

## **EFFECTS OF INTRA-COMMUNAL CONFLICT ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE ETULO PEOPLE IN BURUKU LGA OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study examined the effects of Intra-communal Conflict on Socio-economic Development in Etulo land. It examined the historical perspective of intra-communal conflict in Etulo land and looked at the causes of intra-communal conflict in the land since 2009. It also determined the level of awareness of the community on the effects of the intra-communal conflicts on socio-economic development of the community. The study used a sample size of 400 respondents drawn from the population of Etulo People. The President of Etulo Cultural and Development Community (ECDC) and the president of National Union of Etulo Students (NUES) were also interviewed. Descriptive statistics such as mean, frequencies and percentages presented in tables were used for result presentations and discussions. Univariate Analysis of Variance and Covariances were used to examine the effect of intra-communal conflict on socio-economic development in Etulo Land. The study found that intra-communal conflict has a significant effect on socio-economic development in Etulo Land measured by income per head, access to food and house ownership. However, when socio-economic development is measured by educational attainment, availability of banking services and access to healthcare, the effect of intra-communal conflict is not significant. The study concludes that intra-communal conflict greatly affects the socio-economic development of the community in Etulo Land. The study recommends, among other measures, that there should be a collective dialogue and agreement among all the principal actors in intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land so as to settle all unnecessary arguments that often give rise to intra-communal conflicts in Etulo Land.*

**Keywords:** *Etulo Land, Benue State, Socio-economic Development, Intra-communal Conflict*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Communal conflict is an expression of disagreement over the control of resources. Communal violence can then be seen as a resort to the use of lethal weapons as a means of resolving conflict between non-state identity groups in communities (Orinya, 2016). It is expressed in violent confrontations such as between villages, among ethnic groups in a town or the nation at large, between a village or ethnic group and the state, violence between a religious group and the state, or violence between different ethnic or religious groups within the ruling circle (Nnoli, 2003). Ali (2018) also noted that conflicts occur when two or more people engage in a struggle over values and claims to status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. It emerges whenever one party perceives that one or more goals or purposes or means of achieving a good or preference is being threatened or hindered by the activities of one or more parties. In conflict, parties perceive or treat each other

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as a stumbling block that results in frustrating the other in attaining a set of goals, or even furthering one's interest through their attitudes, behaviours or actions.

Inter-communal conflicts are conflicts between two or more communities; while intra-communal conflicts are conflicts between two or more groups within a particular community (Orinya, 2016). Globally, conflict has been considered an obstacle to progress, political stability, economic prosperity and overall socio-economic development of any society because of its destructive impact (Okoroafor, 2021). This therefore means that conflict must be timely averted or managed properly as failure to do so will reflect a determined action or struggle over a goal, which may be overt or subtle; manifest or imaginary.

Furthermore, communal conflict refers to violent conflict between non-state groups that are organized along a shared communal identity (Brosché, 2022). That is, social situations in which a minimum of two actors strive to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of scarce resources. The key actors involved can include villages or community members, ethnic groups, religious groups, or self-defense militias, each defined by a shared sense of identity. These actors are typically organized around cultural, social, or ideological commonalities that bind them together, whether it be tribal affiliations, religious beliefs, geographic proximity, or shared experiences of marginalization or threat. Their identity serves as both a unifying factor and a basis for collective action, enabling them to mobilize resources, assert influence, or defend their interests. This organization around identity often shapes their goals, strategies, and the dynamics of their interactions with other groups or external entities, underscoring the central role of identity in guiding their actions and defining their sense of purpose.

Research indicates that communal conflicts have profound and long-lasting impacts on various aspects of sustainable development, affecting both inter-group and intra-group levels. These effects are far-reaching, disrupting social cohesion, economic stability, and environmental sustainability (Women Environmental Programme, 2009; Akpenpuun, 2013; Orinya, 2016). Communal conflicts cause deaths, debilitating injuries, disease, distress and displacement; destroys jobs, physical and social capital, damages the environment, prevents educational attainment for generations and discourages investments. The number of indirect victims of communal conflicts are often much larger than the number of direct deaths. This therefore underscores the need for proper conflict analysis for the purpose of developing measures to resolve them.

Recent studies have established a direct connection between communal conflict and socio-economic development in different parts of the African continent. For instance, Oladimeji, Ayuba, and Ayodele, (2019) reported a reduction in agricultural output, loss of revenue through market closure, loss of revenue through non-collection of tax and reduction in the per-capita income as some of the direct economic effects of communal conflict. Oladimeji, et al (2019) also found that loss of life, lack of trust within the communities in conflict, increased unemployment, increase in nefarious activities by youths and even adults and loss of property were some of the social effects of communal conflict. Similar results were reported by Attah, Adalikwu and Ngele (2018); Akpenpuun (2013); and Orinya (2016). They maintained that these conflicts have been responsible for slow economic development or better still, economic setbacks in the regions where they occur and have been tied to the failure of the government to forge national integration and promote economic progress which in turn has led to mass poverty, unemployment, religious and class conflict.

Broadly, socio-economic development is a process that seeks to identify both the social and the economic needs within a community, and seek to create strategies that will address those needs in ways that are practical and in the best interests of the community over the long run. The

general idea is to find ways to improve the standard of living within the area while also making sure the local economy is healthy and capable of sustaining the population present in the area. Socio-economic development occurs in neighbourhoods, in metropolitan areas, sections of smaller cities and towns, and even in rural settings (Oladimeji, et al 2019). The discussion on development calls to mind many questions. One of the questions concerns why other communities are far more developed than others. This brings to mind issues like neglect by the government, colonialism, witchcraft and communal conflict. The question of communal conflict deserves special attention especially considering the fact that it brings about destruction of lives and properties.

The Etulo people of Benue State are a community of people that have shown capacity for independently increasing their ability to live a satisfactory life through cultural development, educational achievement and the ability for exploiting the resources of nature. But from 2009 till now, Adi-Etulo community of Buruku Local government of Benue State has been affected by intra-communal conflict. Consequently, this has affected the socio-economic development of Etulo Land. The Etulo people live in Buruku and Katsina-Ala Local Government Areas of Benue State. This study however focuses on the Etulo people of Buruku Local Government Area, who have Adi, as their main town. Thus, the work refers to them as “Etulo people”, “Adi Etulo” or “Etulo Land”, all meaning the same people.

