

**ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS AND GENDER IN NIGERIA'S MIDDLE
BELT**

BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores and analyses the impact of ethno-religious conflicts in the city of Jos and other parts of the Middle Belt and Nigeria on gender relations and the lives of women. The thesis addresses the question of the impact of conflict on women beyond loss of life and property as seen in other literature. It shows how ongoing conflictual relations that are not always violent, but include aspects of political competition disadvantage women.

The research locations covered by this research are urban areas. Data for this research was gathered through interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 102 respondents, recruited through purposive sampling and willingness to participate in the interview.

This thesis argues that the conflict dynamics affect the life chances of women on different levels because women are associated with the transcendence or transgression of group boundaries in their private life. The growing importance of group boundaries means that women's life choices, such as marriage, are increasingly subject to public comment and criticism. Beyond the private, the growing importance of group boundaries makes it increasingly difficult for women to participate in typically female activities such as trading and selling in local markets. At the political level, the desire for ever smaller groups to be recognised works against the representation of women, who are seen as being much less capable than men of representing group interests. And within the public sector, too, the fallout from the crisis means that women here are also subject to increasing control and scrutiny.

DEDICATION

To My Husband Bitrus Dayil Duwong and Our Children;

Kwoopnan, Kyermun, King-Karshak and Beelong for enduring my absence.

And to Kyenpiya Ayuba Afang

1973 to 2014

A Dear Sister who is greatly missed, but happily remembered and cherished.

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ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

ASUU-	Academic Staff Union of Universities
ATR-	African Traditional Religion
BBB-	British Broadcasting Corporation
CAN-	Christian Association of Nigeria
CCFN-	Christian Corpers Fellowship of Nigeria.
CEPAN-	Centre for Peace Administration in Nigeria
COCIN-	Church of Christ in Nations
ECWA-	Evangelical Church Winning All
EYN-	Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria
FCS-	Fellowship of Christian Students
FCT-	Federal Capital Territory
FGD-	Focus Group Discussion
FOMWAN-	Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria
GRA-	Government Reserved Area
IDPs-	Internally Displaced Persons
IGSR-	Institute for Governance and Social Research
IPCR-	Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution
IRK-	Islamic Religious Knowledge
ITF-	National Industrial Training Fund
JAMB-	Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board
JDPC-	Justice Development Peace Caritas
JETS-	Jos ECWA Theological Seminary

JIBWIS-	Jama'atu Izalatu Bidiah Ikamatu Sunna
JNI-	Jama 'atu Nasul Islam
MBG-	Middle Belt Group
NASFAT-	<i>Nasrul-lahi- I- Fatih</i>
NIFES-	Nigerian Fellowship of Evangelical Students
NIPSS-	National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies
NMG-	Non-Muslim Group
NPC-	National Population Commission
NPCRC-	Nigerian Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Centre
NRCRI-	National Roots Crops Research Institute
NVRI-	National Institute of Veterinary Research
SIM-	Sudan Interior Mission
SUM-	Sudan United Mission
TC-	Teachers College
TCNN-	Theological College of Northern Nigeria
TEKAN-	Tarayar Ekklesiya a Nigeria (Fellowship of Churches of Christ in Nigeria)
WACOL-	The Women's Aid Collective
WANEP-	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WIN-	Women in Nigeria
WPI-	Women for Peace Initiative
UMBC-	United Middle Belt Congress
VOA-	Voice of America

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION/REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1.1 Introduction

This study explores, describes and analyses the everyday difficulties and forms of exclusion women face as a result of the recent ethno-religious conflicts in the city of Jos and other parts of the Middle Belt.¹ It shows how conflict has affected the daily lives and gender relations in Nigeria. In particular, it analyses the impact of the conflict on different aspects of the lives of Nigerian women by looking at four areas; inter-marriage, markets, politics and the public sector. The thesis addresses the impact of conflict on women beyond the loss of life and property by looking at everyday conflict relationship and what it means for women to live in an increasingly politicised society.

The study shows how ethno-religious conflict has led to the growing exclusion of women from many aspects of life and similarly many levels of governance, as the oppression which takes place through the way they are viewed in cultural and religious terms is intensified by the nature of the ethnic and religious conflicts. This is especially so when other forms of interest are involved, such as competition for scarce resources, and the intersection of ethnic and religious identities and their

¹The Middle Belt area of Nigeria refers to Kwara State, Kogi State, Benue State, Plateau State, Nasarawa State, Niger State, Taraba State, Adamawa State as well as the southern parts of Kaduna State, Kebbi State, Bauchi State, Gombe State and Borno State. It comprises people that exist in Nigeria with a consciousness, identity and culture that is different from the Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri of the far North. It is a geo-political term, with a lot of ethnic and religious connotations. See Logams, (2004); Tyoden, (1993); Dudley, (1968).

politicization. Bayart's (2009)² *Politics of the Belly* explains that the manufacturing and utilisation of inequality as a method for the personal accumulation of private wealth in Africa has been responsible for a variety of discriminatory practices and abuse of office for personal gain and the conflict that feeds off this manufactured inequality has created particular difficulties for women.

A number of studies which show the intricacies related to the struggle for scarce resources within the Nigerian Federal system include Benedict (1991); Kastfelt (1994); Kukah (1994); Falola (1998); Chabal & Daloz (1999) and Suberu (2001). These have shown how ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt and Jos is related to historical, social, cultural, political, religious and ideological biases which have continued to impact on the Nigerian polity at the regional, state, and local government levels. Many of them also explore how these conflicts have filtered to the level of personal relationships. However, these studies have so far failed to analyse in depth the implication of the struggle for scarce resources on gender relations and on women's everyday life experiences. In fact, most of the literature on the ethno-religious conflict in Jos, the Middle Belt and Nigeria has given little attention to impact of conflict on these issues, as the literature that focuses specifically on gender and conflict concentrates on the more dramatic impact of conflict violence on women in terms of loss of life, property and the violation of human rights. As a result, the everyday impact of conflict on women remains understudied. This study, therefore, sheds light on the need to look beyond the

² Refer to Bayart's (2009) *Politics of the Belly Metaphor*. He in fact disagrees with those who propose the separation of family problems from political problems. The text provides an explanation of the effect of personal and family rivalries [relations] on the state and power. His ability to carefully explain the link between ethnic [religious] strategies and resources of the modern economy is related to this study.

most obvious impacts of conflict and take a holistic view of gender and, in particular, women's lives. Taking gendered everyday experiences seriously, this thesis presents evidence of the situation of women in Nigeria primarily on the basis of personal narratives, field notes and observation.

As women constitute 68,293,683 million of Nigeria's population of 140,003,542 million (NPC, 2006),³ they cannot be ignored in any discussion relating to the wellbeing and development of the society, despite their continuous subordination to men in many aspects of life. Thus, the study is premised on the grounds that women must be considered an integral part of any conflict or peace process both because of their numerical significance and their importance for the nation's economy. Because violence is gendered (Liebling-Kalifani & Baker, 2010: 190), the incessant conflicts in Jos and the Middle Belt constitute a major setback to the aspirations of many women to live a peaceful private life, to embark on income-yielding activities without coming face to face with danger, to participate in governance without fear of harassment and to meaningfully contribute to the development of the economy in their various careers.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As stated above, the purpose of this research is to examine the ways in which the ethno-religious conflicts in the Middle-Belt Region of Nigeria have impacted on the

³ NPC stands for the 'National Population Census' of Nigeria.

lives and livelihoods and gender relations of women in Nigeria. The main research question addressed in this research is:

- To what extent has ethno-religious conflict impacted on women's lives and how has it affected gender relations in the Middle-Belt Region of Nigeria?

Four sub-questions which represent each of the themes of this thesis have been posed in order to provide answers to the main question:

- i) In what ways has ethno-religious conflict influenced the attitude, perception and views of the community towards women and most especially women in inter-faith marriages, and how has this affected their daily lives?
- ii) In what ways has ethno-religious conflict constituted a setback to women's trade ventures and market networks, and how has this affected their ability to embark on sustained income yielding activities?
- iii) In what ways has ethno-religious conflict influenced attitudes towards the political participation of women, and by extension the ability of women to establish themselves as political leaders?
- iv) In what ways has ethno-religious conflict affected the attitude towards women in the labour market and how has this influenced relationships and the ability of women to progress in their various careers?

1.3 Objectives of the Research

As already noted, the objective of this thesis is to provide an understanding of the impact of ethno-religious conflict on women's lives beyond the very obvious impact

of violence, such as loss of life, property and the violation of human rights. In order to do this it refers to the literature on scarce resources in the Nigerian Federal system and the political manipulation of ethnic and religious sentiments for personal gain in order to explain the causes of conflict. It then builds on this literature to explore the negative implications of conflict on women. This study also explores, describes and analyses how the conflict impacts other structures in Nigerian society and how this in turn has transformed gender relations in inter-faith marriage, in the markets, in politics and in the work-place.

To do this, the study looks at events which took place between 1993 and 2013 in Jos and other parts of the Middle Belt to articulate the impact of conflict on women's daily lives. The conclusion is intended to motivate more research in the area of conflict and gender relations in Nigeria. It is argued that future studies on Jos and Nigeria's Middle Belt should take women's issues more seriously and examine the impact of conflict on women in more depth. It is my hope that this research will be a reference point for studies on gender in the Middle Belt and Nigeria at large.

1.4 Significance of the Research

The significance of this research is that it contributes to:

- Redressing the gender imbalance in the existing literature on ethno-religious conflict through the contextualisation of women's experiences.
- Explaining the impact of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos and Nigeria's Middle Belt region on women's everyday lives, especially inter-faith marriage, market relations, politics and professional careers.

- Providing adequate information on how ethno-religious conflict has influenced attitudes towards the political participation of women, and by extension women's ability to establish themselves as political leaders.
- Suggesting that a consideration of gender in any analysis of the impact of conflict in Nigeria will be helpful in providing further dimensions through which the impact of conflict can be analysed.

1.5 Scope of the Research

The year 1993 marked the beginning of an attempted democratic dispensation, and an important milestone in the political history of Nigeria. It also marked the beginning of a movement by the central government to interfere with the results of elections in Nigeria particularly with the annulment of the June 12 presidential election.⁴ Both the annulment of the June 12 [1993] presidential election by the Babangida regime, and the self-succession effort of the Abacha regime intensified ethnic, regional and religious mobilisation identities to the extent that, together with corruption in public office, these have become the most negative dominant features of Nigerian politics (Jega, 2002: 40).

Thus, the failed attempt to return to civilian rule in 1993 is regarded by some as having regional and religious connotations which have had serious implications for the 1999 elections in Nigeria and beyond. This is because the suspension of the 1993 elections

⁴ The 12 June 1993 election is an important milestone in Nigeria's political history. Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola (AKA M.K.O Abiola), a Moslem Southerner won the election under the Social Democratic Party (SDP). But soon after the elections, Gen Babangida annulled the election results.

convinced the people that elections can be a do-or-die affair for the regional and religious elite group capable of manipulating power and exploiting the Nigerian Federal system. Therefore, this research covers the period from 1993 to 2013 which encompasses the annulment of elections in June, 1993 by the Babangida regime, the last days of military regimes in the country and the beginning and establishment of the country's fourth era of civilian rule. The choice of this period is also predicated on the fact that the growth of democratic processes, especially the elections from 1999 onwards, has contributed to the emergence of ethnic and religious competition in the struggle for political and economic power and representation. Focusing on the way in which competition within succession of regime has had an impact on the everyday lives of women, the thesis explores the complex processes of gendered inequality and empowerment in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria and the Federal system as a whole. The next section provides an analysis of the way in which Federal competition contributes to gender inequality and how it disadvantages women.

1.6 Federal Competition and Ethno-Religious Conflict in Jos and the Middle Belt: Review of the Literature and Summary of Existing Research

1.6.1 Review of the Literature

This thesis draws on diverse theoretical approaches, but its analysis is situated within debates about Federal competition, political manipulation and the politicisation of ethnic and religious sentiments in Nigeria, while at the same time maintaining a strong focus on gender. In the process of the struggle over Nigeria's scarce resources, ethnic and religious differences have always been mobilised and also manipulated. Where

such competition has led to conflict, the practices and debates surrounding it have affected women's everyday lives in many ways. As the grassroots gendered dimensions of ethnic and religious competition in Nigeria have not hitherto been explored in detail, a broad theoretical approach enables this thesis to explore how regional group struggles as well as individual struggles have shaped women's experiences and livelihoods.⁵

As mentioned earlier, a large proportion of the studies on conflict in Jos, the Middle Belt and Nigeria have emphasized the humanitarian and symbolic impact of the conflict on the people who live there, including women. Such research tends to focus on the dramatic changes directly associated with conflict, such as loss of life and property, rape and displacement, and this focus is closely linked to NGO and foreign donor work that centres on providing material relief or psychological support to victims of violent conflict. Long term approaches that seek to understand how day-to-day lives have been transformed by conflict do not normally feature in such analyses.

The general absence of everyday gendered concerns in the study of conflict in Nigeria has meant that gendered analyses of conflict and group competition receive little attention. Despite a large volume of contemporary literature on conflict in Jos and the Middle Belt (Gofwen, 2004; Sha, 2005; Shut, 2005; Best, 2007; Fukshiwe, 2010; Mavalla, 2014; Gwamna, 2010; Agang, 2011), the analysis of this conflict has not been concerned with women's everyday experiences. Where women are mentioned in this literature (Best, 2007; Gwamna, 2010; Habu, 2012), they usually serve as examples to illustrate a point or support a wider argument, but without detailed analytical attention

⁵ Scarce resources used in this context refers to, but not limited to political power, political position or office, land ownership, chieftaincy position, economic space and professional space.

to the degree to which their experiences reflect everyday gendered differences. By exploring and analysing the day-to-day experiences of women in Jos and other parts of the Middle Belt, the changing conditions of women in these societies, both as a direct and as an indirect result of conflict, can also be explored. Focusing on the impact of conflict on women's everyday experiences in marriage, the market, politics and the public sector, this research goes beyond the existing literature on violence and conflict and emphasises the need to pay greater attention to understanding the indirect and everyday impact of ethnic and religious rivalry on gender relations.

Focusing on the effects of ethno-religious competition, the theoretical perspective adopted in this study also relates to literature that offers an understanding of the workings of the Nigerian Federal system. The thesis follows the argument that the disbursement of the country's central oil income through a system of Federal, State and local government institutions has intensified group competition over the control of local state institutions, and in turn led to the emergence of ever smaller areas seeking recognition from the state (Suberu, 2001). At each level, the elites of relevant groups fashion themselves in response to the resulting competition and mobilise support on the basis of ethnic and religious self-assertion. In an attempt to explain this scenario, Bayart (2009: 55) has pointed out that "ethnicity is almost never absent from politics in Africa...It exists mainly as an agent of accumulation – both of wealth and power." Bayart's reference to the tensions between the Yoruba and Hausa in Ibadan as well as similar conflicts in other African countries- Uganda and Zanzibar - reveals not so much disembodied linguistic or cultural opposition but instead a struggle for the control of the town and its resources in the first case, or for trade in the second. Ethnic

difference is thus a strategy aimed at the acquisition and control of resources of the modern economy (see Bayart, 2009: 55-58).

As a result of elite strategies, not only has inequality between ethnic groups in the Middle Belt and Nigeria continued to widen but 'within group' inequality appears to be growing as well. This is because groups are willing to tolerate more 'within group' inequality because of what Horowitz (2000) called group worth. This can be said to be the situation in Nigeria, where ethnic nationalities focus more on group identity in relation to other groups, while condoning widening inequality between men and women within groups.

As Kastfelt (1994) has illustrated in relation to Christian groups in Adamawa State, the practices and debates surrounding these local forms of self-assertion in turn re-frame both group identities and the way in which groups engage with each other. At both levels, women are subject to a wide range of threats and forms of social control because part of the way boundaries are maintained in society is through controlling them. In tribal associations and religious groups in Africa, for example, one way that some groups maintain their self-esteem is a focus on superiority or purity through maintaining the sanctity of the sexuality of the body of the woman (see Mahdi, 1989). Also both Christianity and Islam include many debates and traditions that centre on the control of women and female purity. So in situations of conflict, these forms of control and domination form a growing part of the perception and treatment of women.

Given that this process has not been explored for conflict societies in Africa, and indeed Nigeria, in a detailed manner, this thesis rejects a grounding of its analysis in what Collins (2000: vii) refers to as a "singular theoretical tradition," and instead depends on

a range of suitable approaches to capture the different aspects of the impact of conflict on women's lives and lived experiences. The advantage of this approach is that it enables the research to focus closely on trends and processes at the grassroots that have hitherto received little attention in relation to conflict. Exploring the gendered impact of conflict from the bottom up, in order to re-think the wider structural dynamics highlighted in the existing literature on conflict, this thesis focuses on field research and primary sources such as narratives gained from interviews rather than on the discussion and testing of existing hypotheses taken from secondary literature. At the same time it relies on such literature in order to provide context to its own research and to support the arguments put forward. The next section looks at the impact of the colonial legacy of difference in Nigeria.

1.6.2 The Colonial Legacy of Difference

Violent conflict is perhaps a more usual part of human life than the literature on conflict sometimes suggests. While conflict in Nigeria certainly predated the expansion of the Sokoto Caliphate in the nineteenth century and colonial rule in the twentieth century, many contemporary conflicts, especially in Northern Nigeria, still reflect the structural imbalances reified by or created under British colonial rule which laid the foundation for the present day ethnic, regional and religious conflict (Nnoli, 1980; Turaki, 1993; Kastfelt, 1994; Falola, 1998; Logams, 2004).

Thus, Turaki's (1993) analysis of the British colonial legacy in Northern Nigeria gives a vivid description of the policies, practices and attitude of the Colonial Administration towards Muslim and Non-Muslim Groups (NMG) in Northern Nigeria which has partly contributed to the present-day problems in locations like Jos and other Middle Belt

areas.⁶ According to Turaki (1993:4), the ‘Colonial Administration was responsible for the institutionalisation of status and the fabrication of differences.’ As many NMGs were seen to have no centralised political structures, they fell under the political overlordship of the Fulani and Hausa rulers under the Indirect Rule System (see also Okpu, 1977; Kukah, 1994; Logams, 2004). In the colonial state, the NMGs were subordinated systematically to Hausa-Fulani political control. This system established or perpetuated the differential treatment and uneven socio-political development of ethnic groups, which often included their exclusion from political participation and stratified group inequality (Turaki, 1993). Such structural differences – today, many would say injustices – have continued to be sustained and re-produced within the Nigerian polity.

1.6.3 Colonial Policy of Inclusion and Exclusion

Adekunle (2012: 108) points out that the “divide and rule strategy adopted by the colonialist[s]” was intended to obtain control over Nigerians by setting them against each other. For example, after the British conquered Yola in 1901, they created a Fulani sub-imperialism by choosing the Fulani as their political allies. This situation subjected many of the non-Islamic groups which had been able to stay independent of the Fulani in the 1900s to Fulani hegemonic control. This situation in turn created long-lasting conflicts between the Fulani hegemons and non-Muslim people (Kastfelt

⁶ The British colonial legacy here ‘refers to the colonial philosophy of nation-state building which used racial, ethnic, tribal, religious and cultural values to create and establish a colonial social order.’ In Nigeria, colonial administrative policies used religion, culture and social status as a means of social stratification. This contributed to the animosity and mutual distrust amongst the various ethnic and religious communities in Nigeria and laid the foundation for the present day ethnic and religious clashes. See Okpu, (1977) and Turaki, (1993).

1994:13).⁷ Often headed by newly converted Christians, many non-Muslim peoples resisted the alliance between the British and the Fulani, and thus began the Middle Belt Movement (MBM) as a reaction to colonial and internal domination (Turaki, 1993; Logams, 2004).⁸

The creation of ethno-religious difference and hierarchy was also achieved by separating linguistic groups from one another, particularly in residential areas (Nnoli 1980: 3). In Northern Nigeria, it was official British Policy to separate the Hausa-Fulani from the Southerners. At first, Southern and Northern migrants to Northern cities lived together in harmony with their hosts. This embarrassed the official view that only conflict characterised contact among African tribes, and was considered a potential threat to Indirect Rule which relied on Hausa aristocracy. Hence, the migrants were forced to set up in separate quarters called Sabongaris.⁹ Initially, both Southern and Northern migrants lived in the Sabongaris. Later, the Northern migrants were separated and compelled to live in yet another section of the city called Tudun Wada. Those who were favourably disposed to the migrants were reported as 'not to be trusted on this question' (Nnoli, 1980: 4).

In this way the colonial administration complicated and controlled cohabitation among different Nigerian groups in many parts of Nigeria. It is likely that this policy also shaped

⁷ These conflicts have re-emerged and increased in intensity since the annulment of the June 12 1993 elections and the return of the country to democratic rule in 1999.

⁸ The Middle Belt Movement (MBM) began in 1949. The idea was generated in more strongly in 1949 and came to the fore and became more prominent between 1950 and 1967. Top of the agenda was the creation of a separate Middle Belt Region separated from the Islamic society of the North. See Logams, (2004).

⁹ *Sabongari* is an Hausa word referring to 'New Township.'

views on social relationships more generally, and on inter-marriage in particular. If inter-marriage was considered an anomaly, this certainly affected women more strongly than men and made them the objects of suspicion both from members of their own groups and those they married into.

1.7 Conflict and Antagonism Among Groups Within the System

Conflict arising out of competition over access to the colonial and postcolonial state became a central theme in the political history of Nigeria. While local circumstances are often subtly different, similar trends have shaped the political landscape of other parts of the Middle Belt and Northern Nigeria as a whole (Turaki, 1993; Falola, 1998). Colonial strategies of exclusion and subordination led to an implicit institutionalisation of statuses that prevailed throughout the post-colonial period, with non-Muslim communities in Northern Nigeria usually occupying the status of religious as well as political outsiders. State policies concerning the separation of different ethnic groups also affected other forms of sociality and mobilisation. In many parts of Nigeria, ethnic associations began to form, and while political ties also reflected regional rivalries and class, ethnic and religious ties eventually constituted a driving force behind the foundation of most political parties. For instance, the Northern People's Congress (NPC), founded in 1952 was dominated by the interests of the Islamic power-holders of Northern Nigeria. Its main opposition party, the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), reflected the political elite of Kano and was popularly associated with the commoner or *talakawa*.¹⁰ In contrast, the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC),

¹⁰ 'Talakawa is a Hausa word for meaning commoner or common citizen. The party 'Northern Elements Progressive Union' (NEPU) literally stands for Government of the commoner.

also a minority party, was a party whose members were almost exclusively Christian (Kastfelt, 1994:71-72). The creation of parties based on ethnic and religious bonds accordingly resulted in inter-regional and inter-ethnic mistrust and political intolerance and protectionist politics in the regions (Bello, 1962). Ethnicity and religion thus became what Nnoli (1980: 10) refers to as “a mask for a privileged class,” which continued into the post-independence era. The politics and workings of the post-independence era is discussed in the next section.

1.8 Politics in Post-independence Nigeria

This political trajectory has had a lingering effect on the politics of independent Nigeria. Thus, the Northern Independence politician Sir Ahmadu Bello referred to the Amalgamation of Nigeria which united the different ethnic and religious groups of North and South under one government as “the mistake of 1914” (Bello, 1962). His Southern counterpart, Obafemi Awolowo, referred to Nigeria as a mere geographical expression, again with the intention to underline how different its people and cultures were. Others have since opined that Nigeria existed only on paper (cf. Kirk-Greene, 1971). As a result, Nigerians continued to see themselves as separate people and often understood themselves to be members of what Benedict (1991) refers to as “imagined communities” on the basis of shared language or religion.

Thus, the Nigerian Federal system became nothing more than an artificially constructed agglomeration of diverse ethnicities and other loosely united groups with little trust for the other (Falola, 1998: 52). In addition, the lingering regional competition and struggle led to the development of negative social values like elitism, greed,

dominance, aggressiveness, exploitation, parochialism, tribalism, regionalism and religious favouritism among those who had been relatively advantaged under British rule (Turaki, 1993). This led to mutual fears and suspicions among Nigerian groups, which 'was heightened by the differential spread in the pattern of Western education' (Elaigwu, 2011: 7), which in Northern Nigeria often privileged Christian groups. The extension of education to more women during the colonial and post-colonial era also highlighted gendered differences between competing groups.

The negative social status ascribed to cultural and religious others, particularly women, within the "colonial economic and social structure" (Nnoli 1980: 10) has made it possible for those in power to take advantage of the weak. While the political leaders in each region continued to forge alliances whenever they deemed fit between themselves - as the saying goes, in politics, there are no permanent friends, only permanent interests - the main interest of the Nigerian elites has been to gain control of central resources which remain the characteristic feature of the Nigerian Federal system. In such situations, fragile states like those of the Middle Belt of Nigeria are often vulnerable to conflict because their populations tend to see their governments as protecting the interest of a few and therefore as ineffective, illegitimate, or both. And as the elite has sought to exploit and deprive the population of control over their own lives by manipulating ethnicity and religion, it has not been concerned about providing a safe economic, social and working environment or ensuring that women are politically involved. Therefore, women as a group are deeply disadvantaged by a politics centred on the competition of regional or local elites.

The resulting divisions have thus had an overall negative impact on women, whose wellbeing is systematically considered to be a secondary problem to the ethnic and

religious competition that structures inter-group struggles. Indeed, in many contexts, as groups defined their morality vis-a-vis each other, the secondary social roles of women even became part of an ideology of competition. Such competitive gendered ideologies shaped the opportunities of women in marriage, as well as in trade, politics and careers in the formal sector.

Certainly, during the colonial and early postcolonial era, little effort was made to integrate women into the Nigerian economic, political and social systems. While colonial rule disenfranchised both men and women, women were more strictly excluded from local structures of the state, such as the Native Administration. Local opposition against colonial exclusion and the internal hierarchies ossified under colonial rule was not primarily concerned with addressing this gender imbalance. In the 1950s, despite strong support by women, and especially market women in general, for the nationalist movement, only three¹¹ women were appointed to high political office. Thus the ethnic and religious rivalry encouraged by the colonial administration, as well as the early postcolonial state's own explicit disadvantaging of women, has excluded women from politics and important sections of the public sector.

But although women in the past were rarely given access to institutional power within various groups in the community, they have increasingly been able to withstand the pressure not to engage in political activities, and even to become highly militant when the need arises (UNRISD, 2005:17). According to Adekunle (2012: 116), the 'willingness of Nigerian women to be more involved in socio-economic and political life

¹¹ The three women include; Olufumilayo Ramsome Kuti, Chief Margeret Ekpo and Janet Mokuolu.

in Nigeria led to the formation of Women in Nigeria (WIN) in 1983, with a militant approach to the mobilisation of women.¹²

But often the mobilisation of women did not lead to political representation, as was evident during the 1999 elections when women constituted about 27 million out of the 47 million registered voters, but only 1.6 percent obtained political office. (Agina-Ude, 2003; Alubo, 2004). The overall percentage of women in positions of political leadership did not significantly increase in either the 2003 (Egwu, 2005; Alubo, 2004), 2007 or 2011 elections. Closely associated with the insignificant presence of women is the politics of disorder, which is explained in the section below.

1.8.1 The Politics of Disorder in Nigeria and the Middle Belt

At independence, the Nigerian constitution encouraged ethnic competition not only at the grassroots but also between the parties that dominated the country's three (later four) administrative regions. The increasing scale of this competition eventually led to the breakdown of political order in the Southwest and, in response to the Southeast's secession, the Civil War (1967-70). Confronted with the escalation of violence, then Head of State Gen Yakubu Gowon (1966-75) and his successor General Obasanjo (1976-79) reformed the state's political structure by introducing a centralised Federal system where most income went to the central state and was then disbursed to originally 12 (now 36) Federal states (and, today, a Federal Capital Territory). The introduction of a centralised Federal system contributed to a decline in inter-regional

¹² One of WIN's objectives is to end the oppression and exploitation of women. See Adekunle, (2012).

competition. At the same time, it encouraged new forms of struggle directed at the centre.

As in other Federalist nations such as India, Switzerland and Canada, Federalism in Nigeria was developed in order to accommodate the cultural and religious diversity within the country. Giving access to the local state to a larger number of local elites, it broke up the three ethno-regional monolithic blocs associated with the Regions. Offering greater inclusion, Federalism was meant to foster national unity by allowing new state-based elites to control their own administrations (Suberu, 2001; Eliagwu, 2005). Thus Federalism protected important ethnic minorities from the direct hegemony of the bigger ethnic groups and ensured a more equitable spread of resources.

However, as long as the responsibility for controlling and channelling central resources to the federating constituencies lay with the centre (Suberu, 2001: 7), the logic of group mobilisation in order to gain access to the local state remained valid. As Nigeria's centrally managed oil income intensified the quest for the allocation of centrally held resources, 'the centre became an increasingly big prize to win' (Eliagwu, 2005: 15). 'Ethno-distributive pressures' (Suberu, 2006:68) continued to shape the politics of the centre, with a growing number of states and similarly ethnic groups involved in an unending struggle to gain administrative recognition (Suberu, 2001; Eliagwu, 2005).

Referring to this distributive logic, Bayart (2009: xxii) described Nigeria's Federal income as the "national cake." The desire to share in this scene set the centre stage for members of Nigeria's different groups to invoke ethnic [and religious] differences in

other to gain their own administrative territory, whether at state or local government level, and by implication to gain access to the state's resources (Bayart, 2009: 218).

In the process of group differentiation and competition over access to the state, religious difference has played an important role. Often closely linked to ethnic and other forms of difference, religious boundaries have continued to be mobilised in the struggle over access to state and administrative power. As a result, religious and ethnic competition has increased as the units of the Federal system have become smaller under military rule. Further, the continuous agitation for State and Local Government creation suggests the possible gains to be derived from the emphasis on difference. But while state creation has come to a halt with the return to civilian rule in 1999, the liberalisation of political competition has nonetheless contributed to an increasing mobilisation of ethnic and religious difference in the attempt to capture state power. Bayart (2009: xxii) has shown how the "democratic transition [return to civilian rule] was widely experienced as a new form of access to what has been referred to as the national cake in Nigeria." Reflecting on the assertion of politics of the belly (Bayart, 2009) and the ongoing process of the division and factionalisation of local and regional elites focused on the control of community, local government, state and Federal politics, Nigeria continues to mobilise along ethnic and religious lines (cf. Kukah, 1994; Falola, 1998) as a broader strategy of control and exclusion.

Since Federalism was introduced in Nigeria, and since the advent of democracy in 1999, religious and communal crises have been on the increase. Religious and ethnic sentiments are deliberately mobilised to fuel these crises, not only in Jos and the Middle Belt, but Nigeria as a whole (Best, 2004; Gwamna, 2010; Boer, 2004). It has been argued that these crises are often the result of a deliberate manoeuvring of the

polity by the political class and its religious zealots (Usman, 1987; Boer, 2004; Gwamna, 2010; Kaigama, 2012).

Thus, ethnic and religious loyalties and differences are responsible for most of the contentious issues in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Further, Ter Haar (2005) is of the opinion that the real issue in conflicts is the pressure to share resources with others which most groupings are unwilling to do. She also notes that the politics of domination has come to influence relationships between various groups (Ter Haar, 2005: 4). In such situations, political violence becomes legitimised through ethnic and religious ideologies.

It is important to note that the Middle Belt region has been recognised as accommodating the largest number of Nigeria's ethnic minorities. These ethnic groups have different images of their histories, cultural identities, ancestral heroism, and a sense of originality and indigeneity over areas of land occupied by them creating strong tribal loyalty. This loyalty is fundamental to most residents of Jos, but this alliance is somewhat cross-cut by political and religious differences (Plotnicov, 1967). In this context, ethnic communities that believe they have been the first to settle in a place see all others that arrive after them within the same territorial space as settlers or "indigenes versus migrants or non-indigenes" (Best, 2004: 8). Arguing self-defence, Northern Christians, usually settlers, have begun to justify violence as a way of protecting their lives and faith against non-indigenes.

Emphasis on the size of groups also shapes public debate. Thus the predominantly Christian Beroms and Tivs claim they are the majority in Plateau State and Benue State respectively. In contrast, the Muslim Fulani, Hausa and Kanuri claim to constitute

the majority in Nasarawa State. These numerical issues have bred terror and insecurity among ethnic communities especially during political contestations, because they are linked to the ability to mobilise violent groups. In the Middle Belt, ethnic and religious competition has led to the creation of many ethnic militias, for example in the Ombatse in Nasarawa and the Akwat Atap in Southern Kaduna. The emergence of such militias, has deepened the divisions between the various ethnic and religious groups due to feared and experienced violence (Salawu, 2010: 345; Higazi, 2007).

The contestation of numbers is also linked to religious competition. For instance, during the appointment of Ibrahim Dasuki as the Sultan of Sokoto in 2014, both the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Voice of America (VOA), reported that the Sultan was the spiritual head of the Muslims in Nigeria, a group which comprises 40 percent of the population. Within a week, letters about official condemnation of such a low percentage followed. Depending on the source of the responses, it was then stated that 70 percent and 80 percent of the population were supposed to be Muslims. In 1986, Abubakar Gumi¹³ said that the Nigerian population comprised 80 percent Muslims, five percent Christians and 15 percent others. When he received the King Faisal prize in 1987, he claimed a Muslim population of 70 percent for the country (Gumi, 1992).

Similar claims were made during the 1999 and 2003 elections in Jos. The Muslims, claiming that they constituted 80 percent of the population of Jos North Local Government, automatically expected to win elections as the chair of the Local Government at all times. Similar events have taken place in Kaduna, Benue and some

¹³ Sheik Abubakar Gumi was an outspoken Islamic scholar and Grand Khadi of the Northern Region of Nigeria from 1962 to 1967.

parts of Nasarawa State, where widely held beliefs about local majorities did not lead to electoral success. These expectations illustrate the potential for conflict in Nigeria as groups lay claim to the control of access to Federal resources based on the politics of number (see Suberu, 2001).

Summing up the post-colonial politics which characterise the Middle Belt of Nigeria, Chabal and Daloz (1999) explain how post-colonial experiences have contributed to the sedimentation of a political disorder. As the state is informal and deeply involved in the manufacturing of differences, it offers little alternative to the powers of local leaders and cliques who claim superiority. Given the ubiquity of violence and the absence of an institutionally autonomous and relatively impartial state affording protection for its citizens, it is imperative for ordinary people to maintain links with those who have power. This need confirms the apparent importance of primordial solidarity, on which people draw in order to establish themselves as clients of powerful leaders. By both benefiting from, and confirming, the importance of ethno-national difference, political disorder has become a resource for clientelist politics (Chabal & Daloz, 1999: 20 & 162).

But while Chabal and Daloz offer a convincing model, they do not explore how the historical and cultural processes associated with conflict and disorder operate at the grassroots level. As a result, the gendered nature of disorder remains irrelevant to their, and others, analysis.

1.9 The Missing Gender Dimension

As this thesis illustrates, the federally-inspired dynamics in Nigeria affect the life chances of women on different levels. At the political level, the desire for ever smaller groups to be recognised works against the representation of women. At the private level, the growing importance of group boundaries means that women's life choices are increasingly subject to control. An example of this is an increasingly felt need to control women's marital choices. Further, as married women are regarded as mediators or links between families, their own and that of the family they marry into, they stand in-between their kin and in-laws. This in-between position challenges group boundaries by creating and affirming links between ostensibly different communities.

Beyond the private, the growing importance of group boundaries makes it increasingly difficult for women to participate in the informal sector, and especially in typically female activities such as trading and selling, because many trading networks historically cut across ethnic and religious differences. As existing networks are replaced by parallel ethno-religiously based economic and political structures, the increased violence and insecurity of change, as well as the growing control of female activities, is often associated with a relative empowerment of men vis-à-vis women.

In the public sphere, competition and conflict exclude women partly because of their greater – perceived or real – vulnerability to violence. In addition to this, the fact that local debates about inclusion and exclusion centre on ethnic and religious boundaries rather than on different social groups means that women are less likely to be included in the local political elite. Given the association of women with the transcendence or transgression of group boundaries in private life, they are, in the Nigerian context, seen to be much less capable than men of representing overall group interests. Moreover, the privileging of ethnic and religious difference in political discourse means that the

representation of different social groups, including those defined by gender, appears to many people as having secondary importance.

In addition to the question of representation, the struggles over the control of resources at the local government level mean that the public sector is increasingly divided and subject to scrutiny from below. The increasing division of the population into separate factions means that even within the formal professional environment of public sector workers, ethno-religious difference is the starting point for suspicion and discrimination. Given the importance of gendered differences in the Muslim-Christian competition shaping Jos, this means an increasing focus on, and control of, female behaviour and dress within the sector. Such scrutiny, fuelled by the widespread sense of alienation at the communal level from those public sector workers who belong to another group, also increasingly shapes the interaction of public sector workers with the public. In professions dominated by Christian women, such as education, this can lead to particular forms of gendered aggression and alienation.

Where violence and disorder become the norm and shape practice, even in government institutions, they not only directly affect but also transform all aspects of the public and private order. Importantly for this thesis, Galtung (1990: 292) describes violence as having two dimensions, namely direct violence or 'intentional acts aimed at hurting another human being or the environment' and structural or indirect violence, i.e. 'those [acts] that hinder the acquisition of a person's basic needs for identity and freedom' (Khoja-Moolji, 2012: 2). The notion of structural violence is important because it describes the everyday forms of exclusion and disadvantage suffered by all women, not just as victims of direct violence, in Nigeria's Middle Belt, but also the everyday form of control and cultural domination.

Therefore, as group boundaries are hardened and affirmed, women are increasingly seen, in all areas of life, not as potential links between groups but as intruders and threats. As political leaders even at the lowest level of government invest great energy in maintaining exclusive control of their political territory, women are increasingly treated with suspicion by the community and family they live in because their loyalty is to both their kin and in-laws. As the exclusion of women is gradually becoming the norm in Nigerian politics, one can also understand the politics of disorder as an ongoing gendered struggle, in which women and other social groups are disadvantaged. As political leaders mobilise their supporters through a focus on shared religious and ethnic identities, the implicit disadvantage of this discourse to women is indirect and not always clear to their audience. Despite the fact that the increasing political competition disadvantages them, some women may be as convinced of the need to patrol group boundaries as men. Even so, the in-between position associated with women on the basis of their gender also encourages some of them to try to overcome these growing social divisions.

Focusing on the Middle Belt, some authors (Best, 2004, 2007; Sha, 2005; Egwu, 2003; 2004; Jibo, Simbine & Galadima, 2001; Tyoden, 1993) have looked at the impact of the conflicts on women. Sha (2005) explains that women, children and other weak groups are seriously affected by conflicts in Jos and the Middle Belt and thus recommends the creation of a forum that brings women together to empower them. However, as Sha does not acknowledge the way conflict affects women's everyday lives, he remains silent on the experiences and structures that prevent them from coming together and seeking empowerment.

