

Conflict Resolution in Nigeria: The Role of Academic Library

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Abstract The study examined the services offered by academic libraries in conflict resolution, identified the media through which academic libraries offer their services and the problems encountered by academic libraries in rendering conflict resolution services. Descriptive survey was adopted for this study. The population comprised academic libraries in Nigeria. 10 university libraries were selected at random cutting across the geopolitical zones of the country. Dissemination of information resources on security issues was prevalently rendered by all the libraries with a variable score of (3.5). Radio/TV partnership programmes (2.0) have variable scores below the AVS (2.7) and were the least service rendered by the libraries. Radio and television interviews were the least media used. The study revealed lack of established library policy on conflict management information services as the major problems affecting library services for conflict resolution with the highest variable score (3.7). It was recommended that services which will have large audience coverage like radio and television partnership programmes should be given utmost priority.

Keywords Conflict, Conflict resolution, Academic library, Librarian

1. Introduction

The prevalence of conflict in the country has become a major concern for the well meaning Nigerians considering the impact on the peace, security as well as the economy of the nation. Destruction of lives and properties has almost become an everyday affair. These happenings have created a fearful atmosphere that discourages investors both domestic and foreign. By and large the economy of the nation is threatened. In explaining the political situation in the country; three terms need to be clarified. They include: crisis, conflict and violence. Crisis is the aftermath of conflict and violence. According to [1], violence is often the manifestation of extreme, consistent and intense level of conflict. It is the harm perpetrated on persons ranging from restriction of their movement to torture or death and also the harm inflicted on properties ranging from mere damage to complete destruction. It is better imagined. Peace may not be appreciated without prior experiences of violence futility. Conflict occurs where there is an interaction between at least two individuals or groups whose objectives differ. The social cost of conflict is so enormous that the government of a nation should do all within its capacity to discover the best strategy for conflict resolution.

Resolution is a collaborative problem-solving, a

cooperative taking together process that leads to choosing a plan of action that both of you can feel good about [2]. There are undoubtedly serious security issues challenging the peace and national security of the nation. Security is crucial to a nation's sustainable development. Production and industrial activities can only thrive in an enabling environment. Challenging issues currently facing the country include: Political Violence, Extremism (Boko Haram) or insurgency, Communal violence, kidnapping, the Niger Delta, Maritime insecurity among others. If these issues are considered critically, irreconcilable differences and struggle between individuals and groups over access to power, opportunities and privileges that go with it are not farfetched.

[3] provides a broad definition of the term conflict resolution, to embrace conflict management and social control. This involves the principles, methods and skills that are employed to prevent, reduce, or resolve conflict. Thus, Conflict resolution includes post conflict activities such as reconciliation, reinsertion, reintegration, and rehabilitation of ex-combatants and war-affected persons, plus the design and implementation of early warning systems.

Libraries are part of the community. They are more than four walls and shelves of books. A library is a place where all walks of life may be present; a place where people can gather to meet new people, discuss books read or articles discovered even get together with others is a valuable component of successful community life and increase people's confidence and self-esteem. According to [4], library is a place where community-building connections are happening. Library provides the opportunities for people to interact and connect

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with others and foster a sense of belonging to a community. People may go to the library looking mainly for information, but they find each other and discuss current and pressing events in the community. The roles of librarians are crucial in this era of fading service personnel. They provide help and ensure the library functions effectively; they are also a part of the community who utilizes available resources within the four walls and outside in the whole world in meeting the information needs of the community. Librarians know their communities firsthand, and are often the first to recognize a pressing local need, owing to their interaction on a daily basis with patrons from all walks of life. They are in the best position not only to bring local issues to municipal governments and social agencies, but also to partner with local governments and agencies to address the needs of a community.

2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

- i. to examine the services available in academic libraries for conflict resolution;
- ii. identify the media through which academic libraries offer their services;
- iii. identify the problems encountered by academic libraries in rendering conflict resolution service.

