



IMPLICATIONS OF EZESHIP TUSSE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE OF IMO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study analysed implications of Ezeship tussle on community development in Imo State, Nigeria. Multistage purposive sampling was adopted in choosing 120 respondents. Structured interview schedule was used to solicit for the information from the respondents. Data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics which involved the use of percentage, preference ranking, means, standard deviations and hypothesis was tested using the Duncan's multiple range test (DMRT). The result of the analysis indicates respondents' perceived personal characteristics that influence choice of ezeship. It was found that *Ezeship* tussle have both negative and positive effects on community development whereas the major coping strategies to reducing effects of ezeship tussle on community development were accommodation, cooperation and compromise. Result further indicates that the sources of Ezeship tussle that affect community development were identified among them were family ancestry, issues of hereditary and rotatory, superiority right syndrome and caste system. Result shows that family reputation ranks first while physical appearance was least considered. Result further shows the mean of the major sources of ezeship tussle were: family ancestry (2.9), injustice (2.8) and creation of new autonomous communities (2.8). Recommendations include a public enlightenment programme on the negative consequences of Ezeship tussle on community development. The results of the study calls for policies aimed at good cooperation and friendly relationship which should enhance community development.

Keywords: Implications, Ezeship, Tussle, Community development

INTRODUCTION

History has it that the Igbo's love living in small village republics, where every adult male was deemed as important as everyone else. This is because they believe in personal freedom and very strong resentment for autocratic rule (Ndoh, 1997). The *Igbo* society was acephalus and did not have any single figure one could point at as their ruler (Okereke, 1997). The consequences have been distrust, rivalry and lack of cooperation that have characterized the relationship between the component villages in the community. After the Nigerian civil war, the position of the traditional ruler otherwise known as the Eze in *Igbo* society has become very clear and significant. Power and prestige have been attached to it. Ezeship or kingship simply refers to the traditional ruler of the community. The Eze and his cabinet wield a lot of influence on community development. However, some communities are bedevilled with Ezeship tussle by local power seekers. The activities slow down the pace of community projects / development or cause outright abandonment of self-help efforts before they began even half way into the implementation (Onumadu, 2013).

Oxford Learned Dictionary 6th Edition defines tussle as a short struggle, fight, argument especially in order to get something. Tussle is synonymous with conflict. The word conflict was derived from the Latin word *confligere* meaning to tussle, clash engage or struggle over perceived incompatible goals or values. Conflict refers to physical confrontation, clash, controversy, hostility, tension disagreement, struggle, tussle among individuals and group in a society. Conflict or tussle simply described as some form of friction,

disagreement or discord arising within a group when the belief or action of one or more members of the group are either resisted by or unacceptable to one or more members of another group. Conflict is a natural occurrence in every day inter-relationships. Tussle or conflict is a dispute between two groups that is characterized by overt expression of hostility and intentional inference in the goal attainment of the opposition groups (Anyanwu, 1999).

Mgbada (2010) defines tussle as a form of social interaction in which the actors seek to obtain specific reward by eliminating or weakening other contenders. Adedoyin (2015) defines tussle as a struggle over values and claims to secure status, power and resources which aim at eliminating their rivals. Community conflict arises where there is difference of opinion between group leaders in situation where one group tend to manoeuvre the other. Conflict between personalities may result in group quarrel and thus division of the community into several factions trying to obtain command and power over the others. Conflict is an essential component of human occurring when parties involved compete, struggle over certain goals, values and interest (Adedoyin, 2015). Conflict is a purposeful struggle between the collective actors who use social power to remove opponents in order to gain status, position, prestige, resources and push their values over other social groups. Conflict is an agent of change through which social values of welfare, security justice, and opportunities are easily achieved. Communities involved in Ezeship tussles experience stress, anger, bitterness, frustration and anxiety. Conflicts seem to be unusual phenomenon with only negative

consequences. But this is not true because if managed properly conflict has both good and bad consequences.

Tussle is inevitable in any human relationship although some people believe that doing good in organizations or communities are the absolute removal of conflict. Indeed this view lack realism because some kinds of conflict are necessary to give the community challenges and encourage positive change (Akanwa, 2003). The major causes of tussle indeed are injustice, poor information management, resources, cultural difference, values perception and psychological needs. Furthermore, Ezeship tussle is a social conflict over the values, power and claims to secure status, power and superiority in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals (Agbaraevo and Obinna, 2010).