In the face of intra-communal conflict, the community has witnessed loss of lives, population displacement, destruction of farms, and disruption of economic and social activities. Like any other intra-communal conflict, many of the residents have been forced to leave their homes, while schools, health clinics and other facilities in the community have been affected. In addition, the resultant internal displacement occasioned by the persistent intra-communal conflicts has not only made life miserable for those running for safety but has also generated livelihood crises for those that are left behind. The persistence of the conflict means that the population of the community is continuously being depleted, while the direct actors are no doubt exposed to great physical, social and economic costs. A causal observation revealed that the Adi-Etulo intra-communal conflict has affected development negatively at home and outside Etulo land. Relationships have broken down among Etulo nationalities both at home and outside. Many people cannot sit down together and share a meal as used to be the case before; let alone sharing developmental ideas and opportunities.

Globally, territorial disputes, armed conflict, ethnic and religious violence have come to represent the greatest challenges to peace, security, stability and socio-economic development. On the African continent in general and Nigeria in particular, these threats have been much more pronounced and indeed have increased in terms of the number of incidences of inter and intra communal conflicts, intensity and frequency in the last three decades (Ikejiaku, 2009). Ikejiaku, (2009) further argued that no continent, country or community that is bedevilled with the problem of peace and stability resulting from resource conflict can progress. The fact that whenever conflict occurs, the development of the society in most times is seriously affected suggests that there is an underlying link between conflict and development.

In Nigeria, intra and inter communal conflicts stemming from land resource disputes, especially territorial contests that often defile amicable resolutions have become common in the last three decades (Oladimeji, 2019). Examples of such include Ife/Modakeke, Aguleri/Umuleri, Bauchi, Jos, Kafanchan, Hausa/Yoruba in Sagamu, Eleme/Okirika, Tiv/Jukun in Wukari, Ogoni/Adoni in River State, Chamba/Kuteb in Taraba, Ijaw/Itsekiri in Delta State, Ijaw/Ilaje in Ondo State, Basa/Egbura in Nassarawa, Hausa/Fulani in Bauchi, Erin-Ile/Offa in Kwara State, Ife/Hausa

conflict, Jos conflict and recently farmer/herders conflict in North-Central Nigeria, especially in Benue State among many others that are not reported (Oladimeji, 2019).

From observation and available literature, for example Azar, (1990), Akpenpuun, (2013) and Mitchel, (1988), it appears that more attention has been given to inter-communal conflicts than intra-communal conflicts even though they all impact on the socio-economic development of the affected communities alike though in varying degrees. This probably explains why intra-communal conflict that has engulfed Adi-Etulo community of Buruku Local government of Benue State since 2009 has received little or no attention.

An observation of the Adi-Etulo community of Buruku Local government of Benue State reveals that there is under development in the land. Since there is a connection between conflict and development, could this socio-economic underdevelopment in the land be traced to the incessant intra-communal conflicts in the land? And to what extent? Meanwhile, understanding the historical perspective, causes and impact of conflict is critical for effective conflict resolution that would pave the way for peace and socio-economic development. Also, from the literature at the disposal of the researcher, no empirical work has addressed this gap with respect to intra-communal conflict in Etulo land which therefore underscores the need for this study. This will help in redesigning a new approach that will provide grounds for the management of the conflict. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to assess the Effects of Intra-communal conflict on the socio-economic development of the Etulo people of Benue State, Nigeria. The objectives pursued in achieving this aim are, to: examine the historical perspective of intra-communal conflict in Etulo land since 2009, investigate the causes of intra-communal conflict in Etulo land since 2009, determine the effects of the intra-communal conflicts on the socio-economic development of the community and determine the level of awareness of the community on the effects of the intra-communal conflicts on socio-economic underdevelopment of the community.

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **2.1 Study Area**

The Etulo community is located on the bank of the River Katsina-Ala, about 136 kilometres east of Makurdi, the Benue state capital. The Etulo land (Ikpese Etulo) extends from Latitude  $7^{\circ} 10^1$  N to  $7^{\circ} 18^1$  N and Longitude  $9^{\circ} 13^1$  E to  $9^{\circ} 22^1$  E (Figures 1 and 2).