3. Review of Literature

Conflict is an intrinsic and part of human existence. According to [5] Conflicts are inevitable in human society as long as there is existence. [6] stresses that it is the resort use of force and armed violence in the pursuit of incompatible and particular interests and goals. Conflict is not a new phenomenon but rather a problem that grows with time. [7] considered conflict as a relationship between two or more parties who believe they have incompatible goals or interests. It could be as a result of misunderstanding that involves negotiable interest which could be religious, social, political or economic interest.

Conflict is a common phenomenon especially in a democratic setting. [1] emphasized that conflict is necessary to consolidate the tenets and principles of democracy; and concerned citizens in the region engage in conflicts in order to address the problem of injustice and fair play. To buttress the fact that conflict is inevitable, [8] considered conflict as a dynamic phenomenon which is part of life. Conflict only becomes a problem when it turns out to threaten the security of a nation. Though it is often said that conflicts are desirable in shaping human ideologies and relationship, they never occur without negative consequences. Often such consequences constitute serious threats to humanity and undermine particular human development objectives [9].

Considering the likely causes of conflict in Nigeria, [10] identifies five points which includes: Tribalism, resource control, religion, land disputes and trade related disputes.

Leadership tussle and access to power are not excluded. The distribution of wealth has also sparked conflict in Nigeria's oil-rich southern Delta region, where militants lobbying for a greater share of oil revenue regularly blow up pipelines and kidnap foreign oil workers. In [11] analysis, Conflicts in the Niger Delta are three dimensional processes which are centered on social identify, agitation for resource control by different ethnic groups, especially, those living where oil is exploited and inter and intra communal conflicts between communities over land and water spoiled by crude oil deposit. All these were perceived to be the products of exploitation, injustice, uneven distribution of commonwealth and political marginalization. According to [12] the major cause of what we now see as ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria has to do with the accusation and allegations of neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and bigotry.

Various dimensions to the causes of conflicts have been identified by writers. The major cause of conflict in the country seems to be lack of sense of community and belongingness. [13] prefer the abbreviated label "Sense of Community," and provide the following one-sentence definition: "Sense of Community is a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together. "Lack of sense of belongingness is the only purpose of being taking a great part in destruction of lives and properties. This is not unconnected with wrong indoctrination and misinformation. Misinformed people rarely changed their minds even when exposed to corrected facts in news stories. They rather become rigid in their beliefs. The belief system of people influences the way they think, feel and see things in relations to others [14].

Opinions are often based on beliefs, which can have an uneasy relationship with facts. Beliefs do dictate the facts people chose to accept, wrong information can be uncritically accepted just because it reinforces our beliefs. This reinforcement makes us more confident we're right, and even less likely to listen to any new information. This further explains why people cannot think in more positive terms as in the case of insurgency otherwise called Boko Haram in the major part of the northern states of the country. Insurgency does not have the human face. It does not understand the language of human rights, or any human language. Those who belief in it see themselves as members of a group, conforming to the standards of this group leading to involvement in various activities that are commonly unacceptable, and are out to destroy any one who does not comply with their demands, killing self and others with the premonition that a great man will want his life stopped by a great part, perhaps to become a hero in the other life.

Human social life would simply not be possible without social identification; we should be able to know who we are, and who others are. Collective identities are inherent in social life, whether part of a conflict or not. When and how identities contribute to intractable conflicts depends greatly

on the content of the identities held. Certain qualities of identities contribute significantly to the intractability of conflicts, and whether those conflicts are constructive or destructive [15]. Identity problem is not only a national problem. It is and will remain for decades to come the most important source of international violence and war in the world. Identities conflict is built on the belief of group members. What it means to be a group member, and typically, who the group's enemies are. The beliefs of group members are easily discernable in the national media, school curricula, official government documents and speeches, popular literature and history, etc. The more hostile the belief or ideology, the more likely violence is to occur, and the more severe it is likely to be. Identity is used in connection with personal individuality. It has to do with selfhood, self-actualization, freedom, and authenticity, life style which involves everything from subculture to social position and social status.

