

Exploring Research Findings on the Conflicts in Jos-Nigeria

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Abstract

The threats of violent conflict has become a global concern. Jos has experienced an inundation of sporadic violent conflicts from 2001 to date. The paper explores the assumption of Boal's Forum Theatre Technique in Forum Theatre as appropriate instrument of transformation and change. The paper adopted a case paper design to explore new ways of repositioning the practice of Forum Theatre. This paper involved Focus group discussion (FGD) groups, structure, semi structured interviews (SSIs), questionnaire administration, participation observation approach were employed to access forum theatre methodology as medium for change. Conflict transformation goes beyond the idea of conflict resolution. Violent conflict is referred to any attempt as positively changing the parties against conflict, in improving their relationship and addressing the underlying structural and systemic causes of the conflict. Findings revealed that the conflicts in Jos are struggle over political, social, economic, religious and ethnic, with great effects on residential, worship places, intergroup relationships leading in new trends of community polarities. This paper found out that peace building, public enlightenment, advocacies, addressing segregated settlement are possible solutions. The paper draws and concludes specific recommendation towards its transformation and change.

Introduction

This paper presents the research findings collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Semi Structured Interviews (SSIs), questionnaire. One hundred and ten questionnaires were distributed and one hundred were returned. The adjoining socio-cultural characteristics were described under the following: age, educational level, religion, ethnic group, residential status, employment status, violent cause and impact. The mean of age as shown in Table 4.1 was 38 years and implied that most of the respondents were still within the productive age bracket. The modal age bracket (29-38 years) reflected that majority of the respondents were active

participants in the conflict and fell within the bracket of the youth as described by African Youth Charter (15 – 35). This age bracket was similar to Ojo (2010) who described the involvement of the youth of this age range as a result of the increasing number of the unemployed youths who are ready to be recruited for criminal activities. Similarly, research has also shown that in crisis situation this age group is used to perpetrate violent acts by the bourgeoisie.

Interestingly, the paper collating the data at the level of drama performance used the Forum Theatre Technique of Augusto Boal (2000). Its ideological context is traced to Edwin Piscator (1893-1966) and Brecht (1949) among others. These scholars sought to create a proletarian drama as opposed to merely producing plays for a working class audience. It was Piscator's theatre techniques which suggested that the stage should supply images, slogans, statistics that would enable the audience to reach political decisions. The tenet of Piscator's epic theatre was to learn how to think rather than feel; moving above the steam rather than losing oneself in it (Piscator, 1966). Piscator's Epic theatre is a new direction given to the new modern dramatist and which placed the audience in control of decision making. It also gave the people a voice in the play process. Piscator was of the view that people could rise to the challenge in whatever situation they found themselves. In the same vein, Piscator's pioneering work, Epic Theatre, is now associated primarily with Bertolt Brecht (1964). The Epic Theatre began with the recognition that theatre was growing and moving beyond a simple personification of motive forces or subjecting characters to metaphysical powers against Aristotle's own definition of Epic Theatre. Brecht saw the social relations which created dramatic actions. In other words, social beings condition social thought (Brecht, 1964). Brecht described this kind of drama as:

A new awareness of selfhood, and people begin to look critically at the social situation in which they find themselves, often taking

initiatives in acting to transform the society that has denied them the opportunity of participation (Brecht, 1964, p. 25).

The tenet here is that man is an object of inquiry and in process which means that the society and its structural disadvantages are responsible for the kind of injustice and social inequalities experienced today. To consider man as fixed and inalterable is tragic. It is these contradictions and the ability to deal with them is what Brecht instructs. Brecht argues that artists should abandon the down stage and move to the community to change it. Similarly, Augusto Boal (1985) is one of the recent theorists of post modern theatre who provides skeptical, inquisitive, comic and optimistic theatre involving spectators and performance in search of community integrity (Boal, 2000). The tenets of this community approach is that the theatre depends so much on the people, their culture, the communities as a motivating factor to facilitate social change. The theoretical premise of this paper harmonizes the thoughts of Piscator (1966), Brecht(1964) and Boal's(2000) Forum Theatre techniques as a general guide. For Boal (2000), the technique is centred on empowering the communities to take active role in the theatre and society and provoking change and participation. The tenet here is; that theatre gives room for decision making and active involvement in handling of issues which gives the people the opportunity to be part of their problems and to find ways to resolve them by themselves.