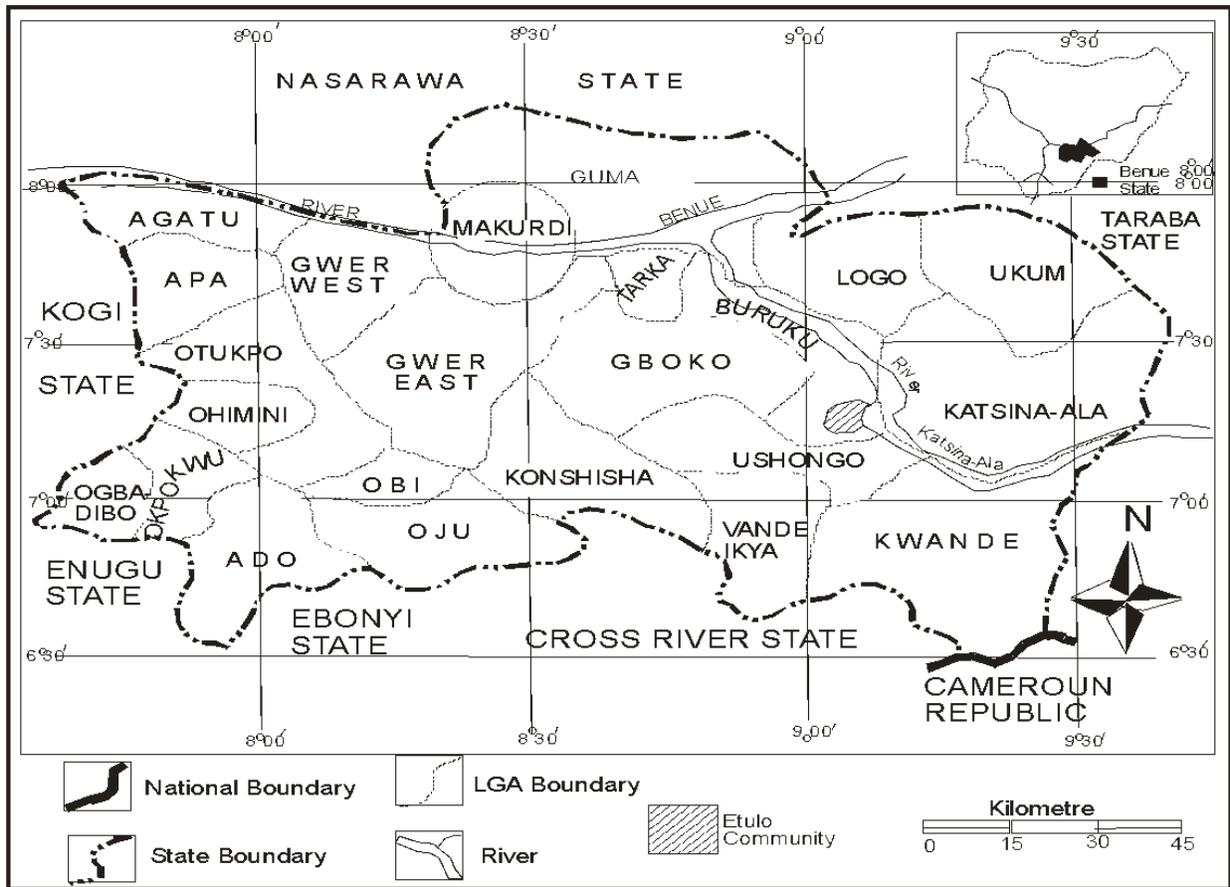
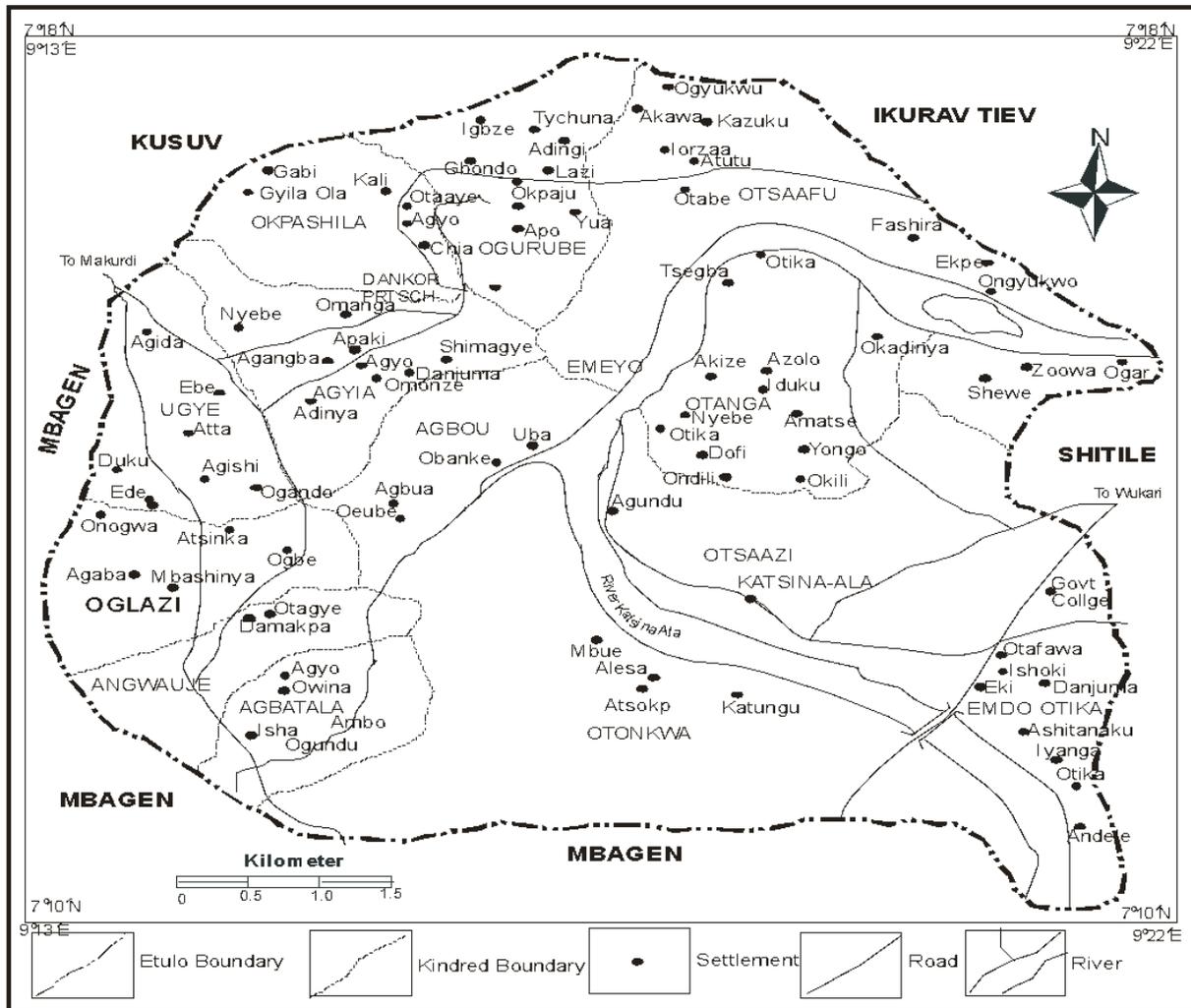


Figure 1.1: Benue State Showing Etulo Community(Study Area)  
 Source: Ministry of Lands and Survey, Makurdi.

**Figure 1: Benue state showing Etulo Community**

Source: Ministry of Lands and Survey, Makurdi

The land is bounded by Mbagen District on the North and Ikyurav-Tiev on the East. The Etulo land is almost entirely situated in the basin of the River Katsina-Ala. The only exception is the upland and coastal cliffs at Otsafu on the Southern bank.



**Figure 1. 2: Etulo Community(Study Area)**

Source: Ministry of Lands and Survey Makurdi

**Figure 2: Etulo community showing major settlements**

Source: Ministry of lands and Survey, Makurdi

The estimated population of Etulo people in Buruku local government area is about fifty-five thousand, going by projection of the 2006 National population commission. The Etulo community has four viable markets located at Adi, Abakwa, Mandela and Ilimi that are commercially functional. Total revenue realized from the four markets in a month is estimated at One Hundred and fifty thousand Naira only (Etulo Consultative Group, 2014).