Ezeship and chieftaincy tussles have torn apart different communities. There is hardly any community that accepts the status quo. It is no longer a gainsaying that most conspicuous causes of social conflict in communities of Igbo land in recent time are the traditional rulership, chieftaincy title, land and boundary disputes and the outcast (Osu) syndrome. The major sources of the Ezeship tussle include the issue of whether the office of the Eze should be hereditary or rotatory and the balkanization of communities into new kingdoms otherwise referred to as autonomous communities which gives recognition to the position of Ezeship in the new communities to succession (Onumadu, 2013). Adedoyin (2015) sees development as the creation of conditions for the realization of human personality which implies realization on poverty unemployment and inequality social justice and human satisfaction. Community development is all about the improvement of man and his environment. Development is an impression, a progress and a study which becomes a global concern. At the societal group level development implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationship. Development is an attack to the foremost ills of the society that includes starvation, diseases, illiteracy, injustice joblessness and inequality (Mohammed, 2011). Development means providing sufficient and affordable basic needs for the present generation without threatening the prospects of subsequent generations (Mohammed and Babara, 2011). Community development is a collective activity. Man cannot live in isolation and he must interact with fellow human beings in order to achieve fuller and more satisfying life (Akubuilu, 2008). Mgbada, (2010) explains that community development projects call for holistic approach to development for greater *esprit-de-corps* and cooperation among community members to ensure team building and unity of purpose, more focused use of their critical

or special knowledge in working together for the achievement of development objectives activity.

This term *esprit de corp* is known in Igbo cosmology and community development efforts as “*Igwebuike*” (Unity is strength) as opposed to “*Ike otuonye*” (one man’s strength). Community development refers to the movement designed to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and on the initiative of the community (Ekong, 2010). United Nations (1956) defines community development as the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of the government agencies to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities to integrate these communities into life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress. Community development is a self-help effort of the people in identifying their immediate needs and improve their level of living, applying their initiatives and using their own resources with or without the help of external agencies (Nwosu, 2013).

Theoretical bases of this study anchors on conflict theory that states that society is an arena of tussle and power struggle where cooperation is not assumed and individuals act on their own interest. The proponents of this theory define conflict as a fact of life in any society where social changes is a basic feature and tussles are the driving force behind desirable changes. The neo-classical conflict theorists were of the opinion that tussles are due to scarcity of resources, wealth, power, superiority, prestige and power are always limited in supply so that gains for one group are often losses for others (Olakunle, 2015). Conflict are products of social change because they cause obstacle to change. Generally speaking, there is hardly any society that accepts the status quo. Communities are bedeviled by the wave of Ezeship tussle which are in midst of those social process that had to cause people to move slightly further apart (Ukaegbu and Agunwamba, 1995).

Community development is the conscious and deliberate efforts aimed at helping communities recognize their need and to assume increasing responsibility for solving their problems (Ekong, 2010). It is a set of shared attitude values, goals, and practices that characterized an institution, organization or group. Eidelson and Eidelson (2008) explained that beliefs play important role in triggering conflicts between groups. This beliefs domains include superiority injustice vulnerability distrust and helplessness. Ezeship tussle consequences on community development could be negative or positive. Community development cannot work effectively of the Ezeship stool is not accepted by the whole community (Mgbada, 2010). The ugly consequences of Ezeship tussle on the traditional



value system because of its wide discrimination in form of *Osu, Di Ala, Ohuand* or stereotype syndrome. Ezeship tussle negatively affects the core value, loss of lives and properties. Studies indicate that the sources of Ezeship tussle include, seniority right minority right, discrimination /social exclusion, political exclusion, stereotyping, perception, born to rule syndrome, cultural beliefs, corruption and character of individual contestants.

Despite the constitutional provision and efforts by government, religious organizations, peace building organizations, in sensitizing mediatory and sanctioning communities and individuals. In spite of the constitutional provisions to protect the citizens in times and areas of conflict, rural communities, and local power seekers still engage in Ezeship tussle because such protections are not premised on robust and potent policies. Implications of these upheavals on the lives and properties of citizens are huge. Community development programmes and projects have operated in a world assumed to be characterized by social harmony. Efforts are hardly made to follow implementation with search for possible social feasibility to community development programme success. The literature on community development is characterized by a plethora of impact studies, critiques and perception for activity improvement, (Ukaegbu and Agunwamba, 1995). Little or no attention is paid on the possible effects on social relationship within the target population. Social relationship is an important pre-requisite to the realization of the greater community development policies and actions.

