Conflict and Conflict Management Strategies in Odual Kingdom, 1800 – 2020

By

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Abstract

This paper examined conflicts in Odual kingdom, its causes, impact and conflict management strategies used by the people to promote their peaceful co-existence. Odual is a kingdom in Abua/Odual Local Government Area situated within the Northern Delta Fringe of the Niger Delta region. Over the years, the kingdom has experienced numerous conflicts bordered on land disputes, chieftaincy tussle, political crises, youth restiveness, cultism, militancy among others, and these conflicts have created a lot of negative impact in the area. A lot has been done to end these conflicts over the years. This paper therefore brought to light the various conflict management mechanism used by Odual people in resolving conflicts, discuss the efficacy of these methods, analyzed their pitfalls and suggest possible methods that can be used to minimize conflicts in Odual. The paper used primary and secondary sources of information to generate the needed data for this study. The researchers conducted oral interviews across the kingdom, visited archives and libraries to source for information. The paper also adopted the multi-disciplinary approach using knowledge from related disciplines to augment the available historical data. The economic and human needs theories were used to guide the study. The findings of the study revealed that Odual as a kingdom is bedeviled with a lot of intra and inter communal conflicts that have impacted

negatively on the overall development of the area. The paper therefore recommended a non-violent approach to conflict management in Odual.

Keywords: Conflict, Odual, Management, Strategies, Mechanisms

Introduction

Due to the geometric increase in the breakdown of peace, law and order in the society, and the increase in conflicts among peoples or group of people in the society, there is, therefore, the need to sort for veritable means of managing conflicts so it does not degenerate to greater crises. This, therefore, calls for the evolution of workable strategies/styles to effectively manage these ever reoccurring conflicts in our society. It is a known fact that, different measures have been adopted at different times by peace scholars with the aim of finding a lasting solution to conflict situations, however, these efforts have often proved less productive and ineffective as it is not all encompassing, hence, its failures. Though, some conflict management style may provide good and desirable results in some societies, it may also not produce same in others. This research therefore, becomes imperative to provide scholars access to various conflict management strategies that can be employed to effectively manage or handle various degrees of conflicts in Odual kingdom, be it interpersonal, intergroup, interstate among others. Against this background, this paper examines conflicts and conflict management strategies in Odual kingdom, with a view to bringing to limelight the efficacy of those strategies and how there can be some level of improvement and changes.

Historical background

Odual is one of the kingdoms in Rivers State situated within the Northern Fringe of the Niger Delta. It lies between the salt waters and fresh water (Brackish) region of the Niger Delta. The kingdom is well endowed with natural resources and its environment favour's both farming and fishing activities. Odual is made up of three major clans- Adibom (Emelego, Aduda, Okolomade, Ogbaloma, Obhiny Ikpagagh communities), Arughunya (Ekunuga, Anyu, Emirikpoko, Obedum and Odual communities) and Kugbo (Akani, Emago Amurutor Amurukani communities). Over the years, these communities have experienced intra and inter communal conflicts due to land disputes, chieftaincy tussles, political differences, cultism, youth restiveness, militancy, and oil bunkering, among others.

As individuals/communities interact, they are most likely to encounter more forms of conflict, particularly when there is a clash of interest(s). Conflict as known, is an inherent part of human existence and no society can claim to exist without an iota of it. As population surges across the world, there is an ever growing threat of more conflicts. This

may occasioned by the need of groups for expansion, which would readily pitch individuals/communities against themselves. Such expansionist ventures in most cases may result in conflicts because of boundary encroachment and pressures on meager resources. It is an obvious fact that land which is the major natural resources of man is static and as such, when population increases, there is the tendency for conflicts over land ownerships and control.

Again, most societies operates on communal and family land ownership, where the Chiefs are the custodians of the lands and all the resources therein. This explains why there are pockets of violent conflicts among Odual communities over meager resources, boundary disputes, chieftaincy tussles among other. The greed factor in humans has also escalated the conflicts in Odual. The conflicts have resulted to break down of law and order, killing and maiming, destruction of properties, diabolic practices, Enmity, hatred and violent confrontations.