The Etulo land has an agrarian economy. The land is fertile with alluvial deposits from River Katsina-Ala that has created an extensive fadama land which enhance the production of both cash and subsistence crops which include rice, maize, millet, sugarcane, yam, beans, cassava, soya-beans, oil palm, citrus, vegetables and fruits. The River Katsina-Ala that passes through Etulo land provides opportunities for all year-round cultivation of assorted crops that sustain the economic growth of the people. The land is also rich in clay and this promotes pottery industry in the community. In addition, Etulo land has over ten natural lakes which support fishing activities, thus, promoting the economic activities in the land. There are also many artisans of various disciplines. (Etulo Consultative Group, 2014).

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The Etulo land is accessible from all parts of the state and this has made transportation to and from the land an easy adventure. Apart from the good network of roads, there are many primary and post primary institutions, a Government Health centre and other private health institutions which cater for the educational and health needs of the people. It is also on record that the Etulo community is the first community in Benue state to step down electricity (1980), in their land through communal efforts (Tabe, 2007). Thus, there is electricity supply in the land, a modern post office with internet facilities in operation that facilitate easy communication from within and outside the community.

## 2.2 Methods

This study adopts survey research design. This design is considered suitable for this study because it provides a practical approach of investigating the objects in their natural setting using questionnaires and interviews.

The intra-communal conflict in the study area affected the whole Adi-Etulo community of Buruku Local government Area of Benue State, since the inception of the conflict in 2009. The Adi-Etulo community (the Etulo people living in Adi town) in Buruku local government area have a population of about fifty-five thousand (55,000) people (Projection of National Population Census, 2006). This constitutes the study population. However, the different components (the major actors) of the population are the direct victims of the conflict (the residents), and the community and opinion leaders. The sampling is based on these different components of the study population.

The sample size is computed using the human population of the residents of Adi-Etulo community because they are directly or indirectly affected by the conflict. In determining the sample size for the purpose of questionnaire administration and interview with the various components of the conflict, the Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 2004) for determining sample size was used which yielded a sample size of 400 people who were engaged in the questionnaire administration and interview. The formula is given as

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where;

n – Represents sample size

N – Represents the finite population

e – Represents limits of tolerable error [(0.05)<sup>2</sup>]

1 – Represents unity (constant value)

The sample size was thus determined as follows

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{55,000}{1 + 55,000(0.05)^2} \\ &= \frac{55,000}{55,001 \times 0.0025} \\ &= \frac{55,000}{137.50} \\ n &= 400 \end{aligned}$$

In addition, the president General of the Etulo Cultural And Development Community (ECDC), Prince Bartholomew Ugye, and the president of the National Union of Etulo Students (NUES), Comrade Felix Akanya were interviewed so as to illicit balanced information on the history, cause and impact of the conflict and the way forward.

The four hundred (400) sample size was distributed among the nine (9) clans of the Etulo community in the study area randomly. In each clan, questionnaires were administered on the household heads selected using simple random sampling methods. Simple random sampling method was adopted to avoid any bias in the selection.

The data for this study was collected through the use of questionnaires and key informant interviews (KII). Questionnaires were distributed to 400 sampled inhabitants of Etulo land. All the distributed questionnaires were equally retrieved. The study recorded 100% questionnaire retrieval because they were administered directly to the respondents with the help of research assistants. The study also interviewed two key informants, Prince Bartholomew Ugye, who is the son of the former king of the Etulo nation, late Chief Ugye Idoko; currently, he is the National President of the Etulo Cultural and Development Community (ECDC), and Comrade Felix Akanya, the President of the National Union of Etulo Students (NUES). The choice of Prince Bartholomew Ugye and Comrade Felix Akanya is informed by their neutral position in the conflict, and the need to obtain an unbiased perspective of the causes and effects of the conflicts.

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis in view of the nature of the objectives of the study. Qualitative method was used in the description and account of the historical perspective of the conflict since its inception, and the causes of intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land. On the other hand, quantitative data collected were presented in frequency tables and expressed in percentages and averages. The effect of intra-communal conflict on socio-economic development in Etulo Land was analysed using the univariate analysis of variance and covariance as appropriate.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

The demographic characteristics cover information about the age, sex, marital status and sources of income of the respondents Table 1. This study uses six (6) indicators to measure socio-economic development. These indicators include educational attainment, average monthly income, access to healthcare, availability of banking services, access to food, and house ownership.

The age distribution of the respondents as shown by Table 1 above indicates that most of the people interviewed were from the ages of 31 to 60. This distribution suggests that Etulo People of Benue State typically have a young population, even though the age distribution cuts across all age grades. There is, therefore, the possibility that the history of intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land will be passed on from generation to generation.

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender, Marital Status and Sources of Income**

| Characteristic                   | Category              | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Sex                              | Female                | 220       | 55.0       |
|                                  | Male                  | 180       | 45.0       |
|                                  | Total                 | 400       | 100        |
| Age Group                        | 11-30                 | 80        | 20.0       |
|                                  | 31-60                 | 236       | 59.0       |
|                                  | 61 and above          | 84        | 21.0       |
|                                  | Total                 | 400       | 100        |
| Marital Status                   | Single                | 144       | 36.0       |
|                                  | Widowed               | 100       | 25.0       |
|                                  | Married               | 100       | 25.0       |
|                                  | Divorced              | 56        | 14.0       |
|                                  | Total                 | 400       | 100        |
| Sources of Income                | Farming               | 210       | 52.5       |
|                                  | Paid employment       | 136       | 34.0       |
|                                  | Remittance            | 52        | 13.0       |
|                                  | Other                 | 2         | 0.5        |
|                                  | Total                 | 400       | 100        |
| Highest Educational Attainment   | Elementary/Primary    | 109       | 27.3       |
|                                  | Secondary             | 109       | 27.3       |
|                                  | No formal education   | 66        | 16.5       |
|                                  | Pre-degree            | 52        | 13.0       |
|                                  | HND/Bachelor's Degree | 44        | 11.0       |
|                                  | Postgraduate          | 20        | 5.0        |
|                                  | Total                 | 400       | 100.0      |
| Access to Healthcare             | General Hospital      | 147       | 36.8       |
|                                  | Specialist hospital   | 134       | 33.5       |
|                                  | Primary health clinic | 83        | 20.8       |
|                                  | None                  | 34        | 8.5        |
|                                  | Other                 | 2         | .5         |
|                                  | Total                 | 400       | 100.0      |
| Availability of Banking Services | POS                   | 398       | 99.5       |
|                                  | ATM                   | 2         | .5         |
|                                  | Total                 | 400       | 100.0      |
| Access to Food                   | Twice                 | 166       | 41.5       |
|                                  | Thrice                | 126       | 31.5       |
|                                  | Once                  | 108       | 27.0       |
|                                  | Total                 | 400       | 100.0      |
| House Ownership Status           | Built by self         | 198       | 49.5       |
|                                  | Inherited             | 136       | 34.0       |
|                                  | Rented                | 66        | 16.5       |

|  |       |     |       |
|--|-------|-----|-------|
|  | Total | 400 | 100.0 |
|--|-------|-----|-------|

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Women make up the majority of the respondents by commanding 55% of the total sample. The remaining 45% was covered by men who were 180 out of the sampled 400 respondents. Notwithstanding the sex gap, this distribution shows that the diversity of responses with respect to men and women was adequately taken care of by the study.