For the proper inculcation of the right social values and tolerance, the process of losing identity must be reversed, and identity restored. In view of this, the role of the library as an agent of conflict resolution cannot be over emphasized. Mankind may be uniquely susceptible to ignorance and misinformation, but knowledge is the best remedy. If people are furnished with facts, they will be clearer thinkers and better citizens, ignorance and confusion are removed. Library must in its efforts encourage the re-establishment of the sense of community and belongingness and make people begin to see themselves as their brothers' keepers.

3.1. Library and Its Services in Conflict Resolution

According to [7], Conflict resolution performs a healing function in society, of which he believes the library can be instrumental. [16] stressed that library services are needed to enable the individual develop full potentials and widening the horizons of perception, interests and skills. Library services are needed for the following:

- Public enlightenment or rights in the society, understanding social values and expected conduct in public life
- Assisting to adjust to existing social, political, spiritual and economic activities of the society,
- To cultivate and maintain reading culture and promotion of good literatures.

Information dissemination related to disasters involves various elements in the society. It is therefore the role of governmental, non-governmental institutions as well as individuals, to spread it up to the families through libraries and information centers.

Libraries, information centers, and librarians have a strategic position in taking the role of information dissemination through the library resource and programs which include: talk show, symposium, library week, book exhibition, book fair, mobile library in rural areas. It is believed that some of these conflicts could be avoided, if there were adequate communication among the warring communities and peace makers before they broke out. In

other words, if there were information channels that are open to everybody, then the conflict would have been contained. Timely alert to potential conflicts is central to an early warning system which in order to be meaningful, must be complemented by early political action [17].

For any nation to make meaningful impact in conflict prevention, peace promotion and conflict resolution, early warning information is needed. Free flow of information in any society is also very important because absence of it brings about conflict [18]. [19] stressed that Library and information service is a key player in providing unhindered access to essential information resources for economics and cultural advancement. Effective information dissemination through libraries and internet will put the leaders and the people at alert on facts of potential and conflict, including their causes, evolution, consequences and solutions [17]. Services that could be rendered and the collection of an academic library determine its involvement in conflict resolution. [20] included in his study current awareness services, selective dissemination of information and organizing seminars, conference, workshops and symposia as services that could be rendered by academic libraries for conflict resolution. [21] considered government publications such as gazettes, constitutions, government bulletins and materials of cultural heritages as veritable tools in conflict resolution that should be included in the library collection.

Research has revealed the efficacy of libraries and information centers in conflict resolution. The World Bank Report [22] states that countries such as Ethiopia, Namibia, Uganda, Somalia and Liberia had mobilized library community resources in innovative ways, such as organizing seminars, conferences and workshop on conflict resolution, creating access to free information, providing links with non-governmental organizations, extension services and indigenous knowledge systems, repackaging information in a way that illiterate ones would be able to comprehend it, creating a web site on conflict resolution where the target users can access and discuss matters relating to conflict resolution.

Library has potentials to work with any of the media e.g.TV, radio for propaganda through which the ideology and beliefs of a group is expressed to effect a timely intervention in conflict periods. Some early information media through which library can create awareness of the imminent conflict include internet, community radio, television video conferencing, email, print media and reference services. [23] stated that the need for libraries and information in the developmental efforts of any society is basically that of survival. Libraries have the capacity to work with non-governmental organizations to organize out-reach programmes for distribution of information materials, delivering lectures and talks which would stimulate discussion among the participants to encourage them to embrace simple steps to promote peace and resolve conflicts. Essentially, public and academic libraries are equipped to function in this capacity. However, the realization of the potential roles of the academic libraries in offering services

for conflict resolution has prompted some universities to introduce the course “Peace and conflict resolution” as general studies course as it is the University of Jos where peace and conflict resolution studies is taught as one of the general studies course with course code GST222. [24] also agitated for the learning of inter-religious socialization as a peace education subject for lifelong education that would promote peace in the country. A good example of this is availability of a course titled Islam-Christianity Relationship in St. Paul’s University Limuru, Kenya.

