

EFFECT OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CRISES ON THE PEOPLE OF SOUTHERN KADUNA IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

Samaila Yakubu

Pauline Mark Lere

Jordan Samson Rengshwat, PhD

ABSTRACT

Ethno-religious crises have ravaged Southern Kaduna since 1987. While many have written on the crises that took place between 1980 and 2010, not much is known about the effects of the persistent crises in the recent past. Thus, the study aims at unravelling the contemporary effects of the ethno-religious crises on the people in the study area. The study uses the qualitative method of research, particularly historical method, which includes the use of oral interviews. The findings reveal that crises are threat to human security. Crises are often characterised by intense violence which result to injuries, large scale displacement of its victims, destruction of lives and property of individuals and corporate organisations. Running through the reasons behind these incessant fracas, one finds ethno-religious consciousness, religious intolerance, over concentration of governance, corruption, exploitative tendencies of some government officials, perceived injustice, scarcity of natural resources, poor leadership, choice of violence as solutions, climatic changes, moral banditry, poor response to early warning signals, greed and grievance. The study also finds that these recurring ethno-religious crises in the area have affected the economic progress and peaceful coexistence of the people. The paper recommends ways the crises can be curbed in order to pave way for peace and sustainable development.

KEYWORDS: Contemporary Times, Effect, Ethno-Religious Crises, Peaceful Coexistence, Southern Kaduna

INTRODUCTION

This paper looks at the story of ethno-religious crises in Southern Kaduna, with particular emphasis on how the crises affect the people of the study area in contemporary times. Many works exist on the Kaduna crises of the 1980s and 1990s. Some of these works include: T. Falola's *The Crisis of Religious, Political and Secular Ideologies* (1998); Rotgak Gofwen's *Religious Conflicts in Northern Nigeria and Nation-Building: The Throes of Two Decades 1980-2000* (2004); Abdul Shafa's *Crises and Conflicts in Nigeria: A Quest for Peaceful Co-existence* (2002); and Yusufu Turaki's *Historical Roots of Ethno-Religious Crises and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria* (2010). Others like Hussaini

Abdu (2010), Sunday Bobai Agang (2011) and Nokshuwan Godfrey Jidauna (2012), tell the story of the incessant crises in Kaduna up to 2010.

This particular paper focuses more on more recent happenings, particularly from 2010 to 2022. The extant works that fall under this period (2010-2022) include the works of Dogara J. Gwamna (*Religion and Politics in Nigeria: Religious Conflicts and Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria* – 2014), Mark Lipdo (*Killings in North and Central Nigeria: A Threat to Ethno-Religious Freedom and Democracy* – 2015) and Gideon Pwakim (*The Persistence of Religious Violence in Northern Nigeria and the Search for Peaceful Co-Existence: A Theological Perspective* – 2020). Although these works tell the story of more recent happenings, they did not capture the conversations related to the effects of the crises on the citizenry in contemporary times. Therefore, the objectives of this paper are to: investigate the causes of the incessant crises; examine the responses made by relevant stakeholders; unveil the effects of such crises on the people; and make recommendations on the way forward for peaceful coexistence. Thus, the stories of how each crisis begun and unfolded to its denouement are not given in details because such stories could be found in some of the works mentioned above.

The qualitative research design is employed for the study, with particular attention given to oral evidence. Many people were interviewed orally. To ensure compliance with the demands of ethical considerations, the interviewees' permissions were sought to allow the writers of the paper to cite the information they gave and also mention or cite their names as references.

PRE-2010 SOUTHERN KADUNA CRISES

Since the late 1980s peace has eluded Southern Kaduna people for decades. Right up to the recent past, the area is known for incessant ethno-religious crises. Most prominent of these conflicts in the area was the 1987 Kafanchan religious crisis or riot that began at the Kaduna State College of Education Kafanchan. It was said to have begun “when the Muslim Student Society attacked Christian Students of the College of Education because of a theological disagreement. This spread to Zaria, Kaduna and other parts of the state; where churches were burnt, people killed, and property destroyed (Bonnat 1, Suberu 4). Other similarly destructive conflicts are the February and May 1992 crises in Zango Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State. This began as an ethnic conflict between Kataf people and the Hausa Muslim residents of Zango in relation to the relocation of the Zango Market, but quickly turned to religious crisis that spread to other parts of the state; and also led to wanton destruction of lives and property.

