



Influence of Inter-Communal Crises on Academic Performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated Influence of Inter-Communal Crises on Academic Performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State. Descriptive research design was adopted, three research questions and three null hypotheses respectively were raised to guide the study. One thousand (1000) participants consisting of 506 male and 494 female teachers, were selected from a population of 6893 teachers of the 3 senatorial districts of the state. Simple random sampling technique was applied for sample selection while participants were proportionately distributed to the three senatorial districts. A researchers' designed questionnaire which was validated by three experts was used for data collection. The reliability indices of the various clusters of the instrument established using Cronbach's alpha were 0.82, 0.77, and 0.73. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions, while z-test statistics was used to test null hypotheses. The findings revealed among others that male and female teachers agreed that chieftaincy disputes, crises over location of natural resources, and farm land disputes, influence the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State. Consequently, it was recommended that procedures and criteria for kingship stools should be well defined so as to forestall avoidable crises when the incumbent dies. There should be effective consultations among individuals, families and communities as to avert farm land crises that will result in loss of life; and natural resources in our communities should be used to enhance community development and to stimulate peaceful coexistence.

Keywords: Inter-Communal Crises, academic performance, chieftaincy disputes, students

INTRODUCTION

In multi-ethnic societies, there is always quest for distributive justice, the perceived absence of which breeds frustration and conflict among members, which may result in acts of aggression in the pursuit of the satisfaction of basic life requirements. In Rivers State, according to Akpaeti, in Opiki and Adeleke (2015), one of the causes of conflicts is the control of resources. A release from the Department of State Service (DSS) cited by the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IFPCR, 2002) noted that since the creation of Rivers State in 1967, several bloody communal clashes had occurred. For instance, Ogoni and Andoni from 1993 to 1994, Dumo Ama and Ogan Communities (Okrika L.G.A.) in 1993, and Umuechem (Etche L.G.A.) versus Shell in 1997-1998. The exploitation of the natural resources, without adequate compensation has led to youth restiveness in the Niger Delta. Owolabi (2017) in reporting the threats of new militant groups emphasized that these activities have resulted in the formation of different groups like Niger Delta Avengers (2016), Niger Delta General Justice Mandate (2016), Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force (2016), Niger Delta Red Squad (2016), etc. Some of these groups which were originally

formed to fight against the perceived marginalization and exploitation of the Niger Delta minorities, have over the period factionalized themselves; some are tagged cult groups, while some are being used against one another; some are roped into politics, bought over and/ or used by politicians (Taft,2015). Within the period under reference, communities were deserted, school activities and programs were abandoned as schools were forcefully shut. Final year students who could not afford transfer to other schools were denied external examinations, while some had to travel long distances or even relocate to enable them complete secondary school education. The conflicts between militants and oil companies have impacted negatively on the land and other environmental resources, thereby reducing the livelihood, development potentials of the natural resource base, as well as the educational development of the people.

Statement of the Problem

In every family, community or nation there is hardly a complete agreement on how to share common wealth, resources, power and status among individuals and groups, and on how to effect necessary changes and reforms (Fabiya, Thontteh & Borisade, 2012). Conflict is an ever-present process in human relations. Since different groups and individuals have diverse interests, aims, objectives and aspirations of some individuals or groups will always conflict with those of others. When conflict persists and remains unresolved, it may degenerate to crisis. Omah (2013) states that conflict is pervasive and inevitable because whenever people interact, there is always the possibility of the emergence or manifestation of conflicts. In recent times, crises across communities in Nigeria have assumed a worrisome proportion and dimensions. In Rivers State for instance, there were crisis that involved members of the same family in sharing farm land; contesting for chieftaincy stool or political office. There have also been cult related conflicts within the same family or between two families in the same community or different communities. In many of such cases, hitherto friendly families and communities suddenly carry arms against each other in a quest to dominate, oppress and sideline the contending families.

In order to curb the ever-increasing conflict among rural communities, state government, community heads and religious leaders have made several efforts by setting up internal security mechanisms across the disputant families and communities to address these increasing menace. Furthermore, other techniques or measures for reconciliation such as negotiation, mediation and dialogue had often been adopted. In recent times, due to the reoccurrence of communal conflicts, the state government has taken drastic measures to curbing the increasing wave of communal conflicts. In spite of all these and other punitive measures, there is still increase in communal unrest in some families and communities.