4. Historical Antecedents of Nigeria and Geopolitical Zones

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. Based on projections from the 2006 census which put the nation at 140 million, the current population of Nigeria is between 160 to 167 million. According to [25], one out of every five Africans is a Nigerian, and also one of the most ethnically fragmented with over 200 ethnic groups and 374 languages. Before the advent of colonial rule, Nigeria was non-existent, and the area mapped out as Nigeria held several distinct kingdoms each with its unique cultural heritage. Before the British took over in the 19th century, these kingdoms clashed regularly in attempts to assert individual dominance and superiority.

After the takeover of most parts of Africa by the Europeans, the region was divided arbitrarily mainly between the French and the British. Subsequently, the southern Cameroon later joined the Cameroon hence making the British the sole occupant of what later became Nigeria. Nigeria was thus created as an aggregate of different kingdoms and parts of kingdoms. For administrative convenience, the British divided the country first into two regions (Northern and Southern protectorates), and later amalgamated the two regions to form what is known today as Nigeria. However, the existence of several unique kingdoms within these regions necessitated further divisions as minor groups sought to carve out their own niche amidst clashes and claims of marginalization.

Today, there are thirty-six states in Nigeria excluding Abuja the capital, yet the demands for further divisions are still before the National Assembly for consideration. Consequently, the thirty-six states in Nigeria, for ease of resource sharing, have been politically classified into six geopolitical zones, namely, the North Eastern Zone (NE), the North-Central Zone (NC), the Middle-Belt Zone (MB), the South-East Zone (SE), the South-West Zone (SW), and South-South Zone (SS). It is interesting to note that these zones have not been entirely carved out based on geopolitical location, but rather states with similar cultures, ethnic groups, and common history were classified in the same zone. [26]

From the above six geopolitical zones, 3 zones are popularly recognized according to the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria; Northern zone comprised the Hausa /Fulani ethnic group; Eastern zone –Igbo ethnic group and

South-Western zone which comprised the Yoruba ethnic group.

5. Methodology

Descriptive survey was adopted for this study. The population comprised academic libraries in Nigeria. 10 university libraries were selected at random cutting across the geopolitical zones of the country. Three university libraries were selected from the Eastern part of Nigeria which include: University of Uyo Library, Uyo, University of Nigeria Library, Nsukka, and University of Porthacourt Library, Porthacourt. From the Southwest Nigeria, three academic libraries were selected namely: Obafemi Awolowo University Library, Ile-Ife, University of Ibadan library, Ibadan and University of Lagos Library, Lagos. Four academic libraries were selected from the Northern Nigeria. These libraries include: Usman Dan Fodio University library, Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello University library, Zaria, Northwest University library, Kano. University of Maiduguri library, Maiduguri.

A 30-item structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was categorized into three sections. The first section studies the availability of library services in relation to conflict resolution. The second section studied the media used by the academic libraries for dissemination of information on conflict resolution while the third section studied the problems affecting library services for conflict resolution.

The questionnaire was administered to the reference librarians in each of the academic libraries studied. Data collected was analyzed using SPSS for window version 17(SPSS Inc. Chicago Illinois, U.S.A)

6. Results

Ten university libraries were evaluated in the study; 3 from Eastern Nigeria; 3 from the Southwest and 4 from the North.

Table 1 shows the availability of library services in relation to conflict resolution. In the libraries studied, the average variable score (AVS) for availability of library services in relation to conflict resolution is 2.7. Dissemination of information resources on security issues was prevalently rendered by all the libraries with a variable score of (3.5). Organization of lectures (3.2) and library week activities (2.9) have variable scores (VS) above the average variable score. Organization of workshops (2.4); display of topical issues (2.4) organization of seminars (2.6) and Radio/TV partnership programme (2.0) have variable scores below the AVS (2.7). Radio/TV partnership programme is the least service rendered by the libraries.

Table 2 shows the media used by the academic libraries for dissemination of information on conflict resolution with average variable score (AVS) of 2.5. Electronic mail (3.2)

was the prime medium utilized by the libraries. One-on-one message (3.0); liaison with community leaders (2.9) and distribution of handbills/flyers (2.8) were the other media that have VS above the AVS. Radio and Television interviews, television announcement and teleconferencing have variable scores below the average variable score of 2.5. Radio and television interviews were the least media used.