The people of Southern Kaduna have experienced different kinds of crises, especially ones that are ethno-religious in nature. The inhabitants of Kafanchan in particular may never forget the 1999 fight for position of the head of Jama'a emirate which was political, but turned to ethno-religious riot. In 2000 sharia riots engulfed the whole of

Kaduna including the Southern parts of Kaduna State where it was more pronounced. So many people, especially Southern Kaduna Christian indigenes, lost their lives and property worth billions of Naira.

2010 TO 2022 SOUTHERN KADUNA CRISES

The worst of all these prominent crises situations in Southern Kaduna was the 2011 post-election violence, a political situation turned religious, that nearly brought Southern Kaduna (Kafanchan and Zonkwa in particular) to a total standstill. This happened as a result of incendiary comments and incitement by political leaders during the 2011 Presidential elections (Bonnat 2).

Other series of attacks on the Southern Kaduna communities since 2011 have been the chain of the aftermath of the post-presidential election crises. The Fulani herdsmen resorted to guerrilla attacks on the people in villages in the night without reservation especially between 2016 and 2017. There is no part or axis of the area that has not been inflicted with injuries and deaths from 2011 to 2020 (Shiklam 1). The series of attacks in Southern Kaduna have led to mass displacement of the indigenes of the area and their lands taken over by the attackers who are Fulani herders. People are even afraid to go to their farms to till the land for food and economic purposes as usual, and this has affected the area economically.

The spate of killings and destruction of lives and property in Southern Kaduna has given birth to mass graves littered in various Local Government Areas of Southern Kaduna as observed by the late Bagobiri, the Catholic Bishop of Kafanchan Diocese in the State (12). It was common sight to see hundreds of kiths and kins laid to rest in mass graves. These spates of killings in Southern Kaduna have expanded so rampantly and their re-occurrence has been so incessant that managing or controlling them has become difficult. It is noted that poor response to early warnings or total inaction has led to this situation of incessant attacks or conflicts. Mohammed Adamu, writing in 2017, observed that:

Fire can only be extinguished when it is a flickering flame. It could then be blown out orally or quenched by a flutter of a hand. But if ignored or abandoned it will rapidly developed into a ravaging blaze, consuming everything in its destructive frenzy. This is an analogy to what obtains today in Southern Kaduna which has recently been allowed by official neglect to be predisposed to several bouts of crises that rendered it a theatre of unrest and bickering (1).

There had been several responses from federal, state and local governments and other stakeholders in Nigeria and Southern Kaduna in particular; in an effort to manage such conflicts and also prevent same from re-occurrence. These efforts have either only play down the conditions in Southern Kaduna or even worsened the situation. Some of the white papers, reports and recommendations by various committees and commissions of inquiries to find solution to violent conflicts in Southern Kaduna have either not been

brought to public notice or kept aside as a result of inaction by those who constituted these panels. Many arrests have been made and some people were tried but no positive results are forthcoming. This is so because some people were arrested and tried objectively while others were arrested and tried with tint of bias. Kukah tells the story of the trial of Major General Zamani Lekwot and others and how bias the trial was (214–229).

Apart from the peace efforts of local, state and federal governments, the local government chapters of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Southern Kaduna People Union (SOKAPU) and Southern Kaduna Muslim Development Association (SOKAMUDA) have made several efforts in terms of dialogues and peace declarations to no avail. Most times, the venue for such dialogues and peace declarations was Kafanchan, the centre of Southern Kaduna. Dignitaries like the former Vice President of Nigeria, Prof. Osinbajo, have warned that the Southern Kaduna crises could have great consequences for the entire nation if not checked. In the words of Osinbajo (quoted in Bagobiri): “Southern Kaduna Crisis is capable of consuming all of us in this nation...if not halted” (Bagobiri 210). General Abdulsalami, a former Nigerian Head of State also observes that if the crisis is “unchecked the Southern Kaduna crises could engulf the entire country” (Punch 2). Despite the efforts made by various stakeholders, peace in Southern Kaduna has continued to remain an illusion as earlier mentioned.

