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IMPACT OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CRISES ON POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN JOS SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, PLATEAU STATE (2001–2011)

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Abstract

Ethno-religious crises remain a critical challenge to political stability and economic development in Nigeria. Plateau State, particularly Jos South Local Government Area (LGA), experienced repeated violent conflicts between 2001 and 2011 that resulted in widespread loss of lives, destruction of property, and displacement of populations. This study examines the impact of ethno-religious crises on political and economic development in Jos South LGA. The study is anchored on Marxist Conflict Theory, which provides a framework for examining competition over material resources and political power. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 425 respondents selected using random sampling techniques. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. Findings reveal that the crises were driven by settler–indigene rivalry, religious intolerance, unemployment, illiteracy, and political manipulation by elites. The consequences included weakened political institutions, reduced civic participation, economic stagnation, destruction of markets and farms, and residential segregation along ethnic and religious lines. Although recovery was facilitated by government intervention, community reconciliation, and support from non-governmental organizations, unequal distribution of development projects and persistent mistrust continue to threaten sustainable peace. The study recommends inclusive governance, equitable development policies, youth empowerment, and sustained interfaith dialogue to consolidate political stability and economic growth in Jos South LGA.

Keywords: Ethno-religious crisis, political development, economic development, conflict, Jos South LGA, Plateau State.

Introduction

The Nigerian state is characterized by substantial ethnic and religious diversity, and the interaction of these identities has at times generated political and social tensions. Research on Jos shows that the conflict is rooted in overlapping ethnic, religious and political divisions, particularly disputes over indigene status, political representation and access to socioeconomic rights (Madueke, 2019; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021).

The return to democratic rule in 1999 also coincided with intensified competition over political representation and local authority in Jos. Scholarly studies identify the politics of indigeneity, political appointments, and the interaction between ethnic and religious identities as important dimensions of the violence that began in 2001 (Madueke, 2019; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021).

Plateau State, often referred to as the "Home of Peace and Tourism," nevertheless experienced recurrent violent conflict during the period under review. The Jos crises produced extensive deaths, displacement and destruction of property, while also reshaping residential and social relations in affected communities (Higazi, 2011; Madueke, 2019). Jos South LGA, whose headquarters is Bukuru, is one of the local government areas surrounding the state capital (Plateau State Government, 2022).

Jos South is economically important because of its agricultural, commercial and industrial activities. The period 2001–2011 therefore provides an important context for examining how communal violence affected political participation, local governance and livelihoods. Rather than treating the crises only as religious confrontations, this study considers the interaction of identity, political competition and material interests.

This study focuses on the political and economic consequences of the crises in Jos South LGA. It draws on survey evidence from residents of the twelve wards identified in the study and relates the findings to the broader literature on Jos conflict.

Problem Statement

Existing scholarship has generated substantial knowledge about the Jos crises, especially the role of indigene-settler relations, political representation and overlapping ethnic and religious identities (Madueke, 2019; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021). However, the present study is concerned specifically with how these crises affected political and economic development in Jos South LGA.

The problem addressed by this study is the developmental disruption associated with recurrent violence. The study examines whether insecurity was associated with weakened trust in local governance, reduced civic participation, economic losses, disruption of agricultural activity and relocation of businesses. Without empirical attention to these consequences at the LGA level, development and peacebuilding interventions may fail to respond adequately to the experiences reported by affected residents.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of ethno-religious crises on the political and economic development of Jos South LGA. The specific objectives are to:

• identify the primary socio-political and economic drivers of the ethno-religious crises in Jos South LGA between 2001 and 2011;

• assess the extent to which these crises weakened local political institutions and reduced civic engagement among residents;

• investigate the quantitative and qualitative impacts of the violence on the commercial, industrial and agricultural sectors of the LGA; and

• analyze the effectiveness of post-crisis recovery strategies and identify barriers to sustainable peace and development.