Majority (36%) of the respondents were single. This is justifiable by the fact that the sampled population is typically young, and the older the population, the more likely it is to have more married people. Nonetheless, 25% of the respondents were married and widowed respectively, while 14% had lost their spouses to death. Table 4.2 shows that although only 25% of the respondents were still actively married, at least 64% of the respondents had passed through the institution of marriage.

The Etulo people are mostly farmers as given that farmers made up 52.5% of the respondents Table 1. About 34% of the respondents were engaged in paid employment, 13% relied on remittances from close associates, while 0.5% of the respondents sourced their income from other, not too predominant sources. This distribution typifies Etulo land as an agrarian community where farming is the major employment of labour. The results in Table 4.2 reveal that the sample has been adequately disaggregated by sex, marital status and sources of income, thereby accounting for the diversity of opinion across different sexes, marital statuses and income sources. As a typical agrarian society, primary and secondary educational attainment are the predominant educational attainments among the respondents in the study area as they accounted for 27.3% of the respondents respectively. Even though 16.5% of the respondents had no formal education, about 13% acquired pre-degree qualifications, 11% obtained HND or Degree certificates, and 5% had postgraduate qualifications. It is fair to state that Etulo land is made up of a literate population since most of the respondents have attained, at least, elementary education.

Healthcare is generally accessible to the people of Etulo Land. About 99.5% of the respondents could afford treatment at general hospital (36.8%), specialist hospital (33.5%) and primary health clinic (20.8%). While only 8.5% of the respondents had no access to healthcare, 0.5% had access to other healthcare facilities. On a general note, the sampled population of Etulo Land had access to varying healthcare facilities based on which their income could afford.

Although there is no presence of a commercial bank in the study area, there is the availability of banking services as indicated by the response of the respondents. Point of sale (POS) is available to 99.5% of the respondents while 0.5% have Automated Teller Machine (ATM) available to them. This shows a high level of financial inclusion in the study area. Respondents can access financial services at their convenience with the availability of POS and ATMs. Due to the poverty level of the respondents, there is a prevalence of food insecurity in Etulo Land Table 1. This is evident in the fact that the majority of the respondents can afford only two meals a day. As much as 31.5% of the respondents afford three meals a day, as much as 27% of the respondents are able to eat only one meal every day. This is explainable to the fact that the population under study is a low-income one that mostly earns below the \$2.00 per day poverty line.

Majority of the respondents use houses built by themselves. This represents 49.5% of the total sample. About 34% of the respondents inherited their houses while 16.5% live in rented houses. This distribution suffices to state that there is a high level of house ownership among the Etulo people of Benue State Table 1.

### 3.2 Historical Perspectives of Intra-Communal Conflict in Etulo Land

The interviews with Prince Bartholomew Ugye, (son of the former king of the Etulo Nation, late Chief Ugye Idoko), the National President of the Etulo Cultural and Development Community (ECDC), and Comrade Felix Akanya, the National president of the National Union of Etulo Students (NUES). These interviews produced insights into the history of intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land and the principal actors.

*“A number of crises have occurred in Etulo Land”* – Comrade Felix Akanya.

According to Comrade Akanya, there have been a number of intra-communal conflicts in Etulo Land since 2009. In 2009, there was a conflict over the succession of Late Chief Ugye who passed on as the *Otse Etulo*. This, according to Comrade Akanya, was after the appointment of Chief John Efu as the District Head of Etulo by the Late Tor Tiv, Chief Alfred Akawe Torkula. This crisis prompted the convening of a meeting by prominent Etulo sons on 13th June 2009, to look into the matter. This aligns with findings of Ayanlade and Orimoogunje (2011) in the contexts of Ife-Modakeke communities which revealed that leadership disagreements could destabilize community cohesion and hinder recovery efforts for decades. Further intensifying mistrust among community members where such disputes aggravate tensions.

In 2010, there was a student crisis over the leadership of the National Union of Etulo Students. There were two factions fighting against each other over who was the supposed leader of the National Union of Etulo Students (NUES), between Comrade Abite Olele and Comrade Benjamin Amatsi. According to Comrade Akanya, this crisis was the beginning of the hostility and intra-communal conflict in contemporary Etulo Land. Similar dynamics were seen in Liberia, where youth mobilizations over communal land disputes escalated tensions, sometimes resulting in violence, the case of "Margibi Massacre" (Gobewole, 2021)

Prince Bartholomew Ugye narrated that there was another conflict between the Okakwu and the Agida Royal Families on 11th April, 2016. Even though the Okakwu Royal House is led by Chief John Aleshu Efu and the Agida Royal House is led by Chief Douglas Agiishi, it could not be ascertained whether the leaders directly engineered the open confrontation in the conflict or not. In this intra-communal conflict, houses were burnt and valuable materials, all worth about forty million naira were destroyed.

Another intra-communal conflict was recorded between the Okakwu Royal family and the Etulo Cultural and Development Community (ECDC) on December 10, 2016. Prince Bartholomew narrated that based on the report of the 11th April conflict, filed by Chief Aleshu Efu, some members of the armed forces stormed Adi village on Saturday, 10th December, 2016, and arrested the then president of the ECDC, Mr Benjamin Ikale and five others. Out of anger over the arrest, the central youth, led by one Mr Sam Hange Argentina (late), organized themselves, and in the night of the same day, went round the village destroying and burning down houses, the aftermath of which was a damage that appeared triple any damages previously recorded. Catechist Clement Agyo of the Roman Catholic Church in Adi, was kidnapped and has not been found till today.