HOW THE SOUTHERN KADUNA CRISES AFFECT PEOPLE’S LIVES

This section discusses the effects of the Southern Kaduna crises on every aspect of the lives of the people of Southern Kaduna.

Economic Effects

The economic aspect of lives of the people of Southern Kaduna has been grossly affected by the series of incessant crises that have occurred in the study area. The number of human lives that have been lost since 2010 in the Southern Kaduna crises is unprecedented. Some of those who were killed were bread winners and pillars of their various families, hence their death have caused economic setbacks to their families, their immediate communities, the Southern Kaduna community and by extension Kaduna State.

Some of the people who lost their lives were business moguls and commercial farmers; as such the gap their demise has created would take a long time to be filled. These killings, especially in rural areas, affected the level of agricultural labour and productivity in Southern Kaduna. Those who are serious investors and farmers have either been killed or are afraid to enter their farms for fear of being killed. Those who have been wounded by the assailants cannot continue with their normal farm work and other businesses. As such, it has drawn the Southern Kaduna people backward in terms of economic progress. It is in this light that Uroko noted that:

Southern Kaduna has for long been retarded from achieving her great potentials and thus contributing her quota to the national growth and development... The survival and sponsorship of these killings of both Christians and Muslims have not yielded any gains to both sides (7, 34).

The crisis situation has really caused a serious setback to the Southern Kaduna people in terms of economic progress. Apart from the human resources that were destroyed, farmlands and farm products such as those that were already harvested and stored were looted or destroyed by the assailants. This is also observed by Uroko in the following words:

Many hectares of farmlands, as well as its products have been destroyed. Food produce, such as yam and tomatoes were devastated as a result of the crises. The means of livelihood of the indigenes of Southern Kaduna have been destroyed--- It has also led to unemployment (8, 35).

Some people who were interviewed in some of the affected villages corroborated the above statements made by Uroko. Since most of these attacks are carried out during the rainy seasons, most farmlands are either destroyed or looted. Some people as earlier stated even find it difficult to enter their farms, and most of them hold to farming as their only occupation. Since they cannot go to their farms again, it means they have lost their jobs, hence they have become unemployed.

One of the research participants, Jeremiah Ajayi, stated that the activities of the Fulani herdsmen have affected the production of food in the area. People cannot freely enter their farms to till the ground to boost agricultural production in Southern Kaduna. He said; even if the lands are tilled Fulani herdsmen encroach on such farms. This has led to scarcity of food and high cost of feeding in Southern Kaduna in particular. He said, sometimes, even when the farm produce are ready for harvest, farmers are not allowed to harvest their farms through death threats from the herders in the forest. "They have either gunned down or machetted a large number of farmers who had either gone to check their farms or harvest them and the farmers dare not say any word in complain no matter what happens" (09/06/2021).

These words from Ajayi were repeated by some other respondents like *Ardo* Ambam (who double as *Ardo* (Chief) Fulani in Zikpak Fantswam Chieftdom) and Mallam Abubakar Ibrahim. Abubakar Ibrahim noted that: "...it is difficult to get enough food to eat, because of the crises in Southern Kaduna" (10/06/2021). The District Head of Zikpak Fada, Chief Saidu Umaru, also reiterated that "the crises have caused a lot of difficulties in farming." He blamed the Fulani herders' incessant attacks for the difficulties faced by farmers in the rural areas (10/06/2022). Besides the killing of people and the destruction of farmlands and farm produce, both Muslims and Christians in Southern Kaduna have lost billions of Naira as a result of the burning or looting of their houses, shops, business environments, vehicles and goods by the assailants. It is in this light that Yahaya, on the Southern Kaduna ethno-religious crises, noted that many of such crises:

...have left millions if not billions of Naira lost to the conflicts. Houses, shops and goods have been burnt down as well as the wanton destruction of farmlands and farm produce. Ethno-religious crises discourage growth in the sense of industrialization. This is because no business person or industrialist wants to invest where the safety of their investment is not guaranteed (Quoted in Ogbaki 12).