It is in this regard that this study examine the implications of Ezeship tussle on Community development; a case of Imo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study, examine, personal characteristics of the acceptable ezeship contestant,- determine effect of ezeship tussle on community development, ascertain coping strategies to reducing ezeship tussle and ascertain sources of ezeship tussle in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out Imo state. The state is located between latitude $5^{\circ}45'N$ and longitude $6^{\circ}35'E$ of the Greenwich Meridian. The state has a population of 2,934,899 persons, with a total area of 5,530km² and population density of 710 persons per square kilometre and the state population is predominantly rural (NPC, 2007). It is bounded in the east by Abia State, Northwest by Rivers state. A total of 120 respondents were chosen using multi stage purpose sampling technique. In the first stage, three local government areas were purposively selected from the 27 LGAs in Imo State. They were, Obowo, Aboh Mbaise and Ideato South

In the second stage two communities were purposively selected from each LGAs giving a total of six communities. In the third stage two villages were randomly selected from each of the communities while ten respondents were randomly selected from each village. The sampling frame was the list of troubled tussling communities from each local government area, community, village selected was obtained from the Imo state peace and conflict resolution bureau. The analytical tools used in this study include descriptive statistics, such as frequency distribution, means, percentage, standard deviation and Duncan multiple range test.

Objective (i) was captured with descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentage and mean scores objective; while (ii) was analyzed using Duncan multiple range test. Objective (iii) the coping strategies by respondents in the study area was realized using a-10 item statements was used to solicit information from respondents. A-4 point likert type scale of strongly agree 4, agree 3, strongly disagree 2, and agree 1. Thus. $4 + 3 + 2 + 10/4 = 2.50$. Based on the mid score, decision rule, any mean score greater than or equal than 2.50 implied use of stated strategy and mean score less than 2.50 denote, non use strategy by respondents. The implication of Ezeship tussle on community development was analyzed using descriptive statistics' which involved the use of percentage and tested using the Duncan's multiple range test (DMRT) which involved the comparison of the largest score with the smallest using the Shortest Significant Difference (SSD) for their relative position to each other at 5% level of probability (Ogbunike *et al* 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Personal characteristics acceptable for ezeship choice in the study area

A total of 13 preferred personal characteristics acceptable for an Ezeship stool were considered as indicated in Table 1. These include, age, educational level, marital status, religion character/integrity, social network, wealth, occupation family reputation/ancestry, personality intelligent quotient, physical appealing personality. A total of 90 respondents (75.8%) indicates that family reputation/ancestry. This shows that family reputation is the most common preferred personal characteristics acceptable for Ezeship stool in the area. The respondents showed knowledge of the advantages of family ancestry. They indicated that family reputation/background suits their social status and political influence in their social system, in spite of this finding, reports in the literature shows that family reputation is not rated so high by leadership scholars/theorists as sustainable determinants for effective leadership in rural society (Ekong, 2010). Age ranked next to family ancestry/reputation. A total of 90 respondents

(75.6%) favoured age/adult as personal characteristics acceptable for Ezeship stool/position. According to the respondents age not only add prestige value and difference accorded to Ezeship but also provides political/leadership influence in the society's value system character/integrity is the third most important personal characteristics acceptable for the choice of Ezeship stool in the area. What constituted character/integrity as used by the respondents is the reputation people have of a person, particularly whether the person can be trusted or relied on. The respondents preferred these personal characteristics because a man of good character and integrity is pivotal to effective leadership that ensures enhanced community development and inspires innovative ideas.