The narratives by Prince Bartholomew Ugye and Comrade Felix Akanya, indicate that intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land is still a recent phenomenon that has upset the peaceful co-existence of the Etulo People. The Traditional Rulers who are supposed to be the custodians of peace are also part of the people promoting the conflicts. Students, youth and prominent sons

of Etulo land are not left out. This means that the art of intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land affects, and is affected, by almost all the members of the community.

### **3.3 Causes of Intra-Communal Conflicts in Etulo Land**

The interviews of Prince Bartholomew Ugye and Comrade Felix Akanya, also provided insight into what led to the intra-communal conflicts in Etulo Land as reported in the previous sections. As narrated by prince Ugye and Comrade Akanya, the 2009 conflict was caused by tension over the choice of the District Head of the Etulo Nation. The 2010 conflict between the two student factions was caused by the agitation over who was the true leader of the National Union of Etulo Students (NUES). The conflict of April 2016 was caused by the battle for supremacy between the Okakwu and the Agida Royal Families. Similarly, a leadership tussle between the Okakwu Royal Family and the Etulo Cultural and Development Community led to the birth of the intra-communal conflict of December 2016.

Comrade Akanya narrated that while these conflicts start with unhealthy arguments in the daytime, they are followed by burning of houses and destruction of valuable public properties in the night. These public properties include pipe borne water, electricity, among others. This shows that the intra-communal conflicts in Etulo Land are capable of exerting negative effects on the socio-economic development in the community. This agrees with the findings of Varvar, (1999); Utov, (2000); and Lamidi, and Olaleye (2023), that communal leadership disputes, especially in traditional governance systems, often reflect broader socio-economic disparities and power struggles. These conflicts disrupt essential infrastructure, such as water and electricity, which align with the destructive aftermath described in Etulo Land.

### **3.4 Effects of Intra-Communal Conflicts on Socio-Economic Development in Etulo Land**

Six indicators were used to measure socio-economic development in this study. These indicators are educational attainment, average monthly income, access to healthcare, availability of banking services, access to food, and house ownership. Univariate Analysis of Variance is used to analyse the effect of intra-communal conflict on the average monthly income in Etulo Land, while Univariate Analysis of Covariance is used to analyse the effect of intra-communal conflict on the other indicators of socio-economic development in the study area. Intra-communal conflict is measured by making Likert scale statements relating to the socio-economic development indicators of interest.

**Table 2: Effect of Intra-Communal Conflict on Average Monthly Income Per Capita in Etulo Land**

| Variable              | Label   | F       | Sig. |
|-----------------------|---|---------|------|
|                       | Corrected model   | 4.204   | .000 |
| C                     | Intercept   | 4.204   | .000 |
| DI760                 | My daily income has never been up to ₦760.00 (USD2.00).   | 343.537 | .000 |
| ICCAI                 | Intra-communal conflict in Etulo land has affected my daily income.   | 13.491  | .000 |
| ICCIE                 | Intra-communal conflict in Etulo land made me spend more than I should.                                       | 12.051  | .000 |
| LSII                  | My sources of income have been limited due to intra-communal conflict in Etulo land                           | 4.610   | .011 |
| SFRDI                 | I survive through financial remittances from family and friends due to intra-communal conflict in Etulo land. | 4.361   | .014 |
| DI760 * ICCAI         | Interactions  | 8.201   | .000 |
| DI760 * ICCIE         | Interactions  | 2.673   | .000 |
| DI760 * SFRDI         | Interactions  | 13.242  | .000 |
| ICCAI * ICCIE         | Interactions  | 3.172   | .014 |
| ICCAI * LSII          | Interactions  | 8.565   | .000 |
| ICCAI * SFRDI         | Interactions  | 12.141  | .000 |
| ICCIE * LSII          | Interactions  | 4.679   | .001 |
| ICCIE * SFRDI         | Interactions  | 6.844   | .000 |
| LSII * SFRDI          | Interactions  | 6.492   | .000 |
| DI760 * ICCAI * LSII  | Interactions  | 5.003   | .001 |
| DI760 * ICCIE * SFRDI | Interactions  | 32.514  | .000 |
| DI760 * LSII * SFRDI  | Interactions  | 8.339   | .000 |
| ICCIE * LSII * SFRDI  | Interactions  | 3.848   | .022 |
|                       | R-Squared   | 0.621   |      |

Source: Researcher's Computations.

The five statements used to measure the relationship between intra-communal conflict and monthly income per capita in Etulo Land indicate an unfavourable impact of the conflict on income. The five statements were used as factors or parameters of the between- subject effects model. The probability values of the F-statistic for all the factors are less than 0.05. This means that the F statistics are statistically significant. The interactions presented in Table 2 cover two-stage variances and three-stage variances. Only the interactions whose F-statistics are statistically significant are presented here.

The insignificant ones can be looked up in the appendices. The statistical significance of the F statistics of the variables and their interactions indicate that intra-communal conflict has a significant effect on the monthly income of the Etulo People. The F statistic of the corrected model is statistically significant. This implies that the between-subjects model performed well. The value of the coefficient of determination (R-squared) is 0.621. This means that intra-communal conflict accounts for about 62.1% of the variations in the annual income of the people in Etulo Land. This is a further confirmation that intra-communal conflict has an effect on income in Etulo Land.

**Table 3: Effect of Intra-Communal Conflict on Educational Attainment in Etulo Land**

| Variable | Label  | F       | Sig. |
|----------|--|---------|------|
|          | Corrected Model  | 2.688   | .001 |
|          | Intercept  | 120.396 | .000 |
| AICE     | Covariate (awareness of the effect of intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land).  | 3.824   | .051 |
| DSCHI    | Schools in my area have been destroyed as a result of intra-communal conflict in Etulo land  | .       | .    |
| FESCHE   | Proprietors are unwilling to establish schools in Etulo land due to fear of intra-communal conflict  | .       | .    |
| FSCHI    | Available schools in Etulo land are failing due to lack of students  | .544    | .461 |
| ATIE     | There is no tertiary institution within my locality  | .613    | .542 |
| FSCHCE   | Children and youth in my community have been cut-off from attaining formal education as a result of intra-communal conflict in Etulo land. |         |      |
|          | R-Squared  | 0.089   |      |

Source: Researcher's Computations

Intra-communal conflict appears not to have any significant effect on educational attainment in Etulo Land. This is because none of the parameters considered as factors of intra-communal conflict is statistically significant. There is neither an interaction effect of any of the intra-communal conflict factors on educational attainment in Etulo Land. The R-Squared value is 0.089. This means that intra-communal conflict is responsible for only 8.9% of the variations in educational attainment in Etulo Land. Even though the corrected model's F statistic is significant (less than 0.05), the results presented in Table 4.10 suffice to state that intra-communal conflict has no effect on educational attainment in Etulo Land.

