

**VOLUME 6 ISSUE 2, 2021**

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**Journal of Social Sciences**

Published by

Faculty of the Social Sciences

Enugu State University of Science & Technology

[www.esutjss.com](http://www.esutjss.com)

## **Peace and Conflict Resolution as a Strategy for Societal Wellbeing (A Nigerian Perspective)**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper examined the necessities and usefulness or otherwise of the employment of the tools of peace and conflict resolution as a strategy for societal wellbeing in Nigeria within the periods of pre and post Covid-19 era. This is done with a view to evaluating the efforts of government of Nigeria in resolving conflicts vis-à-vis using the tools of peace and conflict resolution as an available strategy for the benefit of her citizens. This is because the constant interaction of Nigerians at any level will definitely generate conflict since conflict is inevitable in any social milieu. Yet for the continuous sustenance of human existence, these moments of conflicts are naturally followed by moment of peace either brought about by the intervention of a third party, civil society initiatives or by the disenchantments of the parties in conflict, hence the tendency to search for a peaceful settlement of such a conflict. The study employs secondary data generated through documentary sources. The paper again adopted Relative Deprivation, Rising Expectation and Frustration-Aggression Theory as its theoretical framework. The paper concludes that peace and conflict resolution tools remain an absolute tools for the sustenance of human existence especially in this extraordinary times of pre and post Covid-19 era when successive waves of a more contiguous variant of viral progression seems to diminish the previous efforts of government and scientists in containing the ravaging effects of the virus through vaccine production and its therapeutic use thereby constituting deadlier threats that accentuate the need for peace and conflict resolution among persons and societies.*

**Keywords:** Peace, Conflict, Covid-19 pandemic, wellbeing and Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

So long as there is a constant interaction among human beings living in a given society, either in a traditional society or at the international arena, there are bound to be conflicts. Given that man as a social being will always relate with others in the search of either a reciprocal exchange of goods or services could generate further skirmishes or unanticipated conflicts. The study of peace and conflict resolution is the shared concern of behavioural scholars, politicians, statesmen, diplomats, civil societies and civil rights organization. There is no absolute peace in a conflictual world society. Because of the interest this new area of study has generated, scholars over the years have devoted their time and energy in the teaching of peace and conflict resolution in our tertiary institutions with the aim of inculcating in students' knowledge and skill on peace and conflict resolution and at other times have created awareness among policy makers on the need to embrace such tools in the control and management of conflict whenever

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it occurs. This is because conflict is an ill-wind that blows none any good and should not be left alone. Paradoxically, in Nigeria today, the level of insecurity and conflict situations have made many especially scholars, peace advocates to question the relevance of peace and conflict resolution as a branch of discipline in the curriculum of study. Many policy makers as well have acted brazenly in such a manner that had negated the value of peace and conflict resolution in our society.

Again, mindful of the raging conflicts in Nigeria in the past few years and at the same time knowing that each day that passes bring with it a new tempo in the escalation of these conflicts with millions of lives, properties and critical infrastructures destroyed. With the Boko Haram insurgency having engulfed the whole of the Northeast region of Nigeria with its destructive tales, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) have been at loggerhead with the Central Government for years and it appears its activities are spinning out of control with its destruction of critical infrastructures in the Southeast of the country especially police stations, military barracks and security personnel. And all these have resulted in the loss of lives of our youths, women and children some of who are caught in between the crossfire. In other to overcome these conflictual situations threatening our country, there is the need to identify and analyze these triggers or indicators of conflicts at the early stages before they graduate into the exhaustive or explosive conflict situation. The imperative for this proactive action is that if parties are sensitive or responsive to address the early conflict signals, conflict could be avoided. A deeper understanding of the behaviours and the structural imbalances fuelling these social, political and economic conflicts are necessary to achieve a more desirable human condition and societal wellbeing.

According to Abbas (2015:3), peace and conflict resolution are readily available as veritable tools in analyzing, preventing or de-escalating these conflict situation. With the current wave of conflicts in Nigeria, peace and conflicts resolution strategy has become necessary as an alternative to confrontational postures and coercive diplomacy that appear to be the norm at the moment. Hence, peace and conflict resolution are made available to individuals, policy makers and political leaders in the same way as various religious and cultural leaders tend to promote peace for the societal wellbeing. Peace has a desired virtue that must be continually advanced since there is no society where absolute peace reigns or exists.