a. Spectacle

The alienation effect attempts to combat emotional manipulation in the theatre replacing it with an entertainment or surprise jolt. This is a process where the audience could stop performance to suggest different actions for the actors, who would carry out the audience suggestions. The actors bridge the separation between them and the spectators. This was achieved in this paper. As Boal(2000) puts it:

Debate the conflicts of ideas, arguments, dialectives, and counter argument, all of these stimulates, arouses, enriches, and prepares the spectators the spectators for action in real life (Boal, 1992, p. 231)

b. Stage

In theatre the props, the settings and the stage lights can be manipulated on stage. The audience should never be allowed to confuse what they see on stage with reality, rather, the play must always be thought of as a comment on life. The forum theorist insisted that the stage should always be recognized as a stage and the actors as actors. This technique is today co-opted into the contemporary theatre and film. The tenet here is to allow the audience look at their situation to acquire knowledge of the stage which drives the spectator to action. This was seen and reflected in their choices of venues for all their activities as displayed in all performances.

c. Scenery:

This is to create illusion. Forum theorists left bare a montage of fragmentation, contrast, consolidation and interruptions. Roger (1961) addresses epic to its production that each scene, each section must be perfected and played as rigorously and with as much discipline as if it were a short story complete in itself Willett (1964). This means that one could act as if it is the conclusion of the play avoiding getting into character to achieve the imperfection of the well-made play. The tenet here is that improvisation acts as a major technique of play making which gives easy flow in creating stories.

The weakness of this theory is that the forms and styles are known but the sense of ownership is absent and in the long run, the programme ends up in chaos. It sometimes becomes a medium of

propaganda which lacks participation. The strength of this theory lies in the fact that it gives a performative art, the freedom of using simple language that is acceptable and common to their cultural forms which are indigenous to them as a motivating factor to facilitate social change.

Forum techniques were relevant to this paper because of the decline of its artifacts and philosophical tenets of the past that is old and in decline. While Boal's forum theatre form the technique that was employed in the paper through performance that demystify, deconstruct and interrogate the conventional theatre. This forum technique allowed participation as a medium for transformational change and conscientization. Change is achieved from the genre of performances as demonstrated the paper, which raise expectations in the audience according to how are presented. All the texts for performances had emerged from the stories which all the groups had collected from the communities. David (1989) describes this as organizing human experiences.

Forum theatre techniques were used as theoretical framework of this paper. Forum theatre has its challenges and limitations which were noted critically. Questions are raised such as: how do you work into the community? Where and what is the significance of performances which took place in such venues? Do the people you are presenting these plays to understand the politics of that something new? What is the complexity of the hegemony? As a researcher, do you understand the new method? Being aware of selfhood and total control of their own decision, what is the complexity of the hegemony which is seen in constant interference by the dominant ruling class as a contributory factor of the recurring violent conflict? Has it been successful? The idea here is that the new method must be studied which is the TFD methodology.

Space:

This is dependent on ideological space which was interpreted and analyzed such as market square, chief's palace, town halls and were identified and defined within the context of this paper.

Analysis of language:

Communicative mode was also addressed. How many tribes are involved? How was communication conveyed in all the theatre activities conducted with the history and relationship within the area of paper? Why the use of specific language? To achieve relevant answers to these questions, deconstruction of analysis was done.

THEORETICAL EXPOSITION**Cultural positions:**

What consists of culture in this paper? What are issues related to culture? How does culture transit between societies which is not static? What are the emerging cultures? What are the live process relationships? Residual, emergent and the dominant factors were analyzed and addressed in order to understand the space and the performances.

The theoretical starting point was with Marx who stated: "in capitalist formations, above all, literature belongs at once, to 'base' and super structure; figures at once within material reproduction and ideological formation" (Marx, 1969, p. 41). The analytical implication of the statement is that existing history is the history of class struggle. It explains further that the dominant ideas in every epoch are ideas of the ruling classes. This in itself is highlighted in the transformative peaceful resolutions in this research. The idea here is that in every mode of

production, there is erection and inter-lacing of certain structure, economy, politics, social and cultural structures, through which classes have emerged dominant, maintain their power and control. This in itself is contentious and discussed in the paper.