**Table 4: Effect of Intra-Communal Conflict on Access to Healthcare in Etulo Land**

| Variable | Label   | F       | Sig. |
|----------|---|---------|------|
|          | Corrected model   | 1.242   | .252 |
| C        | Intercept   | 102.344 | .000 |
| AICE     | Covariate (awareness of the effect of intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land).                               | .442    | .506 |
| AHC      | There is no healthcare facility in my community   | 2.015   | .135 |
| DHFI     | Intra-communal conflict has led to destruction of health facilities in my community                         | .685    | .408 |
| ECHI     | Community members prefer using health facilities outside Etulo land due to fear of intra-communal conflict. | 2.750   | .065 |
| ISHSE    | Health facilities in Etulo land lack adequate medical staff due to fear of intra-communal conflict.         | 4.269   | .039 |
|          | R-Squared   | 0.037   |      |

Source: Researcher's Computations

There is also no effect of intra-communal conflict on access to healthcare in Etulo Land Table 5. In as much as one of the factors used as intra-communal conflict is significant (F statistic probability less than 0.05), the other factors, including the covariate, are not significant. There is also no interaction effect in the between-subjects model. The R-squared is small (0.037), implying that intra-communal conflict is responsible for the changes in access to healthcare in Etulo Land by only 3.7%.

**Table 5: Effect of Intra-Communal on the Availability of Banking Services in Etulo Land**

| Variable | Label   | F        | Sig. |
|----------|---|----------|------|
|          | Corrected Model   | 1.127    | .255 |
|          | Intercept   | 3832.687 | .000 |
| AICE     | Covariate (awareness of the effect of intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land).   | 2.656    | .104 |
| @1BE     | There is at least one commercial bank in Etulo land   | .212     | .809 |
| NOATM    | There is no ATM in my community   | .565     | .453 |
| NOPOS    | There are no POS services in my community   | .543     | .582 |
| DBI      | Banking services in Etulo Land were disrupted by intra-communal conflict in the past                                  | .050     | .951 |
| FBEI     | Banking services agents are afraid of operating in Etulo Land due to the insecurity posed by intra-communal conflict. | .075     | .928 |
|          | R-Squared   | 0.169    |      |

Source: Researcher's Computations

Intra-communal conflict has an effect on banking services availability in Etulo Land Table 6. The Effect is, however, not significant. There are also interaction effects in the between-subjects

model which are not significant. The results of the interaction effects are presented in the Appendices. The R-squared value of 0.169 indicates that only 16.9% of the variations in banking services availability in Etulo Land are explained by intra-communal conflict. This is not surprising as 99.5% of the respondents had reported to have access to banking services in the study area.

**Table 6: Effect of Intra-Communal Conflict on Food Security in Etulo Land**

| Variable            | Label   | F       | Sig. |
|---------------------|---|---------|------|
|                     | Corrected model   | 3.599   | .000 |
| C                   | Intercept   | 209.376 | .000 |
| AICE                | Covariate (awareness of the effect of intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land).                         | .485    | .487 |
| AFP                 | Food production in my community has been hampered by intra-communal conflict                          | 14.019  | .000 |
| L3MD                | I am not able to afford 3 meals a day   | .869    | .420 |
| DFDI                | Food crops have been destroyed in the past during intra-communal conflict                             | 9.637   | .000 |
| FBDI                | Food stuff have been booted away in the past by warriors during intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land | 3.725   | .025 |
| AFP * L3MD          | Interactions  | 8.364   | .000 |
| AFP * DFDI          | Interactions  | 5.104   | .002 |
| L3MD * DFDI         | Interactions  | 8.046   | .000 |
| L3MD * FBDI         | Interactions  | 4.608   | .004 |
| L3MD * LAFSS        | Interactions  | 3.639   | .006 |
| DFDI * FBDI         | Interactions  | 4.610   | .001 |
| FBDI * LAFSS        | Interactions  | 3.613   | .007 |
| AFP * L3MD * FBDI   | Interactions  | 7.734   | .001 |
| L3MD * DFDI * LAFSS | Interactions  | 3.044   | .049 |
| L3MD * FBDI * LAFSS | Interactions  | 4.331   | .014 |
| DFDI * FBDI * LAFSS | Interactions  | 3.812   | .010 |
|                     | R-Squared   | 0.494   |      |

Source: Researcher's Computations

Table 6 reveals that intra-communal conflict has a significant effect on food security in Etulo Land. There is a significance of both the individual effects of the intra-communal conflict factors and their interactions. The results reveal both two-stage interactions and three-stage interactions. These results only confirm the claim of food insecurity reported in this study about the access of Etulo People to food. The intra-communal conflicts reported in this study have therefore influenced the food insecurity in Etulo Land significantly. The value of the R-squared indicates that intra-communal conflict accounts for 49.4% of the variations in food security in Etulo Land.

**Table 7: Effect of Intra-Communal Conflict on House Ownership in Etulo Land**

| Variable              | Label   | F       | Sig. |
|-----------------------|---|---------|------|
|                       | Corrected model   | 4.157   | .000 |
| C                     | Intercept   | 281.088 | .000 |
| AICE                  | Covariate (awareness of the effect of intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land).                         | .938    | .333 |
| HBDI                  | Food production in my community has been hampered by intra-communal conflict                          | 6.214   | .002 |
| FBDI_A                | I am not able to afford 3 meals a day   | 1.972   | .141 |
| FBZDI                 | Food crops have been destroyed in the past during intra-communal conflict                             | 1.019   | .362 |
| HBDI * FBDI_A         | Food stuff have been booted away in the past by warriors during intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land | 6.799   | .000 |
| HBDI * FBZDI          | Interactions  | 3.472   | .008 |
| FBDI_A * FBZDI        | Interactions  | 2.908   | .056 |
| HBDI * FBDI_A * FBZDI | Interactions  | 2.164   | .073 |
|                       | R-Squared   | 0.188   |      |

Source: Researcher's Computations

Table 7 reveals that intra-communal conflict has an effect on house ownership in Etulo Land. Though only one factor out of the three factors of intra-communal conflict has a significant effect on house ownership in the study area, two significant interaction effects have been reported. The R-Squared value is 0.118, implying that intra-communal conflict is responsible for 18.8% of the changes in house ownership in Etulo Land. This corroborates with the finding of Anierobi *et al* (2024) that conflicts often arise from systemic oppression or exclusion, such as limited access to land ownership and housing rights. These tensions often escalate into conflicts that disrupt local development and property ownership patterns, particularly in rural or marginalized areas.