Best (2008) stresses that while women are impacted by the conflict in obviously negative ways, they have been unable to set up networks and support groups to enhance their empowerment in the aftermath of the conflict. But Best also points out that while women were unable to do this, their voices are usually heard through the voices of men or proxy groups. It is important to note that the intention of those who discuss the voices of women is often to make a point that is of interest to their groups and not to women as a section of society. Frequently they use women's voices to the apparent disadvantage and loss to the groups they represent. But while it offers some insights, this approach does not take the reality of gendered experiences seriously, because the analysis is often centred on economic loss.

We have argued that Federal competition in Nigeria, the colonial legacy and the intersection of ethnicity and religion have continued to fan hatred as various regions and ethnic groups struggle for space and access to the national cake. Fears and continual suspicion accompany all forms of interaction among the different ethnic, regional and religious groups in Nigeria. In their struggle for a piece of the national cake (Chabal & Daloz, 1999), the stronger people within the ethnic and religious groups continue to take advantage of weaker groups, especially women, in an unending circle of *elite-resource-war*.

While the political actors in Nigeria continue to manipulate religion to advance their goals as profiteers from ethnic and religious violence, the divisive colonial policy and leadership style is considered to be responsible for the institutionalisation of such. Further, colonial masters aided in the fabrication of differences through their system of administration, which later became an enduring part of the Nigerian Federal system. And in order to maintain the status quo, ethnic, regional and religious groups

particularly the elites, justify conflict in the name of religious or ethnic discrimination, marginalisation, neglect, exploitation and victimization. All of which relate to the victimization of weaker groups, particularly women, in their competition over the nations scarce resources and the protection of the political space from competitors within the Nigerian Federal system.

1.10 Structure of the Research

As already stated, this study explores, describes and analyses how the recent ethno-religious conflicts in the city of Jos and other parts of the Middle Belt affects women's lives and gender relations. The thesis spreads across eight chapters including the conclusion.

Chapter one contains the introduction, statement of the problem, objective, significance and the scope. It also shows how the colonial legacy of difference and the politics of disorder have shaped interactions in Nigeria. It discusses how the struggles over the control of Federal resources at various levels of government have created the suspicion and discrimination that have disadvantaged women.

Chapter two gives a detailed overview of the Middle Belt and Nigeria's ethnic and religious landscape. It discusses how the struggle for a politically recognised identity has been used by a privileged self-interested elite who employ the instrumentality of ethnicity and religion to negotiate political patronage for themselves, their families and friends. Often in these struggles, women are left out of political discussions or are threatened directly or indirectly by an insecure environment, directly aimed at excluding them.

Chapter three provides an explanation of the various ways in which data for this research was collected and analysed. It explains the methods used in sampling and the sampling technique. In addition, it presents some of the challenges and experiences in the field to offer an insight into the actual processes of data collection and to enable the reader to better understand the environment in which the research was carried out. The chapter stresses the importance of trust, sensitivity and the use of field assistants who are familiar with the terrain, as critical factors when doing research in communities affected by conflict. It also points to the importance of considering the more limited social agency of many women in societies like Jos.

Chapter four explores the impact of conflict on women in inter-faith marriages in Nigeria's Middle Belt. It explains that while women face a lot of discrimination and rejection in society, those who are in inter-faith marriages face additional forms of discrimination and oppression especially as ethnic and religious boundaries become hardened. The chapter highlights how married women in particular have to be loyal to both their natal family and their in-laws and how, as a result, they are often caught in-between in terms of religion, marriage and their relationship with their immediate families, religious bodies and the community. Consequently, their structural position of knowing the inner workings of two families has resulted in women being widely recognised not only as mediators but also as potential enemies within, and that as a result they suffer isolation which also affects their children. This chapter also emphasise the need to look at the personal dimension of politics.

Chapter five analyses the impact of ethno-religious conflicts on economic activities particularly those that characterise interactions and the utilisation of public spaces in the markets in Jos and other parts of the Middle Belt. It shows how the conflicts have

shaped the socio-economic space and market interactions and how the displacement and separation of markets makes trading more difficult for women due to the mistrust created by the conflict. The chapter explains how the declining sense of social trust due to the conflict has affected many potentially cooperative relationship

Chapter six discusses some of the reasons for there being a limited number of women in politics and how conflict serves to magnify and strengthen some of these issues. It presents the experiences of women as they aspire to political representation in situations of extreme and intense political competition. The chapter highlights how firmly established ethnic and religious divisions in the Middle Belt and Nigeria narrows social integration making it very difficult for female politicians to establish political, economic and social connections and maintain trust due to their structural positions.

Chapter seven explores and analyses the implications of the religious and ethnic divide on professional relations in Jos and the Middle Belt, with particular reference to the education sector (the teaching profession). This chapter shows how the high number of female Christian teachers at the primary school level face undue pressure and how female teachers in higher institutions of learning continue to face discrimination as more healthy forms of competition. It explains how professional conduct, merit and respect gives room to unhealthy competition and thereby implicitly institutionalising structural violence used to frustrate women.

Chapter eight, which is the concluding chapter, summarises the findings of this research, and makes recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

CONFLICT AND THE NIGERIAN ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the Nigerian multi-ethnic and religious landscape with specific reference to the Middle Belt Region and Jos. It also describes the struggle of various ethnic groups and religious communities within Nigeria and the Middle Belt Region to gain and maintain control of the economic and political landscape. As discussed in the later part of this chapter, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups, including women, have had to struggle with larger ethnic groups in order to gain recognition and dominance. Further, the unequal and regional disparity in the composition of the Federal State has created the assumption that the three major ethnic groups - Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba - are meant to rule and dominate the economy of the country. As a result, ethnic and religious groups continue to contest census figures in a bid to show numerical strength, and ethnic minorities continue to oppose the notion of numerical inferiority (See Suberu, 1999), thereby setting the foundation of most conflicts in Nigeria.

The unequal treatment of minority communities by dominant groups, competition with other groups for access to power in new states, and ethno-political and politicisation of religion continue to dominate relationships in response to this competition. And religious forms and practices have continued to evolve and disadvantage many groups, who resort to violence especially since the return of the country to civilian rule in 1999. Suberu (1999: xi) contends that, “these processes have operated not only to

foster and institutionalise the oppressive hegemony of the country's three major ethnicities of Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo, but also to legitimise the inordinate exportation of the resources of the oil-producing communities as part of an official strategy of centralised national cake-sharing." With the centre retaining overwhelming power, the capacity of women to excel in relation to other competing groups becomes more difficult. Opposition continues to be directed at women who dare challenge the status quo and the highly conflictual environment, and thus face discrimination and violence daily, both in their private and public lives. This chapter will also discuss how the ethnic and religious situation has affected women and give some specific examples.

2.2 The Ethnic and Religious Landscape in Nigeria

Nigeria, popularly referred to as the giant of Africa, is Africa's most populous state. It is very diverse ethnically and linguistically, and historians and scholars have struggled to summarize this ethnic and linguistic variety. Amongst them are Oshomha (1990: ix) who claims that there are over 300 hundred ethnic and linguistic groups and Onwuejegwu (2002: 4-5) who explains that Nigeria is the only country in the world that has about 480 ethnic nationalities. Meanwhile Ostien (2009: 1) believes that there are between 400-500 mutually unintelligible languages spoken in Nigeria. Similarly, Professor Otite (1990) who has done more work on Nigeria's ethnic groups than any Nigerian scholar, puts the number of ethnic groups at about 370 (Best, 2010: 5).¹⁴

¹⁴ Nigeria has three major ethnic groups; the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo, accounting for 68 percent of population according to the World Fact Book of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The official population count of each of Nigeria's ethnicities has always remained controversial and disputed as

These ethnic groups are unequally distributed from one region to another and from one state or even local government to the other within the country. While some states are dominated by one large ethnic group, the living together of numerous diverse groups is typical of the Middle Belt,¹⁵ a region that has been recognized as accommodating the largest number of Nigeria's ethnic minorities (Best, 2004: 8) ¹⁶ The only Middle Belt – and indeed Nigerian – state with a larger number of ethnic groups is Adamawa which has approximately 80 (Best, 2010: 5). Best (2007: 4) also noted that Plateau State has one of the largest concentrations of ethnic minorities in the Nigerian Federation, with over 58 relatively small ethnic communities spread across its 17 local government areas. While some of the smallest ethnic groups such as the Berom, Mwaghavul, Ngas and Pyem in Nigeria can be also found in Plateau State. Blench (2004) put the number of ethnic groups at 37, and the Plateau Indigenous groups report listed up to 50 recognised ethnic groups in the state (See Appendix 1).

Similarly, Nigeria's religious composition has been a much contested issue. For instance, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) estimates the population to be 45 percent Muslim, 45 percent Christian, and 10 percent practitioners of Indigenous

members of different ethnic groups believe the census is rigged to give a particular group numerical superiority.

15 See Best, (2004). The differences between groups often include more than language. Many groups have different myths of origin and different customs. Importantly, many groups have very different ideas about gender roles, including marriage, divorce and widowhood, but also the possibilities of women holding property and power.

16 Most ethnic groups have different images of their histories, cultural identities and a sense of originality and indigeneity over the areas of land they occupy. In the sense, they have come to define who settlers are within the context of their interpretations of history, and how to keep such settlers out of their domains. They do so to preserve culturally and historically defined spaces against infiltration and takeover by the perceived settlers. The complication arising from this has led to conflict in many cases. See Best (2004).

Religious Beliefs (referred to as African Traditional Religion- ATR) (see Danfulani, 2001: 35). Falola (1998: 306) points out that “representatives of both Islam and Christianity have” contested these figures. For instance, CAN states that “the number of Muslims does not exceed the number of Christians in the country” (Falola, 1998: 306). He concedes that Muslims predominate only in three Northern states (Katsina, Kano and Sokoto) but nowhere else in the region, and claims that Benue, Plateau, Gongola, Kaduna, Kwara, and Bauchi are predominantly Christian. In contrast, Abubakar Gumi, who was an outspoken Islamic scholar and Grand Khadi of the Northern Region of Nigeria (1962–1967) claimed in early 1986 that Nigeria was 80 percent Muslim, five percent Christians, and 15 percent others. In another statement, made when he received the King Faisal Prize in 1987, he claimed a 70 percent Muslim population for the country (IPA, 1987).¹⁷ Based on recent survey work on the size and distribution of the world’s Muslim population of 2009, the Pew Forum (2011: 5) suggests that out of Nigeria’s 144.7 million inhabitants, there are 78.056 million Muslims, representing 5 percent of Islamic adherents in the world and just over 50 percent of Nigeria’s population.

In the far North of Nigeria, the Hausa-Fulani¹⁸ and Kanuri ethnic groups are predominantly Muslim and in the same region a “significant Christian community had

¹⁷ Alhaji Abubakar Gumi was considered to be a very controversial person who created tension and destruction. Alhaji Yahaya Gusau in an interview with Mathew Kukah said -His problem is that anytime he opens his mouth to speak, he becomes a very confused person. Kukah (1994). Based on such public notions about Gumi’s personality, it becomes difficult to accept any of his claims.

¹⁸ The Fulani is *Fulbe* in plural or *pullo* singular, speak *fullata* or *fulfulbe*. There are two categories of Fulani, the *Fulani Gida* or Fulanin Zaure- *Town Fulani* and the Fulanin Daji- *Pastoral Fulani*. One interesting discovery is that some Fulanis in Plateau State have recently objected to the use of the term Hausa/Fulani, believing that they are being lumped together. The Hausa elite have no problem with the use of the term which, they argue, dates back to the period after Dan Fodio Jihad. Refer to Best (2007).

resided and inter-married with Muslims for more than 50 years” (Best, 2007: 5). While “Christianity is widespread” (Falola, 1998: 306) in the Middle Belt, and both Muslims and Christians reside in approximately equal numbers in the Southwest, where the Yoruba ethnic group predominates. The percentage given by the Pew Forum and other scholars above cannot be accepted as final or conclusive; first, because of the significant margins of error highlighted by the Pew Forum itself, and second, and more generally, because the 2006 Nigeria Population Census does not provide data on religion.

To complicate matters, religious forms continue to evolve, each seeking meaning to better understand life and control environmental forces. These religious groups seek inclusion and dominance through ensuring that their interest is represented at all levels of governance. According to a report by the BBC on the 2006 Nigerian election:

The relative strengths of every ethnic and religious group must be taken into consideration in determining appointments in the civil service, the armed forces and political institutions in line with the Federal Character principle. Political and community leaders study the personnel composition of every institution of government with a microscope to find a breach of the principle¹⁹ where they are not favored (BBC, 2006).

This quote highlights the complex situation with regard to ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria, where ethnic and religious ideologues and intellectuals watch assiduously

¹⁹ Refer to Nigeria’s 1979 Federal Character. The Federal Character Principle has been enshrined in Nigeria’s Constitution since 1979. The principle seeks to ensure that appointments to public service institutions fairly reflect the linguistic, ethnic, religious, and geographic diversity of the country.

the pattern of distribution of resources, often emphasizing the neglect of their group, thereby fanning the embers of inter-ethnic and inter-religious prejudice and hostility (Nnoli 1980: 218). The negative impact of this inter-ethnic and inter-religious hostility on Nigerian society is that it limits the extent and degree of association between groups and various regions across the country, by extension limiting the degree of association between women and their counterparts across the country, especially when ethnicity and religion is a big factor in political empowerment (Suleiman, 2002: 194).

Further, in a bid to maintain and improve their ability to control and exclude others within the Nigerian system, religious groups have continued to evolve and reinvent new strategies in order to assert their presence. It is in this vein that Pentecostal Christianity is growing rapidly in the Southern part of the country and the Middle Belt respectively, and members of the Muslim Ahmadiyya movement and some forms of what is often referred to as Pentecostal Islam (NASFAT,²⁰ *Ikhwan and Darul Islam*) are increasing among Muslims (Danfulani, 2009: 3).

Also, one might argue that not all the survey responses that I obtained in my fieldwork offer a full picture of local practices since religion continues to offer not just avenues for religious groups to acquire an understanding of self and society, but also a means for access to and acquisition of local, state and Federal resources. Peel (2000) captures aptly the reason behind the acceptance of religion in Africa. According to him:

The 19th Century rulers in Africa accepted European religion [Christianity] for two reasons: A search for allies in the ongoing regional power struggle, and a desire for cultural enhancement... They wanted not only allies and technology,

²⁰ Nasrul-lahi Fathi Society of Nigeria (NASFAT).

but also access to the hidden sources of the white man's power... (Men who professed expertise in the world of spirit) comparable with the religious specialists they already knew; such as diviners and Muslims (Peel, 2000, 123-124).

Peel (2000: 213-214) explains how the Yoruba struggled to hold onto Islam and Christianity for the following reasons: "for Islam, it was the appeal of the spiritual techniques of the *alufa* –their prayers and charms, backed by the prestige of Islam's trans-regional networks and its politico-military clout – and for Christianity, it was the appeal of Christ as mediator; and its association with the technological power of its European bearers, eventually to be diffused through the colonial order."²¹ In the Southeast, where the Igbo ethnic group is dominant, Catholics, Anglicans and Methodists constitute the majority and many Igbos continue to observe traditional rites, such as marriage rites, ceremonies, and other cultural forms in tandem with Christianity. For example, the Igbos have strict traditional rites that have to be performed when giving their daughters in marriage. These customary marriage rites are observed even if they are dealing with a different ethnic group and are sometimes given precedence over their Christian faith and practices with, for example, traditional marriage (*Igbankwu*) ceremony being performed alongside Christian marriage (*Isichei*, 1976; Njoku, 1990). Religion in this context is a practice meant to satisfy a need whenever one arises. It can also be an apparatus for the control of the other, and most

²¹ Read Peel, (2000). The study exposes how individuals approach religion- as a source of empowerment. This can be analyzed within the context of current happenings in Nigeria, especially as it relates to the manipulation of religion for personal gain.

especially women. The relationship between religion and the role of women will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.1 The Position of Women Within the Context of Competition

Throughout Nigeria, the roles of women in different ethnic and religious communities often exist in some contrast to each other. For example, the women who inter-marry often recall painful experiences. In cases where women are the link between two very different families, they usually face the dilemma of choosing where to belong as daughters, wives, mothers and in-laws. This is particularly so when they marry into families that are of a different faith to theirs.

For instance, the Christian women living in Jos who married Muslim men and Muslim women who married Christian men that I spoke to informed me that religion and traditional practices have made life difficult for some women. They told me that in some cases parents actively encouraged and persuaded their daughters to walk out of their marriage, especially after the recent ethno-religious conflicts in Jos and its environs. Their communities felt that the women in inter-faith marriages were no longer safe as they were regarded as informants and objects of suspicion by their husband's relatives and other friends within the community.²² This suspicion that they could not be trusted not only affects their marriage life but also their economic, political and professional life.

²² This was a result of personal discussions with women on their experiences in the Jos conflict during fieldwork for this thesis at the Institute of Governance and Social Research (IGSR). Field notes 2012-2013.

In another instance of the ethnic struggle that women face, and echoing the quote from the BBC report noted earlier, a former Director General of the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB), Dr Lami Hamza from Plateau state, married to a Muslim man from Kaduna State, had her appointment queried by parties from both her own state and her husband's state. They claimed that she was taking up the quota of the real indigenes from Kaduna while being from Plateau, which she refuted (Tyoden, 2006: 6-7). That is to say, while the public debate ostensibly centred on her claim about her state of origin the controversy mainly centred on her religious beliefs and on her gender.

The problems that women face in both their private and professional lives undoubtedly contribute to their under-representation in Nigerian public life. Despite the fact that women constitute just under half of the country's population, their representation in elective and appointive positions still stands at between 1.6 percent and 8.0 percent. For example, out of 49 ministers and advisers at that time, only 6 were women, and only 4 out of 52 ambassadors were women (IDEA, 2005: 8-9; Alubo, 2008:17; 2011: 90).

Despite a slight trend upwards since 1999, women still hold fewer than 10 percent of political offices at all levels of national politics. However, this distribution is subject to variation throughout the country. While women in some parts of Nigeria such as the East and West are relatively better represented compared to the North, they have very little influence in other areas and their representation is quite low in the Middle Belt

area. This may be partly linked to the ubiquity of local conflicts²³ and ethnic/religious issues.

It could be noted at this point that often in these struggles, women are left out of political discussions or are threatened directly or indirectly by an insecure environment, and so they stay out of the public domain, while those women who brave the harsh political competition come face to face with life threatening danger. For example, on 3rd May, 2003, during the Nasarawa State Assembly elections, Mrs Maimuna Joyce Katai, then a commissioner in Nasarawa State, was beaten to death and shot twice by youth militia groups²⁴ while trying to protect the ballot box in her polling unit (Best, 2004).²⁵

While political assassinations are also directed at men, the fact that women, already marginalised, face even more threats than men contributes to their under-representation in the political sphere. For example, the dominant forms of Islam and Christianity in the Middle Belt suggest that the purity of women is guaranteed by their staying out of politics and public life. Thus the women in the Middle Belt face many dilemmas: the highly conflictual environment in which they live exposes them to a disproportionate threat of discrimination and violence, both in their private and public lives; that they live in a generally patriarchal culture which takes little account of their

²³ Refer to Arowolo & Aluko, (2010).

²⁴ Her murderers were suspected to be Egbura Youths who may have been hired to disrupt the 2003 State Assembly Elections. Others versions of the incident indicate the insecurity and restiveness that sometimes pervades the Nigerian political landscape, thus, leading to militia groups taking the laws into their hands and threatening both life and property. The works of Best (2004) provide more insight into the incident.

²⁵ This is one out of many examples of insecure environments, which makes it quite difficult for women to engage in politics and it also signifies to some extent the failure of the state in conducting free and fair elections. Refer to the works of Best (2004) on the Bassa-Egbura Conflict in Toto Local Government Area.

needs; and lastly, their religious identities – politicised locally – discourages their engagement and participation in public life. Affected disproportionately by local conflict due to local interpretations of custom and religion, as well as family pressure and public hostility, these same factors prevent them from addressing the problems with which they are faced.

2.3 Ethnic Minority Issues and Conflict in Nigeria

Ethnic and communal conflicts have been part of the Nigerian polity since independence. Deeply rooted in the political system is the “competition amongst the big three - Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba - with the ethnic minority groups being used as pawns in this three-player ethnic game” (Suberu, 1996: 12). For instance, “ethnic minority issues occupied the minds of all politically involved Nigerians in Adamawa in the forties and fifties. To groups like the Bachama, the Kilba or the Chamber, the basis of ethnic politics was their wish to maintain their cultural identity and political independence in relation to other ethnic groups” (Kastfelt, 1994: 75). In a bid to incorporate the ethnic minorities into Nigeria’s Federal system, new states were established beginning with General Gowon’s creation in 1967 to the late General Abacha’s administration in 1996.

Another minority issue is the fact that a “religious divide separates Christians and Muslims, and ... further divides the people” (Falola, 1998: 1). More worrisome is that since the return of the country to democratic rule in 1999, the nation has been beset by some of the most deadly conflicts to occur among several ethnic and religious communities in different regions and states of Nigeria. The “larger proportion of such

conflicts has occurred in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria, with Plateau State as its typical example” (Best, 2007: 3-4; Gwamna, 2010:7). Karl (2010: 87) rightly noted that “since independence, the Middle Belt has been the scene of frequent flare ups, rooted in minority attempts to free themselves from [the] Hausa-Fulani establishment.” Dike (2001: 87) concurs that “ethnic and religious disputes are common currency in the volatile Middle Belt region.”

Many of these conflicts affect the lives and possibilities open to women in various ways and the volatile conditions mean that the livelihoods of women in the Middle Belt are constantly under threat. For example, the insecurity of the state has made it difficult for women to go to both the general markets and the vegetable and yams markets as they normally would, due to fear of conflict or attack. Because women are traditionally responsible for food shopping for the family, for which they receive an allowance from their husbands even if they earn money themselves, this has put greater financial pressure on many professional women. For those who sell in the markets, as many less well educated women do, the effects of conflict have been much more devastating. For instance, I happened to meet a Christian taxi driver during my pilot study in August 2011 at Tudun Wada, Jos, who told me that his wife who used to have a small stall at the Dilimi yam Market no longer did so since she is a Christian and the area is now a *no-go-area* for non-Muslims. In such families, the economy of the family is strongly affected by one partner losing their source of livelihood.

Similarly, in addition to the increased threat of violence, women’s loss of earnings and income has negative consequences beyond their personal lives. For example, as women are usually partly responsible for paying their children’s school fees, their declining financial status might mean that children are taken out of school or moved to

a less expensive one. In the worst case, their financial decline could affect how they feed their family because they would no longer be able to afford adequate quantities of nutritious food. And because they are sidelined in local party politics as minors within minority groupings, they are often unable to voice these and other issues that affect them, and by extension their families and especially their children.

2.4 The Middle Belt Ethnic and Religious Landscape

The Middle Belt region of Nigeria is sandwiched between the predominantly Christian Igbo and Yoruba South and the Muslim Hausa North (Okpeh, 2007: 229; Warren-Rothlin, 2010:14). It has been argued that one of the factors that distinguishes it from other minority areas in Nigeria is its geographical contiguity coupled with the large concentration of Nigeria's ethnic minority groups who live there. Formally, the area that is considered to encompass the Middle Belt is the North-Central Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria, which consists of the present Adamawa, Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa, Kogi, Kwara, Niger, Taraba States as well as the capital Abuja (Federal Capital Territory-FCT). The North-Central Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria coexists with five other zones, of which three are dominated by one of Nigeria's majority ethnic groups,²⁶ and two more are clearly identified with a majority religion.²⁷ As a result, the religious and ethnic variety of the North-Central Geo-Political Zone, and additionally Southern Kaduna,

26 The South West Geo-Political Zone is dominated by the Yoruba, the South East by the Igbo and the North West by the Hausa.

27 The North East Geo-political Zone is predominantly Muslim, while the South-South is predominantly Christian.

Adamawa, Bauchi, Niger, Kebbi and Taraba states acutely reflects Nigeria's diversity.²⁸

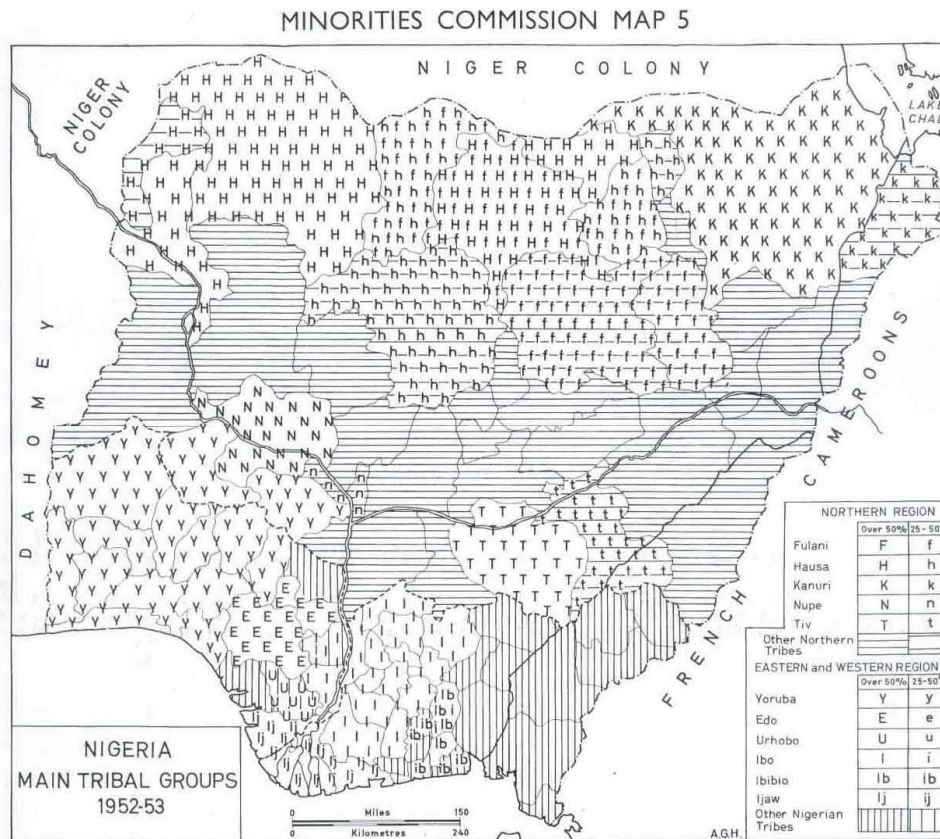
With regard to the political zoning of the Nigerian state, scholars hold divergent views of the exact boundaries of the Middle Belt while acknowledging that it occupies the territory that lies between the predominantly Muslim North and the mainly Christian South. A view of the map of Nigeria shows the Middle Belt states lying geographically at the centre of the country (see map 2), thus acting as a geographical buffer zone located in the middle between Northern and Southern Nigeria (Okpeh, 2007 : 229).

Some observers refer to the Middle Belt region of Nigeria as comprising Adamawa and Taraba, Plateau and Benue States as well as the Southern parts of Kaduna, Bauchi and Gombe States. They do this with reference to contemporary Nigerian politics, excluding Kwara and Kogi due to their relative peacefulness and cultural affinity to the Southwest, and including Kaduna, Bauchi and Gombe States because of the recent conflicts in these areas between smaller ethnic groups who have often been divided by religion (Logams, 2004). Others also describe the area as encompassing Kabba, Ilorin, Niger, Benue, Plateau, Adamawa, Southern Zaria and Southern Bauchi provinces (Tyoden, 1993:14; Gwamna, 2010: 20-21), because these states comprise several ethnic communities that share many cultural, historical, economic and political characteristics apart from their geographical location.

28 The South West Geo-Political Zone also has a clear Muslim-Christian divide, and the South-South has great ethnic diversity. But particularly the North Central Zone is the most ethnically diverse. I have to make it clear that the Zoning system here is more so for electoral parity and representation. It, however, does not capture all the areas of the Middle Belt Region and its non-Muslim minority struggle for emancipation.

The two maps below illustrate the controversies arising from the debate on the Middle Belt in juxtaposition to the North Central Geo-Political Zone of the country and at the same time present it as a region comprising Nigeria's ethnic minorities.

Map 1: The Minority Commission of 1957 Map Showing Minority Areas

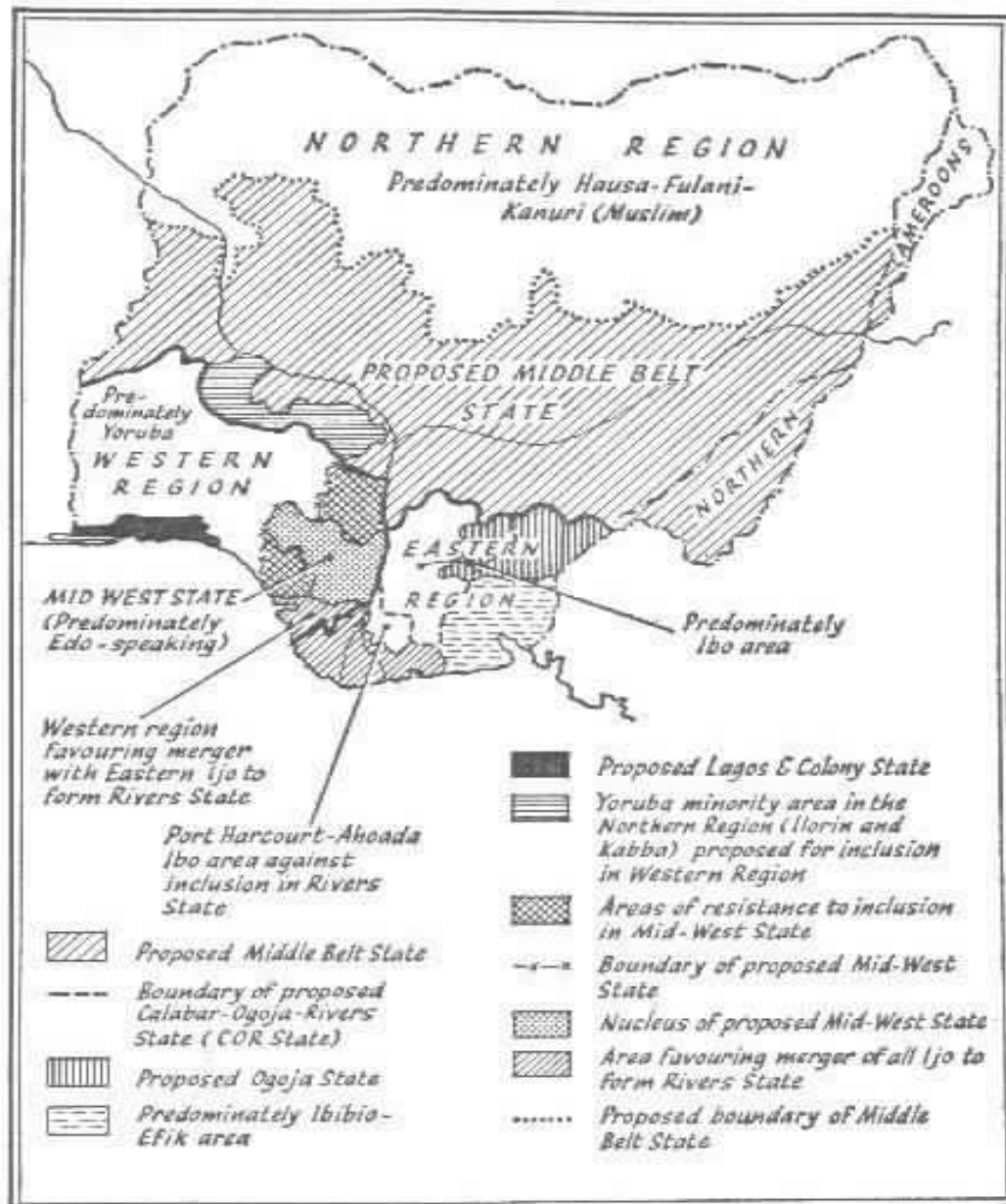


Source: Willinks' Report of Nigeria and the Minorities Commission of 1957.

Map 1 shows the areas occupied by ethnic minorities. These states include the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, Nasarawa, Plateau, and the Southern part of Kaduna, Bauchi and Gombe State. However the map does not capture all the minority areas especially the Tiv (see the alphabet T & t on map 1) and the Nupe (see the alphabet N & n on map 1) who are also a minority tribe in Nigeria and identify themselves as Middle Belters. If this map is taken to represent the Middle Belt, it neglects the entire Benue

state, Southern parts of Kaduna, Taraba, Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe and Kebbi States. These are areas with a large concentration of ethnic minorities and at the same time a predominantly Christian population who identify themselves as Middle Belters.

Map 2: Map of Nigeria Showing Proposed Middle Belt Region



MAP 3. Territory for Proposed New Regions (adapted from *The Story of Nigeria* by Michael Crowder, and reprinted by permission of Faber and Faber, Ltd., London). The map was drawn prior to the creation of the Midwest Region. The areas shown as resisting inclusion within that region in fact voted for its creation. The area shown as Northern Cameroons is now part of the Northern Region.

Source: Adopted from Uduma & Jimoh (2014). *World Journal of Agricultural Research*.

Vol. 2(1), 5-11.

In contrast with map 1, map 2 includes a delineation of areas that date back to colonial times where the people who live there identify themselves as ethnic minorities,²⁹ and have been involved in the struggle for emancipation from those perceived as Northern Jihadists and from the Hausa or Fulani cultural assimilation. This map captures the areas often referred to as the Middle Belt and the region of the minorities. It includes Niger, Kwara, Kogi, FCT, Nasarawa, Benue and Plateau States, as well as the Southern parts of Kaduna, Taraba, Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe and Kebbi States. It is also visibly central on the underlying map of Nigeria.

These maps show that the Middle Belt has fluid boundaries which are linked to different minority and majority communities. Ostien (2009: 2) explains that because the Middle Belt is not firmly established, its geographical definition is often subject to great debate among academics. This is partly due to the presence of a significant number of ethnic Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri groups in this area. As explained above, the Yoruba of Kwara and Kogi states have a strong affinity with the main Yoruba community in Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Osun and Oyo States. They frequently identify with the South-West rather than with the Middle Belt, because they want to be regarded as one of the majority tribes of Nigeria on the one hand and also because they would not want to be seen as subjects of Northern Nigerian influence on the other.³⁰

Part of the problem with the conceptualisation and struggle for a politically recognised identity is the fact that the Middle Belt is betrayed by its privileged elites who employ the instrumentality of the Middle Belt consciousness (See Okpu, 1977: 121) to

²⁹ Reference is made here to Nigeria and the Willinks' Minorities Commission report of 1957.

³⁰ This is a complicated issue, and the self-identification of northern Yoruba (and related) groups remains very much in flux. Unfortunately this topic cannot be explored in depth in this dissertation.

negotiate political patronage for themselves, their families and friends, (cf. Bayart, 2009). This process can work against the overall interest of the people as the struggle for the Middle Belt identity is misinterpreted as a struggle for the national cake (Bayart, 2009). That notwithstanding, the Middle Belt is always understood as a concept, movement and philosophy that seeks to forge a separate identity from the erstwhile Northern region, into a distinct emancipated region that is independent and self-asserting (see Kastfelt, 1994).

Despite minimal success associated with the Middle Belt consciousness, Gwamna (2010:19-20) explains that this concept is politically relevant to the oppressed ethnic minorities, non-Hausa-Fulani and non-Hausa-Fulani Muslim people of the North East and North Central Nigeria and to the people of Plateau State, in particular, who have constantly experienced conflicts over issues relating to ownership and control of the state in the recent past. It has been mentioned earlier that the Middle Belt region of Nigeria has been recognised as accommodating the largest number of Nigeria's ethnic minorities (Tyoden, 1993; Best, 2004: 8; Okpeh, 2007). Egwu (2001:11) adds that the major denominator of the Middle Belt is "a shared collective minority identity in relation to the Northern power system," and the larger Nigerian state. Because they see themselves as lacking in power and voice within the larger Northern region, the struggle of this collective minority has been centred around colonial politics, which set the so-called dominant ethnic groups against the smaller nationalities on terms which were conceived and understood to be oppressive, exploitative and marginalising (Gwamna, 2010: 32) and an attempt at neglect in order to further under-develop the region.

In a more diplomatic vein, the Governor of Plateau state, Jonah Jang, provided a broad definition of the Middle Belt.³¹ Gov Jang describes the Middle Belt as:

Not just what in Nigerian politics is called the North Central Geo-Political Zone (Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau States plus the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja), but also Southern Kebbi, Southern Kaduna, Southern Borno, Southern Bauchi, Southern Gombe, Adamawa, Taraba, Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa, Kogi, the Federal Capital Territory, Kwara and Niger (Ostien, 2009: 19).

Jang (see Ostein, 2009) stresses further that because the Middle Belt is in central Nigeria it is always in the best position to interpret the North to the South and the South to the North. Further, it remains central to the geo-political calculation of both the ruling class in the North, and that in the South, with each making claims on a different basis which is that in the politics of Nigeria, the Muslim North claims the area on the basis of geographical contiguity, while the South appeals to a shared religious – Christian – brotherhood (Kukah, 1994: xiii).

It should be noted, however, that the Middle Belt area is not a homogenous zone. Its religious and ethnic diversity also results in different local constellations of power. In Plateau State, for example, the Berom, Ngas, Taroh, Mwaghavul and Goemai are predominantly Christians, while the Jarawa, Bogghom, and Pyem are a significant Muslim population. In Nasarawa State, the Eggon, Mighili, Gbagyi, Bassa and Yeskwa are predominantly Christians, while Alago, Igbirra, and Gwandara have a large Muslim

³¹ See Ostien (2009) for a report on the Muslim Christian Relations in Africa. Especially the interview with Governor Jonah David Jang.

population along with Christian adherents. In the FCT, the Gbagyi are in the main Christians, while the Gwandara and Igbirra are predominantly Muslims with a small Christian following. In Kaduna State, Bajju, Kaninkon, Ham and Atyab (Kataf) are predominantly Christians with a Gbagyi population that is both Muslim and Christian. In Taraba State, Jukun, Chamba, Kuteb and Tiv are mostly Christians with a small Muslim population. In Bauchi State, the Sayawa are mainly Christians with a small Muslim population. In Kwara state, most ethnic groups have both Christian and Muslim populations. In Kogi State, Igbirra and Igala have a Muslim and Christian population, while Okun and Bassa have a predominantly Christian population with a small number of Muslim adherents. In Adamawa State, Mbula, Byatiye (Bachama, Bata), Chamba and Higgi have a predominantly Christian population, while Kilba and Marghi have both Muslim and Christian populations (Gwamna, 2010: 21 & 22).