Methodology

The study used both primary and secondary sources of information to gather the needed data for the research. Taking into cognizance that a single source cannot provide the needed materials for the research work, the researcher adopted the multi-source mechanism in writing this paper. This is necessary because historians uses the strength of one source to fill the deficiency emanating from the weakness of the other. Primary sources where derived from oral interviews while secondary sources were sourced from relevant text books, journals, intelligence reports, memos, minutes among others.

Owing to the fact that knowledge cut across disciplines, the paper adopted the multi-disciplinary approach in writing this work. The research used the historical, narrative, discipline and analytical approach in the analysis and interpretation of data source from both primary and secondary sources. The research was subjected to critical scrutiny and proper evaluation of all the information generated before conclusion were drawn.

Conceptual Clarification

Conflict

According to Lewis Coser, conflict is the struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources which the aim of the opponent is to neutralize, injure or kill their rivals. He opined that competition graduates into conflict when the parties try to support their own position by reducing their opponents. Francis (2006) defines conflict as the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups. He identified armed conflict which is the use of force and armed violence in the pursuit of incompatible and

particular interests and goals, as the worst form of conflict and which entails mass murder and genocide against unarmed and innocent civilians. However, to this research work, conflict is seen as a violent antagonistic confrontation or clash between two or more parties and individuals.

Conflict Management

Best (2006) defined conflict management as a process of reducing the negative and destructive capacity of conflict through a number of measures and by working and through the parties involved in the conflict. To Obuah (2016) it involves interventionist efforts towards preventing the escalation and negative effects of ongoing conflicts. According to him, it involves the technique of bringing the conflicting parties together to establish mutual agreement, intervention by third party to introduce or impose decision, provision of new initiative programmes or institutional structure as election to address the conflict. Disputing parties can be compelled or coerced to utilize previously established means of resolution or containment, and use of coercion by third party to eliminate or instill fear among one or all the disputants to make them less or strong.

Conflict management covers the entire area of handling conflicts positively at different stages including those efforts made to prevent conflicts by being proactive. It encompasses conflict limitation containment and limitation containment and litigation (Shadrack, 2006). Conflict can only be managed in the society but cannot be totally eradicated as rightfully opined by Shadrack that the term "conflict management" is perhaps an admission of the reality that conflict is inevitable but not all conflicts can be resolved. Therefore, what practitioners can do is to manage and regulate them. Bouton (1990) sees the term as the containment of conflict through introduced to promote conditions in which collaborations and valued relationship control the behavior of conflict parties. Whatever be the case, conflict can be managed. In this study, conflict management refers to the totality of the processes, mechanism and strategies, a society adopts in resolving and managing conflicts within her domain. These strategies may be general or peculiar to that society.

Conflict Management Styles

Style is seen as the manner of doing or presenting things, especially a fashionable one a particular way in which something is done. While management could be seen as the judicious use of means to accomplish an end. This is the skill or act of dealing with people or situations in a successful way. Hence conflict management or handling style could be seen as a particular means of managing conflict that will bring about peace or de-escalation or that will not degenerate to a crisis situation. Ojiji (2006) refers to it as the responses that people make to address the situation that is considered detrimental to the attainment of a

desired goal, conflict management style entails the different strategies adopted by person or professional peace scholar to stem down conflicts in the society. It is the manner and mean to which people manage conflicts in the society that will bring satisfaction to the conflicting parties.

Theoretical Frame Work.

The Economic Theory: This school of thought believes that some conflicts are caused by the economic intentions of the perpetrators of the conflict. The gains the leaders in the said conflicts stand to get. This explains why some conflicts have dragged for so long. It is on this that Collier (2003) observed that some people commonly referred to as conflict entrepreneurs actually benefits from chaos, while the overwhelming majority of the population is affected by the negative impact of the conflict. The leader of armed formation that are actually the perpetrators of the violence often profit from the chaos and that, the lure of primary gains seldom drive the principal incentive for rebellion. That is, the conflict entrepreneurs would like to continue and maintain the status quo, since they earn and sustain a living through it.