On a general note, scholars and peace advocates have attested to the fact that peace is the prime value of human existence. They have equally underscored the belief that peace is not just a thing. It has many sidedness or images. It is a multidimensional concept. Its values are enhanced if conceptualized from its many images or perspectives. From whatever perspective, peace remains a crucial element that continues to receive the attention of all sectors of our country. There is no doubt that Nigeria and her citizens need to strengthen the principles of peace and conflict resolution in order to reduce to its barest minimum the escalating situation we have inadvertently or through the act or omission of our leaders found ourselves in. This tends to have progressively reversed the developmental strides made over the years as a country. The knowledge of peace and conflict resolution could be deployed at this extraordinary period of post Covid-19 era when successive waves of a contagious variant of viral progression seems to obliterate the achievement of various efforts of the Nigerian government and scientists in containing the rampaging effects the virus. The Nigerian state have spent huge amount of capital or resources to procure vaccine and its effective delivery to get to the arms of the citizens. Palliative measures or packages have taken a huge chunk of government's budgetary allocation. Citizens who have lost their loved ones and jobs need to be rehabilitated or reinvigorated. All these soothing measures would require competent and strong leadership as well as responsive citizens that are peace and conflict resolution friendly. We need to emphasize that the understanding and knowledge of peace and conflict resolution can only be beneficial if our leaders, stakeholders, policy makers, technocrats and ordinary citizens are ready to put such knowledge into action. Applying such knowledge to real life situation on the ground could help to better the lots of most families, communities and societies at large.

The knowledge of peace and conflict resolution is important as it will arm the populace with tools to deploy in solving myriads of conflicts that are afflicting Nigeria today. This knowledge also could be of immense benefit in the resolution of the apparent conflict or misunderstanding between the Nigerian state and her citizens over the lockdown measures adopted by government and the untold hardship it impacted on the citizens. It will also help the aggrieved in the country to overcome their perceived persecution and alleged marginalization. The knowledge of peace and conflict resolution could transform the country in order to attain to a more just and equitable environment where citizens can freely interact with each other without bias or suspicion. Through peace and conflict resolution, the causes and preventive measures as well as the nature of conflict could better be appreciated and addressed to the satisfaction of

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all. This paper intends to re-emphasize the usefulness and necessity of peace and conflict resolution as a strategy in solving the country's conflictual situations and its attendant wellbeing.

### **The concept of peace**

The mention or pronouncement of the word "peace" in any human society arouses the feeling of an assurance of security and safety. Often, people venture into certain endeavours because they are sure, not just of their safety, but also of their peace of mind. While safety is usually a product of peace, peace in itself stimulates a feeling of safety required to sustain peace. Peace is a relative condition of security friendly climate that allows individuals and group relations to progressive order and security (Akpuru-Aja, 2007). Peace does not necessarily mean the absence of conflict or violence rather it reflects the security friendly system that frees individuals and group of people from fears and dangers of losing such inalienable rights such as life, liberty and property (Ibeanu, 2006). Ibeanu further defines peace as a "process involving activities that are directly or indirectly linked to increasing development and reducing conflicts both within specific societies and in the wider international community". Peace connotes system maintenance against anarchy or lawlessness. Peace could also mean the presence of justice, equality and development, existence of rule of law, respect for human life and dignity, tolerance among and between people and most importantly having inner peace, wholeness or wellbeing. Peace is constructive, cooperative, integrative and collaborative. It is a human desired condition and order of existence that allows the ruler and ruled to fulfill their life obligations with minimum fear and danger to life. Peace does not exist in situations of violence or flagrant abuse of power as each of these processes is a negation of the serenity and human desire for an ordered setting that sustains mutual co-existence. It is a prime value of human existence. It is described as public goal because it guarantees security for all rather than fear or terror. Without peace, the individual does not discover and fulfill itself.