In some areas of the Middle Belt it is common to have families within which are adherents of Christianity, Islam and the African Traditional Religion (ATR) and thus these three religions can be represented in one group or even community. Ali Mazrui's (1980) observation of the religious scenario of the typical African milieu applies quite rightly in the Middle Belt case where many African families are multi-religious in composition without strain. One brother could be Muslim, another Roman Catholic, a sister Protestant and the father a practising member of the African Religion. Mazrui's idea that Africa is a Triple Heritage means that Africa is a product of her traditional religions, Islam and Christianity. What became contemporary Africa is either a synthesis or the compromise among these three influences. Whether the synthesis is smooth or not is another question.

2.5 A History of Jos and Plateau State

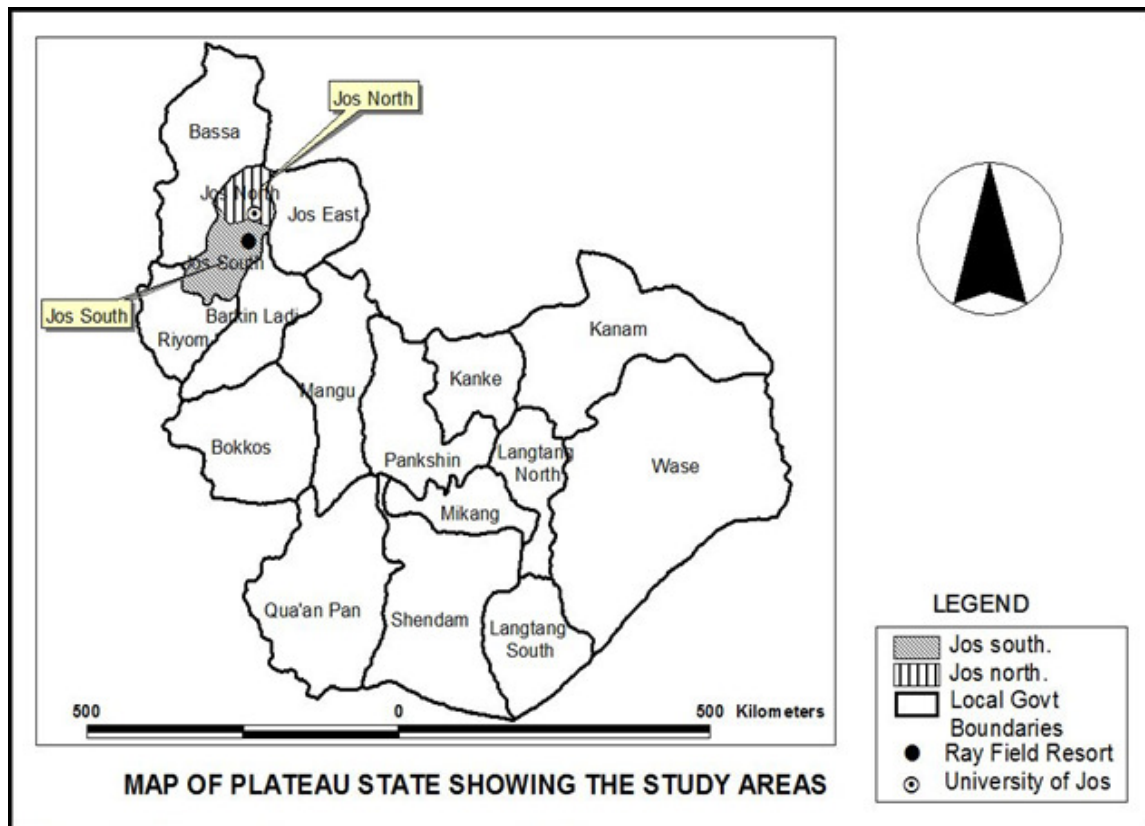
Plateau State derives its name from its geographical landscape, being a tableland dominated by lofty hills and mountains some 4,200 feet above sea level lying close to the geographical centre of the Northern Province of Nigeria. It is celebrated as the Home of Peace and Tourism, an image that has been dented in recent years by religious clashes. It has a population of around 3.5 million people and about 50 ethnic nationalities, spread across 17 Local Government Areas (Larab, 2008: 145) ³²(See Map 3). Its capital is Jos which appears to be located at/near the centre of the country. Technically, its strategic location has made it a communication centre of the country. Regularly, highways connect it with most of the major cities of the North³³ (Plotnicov, 1967:28) and it is the twelfth largest state in Nigeria, with an area of 30,913km.

Jos North and Jos South Local Government areas (indicated in Map 3) have over the years attracted settler, due to their strategic location as the administrative and commercial centers of the state. In addition, the weather is quite embracing and supports agriculture during the rainy season and dry season gardening. Thus, the influx of buyers and sellers to these location have in some instances added to the dynamics of the conflictual environment.

³² Refer to Appendix 1. It provides a comprehensive list of the 50 officially recognized ethnic nationalities in Plateau State.

³³ The State also connects the far North to other parts of the country by road transport. For instance going to Sokoto from Nasarawa, Bauchi or Gombe, you have to drive through Jos. This might not be necessarily significant to our work, but it just shows how the state witnesses on a daily basis an influx of people on the move and that might also indicate how porous its borders are.

Map 3. Map of Plateau Showing the 17 Local Governments and Study Areas



Source: Adopted from Uduma & Jimoh (2014). *World Journal of Agricultural Research*. 2(1), 5-11.

As mentioned above, the temperate climate in Jos makes it one of the coldest in Nigeria and therefore suitable for specialised agricultural (vegetables) production. Like other Middle Belt states, Plateau has often been referred to as belonging to 'the food basket of the Nation,' and it contributes significantly to the production of vegetables, fruits, roots, maize, millet and sorghum consumed in the country (Odey, 2008:179). Women have long played active roles in the cultivation of these food crops and sales. However, they very rarely own land themselves, and mainly only cultivate farmlands which belong to either their families, their husbands or which they rent from other men.

Its scenic beauty has contributed to Jos' status as a minor tourist attraction within Nigeria. Plotnicov describes Jos as "one of the healthiest places in West Africa" (1967:30). Its bracing atmosphere also attracts residents within the country who normally find the weather elsewhere quite hot. It is common for youths on the compulsory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) posted to Jos to prefer to remain there after their service year.³⁴

The city experienced an increase in population in the early 19th century when non-Muslim ethnic groups fled to its hills to escape the ravages of the Fulani Jihad. To this present day, Jos has continued to be home to non-Muslim Northerners displaced by the ongoing Boko Haram massacre in the North-east and North-west regions of Nigeria. The indigenous ethnic groups in the state were never organised into a traditional state and were majorly animist. A large proportion of the indigenous ethnic groups are now Christians due to the presence and activities of missionaries. Today, church missions and foreign commercial firms maintain rest houses in and around Jos for their staff members on local leave, and before the increase in local violence in the late 1990. European expatriates stationed elsewhere in Nigeria would often visit Jos to spend a holiday. The West African headquarters of several missionary societies, including large American organisations, are located in Jos, and their staff form a considerable portion of the local European residents. Jos is also an old mining town with huge deposits of tin, as well as columbite, kaoline, limestone, salt, precious stones and barites. Colonial miners established and commenced large-scale operations in

³⁴The compulsory NYSC scheme was introduced in Nigeria in 1973 with a view to promote national unity through the encouragement and development of common ties among the youth. My interaction with a young woman from the South West in 2012 in Jos reveals this fact. She said that as soon she arrived in Jos for her NYSC, she fell in love with the city. She said "I knew I will not be going back after the service year and I knew I will marry and settle here." She has since married a man from Plateau.

1904, with mining camps around Naraguta, Bukuru Metropolis, Barkin Ladi and Bokkos. Historically, the area has experienced a lot of immigration particularly from Northern Nigeria- Shuwa Arabs, Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri and its Northern neighbours, where communities are often threatened by desert drought and tsetse fly. As a result of such threats, many people migrated southwards to find grazing areas and also jobs in the tin mines (Shut, 2007: 93), including the herdsmen who find the savannah grassland, especially around Kurra Falls area attractive.³⁵ Because of its favourable climate, its role as an administrative centre, and its mining activities, Jos attracted large numbers of migrants and their families during the colonial period. Ploticov (1967:32) illustrates its attraction in the late colonial and early independence period:

In 1951 the European community of Lagos was 4,200. Outside (Lagos) the largest European community is that of the Plateau province; here, in a climatic environment unique... [it] support[s] a total of 1,200 Europeans... Government census figures do not distinguish between temporary and permanent European residents, but from the large number of homes privately owned by Europeans in long continuous residence, it may be concluded that while the total European population of the Jos Plateau is second to Lagos, the Plateau has a larger number of permanent European residents.

In addition to the ethnic diversity of the state (as already mentioned above), Plateau State is a proud example of religious plurality. Historically, Jos, the state capital, is home to the headquarters of major religious organisations from both Christian and

³⁵ Kurra Falls is located 77km Southeast of Jos. It is the state's first hydroelectric power station. The area is surrounded by a vast expanse of green land.

Islamic constituencies (Best, 2010:5).³⁶ In particular, it has been home to the headquarters of many of the Christian missions which dominated Nigeria in the colonial era. In recent times, newer Christian organisations have also preferred to locate their headquarters here (Best, 2008:8). The establishment of these organisations has also served to pull more people into the state, contributing to its population growth.

The dominant presence of Christian mission agencies, educational institutions and its former peaceful status have helped Jos to assume the status of a missionary centre. It is the location of the national headquarters of major Christian agencies such as the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), Evangelical Church of Winning All (ECWA), Sudan United Mission (SUM), Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN), and Tarayar Ekklesiya a Nigeria (TEKAN). It also hosts the national headquarters of the Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS), Nigerian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (NIFES) and Christian Corpers Fellowship of Nigeria and three theological seminaries including Jos ECWA Theological Seminary (JETS), and Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN) (Gwamna, 2010: 32-33). And most recently the Nigerian Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Centre (NPCRC) were established in Jos, despite the 2010-2011 Jos crises.

Furthermore, Jos is also home to a growing Islamic presence and activity. It hosts the National headquarters of the Jama'atu Izalatu Bidiyah Ikamatu Sunna (JIBWIS), often

³⁶ Many religious groups therefore have different forms of emotional and mental affiliation to Jos, making any conflict there a phenomenon beyond Jos itself. Thus, it has acquired what it takes to be a boiling pot of ethnic and religious mayhem of late. However, the trouble in Jos has been aggravated by the migrant population and the nature of its political economy as well as the cultural and religious incompatibility; rather than by the problems generated by its many indigenous ethnic and religious groups who generally coexist in peace.

referred to as a radical Islamic evangelical organisation. JIBWIS comprises two opposing factions; JIBWIS A and JIBWIS B.³⁷ The former has its headquarters in Jos, while the latter has its headquarters in Kaduna. The Jama 'atu Nasrill Islam (JNI), is the central coordinating body of all Islamic Organisations in Nigeria also has a strong presence in Jos. Other Islamic organisations present in Jos include the *Satyan Ul Islam*, the *Kadirayya*, the National Council of Muslim Youths and the Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN). Jos has therefore attracted attention to itself from diverse religious groups (Gwamna, 2010: 33; Best, 2008: 10). This partly explains the strong interest in the control of Jos by members of these faiths, in addition to the ethnic tensions there.

Today, however, the ownership of Jos town is hotly contested among three main indigenous groups, the Berom, Naraguta and Afizare, whose traditional land meets on an unmarked borderline in Jos town and the descendants of Hausa-Fulani settlers who initially settled in Jos as traders and tin miners.³⁸ While cooperation links between the indigenous groups and the Fulani settlers may exist at the local level, there is little evidence of any more general collaboration (Campbell & Harwood, 2013) due to the ownership contest. Today, these settlers refer to themselves as the *Jasawa*, a *Hausanised* term for a Jos man (Gwamna, 2010:31). These conflicts are best understood in the context of the history of Jos.

³⁷ This controversy between JIBWIS A & B faction has been partly resolved and a substantive chairman emerged from Kaduna. So by implication the national headquarters is now in Kaduna.

³⁸ Plateau State founded at the dawn of the twentieth century (about 1902) as a tin mining city Nigeria became the sixth largest world producer with the greatest part of this output coming from the Jos-Plateau minefields. See Bingel, (1978) and Gwamna, (2010).

2.6 The Growth and Expansion of Economic Activities in Jos

The commencement of tin mining in Jos attracted settlers from all over the country. In March 1902, Nicolaus, a European mining engineer, undertook a successful expedition of the Plateau for the colonial masters who were determined to investigate whether there was tin in Jos. By early 1904, Europeans established a permanent mining camp, using a set of military campaigns by the West African Frontier Force (Bingel, 1987)³⁹ to subdue the hostile local groups. By the middle of 1905 an administrative section was opened in Bukuru, on the road between Keffi and the tin mines in Naraguta, in order to quell the periodic uprisings of local groups which were opposed to the camp. Hausa and Yoruba contingents of the West African Frontier Force armed with Maxim guns were called in as warriors. However, Plateau natives continued firstly, to obstruct the routes along which processed tin was transported, and secondly, to harass the mining operations as a means of securing and defending their lands from the devastating effects of mining.

The local policy of mineral exploitation followed the loss of Malaya to Japan by Great Britain in 1942 which deprived Great Britain of its most important source of tin at the time she most needed it and so she turned to Nigeria to compensate for the lost tin supplies. In the early 1940s, the colonial state recruited forced labour from Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Kano, Katsina, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto and Zaria provinces to work in the mines.⁴⁰

³⁹ The West African Frontier Force consisted of native African Soldiers who were under the control of British Officers. Check Plotnicov, (1967).

⁴⁰ From 1944, the highest number of migrants came from Zaria, Sokoto, Bauchi, Benue, Borno with 19 percent, 16.1 percent, 15.8 percent, 12.9 percent, 11.4 percent respectively, with Kano which came lowest with 2.1 percent out of the 92,703 workforce recruited between 1942-1944. Refer to Sha, (2005).

By the end of December 1942, 14,880 permanent employees and voluntary labourers from various regions adjacent to the Plateau province were absorbed in the 85 European companies operating mines at different places on the Jos Plateau; Bukuru, Dilimi, Gurum, Warrang, Barkin Ladi, Ropp, Rayfield, Federe etc (Kudu, 2008:124). There is no readily available data on the gendered composition of the workers in these minefields, but scholars and historians have often referred to the mine labourers as men. While mining was not an exclusively male occupation, it is probable that most miners may have been men. Many of these men were either migrants from neighbouring communities or those who were forced to work in the tin mines by the colonial masters. Due to the heterogeneity of the surrounding communities, it is likely that the early miners were of different religious beliefs, including both Christians and Muslims.

With the expansion of mining activities came the creation of markets and the expansion of various economic activities in Jos. This included the building of markets like the central market at Terminus, the building material market in Bukuru, and the Zaria road mechanics market among others (Sha, 2005: 40). The development of these markets illustrates the importance of more typically female economic activities. In the mining areas women and girls were sometimes involved in mining work but they mostly appeared around the minefields selling snacks and food items in little stalls or at the door to their compounds. Once markets were in place, women were able to further increase their options in terms of their economic activities and these local markets offered them a comparably safe and regulated environment to trade in.

Ngo Mary Princewells was one of the women who participated in the colonial mining economy of Jos. Born in 1929 in a family of seven children in the Du District of Zawan,

she started work on the mining fields at the age of nine to support the family after their father's death in 1935. She first scavenged for tin along river banks and at the foot of yam ridges where the tin was exposed when it rained. She later abandoned her mining work to trade in foodstuffs and subsequently sold local beer, probably at Zawan and Kuwuri (now referred to Angwan Soya) (Nyam, 1999: 18-19). Thus, like many other women of her time, she took advantage of the expanding economic activities and the establishment of markets in Jos.

The people that came to work in the tin mines later settled in Jos and its environs, and many descendants of these early settlers still live in Jos today.⁴¹ Gwamna (2010: 32) noted that traders, butchers, Quranic teachers and other artisans also followed the mining population and have remained in Jos since then. Other wider Plateau indigenous ethnic groups came into the city for either commerce or to join the tin mining industry. These include Plateau groups like the Ngas, Ron, Mpun and Mwaghavul (Best, 2007: 25). As mentioned earlier, it is not clear how many people migrated to the minefields in terms of gender, we can only assume that some men might have migrated with their wives, and that some young women might have migrated in search of a better life outside the village, as illustrated by the case of Ngo Mary Princewell above.⁴² In time, Jos became a commercial merchant capital. The United African Company (UAC), supported by the colonial state, was the first to engage in commercial activities such

⁴¹ The tin fields in Jos attracted Nigerians from across the country who settled for tin mining activities and/or businesses. See Plotnicov, (1967).

⁴² It is unclear to me at this point in my write up as to whether any documented evidence of women coming to Jos with their husbands or wives coming on their own or in both cases with the children. But few cases do exist of men who came as a family and others who came and married women from Jos. And the case of Mr PrinceWell and Ngo Mary might well be an example of men who came to Jos in search of jobs and also married in Jos.

as the selling of food items and installed its outlet in Jos and its environs alongside other European commercial companies including Paterson Zochonics (PZ), CFAO and Mandillas (in the minefields). As commercial activities expanded, Jos became the commercial centre serving as a market for areas like Bauchi and other neighbouring (Sha, 2005: 40 & 41). Plotnicov (1967: 52) noted that once these industries had settled in Jos, informal economic activities grew to service this indigenous and migrant labour population; for example, women started selling tinned food, cigarettes, gari (cassava flour), soap, cosmetics and similar items from small stalls and near the entrances to house compounds.

The expansion of Jos also attracted Fulani herdsmen who came to sell cattle to service the growing population by providing meat in the markets, and most noticing that the climate and grazing were good for their cattle, decided to settle around Jos and its neighbouring villages. Better grazing meant that the cattle produced more milk which meant that the Fulani women, who mostly sell *Fura da Nono* (corn balls and yogurt), found it easier to make more money.

The decline in the tin industry in the 1960s and 1970s meant that the labour force engaged in the mines had to retrench. The informal sector accommodated this labour force which consisted mainly of the 'migrant' population. Former miners engaged in all sorts of small-scale production and commercial ventures as a means of meeting the livelihood challenges within Jos and its environs (Sha, 2005:38-39). Many of them became dry season farmers, petty traders, taxi and bus drivers, sales commission agents, retailers and pool agents, while women lost out immediately in the service to the minefields population and had to search for other ways to establish a livelihood. In effect, even after the collapse of tin mining, most artisans and traders remained in Jos

and made it their permanent home. The implication of this for women was that they lost out in the little business ventures they had started while at the same time facing an expansion of the informal economy. All the same, many of them were unwilling to go back to the rural areas, and thus had to find a way of being absorbed into the new urban economy.

Since the days of tin mining in Jos, the growth of Jos city has been phenomenal. The creation of Benue Plateau State in 1967 with Jos as the headquarters led to an influx of civil servants and other businessmen. Due to the Federal Character Principle, which guarantees an equitable distribution of Federal resources between the Nigerian states, Jos and Plateau State have also attracted other national institutions such as the prestigious National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies in Kuru (NIPSS) as well as the National Roots Crops Research Institute (NRCRI), the National Institute of Veterinary Research (NVRI) and the Headquarters of the National Industrial Training Fund (ITF), and the University of Jos among others. It has become clear that women who were displaced from the tin mine economy had an opportunity to get lower cadre jobs (cleaning, cooking) in these institutions and were also able to start other businesses on the premises of these institutions. These organisations have attracted employees and workers from beyond the boundaries of Plateau State, thus contributing further to immigration and the local diversity of ethnic groups associated with various businesses. Businesses and interactions went on smoothly until recently, and, perhaps due to the conflicts, workers in these institutions now sometimes collect statistics of their employees based on religion and ethnicity as a means of monitoring other and their groups' progress as mentioned earlier.

Even after the decline of mining and the rise of other sectors, Jos' tin mining history has continued to shape the livelihoods of its population because the mining has had a devastating effect on the land. For example, this meant that women who were engaged in vegetable farming could no longer do so. While women traditionally do not own land or inherit it within their natal families, they are regarded as good workers on their family and husband's farm. Thus, if a man's farmland is devastated, his wife's source of livelihood is likewise destroyed.

Furthermore, the former miners were not ready to go back to the village to farm after experiencing the relative comfort of the city and they found work in a variety of businesses such as; *yan-dako* (load carriers), *yan-paskare* (wood splitters), *yan-kwalabe* (bottle sellers), and the *yan-bidabidi* (Road construction labourers) (Kudu, 2008:130). An immediate view of these categories of workers suggests that these businesses are gendered as the writer did not come across any females working in *dako*, *kwalabe*, *bidabidi* or even *paskare*. Women who split wood (*paskare*) do this only at the domestic level for home use or, sometimes, at the retail level to supply to other women in the neighbourhood. The foregoing shows that some level of religious tolerance must have existed between the migrant and indigenous populations (Christians, Muslims and Pagans) who interacted and intermarried. Examples of such a marriage are those of Mrs Muktar⁴³ which I discussed in chapter four and that of Ngo Mary PrinceWell for whom religion and ethnicity were not an obstacle. Similarly, I have also not come across any records indicating that buying and selling in the mining camps, markets and elsewhere was based on religious or ethnic associations. Women

⁴³ Mrs Matyen Muktar worked with the Plateau state government and was retired prematurely probably as a result of the ethnic and religious conflict. She is married to a non-indigene.

who intermarried during the mining period might have enjoyed a peaceful relationship with their spouses until the recent escalation of ethnic and religious conflicts. With the defined settlement pattern based on religion and sometimes ethnicity, tension and suspicion started to pervade professional and political relationships. And this has significant consequences for market relationships as well as other networks, as shall be examined later.

2.7 Patterns of Conflict in Contemporary Jos and the Middle Belt

The diversity of Jos notwithstanding, Plateau state does not have a long history of conflict. While the rest of Nigeria was affected by violent conflict in the 1980s and early 1990s,⁴⁴ Plateau state remained peaceful, calm and reassuring to other Nigerians looking for a safe haven from the insecurity that was associated with many of the far Northern States. By then, however, the cosmopolitan nature of Jos, coupled with its large concentration of different ethnic and religious groups meant that Jos became increasingly central to the struggle by various ethnic and religious groups for access and control over scarce economic resources. It is very likely that Government interference in the local political economy increased the propensity towards violence. The conflict in Plateau state is economic and ethnic with a religious dimension as residents accuse local and state government personalities of fanning identity-based divisions to advance their own political agendas (Campbell & Harwood, 2013). The

⁴⁴ Nigeria has experienced ethnic conflict since its creation, and the civil war was an important aspect of this, but as Falola argues, religious tensions have increased in Nigeria since the 1970s and 1980s. And now most of these violence has taken place in the Middle Belt. Refer to Falola's (1998) work on Violence in Nigeria. Collis (1970) also has a similar opinion in his write up on Nigeria.

episodic conflict in the state dates back to 1945 with the economic and trade rivalry between the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba (See Plotnicov, 1971), and the anti-Igbo violence around the tin mines in 1966. An example of the conflict in the mid 1990s is the Jos riot of April 1994 resulting from the naming of a Hausa-Fulani candidate as caretaker committee chairman of Jos North Local Government Authority and the subsequent rejection of that appointment by the indigenous groups of Afizere, Anaguta and Berom.

Since the mid-1990s, local struggles for material resources have often bred conflict. In most cases, this is between indigenous Christian groups and Hausa-speaking Muslim immigrants. This rivalry has intensified since the 2001 September riot⁴⁵ and there has since been a series of conflicts from 1994 to date. The table below shows some selected cases of conflicts in the Jos and other parts of the Middle Belt.

⁴⁵ The September 2001 violence was as a result of the appointment of another settler, Mukhtar Usman Mohammed, by the civilian government of President Olusegun Obasanjo, on 20 June of that year, to the office of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) coordinator and as chairman of the Local Government Monitoring Committee (LGMC) for the council.

Table 1: Selected Cases of Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in the Middle Belt

	Date	Location	Nature of Conflict and Principal Actors
1	5 April 1994	Jos, Plateau	Indigenes staged a protest over the appointment of Aminu Mato a Hausa-Fulani as the Chairman of Jos North. Violence erupted few days later when the Jasawa youths took to the street.
2	28 February 2000	Kaduna, Kaduna	Kaduna city exploded in violence as Muslim and Christian extremists and other hoodlums clashed over the proposal to re-introduce Sharia.
3	14 April 2000	Agyragu, Nasarawa	Communal clash that started with a protest against the location of Local Government Council Headquarters. The militant youth group started the riot and later took to the streets killing and destroying.
4	7 September 2001	Jos, Plateau	A violent ethno-religious crisis between the Muslim/Hausa-Fulani and Christian/indigenes. The subject of discord between the Jasawa Development Association and Plateau Youth Council was over political appointment in Jos North LGC.
5	2 November 2001	Gwantu, Kaduna	A clash that started on a political ground (over the relocation of LGC Headquarters) later took on ethno-religious dimension. Several places of worship were destroyed.
6	30 December 2001	Barikin Ladi, Plateau	A violent communal conflict in Vwang district between the indigenes and non-indigenes exploded at the backdrop of the September 7, 2001 Jos crisis. It started when an illegal group of 40 men attacked the District Head of Vwang. It also had religious colouring.
7	6 June 2002	Yelwa-Shendam, Plateau	A religious/ethnic fracas between the native people (predominantly Christians) and Hausa settlers (predominantly Muslims). This violence extended to about 14 LGCs in Southern Plateau.
8	March 2003	Langtang North, Wase and Kanam LGC of Plateau	Fresh ethno-religious conflicts in the three neighbouring LGCs which is an extension of the crisis in southern Plateau.
9	1 May 2004	Yelwan Shendam, Plateau	A fresh ethno-religious mayhem that claimed over 650 lives and over 250 women abducted by suspected Taroh militia.
10	3 May 2005	Buruku/Katsina-Ala, Benue	A violent clash between Kursur and Ikyurav communities over ownership of piece of land. Several houses and farms were destroyed, and several women were abducted.
11	28 November 2008	Jos, Plateau	Ethno-religious clash between largely Hausa/Fulani-Muslims and Indigenous groups-Christians following a local government election. The Hausa/Fulanis are considered 'settlers' by other indigenous groups as both groups struggle for political space and control of the Jos-North LGA. Over 500 lives were lost in the conflict.
12	7 April 2009	Guma, Benue	Violent communal clash between Mbagen and Mzoron communities in Guma LGA over ownership of disputed farmlands. Eight people were reported killed while several houses and farmlands were destroyed.
13	19 December 2009.	Nasarawa, Nasarawa	A violent farmers/herdsmen clash in Uden Gida village over allegation of destruction of rice farm by cattle. Conflict was reported to have started on December 6, 2009 when farmer protested against destruction of his rice and got killed in the process. Over 30 people lost their lives in the latest orgy of violence.
14	26 January 2011	Jos, Plateau State.	Hundreds of aggrieved women staged a public protest against the continued presence of soldiers at the central abattoir, alleging that the soldiers were aiding and abetting attacks on the people of the state
15	11 June 2013	Rukubi village, Doma Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.	No fewer than 50 people were killed in renewed clashes between Tiv/Agatu famers and Fulani herdsmen.

Source: Institute of Governance and Social Research (IGSR) (2011). Updated

Table 1 above indicates that conflicts in Jos and the Middle Belt is recurring. These conflicts have been labelled ethnic and religious because they involved the Hausa-Fulani who are mainly Muslims and the Berom and other ethnic groups who are mostly Christians. However Campbell & Harwood (2013) noted that rivalries between ethnic groups, settlers and indigenes, herders and farmers, and religious groups overlap. This is so because in many cases religious identity and ethnicity coincided with or contradicted each other, depending on the context (Best, 2008: 9). As Kastfelt (1994) suggests, the ethnic groups have often used religion as a mobilising force and even manipulated it to suit their political projects (see also Sha, 2004: 2),⁴⁶ and the case in Jos and the Middle Belt is no exception.

2.7.1 Immediate and Remote Causes of the Conflict in Jos

Other causes of conflict in Jos include the struggle over the traditional rulership of Jos, struggle over political office, the indigene versus settler dichotomy, the culture of belittling, religious intolerance and the struggle over access to pastoral and arable land. For example, the arrival of the Muslim Fulani herdsmen in Plateau, mentioned earlier, brought them into direct land-use competition with the Christian Berom⁴⁷ (Campbell & Harwood, 2013), which created long lasting tension. Similarly, Shut (2007) notes that the politics of participation in government has also bred what is referred to as the

46 Any description of contemporary manipulation of religion and politics for personal gain will benefit from Kastfelt's (1994) work on Religion and Politics in Nigeria.

47 The Governor of Plateau state is Berom. Berom is presumably the largest ethnic group in Jos. Governor Jonah David Jang has since assumption of office been accused of favouritism in the appointment and issuance of government contracts. This attitude is said to have contributed to fanning the conflict.

indigene versus settler syndrome in Jos. Political offices are hotly contested amongst indigenes who are often resistant to non-indigenes (settlers) taking part in the process as noted earlier. Such contest and rivalry between the ethnic and religious groups in Jos and the Middle Belt triggers intolerance for inter-faith marriage.

2.7.2 Inter-faith Marriage and the Conflict in Jos

A social dimension of the conflict, particularly when it comes to marriage, is that although indigenes and settlers inter-married, a majority of the ethnic groups did not approve of marriage between their women and the Fulani. For example, there were instances of this disapproval in Tiv land that led to couples having to separate (Okpu, 1977:23). Likewise, the Muslim Hausa community is intolerant of their daughters marrying Christians, demonstrating an unwillingness to fully integrate into the Jos Plateau society, and creating resentment which we will deal with in more detail in subsequent chapters.

2.7.3 Culture of Belittling and the Conflict in Jos

Christians refer to Muslim men's disapproval of their women marrying Christian men as *raini* (Hausa- culture of belittling) and also an exhibition of total disregard for their own religion and traditional community (Danfulani, 2006: 4). This attitude not only reflects the ongoing political conflict, it also illustrates the subordinate role of women in local ethnic and religious relations, as both 'indigenous' Christian and 'migrant' Muslim leaders are concerned about maintaining control over their daughters. At the same time, the fact that emotions over marriage practices run so deep illustrates the

centrality of women to local understandings of conflict and violence not only in Jos and the Middle Belt but elsewhere.

2.7.4 Religious Intolerance and the Conflict in Jos

Due to the religious plurality of Jos and its function as a state capital, conflict can escalate quickly and then extend to other regions of the state because the indigenes and migrants residing outside it are sentimentally attached to, and thus affected by, the issues in Jos, their capital, and both Muslims and Christians regard Jos as their religious headquarters. That is to say, the Plateau's indigenous groups in local governments outside Jos hold strong opinions about a Jos conflict in the same way that the Hausa-Fulani diaspora populations do, and by extension Muslim populations in the diaspora are sentimentally attached to what happens to the Muslim *Ummah* in Jos city and its environs (Best, 2008:10).

This strong attachment creates a virtual shared community based on a shared cultural (and in this case also religious) engagement (Anderson, 1991). While Anderson highlights the importance of language and written culture for the creation of nations, in Jos members of the same ethnic group often create a sense of belonging to a larger unit through a strong associational life and shared communication through ethnically-based telephone and internet networks centring on local politics, land use and other issues.⁴⁸ In fact, Nigerian Muslims and Christians everywhere, but especially in Jos,

⁴⁸ For instance, various blogs have been created to discuss issues relating to the conflicts such as land, political appointments and other corrupt practices. The Middle Belt discussion forum is one I am aware of. The University of Jos Alumni also has a blog on yahoo, where issues relating to the stability of the institution in a conflict environment are always discussed.

already live with a strong sense of shared community as part of the practices and texts associated with their faith.⁴⁹ This investment in a virtual community is linked to the belief that an injury to one is an injury to all, notwithstanding distance or actual contact, and this sense of brotherhood might explain the escalation of conflicts and religious intolerance in Jos and other parts of the country.

2.8 The Impact of the Conflict on Women

Campbell & Harwood (2013) note that most victims in the Jos conflicts are predominantly women, children and the elderly who cannot, unlike men, physically run away from any fighting. Further, women experience great fear, stress and trauma, and also often become refugees or are internally displaced (WANEP, 2009: 13). This trauma arises from the loss of loved ones, displacement, caring for injured family members, sexual abuse and rape. Thus, because of their greater social and economic dependence on marriage and family networks, and because of their sexual, emotional and physical vulnerability, among other reasons, women suffer more than men in times of conflict. For instance, the official ratio of male to female Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the Gamai-Kofyar/Pan conflict in Namu, south of Jos in Plateau State, indicate that out of a total of 1,719 IDPs at the 333 Artillery Barracks in Shendam, 1,303 are women (Best, 2007: 229). My interaction with some of the IDPs within Jos and its environment suggests that women constitute a high proportion of individuals who are

⁴⁹ Refer to Kukah (1993). Kukah pointed out that such imaginings as the Northernisation agenda is a guise to gain access to leadership where leaders make unguided utterances and expect support from people of the same faith as theirs.

unable to rebuild their lives in post-conflict without help. Further, Dinshak (2008: 107) recollected that Chindo Madaki told him in an interview that:

Our women suffered greatly because they left all their belongings behind. Many of the women that were pregnant suffered spontaneous abortion. There were also cases of ill health because of poor living conditions and many of them had diarrhoea.

That is just one case out of so many other cases of the plight of women in the Jos and Plateau conflicts. Scholars (Best, 2004, 2007, 2008; Gwamna, 2010) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the League for Human Rights (LHR), the Justice Development Peace and Caritas (JDPC) and the Institute for Governance and Social Research (IGSR) in Jos have documented evidence of the impact of conflict on women and noted that very little has been done to lessen this impact. This research is therefore going to look at how conflict is linked to women's everyday activities and how it is also linked to their typical trades and professions, by examining how the historical and cultural processes associated with the conflicts in Jos impacts on the ability of women to participate in public and political life.

2.9 Conclusion and Reflection

Nigeria after independence was focused on creating more political units instead of building strong inclusive institutions. This approach affects the identity and consciousness of the people who later began to align along ethnicity and religion. In communities like Jos and other parts of the Middle Belt the high concentration of ethnic minority groups and the struggle over control of resources at the local and State levels

has created rivalry based on the differences between ethnic groups. Settlers and indigenes, herders and farmers, and members of different religious groups are in constant competition with one another to gain control. This competition in many cases depends on religious identity and ethnicity coinciding with or contradicting each other, depending on the context. Similarly, ethno-religious conflict and the tensions associated with such conflicts have proved to be sufficiently long-lasting, as to raise questions about whether the present 'emergency' or 'conflict' situation runs the risk of becoming the new 'norm'. This does have implication for our understanding of what might be described as 'politics as usual' and 'conflict politics,' as the distinction between the two is becoming increasingly blurred in practice.

When the democratic era started in 1999, democracy came to be seen as an avenue for the dominant political groups to legitimize exploitation and enrich themselves using ethnic and religious cleavages, and, as noted, the lives of many women in Nigeria are limited by conflict and male dominance within the political system. Thus, as male politicians use ethnicity and religion to capture and control resources against outside groups, competition within the group is restricted by the exclusion of women. Thus women's lives are also limited by the essentialisation of group differences and growing mistrust. This growing exclusion of women from different aspects of social life unfortunately affects the ways in which they can be mobilised to participate in research like this. The next chapter presents the methodology used to collect data and highlights the various ways in which the research methodology had to be adapted in order to take account of women's particular difficulties.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION FOR THIS RESEARCH

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an explanation of the various ways in which data for this research was collected and analysed. It also explains the methods used in sampling and the sampling technique. In addition, it presents some of the experiences in my field notes in order to offer an insight into the actual processes of data collection. An open discussion of the challenges faced during the collection of data enables the reader to better understand the environment in which the research was carried out, which in turn had an impact on the quality of the data. This chapter also includes some of the challenges faced in terms of research ethics, even where formal consent was given.

Coming from the Middle Belt myself, I thought conducting research in this area would be easy. One reason for this confidence was that, because of my involvement in the activities of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) at the onset of the conflict in Jos, many respondents knew me by sight; however, those I knew best were not necessarily those who were most at ease with me in this new context (Clark, 2010: 15).⁵⁰ The IGSR organises seminars on peace and reconciliation. It also researches into the causes of the conflicts and provides recommendations on ways to prevent the

⁵⁰ Through my involvement in a series of peace building workshops, seminars, community dialogue and negotiations as a volunteer with the Institute for Governance and Social Research (IGSR) from mid-2006, I came in contact with a few of my prospective respondents during my activities with IGSR. I re-established connections with them during my pilot study and during my field work in 2012, they served as my link to other respondents. I have also in the process of working with IGSR come in contact with other NGOs like the Justice Development Peace and Caritas (JDPC) who also provided useful links to respondents.

recurrence of violence. With headquarters in Jos, its activities cut across the various States of the Middle Belt, including Plateau, Bauchi, Benue, Nasarawa and Kaduna States.

I got involved in the IGSR's activities, particularly those centred on the conflicts in Jos, making me a participant observer. In 2010 and partly 2011, I worked as a member of the team established by the IGSR called the Women for Peace Initiative (WPI), which engaged women within Jos to talk about the conflict and to be active participants in the peace and reconciliation process. Through this work I gained a lot of experience on which I draw for my doctoral programme. My ability to communicate fluently in Hausa, Irigwe, Mwaghavul and Mupun enabled me to reach a wide range of women as I was able to connect with them through speaking their own language. In particular, I often used their language for salutations before interviews were conducted, and this opened up the conversation space and I did not have to depend on interpreters.

On the basis of this experience I developed an interest in pursuing doctoral research to gain deeper understanding on the impact of conflict on gender relations beyond the loss of life and property often adopted by NGOs. With the support of my then Head of Department at the University of Jos where I work, I developed a research proposal that focused on obtaining a more in-depth understanding of how conflict affects the lives of women and men. With this proposal I was accepted at the University of Birmingham. After a period of reading relevant literature and of adapting my plans to meet the expectations of a doctoral programme, I returned to Jos for fieldwork.

As noted above, my prior access to prospective respondents did not make my academic field work easier. I found interviewing and recording the personal experiences of women for the purposes of research a herculean task. One of the reasons for this was that the record and consent forms introduced for research purposes changed the ideas of my respondents about the nature of our interactions. Although in the past we had interacted easily and informally through NGOs, my research sometimes created its own anxieties among prospective respondents. Whilst this was not surprising given the sensitive political situation in many parts of Jos and the Middle Belt, this made things harder for me in a range of ways discussed in more detail below.

3.2 Geographical Area Covered in the Research

The research was conducted primarily in Jos, but some of the field work and interviews were also carried out in Nasarawa, Kaduna and Benue States for the purpose of comparison. These States have experienced conflicts similar to those that have shaken Jos, so this enables me to make some broader points about women and conflict in the Middle Belt of Nigeria. A comparison of what has taken place in these states also informs my views on likely developments in Jos in the future. "Comparison across several cases enables the researcher to assess whether a particular political phenomenon is simply a local issue or ...a previously unobserved general trend" (Hopkin, 2002: 249) For example, the conflicts in Kaduna State predate the Jos conflict. This state is now divided into Kaduna North and South,⁵¹ with Muslims primarily located

⁵¹ The Northern part of Kaduna is occupied by a majority Muslim population, while the Southern part is occupied by a majority Christian population.

in the North and Christians in the South. The fast growth of segregated residential patterns is also a trend that shapes present-day Jos.