The Human needs Theory: This theory states that every man has needs which they strive to fulfill and when they are frustrated while trying to achieve these needs may amount to violent reaction. That basic human needs comprise of psychological, social and spiritual need. That an attempt to the deprivation of these basic needs amount to conflict. Maslow identifies these as psychological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love, esteem and self-actualization. Burton (1979) listed among these needs are response, stimulation, security, recognition, distributive justice, meaning, needs to appear rational and develop rationally, need for sense of control and need for role defense. He went further to refer to some as basic needs such as food, shelter, sex and reproduction etc. Azar (1994) listed some of these needs as security, distinctive identity, social recognition of identity and effective participation in the process that shapes such identity. `Marx Neef (1991) observed that when important needs are not sufficiently satisfied, economic and political problems will continue to grow. Hence, the absence of economic opportunity, hyper-inflation, and penury are manifestation of economic imbalance, while political imbalance leads to fear, xenophobia, crime and violence, forced migration, voluntary or forced exile and political marginalization are the root causes of bitter conflicts. All these factors were visible in our societies. This paper used the Economic and Human needs theories to guide the study. The two theories provided the foundation on which conflicts and conflict management in Odual, were discussed

Causes of Conflicts in Odual.

Land/ Boundary dispute

Though land is a free gift of nature, it is very valuable hence, it has become a major source of conflict in the society from the earliest time. It is a major resource that man depend on, to earn a living, so there is always a keen competition for land. Falati (2006) observed that the competition for scarce resources including land has been identified as one of the major causes of conflict globally. Olubunmi and Olaoluwa (2019) noted that the intensity of the conflicts especially land, conflict has been escalated by factors like: population growth, industrialization and climate change.

Accordingly, the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) 2012 report, revealed land and related resources as the most consistent precipitator of violence in most parts of the country (Odual inclusive). Olubunmi and Olaoluwa (2019) opined that intergroup conflicts are especially triggered by claims and counter claims of land ownership between those conceived as settlers and indigenous groups. That conflicts can also be triggered by controversies over the location of boundary point between two communities. They also observed that conflicts are sometimes exacerbated after the discovery of valuable natural economic resources on contentious areas. Corroborating this, Adesola and Omojeje (2012) opined that Nigeria has continued to battle with various cases of inter communal conflicts which range from boundary disputes.

However, studies have shown that 80% of the conflicts in Odual, both intra and inter communal, are land related. For instance, the age long Okolomade-Ekunuga conflict is land related, the Edumaghunu-Obedum conflict, the Anyu-Ogboloma, Anyu-Okolomade, Ogboloma-Aghalaga, Odual-Obedum, Anyu-Emirikpoko, Edumeru family-Anyu, Emelego-Okolomade conflicts, to mention a few are all land related inter communal conflicts. In the same vein, the Otuibaam-Otuiya-Otuolodi and Otuokuny conflicts of Odual, the Otuake-Edumeru, Edumaghunu-Otuake, Otu Onyuk-Otu Kpirigbol, Otuibal-otu Ofeniani, and Obura-Otuake families of Emirikpoko are all intra communal land conflicts. Of these mentioned cases, the conflict between Obedum community and Edumaghunu (family of Emirikpoko) and Ekunuga vs Okolomade are cases of settlers and indigenous and or ingratitude/population growth. While all other mentioned cases are cases of boundary points, settling of projects like the siting of Etisalat mast aggravated the conflict between Obedum and Edumaghunu family, laying of gas and oil pipeline and the discovery of natural economic resources as it is believed that the recent conflict between Okolomade and Emelego might not be unconnected to the discovery of crude oil at Okolomade community.