According to Ibeanu (2006:2), despite the general knowledge of peace, there are variations in its meaning especially through the lenses of philosophy, sociology, politics, structural and strategic perspective. According to the philosophical perspective, "peace is a natural God-given state of human existence without the corruptive tendencies of man". The sociologist refers peace to a condition of social harmony in which there are no social antagonism among people or group in a given society or community. For the political scientist, peace is a political condition that makes justice possible in any given society thereby entailing political order. The

structural conception of peace assumes that the society is an inter-dependent one, and each has a role, an obligation or indeed a function. Finally, the strategist argues that the welfare and security of citizens are better protected, preserved and projected in the development and use of military force. For a society that is perpetually engulfed in violence and armed conflicts, it will view peace as absence of violence, the presence of freedom, justice, equality, development and availability of basic needs of life and wellbeing.

Sustainable peace and societal wellbeing may include the following:

- Competent and robust leadership
- Good governance
- Good followership
- Non-violent value system
- Preservation of human rights
- Creating an institutional mechanism for the promotion of more collaborative activities than discord
- Security measures to guarantee the absence from fear or threat to subjects and core values of the society

### **The concept of conflict**

One necessary condition for conflict is the reality that human beings live in groups, be it ethnic, religious, economic or political groups. Any of these groups, societies or communities have members who have different aspiration and needs. The same applies to states like Nigerian state whose component units most often clash with each other within the country in the pursuit of their respective interests. This makes disagreements an inevitable aspect of human life. Like peace, conflict has lent itself to varied but related definitions and conceptions. According to Akpuru-Aja (2007:15), conflict is an attitude, a behavior or an action or a process that introduces strains or stresses in the relationship between two or more parties on, say, the attainment of a set of interests or goals. In conflict, parties perceive or treat each other as a stumbling block that will result in frustrating the other in attaining a set of goals. Contrasting images of each other's intention or action may also create a situation of conflict. Generally, conflict has been considered as an obstacle to progress, political stability, economic prosperity and overall socio-economic development of any society because of its destructive impact. Conflict does not just exist. For every manifest or psychological conflict situation, there are bound to be conflict indicators or triggers. Often, insensitive to such indicators would create a situation of conflict. This means that conflict must be timely averted or managed properly as

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failure to do so will reflect a determined action or struggle over a goal. In terms of transition of conflict, it could graduate from conflict proper to the resistant conflict situation and finally to exhaustive or explosive conflict situation.

The categorization of conflict could be examined in its traditional view, human relation view, interactionist view and Marxist concept of conflict. The traditional view of conflict is in the negative. For them, conflict is bad. It is an ill-wind that blows none any good. This view projects the badness of conflict because it transits to violence, destruction, irrationality and physical violence. The human relation view of conflict posits that conflict is natural, innate and inevitable. Human community needs to accept conflict as part of life and its existence. This view approximates to the political realist's image. The interactionist conflict goes beyond the acceptance of conflict as inevitable to that of encouraging conflicts on the ground of harmonious, peaceful and cooperative relations which grows out of conflict. While the Marxist view assumes that the root cause of conflict and social change in historical society is man's exploitation of man by man. In relating these views to our country, it is apt to state that the Nigerian state has been bedeviled by many conflicts such as ethnic conflict, political conflict, religious conflict and economic conflict.

## **Wellbeing defined**

The English Learner's Dictionary defines wellbeing as the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy. It is important to stress that wellbeing is a more broader concept than moment-to-moment happiness, while happiness is a part of it. It also includes other things such as how satisfied people are with their whole life, their sense of purpose and their control of event around them. According to a British think-tank, wellbeing can be understood as how people feel, how they function both on a personal and social level and how they evaluate their lives as a whole. Wellbeing is the desire of most people. It is the intrinsic value of all. It is the essence or ultimate good of people i.e their self interest. In a subjective perspective, wellbeing denotes how people experience and evaluate their lives. Wellbeing as a concept could be explained in terms of mental wellbeing, physical wellbeing, economic wellbeing and emotional wellbeing. Wellbeing plays a central role in ethics since what we do depends at least to some extent on what would make someone's life go better or worse.