Comparative research therefore has enabled me to consider the shared aspects of conflicts in the Middle Belt States and also the similarities and dissimilarities in practices day to day interaction. The comparative approach also highlights dissimilarities which have arisen as a result of the particular impact of conflict on different settlements and locally existing forms of social relations. Despite the long established relationships (through trade, marriage, and communal living) that exist between the Hausa-Fulani and the numerous other ethnic groups in Nigeria, the identity of these groups have over the years remained as important to them as the ownership of the land which they occupy. The exact ways in which groups react to, and interact with, each other is linked to a range of issues usually including their culture and tradition, control of land and other resources, and may therefore differ from place to place.

3.2.1 Identity Issues Within the Geographical Area Covered

The importance of group identities is also reflected in people's private lives where it can undermine or challenge gendered notions of marital control. For instance, even though husbands are considered to have control over their wives and children, a Fulani woman who marries a Berom man does not automatically become Berom and nor does she cease completely to be Fulani. Instead she acquires an added identity by marriage and in some instances maintains a stronger affinity to her natal home than to the matrimonial home. Depending on the situation, and despite the widespread sense that

children belong to the father, she might even pass her own identity on to her children who might grow up feeling more Fulani than Berom. As a result of such local practices, her experience, and that of her children, may be slightly different from that of other groups and marriages. Here the argument is that the particular social and historical links between the groups residing in Jos also shape the forms of conflict between them.

It is important to point out that my identity as a member of one of the Jos smaller indigenous groups prevented me from taking on the position of a neutral observer, but I have been able to distance myself from the data gathered, by ensuring that interviews were reported exactly and unclear statements verified. This was achieved through follow-up visits and phone calls aimed at asking the “informant for their reaction to the interpretation of the interview transcript” (Devine, 2002: 207). Following official designation, many Nigerians may describe my research as focusing on the North Central and North Eastern zones of Nigeria. However, I choose to refer to these parts of the country as the Middle Belt because this term encompasses, in my understanding, the political landscape shaped by the encounters between the Muslim speakers of Hausa and Fulani and the often Christian, or non-Muslim, and speakers of other languages in Northern Nigeria. These encounters in turn are shaped by the historical experience of the Sokoto Caliphate and Indirect Rule, and the colonial and early postcolonial structure of the Northern Region.

Inhabited mainly by groups that produce political, religious and ethnic counter-identities to Northern Nigeria’s dominant Hausa groups, the Middle Belt symbolizes a particular kind of struggle, identity and self-assertion. In fact, the struggle for an independent Middle Belt Region is in itself a part of the conflicts within the region. The Middle Belt

according to Mailafia (2012: 3)⁵² “is ultimately a state of mind – a way of life and a way of being. Like the British constitution, it is deeply enshrined in the hearts and minds of the peoples of the Middle Belt”. While my own position does not prevent me from understanding alternative visions for Jos and similar localities, readers unfamiliar with Northern Nigeria’s political geography should note that it is often impossible to find neutral words to bridge the gulf that divides different local ways of being.

3.3 Rationale for the Selection of Location and Respondents

Of the several states that make up the Middle Belt Region, I decided to restrict my research to Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Plateau States. This is partly because they once shared an administration within the old Benue-Plateau State. Benue-Plateau State was created in 1967 from parts of the Northern Region with its capital at Jos and existed until 1976 when it was divided into two states: Benue and Plateau. Nasarawa State remained part of Plateau State until 1996 when it was created as a separate state. As a result these states share a degree of common history in addition to their experience of ethnic and religious conflict. In contrast, Kaduna State provides an insight into similar conflicts within a separate setting as it relates to the “oppressive feature of the emirate system, particularly the headship of Fulani ruling families over predominantly non-Fulani districts” (Suberu, 1999: 50), which is the opposite of the case in Jos.

⁵² For more understanding of the Middle Belt conflict, see Mailafia, (2012).

3.3.1 Plateau State

Plateau State is “well known for the ethnic and religious clashes that have taken place here since the inception of civilian rule in 1999, and particularly from 2001” (Higazi, 2011: 15). As the location of competing ethnic and religious groups, as well as an established administrative centre and a regional centre of trade, Plateau State, and especially its capital, Jos, is the central focus for this thesis in order to attempt to understand the impact of conflict on the everyday lives of women and because it offers a good case study of the impact of group-based competition on women’s experiences in marriage, trade, politics and the public sector. Events in Plateau State will be compared and contrasted with recent conflicts in Benue, Kaduna and Nasarawa where relevant.

3.3.2 Nasarawa State

Ethnic and religious competition has permeated Nasarawa State since its creation. In 1996, General Abacha, the then head of state, allegedly situated the headquarters of the state in Lafia to empower and favour the Kanuri emir (his kin) of the town. This decision was said to have gone against the earlier agreed siting of the headquarters in Akwanga, a town with a strong Christian presence. Subsequently, ethnicity and religion continued to remain relevant in the political landscape in Nasarawa. Recent clashes between ethnic and religious communities in the state have impacted on the everyday marital, political, trade and professional lives of women in the state in similar ways to Jos and Plateau State.

3.3.3 Benue State

Benue State has recently witnessed ethnic and religious conflicts similar to those in Jos though differing in terms of severity and occurrence. There has been a series of clashes between the predominantly Christian host communities and the mainly Muslim Fulani herdsmen in Gwer, Shaga, Tse Kyuel, Tse Ayeri, and Zaan villages amongst others. A large fire that burnt down major stores in the Markurdi Modern Market in 2011 and another fire at the residence of the governor in 2012, both credited to the actions of political opponents and ethno-religious malcontents who feel marginalised out of government.

3.3.4 Kaduna State

In addition to the states that were formerly part of Plateau-Benue State, Kaduna State was chosen because its population is now split almost equally between Christians and Muslims residing in the South and North respectively and increasingly separated religiously and socially.⁵³ Ethnic and religious conflicts in Kaduna predate the conflicts in Jos, and trends in Kaduna offer the possibility of comparing the impact of ethnic and religious conflict on women's everyday life experiences across different local political economies in northern Nigeria.

⁵³ Segregated settlement is becoming the norm in areas affected by conflict in Jos, Nasarawa and Benue State. In Jos, Bauchi road is exclusively a Muslim settlement, while Angwan Rukuba an exclusively Christian settlement. This implies that schools even though government, only serves one particular religious group, and by implication narrowing social integration.

3.4 Research Respondents

Respondents for this research were selected from four main categories; inter-faith marriage, markets, politicians and those in the teaching profession. The focus is to explore and analyse the impact of ethno-religious conflict on women within these areas to enable us to have a broader understanding of the implication of conflict on their daily lives and on gender relations.

3.4.1 Inter-faith Marriage Respondents.

Both Christians and Muslims women who intermarried were interviewed in this category. I also interviewed women who intra-married because in-group ethnic and religious differences do exist. Denominational and sect rivalry puts a lot of pressure on women whose lives are often objects of control and domination. To discuss inter-faith marriage, I identified respondents through NGOs and especially the JPDC. From their original contacts I was able to snowball and get to other women in this category.

3.4.2 Market Respondents

All the FGDs that I conducted constituted a combination of market leaders and a few sellers. In the markets I interviewed market leaders or anyone holding a position of leadership, either male or female. Each group of items (food stuff) sold in the market has an existing leadership structure which I utilised for this study, because, it would be quite difficult to study the entire markets and each item. Because of the large number

of women in the various trades in the markets I concentrated on the foodstuff and vegetable sellers.

3.4.3 Political Respondents

With regard to attitudes towards women politicians, I interviewed both the male and female leadership of a party. For the other category of female politicians, respondents either hold elective positions or once held representative positions. Identifying these women was not necessarily an easy task but it enabled me to understand the different nature of the challenges faced by women in each of these roles. Securing appointments with the female politicians often relied on the help of my senior colleagues at the University of Jos who linked me up to a few University colleagues currently on political appointments, from whom I snowballed on to others.

3.4.4 Professional Respondents

For the professional group, setting up interviews was more or less straightforward. All I needed to do in order to speak to teachers and lecturers was to arrive a few minutes before the end of their lectures and teaching appointments and wait for them. I chose a few primary and secondary schools and one tertiary institution for my research. I interviewed both Muslim and Christian teachers and lecturers to give me a view of how the conflict has affected professional relations, daily office life and possibly productivity.

3.5 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic characteristics of respondents were compiled after the interview but did not form the basis for the identification of respondents during the field work with the exception of the stipulation that respondents must be 18 years and above. However, the location of respondents in this research and their source of livelihood are of central importance because it forms part of the central thesis of this work. Issues relating to age, marital status, number of children, educational qualification and social and economic status were compiled to present a greater picture of how such variables might be related to responses.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

This thesis used face-to-face interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and personal observation. The approach “explores attitudes, behaviour and experiences through such methods as interviews or focus groups. It attempts to get an in-depth opinion from participants” (Dawson, 2006: 14). Secondary sources were also used, which included books, internet sources, journals, newspapers, conference reports and Governments reports. These methods are discussed in detail below.

3.6.1 Secondary Materials: One of the methods used for this doctoral study included accessing secondary literature from the university libraries in Birmingham and Jos and locally printed material and internet-based resources. The research also consulted various publications of the commissions of inquiry, newspapers and government publications. These sources complement each other very well because some of the conflicts occurred several years and decades ago and thus the interviews collaborate

some of the evidence they provide. Part of the data collection process also involved reading and reviewing documents and websites on colonialism and Northern Nigeria and the conflicts in Nigeria's Middle Belt.

The Middle Belt Dialogue Group (MBDG), is an online blog which I enlisted provided useful insights into the nature of discussions centred on the conflicts. The University of Jos also has an online group where members interact and comment freely on the issues affecting Jos with discussions of the conflict always taking centre stage.

NGO publications provide a broad range of perspectives. This is because they include narratives of individuals involved in the conflict which have sometimes just been transcribed and published without editing. They thus provide direct information about victims and, in some instances, perpetrators of these conflicts. While carefully ensuring that such individuals could not be identified in this thesis, I used such materials from IGSR, CEPAN and JDPC, all located in Jos. I also consulted literature from the Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN), especially the TCNN Research Bulletins. Other materials consulted include reports of Conferences and Judiciary Commissions of Enquiry set up by both the Federal and State Government to look into some of the civil disturbances in Kaduna and Jos in Kaduna and Plateau States and reports of the various ethnic groups (especially Hausa, Yoruba, South-South, Igbo and Berom communities) about the ownership of Jos and the root causes of the conflict.

There were equally varied journals whose publications centred on some of the themes of this research including *Journal of Women in Peace Building*,⁵⁴ the *Journal of Christian Religious Education* and the publications of the Institute for Peace and

⁵⁴ This is published by the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP).

Conflict Resolution (IPCR) at the Presidency, Abuja. Moreover, I consulted materials from the libraries of some of the traditional rulers in Kaduna and Benue and got an insight into the rich collection of materials which make reference to local political histories.

3.6.2 Interviews

I conducted face to face interviews with persons identified as relevant to this research based on my sampling technique (which is purposive sampling) and I collected data on the specified indicators through semi-structured interviews and respondents narratives. Most of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. My field notes also served as an important part of the interview process, and I referred to them when I reflected on the research and wrote up my findings. As information obtained through interviews may not always be accurate, I paid attention where necessary to having the right contact points and triangulating the data bearing in mind the confidentiality of the respondents and in line with the ethics I mentioned above.

I interviewed heads of NGOs within the study area, particularly those working in areas relating to conflict. Efforts were made to speak with government officials to gain insights into their re-integration efforts and strategies used in the distribution of relief materials and the resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within Jos and its environs, but these yielded very little fruit. The interviews were conducted at a convenient time and location for the respondents and the questions were open-ended. I used closed questions for those who were very busy or too busy to speak to me and wanted to contribute to my work without being interviewed. In such cases I dropped the sample

questions and visited later for a very short interview. Most of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Particular attention was paid to observations of the environment and recorded in my field notes.

3.6.3 Focus Group Discussions

The FGD was used during the field work between May 2012 and February 2013. This method enables the researcher to gain deeper understanding of the complexities of every day market relationships. As Krueger (1994: 29-30) has noted, “researchers are recognising the benefits...greater methodological mixes that strengthen the research design...two or more different research methods to address the same issue to confirm findings and to obtain both breadth and depth of information.” FGDs are meant to be a social experience (Krueger, 1998). Their main purpose is “to gather qualitative data from individuals who have experienced some particular concrete situation which serves as the focus of the interview” (Merton & Kindal, 1946: 541), thus asking conversational questions is essential in order to create and maintain an informal environment (Krueger, 1998). It is equally important for the researcher to know that they are responsible for establishing a “climate of communication that works well for participants to develop a rapport based on trust and confidence” (Krueger, 1998).

Like interviews, FGDs have the advantage of producing a very rich body of data expressed in the respondents own words and context. They also allow the researcher to interact directly with respondents. According to David, Prem & Dennis (2007: 42), one of the advantages of FGDs is that:

It provides opportunities for the clarification of responses, for follow-up questions and for probing responses...it is possible for the researcher to observe nonverbal responses such as gestures, smiles, frowns...which may carry information that supplements and on occasions even contradicts the verbal response.

The process allows the individual to respond in their own words using their own categorisation and perceived association, providing very rich data and allowing the researcher to obtain deeper meaning of what was said (David, Prem & Dennis, 2007). It also enables the researcher to obtain speedy results when various FGDs are compared, and to increase the sample size of qualitative studies, thereby saving cost and time (Krueger, 1998: 36).

The FGDs were used mainly for the market category where the market leaders were interviewed. The leaders were specifically targeted because they were considered experts who had all the information required. Krueger (1994) has referred to these category of participants as a special type of group because participants are selected based on the possession of certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic and normally the FGD is repeated several times with different people, to identify trends and patterns in perceptions. This is why the research was carried out via FGDs in several markets within Jos and other parts of the Middle Belt in order to ascertain facts about the impact of the conflict on market relations.

3.7 The Pilot Study

A pilot study for this research was conducted between July and August 2011, when I was able to distribute approximately 150 open-ended questionnaires to sample opinions on the topics of this research within the Jos metropolis. The questionnaires were distributed to NGOs, particularly the IGSR trainees who were based at a youth reconciliation camp, and at the University of Jos. The questionnaires asked what respondents thought the conflict was about, what they saw as the effects of the conflict and how it had changed interactions and everyday lives for them and other ordinary people.

In combination with my own reading of the literature, this pilot study led me to the understanding that a greater proportion of the NGO work on conflict is centred on loss of life and property or on group reconciliation, with very little attention paid to how it has changed the everyday lives of women. Following on from this, I also held open discussions around the conflicts with the Director and a few members of staff of the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution in Abuja, the Director of IGSR, market women at the Terminus market (the main market) in Jos and politicians during the IGSR 2012 programme at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPP) Kuru in Jos.

The period of the pilot study also enabled me to collect the most important – and internationally quoted – works on conflict in Jos. It was interesting to learn that the majority of that literature (Best, 2004 & 2005; Gofwen, 2004; Gwamna 2010; Sha, 2004) dealt with the loss of lives and property. Very little attention was paid to how conflict has impacted on the interactions, relationships and daily lives of women as well

as men in Jos. This insight encouraged me to explore the existing gap in the literature on women and conflict in the area.

During the pilot study, I was also able to map out the geographical areas of the town which I needed to include in my study, as several of the responses indicated the need to cover states like Kaduna, Nasarawa and Benue. The pilot study period also helped me to identify and make contact with my future field assistants and some of my respondents. In addition, I was able to revive my contacts with NGOs like the JDPC and CEPAN that eventually served as major links to my respondents, particularly the inter-faith marriage group. The pilot study was also useful, because I was able to identify relevant sources of information for my research on issues relating to women as well as relevant stake-holders to be interviewed during the fieldwork. I kept a diary of comprehensive information on the identified stakeholders, institutions and individuals to be contacted during the fieldwork. I was also able to identify themes and areas that I was able to later develop for the proper field work. It became clear that Focus Group Discussion was to be used alongside other methods of data collection.

3.8 Research Sample and Sample Size

Initially, I had planned to contact and interview between 400 and 600 respondents for this research. But I soon discovered that this was too ambitious for a qualitative research project at doctoral level. Apart from the difficulties of obtaining these interviews, it would take a long time to actually speak to so many people, and to transcribe and analyse so much data. It was therefore more reasonable and realistic

to aim for about 100 interviews and FGDs (See Table 1) in the areas mentioned considering the time frame needed to complete this research.

Respondents were basically identified in relation to their position within society, and mainly in relation to inter-faith marriage, markets, professional groups, politics as well as religious groups and traditional institutions. The location of respondents and their source of livelihood are of central importance because it forms part of the central thesis of this work, particularly in regard to networking in conflict and post conflict Jos.

Table 2: Total Number of Respondents by Location and Topics Discussed

S/N	Categories	Location	Total
1	Inter-Faith Marriage	Jos	10
2	Markets (Men & Women)	Jos, Markurdi, Nasarawa, Kaduna	24
3	Women in Politics (Elected Representatives)	Jos, Markurdi, Nasarawa, Kaduna	18
4	Political Party Leaders	Jos, Makurdi, Nasarawa, Kaduna	10
5	Professional men and women (Mainly Primary, Secondary and University Teachers)	Jos	14
6	Traditional Rulers, Ward Heads & Religious Leaders	Jos, Makurdi, Nasarawa, Kaduna	10
7	Ethnic Associations (Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Fulani, Berom)	Jos	10
8	Non-Governmental Organisations	Jos	6
Total			102

Source: Field notes 2012/2013 © Plangsats Dayil

3.8.1 Research Sampling Technique

The sampling strategy used for this research is mainly purposive sampling. The 'purposive sampling technique is a type of non-probability sampling that is most effective when one needs to study a particular cultural domain with knowledgeable

experts within' (Tongco, 2007: 147). This method is very effective in sampling respondents who are thought to be of direct relevance to the research. Tongco (2007:147) points out that:

The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses. It is a non-random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of informants.

The adopted sampling technique can be described as 'a random selection of sampling units within the segment of the population with the most information on the characteristic of interest' (Guarte & Barrios, 2006: 277). This procedure is quite effective in qualitative research because it helps the researcher to choose subjects carefully and ensure that they only talk to those with knowledge relevant to the research topic and thus not waste time. I also used the snowball sampling method alongside the purposive sampling method, by taking note of names and sources of information mentioned by other respondents. Tran & Perry (2003) point out that 'Sometimes snowball sampling involves asking an informant to suggest another informant.' Tongco (2007: 153) explains that "this method might not be free from bias..." (See also, Lopez *et al*, 1997; Seidler 1974; Smith, 1983; Zelditch, 1962). So it is important to state the bias clearly when the results are analysed and interpreted so as not to mislead people into inferring general conclusions (Bernard, 2002; Godambe, 1982; Snedecor, 1939). Despite its inherent bias, purposive sampling can provide reliable and robust data. The strength of the method actually lies in its intentional bias (Bernard, 2002; Lewis & Sheppard, 2006; Poggie, 1972; Tremblay 1957).

As a way of ruling out any form of bias and misrepresentation, incoherent and unclear responses were cross-checked and respondents contacted in a follow-up visit in August and September 2014. This follow-up visit enabled me to clearly understand the sense in which certain responses were made at a time and particularly to present the arguments exactly in the way they were intended.

Respondents for this study were carefully selected to respond to the central areas of research that emerged as important for women's everyday lives, namely marriage, market relations, politics and the formal sector. The table below shows the categories and the number of interviews and focus group discussions conducted under each theme. As set out above, most of the interviews were recorded and transcribed. My field notes also served as an important part of the interview process, and I referred to them when I reflected on the research and wrote up my findings. As information obtained through interviews may not always be accurate, I paid attention where necessary to having the right contact points and triangulating the data, bearing in mind the confidentiality of the respondents and in line with the ethics I mentioned above.

Conflicting kinds of response are expected in humans when they relate in a group. Krueger (1994: 31) pointed out that "human conditions can be distorted intentionally or unintentionally. People are not always truthful, and sometimes they give answers that seem best for the situation. Other times people hold back important information because of apprehensions or social pressure. Experts who work with small groups testify about the unpredictable nature of groups, and that group leaders or moderators can skilfully or unwittingly lead groups into decisions or consensus."

This is illustrated by an experience I had at the Farin Gada market when the leader of the market tried to ensure that he controlled the discussion. He clearly said that the conflict had never affected the market. However, when I continued with the FGD and encouraged a wider range of respondents, including women, to speak, other views emerged. One of the female respondents in the FGD said that they had often narrowly escaped death and would have been killed if it had not been for the intervention of some of the people who traded within the market. Bearing in mind the complicated nature of interviews and of what people considered to be the truth, my collection of the data and my understanding of it both relied strongly on my own knowledge of local forms of behaviour and social interaction.

3.9 Data Analysis Process

The data for this research was analysed based on themes for this research. During the collection of data, I was able to identify and conduct interviews based on the areas that I think speak about women's lives in the Middle Belt conflicts: marriage, markets, politics and the public sector. These areas were assessed in line with the objective of this research set out earlier. I tried to ensure a comparison of my findings with other research done in same or similar fields from the available literature.

I was also able to evaluate my findings as I was writing up. The data analysis process involved data reduction. This involved "subjecting data to numerous readings until different themes emerge[d]" (Divine, 2002: 206). I looked for groupings and relationships in the interviews, which enabled me to link up all the themes in the research to present a bigger picture. I carefully examined all evidence, reviewing the

transcripts multiple times, and comparing and contrasting participant's comments until central themes emerge (Krueger, 1998: 231). Based on this, I was able to draw up some more general arguments and conclusions.⁵⁵

The larger themes I addressed in this research included women's lives in inter-faith marriages, women's economic networks in the markets, women's political representation and careers lives, and women's professional lives in the education and higher education sector. The analysis is centred on the in-betweenness of women and the politicisation of women's experiences – and sometimes even presence – in a wide range of economic and professional relationships during and after conflicts.

3.10 Ethical Issues

Like any other, this study was shaped by a number of concerns. Importantly, the research had to follow regulations laid down by the University of Birmingham. The methodology for this research was approved by the University of Birmingham's ethics committee in line with the University's rules guiding doctoral research. While the approval was necessary to ensure that ethical issues were considered and followed during the fieldwork, the entire process took long before the approval was granted. This was important because ethics involves the careful consideration about the impact of our research on others. Bulmer (1992) referred to ethics as a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others. It is a form of social responsibility by the researcher to ensure that the process of gathering and disseminating information is free from any

⁵⁵ See Kane and O'Reilly-de Brun: 2001.

undesirable immediate and future consequences to the respondent. Good ethical practice involves being a good researcher at the same time as being a good human being (Iphofen, 2011). The process also encompasses all aspects relating to anonymity, confidentiality, consent, feedback and storage and withdrawal, which also have to be explained to the respondent at the onset of each interview. Researchers, therefore, must be careful to ensure that they are not harming their respondents.⁵⁶

As my research relies on the narratives of people, and especially women, who are in many instances impacted negatively by these conflicts, I took time to explain to the respondents all the aspects of my research in order to obtain their informed permission to record the interviews and assured them of confidentiality. The participants in the research were given a consent form to indicate that they agreed to participate in the study.

The consent form explained clearly the purpose of this research and informed respondents how they could obtain information about this research after it was completed. On the form, the respondents were asked to indicate how they wanted their information recorded, either through a voice recorder or just note-taking. Participants were informed how their information will be used and stored. Respondents' consent forms also asked them how they wanted their information shared, and they were given the option to choose if they wanted their identity known. For most respondents, this research used a different name and code to identify them so nobody could link their responses to them personally. While several people willingly allowed me to use their

⁵⁶ Systematic Harm to the respondent could mean, but not limited to, raising false expectations of gain to participants, unwarranted exclusion as a result taking part in a research. Refer to Iphofen, (2011) for more on harming respondents.

names I still decided that in most cases, usually with the exception of public figures, anonymity was the better option.

Some of the respondents especially in the markets gave me permission to arrange a video recording of the interview. This was useful particularly in the markets where this technology allowed me to capture complex events and settings rather than just the spoken word. While the doctoral results do not include these videos in order to ensure anonymity, they have served as a very good reminder of the environment in which I carried out fieldwork. Many respondents allowed me to take voice recordings of interviews, while some of the respondents were more comfortable with note-taking which they considered as less of a threat than having their voices or images recorded.

The potential impact of recordings was an important consideration even for ostensibly powerful people. One of my respondents, a politician and chairman of one of the political parties in the state, did not allow me to record or take notes of an interview. He told me to just listen and later make sense of what he said, which I did. Immediately after I left his office I stopped to jot down all I could recollect.

Upon agreement the consent form was signed in duplicate and the respondents retained a copy for their own records. I pointed out to all respondents about their right to withdraw their consent for up to a year after the interview, and I left my telephone number, email address and postal details in Nigeria and Birmingham with each of them.

Because consent forms immediately take the respondents into the realm of officialdom, the need to obtain signatures limited the level of informality and freedom of speech I enjoyed with them. In addition to that most of the interviews were accompanied by note-taking and voice recording which immediately put the respondent in a position of

reservation where he or she focused on accuracy and correctness of speech. Despite the difficulties associated with the consent forms, my respondents were very happy to know that they could have a copy of the form and that they could also contact me or my supervisor at any point to withdraw from the research. It was extremely important to many of my respondents to be sure that their information was not going to be used against them at any point in time.

In addition to the formal requirements set out by the university, I also ensured that data gathered through recording was properly transcribed and well coded, and I kept a record of the contact details of respondents which enabled me to get back to them for the duration of the research to ensure that the data was presented accurately and constituted a true representation of what they told me. I also avoided or consciously moderated very sensitive questions or emotion triggers that would bring back bad memories and hurtful feelings. I did that through paying attention to the respondent's facial expressions and body language as questions were asked, and empathising with them when the need arose.

As a researcher, I am also human and have feelings. There were sober moments when I had to stop recording and empathise with the respondents before going on. This is what Sarantakos (1998) referred to as issues that would have jeopardised the respondent's psychological well-being, but showing concern and empathy goes a long way in assisting respondents to quickly relax again and move on with the interview.

While interviewing was often difficult I noticed that it also frequently had a positive impact on the respondents. Many people became more relaxed and were willing to go on with the interview after a moment of shared solemnity. These sort of experiences

occurred mostly with the women in inter-faith marriages whose interviews were conducted in their homes, and many of them were moved to tears as they recollected some of their experiences. The conflict had come to define the way they related to society and the way society saw them. The need for breaks and pauses made the interview periods longer and more demanding personally as I empathised and in some instances even cried with them.

3.11 Challenges and Limitations

There were numerous challenges faced during the data gathering process in addition to some of the challenges related to ethics mentioned in the previous paragraph. As a result of the conflicts in Jos, settlement patterns have changed and they continue to shift along religious, and in some instances ethnic lines. You find, for instance, large areas of the city dominated by Christians, making it quite difficult for someone of the opposite faith to move or drive in these areas due to fear of attacks. Similarly it is difficult for a Christian to move freely in the Muslim-dominated areas. Therefore, on several occasions I asked members of the Jos North Peace Ambassadors to accompany me in order to boost my sense of security.⁵⁷ Since the start of the conflicts many Muslim areas had become unfamiliar terrain to me, so often the peace ambassadors also provided me with directions to where I was going.

⁵⁷ The Peace Ambassadors are both Christian and Muslim youths trained by IGSR in collaboration with the Plateau State Government and the Security agencies in Jos. These group of youths are empowered as whistle blowers and mediators in the event of any conflict.

The separation of the city added a burden of confidence and trust on me, because it was important for the people I visited in these areas to trust and have confidence in me, particularly when visiting members of ethnic and religious groups different from mine. I was able to overcome such difficulties at least partially by using contact persons for each of these settlements who were familiar to the people I was visiting. Important among those who helped me to contact members of different groups were the Jos North Peace Ambassadors, who are Christian and Muslim youths trained by the Institute of Governance and Social Research (IGSR) in collaboration with the Plateau State Government and the Security Sectors in Jos. Peace Ambassadors also assisted in securing and arranging some of my interview appointments. However, I had to conduct almost all my interviews myself, both because of the emotional content of many interviews and because I noticed with some of the respondents that they needed a little push during interviews before the whole story was told. The confidence required for this was not something I could ask or expect of research assistants. Therefore I was unable to delegate many interviews.

Another limitation was the fact that at the time of my fieldwork the conflicts had already created certain patterns of behaviour in relation to individuals who were not from a respondent's group. This means that it was sometimes difficult for me to gain the trust of respondents who did not see me as a member of their *in-group*. Due to my own background it was somewhat easier to win the trust of Christians and Muslims who were members of indigenous groups. However, I was able to utilise some of the women whom I worked with during the Women for Peace Initiative (WPI) and the Peace Ambassadors to overcome this challenge. These women were able to relate freely, and granted interview because of the long established trust which was also important.

Another strategy for gaining trust was that during most of the interviews I conducted in the exclusively Muslim areas, I had to dress in such a way that is acceptable to the community and by so doing avoid drawing unnecessary attention to myself. Dressing otherwise would have looked disrespectful and insensitive to the community where I was conducting the research, and might have exposed me to abuse because of the sensitivity of the research and because the communities were still hurting and nurturing the wounds of the conflict.

A further problem was caused by the period of my fieldwork coinciding with religious and ethnic conflicts in the Riyom and Barkin Ladi areas in Plateau, the Asakio and Agyaragu areas in Nasarawa, the Manchok and Zangon Kataf areas in Kaduna and the Naka and Yogbo in Benue. In the period between May 2012 and February 2013, Plateau State lost two of its lawmakers: Honourable Gyang Fuani of the Plateau House of Assembly and Honourable Gyang Dantong, Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. When these politicians were attacked by unknown men during a mass burial of members from Riyom constituency the government imposed a curfew to restrict movement and normal activities in Jos did not return for nearly two weeks, so I had to suspend interviews because tensions were too high for me to move about.

Another problem, especially with prominent women and female politicians, was accessibility and keeping appointments. Getting politicians to keep appointments was a challenge as many interviews and meetings were re-scheduled repeatedly. For example, I tried to meet one of the female politicians in Nasarawa State capital for an agreed appointment but on reaching there she asked me to meet her in her village compound. Driving to her village, I gave her a call to ask for the exact location of the place, but she told me that she had been called out for a meeting, and was sorry but

we could not hold the interview. After several such experiences I gave up on this respondent. Arranging a meeting with a Nigerian politician, whether male or female, requires patience and persistence and some interviews had to be cancelled or were too short to be useful. Often I had to make several calls and visits to the women politicians and party leaders before interviews were granted. As illustrated above, some women remained inaccessible to me. In other cases I had to attend political party rallies to gain access to female party leaders which involved driving long distances to the venues of the rallies. Despite many disappointments, I did not give up on this area of research and ensured that I got across to as many female politicians as possible.

Some respondents suffered from research respondents' fatigue: living in an area shaken by conflict, many had seen researchers come to interview them and then leave without much change. As a result, some began to question what researchers do with the responses they collect, and many of them pointed out to me that there has been no commensurate change in their living conditions despite the activities of a multiplicity of researchers. Such a challenge spurred me on to consider the need to link research to policy formulation in Nigeria and most importantly to instigate development that is people-centred.

Some of the respondents were illiterate and could not communicate in English. Here my ability to speak Hausa fluently and my ability to write in Hausa were valuable assets as I did not have to depend on interpreters. I noticed immediately that such an approach lightened the interview mood, as respondents immediately looked at ease and saw me as sympathetic rather than unsympathetic to them. However, the process was time consuming because I often had to take time to read through the consent form and interpret it for my respondents

Another issue was that most of the field research in and around Jos was carried out during the rainy season and most of the roads were quite muddy due to the poor drainage system. This can make it difficult for pedestrians to move around as well as making driving dangerous. As a result rain disrupted some of my fieldwork, especially when we had to cancel interview appointments due to the impassability of roads.

Often I would have preferred to meet my respondents in an NGO office or a government establishment. As the conflicts were ongoing at the time of my interview work this would have been safer for me. But many people insisted on doing the interview in their houses which meant that I had to traverse areas where I might be subject to abuse or even violence. About 90 percent of the interviews with the political group were conducted with women in their homes, with the remaining 10 percent speaking to me in their offices due to their busy schedules.⁵⁸ In most of the homes the women talked to me alone in their sitting rooms while family members were directed to remain quiet to minimise noise interference and distraction. In the inter-faith marriage group, 50 percent of the interviews were conducted in the presence of the spouses. When these spouses were present I often noticed uneasiness at the onset of the interview, which relaxed as we proceed.

The literature search, particularly of locally produced books and journals, was frustrating because there is no central institution such as a library or, for instance, an internet listing of books where such books could be identified and purchased. Local book stores rarely stocked up-to-date books and I had to rely on friends and work associates to identify relevant publications. While I was determined to conduct a

⁵⁸ The 10 percent were actually the professional (teachers) groups employed in the public sector.

sufficiently broad survey of the relevant literature, I was limited both by the time allocated to the doctoral research and by my own financial constraints.

Finally I engaged the services of a secretary, mainly to assist with the transcription of longer interviews. The fact that she was very slow doing this work affected the speed of my own work and my ability to complete the field research within six months as I had originally intended to do.

3.12 Conclusion: Sensibilities of Research in Conflict Zones

This chapter has provided an explanation of the various ways in which data for this research was collected and analysed. It has also explained the challenges faced during the collection of data and how I was able to overcome them. Based on my experience from the field I believe that the methodology and experiences described in this chapter suggest that research on women, and especially on women in conflict zones, requires particular methodologies and sensibilities.

I realized the importance of my personal respectability and trustworthiness after one of the husbands in an inter-religious marriage said to me “madam, we have agreed to grant you this interview because we believe you are a mother and capable of handling the data with motherly maturity.”⁵⁹ This stuck in my mind and I later shared this view with a colleague of mine who concurred and responded by imagining how hard it would have been for a young man to succeed with research on inter-faith marriage.

⁵⁹ This response came from Mr Muktar the husband to one of my respondents. He himself is a leader of one of the ethnic communities in Jos.

Certainly in the context of Jos, a man might find it difficult to secure an appointment to discuss marriage issues with another man's wife. Moreover, my own marriage conferred on me the respect which some deem fit for a mature researcher in this context. Homan (1992:325) points out how a researcher's social position influences their access to respondents. Homan refers to Sutherland's success in the study of the Rom community who were often secretive and exclusive and normally hostile to representatives of the world outside, by exploiting her role as a teacher of its children. In a recently concluded study on a related topic in Jos and Kaduna where securing and keeping up appointments with women was very difficult Mavalla (2014: 11) states that:

The second challenge was the general decline of potential interviewees, particularly among the female population...There was deep anxiety and mistrust in Kaduna due to the protracted violent conflict in Plateau State and some other Northern states. This fear possibly accounted for women refusing to be interviewed ... few who accepted to grant me an interview later declined the appointments, hence the absence of many female voices.

The difficulty of carrying out research in Hausa society, as in many other parts of Northern Nigeria is that it is sexually segregated and most studies of Hausa women have been done by women (Callaway, 1987: xii). Despite my own 'motherly' and 'married' respectability, coupled with my commitment and dedication, and even careful planning ahead of time, I too experienced disappointments during the field research. While this did not affect the presence of female voices, contributions by female respondents confirm even the methodology used for research has to be gendered. The

same process that works for men might not necessarily work out the same for female respondents. As more research is carried out in the area of gender and conflict it will be important to explore whether women respondents are more likely to withdraw from research than men.

The particular importance of focusing on women's experiences includes the fact that at least some of them are more likely to have been victimized by conflict. As a result, the recollection of their experiences comes with a lot of pain. As most people try to avoid pain, I had to be very careful to create personal encounters that were nonetheless satisfying to the women involved. For example, I tried to be very sensitive about questions asked. While maintaining a calm facial expression myself, I constantly paid attention to respondents' feelings in order to empathise with them when needed. This was my way of making them feel that as a researcher I was not only interested in their story but understood what they were (and are) going through.

Despite the inconvenience for myself, it was also very important to go the extra mile to meet respondents in places that were most suitable for them in order not to expose them to danger. Meeting respondents in places of their choosing was often not convenient for me, but it enabled many women to be comfortable and relaxed and thus to be more open during the interview. It also made them see how serious I was about getting my data right.

In as much as I was ensuring my respondents were comfortable with the interview I did not take my own safety for granted. Realizing that as a woman I was also more vulnerable to aggression, especially in *no-go-areas*, I drew extensively on advice from

local networks of supporters and mentors, and I often used the youth peace ambassadors to accompany me on interviews to ensure my own safety.

Finally, I had to realise that the realities of the field sometimes challenge the assumptions of the academy. Thus, while I had assumed that all individuals involved in research could give consent for themselves, obtaining the consent of spouses of female respondents, particularly those in inter-faith marriages, was very important for respondents. Like judicial minors, many of the women I interviewed were being monitored by their husbands or families – sometimes in order to ensure their compliance, but more frequently in consideration of their safety. Given the vulnerability of some women, the use of the consent form was helpful because it gave confidence to the respondents (and their observant spouses) that the information they provided was not going to be used against them, and that the wellbeing of the respondents was considered by the institutions involved in the research. Equally importantly, I was able to take advantage of the presence of the spouses of the inter-faith marriage group during the interview with their wives to verify certain facts, which I considered a way of triangulating. But despite the fact that I could gain some advantage from this process, it is a stark reminder of the reality of social control and dependence experienced by many women in Jos. Research methodology cannot be gender-neutral. In the next four chapters, I will present empirical evidence and discussions on the impact of conflict on women's everyday lives.

CHAPTER FOUR

EFFECTS OF CONFLICT ON WOMEN IN INTER-FAITH MARRIAGES IN NIGERIA'S MIDDLE BELT: ISOLATION AND IN-BETWEENESS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the impact of conflict on women's lives in Jos and Plateau State by looking at the experiences of women in inter-faith marriages in Nigeria's Middle Belt. While women face a lot of discrimination and rejection in society, those who are in inter-faith marriages face additional forms of discrimination and oppression. Nwabara (1989: 7-16) illustrated this by pointing to the fact that women suffer oppression in various spheres of life that cuts across both their private and social life; as members of a subordinate class and as women. The discrimination of women begins first and foremost within the family with "parental upbringing that inculcates discriminatory attitudes in children this then leads to the acceptance and perpetuation of women's subordinate position" (Imam, 1989: 5). As a result, women suffer discrimination which often goes unnoticed in societies divided by conflict. Furthermore, ethnic and religious positions become hardened in situations of ethnic and religious conflicts which creates additional difficulties for women especially those in inter-faith marriages, because if a person is seen not to belong completely to one ethnic or religious group, their loyalty to either group is subject to scrutiny and questioned. For instance, Barnes pointed out that "a married woman neither remains fully affiliated to her natal group nor completely transferred to her husband's group but rather sustains an interest in both" (Barnes, 1962: 6). Such impressions about the in-between position of women have become more noticeable in Jos since the beginning of the ethnic and religious conflicts in 2001.