Table 4.1: Summary of demographic profile of respondents

Age of Respondents

AGE BRACKET	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
19-28	23	23
29-38	29	29
39-48	27	27
49-58	21	21
Minimum	19	
Mean	38	
Maximum	58	

Source: Field Survey, 2015

4.1.1 Educational Level of Respondents

Data on educational level in Table 4.2 points to the fact that most of the respondents had obtained tertiary education and accounted for 49% of the sampled. The implication of this high proportion was that the sample was dominated by the literate class. However, 28% had informal education while 17% possessed secondary school certificates and 6% had primary school certificates. This added up to 51% who were on standby for either employment or further educational training. With rising unemployment, this trend exposes many of these youths to all forms of temptations. This was captured in FGD responses by NOA members who argued that “a

lot of our youths were jobless after they finished from school, and were so vulnerable to so many things.”

Our observation and experience of our living in Jos for more than thirty years has confirmed the low rate of employment opportunities and in fact most of the people survive on menial jobs throughout their lives. It is also observed that very few who enjoy employment opportunities were linked through ethnic or religious affiliations. This was revealed by a religious leader (Imam) during SSI that: “religious and ethnic cleavages were where they got immediate sympathy that was why most of the conflicts ended up as religious conflicts. It was like when our members’ gained, it was our gain; when he/she loses, it is our loss.” Therefore, economic factor is entrenched in the jobs and violent conflict, because of the issues of employment and competition over scarce resources and means of production, inequality and unbalanced power sharing as well as greed.

Table 4.2: Educational Level of Respondents

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	6	6
Secondary	17	17
Third level	49	49
Others	28	28

Source: Field Survey, 2015

4.1.2 Religious Factor in the violent conflicts

From the respondents, 70% of them were Christians while 27% were Muslims. However, 3% of the respondents belonged to traditional religions. Some members of FGDs with Plateau youths (Sabon barki) were emphatic about their feelings: “We do not see any factor as the cause of violent conflict in Jos other than religion. This is because when the violence started, it was only places of worship that were under attack and no record of any political party office was attacked. It is just religious fanaticism that is in the heart of the conflict.”

In the same manner, an Imam, a religious leader at Angwan Rogo claimed that:

the Christians on the Plateau do not want Islam as a religion to be in this State. They are working very hard to see that Islam is wiped out of the State and that is why the conflict is always happening.

Both religions are blaming each other for the conflict. However, the majority were of the opinion that religion is merely been used and could not have been a major casual factor to the violent conflict in Jos, but is rather seen as multi-dimensional. In all the six FGDs and 17% of the respondents in Table 4.3, there was an agreement that religious consciousness had been developed for purposes of having nothing to do with the propagation of the faith. This is was line with what Brahmeshanenda and Math (undated), and Boer (2000) opined that religion has been one of the most potent forces of unity and integration but unfortunately also of conflict and disintegration. It was also captured in one of the reports from the FGD with JDPC, Jos by the following words: “It is a pity that religious awareness is mostly associated with different aims other than evangelization. People portray themselves as good Christians or Muslims when they want some benefits from the followers especially the politicians”.

Furthermore, according to some of the displaced respondents, it was easy to manipulate religion because it had lost its place and its true worth was obscure. A displaced respondent at Tudun - Wada said that: religion has lost its place; religion that is supposed to be a binding force, something noble, something that was cherished, acceptable, loved, appreciated whether it was your own religion or another person's religion, both religions had lost their places."From the evidence presented so far, it seemed clear that religion was used as a source of mobilization.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Respondents according to Religious Affiliation

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Islam	27	27
Christianity	70	70
African Religions	3	3

Source: Field Survey, 2015

4.1.3 Causes of Violence in the Paper Area

In Table 4.4 the distribution of respondents' opinions on the causes of violence in Jos was shown and apparently that the conflict was multifaceted. It was caused by the combined effect of political, religious, ethnic and economic factors.