## **Causes and Implications of Conflict in a Covid-19 Ravaged Nigeria.**

Conflict is sometimes useful whereas at other times it retards development and depletes resources that would otherwise serve sundry developmental purposes. Conflicts could at some

points exert destructive stints on the fabrics that hold a given society. Conflicts destroy infrastructure, severe relationships, impede economies and destroy lives yet they are inevitable. The Nigerian state has had several cases of conflicts and challenges since its creation. And all these have threatened the corporate existence and sovereignty of the country. Worthy of note include the Nigeria-Biafra civil war, the political logjam occasioned by the cancellation of June 12 Presidential election that was adjudged to be the most transparent and free elections in the history of Nigeria, the Nigeria-Cameroon border dispute over Bakassi Peninsular, the EndSars protest, Boko Haram insurgency and the Ethnic separatist agitations, the spate of kidnapping, banditry and insecurity that are almost engulfing the country. The above was the situation before the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic which has complicated and compounded the already precarious situation. The Covid-19 pandemic has tremendously affected and worsened the already existing deteriorating socio-economic and psychological wellbeing of Nigerians. Livelihoods has been lost especially amongst the people that depended on daily income for survival during the lockdown. The mental health of the people have nosedived. According to WHO (2020), one in every four Nigerians is currently suffering from mental ill-health. The academic calendars of schools have been truncated as schools were shutdown.

Meanwhile the economic hardships occasioned by the deprecating and ravaging effects of the virus has placed the country and her citizens on the brink of intense conflict arising from intense competition for the scarce resources. Within the country, there are competitions among smaller ethno-political entities over national or regional resources that were more accessible in the pre Covid-19 days. Because of decline in productive outputs and other fallouts from Covid-19, there are increased competitive interactions that could give rise to conflicts over who gets what. Such conflicts no doubt could escalate to violence. Hence grinding poverty that followed the outbreak of coronavirus is an undeniable source of conflict in the post Covid-19 era especially in Nigeria where businesses remained shut down within the periods of restrictions and lockdowns. Those whose business capitals were depleted could constitute societal nuisance hence could trigger another potential source of conflict between and among societies. Politics of coronavirus cure and vaccination may continue to remain a source of conflict. In the same vein, citizen's perceptions of insincerity arising from politics of coronavirus constitute a major reason for civil disobedience to certain coronavirus protocols.

Similarly, police enforcement of the protocols guiding citizens during the lockdown and associated periods is another source of conflict during these periods and in the early post Covid-



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19 era. In the same manner, the coding of crimes associated with these protocols created legal challenges that impede smooth and hitch-free enforcements for which there is most likely going to be some manifest conflict between the citizens and enforcement agents. Increased prices of goods and services especially in an already inflationary situation could portend danger for the post Covid-19 era, since the country lacks the requisite economic ability to stabilize her economy to cushion the effects of government lockdowns. There is every likelihood that citizens of this country would aggressively respond to frustration occasioned by insufficiency or complete lack of essential goods. Uncoordinated news as well as rumors of another impending lockdown especially in African countries like Nigeria could be another source of conflict in the post Covid-19 era. Most conflicts associated with these rumors could result to panic purchases and efforts by citizens not to be caught up by the unexpected lockdown. Panics normally lead to confusion which in turn may result to conflict among the citizens and between them and not just the government and its agencies but also the law enforcement agents (i.e police) seeking to reinstate order. The latter are usually accused of high handedness and an improper handling of volatile situations. These could lead to chaos similar to the outcomes of Nigeria's EndSars Protest in September 2020.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Scholars have advanced theories that could be applied to study, analyze and understand peace and conflict situations. And since conflict or violence is multidimensional in nature, it will not be out of place to adopt a multi-theoretical approach in this analysis.

The study adopts Relative Deprivation, Rising Expectation and Frustration-Aggression theory as its theoretical framework. This is employed when examining issues pertaining to conflicts, violence or revolution.

According to Dollard *et al.* (1939: 2), every act of violence or aggression is consequent upon some form of disappointment and discontent in the system which invariably leads to frustration. The individuals or groups in order to save themselves from such frustration and discontent will engage in violence in an attempt to influence political actors or even change the system to their own advantage. Again people react aggressively to a perpetual denial of essential needs. It is on the ground of complete denial and deprivation that men rebel.