This position by Yahaya in Ogbaki is supported by Chukuma and Ateli in Gever and Essien, especially in relation to the herders-farmers crisis. They observe that:

The economic impact can be seen in terms of losses associated with destruction of homes farmlands, community assets and household properties. When the conflicts occur during the farming season, [there is] the tendency for most farmers to avoid going to their farms for fear of being attacked. The implication of this is the possibility of low agricultural productivity in the following harvest season. On the other hand, it has also led to the killing of cows from the Fulani herd. All these damage translate into real and quantifiable material losses (5).

This is also affirmed by some respondents interviewed in the field in relation to the impact of these crises on the people of Southern Kaduna. The destitution of the Southern Kaduna communities as a result of these crises speaks volumes of what the people are passing through. The District Head of Kafanchan Kewaye Chief Saidu Umaru, like his subordinate Ardo Abubakar Ibrahim stated that the situation in the area has led to the backwardness of the people on the economical, social and political fronts (Interview 10/06/2022).

Ofuoku and Isife in the same light attribute the poor economic condition of the Southern Kaduna people to the negative impact of the incessant crises in the area. They noted that:

[There is] reduction in output and income of crop farmers as a result of the destruction of crops by cattle and indiscriminate bush burning. Most farmers lost part or the whole of their crops. These meant reduced yield which translated into low income on the part of the farmers who take farming as a major occupation. This discourages the farmers and rural/agricultural development (53).

When there is reduced yield from farms because of their being destroyed or farmers being discouraged from investing their energy and resources on their farms, it also means the fall of the Gross Domestic Product of the area and the nation at large. Salihu notes that conflicts almost always affect the rate of growth of a country's economy as a result of the negative impacts on physical and human capital as well as disrupted markets and reduced trust (23). This in essence is the case in Southern Kaduna. Whenever there are crises market activities are disrupted or stalled entirely as were obvious in the case of the 1987 Kafanchan crisis, 1992 Zangon Kataf crisis, the 2011 post-presidential election crisis, and the series of herders-farmers clashes. Crises have reduced market attendance in the area. Some markets even find it difficult to operate because of fear of the unknown. Presently the Zangon Kataf market, the Kajuru markets, among others can

only be operated and attended with caution because of the mistrust that now exists among the people. The Kafanchan market is yet to be reconstructed for full operation.

Social Effects

The ethno-religious crises in Southern Kaduna have had serious negative impacts on the people. Crises in the area have led to large scale displacement and forceful relocation of people to safer places within and outside Southern Kaduna. There are thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPS) in Southern Kaduna (Uroko 8 and 35). There are camps for IDPS in Zonkwa, Kafanchan, Kogum and other places. Most of these IDPS are integrated to some of their family members who live in major towns and safer villages in Southern Kaduna. The displaced Southern Kaduna indigenous farmers who are accommodated by their relations are going through many unhappy experiences. The feeding and catering for the social needs of the displaced, both in homes of relations and IDP camps, have been the trouble of the Southern Kaduna people. The indigenous Southern Kaduna people who are citizens of Nigeria have become stranded in their homeland and reduced to beggars who can no more cater for themselves because of the crises.

Some of these displaced persons have lost their husbands, wives or children, who probably were bread winners and pillars of their families; as such they cannot cater for themselves. Alawode stresses that: "women become widowed and children become orphaned and many others displaced, as such access to land for agricultural production is reduced, thereby leading to shortage in production and availability of food" (Salihu 23). This has made the living conditions of many people in Southern Kaduna unbearable day after day because the crises have not stopped. People are running for their dear lives every day in the area thereby abandoning their original abodes and belongings. Wives separated from husbands, children get missing and relations go separate ways for good, agreeing with what Nnoli said in regard to difficulties suffered by displaced persons. According to Nnoli:

During the course of leaving the theatres of violence internally displaced persons face various difficulties. Many of their problems stem from the spontaneous, hurried and unorganized nature of their departures. Consequently, their flight out of the conflicts zone is quite often chaotic. Wives are separated from husbands, children go missing, their husbands and the emigrant are forced to trek very long distances. In some cases, they do not even know what their destinations are before they leave their homes (in Gwamna 9).

Some respondents like Ajayi in Tudun Wada Kaninkon observed that the crises have also led to sour relationship between the indigenous people of Southern Kaduna and the Fulani herders in the area. There is no cordiality in their relationship as it were in the past (Ajayi interview). Shehu noted that there is a serious lack of trust between the Hausa-

Fulani Muslim herders and the people of Southern Kaduna who are predominantly farmers (359).