Experience and records have shown that whenever these crises loom, communities are deserted, all institutions including educational institutions are shut down, academic activities are abruptly halted and in some cases school facilities are destroyed and looted. Under such circumstances, the desired excellent performance in educational institutions becomes questionable. These conflicts no doubt, have negative impact on the land and other environmental resources, which truncate the livelihood and development potentials of the people. However, little or no empirical evidence has been advanced with regards to the influence of chieftaincy disputes, crises over location of natural resources and farm land dispute on the academic performance of public senior secondary school students. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to investigate teachers' perception of the influence of inter communal crises on the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State.

Objectives of the Research

This research intends to:

1. Determine the extent to which chieftaincy disputes influence the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State.
2. Ascertain the extent to which crises over location of natural resources influence the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State.
3. Establish the extent to which farm land disputes influence the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent to which chieftaincy disputes influence the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States?
2. To what extent does crises over location of natural resources influence the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States?
3. What is extent to which farm land disputes influence the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance were tested for the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the influence of chieftaincy disputes on academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the influence of crises over location of natural resources on academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the influence of farm land disputes on the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Aggarwall (2015) sees the descriptive research design to involve gathering of information about prevailing conditions or situations for the purpose of description and interpretation. It involves gathering, analyzing and interpreting of data that relates to the types, causes and effects of communal crises or other existing circumstances. Hence the design was considered appropriate for this study. The population for the study consisted 6893 teachers of the Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State and a sample size of 1000 teachers was used for the study that is 506, males and 494 females. Records from the Statistics Department of the Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board (RSSSSB) show that as at 2021, there are 6,893 teachers in the 286 Senior Secondary Schools in the state made up of 3490 males and 3403 females. The population was stratified into the senatorial districts of Rivers East, Rivers South West and Rivers West as shown below.

Table 1: Population Distribution of Teachers in Rivers State according to Senatorial Districts.

Senatorial Districts	No of LGAs	No of Schools	No of male Teachers	No of female Teachers	Total
Rivers East	7	107	1572	2190	3762
Rivers South West	8	82	1015	608	1623
Rivers West	8	97	903	605	1508
Total	23	286	3490	3403	6893

Source: Planning, Research and Statistics Department, RSSSSB, Port Harcourt, 2021.

The simple random technique was adopted to select the schools and the participants from each school. Thus, multistage, stratified, proportionate and simple random sampling techniques were applied in the sample selection. At a first stage of sample size determination, 14% of the entire population was considered reasonable as the value surpasses 378 that the use of Taro Yamen's or the National Educational Association (NEA) models would yield (Krejcie & Morgan, Baridam in Ukwuije & Orluwene, 2012). At a second stage, the same percentage was applied to all strata (3 senatorial districts)

to determine sample size per senatorial district, number of schools per senatorial district, and the number of male and female teachers per senatorial district. At the final stage, the number of respondents per school was then determined proportionately. Schools were sampled from all local government areas of each senatorial district. A researchers' designed instrument was used for data collection. The instrument is made up of two parts A and B. Part A captures the demographic information of respondents including their gender. Part B consists of three clusters, each eliciting data on each of the variables of the study. Cluster 1 deals with chieftaincy disputes, cluster 2 with location of natural resources, cluster 3 on farm land disputes. All clusters of the instrument were modeled to a four-point Likert type rating scale of very high extent (VHE): four point; high extent (HE): three-point, low extent (LE): two point and very low extent (VLE): one point.

To determine the face and content validity of the instrument, copies were given to three experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.

In order to establish the reliability of the instrument that was used for this study, the Cronbach's Alpha method was adopted and the reliability indices obtained for the various clusters were 0.82, 0.77, 0.73 after some copies of the instrument were administered to twenty teachers of Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State, who were not part of the sample for this study. Their responses were then analyzed using Cronbachs' Alpha Method. The data collected for the study were analyzed by the researchers using the descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions using the following boundaries for decision making:

0.1 – 1.4	Low Exent (LE)
1.5 – 2.4	Moderate Extent (ME)
2.5 – 4.0	High Extent (HE).