Chieftaincy Tussle

Chieftaincy tussle is another major generator of conflict in Odual. Adesola and Omojeje (2012) observed that "Nigeria, like any other developing countries of the world has continued to battle with various cases of inter communal conflicts which range from chieftaincy" … Chieftaincy tussle has plunged Odual communities into serious conflicts. Notable among them are the Emirikpoko chieftaincy tussle between the Otuake and Edumeru family which led to open-confrontation involving shootouts. Obedum community have their own fair share which led to the dethronement of the paramount rule Princewill Ogborokwe which also polarize the community. In Anyu community, the conflict got to its climax when chief Amakiri Azeri was dethroned and replaced with his brother Kingsway. This caused a great division in Anyu that the community is now without a crown paramount ruler for over length of years, 70 years as the history has it that three families Otu-Uya, Otu-Okuny and Otu-Olodi constitutes the royal family hence produces the paramount ruler rotationally. This arrangement has brought in a lot of scheming politicking and internal wrangling which kept the throne vacant and allowed CDC to dominate the leadership positions of Odual (Lucky, 2021).

Greed

Greed is the selfish desire for more than is needed or deserved, especially of money, wealth, food or other possessions. This was the cause of the Ekunuga vs Okolomade conflict as Ekunaga refuses to allow Okolomade benefits from the royalty of the pipeline on the land that Okolomade gave to them to settle. It also caused the Obedum community and Edumaghunu family as Obedum wanted to take the royalty from the Etisalat from the land Edumaghunu gave them out if greed. Mondibo and Abraham (2021)

Absence of Truth

Lack of truth among the elders and council of traditional rulers is another major cause of conflicts in Odual (Jamela, Olami, Nathaniel, Jeofrey Mondibo & Irele, 2021). Members of the Odual Council-of-Chiefs and other elders in Odual have been economical with the truth. They bend the truth to favor them and their allies for selfish interest. This was the case in Okolomade-Ekunuga where some well-meaning, trusted Chief and elders who knew the truth refuse to speak out but rather supported Ekunuga against Okolomade, for what they will gain from them, because of the fame and wealth/government positions. It was also the case of the Edumaghamu and Obedun where the Adhoc committee set up by HRH King Temple gave controversial report after finding the truth. They also recommend that … "Etisalat should recognize Obedun as the host community for this project……." investigation revealed that member of the committee, Chief Hart George, Chief Mondibo James, Chief Amakiri Azeri Elder Vincent Dokubo Eke and Chief John.S. Agara who

chaired the committee took bribe from Obedun to favor them, after finding the truth. This amounted to lie and greed. This act sparked up violent conflict that made Edumaghanu family to file a suit summoning Obedun before a court of competent jurisdiction, where they (Edumaghanu family) won. It can also be said that most of these chiefs acted as conflict entrepreneurs as they benefited from the conflicts, hence, never wanted the conflict to end. This may have made some of these conflicts especially that of Okolomade-Ekunuga to be undertake a protracted-nature, while others are also still under litigation dragging on.

Economic Gains

Some individual known as conflict entrepreneurs cause conflicts in communities in other to benefit from the conflict. To them social conflict perform a functional utility. This was the case in the Emirikpoko intra-communal conflict, where the leaders of a conflicting parties where benefiting from the contributions meant for court cases. In the same vein, certain individuals supported Ekunuga against Okuolomade because of the economic benefits they got from Ekunuga people.

Conflict Management Strategies in Odual

Indeed, conflict constitutes a major threat to African development in terms of loss of human life, destruction of property and of huge resources meant for improving infrastructure and promoting sustainable development into arms purchase and funding of expensive peacekeeping support operation (Albert, 2008). It is in account of these losses that it becomes imperative for peace scholars to proffer workable styles of handling or managing these conflicts in order to avert some of these losses. As Ojiji (2006) would say, it sets the motion, the process that typifies human beings as reasonable organisms. They analyses the situation and decide the appropriate response to it. However, in the light of this, the following conflict management styles are discussed.