Table 3 indicates the problems affecting library services for conflict resolution with average variable score of 3.2. Lack of established library policy on conflict management information services with the highest variable score (3.7)

followed by lack of funds (3.6). For rendering the right information services are the major problems identified by the libraries as hampering library activities in conflict resolution i.e. they have variable scores above the average variable score. Lack of technological infrastructure, communication breakdown, Librarians' lack of skills in organizing and disseminating vital information for conflict resolution and lack of government support in generating information on conflict resolution seem not to be problems for the libraries i.e. they have variable scores below the average variable score.

Table 1. Availability of Conflict Resolution Services in the Library

S/N	Library services	Very frequent	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Very rare	Total Weight Value	Variable Score
		W=5	W=4	W=3	W=2	W=1		
1	Organization of workshops on conflict resolution	0	8	6	10	2	26	2.4
2	Display of topical issues concerning conflict resolution	0	12	6	6	2	26	2.4
3	Dissemination of information resources on security issues	10	16	9	2	1	38	3.5*
4	Organization of lectures	0	16	9	6	1	32	2.9*
5	Organization of conferences	0	4	21	4	1	30	2.7
6	Library week activities	5	12	15	2	1	35	3.2*
7	Organization of seminars on conflict resolution	0	8	15	4	2	29	2.6
8	Radio/TV partnership programmes	0	8	3	6	5	22	2
Average variable Score (AVS)								2.7

*services above average score

Table 2. Media Used by the Library for Disseminating Information on Conflict Resolution

S/N	Media	Very frequent	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Very rare	Total Weight Value	Variable Score
		W=5	W=4	W=3	W=2	W=1		
1	Handbills/flyers	5	8	12	4	2	31	2.8*
2	Radio interviews	0	8	0	8	5	21	1.9
3	Television interviews	0	4	6	6	5	21	1.9
4	Television announcement	0	12	6	4	4	26	2.4
5	One-on-one message	0	24	0	8	1	33	3.0*
6	Liaison with community leaders.	0	12	15	4	1	32	2.9*
7	Liaison with NGOs (religious organisations)	0	8	15	4	2	29	2.6*
8	E-mail	0	20	12	2	1	35	3.2*
9	Teleconferencing	0	4	6	8	4	22	2.0
Average variable Score (AVS)								2.5

*Media above average score

Table 3. Problems Affecting Library Services for Conflict Resolution

S/N	Problems	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed	Total Weight Value	Variable Score
		W=5	W=4	W=3	W=2	W=1		
1	Lack of established library policy on conflict management information services.	25	16	0	0	0	41	3.7*
2	Lack of funds for rendering the right information services for conflict resolution.	25	12	3	0	0	40	3.6*
3	Lack of technological infrastructure e.g. Internet facilities for enhancing information dissemination.	25	4	0	6	0	35	3.2
4	Breakdown in communication due to lack of literacy skills of community members.	15	16	0	4	0	35	3.2
5	Librarians' lack of skills in organizing and disseminating vital information for conflict resolution.	10	8	0	10	0	28	2.5
6	Lack of government support in generating vital information for conflict resolution.	5	20	6	1	0	32	2.9
Average variable Score (AVS)								3.2

*Problems above average score

7. Discussion

Conflict is a common phenomenon especially in a democratic setting. Therefore unwavering conflicts i.e. insurgency, militancy and kidnappings that dotted the three basic regions of Nigeria may not be a surprise. Research has revealed the efficacy of libraries and information centers in conflict resolution particularly in countries such as Ethiopia, Namibia, Uganda, Somalia and Liberia in which library resources were utilized in innovative ways to resolve their internal conflicts. This explains why academic libraries from the 3 basic regions of Nigeria were selected.