Ajayi reiterated that the crises have also brought about setback in the educational pursuit of both farmers and herders in the area as schools in the affected areas are interrupted because of insecurity. The academic calendars of schools were adjusted by state government on several occasions in South Kaduna in particular and Kaduna state in general because of insecurity. Some schools (especially the tertiary institutions) were closed down in Southern Kaduna in the past due to the problem of conflicts and attacks by herders or bandits (Uroko 8, 35).

Beside the closure of schools by the government, some schools have been deserted in ZangoKataf, Kaura, Kajuru and Chikun Local Government Areas by pupils and students because of fear of attacks. This was affirmed by many of the respondents interviewed in these areas. Those indigenes that have ran away from their villages to either IDP centres or to squat with their relations in neighbouring towns have also found it difficult to continue with their studies. In some cases, the pupils or students left school because their sponsors (parents or guardians) were attacked and killed; or seriously wounded; or out of business or farming due to the incessant crises, and therefore incapacitated. This state of affairs in the educational sector made Umana and others to note that:

The incessant spate of ethno-religious crises may lead to the shift of government attention to restore security at the expense of developing a key sector like education. This may lead to crisis in that sector and will cripple the educational development in that area (67).

The authors also reiterate that where such crises occurred the government often:

Impose[d] curfew and restrict movement to restore normalcy, peace, law and order. The resultant effect of this retrogressive phenomenon, is that people spent less time in school and may lead to some being dropped out of school and may perhaps venture into unproductive activities that can affect their future career development to become responsible citizens and future leaders (67).

This submission by Umana and others summarises the effects of the crises on education among the Southern Kaduna people.

In addition, a lot of people have become traumatised, particularly those who witnessed the killings of their relatives and the rampage caused on their properties (Suleiman 10). For instance, those who witnessed the 30th September 2021 attack at Madamai village where over 50 people were killed and many others maimed, with more than 10 dead from a single family were traumatised beyond description. Such crises in Southern Kaduna "have created an atmosphere of mental siege and terror among the populace in a way that threatens public peace and tranquillity (Chukwuma and Ateliin Gever and Essien 5).

As a result of the incessant crises in Southern Kaduna, many people have acquired weapons for self-defence. Some of these people who now have weapons are now using them to terrorise their immediate communities and the larger society (Suleiman 11). As such, the fear that is within Southern Kaduna now is not only that of enemies afar but enemies within who are more dangerous. Some of them have turned to social miscreants and criminals that intimidate their fellow Southern Kaduna indigenes with weapons they have acquired in the name of self-defence. The wanton killing of people in Southern Kaduna has also seriously affected its population. Uroko asserted that many elderly persons and children were killed. This means that the ideas which the young ones would have gotten from the older ones have been wiped out. In this way, there is a knowledge drain, especially with the deaths of teachers (9 and 36).

Political and Religious Effects

The Ethno-religious crises in Southern Kaduna have adversely affected the people politically. Nicholas Madaki Billy (Interview 10/06/2021) noted that the people of Southern Kaduna are politically frustrated because religion, ethnicity, threats and intimidations have now taken centre stage in Kaduna State politics. The marginalisation of the indigenous people of Southern Kaduna in Kaduna State politics is obvious. Most of the positions that used to go to the Southern Kaduna indigenous people are now lost to Muslims in the Northern part of the state or given to non-indigenous Muslims in the Southern part of the state. The position of the State Deputy Governor which used to go to Southern Kaduna Christians is now held by a Southern Kaduna Muslim (in what is currently known as 'Muslim-Muslim ticket'). The secretary to the State Government was usually a Southern Kaduna Christian, but now the position is held by a Hausa-Muslim. There are about thirteen (13) state commissioners in the state; the Southern Kaduna Christians have only two. Most of the agencies' Director-Generals and Executive Secretaries are either Hausa-Muslims or Southern Kaduna Muslims. Out of the 23 sole administrators appointed for the 23 Local Government Areas in the state, only two are Christians as at the time of writing this paper. These situations of gross marginalisation and political intolerance have caused more confusion hence more conflicts in the area of study. It is against this background that Ogbaki noted that:

The political future of Southern Kaduna depends on the level at which the two major religious components can tolerate each other. They must accept to live together and seek those things that will bring about the unity of the geopolitical area rather than look out for division variables (12).