As earlier mentioned, culture is the key to conflict management, hence in the approach of managing conflict, the culture of the people should be considered before choosing the very style that will be suitable to produce the desired result. In the light of this, the Odual society is not an exception. Certain conflict management styles may or will not produce good result in Odual owing to the culture. Studies from available evidence shows that in managing conflicts in Odual, the following styles have been predominantly used, with proven examples.

- African alternative dispute resolution
- Adjudication/litigation
- Arbitration

- Negotiation
- Mediation
- Conciliation
- Dialogue
- Suppression
- Confrontation
- Oath taking
- Magical Hypnotism
- Avoidance

The African alternative dispute resolution style: is an age long traditional way of settling dispute in African society, though many differ in its application in different societies yet, similar in all including Odual. Here, elders and well-meaning influential persons are called to handle conflicts where the disputants are called to give or submit their statement, while judgment is given based on critical examination of the facts before the elders. However, most of these cases were referred to the community deity or shrine for spiritual consultations, libation, swearing or oath taking. Ancestral spirits are also invoked as the case may be, especially in complicated cases like secret murder, witchcraft, theft and boundary disputes. In Odual, the Obaseki shrine of Emelego, Igwe-kaala in Igbo, Odiereke shrine at Ekpeye have played crucial role in handling such conflicts. Typical examples are the Odau completed land disputes between Otuibaam, Otuolodi, Otuiya and Otuokuuny families, the Emirikpoko community land lordship disputes between Otuake family and Edumeru family, taken to Obaseki and Odiereke shrines, Otuake and Obura family land ownership conflict taken to Obaseki shrine, Otuukpiri Ogbol vs Otu-Onyuku boundary disputes referred to Obaseki shrine of Emelego and Edumaghunu family of Emirikpoko vs Obedum community boundary dispute. Sometimes, the implication of this style is the death of the guilty party.

Adjudication and Litigation: This is the conduct of a law suit. This is a non-violent way of handling conflict where the parties go to court to seek redress. In adjudication/litigation, the conflicting parties are represented by their legal counsels or lawyers. They are not given the opportunity of choosing the judge to preside over their case. The judge gives judgment that is binding to both parties and is always enforced by the government law enforcement agencies. In recent time, many conflicts parties prefer using this method as to them it is more satisfactory because it is followed according to the laws of the land.

As earlier explained, this is the use of competent court of law for the settlement of conflicts. Recent development points to this style as dominating other styles and, in some cases, the

last resort. Though it is cost intensive and time taking. The Odual people have resorted to taking their cases to court for litigations. Good examples are the Anyu community & Edumeru family boundary dispute, the Anyu community & Ogboloma community case, Ogboloma & Aghalaga, the Otuake family & Edumera family land ownership/kingship tussle in Emirikpoko. The Edumaghunu & Otuake land ownership in Emirikpoko community, the Edumeru & Otuake Anyu access road case, the Edumaghunu family of Emirikpoko & Obedum boundary dispute, Iguazu & Osuani Oda family of Emelego, Obedum & Odual over land/fish ponds dispute, Okolamade & Ekunuga land lordship conflict etc. These and many others have been referred to court for litigation and adjudication. This style is taking over the traditional Odual conflict management.

Arbitration: Ezejiofor (1997) defines arbitration as the reference of a dispute or difference between not less than two parties for determination after hearing both sides in a judicial manner, by a person or persons other than a court of competent jurisdiction. This is the rise and assistance of a neutral third party in conflict who hears the evidence from both parties and thereafter, gives a verdict usually called award which is expected to be binding on the parties. According to Shadrack (2006) it is a method of conflict settlement that involves a third-party intervention. The basis of arbitration is that all the parties must submit to a binding decision to settle the conflict. For Obinoh (2006), the third party or parties involved in the settlement is called arbitrator or arbitrators. Peace builders and peace makers have also adopted arbitration in managing Odual conflicts. The use of third neutral parties have been used in settling conflict. A typical example is the 2015 general election violent in Anyu that led to the killing of the two brothers "Adam and Kalemugh" by APC thugs and the reprisal attack by PDP member that led to the exile of APC members and arrest and detention of some suspected APC members. A team of arbitrators, initiated and led by Rev. Father Joseph Opelema of Emirikpoko stepped in to broker peace and for the return of the exiled APC members and their relative back to the community.