As will be seen, the interviews that were conducted between June 2012 and February 2013 in Jos, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Benue in Nigeria's Middle Belt were quite revealing because they illuminate the dilemmas of everyday life experiences for women in a society divided by ethno-religious conflict. In the predominantly patrilineal society, or societies, of Jos, married women are always outsiders in their husbands' and children's families and thus their experience is that of growing mistrust in their everyday relationships including family affairs and relations with friends and neighbours. In particular, their wider social circles can be read to illustrate, albeit in a more dramatic form, the way in which women more generally have become the subjects of increased social control and isolation since the beginning of the conflicts.

4.2 The Mobilisation of Ethnic and Religious Sentiments and its Impact on Women.

Since Federalism was introduced in Nigeria, and particularly in the advent of democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999, religious and communal crises have been on the increase. Religious and ethnic sentiments are deliberately mobilised to fuel these crises, particularly in Jos and the Middle Belt (Best, 2004; Gwamna, 2010; Boer, 2004). It has been argued that crises are often the result of a deliberate manoeuvring of the polity by the political class and its religious zealots (Usman, 1987; Boer, 2004; Gwamna, 2010; Kaigama, 2012); and its victims are normally women and children. Apart from the loss of lives, property, forced displacement and trauma, these conflicts have often left people in mixed marriages feeling in-between in relation to their

extended family. Those caught in this web of in-betweenness are mostly women in inter-religious or inter-faith marriages and sometimes those in inter-ethnic marriages.

Existing literature on the conflicts in the Middle Belt mostly covers the physical loss suffered by women (and men) in relation to property and injuries sustained, source of livelihood, displacement, sexual assault and death. But the strain in relationships, suspicion, social exclusion and hatred directed at women, and particularly at women in inter-faith marriages still remains largely unexplored. Because of their marriage to men of a different faith or ethnic group these women are facing life threatening situations because they are daily suspected of colluding with the enemy by neighbours, in-laws, friends and even family members and other people. The conflict becomes a nightmare even for their children in these communities as they interact with friends and relations. These women and children have been at the centre of several forms of ill-treatment during and after conflicts, often their stories are not heard and sometimes not considered obvious. For instance, most cases of domestic violence between husband and wife are reported to the religious leader - Pastor or the Imam - rather than to the police or social welfare. This is because most women lack access and the willpower to go public (Dali, 2012). My interviews revealed this inability to voice the frustration brought about by the conflict and how that has affected their livelihoods. They also reveal a new dimension of looking at women in conflict, as they showed that even without direct violence the conflict has made life unbearable for them and their children. Since the conflict, they have been singled out for constant scrutiny by intrusive neighbours, work associates, friends and sometimes family members. They are now victims of everyday castigations, they are viewed as second class citizens in their own community and they have become more confined to their homes. The physical walls

of their houses and compounds serve as a source of protection and many women look inward to their immediate family for protection. Both the growing need for physical and social security also means greater social isolation for them. For this reasons inter-faith marriage is increasingly on the decline.

Higazi (2008: 113) suggests that “the absence of intermarriage in the lowlands⁶⁰ of today is an index of the deterioration in inter-religious relations.” However, while there may be few new inter-marriages across the religious divide once considered normal, they are increasingly intolerable in the communities that have experienced conflict. I mentioned in the earlier chapter that most families in Nigeria are mixed and the situation is the same in Jos. Gwamna (2010: 26) observed that the religious scenario of the typical African milieu applies quite rightly in the Middle Belt case. He states that most African families are multi-religious and belong to different denominations or sects, and Jos is no exception as marriage had often created ties and linked families (see Cooper, 1997: 10). But recently, society in Jos and in Nigeria at large has placed many such families, and particularly women, in situations of in-betweenness as ethnic and religious boundaries become hardened. They are often caught in-between in terms of religion, marriage and relationship with their immediate families, religious bodies and the community at large.

Experiencing the mistrust of others in their social circle has made many women, and especially those in mixed marriages, conscious of the power of gossip and rumour. Nervously alert to what people might say about them, they told me that this often limits

⁶⁰ The lowlands refers here to the Southern part of Plateau; Shendam, Langtang North & South, Wase, Dengi, Quanpan. It is about 3000 ft. above sea level, with warmer weather compared to the other parts of the state that are above 4000 ft. above sea level and thus cooler.

their exposure to others and they have to seek affirmation in the close circle of friends and relatives who still trust them. Increasingly subject to suspicion, dislike and abuse for being imagined as standing in between communities has restricted their freedom, as for many their immediate family and the walls of their houses offer the greatest safety from harassment and abuse. This situation does not only affect them as women but affects family structure and other social aspects of their lives. How these women have lived through some of the challenges and how they have managed in-between family relationships and community is a major thrust of the next section.

4.3 The In-betweenness of Women

Marilyn Strathern's contribution to the understanding of women as in-between is commendable. Her work reveals that "a married woman is held to have loyalties to both or either sets of people, and furthermore to act on these ...[as] they are in a theoretical position of choice ... to demonstrate loyalty to their own husband's clan" (Strathern, 1995: 281). This form of loyalty can be distorted in situations of conflict, and in this regard gives us a picture of the state of women's lives in the Jos crises. Strathern's (1995: 281) analysis of female roles in Mount Hagen notes that:

A woman's social horizon is relatively narrow, her life being largely focused on her immediate kinsfolk and husband, the members of the small residential unit where she lives and their close neighbours. She perhaps demands more of relations with her husband and her brothers than they exact from her.

I would add that Strathern's description of women as in-between aptly captures the situation of women in many other societies. In Jos and Nigeria's Middle Belt, women

regularly come face to face with the reality of seeking to achieve social harmony for themselves, their in-laws and the communities they belong to. And in conflict and post-conflict situations, the particular nature of their belonging is continuously tested, and sometimes turned against them, as it is in Jos. My intention is to establish the situation of the in-betweenness of women, not necessarily in terms of household, divorce, ownership and disputes as in Strathern's work, but in terms of conversion and inter-marriage in conflictual or divided communities.

4.3.1 Inter-faith Marriages in Jos

In Jos, the pressure on wives to become members of their husbands' religion does not mean that they will be accepted. In fact, the situation of the convert is an exemplary illustration of the dilemma faced by wives who are in-between. This is shown by Mrs Sharki Sharfina's ⁶¹ discussion below on some of the difficulty of convincing others of her status as a true Muslim convert. Her description of suspicion and rejection by both her natal and her marital family illustrates the way in which women in Jos and the Middle Belt – and possibly in many parts of Nigeria – are in-between. A larger proportion of the narratives explored also reveal the extent to which the impact of conflict goes beyond the rhetoric of physical injury and human losses. It includes the excruciating pain arising from the trauma of suspicion and phobia experienced on a day-to-day basis especially when relationships are mobilised along religious and ethnic

⁶¹ Mrs Sharki Sharfina works for the Plateau State Government. She was married at the age of 20 and became a Muslim, practice Islam for 20 years and has now converted back to Christianity. She is a mother of three, and all her sons presently live with her in a *no-go-area* for Muslims, but they themselves are Muslims. Interviewed in Jos. 5/2/2013.

lines amongst the citizenry. As both Christians and Muslims look at each other with contempt and suspicion this has led to growing residential segregation, to the extent that people are unwilling, after conflicts, to return to their residences in mixed areas where they had hitherto lived peacefully (The News, 2001). This growing segregation is closely linked to the permanent culture of fear of reprisal attacks and the deep-rooted culture of lack of trust and suspicion that the Christian and Muslim community have built over the decades of conflicts (Fukshiwe, 2010). Perera (1996) explains that whatever forms conflicts take, they create physical discomfort and psychological tension for women and children, who are often also subject to ill-treatment arising from conflict. Mrs Sharki Sharfina⁶² explained how difficult it has been for her:

It is tough... first, you are regarded as a convert, and then whatever you do, sometimes you are under rated. And it is only you and your God that know your heart deep down and that you are true to your religion. But for them... you are always a second thought; everything they do is like you are not on the first list, no matter how hard you try to prove it, they still call you names and even when you have children for them. And from your own family background where you are coming from which is a Christian dominated area, they will look at you and ask; Do you really like what you are doing? Especially, when they see what your in-laws do to you, they ask: why not leave the marriage? Even when you tell them no, sometimes they will tell you if you do not leave them, that is how you will continue to suffer with them and then we will not do anything about it. And then on their own part they are also looking at it like, after all the bulk of your people are [Christians], they call you names;- *arne*, pagan, and your religion is

⁶² Mrs Sharki Sharfina interviewed in Jos. 5/2/2013.

not just the same with theirs, and so you suffer also that. And especially when you start having children, sometimes they tell you stories like ok these children might not even be as true followers of the religion, they do not see your own children as, you know, children that are born in Islam and sometimes they even tell you to a limit that your children might not even inherit [from] your husband because of where they are coming from.

Mrs Sharki Sharfina's reflection widens the discussion on the situation of women being in-between by illustrating how the new settlement pattern based on ethnic and religious groupings helps in reinforcing this phenomenon. Because ethnic and religious communities in Jos live separately, it puts women into situations that have made them helpless and at the same time their voices have become mute in the face of religious and ethnic intolerance. Strathern (1995) provides us with a way of thinking about women's structural positions, especially as it relates to married women in particular, as they have to be loyal to both kin and husbands. In this sense, she views women as being in a theoretical position of choice. This is certainly true for women in inter-faith marriages in Jos. Socially focused on family, community and neighbours, women are also constantly seeking to negotiate this choice in order to find acceptance. But women's positions in society are related both to the ability to negotiate acceptability within the family and from the larger and more general religious communities to which the families belong. That women are caught up between choices in Jos means that they are in-between both with regard to religion and in their relationship to others. From the interviews conducted, responses show that women's freedoms are limited in many cases due to their in-betweenness. This includes their freedom of speech, freedom of

movement, freedom of association, as well as the freedom to practice one's faith as enshrined in chapter IV of the Nigerian Constitution.⁶³

Therefore, in practice, women are often caught in-between their choice of religion, their loyalty to marriage itself and negotiating acceptability from families, friends, neighbours and work associates. In fact, family and friends sometimes seem to be more worried about their stance as converts than how they are coping with marriage and other obligations. Mrs Mat Gungwen who is a Christian woman married to a Muslim, explained that despite over 30 years of marriage, friends constantly remind her of the need to convert and follow the religion of her husband. According to Mrs Mat Gungwen:⁶⁴

I remember a recent conversation we had with one of our friends when they visited. She also married a Muslim and has recently converted. She said to me *'Haba, yaya kina ba wannan danuwa na wahala ne? Kullum yana dinga zuwan Umrah shi kadai, kai, baki damu da wadan nan yayan ki bane? My husband just smiled and told her not to bother about me, because nobody can change me that they should leave me alone. Sometimes he teases me and we laugh; he will say please reconsider and I will normally reply and say haba Alhaji, kai kenan shekara fiye da arbain a kan magana guda daya, baka gaji bane?'*⁶⁵

⁶³ For Fundamental Human Rights of citizens, refer to the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria.

⁶⁴ Mr Mat Gungwen does not hold any paid employment. She is more or less a house wife. She is married to a non-Hausa-Fulani Muslim from Plateau State and she still practice Christianity despite over 40years of marriage. Interviewed in Jos. 3/9/2012.

⁶⁵My interpretation: Oh, why do you keep punishing my brother? All these while he goes to Hajj alone, are you not bothered about your children.

⁶⁵My interpretation: Oh Alhaji, we have been on this issue for more than 40 years now, are you not tired?

From the above, it is evident that outside influences from extended family and friends reinforce and make visible differences that ordinarily couples would have accommodated. For instance, had Mrs Mat Gungwen converted, she would be regarded as someone whose loyalty is questionable. However, because she has not converted, she is constantly being reminded of her inability to play her wifely role effectively, because of her choice.

Conflict situations also provide opportunities for differences and fears to come to the fore. Mrs Mat Gungwen explained that her father lives in one of the *no-go-areas* of Jos. And during one of the conflicts she found herself torn between her loyalties towards him and those towards her husband. She explained, "I went to visit them [my father] and my husband was very angry with me, because it is a no-go-area for me and I am a Christian. I was actually scared too, but I had to [go and visit them]."⁶⁶

Such scenarios also illustrate how the nature of mistrust of women by men is exacerbated by conflict. In a way, the statement shows how women are still struggling to live up to their in-between position. In both Christian and Muslim communities, men object to their girls marrying from the other side. For example, Higazi's (2008:115) article on vigilantes in Southern Plateau provides a glimpse of the general control and sanctions both religions place on inter-faith relationships. He explained that:

Christians ... prevented their women from having extramarital affairs with Muslim men. ...they harassed and stopped Christian girls... [from entering into]

⁶⁶ Mrs Mat Gungwen comes from a religiously mixed family. According to her, the conflict has impacted negatively on the family especially with the segregated settlements, as family members have had to live on opposite sides of the religious divide.

relations with Muslims ...but it is never possible for Christian men to form relationships with Muslim women.

However, the experience of women in both conflict and post-conflict situations is not always connected to such acrimony and intolerance from both religions. The experience of Mrs Mat Gungwen shows that such controls are less effective among the middle class and high income earners in society. That is not to say that such women do not face discrimination, but what it means is that they can avoid certain forms of social control, as economic status can “change the conduct of social relations: a rich woman would certainly reject undue subordination” (House-Midamba & Ekechi, 1995: 35). For example, they can avoid the potential harassment that might come with shopping in open markets by sending their maids or drivers to do this for them. Also, because they seldom use public transport such as town service buses, they are exempt from stinging comments made to them by other passengers and intrusive neighbours. And by implication their children are likely to experience less discrimination as they have fewer contacts with the general public than those from low income families.

The experience of Hajia Kamran Jepmu,⁶⁷ a Christian-Muslim convert married to a Muslim, sheds more light on the above discussion and illustrates yet another dimension of the inter-religious struggle. Even though a convert, Hajia Kamran Jepmu was very keen to have an education and also wanted to ensure that the whole family embrace education. But as a third wife and a convert her good intentions were not welcomed. She experienced a lot of opposition from her mother in-law and her co-wives, who may have felt threatened by her progressive attitude and the changes she

⁶⁷ Hajia Kamran Jepmu is the Head Mistress of one of the Primary Schools in Jos. Interviewed in Jos. 19/1/2013.

was bringing into the family which they themselves were not willing to be a part of. And I think her case illuminates how religious sentiments and shared hatred can oppose a woman's desire for personal progress. Hajia Kamran Jepmu recollected her experience as follows:

Honestly, it was not easy for me, because, after my marriage, then I was trying to go back to school... my mother in-law said that those women that are educated are harlots, so I will not go back. So I told my husband that, if I am not going back to school, then I am leaving the house...Then later on, I went to Teachers College Jos, and then she said why am I going to Teachers College after having four children? So I told her I have to go to school now, because I have to improve my education, because I cannot be a total house wife ... I went to TC⁶⁸ ... then his own children with the other wives, I started putting them in school and then she started fighting me that; oh see now she is now trying to put your children in school then they will be harlots and they won't like to get married and follow their own husband, this and that ... So I took them, and most of them have now graduated and are working in Abuja now.

Hajia Kamran Jepmu was determined to pursue her education even though she was caught in-between her marriage and career. She explained that the support of her husband who allowed her to continue her education created jealousy at home. She endured ill-will, especially from her mother-in-law and her senior co-wives who became jealous of the fact that despite being only the third wife she was afforded greater freedom than they were. The women alleged that such freedom might encourage her

⁶⁸ TC means Teachers College

to be wayward. These allegations had implications and eventually her husband divorced her. However, her story did not end there despite the active support of her co-wives and mother in-law for the divorce, it only lasted for about six months and she was allowed to return to her marital home. When her husband later married a fourth wife, Hajia Kamran Jepmu made sure that she took her to school.⁶⁹ The next section discusses the way in which women converts are perceived.

4.4 Women's In-betweenness in Inter-marriage: Perception of Female Converts

For Hajia Kamran Jepmu, pursuing her academic career and helping others do the same against the expectations of her husband's existing family was an achievement against the odds. But despite the fact that the income provided by herself and the fourth wife is now indispensable to her married family, her status as a Muslim wife from a non-Muslim background still singles her out. She told me that "... sometimes, when you talk, they tell you that you reason so because you are not a real⁷⁰ Muslim. And that makes you wonder how very little people understand religion." She summarised her in-between position succinctly by explaining:

Right now I am in middle, because the entire area where the Christians are, they will still say, I am carrying their secrets to the Muslims. And if I am home in the Muslim side, they will still say I am carrying their secrets to the Christian side

⁶⁹ Hajia Kamran Jepmu's husband later died in an accident. She and the junior wife are working and ensuring they provide for all the family and the other wives.

⁷⁰ Since a true *Bahaushe*- Hausa Man, is a Muslim, there might refer to such converts as Muslim with a tribe. The Hausa ethnic identity is a complex of variables involving not only language, but also religion and descent. See Khalid, (2002).

or my people. So you see right now I am in the middle and it is such a painful position to be.

Most women in Hajia Kamran Jepmu's difficult situation can become discouraged and helpless because this perception of women limits their ability to get some degree of acceptance. Hajia MS also noted that many people in Jos see religion as something they had from birth, that is, something they were born with rather than an individual choice, the result of learning or a personal encounter with God. She explained that religion was often treated as a form of natural identity which could not really be changed, and similarly the subordinate position of women in religion is a reality that cannot be changed. As a result, religious zealots like many in society use this argument to subdue women. According to her, despite her attempts to practice her new religion (her husband's religion) faithfully and correctly she was treated as though she was not a proper Muslim. This attitude is reflected in the use of the term "original" or "real" to describe Muslims with a long history of descent (original followers of Usman Dan Fodio; the Fulani and Hausa) from other Muslims (who are *Yan derika*; Muslims who are from other ethnic groups aside Hausa Fulani) – as is the case in Jos. As a convert, Hajia Kamran Jepmu was often seen and treated as a false Muslim while Christians viewed her as a treacherous individual who should not be trusted. She explained:

Being a Muslim definitely finds people looking at you and then they see your own religion as unreal, they look at your own as if it is not even original. And so the things they do to you or the way they see you is just like, no she cannot be. But I knew when I became a Muslim, that there was nothing I left unturned, I made sure I studied very well Islamically, I knew the basic things I needed to

know in the five pillars of Islam and then performing Hajj which was one of them, I did wholeheartedly.

It is clear from these few examples that in the religiously divided society of Jos, a convert not only elicits little trust but is seen as someone who sets out to deceive others. This also affects converts more generally, as the experience of Hajia Reprem Mishmut ⁷¹ a Christian-Muslim convert who works as a teacher illustrates. Her father converted to Islam when she was a young girl, and she followed him into the religion and later married a Muslim man. Even though her immediate family was Muslim, she experienced insults about her Christian origin in many everyday situations especially amongst the Christians. She explained that “at times when you are passing, they will be throwing words at you, like: hey hypocrite! Look at them, pretending to be Muslims, meanwhile they are hypocrites.” She explained further: “the situation is the same even within your own Christian family, you are referred to as hypocrite.” The next section discusses the challenges associated with notion that women are hypocrites.

4.4.1 Women’s In-betweenness as a Form of Hypocrisy

The notion of religious hypocrisy is used widely to criticise women, whether in religious matters or not. This is illustrated by Hajia Reprem Mishmut’s story of how an innocent encounter led to an abuse of her person:

⁷¹ Hajia Reprem Mishmut is a teacher in one of the Primary schools in Jos. She converted to Islam from childhood, along with her father and her siblings. She is a widow. Interviewed in Jos. 8/2/2013.

There was a day that we went to greet the Gbong Gwom,⁷² so they put it on the news. So when my neighbours [Muslim community members] saw me on the television they said to me: *“so this woman they say is knowledgeable, how come she is visiting the Gbong Gwom? [a Christian and Traditional ruler]. Such women are the affronts and the hypocrites that carry stories from the Muslim community and go and give it to them (the Christians)...* So at the end of the discussion, they said to me: *“Bari Allah yahada mu da ita.”*⁷³

Implicit in the abuse of converts as hypocrites is the notion that religion is not an expression of individual faith and expression but of communal belonging, and that conversion or inter-marriage is a betrayal both of one's community of origin and of the new community to which one seeks access. In this way, it clearly affects both male and female converts. Mrs Sharki Sharfina reported that her husband suffered when she recently returned to Christianity after 20 years as a Muslim. She noted that, *“My husband ... told me that ... I am ashamed; I cannot freely walk amongst my people anymore, they are mocking me that my wife is now gone back to Christianity.”* Here the implicit accusation that Mrs Sharki Sharfina's husband was unable to assert proper control over his wife is clearly linked to gendered notions of husbandly authority.

This reference to ideal husbandly control over their wives being linked to the general expectation that women should take on their husband's religion upon marriage shows that the mistrust of those from other backgrounds is strongly gendered. These gendered expectations imply that in a society where interreligious marriage was, until

⁷² The Gbong Gwom is the paramount ruler of Jos and Head of the Plateau State Traditional Council. He is a Berom man from Du District.

⁷³ My interpretation: “God will make it possible for us to get at her someday.”

recently, widespread, there are likely to be many more female than male converts. These numbers are boosted by an ethnic component, especially the many marriages between Muslims of different backgrounds particularly those between Muslims from indigenous and migrant (usually Hausa-speaking) groups, which are increasingly divided by the conflicts.

But more importantly, my interviews suggest that the men in inter-religious marriages are much less affected by the suspicion of duplicity. Even though they are not immune from criticism they seem to suffer much less from criticism by family members and community members, partly because as men they do not acquire another family after marriage and therefore are not automatically suspected of deception and dishonesty. The reason why women are affected to a much stronger degree by such suspicions is that they already hold a position of in-betweenness between their natal families and their in-laws. Knowing the inner workings of two families, women are widely recognised not only as mediators but also as potential “enemies within” as they are regarded as being in the perfect position to play off one group against another.

Recognising this perception – and fear – of women, many women try to be as quiet and as gentle as possible in order to be seen as “responsible.” The less a woman’s voice is heard the more responsible she is seen to be. This is illustrated by Hajia Mat Gungwen who told me in our interview that when she got married:

I promised myself just to be a shadow and support behind him [my husband] and the children. Just offering my prayer and support for them at all times. I have never wanted to be a public person.

Given these worries about, and expectations of women, the suspicion directed at them on the basis of religion and ethnic origin is not the only direct form of distrust they suffer, even though it is clearly linked to the growing impact of ethno-religious clashes. As communal boundaries have hardened, women's lives have become ever more subject to control and threats, until in some cases they seem almost impossibly isolated and lonely. This isolation will be discussed in the next section.

4.5 Conflict and the Growing Isolation of Women

Because of their in-between positions, women often have to suffer their resulting exclusion and fear alone. For example, Mrs Matyen Muktar⁷⁴ lives in a compound situated in between walls that are approximately 8ft high. The house is a two-storey building with a gate made of plain open rods welded together so that you could see from any part of the house exactly who was standing there. Next to the gate and about one foot away from the gate walls is a kennel in which there was a dog that barked loudly immediately it sensed there was someone at the gate. This alerted members of the house who then looked through the window to see whether the visitor was a stranger or member of the family.

Thus the architecture of the house was such that it provided Mrs Matyen Muktar with the necessary comfort and security to live in an environment hostile to someone of a different faith, as it was located within one of the most volatile conflict zones of Jos in

⁷⁴ Mrs Matyen Muktar is a retiree. She worked with the Plateau state government and was retired prematurely at the beginning of the ethnic and religious conflict. She alleged that the termination of her appointment might have been related to the growing mistrust among ethnic and religious communities and her position as a woman in an inter-faith marriage. Interviewed in Jos. 24/9/2012.

a *no-go-area* for Christians and Mrs Chinyen Muktar is a Christian. Even in a hostile environment people of other religions can stay safe inasmuch as they remain within their house or even the walls of their compound. If they leave the compound they need to be especially careful during a period of conflict. And they have also learnt, for example, never to talk back at boys on the streets who are idle and angrily waiting for the slightest provocation to be violent.

4.5.1 Isolation and Lack of Acceptance From Friends and Family

Loneliness exists within the walls of safety for women in mixed-religious marriages.

Mrs Chinyen Muktar told me she missed her friends and family so much, saying:

Right now, nobody visits me like that from my own (family) part, they are scared to enter this area. All my friends, nobody comes, nobody comes to visit me. We only speak on the phone or I find time to go out to visit, you know, which is not easy even for me. Even for my husband whose parents came here [to Jos] in the early thirties and was born and brought up here. He has never lived anywhere other than Plateau, but yet, he is never accepted as an indigene. So we do not find it easy, I just wish things will change someday, but for now, we are fast losing hope for any change to come.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Mr Muktar who was present at the time of the corroborated what Mrs Matyen Muktar said and explained other aspects of the conflict, especially the government actions which was seen as negative towards others. He explained that: "It is very sad that the government does not care for anyone except its own. He explained that, the truth is that even if we had looked for scholarship for our children in Plateau, we would not have been given the scholarship, and that is the truth, and which I do not think is fair, not for me but even for their mother, who is a bona fide indigene of this State." He stressed that: "we cannot even go and ask for indigenization certificates for this children, because they will refuse, that is why we never even tried it you know. I myself was denied land, just because I am not an indigene of

In a similar vein, Mrs Sharki Sharfina said that her worry about personal security increased her sense of separation from her former friends. After the conflicts began, she noted that:

With the conflict now, relationships with friends have suddenly changed. There are points my friend will ask me, are you in Jos? And even if I am in Jos I will tell them no, I am not in Jos, because you do not know, somebody is just asking you to send people after you.

The statement by Mrs Sharki Sharfina suggests that the lack of trust further increases her sense of loneliness. The lack of trust also makes it easier for others to justify discrimination and can easily constitute negative attitude towards others which sharpens existing segregation from the outside world.⁷⁶ Mrs Sharki Sharfina considers that she is watching helplessly as people of the same religion say to her: “you are a Muslim... *amma fa yare ne* (but you got a tribe), you are coming from somewhere so you definitely suffer.” Mrs Sharki Sharfina’s statement illustrates the concept of ‘*arne (pegan)*’ and women’s in-betweenness which I will love to explore in the future. Similarly, Hajia Manporem Mahmood⁷⁷, a Christian-Muslim convert who was a young mother and a student at the time of this interview had lived peacefully in a compound

Plateau, that is the truth and I have lived all my life here. My parents came here in the early thirties and I was born and brought up here and I have never lived anywhere other than Plateau, but yet am not finding it easy.” Interviewed in Jos. 24/9/2012.

⁷⁶ This could be referring to Jos and other Middle Belt States. This is an area where these women live and so can easily be described as their outside world.

⁷⁷ Hajia Manporem Mahmood converted to Islam after marriage. She is a young mother and her children are quite young.

with her neighbours and some of her in-laws until the 2010 Jos crises. She explained that:

The 2010 crises was the worst moment in my life and to me the most devastating of them all. You know, nobody will relate to me, talk to me and they all avoided me. They just treated me like an outcast ... even sometimes they will gather in front of my house and be saying all sorts of insulting words and things that they know will offend me.

The narrative shows that conflict has not just affected relationships with neighbours but also those with friends and extended family members. For instance, Mrs Chinyen Muktar explained that family members who used to visit her freely and who have stayed with her in the past no longer come to her house. Even those who want to come are afraid to do so because of the dangers of the area she lives in. She said:

Conflict is not good really ... before I used to go to town for my [church] service, but now with all the security challenges, I cannot go again. And [the] painful aspect of it is that my friends cannot visit me. I miss them and... when I try to encourage them to come, they always turn it down... I am feeling they too have their fears. Now I have only my husband as my best friend and my children as my friends.

4.5.2 The Trauma of Isolation

For most women I interviewed coping with the pain and agony resulting from isolation and loneliness, just as Mrs Matyen Muktar experienced is a continual struggle they

have to face in their everyday life. Being cut off from family and friends is often experienced as a trauma due to the overwhelming social distance created. For instance, Maryam Babba ⁷⁸ explained that she experienced her loneliness as a direct result of violence:

This psychological trauma in me ... [I] kept thinking about the people that, I know, were killed and burnt... and, you know, my good friends who happened to be Christians and even some of my closest friends that we grew up together, we went to the same primary school together, that I cannot even visit now, that I cannot keep on that good relationship that we had due to the conflict has a psychological effect on me, you know; the fact that I cannot move freely or visit my friends any more is socially distressing.

Another burden created by religious conflict in addition to the trauma of social isolation is that community and neighbourhood groups – often young men – assume for themselves the roles of guardians of the community. In this role they often attempt to control and police women. The easily visible nature of how women dress is often the focus of such policing. For example, wearing the veil in a Christian dominated area or dressing in skirts and trousers in a Muslim dominated area sets women apart from the norm in that area, and they become victims of provocative attacks or face immediate violence by the self-appointed male vigilantes.

⁷⁸ Maryam Bappa is a young mother who has just had her first baby. She is well educated and lives in one of the conflict flash points of Jos. She is not in any formal employment or engaged in any business activity at the time of this interview, but depend on the financial support of her husband. Interviewed in Jos. 19/1/2013.

4.5.3 Stigmatising, Policing and Attacks on Women's Dressing

Stigmatising women because of what they wear also occurs in public functions and professional environments. Hajia Reprem Mishmut narrated an experience that illustrates the way in which community groups can intimidate women who no longer visibly belong to the community:

During December, my brother invited me to go and help him during the Christmas holiday ... When I finished some chores, I decided go and see my other relatives ... When I was walking in the village, the youths kept shouting; hey you woman, where are you going? What brought you here? You better remove that thing [a hijab] you are wearing... You see we face a lot of challenges from both sides, the rejection is eating [us] up seriously.

The statement above points to the hostility women come face to face with as a result the conflict. Such comments mostly directed at women is part of the way in which the experience of conflict in Jos and other parts of the Middle has made it easier for men to internalise how an ideal good women should dress or behave. For instance, women are taught to ignore derogatory comments for the sake of peace, because an angry response is usually taken to confirm the assumption of bad character. Such comments and remarks play a very important part in making life difficult for those married into another community. In some cases, women even endure accusations of contamination from their own family members. The experience of Hajia Kamran Jepmu sheds light on the way women's lives are being controlled even under normal circumstances, sometimes by family members considered much younger than them but who enjoy the

privilege of being male. Hajia Kamran Jepmu faced many challenges at the beginning of her marriage. She said:

When I delivered my first daughter I wanted to go home and show her to my parents. My own junior brother said to me: 'I am going to kill you and the baby if you dare visit us.' He said he does not want any Muslim or Muslim baby in their house, because it is a contamination of the full indigene blood. He started beating me with the girl, he tore my clothes ... to the extent that we were admitted in the Hospital.

Thus, women are targeted partly because of their choice of husband and more because of their gender. The statement above demonstrates how ethnic and religious divisions further isolate women. The main source of comfort for many women suffering the loneliness of growing suspicion from their natal family and community is their immediate family, i.e. their husbands and children. For instance, Mrs Matyen Muktar told me her husband is her best friend and that his home, even though the area is dangerous for Christians like herself is her home. She told me: "There is nowhere like home and your family are your friends." She said: "I married my husband getting to 37 years now"⁷⁹ and explained:

We all live here in peace with one another and I had my nephews who lived here with us from childhood and they are orphans. This is their home from childhood and we are the only parents they have known all this while, but with

⁷⁹I noticed a big smile on Mr Muktar's face when his wife said "my husband is my childhood friend and my best friend."

the conflict they had to go because they are Christians, and with the lingering ethnic and religious intolerance, they had to leave.

Not all marriages survive the pressures of the conflict. For Hajia Sharki Sharfina, the challenge was much more than her family could bear. She narrated the effect of the fall-out from the 2010 crisis on her own life:

One of the day I was in the office like that and the crisis in Jos started and my husband rang me and asked: 'where are you'? I said I was in the office, and he said, I am leaving the house oh, you better hurry up and come and see your children, because I am going [away]. I said to him, where are you going to? He said just hurry up, they have started fighting from Bukuru and before it gets here I am going to leave. I said to him why are you leaving the children, can you go with them and when I come to collect them? He said no, he does not even know where he is going to, so I should just hurry up.

I drove out my car from the office as quickly as I can [as if I was going to fly] ... I got home and I called my children, are you all home?, and they said they are all home, and I said enter, and they all entered the living room where I was. And I said to them, there is crisis already and your father had left. And immediately I opened my door I saw a letter on the bed that he had written me that he had to leave. In it he said he could not put up with it anymore, he could not stay any more, he feels so mocked and he feels he will be safer among his Muslim brothers than where he is, so I should take care of the children.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Mrs Sharki Sharfina narrated this aspect of her life to me with tears in her eyes and with so much pain in her voice. I remembered my eyes became so teary too and we had to stop the interview for a moment

The position of Hajia Sharki Sharfina in the narrative above presents part of the very complex and inevitable challenge that results from separation from their spouse, for example this situation where women in an inter-faith marriage have had to face divorce due to the displacement arising from the segregated settlements. As pointed out by Fukshiwe (2010: 38), “residential relationships hardly remain the same after violent conflicts, because what...follow[ed] such acts are separation, segregation and polarisation.” He stressed further that ‘people whose houses were destroyed no longer feel secure’ particularly when the reason for the destruction is ethnically and religiously motivated. In Jos itself and in some outlying villages, the violence has led to ethnic cleansing where the animosity and hatred recalls the Rwandan genocide, each group with the intension of wiping out the other, as formerly mixed villages or Jos neighbourhoods now consist of only one ethnic group and in some cases predominant religious groups. If an outsider is detected, he risks being killed on the spot (Campbell & Harwood, 2013). The result of this situation is that women often face forced divorce, due to the insecurity associated with the conflict where they or their spouses are easily targeted. As will be discussed in the next section, looking after children under such conditions also becomes very challenging.

4.6 The Impact of Isolation on Children from Inter-faith Marriages

Many women persevere in extremely difficult circumstances in order to stay and watch their children grow up but as explained below, the narratives reveal that what they

until she asked to continue. The strength she displayed after she noticed I was equally worried enabled us to carry on with the interview.

suffer also affects their children. Unfortunately I was unable to interview such children due to time and ethical constraints so I refer here to interviews with parents, and especially mothers. Hajia Kamran Jepmu and many other women I interviewed told me that their children do not move around freely because people call them all sorts of names and look at them with so much disdain. According to Hajia Kamran Jepmu, the children face discrimination arising from both their religion and ethnicity depending on the context. As individuals who are at least partly affected by the problematic in-betweenness of their mothers, they have limited authority to speak. Hajia Kamran Jepmu further explains:

The experience is not good. It pains me sometimes, it pains me ... even for my children they always tell them that they are Beroms and they will say yes we are Beroms. And sometimes when they are abusing the governor⁸¹ and my children join in the discussion, they will tell them to just keep quiet, Beroms are not part of this conversation.

Added to the inability to freely join in discussions with their peers, the children of mixed marriages often feel insecure among friends and neighbours which is a very ugly side of the crises according to most of the mothers.

⁸¹ There is a deep rooted and un-resolved animosity between the Berom and Hausa-Fulani community in Jos due to political power contestation, struggle over chieftaincy and indigeneity. The Hausa- Fulani believe the Beroms, with the Governor Jonah Jang as their chief representative, have denied them their rights in Plateau State for a long time and that the Beroms are fanning conflicts through their actions. Similarly, that the Governor of Plateau State who is a Berom man adds to the complexity of the issues. It is a widely held view by a large number of the Hausa-Fulani in Jos that he imposed a Berom candidate in the Jos North Local Government Election in 2007 against popular will and vote of the people. And the governor was accused of imposing a member of his village and clan. They are of the opinion that if elections are to be free and fair in Jos North, it will be difficult for an indigene to win. Hajia Matporem is Berom.

Many families where parents come from different backgrounds have now relocated to areas where they feel they are safe and life itself is less threatening. In a related study, Achi (2007:31) rightly points out that “Christians build houses and live where they have [a] dominant population and likewise the Muslims.” This study found similar settlement patterns in Jos, as since the 2001 crises families have continued to build, buy land and transact businesses along religious lines in most instances and sometimes ethnic lines. This is probably because they assume it is safer to reside among their own ethnic or religious group.

For instance, Hajia Matporem Mahmood told me they have just moved into a new area, and that the reason for doing that was that her children felt they were no longer safe where they were. She narrated an incident that took place which involved her daughter and a neighbour:

My daughter then was in Trust International School. She was coming back from school and a neighbouring daughter was calling her and shouting; “*Ke yar arna, yar arna*”⁸² My daughter was bitter ... They came face to face with each other and so my daughter got hold of her and beat her up. So she [the girl who had abused my daughter] went back home crying. The sisters came out without inquiring into what happened and started raining abuses. So I came out and said to them; why would she call her *yar arna*? Is it Islam for a Hausa man alone? If it is so, her dad is a Hausa man, so where does the *arnanchi* come from? Is it because from me [her mother]? So one of them turned and said yes,

⁸² My translation “Hey you daughter of an infidel.”

we call you *arnas* because we do not trust your religion and we do not trust you as Muslims.

It became a big scandal that day. Those words pierced painfully into my heart and my children also felt the same way. So you see life became unbearable since the incident even for my kids. And they kept on repeating the same provocatively and it became a recurrent issue. My kids were always scared and at night they will tell me, mummy let us run away from this place. So one day, I just decided to leave the area.

At the time of this incident her children were between ages two and twelve, and the community they lived in was intolerant and hostile to them as they could not move about freely, and at night they had to ask their mother if they were safe living in the area. These children have become worried about their safety. Their mother has the additional worry of rejection from friends, neighbours and in-laws as well as worrying about the safety of, and the constant fear expressed by, her children.

Hajia Manporem Mahmood's narrative, and that of many other women mentioned above, also confirmed that it is not only the community that sees such children as outsiders but the paternal family may do so as well, especially if they dislike the mother from the onset. For instance, she explained that:

For the children, it is not only outsiders that treat them that way, even their own paternal family. It is almost the same thing. You know, they transferred the hatred that they had for me to them. It became unbearable for me [us]. It reached a point where my brothers-in-law were threatening me to leave the

house or they will burn the house. So that instil [led] fear in the children and I thought it was wise to listen to them to relocate to a safer area.

Leaving such an area becomes imperative when a woman feels so threatened that she does not dare to leave the house. Faced by taunts, abuse and threats, or even with physical violence, many women are unable to move freely, including going to the markets to buy foodstuffs.⁸³ If they are then also ostracised by the small traders who move from house to house to sell wares the family goes hungry. Hajia Kamran Jepmu summarised the dilemma well. According to her:

Most women and their children suffer...the problem for most women is when there is these conflicts [sic] because when they stay at home, the children can cry at home, they do not have food to eat, and there is nowhere to buy the food.