The crises have also affected the religious life of the Southern Kaduna People. Worship centres and pastors are prime targets of attack and kidnapping by the herdsmen who are also known as bandits. Consequently, in most worship centres in the affected areas, Christians no longer attend church services because of fear of attack.

CURBING CRISES IN SOUTHERN KADUNA FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Having known the causes and effects of ethno-religious crises in Southern Kaduna in contemporary times, it is important to discuss the remedies. Some of these remedies include the following:

1. Friendship should be encouraged and education on tolerance, human rights and the principle of 'live and let others live' should be emphasised regularly. If there is cordiality among leaders of different faiths, proper orientation of adherents of various ethno-religious groups and other groups by their leaders, proper education of the people on issues of human rights and freedom of citizens, it will breed peaceful coexistence among the people of Southern Kaduna irrespective of ethnic and religious affiliation.
2. There should be more frequent interfaith and inter-communal dialogue at the grassroots level in different communities in Southern Kaduna. This dialogue should be guided by the leaders selected from the different faiths, especially the two major faiths (Islam and Christianity), in collaboration with the representatives of the government and specialists in the field of conflict management and peace building.
4. Truth should be encouraged and oppression and exploitation should be discouraged.
5. There should be quick response to early warning signs of crises by the government, security agencies and other stakeholders. This will indicate the genuineness of the willingness of government and other stakeholders to stop the incessant crises in Southern Kaduna.
6. The government should invest more money on security so that security should be provided without bias to all Southern Kaduna people against banditry.
7. There should be fair prosecution of culprits of ethno-religious crises in Southern Kaduna irrespective of social status, religious or ethnic identity.
8. There should be fair play on the political arena of the state irrespective of ethnicity and religion. The Southern Kaduna person should be seen as qualified to occupy the seat of the governor of Kaduna State, and any other political appointment irrespective of ethnicity and religion.
9. The government should create an atmosphere of trust among her subjects by not taking side with any group in a situation of crisis. If there is an attack on either a Christian community or a Muslim community in any part of the state, the government should come out and condemn it in strong terms, and workable measures should be taken to alleviate the suffering of the victims.

If these remedies are genuinely employed the incessant crises in Southern Kaduna will be checked, if not completely resolved. This will pave way for peaceful coexistence and sustainable development in Kaduna State.

CONCLUSION

The authors of this paper have focused on the story of ethno-religious crises in Southern Kaduna in the recent past. The causes of the crises are many and varied. The crises themselves are incessant. The wanton destruction of lives and property are unprecedented. The crises have affected contemporary Southern Kaduna people socially, economically, mentally and politically. It has also affected their religious lives. Recommendations were also made on how such crises could be prevented, managed and resolved for peaceful coexistence in order to pave way for sustainable development in Southern Kaduna.

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LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Respondent	Place Interviewed	Date	Age	Faith	Position in Society/Career
Badau, Adamu B.	Ungwa Musa	9/6/2022	54	Christian	Cleric
Billy, Nicholas M.	Zikpak Fada	10/6/2021	37	Christian	Youth Leader
Damishi, Benjamin	Bakinkogi Kaninkon	16/09/2021	43	Christian	Civil Servant
Dodo, Irimiya	Ungwa Musa	30/01/2022	43	Christian	Security
Ibrahim, Abubakar	Ambam	10/6/2021	59	Muslim	Chief
Ibrahim, Haruna	Kafanchan	9/6/2021	53	Muslim	Cleric
Madaki, Jeremiah	T/Wada Kaninkon	9/6/2021	52	Christian	Farmer
Markus, Mercy	UngwaYanshi	10/6/2021	45	Christian	Politician
Musa, Iliyasu	Kafanchan	25/01/2022	59	Muslim	Cleric
Umar, Saidu	Zikpak Fada	10/6/2021	58	Christian	Chief
Yaro, Danjuma	Kaura	30/01/2022	50	Christian	Security
Zaki, Musa G.	Ungwa Musa	30/01/2022	58	Christian	Security