Another example is the Edumeru vs Otuake family kingship dispute in Emirikpoko, where the Abua/Odual local government chairman Hon Daniel O. Daniel stepped in and mandated the Odual Council-of-Chief to mediate between the conflicting parties. The Edumaghunu family of Emirikpoko and Obedum community boundary dispute is another case attempted by the Odual Council-of-Chiefs through arbitration. However, irrespective of the award, the parties referred the cases for litigation as they were not satisfied. Arbitration is a traditional conflict management style in Odual, the family heads settle in his family while paramount ruler and his council of chief handle matter at the clan level. Awards are pronounced while the guilty party is made to face the penalty.

Negotiation: Negotiation has also seen the light of the day, as a style for conflict resolution in Odual. Conflicting parties after trying other means of conflict management, adopted negotiation, where they sit on the round table for diplomatic talk on the way forward to end disputes. One prominent and notable example is that of Okolomade and Ekunuga. The age long conflict that almost turned the two communities to traditional enemies, and have been under Adjudication and litigation over the years was finally settled through an out of court settlement (Mondibo, 2021). Another example is the recent ongoing peace negotiation between Okolomade and Emelego communities over their boundary disputes. Also, Edumeru and Edumaghunu families of Emirikpoko negotiated on their boundary line to avoid conflict between the brotherly and allies' families.

Again, some murder cases are settled through negotiation. It is the tradition of the Odual people that in the case of murder, the murderer is to die by hanging, drowning or tired to a three in an evil forest and left to die there. But in situation where the murder was by mistake then, the murderer was to go an exile or be banished and/or where the family is wealthy and influential then they were to pay for the victim or replace the deads with any member of their family, or marry a wife for the bereaved family (Beaumont, 1939). A typical example is the Ozimokarabh vs Ukpirigbol, were Ukpirigbol use his younger brother Akpana to pay (Irele & Godknows, 2021).

Meditation: Meditation is one of the oldest styles used by Odual people in managing conflict in the society. It is where a third party comes in to try to hold talk between the conflicting parties, to help in brokering peace among them. A classic example is the case of intra communal conflict in Emirikpokpo where the Ogboloma community meditated among the conflicting parties. It was also adopted in the Anyu conflict, the Okolomade-Ekunuga conflict, and other inter-personal conflict.

Conciliation: Conciliatory system is also used by the Odual people in managing their conflicts, where a third neutral party is called to play an inter-mediatory role and persuading the conflicting persons to reconcile and ensure peace. A good example is the Anyu 2015 general election violent that polarized the community along party line and the killing of the PDP brothers by APC supporters. Rev father Joe Opelema came in to reconcile the factions and for the return of the exiled APC members. Another example is Abua/Odual Kupe Foundation, an (NGO) who tried to withdraw the Edumaghunu family of Emirikpopo & Obedun community case from the Obaseki shrine and settle it peacefully.

Dialogue: This is another peaceful non-violent style used in managing conflict in Odual. A good example is Okolomade and Ekunuga communities' age long

landlordship/tenantship crisis that could not be resolved, but later settled on the peaceful table of diplomatic dialogue (Mondibo, 2021).

Suppression: Suppression as a style for managing peace is mostly done by a strong power applying superior force in the form of intervention, especially when conflict escalate to crisis situation. It is mostly used by the government. It was adopted in Odual in the Emirikpoko intra-communal clashes, Okolomade & Ekunuga conflict, and the Anyu election crisis.

Confrontation/fighting: This has always been the style adopted during the first instance in a heated conflict that degenerates to crisis situation, while parties try to express their deep-rooted anger. Injuries and death have always been the end result. In Odual, the Okolomade & Ekunuga conflict, the Odau inter-personal/intra-communal land disputes, the Anyu-Ogboloma boundary dispute, Edumaghunu family of Emiyikpoko Obedum community conflict, Emirikpoko intra communal land/kingship tussle between Otake and Edumeru families and the Anyu 2015 general election violent crisis are all classical example of confrontation/fighting style used in managing their conflict. This style has never proffered lasting solution, rather it deepens, complicates and break the existing relationship between the factions, keeping them afar from each other and make them to be more suspicious.