According to Ted Gurr (1970:3) on “Why Men Rebel”, in his explanation of the causes of political violence as a theory said that deprivation is a perceived discrepancy between men’s value expectations and their value capabilities (i.e. the disparity between expectations of men and their capability to realize such expectations). He went further to define value expectations as the goods and conditions of life which people believe they are rightfully entitled to; and, value capabilities as goods and conditions of life they think they are capable of attaining or maintaining given the social means available to them. Gurr further contends that societal conditions that increase average level or intensity of expectations without increasing capabilities, increase the intensity of discontent.

Roger Barker *et al.* (1941:4), posited that uprisings begin especially when people can no longer live in a given situation. In fact, at some levels of discontent and dissatisfaction especially when the issues and areas affected bother more on social and non-vital issues, human being can endure and therefore allow the status quo over time. At certain increased level of oppression and deprivation also, people can remain peaceful thereby expressing their regard for the sanctity of human life and peaceful co-existence. At this stage, they seek alternative means of redressing the real or perceived anomaly. Where government institution constitutes the problem factor at this stage, people patiently await subsequent elections to vote out these inept leaders. Also, where other social factors constitute the problems, alternatives are sought. This obviously is in an effort to preserve existing peace within the given area. When the factors responsible for the discontentment and dissatisfaction of the masses bother on economy and people’s survival, patience and accompanying endurance are jettisoned. Mass actions, revolution and violent protests seem to be the only alternative. The masses in this situation assume a position determining their fate in their own hands. It is pertinent to note that when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, aggression gets into the targeting of innocent citizens. The aggression of the enlightened could be controlled or moderated but when it involves the poor or deprived sections of the society, it becomes difficult to fathom the extent to which they will let out their bottled-up frustration and anger which is always violent.

The Frustration-Aggression theory according to the Blackwell dictionary of sociology, posits that social movements occur when frustration leads to collective, often aggressive behaviour. According to the theory and its later variations, frustration has a variety of sources. It may for example, result from deprivation caused by poor economic conditions, social oppressions or inept and warped leadership. Deprivation may even be as a result of inequality, social injustice,

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consistent inclination for mediocrity and compromise or as a result of discrimination against a citizen because of his birth (otherwise known as tribalism).

The theory further states that deprivation can be categorized into two forms; the absolute stage: where people do not have enough to survive, i.e. when they only live without enough for mere survival. And secondly, the relative stage: when people have enough to survive but less than those with whom they make comparison.

Finally, people in the society believe that they are rightly entitled to good employment or business of any sort, housing, clothing and adequate feeding. But these things are rarely available. Some other persons spent years studying and acquiring professional skills in the belief that their social status would be enhanced thereby adding value to themselves. A situation where they are not able to realize such expectations as a result of absence of enabling environment, they become emotionally stressed, frustrated and consequently aggressive, venting their anger through violence to the system or society.

### **The Handling of Conflict arising from Covid-19 Era**

According to Ojiji (2006:3), three approaches could be adopted as methods of handling post Covid-19 problems. These include:

- Avoidance
- Accommodation
- Compromise

These styles according to him are the processes through which humans handle conflicts. No doubt these styles experimented in pre Covid-19 era, could be suitable for the post Covid-19 period. Due to its peculiarities, it is necessary that we review these styles as they are applied to peace and conflict resolution as well.

#### **Avoidance**

According to Ojiji (2006: 121), avoidance occurs when one party to a potential or existing conflict ignores the conflicting issues or denies the significance of the issue in their life. It is a way of not addressing the conflict or a tactical way of postponing a conflict to a more suitable time. In avoidance, the party that intends to avoid is not just unassertive but also uncooperative in yielding to issues that causes the impending conflict. He simply walks away from the antagonist who may have expected gains. Avoidance may on several occasions be interpreted as weakness. It may also be mistaken for cowardice. Rather avoidance as a strategy for conflict

handling is simply a rationally subjected choice by a party. It is usually chosen to accommodate the limitless benefits of peace and peaceful settlement of issues. Avoidance implies humility and understanding rather than fight and violence. It is most suitable for the post Covid-19 era because it offers enormous opportunities for parties to stay apart and reappraise what they would have lost from a manifest conflict, which would have occurred if one party did not opt for avoidance as a strategy.