The z – test statistical analysis was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 significance level. A null hypothesis was accepted if the computed z – value was lower than the critical at 0.05 level of significance, and was rejected if otherwise.

RESULT

Research Question 1

What is the extent to which chieftaincy disputes influence the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States?

Table 2: Mean Ratings on the Influence of Chieftaincy Dispute on Academic Performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State. N = 1000

		Male =(506)		Female =(494)		Aggregate		RKS
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
1	Argument between community chiefs sometimes result in communal fights that hinders academic activities of students	2.97	1.01	2.87	1.07	2.92	1.04	HE
2	Succession to chieftaincy stool brings fighting in the communities that hinders free movement and hence attendance to school.	2.91	1.04	2.89	1.08	2.90	1.06	HE
3	The hope to ascend to chieftaincy position through hereditary has made heirs not to be serious with academic activities	2.89	1.05	2.91	1.06	2.90	1.06	HE
4	School structures are being destroyed in the cause of crises from chieftaincy stools	2.94	1.03	2.88	1.08	2.91	1.06	HE
5	School heads who hold chieftaincy titles sometimes absent themselves from school because of chieftaincy disputes	2.92	1.04	2.87	1.08	2.90	1.06	HE
6	Some chiefs entice their subjects who are students with socio-economic benefits to win their support in time of crises	2.87	1.07	2.92	1.07	2.90	1.07	HE
7	Traditional policies between clans and community leadership clashes result to crises leading to temporary closure of schools.	2.92	1.05	2.90	1.08	2.91	1.07	HE
8	Politicians and companies foment crises through the community chiefs and this disrupts peaceful coexistence that enhance academic activities.	2.91	1.05	2.90	1.07	2.91	1.06	HE
9	Families have lost potential intelligent children due to chieftaincy crises	2.91	1.01	2.90	1.08	2.91	1.04	HE
10	Early ascension to chieftaincy position has hampered the furtherance of education of some individuals	2.93	1.03	2.89	1.07	2.91	1.05	HE
11	Chieftaincy positions interfere with academic pursuit of occupants	2.94	1.03	2.90	1.08	2.92	1.06	HE
Grand mean		2.92	1.04	2.89	1.07	2.91	1.06	HE

Source: Field study 2021

Table 2 from the result it can be observed that the mean scores and standard deviation of the male and female teachers on all items is within the decision mean of 2.5 – 4.0. With the grand mean of 2.92 for male teachers and 2.89 for female teachers, all lying within the acceptable mean score (mean cut-off point) of 2.50 and above. Since the mean scores of the respondents are above the minimum mean range of 2.50 and above for high extent set by the researcher, it can therefore be concluded that chieftaincy disputes influence the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students.

Research Question 2

To what extent does crisis over location of natural resources influence the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States?

Table 3: Mean Ratings on the Influence of Location of Natural Resources on Academic Performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State. N = 1000

		Male= (506)		Female = (494)		Aggregate		RK S
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
1	Natural resource-rich regions seek to split away from the rest of a country leading to secessionist conflict that affect school program	2.88	1.08	2.87	1.07	2.89	1.07	HE
2	Communal clashes resulting from location of natural resources leads to temporary closure of schools	2.99	0.98	2.87	1.06	2.93	1.02	HE
3	Resources such as oil, natural gas, minerals and timber are major sources of national income, part of which is used for education budget.	2.90	1.05	2.89	1.05	2.90	1.05	HE
4	Conflict over location of resources enhances the evolution and involvement of school children in secret cultism which affect their academic performances.	2.89	1.04	2.88	1.05	2.89	1.05	HE
5	Children who witness inter-community violence over ownership of oil wells develop low self-esteem which affects their academic performance	2.94	1.03	2.86	1.07	2.90	1.05	HE
6	Cumulative impact of multiple small-scale clashes, typically over land, livestock or fresh water affect school programmes resulting to poor academic performance	2.91	1.04	2.86	1.06	2.89	1.05	HE
7	Anxiety of land disputes among family members reduces students' concentration on academic work.	2.92	1.04	2.87	1.09	2.90	1.05	HE
8	Quarrels among family members over landed property results in students' low interest in school work.	2.90	1.05	2.94	1.05	2.92	1.05	HE
9	Community protests against exploitation of natural resources obstruct school activities and programs.	2.90	1.05	2.94	1.05	2.92	1.05	HE
Grand mean		2.91	1.04	2.87	1.06	2.91	1.05	

Source: Field study 2021

Table 3 from the result it can be observed that the mean scores and standard deviation of the respondents' male and female teachers on all items is above the minimum decision mean of 2.50 for high extent. On the whole the grand mean of 2.91 and 2.87 for male and female, it could therefore, be concluded that location of natural resources influences the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States.