Oath Taking: an oath is a solemn pledge declaration or promise to a god, king or another person to attest to the truth of a statement. This is the affirmation of the truth of a statement. The oxford advanced learners dictionary defines oath as a formal promise to do something or a formal statement that something is true. Oath (Izor) or oath swearing or taking (Oghiran-Izor) is one of the conflict management strategy used by the pre-historic and pre-colonial Odual people, especially on matter where the disputants are not satisfied with the verdict of the council of elders or paramount ruler, especially on land dispute. It involves the disputants swearing before a shrine on the true ownership of the said property by libation to the god with local gin, or by putting the soil of the disputed area into a glass of local gin and stating their case, after which they drink the gin. Judgment in this strategy is always given by the gods hence, it is spiritual. The guilty party incures the wrath of the gods which might be dangerous. It could be in the form of madness, death or other calamities. Another form of swearing was before a local god popularly known as 'juju' (eru). In this way, one of the disputants report the case to shrine, with certain amount of money. The juju priest, (Oku-eru) then invites the second party, after which the both parties state their cases. The juju priest sometime may decide to settle the matter and give his verdict. But if the disputants are not satisfied with the verdict, they then proceed to

swear an oath to the 'juju', through libation (Ogharana or Oghal-Ologh) or (Ologh-te-eru). According to Boyle (2021), this strategy was mostly used to settle land ownership or boundary disputes, theft, and libel/slander.

Mystical Hypnotism: Hypnotism is gotten from the word hypnosis which means a trance-like state, and artificially induced. It is a state in which a person has a heightened suggestibility, and in which suppressed memories may be experienced. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary sees it as an unconscious state in which somebody can still see and hear and can be influenced to follow commands. Hypnotism is the practice of putting somebody into an unconscious state, where the person can be easily influenced to have against his or her wish and to follow the command of the hypnotizer. During the pre-colonial era, Odual had powerful magical medicine men that could use their magical powers to influence a person or persons to act against the wish. According to Samuel (2021) these persons use their magical power or were hired by communities or families to use their powers to hypnotize disputants in a conflict especially where it has degenerated to the crisis state. It was also use to recall back an escaping person who may have committed a heinous crime such as murder. According to Irele (2021), the Odual people uses this means to end the Nembe-Odual war of the era under discuss. It was used to de-escalate existing and protracted conflict and also prevent or wave off potential looming dangerous conflict before they occur. This strategy was also used to settle domestic family conflict between husbands and wives.

Avoidance: Avoidance is the act of annulling, a state of being vacant, quitting or the act of summary and keeping clear of. It is the state of not showing interest, commitment or trying to ignore. Avoidance as a conflict management style is the systematic display of lack of interest or postponing and not addressing the issue at the right time. Odual have adopted this style in managing her conflicts with her bigger neighbors, such as the Nembe-Brass Kalabari; and Ogbia people. This style has been used mostly by the Arughunya communities of Odau, Obedum and Emirikpoko against the Oruma people of Ogbia, because of their large population and strategic location along the only route leading to Odual.

The Way Forward

Conflicts are threat to peace and meaningful development in the society, hence, should be prevented or properly managed. If possible, before they escalate to full crisis situation. In managing conflicts, a holistic approach should be used and all the conflict management style be employed to avert or prevent potential impending conflicts in our society.

Peace brokers such as mediators, negotiators arbitrators and others should maintain neutrality in all forms while finding lasting solution to any conflict situation, and, should be properly trained in the profession of peace and conflict resolution. The government and other organizations and agencies should shift their effort from conflict resolution and management to conflict prevention through a concerted re-orientation of the attitude of the leaders, and followers alike, especially in striving for peaceful resolution of conflicts through peaceful means like dialogue and not through violent confrontation.