### **Accommodation**

Accommodation as a conflict handling style emanates from readiness of the parties to a competitive venture to cooperate by adjusting their expectations to accommodate one another. Accommodation implies that a party may be willing to allow a slight loss to another party to ensure peaceful coexistence among parties to a contest or cooperative venture. Accommodation is one of the ways to ensure social harmony as it is a reflection of a desire to preserve relationships. The phenomenon involves a loss and a win situation where the party that loses does so willingly without actually incurring a loss to the other party (Nmaju, 2009). Accommodation as a conflict handling style applies to that era when humans invoke some sense of sanity due largely to the incurable effects of the Covid-19 that ravaged the globe.

### **Compromise**

Compromise involves resolving an impending or manifest conflict by finding a middle position or common ground that mutually benefits all parties to a contest. Put differently, compromise involves resolving a situation in a manner that none of the contending parties is said to have won. In compromise, the parties accept to win some and lose some. It involves making sacrifices. Compromise has helped individuals and nations resolve conflicts without subjecting themselves to violence that may result in loss of lives and resources. Compromise, as a strategy for peace and conflict resolution has been recommended by several authors as a strategy for sustained peaceful coexistence for individuals and societies (Miall 1999).

Other measures to be considered in preventing, managing, limiting and overcoming conflict generally include the following:

- **Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution comprises an agenda setting to assist parties in dispute or conflict to establish a common ground, given certain guiding principles or conditionalities for

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peaceful co-existence. It establishes a range of principles, rules and regulations and aspirations that help disputing parties to operate. It is expected that when all the parties in a conflict work within the guidelines and conditionalities of conflict resolution, there is a possibility of exercising restraints, respecting norms against conflict. As an agenda setting process, conflict resolution should be seen as a set of peace and security guidelines for achieving relative order and stability.

### **- Conflict Management**

Conflict management is occasionally treated as conflict resolution. They are rather different processes. Conflict management derives from the guideline provisions of conflict resolution. Conflict management is the application or operational phase of conflict resolutions. It represents the enforcement mechanism, strategic responses for the achievement of ideas and goals of conflict resolution as a peace agenda. Conflict resolution represents a theoretical design, while conflict management represents the operational and implementation mechanism or process. The role of the mediator has become clear. It tries to work within the agenda setting of conflict resolution. It is an exercise that initiates room for accords, institutionalizing mechanism for achieving restraint, compliance and verification.

### **- Conflict Transformation**

Conflict transformation goes beyond conflict suppression and resolution. This is about building on longer standing relationships through a process of change in the perception of the parties, their relationship and the conditions that created the conflict. Conflict transformation entails coming into being of a new situation involving conflict issues, perceptions, relationships and commencement patterns. As conflict has become a permanent threat to life and in most cases have reversed development in societies, there is need for an adequate laying of important basis for the transformation of right values, behaviours and attitudes that will promote balanced personal, social, economic and political relations.

## **Negotiation**

Negotiation is the non-violent and out of court mechanism for enhancing the communication flow between the conflicting parties in a bid to resolving their

differences by mutual consent. The central element of negotiation is the use of dialogue as the supreme strategy of conflict resolution and mechanism. Negotiation is in tandem with an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) means. It is an alternative to a settlement in the court of law, just as it is to the use of confrontation or coercive means of settlement. It is a method open to individuals, families, associations, persons in societies. Here parties are helped to search for a solution in talking together. Negotiation de-emphasizes the rigidly held differences in interest. It builds mutual confidence in the ability and capacity of the disputing parties in coming together, talking together and resolving issues together in a frank and friendly environment.

#### - **Mediation**

Mediation is a negotiation that relies on a neutral third party. A mediator is a person who is trusted and accepted by both parties to a dispute. His role is to assist the parties to reach an agreed settlement of dispute. The procedure he adopts to achieve this is to meet each party privately, so as to understand that party's side of the story. Thereafter, he tries to bring the parties together so that they may themselves work out a compromise solution to the dispute. He does not himself suggest a solution to the parties and cannot force them to reach a settlement.