Once oppression has reached this point many women consider it is wiser to move and live in an area where they feel safe, they can move freely, and their family does not starve.

Not all the women I interviewed had experienced this problem, and it is striking that, as noted in the previous section, those who are wealthier than average were exempted from abuse and threats by neighbours. Many of them live in areas that were former Government Reserve Areas (called GRAs) during the colonial era which have now become home to the comfortable and rich. They also suffered less interference from in-laws and society in general, and it appears that their children too are more confident.

⁸³My informal interaction with most of the women revealed that, whenever the mothers are unable to go out and get food stuff and the neighbours are unwilling to assist. The family has to manage the little they have stocked in the home and that implies reduced nutrition for the children and the family.

Mrs Mat Gungwen reported that the members of her family sometimes managed to find something positive in the conflicts:

During conflicts we normally joke and say to each other during our meal times [that] if people come to kill us we can use each other for our defence, because the family is a combination of both Islam and Christianity. My son has always said he is the only one to bring peace in Jos and the Plateau. Because he has parents practicing both religions living together...my son goes everywhere, whether it is a Christian area or a Muslim area.

While this is a good and positive story from Mrs Mat Gungwen, who happens to be living in affluence and luxury, it points to the fact that certain people in a particular social position can avoid socially undesirable experiences and achieve socially desirable experiences. It equally shows that people ranked higher up the social ladder have a better chance of securing socially desirable goals and avoiding undesirable things like conflict situations, as is the case in Jos and the Middle Belt. Even though the serious religious tension and conflict has had an impact on everyone in some way, those that have a higher social position and money obviously have the capacity to deflect some of the negative impacts of the religious conflict, partly because they reside in one of the planned and safe areas, while those that lack resources and power are left to suffer the consequences.

Equally, the conflict has provided an opportunity for Mrs Mat Gungwen and her children to have a positive view of their in-betweenness, since they can relate with ease to people from both religions because of their social status and position. They are of the opinion that if people of different faiths marry and manage to live peacefully with one

another they can actually be peace ambassadors who inspire others. Having a positive stake in both religions, they are truly in the position to bring peace to the State by using their families as examples.

In contrast to the experience of Mrs Mat Gungwen are the narratives of Mrs Larep Bulat⁸⁴ and Mrs Sharki Sharfina, both of whom are less well off. For Mrs Sharki Sharfina, who re-converted to Christianity after two decades as a Muslim, the conflict has made life difficult for her children who cannot move freely and who have to come to terms with the fact that their father had to leave them due to the conflict. Moreover, the children, who are Muslims, also have to put up with her life as a Christian in a Christian neighbourhood which has exposed them to taunts and abuse. As we interacted, she told me that:

I am truly challenged, because even my children sometimes when I wake them up and I pray with them, I do not know if it hurts them. As Muslims, I wake them up before they go to school, before everybody packs his box, we sit down and we pray together. I pray and say to them; I leave you in the merciful hands of God. But deep in my heart, I ask myself ... are they really happy? I do not really know whether they are happy, but they just take it because it is me, their mother ... they know where they are now, that they are in the midst of Christians. And

⁸⁴Mrs Larep Bulat is a Fulani woman. She converted to Christianity shortly before marriage. She is an employee of the Local Government Authority in Plateau State. Her family members are all Muslims. She told me during the interview that she has two other cousins of hers who are now married to Christian men and have converted to Christianity. They all face serious oppositions from their families and she said they have severally told her to give up her marriage in the heat of the crises.

they have to accept it, or they are just doing it to please me or to find a place to stay.

Even though Hajia Sharki Sharfina is a Christian and lives in a Christian community, she still feels insecure because of her children, more so that “the problem associated with segregation is that it has tremendous effects on other aspects of communal and residential interrelations” (Fukshiwe, 2010: 39-40). These changes in residential interrelations cause additional pain women in interfaith marriages who have their children to look after

. For instance Hajia Sharki Sharfina told me that she is always making sure she provides them with all that they need within the walls of their compound because she does not want to expose them to the harm of the outside world. She told me that she has to always be vigilant and alert to the news of any conflict, so that she can keep her children safe by hiding them or keeping them in the house. She will then go out to fetch water, cook and do everything for them until calm returns.

The experience of Mrs Larep Bulat is different again, perhaps because she is one of the few Fulani Muslim converts to Christianity, having become a Christian at Secondary School in Jos and eventually marrying an indigenous Christian man. She now lives in a Christian dominated area and explained that like the Muslim children of originally Christian mothers, her children were very careful about their safety. She said:

My children do not look like Fulani and they all bear Christian names. So they are very careful where they go to. They do not just move freely to the Muslim areas, because they are not sure what happens.

While this statement suggests that the children are careful in Muslim areas it does not refer to their abuse from threats by other Muslims. Given the small number of respondents this may be an exception to the rule, but it may also reflect the different heritages of Middle Belt Christianity and Northern Nigerian Islam. Islam in Northern Nigeria has been historically shaped by strong concerns over correct practice. While general conversion to Islam has been encouraged since the 1960s, often the doctrinal boundaries between different Muslim groups continue to reflect different social strata. In contrast, during the 19th and 20th centuries Christian missionaries throughout West Africa accepted converts of all social backgrounds as true Christians, and the belief in a new start through conversion or being 'born again' is still strongly emphasised, especially in Nigeria's Pentecostal Churches. It is possible that as a result, Christian children from mixed marriages experience slightly less discrimination than Muslim children in the same position. Mrs Larep Bulat, however, added that:

I can remember one day my son told me that mum you have to start teaching me how to speak this Fulani more seriously. With that, I can move freely and if someday I get caught up in crises somewhere that I needed to speak Fulani, then I will speak and be accepted as belonging to that ethnic group.

Mrs Larep Bulat's statement also implies that her children did not see their Muslim ancestry as being quite as damaging as that of the Muslim children of Christian converts, and that they could envisage themselves as bridging the religious gap and being saved by just knowing and speaking their mother's language. While her children's request to learn Fulani may have been made half in jest, it suggests that they also see their mother's origin as a potentially valuable resource rather than as a burden in the confusing religious landscape of Jos.

But as women in inter-faith marriages and their children face a daily struggle due to severed relationships, some children regard their exposure to both religions in a positive light. Overall, therefore, the situation for children of inter-faith marriages is similar in many respects to that experienced by their mothers. While more research is needed to explore in what ways such children are affected by the conflict in the long term,⁸⁵ the worry about their children's safety and well-being is certainly something that affected most mothers I spoke to. Beyond that, it seems to me that these children's lack of trust that they have had since childhood, and for some since the beginning of the conflict, will certainly have implications for the society in the near future. This, too, is something that mothers worry about.

4.7 Conclusion: The Inbetweenness of Women as Victims of Social Isolation

I have argued that women in inter-faith marriages find themselves in situations of in-betweenness when they come face to face with the frustrations of life in conflict and post-conflict environments. Married women in particular are often caught in the web of apparently contradictory relationships. Their loyalties are often shared – or divided – in relation to their husbands, brothers-in-law, mother-in-law, and sisters, and in many cases between Christianity and Islam. Their in-betweenness exists irrespective of whether they convert or whether they remain unconverted. However, while Strathern has highlighted the fact that women's in-betweenness puts them into a theoretical position of choice, our research demonstrates that in reality that theoretical position

⁸⁵An in-depth study of the impact of conflict and the social isolation on children in inter-faith marriages is one that I would love to undertake in the near future. This is because interviewing their mothers does not just explain the predicament they are in at the moment, but highlights the impact of the decisions and choices parents make about their children.

often leads to a narrowing of options. It is women's in-between position that legitimises the suspicion they experience from in-laws, family and community. Consequently, they are affected not only as individuals, but also in their typically female roles of wives and mothers, and in many cases their children experience similar scrutiny. And my research also suggests that their husbands too have their own share of problems that arise from appearing somehow suspicious through their familial links. While their experiences tend to be less dramatic overall, it is my desire that this research opens up more discussions on these gendered and relational aspects of being out of place.

The suspicion experienced by women and their children (and occasionally their husbands) as a result of standing in-between conflicting groups and beliefs illustrates the intimate links between religious conflict and the declining sense of social trust in private lives. As noted, the trust between citizens and communities in Jos and the Middle Belt has declined, and consequently women are affected simply by virtue of their position within the family, not to mention their activities in the economic, political and public sectors. Most of the women I interviewed are unable to engage in simple everyday activities such as maintaining good relations with parents as well as in-laws, and fulfilling their roles as wives and mothers.

In his hierarchy of needs, Maslow (1943) argues that for people to pursue higher order needs which will enable them to develop and heighten their cultural and academic intelligence, they first need to satisfy their basic needs of food, security and shelter.

Unfortunately, religious conflict in Jos and the Middle Belt has affected women in the sense of undermining the basis of their food, security and shelter arising from displacement. If this is the case, and if people cannot develop their cultural and

academic intelligence without securely addressing their primary needs, it is fair to say that in the long run the conflict will reduce the cultural and academic intelligence of displaced children and their parents. Nonetheless, it is important here to remember that social position and income can provide greater flexibility and even open options. Even though all persons are in some way impacted by conflict and violence, those that have higher social positions by virtue of their ethnic background and greater financial resources have the capacity to deflect some of the negative impact of the religious conflict.

As the narratives of this chapter have illustrated, enduring conflict also leads to a normalization of violence in private lives, and especially of those female lives which are seen to challenge the boundaries of conflicting groups. Our research indicates that the disposition of the average Nigerian living in Jos and the Middle Belt is being transformed as violence is becoming internalized and perceived as normal. When violence becomes normal, people become insensitive used to violence. As discussed in this chapter, violence has now become institutionalised in everyday life in Jos as women in inter-faith marriages and their children come face to face with threats, mistrust, ill-treatment and isolation on a daily basis. On ethnic and/or religious grounds some women are treated by their family members in a dehumanizing way, they experience their in-laws or co-wives treating them as less than human, and their children are harassed on the street. Much of the violence that has now become mundane and prosaic in Jos and the Middle Belt is committed by people who think it is alright for them to violate normal ethical principles that should be observed in human relations for the sake of an ultimate religious or ethnic goal.

In this context, the chapter also highlights an important issue in the state of Nigerian society, namely the inability of the institutions of the state to be efficacious in implementing or guaranteeing life and the safety of the property of citizens. Even though Nigerian women as citizens have democratic rights that are guaranteed to them in the Nigerian constitution, those rights are not worth the paper they are written on because the state lacks the capacity to enforce the democratic rights of these female citizens. If women challenge, simply by virtue of their in-between position, the hardening boundaries of ethno-religious groups, they are on their own because the state is not capable of protecting or guaranteeing their rights as citizens. This raises fundamental questions about the form and the substance of the Nigerian postcolonial state, and its instrumentalisation of disorder (Chabal & Daloz, 1999). The fact that women are far more likely than men to be subject to violence simply on the basis of their structural position as wives, i.e. people in-between families and communities, this means that social disorder affects women disproportionately. As a result, disorder certainly has to be conceptualised as an important factor in gender relations.

In conclusion, this chapter has shown that women in religious inter-marriages experience frustration and isolation during and after the conflict. Women continue to suffer due to the impact of conflict on their social positions, and by extension their wider social networks. As a result those who marry outside a different group are likely to have little opportunity to compete for political positions. In addition, there are other forms of discrimination against these women, for example in their professional relationships and at their work places. The subsequent chapters describe how women are affected in the economic arena, and in the political and formal sector.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONFLICT, MARKET AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS IN JOS AND THE MIDDLE BELT

5.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an analysis of the impact of ethno-religious conflict on economic activities, particularly those that characterise interactions and the utilisation of public spaces in the markets in Jos and other parts of the Middle Belt (Kaduna, Nasarawa and Benue). The conflict has shaped the socioeconomic space, particularly market interactions, resulting in ethnic and religious differentiation in market relations (see Lyon & Porter, 2009: 910). This has created mistrust between people of the same and different religions, as the markets have in most instances adopted patterns similar to the increasing residential division along *religio-ethnic* lines as communities continued to be severed by the conflict. Similarly, the resulting displacement has affected the economic situation and has created major strains in economic interactions, making it increasingly difficult for women to trade and maintain healthy economic relationships.

Due to the conflict, people have lost their businesses and the economic co-dependence that theoretically promotes a stable society and peace has been severed by displacement and relocations. Fukshiwe (2010)⁸⁶ has noted that the conflicts in Jos have not just created strains in human relations but have affected the residential architectural pattern and movement in the affected areas. These residential patterns result both from displacement and the fear of association, i.e. the fact that people no longer feel secure among members of groups which have a conflictual relationship with

⁸⁶ Fukshiwe, (2010) also wrote on the effects of conflict on Residential Relationships in Jos.

their own. This fear of association has infiltrated the market space in Jos, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Markurdi breeding mistrust, and by implication, women's economic survival. Because they "have long played a critical role in market trade across most of Nigeria and much of the rest of sub-Saharan Africa" (Porter, Lyon, Adamu & Obafemi, 2010: 32), disruption in the market and trading activities, the indigene versus non-indigene dichotomy and the division of the communities along ethnic and religious lines affect their economic prosperity.

The data from this research sheds light on the nature of relationships that take place amidst this growing segregation, and the narratives have certainly implicated the interventions of government as being instrumental to the polarisation of markets, particularly along ethnic or religious lines. At the same time, they reveal the extent to which men and particularly women maintain trade networks in other ways against all the odds to remain in business. This has been achieved through the maintenance of some form of arrangement based on past networks of trust, which implies the crossing of ethnic or religious divisions.

5.2 Composition of the Markets in Jos

The establishment of markets in Jos in the early 20th century was stimulated by the commencement of the tin mining activity of 1905. As set out earlier, "the region was once an important tin mining area, and it is very mixed ethnically, with indigenous Biroms and Hausa, Kanuri and other migrants, some of whom came to work the mines" (Porter, 1993: 58). Several markets within Jos were set up in close proximity to tin mining camps to service the growing population of migrants and mine workers, their families and visitors. Later, the largest ultramodern indoor market in West Africa was

also built in Jos in 1975 and commissioned in 1985. Other important markets in Jos include the Dilimi auto spare parts (and accessories), scrap iron and wholesale groceries market; the Gangare yams, Irish potatoes and vegetables market; the Kwararafa oil and soup ingredients market and the Farin Gada vegetable market, which is one of the busiest local vegetable markets in Plateau State and supplies traders all over Nigeria, especially from the Eastern and Western part of Nigeria, with tomatoes and other vegetables.

Figure 1. A cross-section of the Farin Gada Vegetable Market



Source: Field notes 2012/2013 © Plangsat Dayil

Many of the green vegetables at the Farin Gada market are retailed by women as seen in the picture above, while many inter-state and regional transporters and suppliers of these vegetables are men. Similarly, many of the yam retailers at the Gada-Biyu

market are women (see Figure 2), while the men are involved with sourcing and transporting yams from the hinterlands. Almost every ethnic group in Nigeria trades in this market, and there is a large presence of Hausa male traders who also constitute a greater percentage of the leadership of the market.

Figure 2. The Gada Biyu Vegetable and Yam Section of the Market



Source: Field notes 2012/2013 © Plangsats Dayil.

5.3 Conflict and the Division of Markets

In Jos, prior to 2001,⁸⁷ markets were basically shared between Muslims and Christians because many of them, the middlemen and commission agents for most of the grains

⁸⁷ The 2001 Jos conflict was said to have been triggered by two factors: the appointment of a Muslim politician Alhaji Muktar Mohammed as local coordinator of the Federal Poverty Alleviation Programme, and the occasion when a Christian woman attempted to cross a barricaded street leading to Congo-

and vegetables were Muslim men, while the retailers were predominantly Christian women with Muslim women mostly trading within compounds. This cleavage of both gender and religion was typical for many markets in Jos, and for Plateau State and the Middle Belt more generally, although it is not universal. However, some of these cleavages have declined since 2001 due to increasing tensions following the conflict (Lyon & Porter, 2009: 916). The implication of this is that markets have adopted patterns similar to the increasing residential division along *religio-ethnic* lines whereby a significant development associated with the division of existing markets has been the expansion of the number of markets within Jos. There are now two rival, ethnically and religiously segregated markets on either side of the Bukuru expressway (Higazi, 2011: 27). The Gyel market is dominated by Christians, while the Muslims have remained in the old Bukuru market. Formerly religiously mixed markets like the Dilimi Market, Kwararafa market and a greater proportion of the Katako market have now become religiously stratified and are dominated by Muslim traders. The new markets in Gada Biyu and Cholbe junction have mainly Christian traders. In all the above cases, the Christian – and predominantly female – traders left the markets during or after the crisis (Lyon & Porter, 2009: 917). This is due to two main reasons: the danger to their lives after losing their businesses, and secondly, the perception of the problem as being communal rather than individual.

The division of the markets was in most cases also alleged to have been supported by community leaders or the local government. In the predominantly Muslim Bukuru

Russia, set up by a few Muslims during prayers. Over 1000 lives were lost and several places of worship burnt down in a conflict that lasted nearly two weeks; from 7 to 17 September.

market, rumours suggest that Christians were encouraged to move to the new Gyel market by the local government after the 19th January 2010 conflict. While it is not clear whether local government was behind the idea for separation, many of my female Christian respondents who formerly traded in Bukuru said they had approached the District Head of Gyel to ask him to assist them by providing them with an empty plot of land, which he granted. Elsewhere, Gada Biyu market sprang from Dilimi Market when Christian traders moved away from Dilimi after the 2008 conflict into a half-completed building of the market under construction and the empty land around the market, where the government later completed the market infrastructure. As a result, the present division and segmentation is a result of insecurity as well as government intervention.

Overall, the creation of new and predominantly Christian markets has disempowered and angered members of the Muslim community. The simple duplication of the markets that has taken place has implications for the trade in the existing markets, and in the predominantly Muslim markets, like Kwararafa, retailers complain of the resulting lower turnover and profitability. Interestingly, respondents from the predominantly Christian Gyel market had the same complaint at the time of this interview. Interaction with the market women and men in all these locations illustrates that the division of markets has reduced the profits of many individual traders.

5.4 Survival Strategy of Traders from Divided Markets

To cope with the changes and divisions affecting these markets, women as well as men have had to devise new means of making ends meet, and a growing number of people now trade outside the markets. To a large extent this depends on the ability of

buyers and sellers to reach an agreement on where to meet outside the existing market settings - normally by the road side. Such arrangements became necessary because most of the items sold in the markets have an ethnic or geographical origin and “there is the domination of the marketing chain by particular ethnic groups” (see Porter, Lyon, Adamu & Obafemi, 2010: 35). So a relationship of dependency exists, with each group dependent on the other. For instance, the crayfish sold in the markets mostly comes from the South-South and South-East of Nigeria and its sellers tend to be Christians. The cattle ready for slaughter are usually sold by Fulani who are from the North and are mainly Muslims. A greater proportion of the vegetables transported to the South-South and South-West comes from rural farmers who are Christians, but also from Jos township irrigation farmers who tend to be Muslims. Understanding these links in the context of our earlier analysis of the *go-* and *no-go-areas* of Jos means that the division of markets along ethnic and religious lines has serious implications for not just women and men in business, but also for their customers. Those who are not prepared to enter markets or trading areas associated with the other religious group have to contend with more limited market choices.

In order to ensure that at least some exchange takes place, Christian and Muslim marketers now have *safe-supply-zones* where they meet to get supplies associated with the other group, often along the major roads. Some of the market men and women are beginning to appreciate the fact that buyers and sellers cannot do without each other, even in the most volatile conflict (cf. Lyon & Porter, 2009: 916). Mrs Maman Muduka⁸⁸ is the women’s leader of foodstuff sellers in one of the markets in Jos. She

⁸⁸ Mrs Maman Muduka is the women leader of foodstuff sellers in one of the markets in Jos. Interviewed in Jos. 7/9/2012

was formerly a trader at the Bukuru Market, but lost all her property during the 2010 crises after which she rebuilt her business at Gyel. She reflected that:

The Hausas [Muslims] are [divided] into two [groups] ... those who love crises and those who hate it. In fact, there was a time I went to Bauchi to buy food stuff and crisis erupted. The road was unsafe and the whole market was scattered... This my customer kept me and watched over me till everywhere was calm. I could see he was so sad and angry with those who perpetrate violence. You see whenever we [Christian and Muslim] marketers hear that conflict has erupted we are sad, because market becomes slow and we incur a lot of loss. That is why a lot of them [Muslims] are against it, when they do not sell and we cannot buy, we both cannot make any money and so we cannot make any profit.

The narrative above goes a long way to show that even though the many markets in Jos are divided along ethnic and religious lines, market men and women of different religions are often part of a shared economic network, and relate to each other as partners rather than enemies. This arises, at least in part, from the recognition that they are heavily dependent on each other for their economic prosperity. They have over the period of the conflicts developed strong trust in their ability to protect one another for mutual benefit (see Lyon & Porter, 2009). Through trust, they have strengthened and sustained the demand and supply of goods and services even at times when conflict was ongoing.

5.4.1 Dependence on Financial Support from Family, Religious and NGOs

Most women re-establish themselves economically after conflicts through their own personal efforts (see Fukshiwe, 2010). They are also in some instances dependent on their religious bodies and their original families' financial support to re-establish lost businesses. A good proportion of women have depended on the NGOs who offer them not just immediate financial and practical assistance, but also provide emotional support and counselling. For instance, the Justice Peace and Development Caritas (JDPC) have organised sessions with the women who were caught in the conflict and have lost their means of livelihood. While Government assistance was considered very low or absent, Christian and Muslim religious organisations and bodies have provided a lot of help. For instance, some of my respondents said their religious bodies gave them seed capital after they lost their original businesses. According to one Madam Ladi Maibaki:⁸⁹

I lost everything to the conflict in 2010. My stall was completely looted. I came in one morning and saw that the shop had disappeared. It was not burnt, but intentionally broken into and brought down to its foundation. My entire family depends on this business. I had to fall back to the Church...it was their little offering that gave me the starting capital to bounce back even stronger...I know you will want me to disclose the amount, but I will not. I used the money well and that is how I moved out of the Bukuru market to Gyel.

It was not possible to establish if she had additional capital from banks and lending agencies because her shop was huge and left me wondering how she would have achieved such phenomenal success with the 'little offering' knowing that the family also

⁸⁹ Madam Ladi Maibaki is one of the leaders of Gyel Market in Jos. Interviewed in Jos. 20/9/2012.

depends on that business. Because many traders could not access credit through banks (cf. Lyon & Porter, 2007: 909) they resorted to using the wonder banks⁹⁰ aka money doublers, who offered what appeared to be mouth-watering, very attractive investment opportunities such as: getting between 100 and 200 percent profit return on investment, but who actually swindled a large amount of money out of people, especially market women. This situation forced many market women out of business as they were cheated out of their trading capital.

5.4.2 Dependence on Old Time Networks and Relationships

For such women who had lost everything to get back to business they had to rely on old time networks and relationships because it was impossible for them to get back to their ethnic or religious organisations to explain that they had been swindled by wonder banks. Cornwall (2007: 30) points to the significance of relationships in mediating in times of uncertainty and misfortune in a study of female traders in Yorubaland where traders give and collect goods on credit as part of the market relationship. This is also the case in Jos and the Middle Belt where although defaulters have caused many to go out of business and have threatened existing trust, such exchanges have continued despite the uncertainties of the conflict environment. In a FGD⁹¹ at the Gada Biyu

⁹⁰ The operation of wonder banks in Nigeria was alleged to have started around 2009. These 'wonder banks,' offered mouth-watering interest to depositors at 100 percent in a month or in three months. The Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) revealed that between 2009 and 2012 such banks had defrauded 560,000 Nigerians of N1 billion.

⁹¹ FGD Gada at the Biyu Market, Jos. 21/9/2012.

market, the women were unanimous in explaining the centrality of credit to the survival of their business. One of them told me:

I lost everything to the conflict...all I had was the good relationship with the middle men. They will supply me with foodstuff and I give them no kobo [money]...just sell it, take my profit and give them back the main money agreed upon. If we were to depend only on little support from our Church or Mosques...it can only go this far. We need steady exchange and supply of goods, even though sometimes you notice that the supplier you know is charging you higher prices and because of the conflict, they are very impatient and are not ready to negotiate prices either.

The above narrative strongly supports the centrality of long term trade relationships. As conflict continues to destroy the markets and segregated settlements continue to sever common markets, “personalised relationships become increasingly important in order to reduce uncertainty” (Lyon and Porter, 2007: 904).

During my visit to the Zonkwa market in Kaduna state, I asked some Christian market women from the religiously mixed market how they get their supplies of foodstuffs and one of the women explained:⁹²

We have a customer [vendor] who is a Hausa man [a Muslim]. He brings the stuff to us. We sometimes pay him full or half. He comes after a week and collects his money and drops another [load of] stuff. Even during conflicts, he finds a way of supplying us. We keep him abreast of happenings and we know

⁹² FGDs at the Zonkwa market Zangon Kataf, Kaduna. 6/2/2013.

he will always come to supply us, except if death separates [us] and we pray we do not see such.

This narrative reveals one interesting topic, the use of communication technology, but that is the subject of another study, however, it should be noted that these market women have utilised such technology in maintaining market relationships in order to withstand the recurring crises that have threatened to sever them. Relying on modern communication devices like mobile phones to keep each other aware of the happenings in the community, they ensure their meetings are safer, it held at the roadside. This is linked to a feeling of attachment and responsibility as these traders interact, they take their safety and those of their business counterparts seriously. The act of keeping each other informed is in a way promoting community integration that could be harnessed for the peace building process (see Jackson, 1995: 145).

5.5 Impact of Conflict on Markets and Relationships in Jos and the Middle Belt

The declining sense of social trust due to the conflict has affected many long-time trading relationship in many ways these include: severed relationships, mistrust and exploitation. These will be discussed in the sections below.

5.5.1 Severed Relationships and Lack of Trust

As mentioned earlier, even though visible settlement patterns tend to suggest that Christians are confined to their own market and Muslims to theirs,⁹³ both sides miss the opportunities associated with contact with the other side and often make conscious efforts to meet due to economic necessity. After the markets were divided, one acceptable way of doing business was to do it along the *lines-of-safety* (safety zones) where differences are put aside in the light of economic necessity. According to Mrs Yosi John⁹⁴ who operates a restaurant along the Bukuru expressway, her business was able to recover because it was well located and people missed the service she provided. She noted:

My customers...initially Muslim customers will not come... [But] over time, people grew tired of secluded life and they started coming back all over again.

However, although evidence shows that dependence on past relationships of trust became central to the sustenance of women's businesses during and after the conflict, Lyon & Porter (2009: 904-907) also point out that trust can actually be a mask for domination, especially in unequal power relations involving men and women. To confirm the above statement further, several of the women I interviewed in Jos reported that some of their business partners had changed the terms of trade since the crises.

⁹³ Markets like that of Dilimi and Bukuru became majority Hausa (Muslim) markets, while the Gada Biyu and Gyel markets were used mainly by Christian traders. Though whenever normalcy returns and the conflict ceases, traders still visit different markets to cope with the demand and supply which they have been used to over the years.

⁹⁴ Mrs Yosi John is a business woman/entrepreneur. She operates a restaurant and equally maintains a stall at the Bukuru market. Interviewed in Jos. 7/9/2012.

Mrs Asabe Dabi,⁹⁵ one of my respondents, is a teacher and also keeps a small poultry business. She noted:

I live in Gyel⁹⁶ and so most of my customers [who are Muslims] cannot come. We still do interact; they come and stop by the main road near one of my sister's shop to take supply. The business is now low, before I can breed 700 to 1,000 birds, but now I cannot. I have to breed based on demand. Sometimes when they tell you they are coming, they do not show up, because it is not safe to do so.

In Mrs Asabe Dabi's case, the division of the community has separated her from her customers. The segregated settlement has made it impossible for Mrs Dabi to go and meet her customers because of her religion. This has affected the sense of obligation feel. She explained to me that:

I do keep cockerels and most of my customers were Muslims. Now most of them cannot come to my house now to pick up supply... they used to buy it in large quantity. After two weeks I get about #12,000 - #13,000 every two weeks. But now my profit is about #8,000 - #9,000. The only difference now is that most of the new customers I have now are not faithful like the ones I had before. A lot of new ones have now gone with my money. I had to re-establish connection with the old ones, though most of them are Muslims who buy and take to Abuja,

⁹⁵ Mrs Asabe Dabi is a Christian and a teacher in one of the Primary Schools in Jos. She lives in the predominantly Christian community of Jos South Local Government Area, but goes to teach in a predominantly Muslim school. She also keeps poultry to supplement her monthly income. Interviewed in Jos. 23/8/2012.

⁹⁶Gyel is located in Bukuru, Jos South Local Government Area. It has recently become a *no-go area* for Muslims.

but am sure of my market and we understand each other well in this business. We pray that God brings an end to this conflict because we are suffering. Sometimes they have somebody who now comes to make purchases on their behalf. Most of the business of rearing birds is done by us the Christian women, and the buyers are the Muslim men. Because of the conflict there is a lot of fear and movement becomes restricted.

The increasing loss of business, and the fact that her customers no longer have a close personal relationship with her and so find it easier to default on her may be a result of the crisis, but it may also reflect a growing sense of alienation between members of different groups in the city. Nevertheless, business transactions such Mrs Dabi's and many others rely mostly on trust built and maintained over time, even where it is evident that the conflict has made the other party not be trustworthy and should be regarded with suspicion.

5.5.2 Exploitation in Trading Transactions

While existing credit relationships have been vital to the economic survival of most female as well as male traders in Jos and the Middle Belt, they have been exploitative in some instances because the terms of the relationship are often decided by the creditors or middle men. Some women have responded to this by changing the way they do business. Madam Ladi Maibaki explained:

Even though my suppliers still remain Muslim men who have established themselves in the business for long, I now go to Bauchi state personally to get my supplies directly.

Her narrative indicates that some women are taking proactive measures by skipping middlemen who might have taken advantage of the conflict and insecurity to pass on the costs of increased risk to female traders. However, especially among those whose businesses were damaged by the conflict, many women were not able to resist the increasing exploitation of middle men. Some of my respondents in a FGD told me that:

You suddenly notice that they [men- middle men] are demanding more and not willing to pay the full price. They feel you owe them much gratitude for coming to pick up your supply, so they treat you badly. When they want to buy our grains, they now use double hands to add so much to the quantity to their own benefit, while you lose. And because you want to sell, you just have to take it.

The comments above shows that there is an unhealthy power relationship in which prices and market participation are more generally determined by women's ability and willingness to accept the authority of middle-men and male buyers. However, some people were even more painfully affected. At the Asakio market (see Figure 3- Asakio yam market), the woman leader of the Yam sellers explained this further when she told me:⁹⁷

I lost all I have to the conflict and all I have left is the clothes I am now wearing [referring to the clothes she was wearing at the time of the interview]. They burnt my house and stole all the yams I had in store. And now, when I go to get supply,

⁹⁷ Interview with the women leader of Yam Sellers Association Asakio Market in Nasarawa State. 4/2/2013 name withheld.

I notice that they have increased their profit margin leaving me with very little gain ... now I feel [I] am just working and selling for them.

This exploitative relationship highlights some of the impact of conflict on market relations, placing women at the mercy of male wholesalers who control the pricing. While these men may claim the increase in price relates to other variables such as increase in transportation cost, these women certainly feel subjective to paying higher price without any corresponding benefit.

Figure 3: The Asakio Yam Market



Source: Field notes 2012/2013 © Plangsath Dayil

5.6 Government, Market Politics and Gender Relations

Government intervention in encouraging the setting up of new markets in Jos may have come about originally as part of official efforts to secure the lives and property of local inhabitants. However, government intervention at both local and state levels in the establishment and allocation of shops and spaces in the markets is seen by many as trying to favour supporters or loyalists and exclude others. In a study of markets in Jos, Porter, Lyon, Adamu & Obafemi (2010: 35) found this to be true, particularly with the reallocation of markets stalls by every new Chairman of the Local Government. Data from the interviews in the markets in Jos, Markurdi, and Nasarawa supports the position that friends and allies readily benefit from the benevolence of government in market allocation.

Unlike the major markets in Jos, the markets outside of Plateau State, and especially those in Markurdi, Lafia and Kaduna, are religiously mixed. However, in these mixed markets, ethnicity and indigeneity, sometimes linked to religion, play a very important role in the market hierarchy. My interaction with Mr Peter Uche⁹⁸ at the Markurdi Modern Market sheds light on the complexity of relations between indigenes and settlers in this market which has become a base for exclusion and the denial of privileges. Mr Peter Uche stated that:

There is a lot of ethnic hatred here in this market ... The worst is that when they [government] allocate these shops, they allocate only to their own people [indigenes] and so we [non-indigenes] have to rent from them and take

⁹⁸ Mr Peter Uche is the chairman of the Markurdi Modern Market. Interviewed in Markurdi. 6/2/2013.

directives from them. The shop owners are majorly indigenes [and one of them] might just wake up one day and call you that he has increased his rent. You either pay or vacate the shop. Sometimes you might even have your money and want to buy the shop off them, but they will refuse or make you pay 1,000% of the original price.

This experience is not limited to market traders in Markurdi and it has also affected markets in Nasarawa. For example, in the Asakio yam Market, the Alagos, an ethnic group in Nasarawa State, claim that the land on which the market was built is theirs and therefore the market belongs to them. They expect that those who trade within this space must recognise that. This means that the market has become a contested political space, and the Alagos, like many other ethnic groups in the Middle Belt and Nigeria, are seeking recognition and identity for their ethnic group. This experience fits into the wider narratives about demands for control and access to the resources of the state such that can in turn confrontational and violent. There were violent ethnic clashes in 2013 in the Asakio market as a result of such differences.

While the crises did not affect relationships in most markets directly, they were perceived as a threat to retailers and middle-men relations especially where religion and ethnicity were involved. While female traders do suffer more during conflicts, this situation was sometimes the same for some of the men that were interviewed. The male chairman of the Yam Sellers Association of Asakio Market shared his experience in a FGD,⁹⁹ explaining that he has been trading in the market for a long time but has

⁹⁹ FGDs at the Asakio yam Market in Nasarawa State. 5/2/2015.

now lost everything in the same market due to the 2012 conflict between the Alago and Eggon tribes. He lamented:

The government has refused to come to our aid, and even the local government is doing nothing to assist us. I only get to know that others were assisted somehow...why this selective assistance? I do not know...it appears government is more interested in others but certainly not us.

Most of the marketers in Nasarawa, Markurdi and Kaduna who are non-indigenes suffer similar forms of discrimination and they equally complain about violent confrontations. Generally, respondents were aware that they must remain silent about their ordeal for peace to reign. One of the women¹⁰⁰ traders in the Market in Benue whom I interviewed said that:

Jos is a 100 percent better. These people [referring to the Tivs of/in Benue state], they do not like visitors. When you go to Plateau, they welcome visitors. If not for religious problem[s], Jos has no problem. They welcome visitors. But here, they do not even want to see visitors. Once you are not an indigene, they do not even want to see you ...these are the things we are enduring and suffering, we are just dying in silence.

Given the everyday nature of discrimination against non-indigenes in many parts of Nigeria, it may seem unsurprising that the North has experienced so many religious

¹⁰⁰ A supposed women leader in the Markurdi Modern Market, who spoke to me under anonymity because of the ongoing skirmishes between the government and the leadership of the Market. Most of the traders during my interview were suspicious of my interviews because they thought I was a government agent trying to spy on them since the crises between them were ongoing at the time of this interviews. And most especially they were afraid of naming any leader in the market because they are afraid of being identified later.

and ethnic conflicts. However, this discrimination is not only experienced in the Middle Belt of the North. Those who settle in other parts of Nigeria suffer similar forms of discrimination and do not feel able to come out and speak about it. This was illustrated to me by an informal interaction with an elderly man (approximately 60 years old) in Markurdi.¹⁰¹ He was an indigene of Makurdi who had formerly lived in the country's South-East and explained anonymously that:

My parents moved to the East in the early 90s, they are still there, we all grew up there but at some point I decided to come back home. I do not love this place [Markurdi], but I have to come, you know. In the East, a non-indigene dare not talk about right to land. The mere thought of it is terror!! You must have seen that on Nigerian movies. If you do, you would realise their approach to land matters, so how can someone from outside think of claiming any right to land there.

As sad as the narrative appears, ethnicity and religion are key players in determining who is an outsider and who is not throughout Nigeria, even in the markets. "In Jos [the Middle Belt and Nigeria at large], the politics of chieftaincy, administrative participation, [and] ethno-religious manoeuvring" (Ochonu, 2014: 182), as well as competition over access to land and scarce economic resources, makes it possible for the leaders to continue to manipulate the citizenry. The citizens for their part now use religious language that is violent towards fellow citizens, treating each other, and most especially women, as enemies and as subhuman. Women thus have very little chance to compete in such situations, especially when this attitude filters through to the market.

¹⁰¹ Anonymous elder. Interviewed in Markurdi. 6/2/2013.

In an earlier survey of market reorganisation in Jos and Borno, Porter (1993: 60), observed that “some individuals and groups may have more [to] gain by market expansion.” The interview data supports the opposite. For example, the creation of the Gyel market in Bukuru was interpreted -by the traders in the Bukuru market- as government ordering all Christians to leave the Bukuru market and move away from the Hausa Muslim traders. But despite the assumptions, a few women see the market expansions as having created alternative markets. Mrs Yosi John explained:

In the past, we just have these idle youths that used to smoke and would rather lazy around doing nothing and waiting to be mobilised as political thugs now getting involved in some form of business or the other. They can be seen now occupying the former shops and stalls owned by the Muslims who left due to the conflict... in the past, to slaughter a cow in the market was for an Hausa man or an Igbo man...the Plateau man does not slaughter meat in the market, but now when you go to the markets, you see that all ethnic groups on the Plateau now participate in the sale of meat. Similarly most ethnic groups are now involved in the dry season gardening which was in recent past left for the Hausa man.