Research Question 3

What is the extent to which farm land disputes influence the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States?

Table 4: Mean Ratings on the Influence of Farm Land Dispute on Academic Performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State. N = 1000

		Male =(506)		Female =(494)		Aggregate		RKS
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
1	Disputes between individuals, groups and communities affect school activities	2.89	1.05	2.88	1.09	2.89	1.07	HE
2	Schools can be destroyed on account of the ownership of the land where the school is located.	2.92	1.04	2.90	1.08	2.91	1.06	HE
3	Students can be hindered from going to school because of land disputes that results to inter-community fighting	2.92	1.02	2.89	1.06	2.91	1.04	HE
4	Land ownership disputes can hinder community and government from building schools	2.96	1.02	2.89	1.06	2.93	1.04	HE
5	Land disputes in some communities have resulted in transfer and the death of teachers	2.90	1.06	2.89	1.06	2.90	1.06	HE
6	Land disputes often result in non-acceptance of teachers postings to such areas.	2.90	1.02	2.89	1.08	2.90	1.05	HE
7	Pupils enrolment is badly affected as a result of communal crises	2.89	1.05	2.89	1.08	2.90	1.07	HE
Grand mean		2.91	1.04	2.89	1.07	2.90	1.06	HE

Field study 2021: Acceptable mean score (mean cut-off point) is 2.50 and above

Table 4. The item by item mean scores of the responses of male and female teachers show that disputes on land often occur between individuals, groups and communities and schools can be destroyed on account of the ownership of the land where the school is located with a mean rating of 2.92 and 2.90. From the results in the table 4.3, it can be observed that the mean scores of male and female teachers are higher than the minimum boundary of 2.50 for high extent, which implies that farm land disputes influence the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States to a high extent.

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the influence of chieftaincy disputes on academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States.

Table 5: z-test Analysis of Male and Female Teacher’s Responses on the Influence of Chieftaincy Disputes on Academic Performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Std Error	z-calc	z-crit	A	Remarks
Male Teachers	506	2.92	1.04	0.06	0.46	1.96	0.05	Not Significant
Female Teachers	494	2.89	1.07					

The table reveals a calculated z-value of 0.46 which is far below the critical value of 1.96. This computed or observed value is not significant at 0.05 level and therefore any significant difference may be attributed to sampling error; hence the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean response of male and female teachers on the influence of chieftaincy disputes on academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2:

Male and female teachers do not differ significantly on their mean ratings on the influence of crises over location of natural resources on academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States.

Table 6: z-test Analysis of Male and Female Teacher’s Responses on the Influence of Crises over Location of Natural Resources on Academic Performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Std Error	z-calc	z-crit	A	Remarks
Male Teachers	506	2.91	1.04	0.06	0.62	1.96	0.05	Not Significant
Female Teachers	494	2.87	1.06					

From the table, it could be observed that the computed value of z (0.62) is less than the critical value (1.96). Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, the null hypothesis is accepted at 0.05 level of significant. The implication is that the difference is not significant and any other observed difference can be due to chance.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the influence of farm land disputes on the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States.