#### **Traditional method of conflict resolution**

As has been stated earlier, peace and conflict resolution tools are necessary for human existence especially within such a time when human existence is threatened by the rampaging activities of coronavirus which devastating effects make it imperative for peaceful human to human interaction as panacea for finding sustainable solution to both the traditional human conflict and the ugly effects of the virus. Here mediation by social network has increased with the emergence of age grade associations, business associations and religious organizations. Each of these may manifest in degree of cordial relationship with the disputing parties and may wish to facilitate the resumption of dialogue. Generally, a social network mediator may even be a friends, neighbours, members of families, religious or political groups. In Nigeria, a number of third parties come from families, friends and in-laws, or ethnic-religious communities and neighbours. The strength of social network mediators comes from the understanding that they too are part of the social relations network and are recognized and trusted as such by the disputants. It is also believed that a return of normal relations between the disputants would

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strengthen an existing social network in a given environment. The beneficiaries go beyond the reconciled parties to include the social network mediators, and the community at large.

The value of this approach or mechanism lies in the ability and willingness of the mediator to employ his or her authoritative influence to enhance the confidence building of the parties to further dialogue. These members of the social network have been effectively deployed during the period of restriction and lockdown to ensure that protocol guidelines are strictly adhered to by the citizens. They have become veritable tools in the implementation of lockdown rules such as social distancing, wearing of face mask and hygienic washing of hands regularly. Without such dialogue, it would have been a near impossibility to convince these skeptics or hesitants to comply with such directives.

## **Conclusion**

A critical examination of the situation in Nigeria today will reveal that all is not well with the way things are. Our country at the moment has been at a tipping point. The centre can no longer hold. A country that is abundantly blessed with all kinds of resources that any country could thrive on to be a major player in the world society has found itself in a mess politically, socially and economically. Our country has become a violent / conflict ridden society where nothing appears to be working. At the heart of these problems are the issues of leadership secession, population census, resource allocation, manipulated electoral processes, unemployment and corruption etc. The mismanagement of all the above listed factors and others have created all the conflict situations that are engulfing us today. An extreme disparity in distribution of wealth among citizens is threatening social cohesion. The youths that deserve a special place in the country as future leaders have been reduced to destitute as unemployment is out of control. Leadership and governance hardly respond to specific needs of the populace including the youths. It appears that the entire system has lost its stability and orderliness as it has been irreparably damaged. It is a truism that people tend to cause trouble when their interests are jeopardized thereby causing unnecessary tension that finally leads to conflict and violence. People also embrace conflict or violence without any proper analysis and appraisal of the situation. This is where peace education and advocacy in conflict resolution would be necessary to maintain a lasting peace and to promote peaceful co-existence in the country for development. This is apt at this extraordinary period when citizens have lost their jobs, loved ones as a result of Covid-19 pandemic. Humanity is being threatened by the successive viral progression that appears to defy every efforts of policy makers and scientists. Our so-called

leaders and elites should refrain from being conflict generators by their utterances, policies and actions and should turn to conflict preventers and managers in order to re-establish mutual trust and confidence among the people. A respected culture of peace needs to be developed through the tools of peace and conflict resolution from good values, behaviours and attributes as a way of life. It is only when this is done that power will grow not from the present coercive diplomacy and barrel of the gun but from participation, dialogue and cooperation.

### **Recommendations**

The factors that generate conflict or violence are multi-dimensional and thus require an integrated approach that involves collaborations among the key stakeholders, policy makers, teachers, students, private sectors, development partners and civil society activists. There is every need to embrace dialogue as the supreme strategy of conflict resolution and by extension conflict management. As have been stated, these listed approaches of peace making are less expensive and more integrative than adjudication that in the long run may create a situation of winner takes all and the loser goes with nothing. This outcome may deepen and expand anger, bitterness and distrust to the point of either furthering conflict or extreme violence. The trustees of government apparatuses at all levels should provide basic human needs and social welfare programmes that would reduce anger and assuage the feelings of the aggrieved sections of the country. These will enhance social cohesion and societal wellbeing. All these measures will lead to conflict reduction or suppression and weaken the extremist abilities to recruit or radicalize the vulnerable youths who are ready tools to achieve their sinister objectives or ambitions.

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