Literature Review

The Concept of Ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria

Ethno-religious conflict is a multidimensional form of collective conflict in which ethnic and religious identities overlap and become important bases for mobilization. In Jos, the conflict has often involved overlapping Christian/indigenous and Muslim/Hausa-Fulani identities, although scholarship cautions against reducing the conflict to religion alone. The literature identifies indigeneity, political representation, socioeconomic rights and local political competition as central issues (Madueke, 2019; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021).

The Jos literature also shows that violence transformed residential spaces and intensified separation between communities. Madueke (2019) documents how neighbourhoods became ethnic strongholds and frontiers of violence, while Vinson and Rudloff (2021) demonstrate that perceptions of local and national causes vary according to whether respondents interpret the conflict primarily through tribal or religious identities.

Political Development and Crises

Political development involves the capacity of political institutions to manage conflict, provide representation, sustain participation and deliver public services. In conflict-affected settings, violence can undermine trust and participation and can intensify identity-based political competition. Evidence from Jos indicates that disputes over political representation and indigene status have been closely connected to conflict dynamics (Madueke, 2019; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021).

Economic Development and Crisis

Economic development depends on the security of productive activities, markets, investment and livelihoods. Conflict can interrupt these activities through destruction of property, restricted movement, displacement and increased costs of doing business. In the Jos context, the literature records extensive property destruction and displacement, providing a basis for examining economic effects at the local level (Higazi, 2011; Madueke, 2019).

Gap in Literature

The literature establishes the broader political and social dynamics of the Jos crises, but the present study narrows the analysis to the reported political and economic effects experienced in Jos South LGA. This focus allows the study to connect broader explanations of conflict with local survey evidence.

Theoretical Framework

Marxist Conflict Theory

This study is anchored on Marxist Conflict Theory, particularly its materialist interpretation of social relations. Marx and Engels (1848) argue that social history is shaped by struggles arising from unequal control over material resources and power. Applied to Jos South, the theory directs attention to competition over land, economic opportunities, political influence and access to public resources.

Assumptions of Marxist Conflict Theory

• Society contains groups with unequal access to resources and political power.

• Competition over scarce or valuable resources can generate conflict between groups.

• Groups that control political and economic institutions tend to protect their interests.

• Conflict may be expressed through social identities and political institutions, even when underlying grievances are material.

• Changes in the distribution of resources and power can alter patterns of conflict.

Justification for the choice of the Theory

Marxist Conflict Theory is appropriate for this study because the Jos South crises involved disputes that extend beyond religious identity to questions of land, political representation, socioeconomic rights and access to resources. The theory helps explain how material interests and unequal power may become expressed through ethnic and religious identities. It therefore provides an analytical bridge between the reported drivers of the crises and their political and economic consequences. This interpretation is consistent with scholarship that identifies indigeneity, political representation and socioeconomic rights as important dimensions of the Jos conflict (Madueke, 2019; Vinson & Rudloff, 2021)

Methodology

Research Design and Study Area

This research utilized a descriptive survey design. This approach was chosen to capture the range of opinions and experiences of residents of Jos South. Jos South LGA consists of twelve administrative wards: Bukuru, Du, Giring, Gyel A, Gyel B, Kuru A, Kuru B, Shen, Turu, Vwang, Zawan A and Zawan B. The LGA headquarters is Bukuru (Plateau State Government, 2022).

Population and Sampling

The population of the study comprises adult residents of the twelve wards. To ensure a representative sample, a multi-stage random sampling technique was employed. First, the

wards were stratified based on the intensity of the crises they experienced. Second, 425 respondents were selected proportionally. Data collection was achieved through a 40-item structured questionnaire titled "Impact of Ethno-Religious Crises Questionnaire" (IERCQ), which had a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.84.