Peace keepers and law enforcement agencies or security forces should be properly educated and re-oriented in obeying the rules of engagement and on their attitude toward civilian populace in order to respect their fundamental human right so as to reduce cases of torture and general debasement of human dignity in order to avoid leaving bitter memories of conflicts in their hearts, which may spark up further conflict.

Most countries of the world including Nigeria have suffered avoidable violent conflicts as a result of lukewarm attitudes toward peace education (Asiedu and Berghs 2012). Peace building is the solution to the instability occasioned by clashes over the control of scarce resource in Africa, where conflict is compounded by several factors (Chibuzor, 2019). In the light of these, peace education and peace building are vital tools to managing conflicts in our society.

In managing conflicts, the early warning signals (E.W.A) should not be taken for granted. It should be taken into cognizance and properly observed so that avoidable conflicts could be prevented or avoided from an early stage. Again, before applying any of the discussed conflict management styles, the culture of that particular society should be put into consideration. Ojiji (2006), observed that the single most important independent variable determining different in the preference for utilization methods of handling conflict is culture. This is because as the perception of the individual differ, so is their culture. That is, some conflict management styles, when applied in a particular society may produce good result because of their culture, but may not work in another, hence, while thinking of the very type of conflict management style to apply in a particular society, it is also important to think of the workability of the style in that society.

It is important to note that, violent confrontation has never worked and will never work in managing conflict because it is a win-lose situation, which leaves bitter grudges in the mind of the looser, which is a time bomb that may explode when ripe, hence, it should not be considered as an option for managing conflict. Rather, peaceful and non-violent management styles like consensus building and joint-problem solving, should be adopted

in managing conflicts in Odual and elsewhere, before they degenerate to full crisis situation.

Conclusion

The research work has been about the different management styles used in managing conflicts in the society. The research work has studied various conflict management styles especially non-violent one and is of the opinion that non-violent conflict management styles should be used to manage conflicts. The research opined that a timely intervention and proper observation and use of the Early Warning Signals (E.W.S) and the application of the very workable management style suitable for that particular society may go a long way to prevent or avert some conflicts that are actually preventable. That many conflicts are actually preventable, but, for the lukewarm attitude of the government, peace builder or relevant authorities, showing non-commitment, the conflict then becomes inevitable.

The study also extensively defined some key words such as conflict, conflict management and conflict management styles. It is also the opinion of the paper that in practical aspect of conflict management, prevention and resolution, the importance of culture should not be ignored, in its application. That violent confrontation should not be an option to conflict resolution or management, but an exhaustive application of the various non-violent styles should be done.

Though, conflicts are inevitable, but, some conflicts are avoidable if the early warning signals are observant and not neglected. The research is of the opinion that violent confrontation is not a good conflict management strategy because it is a win-lose situation hence, it should not be used in managing conflict, because it will leave grudges in the minds of the losers, which is a time bomb. Rather, peaceful and non-violent conflict management strategies should be adopted to manage the Odual conflicts before they degenerate to crisis situation.

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Name	Sex	Age	Status	Occupation	Place	Date
Sokipiri O	M	70	Regent	Paramount Ruler	Emirikpoko	8/6/2021
Boyle Irele	M	73	Elder		Emirikpoko	4/6/2021
Jamala Temple	M	59	Odual King	King	Emelego	4/6/2021
Olami	M	52	Civil Servant	Civil Servant	Emelego	4/6/2021
Nathaniel Ododo	M	68	Rtd Civil Servant	Civil Servant	Emelego	4/6/2021
Jeofrey	M	65	Surveyor		Emelego	4/6/2021
Mondibo	M	59	Paramount Ruler	Okolomade King	Okolomade	3/6/2021
Reginal J. Eghenem	M	61	Politician		Anyu	3/7/2021
John A.	M	72	Rtd Civil Servant	Deputy Paramount Ruler	Ogboloma	3/4/2021

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