### 3.4 Awareness of Etulo People on the Effects of Intra-Communal Conflict in their Community.

With the aid of a 3-point Likert scale, results of the extent to which Etulo People are aware of the effects of intra-communal conflict in their community are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8: Awareness Level of Respondents on the Effects of Intra-Communal Conflict in Etulo Land.**

| <b>Statement</b>  | <b>A (%)</b>  | <b>NS (%)</b> | <b>UA (%)</b> | <b>Total (%)</b> |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| Intra-communal conflict reduces the income  | 222<br>(55.5) | 122<br>(30.5) | 56<br>(14.0)  | 400<br>(100)     |
| Intra-communal conflict prevents citizens from obtaining quality formal education | 192<br>(48.0) | 128<br>(32.0) | 80<br>(20.0)  | 400<br>(100)     |
| There is limited access to quality healthcare                                     | 205<br>(51.2) | 128<br>(32.0) | 67<br>(16.8)  | 400<br>(100)     |
| Intra-communal conflict causes food insecurity                                    | 207<br>(51.7) | 158<br>(39.5) | 35<br>(8.8)   | 400<br>(100)     |
| Intra-communal conflict limits access to housing                                  | 217<br>(54.3) | 120<br>(30.0) | 63<br>(15.8)  | 400<br>(100)     |

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

There is a high level of awareness by Etulo People on the effects of intra-communal conflict in their community. This level of awareness is demonstrated by the majority of the sampled population. According to the responses presented in Table 8, Etulo People are aware of the fact that intra-communal conflict reduces the income of the community, prevents citizens from obtaining quality education, limits access to quality healthcare, causes food insecurity, and limits access to housing. These effects were also confirmed by Prince Bartholomew Ugye, who provided insight into the historical perspectives of intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land.

This study found that between 2009 and 2022, four intra-communal conflicts have been recorded in Etulo Land. One was reported between students and the other three were reported between Royal Families, and the Etulo Cultural and Development Community. These conflicts include the 2009 conflict over the successor of the late Otse Etulo; the 2010 crisis over the leadership of the National Union of Etulo Students; the April 2016 conflict between the Okakwu Royal Family and the Agida Royal Family; and the December 2016 conflict between the Okakwu Royal Family and the Etulo Cultural Development Community. The actors identified with these conflicts are the traditional rulers, students and other stakeholders.

The major cause of intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land, like the ones reported since 2009, was found to be leadership tussle. The conflict between student factions was caused by the disagreement over who was the supposed President of the National Union of Etulo Students (NUES). The conflict between the Okakwu Royal Family and the Agida Royal Family was caused by fights over the right to royalty and disagreement over who should take the mantle of traditional leadership. It was the conflict between the Okakwu Royal Family and the Agida Royal Family that led to the reported conflict between the Okakwu Royal Family and the Etulo

Cultural and Development Community. The quest for leadership lures people into community atrocities in order to achieve their self-interest. When this quest is met with disagreements from other stakeholders, such stakeholders are seen as enemies. As a result, what is usually supposed to be a healthy disagreement transforms into ill-mannered arguments, leading to intra-communal conflict between two people, to groups, and consequently into the whole community.

The study also examined the effect of intra-communal conflict on socio-economic development in Etulo Land. The study found that intra-communal conflict has a significant effect on the income, food security, and house ownership of the Etulo People. However, the effect of the conflict on the educational attainment, access to healthcare and availability of banking services in Etulo Land was found insignificant. Income generation and food production do not thrive in an environment where insecurity and conflict persist. This has therefore inhibited the production of food, adequate to meet the food needs of the Etulo People of Benue State. Majority of the population therefore go for a whole day eating only two times a day. The impairment of income generating activities due to intra-communal conflict has also affected the ability of the Etulo People to afford housing. As a result, house ownership among the people has been affected. Intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land has, therefore affected the socio-economic development of the community.

The study also found that the People of Etulo Land are highly aware of the effects of intra-communal conflict in their community. Some of the effects affirmed to be prominent include reduction of income of the community, preventing citizens from obtaining quality education, limiting access to quality healthcare in the community, the insurrection of food insecurity, and limiting access to housing. With this level of awareness in the community, measures at preventing the upsurge of similar conflicts in Etulo Land are likely to be successful.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings reported, this study concludes that the level of socio-economic development in Etulo Land depends on the presence of peaceful co-existence. Intra-communal conflict greatly affects the socio-economic development of the community. The struggle for leadership is the major cause of intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land. This conflict affects almost every member of the community, out of which students, traditional rulers and other stakeholders are principal actors. There is an equally high level of awareness of the effects of intra-communal conflict on socio-economic development in Etulo Land.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study therefore recommends the following|. There should be a collective dialogue and agreement among all the principal actors in intra-communal conflict in Etulo Land. The Traditional Rulers as the custodians of peace and culture should take the lead. This will settle all unnecessary arguments that often give rise to intra-communal conflicts in Etulo Land. Etulo people should always follow the right and accepted processes of ascending into leadership positions. Those who wish to hold leadership positions should endeavour to follow the laid down procedures so as to avoid creating unnecessary tensions that lead to intra-communal conflicts in Etulo Land. The people of Etulo Land should diversify their income sources from farming that is very vulnerable to intra-communal conflicts. The people can acquire skills in other sectors of the economy through learning, internships and mentorship. The government should increase security surveillance in Etulo Land so as to forestall any future intra-communal conflicts. Increased security presence in the community will also prevent the wanton destruction of property in the

community. This will raise investment confidence in the area and enhance the socio-economic development of the Etulo Land.

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