According to the findings, most of the libraries are doing well in the dissemination of information on security issues in Nigeria. The libraries are playing their primary roles of acquiring, processing, preserving, and disseminating recorded information. It is the opinion of the writers that this will bring a positive long term outcome in the promotion of peace and peaceful coexistence in the communities served by these libraries. Conflict resolution was also a major issue in the libraries' week activities and lectures. This shows that librarians' responsibilities extend far beyond *organizing* and maintaining *library collections*. *In order to fulfill one of the mandates of academic libraries with regards to creating literacy among the people where they are situated, it is important that they give public lectures.*

The less than average performance observed in organizing workshops, seminars and especially radio and television partnership may probably be due to financial constrained.

Suffice to say that substantial amount of money is required to prosecute these programmes. This amount may get beyond what the library management could source for or readily expend.

Availability of resources and services cannot make desirable impact unless they are made accessible to the public. [27] recommended that the existence of these materials and services should be communicated to the people through creating awareness of what they have with the use of flyers or handbills, radio announcements/interviews, one-on-one message, organization of library week having conflict resolution as the theme, publicizing the stock and services on conflict, peace and reconciliation through displays, using community leaders and inviting authors of publications related to peace, conflict resolution and management to talk to the people about the subject. Moreover, Information Communication Technology (ICT) services have also been found useful in conflict resolution. Such services include, e-mail, teleconferencing, list serve and other forms of on-line reference services offered by the library [17]. It was observed that electronic mail was mostly used by librarians in these libraries to disseminate information on conflict resolution. As at 1987, [28] reported that only five institutions and information and documentation centers were identified to have some form of ICT in Nigeria. [29] discovered that the use of e-mail was about 60% and, utilization of internet attracts greater proportion. Today however, many Universities and other information centers are automated.

It was observed that local media such radio and television especially radio which is affordable due to its low-cost were sparingly used by these libraries. These media are known to have a large coverage of audience which should have been exploited by the libraries in reaching the populace. Radio remains the most powerful, and yet the cheapest, mass medium for reaching large numbers of people in isolated areas. Thanks to the revolution of the transistor, even the remotest villages have access to radio programmes, through which oral traditions of rural populace are built even while television is not generally available to communities in very remote areas. In many developing countries like Nigeria, it is becoming a reality that television has the greatest impact on young people and as such, has the ability to shape values, attitudes and perceptions of this category of people who are mainly involved in various conflicts in Nigeria.

A number of problems have been identified by researchers as hindrances to the achievement of the aims of the libraries in conflict resolution. Such problems were highlighted by [30] and [27] which include: inadequate technological infrastructure and knowledge, lack of government support in the generation of vital information related to social cohesiveness, lack of skills/training of information professionals in processing and disseminating indigenous information/knowledge for conflict resolution and breakdown in communication of information due to high illiteracy level of the grassroots community members. These findings show that lack of established library policy conflict management information and inadequate funding of information services were identified as major problems confronting libraries regarding conflict resolution information services.

Lack of technological infrastructure and Librarians' lack of skills in organizing and disseminating vital information for conflict resolution were not serious challenges for these libraries. Similar to this study is that of [9] in which the problem of lack of librarians' skills in organizing and disseminating vital information for conflict resolution were debunked. The writers further suggested that for academic libraries to contribute meaningfully as an agent for promoting democratic ideas and societal cohesiveness, Nigerian Library Association should encourage the administration of academic libraries to develop policies on conflict management information services.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

Most of the libraries are doing well in the dissemination of information on security issues in Nigeria with resounding activities on organization of lectures and library week themed with conflict resolution issues but this is not enough. Radio/TV partnership programmes were low. ICT especially electronic mail was mostly used by librarians in these libraries to disseminate information on conflict resolution. Lack of established library policy conflict management information and inadequate funding of information services

were identified as major problems confronting libraries regarding conflict resolution information services. Lack of technological infrastructure and Librarians' lack of skills in organizing and disseminating vital information for conflict resolution were seem not to be serious challenges.

Services which will have large audience coverage like radio and television partnership programmes should be given utmost priority. [31] opined that organization of workshops, conferences and other out-reach programmes by libraries are vital to conflict resolution. For the smooth running of all the programmes and services of academic libraries, there must be an adequate supply of fund. Although this was not the major problem confronting academic libraries in their service.

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