In identifying the cause of violent conflict in Jos, no single factor was said to be responsible for the conflict in Jos. The finding in Table 4.4, below, recorded that the causes were disaggregated into 17% religion, 18% ethnicity, 20% politics, 2% economy and 53% all of the combined factors. It had been indicated that these causes were hydra-headed with considerable percentage around the issues mentioned below:

Table 4.4: Causes of Violence in the Paper Area

Causes	Frequency*	Percentage
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Religion	17	17
Ethnicity	18	18
Politics	20	20
Economy	2	2
All	53	53

Source: Field Survey, 2015

*NB: *Multiple responses*

4.1.4 Political Factor in the violent conflict

Political factor was also one of the leading causes of violent conflict in Jos. About 20% of the respondents indicated politics as one of the leading factors to the conflict. Of these respondents, 70% were Christians, 27% Muslims and 3% African traditional religions. In a response from JDPC members, it was indicated that almost all the conflicts in Jos, were associated with struggles for political control. This statement was in line with one by Ngoma-Ruth (1970) and another one by Falola (1998) to the effect that states that political control in Nigeria meant power and, by implication, access to resources, Struggles for political positions and political representation were done along ethnic or religious and sometimes regional differences.

A respondent, a religious leader in SSI at Tudun Wada, claimed that all the conflicts in Jos were associated with struggles for political control of Jos North and the state itself. This weak state structure in Nigeria political life has produced politics that makes the violence a prime means of political action (Metumara, 2010).

This is reiterated by a religious leader in Angwan Rogo during an interview who pointed out:

The 2008 violent conflict came after local government elections. So politicians could have a hand in this. Their followers who believe rightly or wrongly those they have been cheated and have not been given what duly belong to them, and that would want to foment trouble (Metumara, 2010, p. 92).

In a response from FGD by University of Jos Theatre Group members, it was indicated that almost all the conflicts in Jos were associated with struggles for political control. This group indicated: “the 1994 violent conflict was because of the appointment with political office in the state; 2001 was also appointment into a federal office in the state and the 2008 was after the conduct of local government elections.” Another respondent in SSI in NPSS claimed that politicians used the jobless to cause confusion. He further said that the problem all started at the collation centre of the elections results at Gada Biyu when ANPP felt that they were not treated fairly and insinuated that the result was rigged by PDP. This captures some of the feelings of the 20% respondents who indicated, through questionnaires, that politics is the main reason for the recurrent violent inter-religious conflicts in Jos.

Another diversion of the political factor as a cause of the violent conflicts in Northern Jos could be traced to historical antecedent. Based on these historical antecedents, a lot of minority groups were struggling to resist domination by the Hausa-Fulani. In response to JDPC members, it was indicated that the indigenous Afizere, Anaguta and Berom feared that if the Hausa-Fulani were given any opportunity in Jos, they would dominate every aspect of the state, be it political or religious. This rift placed the government on a tight rope in the sense that any action was always interpreted to mean favouring one group over the other. For instance, during an SSI, a community leader at Angwan Rogo who was displaced during the 2008 violent conflicts claimed that “the creation of Jos North LGA was biased. I feel that the removal of all the indigenous

communities from the LGA was meant to give the Hausa-Fulani helping hand in the LGA”. This was also reiterated by some religious leader: “the way Jos South and Jos East were carved out of Jos was deliberately done to push out the Berom to Jos South and the Afizere to Jos East leaving Jos North to the Hausa-Fulani.” Based on these findings, politics was one of the leading factors causing recurrent violence in Jos since the struggles for political control have been a perennial problem from the time of the rise of the Hausa - Fulani to date.

4.1.5 The Economic Factor in the violent conflict

Another leading causal factor to the violent conflicts in Jos was the issue of the economic control and its associated inequality element in the distribution of the available resources. Although only 3% of the respondents indicated that this is a leading causal factor to the Jos conflict, the intensity of the struggle for land for agriculture in the face of climate change (for example. Desert encroachment) in Jos North had created a rift. The argument about the connections between climate change and conflict boils down to the one about resource scarcity and competition over means to sustain livelihoods. Dunmoye (2003) explains that competition between haves and have-nots will intensify and wars will be fought over dwindling sources of food. Some areas could well become net beneficiaries of climate shifts, even as absolute availability of the resources declines, but will only exacerbate global and intrastate inequalities and produce further friction. It was also observed that the land boundaries by NOA (2002) with a particular reference to the middle belt zone were emphasised by Dunmoye (2003):

A major factor of communal conflict in the zone is land boundary disputes. This shows that the land is becoming a very scarce factor of production either due to population pressure, land alienation or concentration of land in few hands (Dunmoye, 2003, p. 88) as follows:

This problem was linked to unbalanced power sharing and inequality along with religious and tribal sentiments. For instance NIPSS participants in a SSI claimed that it was only one section of the population that was in charge of all the resources. The winners had it all with no considerations whatsoever for others. It seemed that those who had economic control, struggled to protect their positions while those who were not in such positions, struggled to get involved leading to reactions and counteractions. This displaced respondent at Jos North LGC in an SSI said: “the reactions and counteractions are all resulting from struggle to get economic control and to protect positions already acquired.”