This means that young men have now ventured into some areas of business, partly due to the fall-out from the conflicts and the establishment of new markets at close proximity to their residences. Meaning that government support for alternative markets has provided opportunities for the hitherto idle young men to get engaged in some forms of income yielding activity. In the context of this research, the Hausa Muslim traders feel they are unfairly targeted by government for their exclusion from the economy of Plateau state. The failure of government to involve the market leaders in

discussions relating to the relocation and allocation of stalls might be partly responsible for this growing animosity and suspicion. My interaction with Alhaji Buba Pyem¹⁰² who believes that the government of Plateau State has made its greatest mistake by intervening in the conflicts through its creation of separate markets and by encouraging, or perhaps giving clear instructions for Christians to move from the Bukuru market to the Gyel market, supported this. According to him:

Market is not a religion, neither is it a place of worship. It is for everybody, it is a space for unity, and peace must first begin from the market. Because here Christians and Muslim share a common space and are happy to buy from each other. But the government and some of our market leaders decided to bring an end to that; they separated us along religious line. Now Muslims in Bukuru and Christians in Gyel. This market has over 700 shops [See Figure 4, mostly empty shops at the Bukuru market] and can contain all of us and so no need for a new market elsewhere...this is one of the greatest mistake[s] of this government...instead of bringing us together, it separates us...if we cannot have a common place to buy and sell together, then the peace in Jos will take years to come. We know that this is the architecture of the government...it never consulted us about it, it no longer comes to this market to collect revenue when hitherto it does. The government is not making any conscious effort to unite the markets or to dialogue. ...so government must be the one to find a solution to the problem, because it created it in the first instance.

¹⁰² Alhaji Buba Pyem is one of the Local Government Chairmen of the Traders Association in Plateau State. Interviewed in Jos. 8/9/2012.

The creation of Gyel market from the Bukuru market did not go down well with the Muslim Hausa community, because many of its members believed the government was attempting a form of divide and rule and it was seen as creating undue privileges for the Christians, or indigenes, to the disadvantage of the non-indigene Hausa Muslims. They felt that it shows that the government does not identify itself with them, and they feel left out because government no longer collect fees or taxes from the markets. As a result, they cannot place any demands on government to improve the condition of the market since this separation, which the Hausa Muslim considered a form of violence and marginalisation which could have further promoted division and conflict.

Figure 4: Some of the Vacated Empty Shops at the Bukuru Market



Source: Field notes 2012/2013 © Plangsats Dayil

Figure 4 illustrates the current situation of market stalls in Bukuru where most of the occupants of the shops have relocated to the Gyel market, as most of the shops were given to Christians in the newly created market.

As mentioned earlier, a similar government bias was noted by many Muslims during the allocation of shops at the Gada Biyu market, which sprang from the now Muslim Dilimi market after the 2008 crises. Most of the shop owners there now are Christians of varied ethnicities. As Best (2008) has noted, “People in Jos have mobilised religious identities in the recent past to exclude and discriminate against others” and the market is no exception. Data from my interviews suggest that not only are religious differences mobilised, but government is seen to be supportive of differences because it did nothing to bring the two groups together, rather it was involved in the splitting of markets. Further, many Hausa Muslim traders are not willing to associate with the government or to accept any form of assistance from them which they view as a form of “political patronage and manoeuvring” (Porter, 1993: 57).

In effect, some of the markets, such the Bukuru market, are gradually moving out of government political control, which means that the state is losing by not generating revenue from this market. During the interviews I noticed that shops were being erected, and could see some form of work going on in the market. One would assume this was taking place without any approval from government. Such expansion without any form of control means that the market space becomes rowdy and increases the potential for conflict. This creates a risky situation for the majority of female traders who often bring their children to the markets after school hours and all day at weekends.

Anger over unproductive government interference is not limited to Jos and Plateau State. In the still mixed Asakio market in Nasarawa State, the conflict that erupted between June and November 2012 led to the burning of the popular Asakio yam Market, with the Alagos blaming the Eggon for the inferno and vice versa. The Asakio paramount ruler was also implicated in the conflict as he was accused of illegal and unlawful seizure of farm lands as well as oppressing farmers by appropriating their food crops. Similarly, the government was accused of handpicking individuals for compensation after the Asakio conflict; as a result there was growing animosity and tension in the market when this interview was conducted.

Other respondents accused the government of not responding promptly to the plight of the traders who lost their businesses to the conflict, while informal sources confirm the government for its part referred to the incidences as attempts by the opposition party to disrupt the peace in the state ahead of the 2015 general elections. The traders clearly felt betrayed because the government was being insensitive to their needs, and that playing politics in the market was affecting their livelihood. Prof Wurang Monday,¹⁰³ one of the respondents, explained the situation of the traders in the Asakio market after the conflict by saying that:

We received no support from Government...they are really not ready for us. We only hear stories of them compensating others. The only help we got was from a private organisation that gave each family 10 piece of roofing sheets, 7 pieces of wood and a kilo of nails. They could only do that much... but what can that

¹⁰³ Prof Wurang Monday is one of the leaders in the Asakio market. He was nicknamed Prof because of his activism in the market and engagement with government over market welfare. Interviewed in Asakio, Nasarawa State. 5/2/2013.

do even. It is such a shame that we have a democratically elected government, who collects taxes in this market. We know how much revenue this market generates for the state, yet we have not received any support from them.

The women¹⁰⁴ I spoke with in a FGD at the Asakio market echoed the assertions of Prof Wurang Monday that government is not willing to make any meaningful impact in the markets. They said:

The Government is doing nothing, absolutely nothing. You see all these stalls and shops were all built out of communal efforts. I think the government can do a lot... first, they can build shops, provide soft loans to traders and make their presence felt in the markets, but no, they will not do that.

As a result most of the women had to build their shops through communal efforts or loans from their women associations. The efforts of women in building their own stalls and shops has already been noted by Porter (1993: 61) in a study of the rural markets in Jos, where the Berom women were involved. This research sees a similar trend and an increase in women's involvement in rebuilding markets in the absence of any meaningful government intervention. Though the involvement of women in this regard often goes unnoticed, it has had a significant impact on trading and the market. It is a way in which women contribute to making markets work effectively in an organised form, thereby contributing to the economy. And because a "vast majority of African women earned money through trade" (Liebling-Kalifani & Baker, 2010: 787), getting back to business is key to their livelihood. The women in some parts of Jos were able

¹⁰⁴ FGDs at the Asakio Market, Nasarawa State. 4/2/2013.

to acquire land on lease from the community heads, which they cleared through communal efforts and erected shops as is the case of Gyel market.

Gofwen (2004: 162) noted that one of the implications of government complicity is its inability to decisively deal with societal problems by putting an end to the violent conflicts. Ideological difference filters through market spaces as politicians continue to take advantage of the conflict to handpick and reward victims. Moreover, as noted by Prof Wurang Monday, government interventions are mostly superficial. Prof Wurang Monday observed that:

Up till now, government does not have the right formula for interventions in markets and agriculture... or maybe they are pretending. They have not been able to make any positive impact because of their urban approach and politicking. Their approach is always about *educated-and-big-men-dressing-up* approach to issues. They call for farmers meeting in Abuja, and someone dresses big and appears in Abuja as representative of farmers, and they give him money on behalf of others who cannot even afford a meal, transportation to Abuja or those clothing and yet, they assume they have done something. What have they done? At the beginning of the rainy season, you can sight a big lorry from government distributing a bag or two of fertilizer to farmers who normally use between 50-100 bags for cultivation. Is that fair? No I think it is a shame and equally annoying. Government should better be serious and come directly to individual farmers and help them instead of relying on some well-dressed-tycoons who goes to Abuja to speak English on our behalf. They should work with groups and associations formed and run by farmers and not those run by these same big men as their local businesses for selfish purposes.

Similarly, my observations¹⁰⁵ at the Markurdi, Nasarawa and Jos markets revealed that most of these markets actually lack any government presence. This is evident by the dilapidated shops, absence of sanitary facilities and poor drainage systems. The layout of the markets also speaks volume, as most shops are seen to be in a poor condition. This was illustrated by the narrative of Mr Peter Uche of the Markurdi Modern Market, who believed that the constant misunderstanding that ensued when the market was burnt down is a pointer to the government as the culprit responsible for starting this fire. This is because it happened within the period when government had threatened the traders with either having to leave the market due to intended renovation work or either pay higher charges to retain their shops. The traders were suspicious because they believed that it was not possible for a fire to start at midnight when no one was there apart from the government appointed security personnel. Mr Peter Uche narrated that:

This government is so unfair in its treatment of traders... it is the government who came and set fire in the market at night while we were all gone. The motives behind this action is best known to them. The situation here is worsening...it is ethnic clashes amongst the traders here and government is not doing anything to encourage buying and selling... the government is just doing everything possible to frustrate us the non-indigenes (Igbo traders).

He continued:

The women here are crying, especially the widows. The government is not even caring about their plea. Most of the women cannot afford to pay the rent

¹⁰⁵Personal Observation/informal interactions at the Jos, Markurdi and Nasarawa markets. Field notes 2012/2013 @ plangsat Dayil.

increment the government is demanding for. We have been to the House of Assembly... and it is the same uncaring attitude we receive there. ...the widows even wrote an appeal for rent reduction, but nothing was done till date.

Though Mr Peter Uche seems to present a justifiable reason for trying to gain the sympathy of government, by using the condition of the women as a tool, his statement suggests on the other hand how men use women's agency to achieve male domination for as long as it is profitable. For instance, between June 22 to August 6, 1945, Nigerian workers - mostly civil servants and railwaymen - protested in Lagos in the South-West region over the government's refusal to raise wages after years of acute inflation, and "male workers demanded wage increases and even family allowances on the basis of their status as breadwinners, yet they survived during the course of the strike in large measure because of the economic independence of their wives and the importance of market women to local economies" (Lindsay, 1999:783). Men like Mr Peter Uche who act as the women's spokespersons have become *women-advocate-entrepreneurs* who derive personal benefits from doing so. Mr Peter is clearly using his vocal support of the market women – or, in his words, widows – in order to maintain his own position of authority within the market. Thus, men like Mr Peter try to mobilise sympathy for the plight of the womenfolk, not necessarily because they want to ensure that women gain a better position (cf. Lindsay, 1999) but because they believe that speaking on their behalf, often in a way that portrays women as particularly helpless (as widows usually are), will in the long run enable them to remain or become leaders in their own right.

The concept that women who are distressed in some way should accept male leadership may reflect the widespread acceptance of men as overall leaders in the

relationship between market women and market men. Throughout Nigeria's Middle Belt, men tend to be in charge of market associations while the women are only in charge of the women's wing. The women, in turn, are sometimes so accustomed to men helping them to get what rightfully belongs to them that they do not support their own female leaders.

This suggests that women do not always have the capacity to make strategic choices. Cornwall (2007: 28), for example, argues that, "making clear-cut *strategic* choices is dependent on having the power to realise them: power that many women in this as in other settings, including those with considerable buying and spending power, are not in a position to fully exercise." And because most women are left out of market leadership positions, they lack the power to realise their choice and often have to defer to the male leaders.

In many areas, the conflict has made women even more reluctant to take on leadership positions than before, because they are not prepared to face opposition. For example, the market women leader of Zonkwa explained that the market had about 12 women leaders before the conflict. The number dropped to four after the conflict, with little commitment even when persuaded. It seems women have lost interest in leadership because it affects their ability to cope with other domestic challenges. The conflicts have equally created fears in them and they are equally afraid of more commitments. They would now prefer to concentrate on running their own business than get involved in any activity that took them out of the market in order to attend meetings, which referred to as disturbance.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Interview with foodstuff Women Leader Zonkwa Market, Kaduna. 13/2/2013.

As well as excluding themselves, women are sometimes also actively excluded from market spaces by their male counterparts. The market created in 2011 on the Bauchi road by-pass is one good example. After the 2010 conflict at the Dilimi market, the government provided land for the establishment of a temporary space for the women to continue their businesses. This was received with some scepticism as the government was seen to support the new market as a way of disempowering the Muslim community, which further contributes to religious resentment and division.

5.6.1 Government Involvement in the Markets

The issue of religious discrimination has made it easier for the government to be accused of favouritism. In Jos like in other parts of the Middle Belt, government was accused of allocating shops exclusively to indigenes (who are mainly Christians) as in the Gada Biyu market in 2008. And one result of this was gender bias, as women who are less able to establish links in the political sphere were also left out. Further, women who had held leadership positions in joint markets were often denied the opportunity in new markets because new male leadership came into force. One of the women leaders¹⁰⁷ at the Gada Biyu market narrated how men kept women out of market leadership. According to her:

We, the women, moved to this market first [referring to the Gada Biyu market] before the men joined us. We were given the space for free by the Mai-Angwa [Community Head] to trade...we cleared the space and organised our business... Later the men started coming to join and then later they started

¹⁰⁷ Interview at Gada Biyu market. 21/9/2012.

demanding all sorts of payment from us for using the market. We already had our leaders and we are not aware of any government levy... then they introduced to us the new leaders of the market who will be collecting these fees. They did not consult with us and did not recognise our leadership. We later learnt that they had the backing of the local authority to do so.

This clearly illustrates that because their focus is on conducting trade, the women were disadvantaged by men who first of all built political links and networks. Even though the women predated the men in moving to the new market, the men then drew on their links to the government to control and benefit from their activities. Clearly the political importance of the establishment of a predominantly Christian market to challenge the existing Muslim-dominated one also led to the discrimination of (Christian) women, because it was considered important that the new market had male leadership.

5.7 Conclusion and Reflection

The foregoing illustrates that trust, understanding and dependability links are important in bringing together Muslims and Christians in the market space. But even though economic prosperity for a greater number depends on close chains of exchange, many markets have been divided by government intervention after religious conflicts. The displacement of people from markets and segregated settlements due to the conflict has affected the economic life of Jos, the Middle Belt and Nigeria at large. Its effects are complex. On the one hand, people have lost their businesses and source of their livelihood. On the other the creation of new markets has opened up opportunities for

some women to venture into business and be actively involved in building business relationships and peace.

Overall, however, the increased involvement of local government in market relations has meant that markets in the Middle Belt have become more difficult places for women. In Markurdi, just as in Jos, the struggle for recognition and the struggle over economic resources makes it easy for the indigene versus non-indigene dichotomy to be pronounced (cf. Porter, Lyon, Adamu & Obafemi, 2010). As in many localities, government has helped to fan existing flames by creating separate markets. As a result of this, there is a lot of mistrust among not only marketers of the same religion but also in the relationship between Muslims and Christians. But despite this, the mutual dependence of Muslims and Christians suggests that market trade remains, at least hypothetically, a form of exchange that can be utilised for the preservation of society and the promotion of peace.

The conflicts in Jos and the Middle Belt has affected women in obviously negative ways, and given the physical dangers and demands on their time associated with the trade between different religious communities, women are often at a relative disadvantage to men. They tend to be the ones most in need of intermediaries, which affects their profits. Jackson (1995:142) views these networks and intermediaries in a more positive light. He refers to their role in sustaining business during conflict as a form of “creativity.” Even though Jackson was referring to the case of the Mozambique war, the analysis fits quite well in explaining the advantage of such networks during conflicts. According to him:

There are many other ways people work to subvert terror and destruction and to reconstruct a purposeful social universe. In Mozambique, these...dangers were too great and the profit negligible... because that's how life goes on [in Jos and the Middle Belt as in Mozambique]... I realised that through their journey, they performed an invaluable function. They carried messages for families and friends separated by the fighting; conveyed details on troop deployment and dangers; and transmitted critical economic, crop, trade and political news, not to mention gossip and irrelevant stories between communities severed from one another by the war. They linked different ethnic and language groups in a statement that war was not about local rivalries [they warn about imminent dangers] and could not be, if they were to survive. They forged trade and social networks through disordered landscapes of violence... they simply defied the war in a way that everyone they passed could enjoy and draw strength from. They were literally constructing social order out of chaos (1995:145-146).

The market women as well as men in Jos and the Middle Belt can be seen to be constructing social order. They have tried to overcome any form of existing rivalry from within the market and have forge ahead and ensure that the networks and interactions are not severed by the conflict. But while these traders stand to gain from established business links and trust, the proportionate benefit is lower for most women, and trust sometimes masks male dominance. Middle men have privileged access to information and long-time networks which is difficult for new entrants, and especially women, to master and establish. Moreover, the conflict has also reduced the possibility of negotiating prices, and while many middle men have benefitted from this women have remained more dependent on them.

CHAPTER SIX

THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON WOMEN AND POLITICAL MOBILISATION IN NIGERIA'S MIDDLE BELT

6.1 Introduction

In this Chapter, I explore and analyze how ethno-religious conflict affects the political participation of women. The data in this chapter presents the experiences of women as they aspire to political representation in a society ridden by ethnic and religious violence. Though the political discrimination against women is part of the wider resentment for them in other aspects of society, the conflicts have made it more difficult for them to mobilize and gain support across ethnic and religious communities. In a society like Jos and many other states of the Middle Belt, where ethnic and religious divisions have become firmly established, women politicians (as well as men) have found it very difficult to establish political, economic and social connections and maintain trust due to their structural positions. Also, as indicated in the discussion on inter-marriage, a Christian woman married to a Muslim man (and vice versa) is unlikely to be trusted by people from either religion which makes it increasingly difficult for them to mobilize support in Jos and the Middle Belt.

In the current situation of conflict, an unhealthy mix of existing challenges, growing mistrust and the hardening of ethnic and religious boundaries influences attitudes towards the political participation of women, and by extension women's ability to establish themselves as political leaders. Worldwide, only 14 percent of parliamentarians are women (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundale, 2003: 39), although some

countries employ quotas to increase representational equality women still occupy only 20 percent of lower-level parliamentary seats on average internationally. A recent survey shows that gendered roles and expectations continue to hold back female legislators, unlike male counterparts, capping success and stunting ambitions (World Bank, 2015).

6.2 Women and Politics in Nigeria: The Pre-colonial Era

As in many parts of Africa, women participated in the decision making of pre-colonial Nigeria. For example, in many Yoruba communities, women held specifically female chieftaincy titles representing the interests of women (Nolte, 2008: 86) and both men and women wielded political power and authority, albeit in differing degrees, in precolonial Igbo society. Here, women became political actors based on their kinship relationships as daughters, sisters, mothers, wives, and in-laws to men and the *Isi Ada* (oldest daughter of the lineage), royal women, and heads of women's organizations (Chuku, 2009: 83). Similarly, in Northern Nigeria, the *Magira* (Queen mother) and the *Gumsu* and *Magaram* (both stand for the official elder sister of the *Mai*- ruler) wielded tremendous influence and power (Awe, 2001: 14).

6.2.1 The Colonial Era

During the colonial era, the British governed through male authorities and also formalized male institutions and thus female socio-political organisations were weakened (cf. Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundale, 2003; Chuku, 2009). However, although women were excluded from the colonial administration, they continued to organise into

various associations such as the market women's association to make demands on the colonial government. The 1929 Aba women riot is a testament to women's ability to mobilise and participate in governance despite unfavourable conditions (Chuku, 2009: 89). Through colonial civil society, women were represented in the anti-colonial movements and, albeit to a much lesser degree, in the post-colonial party politics of the 1950s and 1960s (Nolte, 2008: 86-87).

6.2.2 The Post-Colonial Era

After the collapse of Nigeria's First Republic and during two long periods of military rule (1966-79, 1983-99), women were almost completely excluded from active political participation both in Southwest Nigeria (Nolte, 2008: 87) and in almost all other regions of Nigeria. "Interestingly, several post- 1999 Nigerian parties have women's wings. At the same time, the number of women in public office increased by a very small margin, though in most cases by appointment rather than election. While this development suggests that women's wings have, in the absence of other forms of women's inclusion, a small positive effect on female representation, it also illustrates the very real constraints of mobilizing women through structures appended to the main (male) section of organizations" (Nolte, 2008: 92).

Women have remained associate members of political parties in Nigeria through the women's wings of political parties throughout the first, second and aborted third republic¹⁰⁸ (Osinula & Mba, 1996: 13). As auxiliary members, they cannot be involved

¹⁰⁸ Nigeria's first republic was 1963-1966; Second Republic 1979-1983 and the third republic 1993 was aborted. Though the late M.K.O Abiola emerged as a winner, the General Babangida the then president of Nigeria annulled the election of June 12.

in the decision-making processes of political parties so their primary task is to ensure that women have registered, campaigned, and voted for party candidates, especially in rural constituencies (Chuku, 2009: 102), even when their suggestions are never taken seriously (Osinulu, 1996: 19).

The period following the return of Nigeria to democratic rule in May 1999 has been marked by increasingly violent conflicts (Elaigwu, 2012),¹⁰⁹ most of which relate to struggles over access to state resources and for recognition by numerous ethnic nationalities. Both Christianity and Islam have become tools that astute politicians manipulate to acquire power (Falola, 1998: 15). Both religions to a great extent have similar beliefs about politics; one of which is that women should not be active in the public domain. Political parties are also male oriented (Osimulu, 1996: 19), and their structure privileges men more than women (Chuku, 2009: 102). This situation has over the years disadvantaged women.

Table 3: Women in Elected and Appointed Offices in Nigeria in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011

Office	Total Positions	Percentage of Women 1999	Percentage of Women 2003	Percentage of Women 2007	Percentage of Women 2011
President	1	0	0	0	0
Vice President	1	0	0	0	0
Senate	109	2.8	3.7	8.3	6.4
House of Representatives	360	1.9	5.8	7.5	6.9
Governors	36	0	0	0	0
Deputy Governors	36	2.8	5.6	16.7	
State House of Assembly	990	2.4	3.9	5.8	6.9
State House Speakers	36	2.8	5.6	-	-
Cabinet Ministers	49	8.2	17.6	17.9	-

¹⁰⁹ See Elaigwu, (2012).

Source: Abiora & Toomey (2010) *Federalism and Gender Politics in Nigeria*. Pg.211. (Updated)

On the political presence of women in Nigerian politics, research indicates great gender disparity (Awe, 2001; Ibrahim & Salihu, 2004; Osinulu & Mba, 1996). As already stated during the 1999 elections, women constituted about 27 million out of the 47 million registered voters, but only 1.6 percent of them won elected office. In 1999, out of 49 ministers and advisers, only 4 were women and out of 990 State Houses of Assembly, only 24 were women. In the 2003 elections, out of 109 senators in the Senate, only 4 were women, while of the 360 members of the House of Representatives only 21 were women (Agina-Ude, 2003; Ibrahim & Salihu, 2004; Alubo, 2004). There was a slight increase in the 2007 elections when women in the House of Representatives increased to 27 and the number in the Senate increased to 9 (Gender in Nigeria, 2012). The 2011 male and female representation in parliament speaks for itself - in the House of Assembly, for instance, 25 of 360 Representatives are women. In the Senate, 9 of 109 representatives are women (Gaaderse & Valasek, 2011: 188). Although the research is not able to establish the percentage of registered women voters who actually voted, available evidence from precolonial Nigeria to the present polity reveals a trend that suggests that the political marginalisation of women is also linked to class and status, and many of the women who have become successful politicians have been either daughters of politicians or wives or relatives of prominent politicians (cf. Coleman, 2012).

In an effort to ensure the full integration of all women into the development process, the Federal Military Government of General Babangida established the National Commission for Women by Decree No.30 of 1989. The purpose of the commission is

to ensure the integration of women as participants and beneficiaries in the development process, promote healthy and responsible motherhood, enhance women's civic, political and socioeconomic education and eliminate socio-cultural practices that dehumanise and discriminate against women (Abdullahi, 1993: 6). However, wives of past presidents of Nigeria have established various programmes to help women become integrated into society. The Maryam Babaginda's Better Life Program for Rural Women (BLPRW) in 1986, and Dame Patient Goodluck's Women for Change Initiative (WFCI) of 2011, have had a limited impact on women and society. For instance, these programmes have failed to contribute to the success of Decree no.30 of 1989, they were unable to make tangible success in the elimination of gender subordination because their structure, objectives and constitutions negate the need for the mobilisation of the majority of women in Nigeria. This is because these organisations are made up of upper and middle class women whose concerns are to improve the provision of social services rather than change the consciousness of women (Heyzer, 1986:126). In addition, they have not developed a clear understanding of gender sub-ordination or its relationship to other forms of social and economic oppression (Sen and Grown, 1987). Rather, these programmes appear to have been created to provide a useful and appropriate occupation for the wives of important state officials (Abdullah, 1993: 33) and have been unable to challenge the fundamental causes of the discrimination and marginalisation of women in politics and society.

6.3 The Challenges to Women Political Participation

Several reasons and excuses have been given for the low participation of women in politics (Akande, 1996). Some of the excuses are- Religion and traditional practices

and customs that discriminate against women, lack of finance, labelling and name calling, God Fatherism, the use of thugs, scheduling of late night meetings and marriage and husbands as gatekeepers (see Awe, 2001; Ibrahim & Salihu, 2004; Imam, Pittin & Omole, 1989; Osinula & Mba, 1996). These challenges are discussed in the sections below.

6.3.1 Religion, Customs and Traditional Beliefs

Traditional practices, customs and societal norms and attitudes prevalent in Nigeria constitute a hindrance to women's political abilities. For instance, families rejoice over the arrival of a baby boy but are indifferent if it is a baby girl. And growing up, the girl child is easily withdrawn from school to help with household chores. So right from childhood women face discrimination and exclusion (Osinula & Mba, 1996:20; Warsame, 2004: 31). That is why, for example, women are excluded in many Nigerian communities from participation in periodical extended family meetings where concerns and issues relating to family life are discussed (Para-Mallam, 2007: 155). Such cultural bias is not peculiar to Nigeria but also affects other African societies.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, religion and ethnicity are closely linked, particularly in their effect on the subordinate status of women.

6.3.2 Labelling and Name Calling

¹¹⁰ For instance, a study of Somaliland children found that they are brought up with the assumption that the social status of women is inferior to that of men. See Warsame, (2004).

Labelling here refer to branding, name calling and tagging women politicians as irresponsible, cultural deviants, prostitutes and loose women as a means of deterring them from participating in politics. Similarly, Wood (1985: 352) in explaining the function of labelling in political economic and social competition argued that, “the authors of labels determined the rules of access to particular resources and privileges. They are setting the rules of inclusion and exclusion.” Thus, the aim of discriminating against women is to control their presence in public life and eliminate them as competitors with men. One very good example of the implication of name calling with regard to female politicians is contained in the narrative of Hon Mrs. Matdiret Muse who explained that:

When I first muster[ed] the idea of going into politics, my friends said to me...why do you want to spoil your name and that of your children. You know my family live in Jos, and if I have to participate in politics, I need to relocate to Benue. And with the fear that I will be called names, which might put my family on the front line, I had to hold myself back.¹¹¹

The narrative of Hon Mrs. Matdiret Muse mirrors the experiences of many other women around the world who go into politics. In Iraq for example, female members of parliament have been regularly insulted by their male colleagues and relegated to working on “women’s issues.” (Coleman, 2012). While in the United Kingdom, Margaret Thatcher who was prime minister between 1979 and 1990 was nicknamed ‘the iron lady,’ for her uncompromising political leadership style and partly because she

¹¹¹ Hon Mrs Matdiret Muse contested and won elections in Benue state in 2003. Interviewed in Markurdi. 6/2/2013.

was a woman. For whatever reason, most successful politicians have since come to be referred to as ‘iron ladies’ worldwide. The use of this slogan might have the connotation of referring to women politicians as those who abandon or neglect their motherly roles to venture into politics, and as lacking good judgement and moral upbringing, even though their male counterparts who adopt similar leadership styles are showered with encomium. Also, “Society rules that aggressive political commitment is unfeminine and unhealthy for women” (Osinula, 1996: 21). Thus, this negative attitude might be responsible for the disproportionately low numbers of female representatives in Jos, the Middle Belt and many other parts of the world. Another obstacle used to relegate women politicians to the background is religion. This will be discussed below.

6.3.3 Ethnic and Religious Manipulation

In addition to labelling, religion has also been used to subvert the position of women in politics and continually ensure that they remain politically in the background. This is because in Nigerian society, as in many other parts of the world, “religion affects social and political order, by defining appropriate conduct and morality” (Falola, 1998: 11) particularly for women. Religion in this context is used to pressure women out of the public realm and reinforce their subordinate position in society. Some of the reasons identified as causing the marginalisation of women also include cultural beliefs and the patriarchal attitudes of the Nigerian family. For instance, Gwamna (2010: 2) argues that “religion has become a major defining factor of identity in Nigeria. It becomes dangerous when religion is linked to politics and to ethnicity.” Bayart (2010: 42-43) is of the opinion that ethnicity has always been part of the politics in Africa and that it is

often utilised for sectional rather than broader aims. From this perspective politics has become a tool for personal enrichment and the distribution of patronage to kin as evident in the Nigerian Federal system. And as established politicians wish to maintain their status, new entrants in the political terrain particularly women, are normally perceived as encroaching onto personal property. For this reason they are likely to face stiff resistance.

The implication of religion, ethnicity and patriarchal attitudes as part of Nigerian politics is that female entrants into the male-dominated political arena often fall victim to ploys where religion, tradition, marriage and physical violence are used to keep them out. This has significant implications for the level of support women can mobilize and it increases the amount of energy needed to convince potential followers to support them. Moreover, female politicians who hope to appeal to primarily female voters are at an important disadvantage because many women do not consider their right to vote as their personal property, rather, they see their vote as at least partially subject to the control of their husbands. As a result, women's political careers encounter more stumbling blocks than those of men. For instance, in the past eight years Bolivian police have received more than 4,000 complaints of harassment from women participating in politics; many more incidents are likely to have gone unreported (UN Women, 2012). The Bolivian example points to the fact that the issues associated with the private (domestic) sphere of the home should be incorporated into the democratic and trade union discourse. Issues such as domestic violence, rape in marriage, incest and sexual harassment and abuse should no longer be treated as the private and personal affair of individuals and households. It is in the home that women experience their first oppression from their fathers, brothers and, later, their husbands (Abdullah, 1993: 34).

The story of Mrs Jirap Matak¹¹² from Jos reveals how such resistance can be encountered by women in politics. Mrs Jirap Matak went into politics hoping for the female vote. She had worked with women's groups for over 20 years, taking part in micro-credit and health programmes and even mobilizing them to reflect on themselves and their positions. But once she started active politics she realized that she had to deal with gatekeepers that she did not know existed beforehand. When it came to voting, the women who had long worked with her all felt obliged to go home and seek the opinion of their husbands about who they should vote for irrespective of other forms of empowerment. The lack of ability to think strategically is linked to the close control of women. These women were not able to make their own decision when it came to voting no matter what a candidate might have done for them. At first, Mrs Jirap Matak thought that maintaining a steady communication with them and building trust would be enough, but later she realised that was not the case. She said: "though we could talk with women... these gatekeepers, the men, are still in control."

She noted that most of the women to whom she appealed would talk to her, they would come to see her, they would even promise to vote for her if she could solve some of their problems, but the day before they went to vote their attitudes changed. Mrs Jirap Matak believed that she lost the elections not because she was not capable or popular, but because the gatekeepers who controlled her natural supporters' votes did not wish to support her. The lack of support from men generally convinced her that many men

¹¹² Mrs Jirap Matak formally contested for the Chairmanship of a Local Government in Plateau State and lost. Interviewed in Jos. 24/09/2012.

considered her political activism as inappropriate or threatening. In addition to her experiences with female voters, Mrs Jirap Matak reported that many of their family friends were not in support of her candidature. The idea that women are traditionally expected to confine themselves to the domestic arena is one example of cultural bias limiting women's ability and constituting a severe obstacle to their struggle (Warsame, 2004: 8). Given the situation of male opposition to female political activism at an everyday level, Mrs Jirap Matak's experiences explain how many female aspirants and new entrants are prevented from going into politics.

Hajia Saudatu Abulle,¹¹³ who is a wife of a politician, got herself involved in mobilising women and youths during her husband's contest for the Local Government chairmanship. As most of her constituents' houses are Muslim compounds where women are secluded her husband could not go into them to campaign so she and her team normally entered instead. It was very difficult to get the women together during political mobilisation and the team had to move from compound to compound. Hajia Saudatu Abulle was determined to win the women over and get them involved in politics, but seeking their votes was just one aspect of the challenge. She told me that when she and her team got to these Muslim dominated areas mobilisation was a herculean task. She recounts her experience in the field:

We discover during such mobilisations that some of the men in these compounds stopped their wives from coming to such meetings, while some of the men will say go since the campaign team is exclusively women. ...so mobilising these women and bringing them together is the most difficult part of

¹¹³ Hajiya Saudatu Abulle, contested and won the elections in one of the Local Governments of Plateau State. Her husband is also a politician. Interviewed in Jos. 17/8/2012.

the campaign. It is quite easier with the youths. All you need to do is tell the youths the time and venue for the meeting and they sometimes wait for your arrival there. But for the women, you have to go and wait for them and sometimes they have to get their husbands' consent.

Several of my interview partners noted that there are women who appear to have no opinion or political choice of their own. Those who work with a candidate against their husband's wish risk being divorced, which is considered a terrible disgrace for any woman. But even where divorce is not threatened and the couple can discuss politics, they assume that voting is not an individual right or choice but is subject to collective decision. To illustrate my point I would like to give the example of a woman who negotiated successfully with her husband over this issue. The woman told me in an informal discussion that she was a member of Nigeria's ruling party- the People's Democratic Party (PDP)- and her husband was in the opposition party- the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). Following a discussion, her husband said he would allow her to vote for the PDP, but only on the condition that he and all their children voted for the ACN. Undeterred, the woman later re-negotiated the issue with him and they agreed that she and their daughters would vote PDP while he and their sons voted ACN. The ownership of the vote is an important consideration in Nigerian politics, and while some women have negotiating power, it means that the processes which lead to political success are far more complicated – and shaped by the importance of gender and age relations – than political novices often assume.

6.3.4 The Conflict and Dirty Politics

In addition to keeping new entrants away from politics, the ever increasing tensions between various ethnic and religious communities in Jos over access to power have set the stage for violent politicking which almost always relies on the agency of male thugs and their political patrons. Thus, women have to dance to the tune of their male competitors to gain entrance to politics. Most of the female politicians I interviewed were of the opinion that allowing oneself to be remote-controlled by male politicians is what makes politics dirty. According to one of my female respondents, Hon Beatrice Jetbwon:¹¹⁴

Politics is dirty because ...they steal ballot boxes. I cannot have any woman to go and steal ballot papers, and I cannot ask any woman [to] do that because I want to be in power, but the men can do it and they are doing it. They would ensure that and would not let you do it. They bribe their way through and give out brown envelopes [money as a bribe] and I cannot do anything like that.

For a majority of the men interviewed for this research politics is a game which only the wise and swift win. And the strategy that leads to victory can involve giving money in return for votes. The narrative above indicates that conflict has changed the approach of many men and women in politics because while some are unwilling to get involved in fraudulent behaviour, others are more willing to resort to dirty tricks, including hiring thugs, as long as it leads to victory.

6.3.5 Scheduling Late Night Political Meetings

¹¹⁴ Hon Beatrice Jetbwon contested and won elections in one of the Local Governments. Interviewed in Jos. 12/2/2013.

Knowing how to deal with thugs is an issue for many female politicians because some men play on their fears about security and also their need to maintain the good wife image presented above. For example, male politicians often arrange for political meetings to take place at midnight, partly to discourage women from attending and particularly when they realise that women are becoming a threat to their success. Tactically also, meetings at such odd times can allow those who control thugs to send them after an opponent easily, because most people can be expected to have gone to bed and the thugs can attack and get away without being noticed. Some of the women who are aware of these strategies have responded by reinforcing their security and ensuring they are not left out of such meetings. Hon Beatrice Jetbwom narrated:

When men discover that you are pulling your way [becoming successful], they will start to scare [threaten] you. When they do and you do not draw back, honest[ly], they give up [and] make you their friend. They schedule late night meetings and you show up on time and stay to the end. They will try all sorts, but if they scare you and you run away, then you will lose the fight.

Therefore, as discussed, political opponents try all sorts of possible avenues to scare women out of politics including the use of thugs. As previously noted, these thugs have become quite handy and are easy to recruit due to the crises in Jos and the Middle Belt. They also parade during late night meetings in large numbers under the guise of bodyguards. Although data on the subject matter is unclear, observations and informal discussions during field work reveal a link between the local militias, political thugs and personal bodyguards.

6.4 The use of Religious Rhetoric in Middle Belt Politics

As explained in earlier chapters, the political struggle over access to the state by the various federating units (including ethnic nationalities) of Nigeria is being reinforced by religious manipulation. Nigeria is a pluralistic society being both multi-ethnic and multi-religious. While this plurality has the capacity to foster understanding and tolerance, it has often been used divisively when it comes to politics. It is in this regard that Niels Kastfelt (1994: x) gives a vivid picture of religion and politics in Nigeria. He notes that:

The politicization of religion is nothing new in Nigeria, However, ever since southern and northern Nigeria were united into one state in the early colonial period, the different religious orientations of the country's regions have been inseparable from their political interest and strategies. ... [And with the] emergence of constitutional regionalism of the 1950s and regionally based political parties, religious, ethnic and regional loyalties have been decisive and formative elements in Nigerian politics.

Turaki (1993: 188) agrees with Kastfelt that in understanding the socio-political dominance of one group over another, one needs to understand that in many parts of Northern Nigeria, "religion was used as a means of social stratification and differentiation and in consequence, the socio-political dominance of one group over the other" thereby denying the active participation of one group in public affairs and using this to perpetuate marginalisation. This societal norm based on religious and traditional beliefs has in many ways constituted an obstacle to women's political participation. And because religion is so closely linked to local political identities in Jos and elsewhere in Nigeria, it is very difficult for women to overcome the socially

conservative interpretations of Islam and Christianity which dominate the area and which emphasise the leadership roles of men. Hon Laraba Abu¹¹⁵ related how her opponents and detractors used religion against her. According to her:

During the campaigns, my opponents tried to use religion against me. They will say 'she is a Muslim' and see what is happening [the conflict] in Jos, when you vote her, she will get there and join [protect the interest] the killers. But unknown to them, I am from a Christian background. My mother and father all died as Christians and many of my siblings are Christians. When that ploy did not work, they started another rumour that I am going to marry a Muslim, the sitting governor in one of the Northern States. They even went to the extent of printing and circulating fake invitation letters [to the wedding which] they invented. When the news got to me, I told my supporters not to be distracted, that they know me better. Why did these men not call me a prostitute? Because they have no single case against me, so the best thing is to bring religion and marriage (because I am single).

Hon Laraba Abu's experience in politics shows how religion is used for political discrimination against women. Her candidature came under constant attack by male opponents and she was aware that her political opponents tried to manipulate her religion against her. She observed that:

Now going back to Islam, because I am Drika and not Izala, denominationalism set in ... my opponent was a Christian and I am a Muslim, we are both from the same locality. And in order to discredit me, they started saying I am not from

¹¹⁵ Hon Laraba Abbu contested and won elections in one of the Local Governments. Interviewed in Jos. 15/2/2013.

that local government but another. You see, the men already had their candidate who is a Christian and so I was left wondering. But I never gave up, growing up in the barracks and the daughter of a military, I was determined and stronger than they could imagine.