This is followed by education. A total of 73 respondents which represent 60.8 percent saw education as an essential ingredient for any

community development because community development cannot work effectively if the "eze" is not accepted by the whole community (Mgbada, 2010). This is in line with Ekong (2010) who asserts that education creates a personality which therefore with contact outside would estimate, that ideas and experiences by other culture, and sift the relevant ones to be adopted for the modification of his own environment. This equally agreed with the observations of Agbaraevu and Obinne (2010) that education makes people change orientation hence the educated person/leader believes that change is a vehicle for improvement in human conditions, whereas the uneducated is averse to change. The perceived personal characteristics acceptable for the choice of Ezeship stool are presented according to their importance/preference in the table with family ancestry or reputation and age mostly preferred.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to perceived personal characteristics acceptable for ezeship in Imo State, Nigeria

Personal characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Preference ranking
Age (Adult)	90	75.0	2
Educational level	73	60.8	4
Marital status (married)	70	58.3	5
Religion	50	41.7	7
Character (Integrity)	85	70.8	3
Social network (sound)	55	45.8	6
Wealth (Moderate)	50	41.7	7
Appealing personality	70	58.3	5
Occupation (skillful)	25	20.8	9
Family ancestry	91	75.8	1
Personality	31	25.8	8
Intelligent quotient	22	18.3	10
Physical appearance	15	12.5	11

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 2 shows perceived effects of Ezeship tussle on community development in the study area. The data in table shows the responses of respondents on the effect of ezeship tussle on community development. A total of nine item statements were identified in Imo State as indicated in table. These include disruption of social unity, creation of inter group tension, disruption of normal channel of cooperation, solution to nagging issues, increased solidarity, destroy socio-political system, destroy economic productivity enhance positive change and enhance social values improve welfare security and justice. Result revealed that average of 12.8% of the respondents strongly agreed with the item statements while 3.6% agreed, 1.0% strongly disagreed while 0.8% disagreed with the issues. The effects of Ezeship tussle on

community development therefore takes the following order. Increased solidarity (79.2%), enhance positive change (75.0%), creation of intergroup tension, and destroy socio-political system (75.0%). This was followed by disruption of social unity (70.9%) articulate social security, welfare and justice (66.7%) and disruption of normal channel of cooperation (66.7%) and solution to nagging issues (62.5%).

These effects are geared towards positive and negative consequences of Ezeship tussle on community development. These findings are in line with the findings of Olakunle (2015) and Adedoyin (2015), to the effect that conflicts is necessary for any society/community that want to progress. Although the respondents showed different reaction to item statements.



Table 2: Distribution of the respondents according to responses to the effect of ezeship tussle in Imo State, Nigeria

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
Disruption of social unity	85 (70.8)	30 (25.0)	2 (1.77)	3(2.5)	120 (100)
Enhance innovation tension	90 (75.0)	20 (16.7)	60 (5.0)	493.3)	120 (100)
Disruption of normal channels of cooperation	80 (66.7)	25 (20.8)	8 (6.7)	7(5.8)	120 (100)
Solution to nagging issues	75 (62.5)	30 (25.0)	10 (8.3)	5(4.2)	120 (100)
Increased solidarity	95 (79.2)	15 (12.5)	5 (4.2)	5(4.2)	120 (100)
Destroy socio-political system	90 (75.0)	25 (20.8)	3 (2.5)	2(1.7)	120 (100)
Destroy economical productivity	85 (70.8)	25 (20.8)	15 (12.5)	10(8.3)	120 (100)
Articulate social values welfare, security justice	80 (66.7)	25 (20.8)	7 (5.8)	8(6.7)	120 (100)
Mean scores (%)	12.8	3.6	1.0	0.8	120 (100)

Source: Field Survey, (2017)

Data in Table 3, reveals that respondents reported using coping strategies such as social inclusion with mean rating of 2.38, negotiation (2.57), accommodating (2.85) conciliation (3.17), compromising (3.15), and tolerance (3.04), alternative to dispute resolution (2.38), cooperation (3.04), litigation (2.99) and government action (3.09). This result is in consonance with the finding of Mgbada (2010), Akubuilu (2008) where they found that coping strategies were adopted by stakeholders in communities bedeviled with ezeship and chieftaincy tussle in Southeast, Nigeria. The implication of this finding is that

government action was most preferred as coping strategy to reducing effect of ezeship tussle followed by cooperation, conciliation compromising, tolerance (3.04) litigation (2.99), accommodating (2.85) and negotiation (2.57) while alternative dispute resolution and social inclusion were neglected. The reason could be due to inequality pattern of leadership where family ancestry and social value system prevalent in Igbo society of Nigeria. This supports the assertion of Okereke (1997) that every male child in Igbo land assumes a kingship position and believed to be a republic of its own.