4.1.6 Ethnic Identity in the Jos Crisis

Another leading factor to recurrent violent inter-religious conflicts in Jos was identified as ethnic identity with its associate problems of domination and marginalization. Findings revealed that 18% of the respondents indicated that ethnicity was a casual factor to the Jos conflicts. Most of these respondents lamented about the place of ethnocentrism. A community leader in an SSI observed:

It seems we are heading towards a state –where most of your – ethnic identity, qualifications are secondary when it comes to employment, admission into higher institutions of learning and even elections or appointment into executive offices, where your ethnic identity stands is far more important; the certificate of “belongingness” is your qualification.

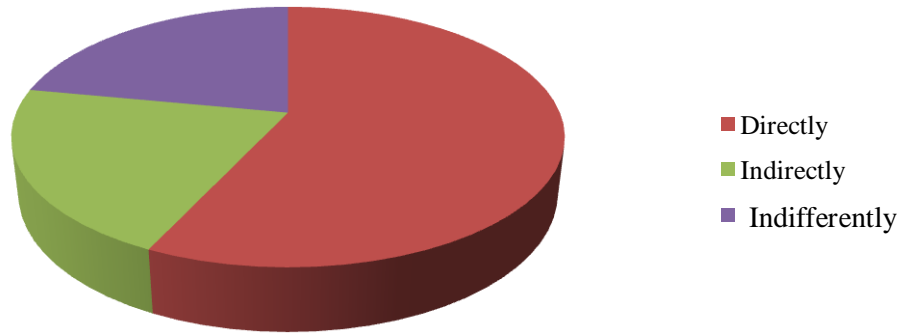
This was further echoed by a religious leader who stated:

“the hi-tech, ethnic chauvinism done today is more than the primitive age “public offices are becoming ethnic enclaves where office holders surround themselves with their ethnic people and the use of their dialects in official transactions, dominate discussions in public places”. The findings indicated that ethnicity was mostly held within religious cleavages in Jos. This was also

echoed by Mc Garvey (2009), in that the majority of the non-Muslim ethnic groups in the North were Christians, whereas the Muslims were usually Hausa-Fulani. The differentiation is the fact that there is no difference between religious and ethnic allegiance. Inter-ethnic problems usually ended up being inter-religious ones in the sense that whenever there was a quarrel between a non-Hausa and a Hausa, both looked to their religion for support. What may have began as a tribal misunderstanding ended up with a as religious dimension (McGarvey, 2009).

The findings indicated that ethnicity is mostly tied to religious cleavages in Jos. It looks coincidentally surprising that the 20% Hausa/Fulani, from the responses, were all Muslims while the Afizere, Anaguta, Berom and others constituted the Christian majority. The problem of indigene-settlers dichotomy came out very strongly in all the various segments of the data findings. The FGDs, questionnaire and SSIs voiced out this issue. The JDPC group in a FGD claimed: “It all started when Frank Taddi was elected the Chairman of Jos North LGA in 1999. He declared that any person in Jos who was not Afizere, Anaguta or Berom was not an indigene of Jos and should not be entitled to the certificate of origin because they were settlers.” Therefore, ethnic identity was a factor that pitches groups against each other in the conflicts in Jos as shown in Figure 4.1 below

Figure 4.1 : Distribution of Respondents by Ethnic Groupings



Conclusion

This paper was aimed at exploring the techniques of Boal's forum theatre in bringing about transformation and change in Jos and how it had affected residential pattern among the people.

It sought to review and analyse this reality in the light of existing theories and literature on Forum theatre techniques and how it's used for conscientization, transformation and change.

It also analyzed how the violent conflict in Jos has affected residential relationships and pattern of residency. It shows that there is urgent need on possible ways in addressing the residential patterns and people in bridging peace.

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