Results and Data Analysis

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents (n =425)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	250	58.8
Gender	Female	175	41.2
Age Group	18–35	190	44.7
Age Group	36–55	155	36.5
Age Group	56 and above	80	18.8

Source: Researcher's Computation (2026)

Analysis of Crises Drivers

The data reveal that the indigene-settler dispute was identified as the most significant driver of conflict in Jos South, with 31.8% of respondents identifying it as the primary cause. This was followed by religious intolerance (25.9%). Unemployment and poverty were cited by 18.8% of respondents, while political manipulation by elites accounted for 14.1%. These responses indicate that respondents understood the crises as having interconnected political, social and economic drivers rather than a single cause

Table 2: Perceived Impact on Political Development

Impact Variable	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Erosion of trust in local governance	45.0	33.0	22.0
Reduced voter turnout in crisis wards	52.0	28.0	20.0
Increased ethnic polarization in appointments	60.0	25.0	15.0

Source: Researcher's Computation (2026)

Discussion of Political Impact

The findings indicate substantial perceived political consequences of the crises. A combined 85% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that ethnic polarization affected appointments. Similarly, 78% agreed or strongly agreed that the crises contributed to reduced voter turnout in crisis wards, while 78% reported erosion of trust in local governance. These

findings suggest that conflict affected both confidence in local institutions and participation in political processes.

Economic Impact Analysis

The economic consequences reported by respondents were also substantial. The study found that 85% of respondents experienced direct business destruction or significant loss of income. Respondents also reported disruption to agricultural activities in Kuru and Vwang wards, where insecurity restricted access to farms. Manufacturing and other businesses were reported to have faced higher operating costs and disruption of supply chains. These findings are consistent with the broader literature, which documents property destruction and displacement associated with the Jos crises (Higazi, 2011; Madueke, 2019).

Table 3: Economic Consequences in Jos South (n =425)

Consequence	Mean Score	Interpretation
Destruction of physical market infrastructure	4.52	Very High Impact
Loss of agricultural output	4.10	High Impact
Relocation of private businesses	3.85	Moderate to High
Increased cost of living	4.60	Very High Impact

Source: Researcher's Computation (2026)

Recovery and Peace-Building Efforts

Post-2011, there have been various attempts at recovery, including state-level peacebuilding initiatives and community reconciliation efforts. The study finds, however, that respondents perceived some interventions as insufficiently connected to grassroots needs. Respondents also reported that although non-governmental organizations contributed to trauma healing, the rebuilding of livelihoods was slower. A persistent perception of unequal distribution of reconstruction projects was identified as a continuing source of mistrust.

The findings suggest that recovery should be understood as both political and economic. Restoring physical infrastructure without rebuilding trust, livelihoods and inclusive participation may leave underlying grievances unresolved.

Summary and Conclusion

The ethno-religious crises in Jos South LGA between 2001 and 2011 had significant political and economic consequences. The survey findings identify indigene-settler rivalry, religious intolerance, unemployment and poverty, and political manipulation as important perceived drivers. Politically, the crises were associated with weakened trust in local governance, reduced voter turnout and perceived ethnic polarization in appointments. Economically, respondents reported destruction of market infrastructure, loss of agricultural output, relocation of businesses and increased cost of living.

The Marxist Conflict Theory adopted in this study helps explain these findings by drawing attention to competition over resources and political power and to the ways in which material grievances can become expressed through group identities. The evidence also shows that recovery requires more than the absence of open violence. Sustainable development in Jos South depends on inclusive institutions, equitable access to opportunities, restoration of livelihoods and mechanisms for sustained intergroup dialogue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are aligned directly with the four specific objectives of the study:

1. Address the identified drivers of conflict: Government and community stakeholders should strengthen mechanisms for managing indigene-settler disputes, reduce religious intolerance, and expand youth employment and livelihood opportunities, since these were among the major drivers identified by respondents.

2. Strengthen political institutions and civic participation: Jos South Local Government should promote transparent and inclusive appointments, strengthen public accountability and encourage civic participation in crisis-affected communities.

3. Protect livelihoods and productive activities: Government should prioritize the rehabilitation of damaged market and agricultural infrastructure, improve security around farming and trading areas, and support affected businesses and farmers to restore productive activity.

4. Improve recovery and peacebuilding: Peacebuilding interventions should combine community reconciliation with livelihood reconstruction, involve local stakeholders in project allocation, and sustain interfaith and community dialogue so that recovery addresses both mistrust and material grievances.

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