Table 7: z-test Analysis of Male and Female Teacher’s Responses on the Influence of Farm Land Dispute on Academic Performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Std Error	z-calc	z-crit	A	Remarks
Male Teachers	506	2.91	1.04	0.06	0.31	1.96	0.05	Not significant
Female Teachers	494	2.89	1.07					

The result of the z-test analysis above shows that the calculated value of t is less than the table value that is {z calc (0.31) < z cri (1.96)}. Since the calculated z-value is less than tabulated value, it implies that the computed value is not significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean male and female teachers on the influence of farm land disputes on the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State is accepted.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result in table 2 shows that the respondents did agree that chieftaincy disputes have influence on academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students to a high extent. The findings of this study are in line with the finding of Ray & Eizlini (2011) who found that chiefs played active roles in the colonial administration to the envy of the educated elites. They performed functions such as tax collection and administration of customary laws. At present, the institution has been integrated into the State as an administrative extension, though this role is fraught with ambiguity due to the absence of any constitutional role assigned chieftaincy in the 1979, 1993, and 1999 constitutions. In the same vein, Ray & Eizlini (2011) opined that occupation of the stool of the His Royal Highness is hereditary and candidacy for the position is limited to a specified list of notables from those families who have the right

to the throne (these are the Ado and Amakiri families in Okrika and Buguma respectively) and are elected solely by those from the royal families. The chiefs are the recognized heads of the larger extended families that trace their origin to a common ancestor, thus only direct descendants of a given lineage can aspire to the stool of the compound chief. In all cases, access to the throne can be either patrilineal or matrilineal however, nobility in history or significant achievement mostly measured in terms of wealth warrants either creation of additional chieftaincy stools or conferment of honorary chieftaincy titles.

The findings in table 3 show that the respondents accepted that to a high extent, crises over location of natural resources influenced academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers State. However, the effect may be at variance from one location to another. The findings of this study are in agreement with the findings of Hellstrom (2003), who agreed in conflict literature that natural resources conflicts are unavoidable, particularly because stakeholders have different competing interests, perceptions and ideas about their use and management. Disputes or crises over location of natural resources – such as land, fresh water, minerals or fishing rights - are ever present, common and pervasive. When resolved peacefully, as is most often the case, such disagreements are an essential part of progress and development. In the same vein, UNEP (2015) found that resources frequently represent an important source of income and power; land, in particular, is essential to the livelihoods of millions of people but when poorly managed, distributed or controlled in an unfair or unequal manner, natural resources can also be a major driver of conflict or instability.

The findings in table 4 revealed that the respondents also agreed that to a high extent farm land disputes influence the academic performance of Public Senior Secondary School Students in Rivers States. This is in consonance with the finding of Abegunde (2010) who opined that conflict interests among communities to secure territories, conserve socio-economic resources and carry out physical development activities and practice customs and traditions on land have given birth to untold crises over the ages. Dispute on land in recent years have done more havoc than good to the 21st century generation. Dispute on land often truncate the socio-economic and physical development of most urban and rural areas leaving the dwellers with economic hardship, poverty accentuation, health challenges, food scarcity, low standard of living, slow city and community growth among others. This was supported by Fischer (2013) who observed that land disputes often result in several deaths and severe injuries during conflict battles especially in situations where it is a communal dispute resulting to closure of schools thereby affecting the academic performance of students. In line with the study Dunmoye (2003) opined that the major causes of and disputes in communities and their adjoining villages relate to claims of long-time settlements on land, long-term enmity amongst families, scarcity of arable lands for farming among other factors.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it was concluded that disagreements also arise when these interests and needs are incompatible, or when the priorities of some user groups are not considered in policies, programmes and projects. Such conflicts of interest are an inevitable feature of all societies. In recent years, the scope and magnitude of natural resource conflicts have increased and intensified. These conflicts, if not addressed, can escalate into violence, cause environmental degradation, disrupt projects, and undermine livelihoods. Disputes on land often occur between individuals, groups and communities. Dispute on land in recent years have done more havoc than good to the 21st century generation. Dispute on land often truncate the socio-economic and physical development of most urban and rural areas leaving the dwellers with economic hardship, poverty accentuation, health challenges, food scarcity, low standard of living, slow city and community growth among others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Policies to reduce chieftaincy related crises be put in place, ascendancy into Kingship stool should be well defined so as to avert avoidable conflict when the incumbent is late

2. There should be effective consultations among individuals, families, and communities when it comes to land and sharing of resources in communities in order to avert farm land crises that will result in loss of lives and property.
3. Companies exploring natural resources in the communities should work out modalities of engaging youths in their areas of operations. Scholarship scheme and other corporate social programs should be introduced that will occupy young school leavers and encourage those willing to proceed for further studies.

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