Table 3: Coping strategies to reducing effects of ezeship tussle in Imo state Nigeria

Coping strategies	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total score	Mean	Decision
Social inclusion	24(96)	22(66)	50(100)	24(24)	286	2.38	Not accepted
Negotiation	48(192)	41(123)	17(51)	14(14)	308	2.57	Accepted
Accommodating	36(144)	37(111)	20(60)	27(27)	342	2.85	Accepted
Conciliation	50(250)	41(123)	14(42)	15(15)	380	3.17	Accepted
Compromising	52(208)	44(132)	15(30)	9(9)	379	3.15	Accepted
Tolerance	49(196)	40(120)	15(36)	13(13)	365	3.04	Accepted
ADR	24(96)	27(66)	50(100)	24(24)	286	2.38	Not accepted
Litigation	53(212)	35(105)	20(40)	12(12)	359	2.99	Accepted
Cooperation	50(200)	40(120)	20(40)	10(10)	370	3.08	Accepted
Government action	51(204)	39(117)	20(40)	10(10)	371	3.07	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Sources of ezeship tussle

The distribution of respondents according to sources of ezeship tussle in Imo State are presented in table 4. The table shows that ten possible sources were investigated in the study. The table reveals that seven (7) sources were considered to be serious sources while three (3) were considered to be not serious sources of ezeship tussle. Data in table 4 reveals that respondents reported using sources of ezeship tussle that affect community development such as family ancestry with mean rating of (2.9), injustice (2.8), secession/creation of new community(2.8),

superiority/seniority right (2.7) poor information management (2.7), caste system/social value/perception syndrome (2.7) and hereditary/rotating syndrome (2.6).The table further reveals a grand mean of 2.2.The study showed that respondents perceived sources of ezeship tussle was high on (7) seven investigated sources because the individual mean source was above the grand mean. The result showed that the standard deviations were closely packed and small. This implies that the data had high degree of uniformity and reliability of the result. This finding agreed with that of Onuh and Igwemma (2007)



which explained that the smaller the standard deviation, the higher the degree of reliability of their estimates. The findings also agreed with Ekong (2010), Olakunle (2015) and Adeoyin

(2015) they asserted the sources of conflicts to ezeship tussle include; family reputation and caste system.

Table 4: Distribution of the Respondents According to Sources of Ezeship Tussle in Imo State, Nigeria

Sources of Tussle	Not Frequent		Serious		Serious		X	Std. Deviation
Majority group syndrome	104	(86.6)	14	(11.7)	2	(1.7)	1.2	0.4 03
Serenity right and superiority syndrome	10	(8.2)	21	(17.5)	89	(74.4)	2.7	0.6198
Secession/New creation	25	(3.9)	9	(7.8)	106	(88.3)	2.8	0.4583
Social Political Exclusion	11	(8.8)	15	(13.1)	94	(78.1)	2.7	0.6253
Poor information management	98	(81.7)	17	(14.4)	5	(3.9)	1.2	0.4345
Hereditary/Rotatory syndrome	14	(11.9)	23	(19.2)	83	(68.9)	2.6	0.6957
Injustice	8	(6.4)	15	(13.1)	98	(81.4)	2.8	0.5619
Family ancestry	4	(3.3)	8	(6.9)	108	(89.9)	2.9	0.4293
Difference in opinion	96	(80.0)	21	(17.5)	3	(2.5)	1.2	0.4737
Caste system	7	(6.1)	16	(13.3)	97	(80.6)	2.7	0.6354

Source: Field data, 2017

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study analyzed the implications of Ezeship tussle on community development in Imo State, Nigeria. Results indicated that personal characteristics that affects the choice of an eze. Include age(75.0%)family reputation(75.8%)and integrity(70.8%).Result showed that average of 12.8% of the respondents strongly agree that the 10-item statements are the effect of Ezeship tussle on community development. The study concludes that the implications of ezeship tussle on community development could be positive or negative depending on the way it is managed. The study recommends that a public enlightenment programme, seminars and workshops on the consequences of conflict on community progress. The study also calls for policy formulation and implementation aimed at good coexistence because peace is second to none in community development.

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