Another female politician had a similar experience of being targeted by religious authorities during her campaigns. Hajiya Saudatu Abulle told me that:

It was never easy for me, because there were also many men who opposed the idea that a woman was contesting. That drove me crazy, because the men will tell the electorates not vote for a woman, because a woman is not supposed to be elected leader over men. That religion forbids that a woman rules over a man, because a woman is under a man. If there is a man, a woman should not be seen a contender. It got to a level that it formed part of the sermon in the Mosques and one day, I had to go to the leader of the Izala in Local Government on that issue. I told him that this is what I heard. I am not saying I want to be a Liman in the Mosques, which is impossible for a woman to lead prayers, it is not even allowed. Secondly, I am not seeking to be a leader of Imams. It is political position that I seek. So I cited examples of Islamic countries that women have led, like in Pakistan. So they promised to find the *mallam* that preached that sermon, because they have not authorised any one to say such a thing or get involved in politics. They only authorised advice that people be told to be watchful of the kind of people they vote for. So I pleaded with them to assist me because other people might take such sermons seriously. And so the next morning, they called the *mallam* to order. But of course, he has already said it.

So you see, that was a challenge for me in a community that was predominantly Muslims.

The idea that many women hold back from politics because of the way people see female politicians was common in most of the interviews I conducted. For example, religious rhetoric and manipulation by political zealots is to a large extent responsible for the view that female political aspirants are social deviants. During political campaigns religion and tradition mainly become a tool when a female aspirant is involved as it is very important as to whether a female aspirant is married or single. When an aspirant is not married she is spoken of in derogatory terms, for example she is regarded as being irresponsible or a prostitute. In the words of Hon Beatrice Jetbwon who is a member of the House of Representatives:

My opponents even went to the extent of dramatizing during their campaigns, calling me [a] prostitute and putting an underwear [sic] on a stick and displaying saying "This is her underwear." They said I am the governor's girlfriend, that I have flirt with so and so. They say all sorts of unimaginable things about me, just to derogate me and try to win elections. I did not give in to the pressures, you see, people do not want women to lead and in my case a single lady. My opponent then was the former chairman of the Local Government and was known for carrying out violent campaigns and using wild thugs. He had even started trailing me, until I alerted the security and I reinforced my own security. He had plans to disrupt the elections and I alerted the security. A night before the elections, they arrested about 67 people with arms imported into the community to come and disrupt elections in wards where I will be leading. So women face the threat of violence and discrimination...people look at them and

call them [the] weaker sex, when leadership has nothing to do with physical force.

This rhetoric not only influences men but it also shapes women's views of other women in politics. Although religious and ethnic differences exist everywhere the dividing lines become sharper in societies divided by ethnic and religious conflicts, particularly where as a result of these conflicts religious leaders play more important roles in their sections of the divided society. Further their sentiments about female political activity can be very influential. However, some women are now countering these challenges as presented below.

6.5 Opposition and Manipulation by Family and Male Politicians

Most female politicians argued that men manipulate and encourage negative portrayals of female leaders. Women are aware that men cannot easily give up power and they are also aware that desperate male politicians have to go the extra mile to discourage women, especially using religion to manipulate the public into not voting for women. But despite the widespread feeling that politics is a male terrain, some of the women are of the view that it is women's fault for not working harder to make politics a more level playing field and to challenge the status quo. Hon Mrs. Joan Torsa¹¹⁶ describes the need for women not to succumb to the pressures of their male counterparts. According to her:

Politics is not a game that is very difficult, but the people involved... Some women sometimes cheapen themselves by giving up so easily. And then men,

¹¹⁶ Hon Mrs. Joan Torsa contested and won election in Benue State. Interviewed in Markurdi. 6/2/2013.

instead of concentrating [on their own tasks], they focus their energies on distracting women. Quite bad that some of the women also believe that you just have to be following the men; they do not believe in struggling it out with the men. Most of women sit down and fold their arms and just be following one particular man thinking the man will connect them, and at the end of the day, they will become disappointed... Some also believe that in politics you have to tell lies... but when you speak the truth, most men will go back home and think about what you said and later realise that what you are saying is the truth.

She continued:

Women have a saying that politics is a difficult game, and “I cannot do it”... [but] it is only when you are not disciplined that you cannot do it, because men will use every means in trying to discourage you... and you will be tempted to pull out. But when you stand strong, they will be able to identify you and say this is what you can do or cannot do, let people identify you in words and in character... that makes politics simple.

Women can overcome some of the opposition they face by persisting and showing themselves to be trustworthy. The particular example of Hon Mrs. Joan Torsa shows that women need to understand that men can make politics difficult for them, but they should not be deterred. While I found evidence of the slander against them from the interviews and informal interactions that took place during the field work, the personal obstacles preventing women from assuming political leadership are not immediately clear.

While it is important to remember the strong emphasis put on keeping family affairs private especially the control over women's decision making power, one can nonetheless deduce from the interviews with female politicians that many of them have faced very strong opposition from their families. Almost all the women I interviewed were quite keen to tell me how much their children love and pray for their political career. Almost all the women said that they have very supportive husbands, thus emphasising that they were beloved and appreciated within their own families, as the cultural onus on women as home makers requires. But in informal comments, I often learned that these woman experienced strong pressure from their husbands and family members to quit politics.

Some women were more open about the attitudes of relatives within the extended family system, and especially their in-laws. These play an important role in most Nigerian families, to the degree that they can certainly affect marital and parental relationships. Hon Mrs. Terumbu Muse,¹¹⁷ recals her experience when she went into politics: She said: "when I contested, my paternal uncle said to the hearing of everyone in the family that; I will remove my private part if she wins."

However, despite her uncle's confidence about her inability to win electoral support, Hon Mrs. Terumbu Muse's candidature was a success and she became a representative. For her, the experience of proving her relative wrong added to her appreciation of her achievements, and she commented that:

¹¹⁷ Hon Mrs. Terumbu Muse, was a onetime Councillor in Abuja and former member of the Benue State House of Assembly. Interviewed in Markurdi. 6/2/2013.

Till date, people kept asking him [the paternal uncle who bet his private parts on her losing] why he has not done so because I won... I was like a threat to him politically, he thinks I will block his way, because I am his senior in politics, but now he comes to me for advice. You see, such challenges charge you up and make you appreciate the position you are aspiring to occupy the more.¹¹⁸

In my experience, it is common for men in Nigeria to hold the belief that women should stay at home and not go into politics, and several male politicians told me that women are not very effective in politics. This is because they feel that when women are given a political post they become proud and lose their regard for marriage and respect for their husband. An example of this view was provided by Hon Mr Yayil Peyaya,¹¹⁹ a former councillor and Chairman of Local Government in Kaduna State, who told me that:

I will not allow my wife to go into politics... You see, when a woman goes into politics, except she has the fear of God and a good background [discipline] she will start misbehaving. Women who go into politics are disobedient to their husbands and do not value marriage any longer. I do not want to mention names, we have a woman who was elected here and she left [divorced] her husband and six children. So that is a signal that politics has changed her and you know such experiences are capable of creating a lot of fear in men. Okay come to think of it, a woman leaves her home and goes for official duties for

¹¹⁹ Hon Mr Yayil Peyaya was a councillor and Chairman a Local Government in Kaduna State. Interviewed in Kaduna. 13/2/2013.

days, if care is not taken, she will be tempted. But for widows, they can participate fully.

The result of this attitude is that women have to face a lot of opposition both from their husbands and extended family members. So, in the realm of politics, married female politicians have to strike a balance between marriage and politics to reduce the domestic pressure. Further, most husbands and other men in the family need to be assured that the domestic power structure and roles will not change. So in addition to their political work, female politicians still have to organise the home and ensure that everyone in it is comfortable because they know that their domestic arrangements will be scrutinised closely. Apart from requiring time and organisation, this ongoing responsibility for the wellbeing of their household has an important financial aspect, especially given that politics is, in Nigeria, a very capital-intensive vocation. The section below throws light on some of the financial challenges of female aspirants.

6.5.1 Women Using the Right Knowledge to Counter Opposition

The growing importance of male politicians who use ethnicity and religion to oppose the candidature of women in Jos and Middle Belt politics has made some female aspirants more determined than ever to establish themselves. This includes exploring ways to defend themselves using the constitution as a reference point, and in some instances, redefining their political strategies. The extract from the interview with Hon Mrs. Laitu Dharbal¹²⁰ with me below suggested that women politicians always need to arm themselves with the right knowledge about the constitutional provision for equality,

¹²⁰ Hon Mrs. Laitu Dharbal is a women leader of one of the political parties in Plateau State. Interviewed in Jos. 22/11/2012.

fairness and justice in every instance. The experience of Hon Mrs. Laitu Dharbal shows that when she was appointed as the Chair of a Local Government many of her female friends left her as did most of her male friends in the political arena. This process was linked to the general prejudices surrounding female politicians, because the enmity she experienced was linked to rumours, petitions and printed stories about her personal life which were untrue. But she did not give up, she held on until her nomination and tenure came through. She explained:

I think most of the opposition I had [to face] has to do with the fact that I am a woman and of a religion that [states that] women should not rule over men... My friends might have left me because they identified me as a political deviant. On the other hand, the male friends brought in the issue of indigeneity, because my parents are from a different community, while I am married to a man from another district. I am aware that in both constituencies, we practice rotational politics, but when it comes to the turn of women, the whole thing changes. When I was appointed, it was the turn of my [husbands'] constituency, but the men opposed me vehemently. Well, with my little knowledge and education, I decided to visit the party office and quoted from the Nigerian constitution during one of the meetings at Kalwa House. I referred them to the section of the constitution that gives dual citizenship to a woman. So I challenged their notion for opposing me, because I can be a shareholder from both sides.

As this narrative suggests, education and knowledge are central to women being aware of their rights as this helps them to put forward a strong defence against any opposition. Knowledge in this context provides women with the necessary tools to

navigate the challenging political landscape. Hon Mrs. Laitu Dharbal was able to utilise her knowledge and she knew exactly how to use it.

6.6 Finance and Politics

The field of Nigerian politics is dependent on finance, as emphasised by all the men and women interviewed who were unanimous in supporting the fact that a lot of money is needed to achieve success in politics. However, most women are financially poorer than their male counterparts and thus find it difficult funding election campaigns. For example, politicians need money to buy the registration forms required to contest in the primaries or elections, and they are expected to buy gifts for people like traditional rulers, chiefs, district heads, ward heads, prominent sons of the soil, youth groups, market women and tribal associations during mobilisation. Money is also needed to rent or buy the cars that are used during the political campaigns and to fuel these cars to transport their campaign teams from place to place canvassing for support. In addition, politicians have to feed their campaign teams during such mobilisation visits.

However, the conflict in Jos and Nigeria's Middle Belt has escalated the poverty there, making politics more expensive as the electorates become more demanding. This is because some of the electorate who have lost their means of livelihood during the conflict now place demands on politicians to give them start-up capital in exchange for votes. And this has made it harder for women to raise the kind of money that is required for successful competition. Hon Mrs. Laitu Dharbal's comment on the importance of political financing in Nigeria sums this matter up succinctly:

Politics in Nigeria has become an issue of money; you have it, you are in and you do not have it, you are out. So women need to know this is a fact.

Some female aspirants are able to benefit from the reciprocity of family ties, using the vantage positions of their husbands to mobilise funds or relying on their parents' political standing and popularity. Other women use funds they have saved over a long period of time from business proceeds. But most of the interviews revealed that such resources were not sufficient. Therefore, as on average women have less access to financial resources than men, money is an important obstacle to female representation in politics. In short, a woman who waits for others to give her the money she needs so that she can invest in her political career will find it very hard to enter politics. Women have to be sure that they are involved in some form of income yielding activity and that they have saved up a large amount of money before venturing into politics. But given the fact that the cost of running campaigns has a significant impact on the family resources, which are part of the responsibilities of most women, If family incomes are drained to pay for politicking and women are not victorious then they might face serious domestic confrontations as well as the threat of poverty. For this reason, Hon Beatrice Jetbwon strongly suggested that:

Before you [women] go into politics, be sure that they are financially prepared, because you have to spend... It is unlike in some developed countries where the electorates who believe in you fund your campaign up to 90 percent. Here, a few friends will support you, but you have to provide most of it.

Similarly, Hon Mrs. Terumbu Muse confirmed the centrality of money in politics. She explained that:

Even though women are behind politically, I advise that if you do not have your own money, do not ever contest, because you have to depend on a sponsor who will later dictate how you run your life. I have been into business and have saved a lot of money for my politicking. It is also important that once in a while you organise some women to make political noise, which will make you politically relevant in addition to your money.

These interviews refer to the fact that some men might offer financial support to a female aspirant, sometimes an aspirant who is a friend's wife, in anticipation of dividends in the event of victory. This means that not only do they expect to be reimbursed for their outlay but they also hope for influence and material rewards. Such demands can be excessive, especially if the men imagine that the woman owes everything to them. Moreover, such demands will compete with the other financial requests that will be made to a female politician because, soon after an electoral victory, all politicians are besieged by members of the electorate who request financial as well as political support, and it is usually more difficult for a woman to deny such requests, especially if they are requests for food or children's school fees. This is because as women and mothers they often have more sympathy for the struggles of

less fortunate women, but also because, judged as women and mothers, they would look less sympathetic than men if they refused to offer support (cf. Osinula & Mba, 1996). This leads to the importance of image which will be discussed in the next section.

6.7 Image as a Form of Control: The Good Woman/Wife As Politician

Many of the women with whom I interacted informally during my fieldwork were quick to point to the fact that a good female politician must first and foremost be seen to be a good wife. However, the task of being a good wife is made much harder by the fact that there is no clear description of what it means to be a good wife or even what the substance of being a good wife is in the political arena. In this regard, a vast majority of female politicians I spoke to affirm the importance of wifely submission. These affirmations probably had a strong tactical element in winning the support of their husbands, and by extension other men, who view such women as being submissive and therefore less threatening.

Another problem with regard to the challenge of inter-state or inter-faith, inter-local or inter-tribal marriage for women discussed in chapter four is that they face the double jeopardy of the outsider syndrome. This has led to women being called betrayers in some instances and their loyalty to their husband's family questioned. These women have the additional burden of gaining the trust of their family and in-laws should they venture into politics. Hon Mrs. Juan Tersa was quick to draw my attention to the importance of good marital relations – and their projection as part of a political profile – at the outset of our interview. She stressed that:

Most of the problems women face is that they do not really give absolute support to their husbands... I am really being encouraged by my husband. Since I started this politics, when I am home I try to ensure that I do my house chores well before going out as a housewife, and that is why I am not having any problem with my husband.

This statement corroborates the above assertion that female politicians are expected to balance their responsibilities on the home front with their struggle to achieve success in politics. By not pointing out the different standards for male and female politicians, these affirmations confirm that despite their political successes most female politicians accept their marginalisation as normal. For them, the much talked about double burden that comes with the advancement of women, according to feminist writers appears natural, and they do not see it as part of their responsibility to change this. While it is, of course, important for all politicians to maintain a psychological balance between their family lives and the rigours of politics, the refusal to point out that the different expectations of women puts them at a disadvantage is remarkable. It discredits and invalidates efforts at ensuring inequality and independence for women as they are expressed in most of the conventions and declarations which Nigeria is a signatory to.

A consequence of the logic that equates female achievement with social deviancy is that husbands of female politicians are sometimes ridiculed by their friends, and in some of the interviews I held women gave examples of such experiences. In one instance a friend visited a family and had lunch with them during a campaign rally in which the woman contested. After finishing his lunch, instead of saying thank you to the family, he looked to the woman who was hurrying to get to a rally and sarcastically

said that he hoped when she got the chairmanship position she would still serve her husband and have the time to cook for him.

While that statement was provocative, it illustrates the pervasiveness of the pressure on women to be seen to be both good wives and good politicians. It is necessary for a woman put in more efforts to ensure that the relationship between her and her husband and in-laws remains very cordial. By so doing, she can ensure there is the peace in her home that she can draw on to gain the inner strength she needs to cope with external pressures. Hon Mrs. Laitu Dharbal stressed the importance for women to understand this from the beginning of their political careers. She reported:

My husband gives me 100 percent support; financially and socially. But his extended family were totally against me and that brought a lot of problems into the family. I can say this serious internal opposition was a major setback to my political career. If not for these internal oppositions, I would have been in the National Assembly or maybe a major stake holder in the politics of Plateau [State]. But I tell you what I did, I made sure I pulled myself together and centred my life on those who gave me support – my family.

The recognition of the need to earn the support of the spouses of female politicians echoed all through the interviews. While most of the male politicians were reluctant to comment on the need to seek the approval and support of their wives, responses suggest that male politicians make more independent choices about their political involvement. And because Nigerian society is permeated by patriarchy, whereby women are expected to conform to and confine themselves to a situation of male dominance and female subservience (Arowolo & Aluko, 2010: 583), some women have

come to accept this position as absolute. Interestingly Hon Mrs. Laitu Dharbal also commented on the fact that the pressure on female politicians does not only come from men but also from women who, because they have internalised the prevailing views on female submission, do not offer solidarity to each other. Hon Mrs. Laitu Dharbal noted that:

Another great challenge apart from extended family and friends is that the women do not support each other; when you share your political ambition with some of them, instead of joining you, they instead discourage you and join the men to fight you. Even though at the end of it all, they do come back and work with you.

Therefore, as in other areas of society, in politics women's economic, political and public lives are generally linked to their private lives.

6.8 In-betweenness of Women and Politics

I discussed in earlier chapters that the conflict in Jos and the Middle Belt has had a negative impact on women's private lives by isolating and undermining women in inter-faith marriages. Turshen and Twagiramariya (1998: 104) highlight these difficulties by pointing that not only are women in such marriages at the mercy of both religions but this can also constitute a significant problem for female political aspirants.

The comments by Hon Mrs. Jesica Bawah,¹²¹ is illuminative in this regard. Hon Mrs. Jesica Bawah is married to a Muslim but has practised Christianity throughout their 38

¹²¹ Hon Mrs. Jessica Bawah contested and won elections in Plateau State.. She is married to a Muslim and she practice Christianity in their 38 years of marriage. Her mother was a leader/member of the

years of marriage. She told me that when she wanted to stand for the House of Representatives, her paternal family had mixed feelings about what side she really belonged to. She explained, however, how she turned this to her advantage:

When I went to the Muslim community they welcomed me thinking that I am their own simply because my husband is a Muslim. My children are Muslim and I am a Christian and the conflict was happening to my people. The crisis is more on my people and here I am, from one of the ethnic groups implicated in the conflict, and a Christian woman with a Muslim husband and children. I am happy that during politicking when I [went] to the Muslims they welcomed me and I talked to them, we discussed peace with them. When I won the election, I continued that forum, and that led me even to get to the presidency and some of the governors who are our neighbours. The governors that are Muslim welcomed me, they discussed peace with me, most specially the governor of Bauchi State. He is a Muslim, he took me like his sister we discussed peace issues and sometimes I call him... and I see my governor [of Plateau State] to tell him they should try to meet and put this crisis behind [them]... I know Islam very well and it helped me.

She continued:

I was very close to Gen Buhari and the late Yar'Adua's and their wives and even the late general Yar'Adua's family. So when he [Yar'Adua] became the president I was able to face him and to challenge him despite the fact that I was a member of the Representatives in his cabinet. I used the relationship from my

Zumuntan Mata of Church of God in Nations (COCIN) in 1945 and her father worked as a miner. Interviewed in Jos. 3/10/2013.

secondary school time in Katsina through his late brother. I was able to make peace between him and my governor, because that is how my own mixed marriage really assisted me in terms of this crisis. Sometimes we get some relative peace, though we want complete peace. You see, sometimes they reveal to me what they are planning to do. For example, they wrote a letter to ICC and I was told and I picked it up. By the time I picked it up they had already submitted their letter to ICC and I started following it up to the United Nations (UN). I even went to talk at the Capitol Hill over this crisis and yet they still welcome me because they believe I am part of them because I have been talking peace, I have been discussing peace.

It is quite clear from the above narrative that Hon Mrs. Jesica Bawah is a member of the upper class in Nigerian society. This means that she has the connections and the money needed to be able to contact and influence important members of society. Thanks to this, she has been able to turn her 'disadvantaged' position and her automatic association with the interests of her husband's background to her advantage, as her in-betweenness has helped her to gain access to the Muslim community with the aim of promoting peace. It should be noted that Hon Mrs. Jesica Bawah's privileged position should not detract from the fact that a large proportion of the female aspirants in politics must suffer situations where their religion, ethnicity and marital status is used against them as few of them have husbands who have her material resources and the links and connections. However, her successes illustrate that the disadvantages arising from inter-marriage also offer opportunities, if properly harnessed. These opportunities include connections arising from "dual affiliations" (Strathern, 1972: viii) to both kin and in-laws.

6.9 Impact of Ethnic and Religious Divides on Political Mobilisation

Though the conflicts in Jos and the Middle Belt are often labelled religious conflicts, it must be taken into account that social, political and economic relations increasingly revolve around the issues of ethnic, religious and indigene vs settler identity (Gwamna, 2010: 2). This is despite the fact that in many cases religious identity and ethnicity coincide or contradict each other, depending on the context (Best, 2008: 10). Thus, conflict over chieftaincy titles, land ownership, politics and recognition can easily be tagged religious or ethnic, depending on the parties involved. We pointed out in the introductory chapters that the conflict in Jos and the Middle Belt is directly related to the struggle for access to political power and recognition; with the indigenes (the majority of whom are Christians) on one side and the Hausa and Fulani (where the majority are Muslims) on the other. The inability of the state to find a lasting solution to the lingering conflict over the past decade has had a serious impact on politics, not just for women but also for men. The interview data revealed the fact that political mobilisation is no longer as easy as it used to be. Hajiya Saudatu Abulle explained this point:

In the past, when we mobilised, there was nothing like, you are a Christian or you are a Muslim. It was purely politics based on principles, opinion and choice. That time, both Christians and Muslims [went] out to campaign, we all worked together moving from house to house during my husband's campaign. But of recent, I have seen some changes; during mobilisations, you will see purely Muslim women going for campaigns in certain areas and Christian women going alone too. So now you have to go the extra mile to find the people you trust to

go to the Muslim or Christian community for you. And even if you want to go and do it yourself, you need to get good feedback to be sure you are safe. Because you are afraid something might happen and people will end up giving it a different meaning and interpretation from what actually happened.

Though some women like Hajiya Saudatu Abulle have been able to make good use of the opportunity to mediate, the situation is different for so many others because the ethnic and religious divide, lack of trust and the high cost of political mobilisation for female aspirants persist. We have seen that with the crises on the Plateau political mobilisation has taken on a new dimension which has made politics quite expensive and dangerous for women as well as men.

6.10 Conflict and the Increased Use of Vanguard and Thugs

It is important to note that one of the aftermaths of conflict is the existence and proliferation of arms and light weapons in the Jos area and beyond. This is linked to a militarisation of youths due to their involvement in the conflicts. Since the end of some of the fighting, many of them, some unemployed, have been hired by politicians as political vanguards and then suddenly they are transformed to thugs used to threaten and scare away political opponents or to assist in elections rigging by carting away ballot boxes. These idle youth groups have gained recognition over the years, particularly since the inception of the conflict, and are fast becoming Nigeria's unofficial law enforcement agents. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is easy to hire members of these groups to act during political campaigns as political vanguards as

they are keen to earn a little more income. Similarly, the use of ethnic militias,¹²² the majority of whom are youths, as noted above, become popular in Jos, the Middle Belt and elsewhere in Nigeria. Their presence at political campaigns, rallies and voting is not unrelated to the sporadic violence that occurs during elections, and though their violent activities are not necessarily targeted directly at women and female politicians, the data from this research shows that this violence affects women more than men. Contributing to this discussion, Turshen and Twagiramariya (1998:159) explain that:

The ease with which virtually any group can obtain light weaponry has encouraged political dissidents, ethnic groups and sectarian movements to abandon non-violent political activity and resort to the use of force to advance their interests. Moreover, it has promoted the proliferation of armed groups by encouraging internal factionalisation and fragmentation.

Women who vie for political positions are often ill-prepared for this experience and become ready victims in this regard, particularly if they are unable to recruit their own thugs, at least for security purposes. For Hon Beatrice Jetbwon, one of the major challenges is for a woman to discover that, after passing through all the rigours of campaign and mobilisation and coming to terms with the religious rhetoric, she has had to face security challenges that threatened her life. For her, the experience she had a few days before the elections was shocking:

I was initially taken a back because of the thuggery involved in politics, which I was not fully aware of. But I resolved that I will not allow myself or any

¹²² These militias are sometimes referred to as vigilantes to legitimise their violent confrontations and sometimes possession of arms. For example the Bakassi Boys, the Egbesu Boys” and recently the *Ombatse (in Nasarawa State)* among others.

member of my team to be intimidated. I promised myself not to match them thuggery for thuggery, [and] instead report[ed] all instances no matter how small to the security agents...and they responded appropriately.

Hon Beatrice Jetbwon said she ventured into politics because she was not happy with the kind of representation people were getting at all levels of government and she felt the people were entitled to better representation. She had no idea about election rigging and the use of thugs. When she stood for election in 2003, she lost due to rigging because, as she explained to me, some of her agents were bought over by political opponents. With that experience, she developed the courage she needed and developed a strong team to monitor votes and she did not just assume that she was the popular candidate and could win an election on the basis of her popularity. After her experience in 2003, she decided in 2007 to mobilise a large number of youths, most of them university students who identified with her and wanted to ensure that she won.

Another complex aspect of the use of thugs is their ability to sell their services to the highest bidder, making it increasingly difficult to associate some of these thugs with a particular ethnic or religious group. According to Hon Katchy Pestu:¹²³

A politician might sponsor a thug to harm an opponent who might not be of the same religion with him, so he hires a thug of a different religion for the job. When such thing happens [it] triggers other problems. Even if you labelled such attacks as religious, you cannot pin down the attacker to an ethnic or religious group.

¹²³ Hon Katchy Pestu is one of the Special Advisers to the Governor of Plateau State. Interviewed in Jos. 1/2/2013.

In states that have experienced conflicts like those in the Middle Belt of Nigeria, the use of violent thugs in politics is an additional issue. Their visibly menacing presence intimidates political aspirants at election venues, especially when contests are polarised due to ethnic and religious divides. At the venues of elections, party offices and sometimes through their presence as bodyguards, these almost exclusively male thugs target female aspirants. The picture below shows the presence of highly armed police men (see Figure 5 below) at a political rally in Jos. These security personnel are always present at political rallies to look after the security of everyone and to subdue any crises that may arise. But at the same time, their presence could be very intimidating if they have to take instructions from the male political aspirants.

Figure 5: Political Rally in Jos



Source: Field notes 2012/2013 © Plangsat Dayil

At the same time, while a majority of female aspirants successfully 'play politics' smartly by advocating and negotiating to achieve success, some have resorted to using thugs as a means of survival in the male controlled political terrain. One of my respondents Hon Laraba Abu told me how she suffered male prejudice and how she countered it:

Religious leaders joined in the war against my candidature... a clergy man warned his congregation against promoting and voting incredible people (referring to me). At that point, I knew I had to do something. So I organised some men [presumably thugs] and we went and gave the pastor the beating of his life. Even though we were taken to the police station after that ... I made them realise that they cannot rubbish me and get away with it because I am a woman.¹²⁴

The narrative shows how experience radicalised this respondent, and, possibly drawing on resources linked to her upbringing from a father who was in the military, she responded to the religious mobilisation against her candidacy through the use of violence. In her words:

When I was in the House of Assembly, I tried my best for my people, except that some of the men who were close to me and were not happy with what I was doing. They believe instead of developing and assisting the people, I should have developed them (individually) instead. On one of my tours to distribute materials, they planned an attack on me. They sent thugs after us, they destroyed some of the things we carried and engineered their boys to kill me.

¹²⁴ Hon Laraba Abu contested and won election in Plateau State. Her father was in the military. Interviewed in Jos. 16/1/2013.

My saving grace was that among the youths who were to carry out the act, some said, but this woman has done no harm or anything wrong. So they decided not to act, but took me through an escape route to the chief's house for safety. That was Gods intervention on my behalf.

The foregoing narrative of Hon Laraba Abu reveals much about the 'politics of the belly' mentioned in our introductory chapter. It also says much about the nature of politics in Nigeria in the sense that most of the people around Hon Laraba Abu wanted her to develop their pockets by giving them money as their own share of the 'national cake' (Bayart, 2010). And because she failed to do this, they sent thugs after her. Apart from the use of thugs, ethnic and religious manipulation, societal views and norms, labelling and finance in politics, other issues like Godfatherism and the scheduling of late night meetings also constitute a serious challenge to women wanting to enter politics.

6.11 Godfatherism and Political Manoeuvring

Godfathers in Nigerian politics are those who have the ability, or who are believed to have the ability, to determine political success through financial support and personal political networks. These godfathers have tremendous influence over the functioning of party caucuses because of their financial power. Hon Katchy Pestu informed me that the problem of godfathers is that you find elder statesmen insisting on a candidate that they feel they have control over and who is not the popular candidate. Though most of the women I interviewed distanced themselves from the word 'godfather,' they nonetheless pointed out that they had role models and mentors. These mentors were not necessarily politicians but could be professionals who excelled in their various fields of endeavour.

Most women shared the belief that if they had a godfather they would have to repay this patronage if they won the seat or become successful, and they may not have the power to decide the direction of social projects expected of them as they would always have to consult the godfather. Even though there is no available documented evidence to support the argument that godfathers play a significant role in the manipulation of electoral outcomes in Jos and the Middle Belt, this is the assumption and belief of many people. As people who control political networks, godfathers seem to benefit from 'disorder' (cf. Chabal & Daloz, 1999) and situations of intense competition and rivalry.

Some of the women I interviewed preferred to be a member of the opposition party in the first instance, not because having a godfather is bad but because it is a strategy used to gain popularity. However, the strategy of working with the opposition favours women who already have some level of financial independence. For example, Hon Mr. Laitu Dharbal said she had no godmother or -father, because she went into politics to serve her people. But on getting there, she discovered a caucus in the opposition party and she joined them. She explained that:

I do not have any godmother or father. I got into politics with a plain mind, not for any gain. I know in politics you normally have a caucus; a small group of about five to six people who are the think-tanks of political parties at each level. They are responsible for mobilising money, they research to know credible candidates who can win, and they sponsor candidates. So you need to have money to be a member of the caucus. By that time, I had a little money, and so I became a member of the caucus in my Local Government. So my hard work and money brought me into politics; I worked very hard and used my money. I

have women I admire who stand firm despite opposition and are professional, they are my models and not godmothers.

Traditionally, and to a large extent politics was and is a male dominated field, and men easily form caucuses and decide who leads and who does not. And since most of the women are not part of these caucuses they find themselves struggling establish a presence. For Hon Mrs. Joan Tersa, women cannot give what they do not have. If the women have the finance and opportunity to go and assess and sponsor a candidate then they can also start to be godmothers and can sponsor a candidate. After all women are good organisers and can form groups under all sorts of names to mobilise support, but they have not been able to form a political caucus and sponsor candidates. This is partly because, as discussed earlier in this chapter, women lack the necessary finance to be able to achieve success in politics.

One can deduce from most of the responses received that when a popular candidate is ousted and the government (and godfathers) insist on a candidate that is not popular, then that person owes their loyalty to the government or the godfather instead of the people. Such candidates end up losing their ability to act independently of the political control and manoeuvring of the godfathers, even in matters that are against the wishes of the people. Women have had both negative and positive experiences when participating in politics, but most of them have the resolve to remain steadfast notwithstanding the numerous other challenges caused by the ethno-religious conflict. The next section discusses the various challenges to political mobilisation in the wake of the conflicts in Jos and the Middle Belt.

6.12 Ethno-religious Conflict and Political Mobilisation

The politicisation of religion in the relations between Christians and Muslims in Nigerian Middle Belt was first seen in the 1950s. The Middle Belt ethnic minorities mobilised in religious and ethnic terms during the period of decolonisation to maintain their independence of the Muslim Hausa-Fulani hegemony. The same structure of political conflict with its conjunction of religious and ethnic interest is repeated in many of the violent confrontations of the 1980s and 1990s (Kastfelt, 1994: ix-x) and in the current political dispensation. Local conflicts are translated into religious loyalties and interpreted within a framework of historical antagonism between Christian ethnic minorities and Muslim Hausa-Fulani (Kastfelt, 1994: ix). Similarly, post-election violence often centres on ethnicity and religion in Nigeria. According to Hon Mr Yayil Peyaya,¹²⁵ since politics started in Nigeria ethnicity and religion has always been an issue.

Many religious leaders and politicians deceive a lot of gullible people because it could be argued that they seem to be serving a God that is only interested in money and power, rather than standing for justice and human rights - most especially the rights of women. The political elite seem more preoccupied with the struggle for the 'national cake' (see Bayart, 2010) rather than creating effective and inclusive institutions. Continuously, these leaders pitch individuals and groups against each other using ethnicity and religion in their campaign slogans to cover their evil and corrupt practices. This has created hostility among the citizens who are ready to fight each other with

¹²⁵ Hon Mr Yayil Peyaya contested and won elections in one of the Local Governments in Kaduna. Interviewed in Kaduna. 7/2/2013.

little or no provocation. Some of the respondents believe strongly that most of the conflict that has taken place is the result of the distortion of religion. According to Mrs. Grace Jakatai:¹²⁶

Politics in the past is quite different from politics nowadays. In the past, the community chooses one person they believe can represent them. Someone who interacts easily with the people and [who] loves to help and assist people. But now, people take politics to be like a market place, where everyone comes, just to get what he wants as quickly as possible. And because these politicians are nowadays desperate and in a hurry to get rich, they use ethnicity and religion to mobilise support as long as it gets them what they want.

In this kind of politics female aspirants become an immediate threat and are regarded as an enemy that has to be removed quickly, whether they are Christian or Muslim. And because religion and ethnicity come in to play when people interact in Jos and the Middle Belt, political aspirants and political parties are finding it increasingly difficult to mobilise and run female-dominated campaigns and meetings. Mrs Henrietta Tapden¹²⁷ laments that:

Before the conflicts, we could meet and hold meetings anywhere and things went on smoothly. But with the conflict, women became sensitive to their religion...we are no longer united as we use to be. Before, we use to meet freely in Angwan Rogo, hold meetings in houses, but not now. ...it became difficult for

¹²⁶ Mrs. Grace Jakatai was a Women Leader for one of the political parties in Nigeria. Interviewed in Jos. 16/8/2012.

¹²⁷ Mrs Henrietta Tapden is a women leader of one of the political parties in Nigeria. She is also one of the state coordinators of the Women for Change Programme of Mrs Patience Goodluck Jonathan. Interviewed in Abuja. 24/1/2013.

either the Christians or Muslims to keep up attendance of meetings, and the location for meetings became a very serious issue. As the coordinator of women for change of Mrs Jonathan, I had to depend on other women for my messages to get across to the Muslim women and do not interact directly with them, like I use to do.

She continued:

Before [the conflict], you could talk freely; you know you are talking to mothers and women. But now, I am very selective of my choice of words, because I do not want to say something that a religious faction will respond negatively. So the fear of not hurting is always there and that makes me not to be free to say all I am supposed to say or open up easily like we do before. And when I want to hold a programme that is beneficial to a community that I cannot go to, then I must have to delegate. When we sit as women politicians, on an agenda to discuss things that will be beneficial, differences show up and that affects the meeting in the sense that one is limited in what to say. Such restrictions are against progress. That is why we are not getting anywhere in our struggles.

This means that the conflict has brought about a major setback in women's political careers and decision-making since they are now divided on the basis of religion and find it difficult to agree on certain issues. It also means that a lot of time is spent during meetings disagreeing and not making any progress. The impact of conflict on politics is not limited to local and state politics but is now affecting the National Assembly. According to Hon Beatrice Jetbwon who is a member of the House said to me:

Religion is a challenge, sometimes even in the National Assembly, when a meeting is being called, you tend to see some sections of the community being more represented than others. So politicking there [National Assembly] is all about gender, religion and ethnicity. Even though we have a women caucus in the house we discuss women issues and bring it to light. For example, we insist that every ad-hoc committee should have at least one or two women depending on the size. If it is up to six, then at least one should be a woman. So also in all appointments we insist women should also be appointed to key positions [Aviation, Foreign Affairs, Environment, Public Procurement], unlike in the past when they are relegated to insignificant committees. But still you will notice that certain groups of people get certain positions and you wonder.

Most of the respondents in this category admit that the ethnic and religious differences have deeper roots than it seems on the surface, and a lot of regional comparison and blaming takes place. Similarly, many of people in the informal discussions that I had related the escalation of ethnic and religious divides in the country to conflict in its totality, and told me that many politicians manipulate these divides for their own selfish gains. And in such situations, the opposition group can easily be accused of aligning with other marginal groups to bring down the government. It may be assumed that if the government tried to distribute development projects equitably by giving the opposition a sense of belonging, then some of the problems would be reduced.

6.13 Conclusion and Reflection

As discussed in this chapter, women in Jos and the Middle Belt have faced numerous challenges which has limited their ability to effectively mobilise and participate in

politics. Institutional and cultural obstacles are largely responsible for these difficulties. Male politicians manipulate religion and tradition as a means of establishing and maintaining power and control. All conservative traditions, whether Christianity or Islam, seem to have similar beliefs about politics, one of which is that women should not play an active part. And the Nigerian elite and political class has since utilised similar strategies – division on the basis of religion, culture and traditions – to divide the polity and to exclude women. In Jos and the Middle Belt, male politicians rely on religion to exclude female political aspirants and to restrict new entrants into politics, just as the European rule utilized the divide and rule system to ensure dominance (see Ekeh, 1975).

Although Religion, culture and traditions are critical in the institutionalisation of democracy, the practices/institutions do not support democratic principles as seen in the discriminatory practices against female politicians. For example, using the argument above, the institutionalisation of Sharia in Nigeria¹²⁸ by some Northern states was condemned as it was seen as acting against the principle of democracy, moreover, the rights of women were very much limited under Sharia law. In Nigeria, the focus is on the practice of democracy, while ignoring the cultural and attitudinal change and world view change that democracy entails. The form and substance of politics may give the impression that Nigeria is a democratic nation, but data from this research suggests the contrary for example; the use of thugs, election rigging and godfatherism,

¹²⁸ Sharia, an Islamic civil and criminal law was introduced in Nigeria in 1999. The then Governor of Zamfara Ahmad Rufai Sani pushed for the institution of Sharia at the state level of government. Sharia was introduced in: Bauchi, Borno, Jigawa, Kebbi, Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara, states. The introduction of sharia in states like Gombe, Kaduna and Niger, was limited to parts with large a Muslim population, usually the Northern parts of the state.

are not democratic practices. For instance, democracy in many non-western societies is not just a question of having a modern constitution and creating political structures and institutions that resemble that of the west. In many liberal democracies, every adult is believed to be an autonomous individual and rights are supposed to apply to all without regard to gender differences. Data from this research strongly suggests that women are not treated as autonomous beings. So the Nigerian female politician face the challenge of being treated as an appendage especially when she has to seek consent and approval from their husbands in everything they do.

Institutional and cultural challenges can be found in almost all African countries and many western nations alike. And in this respect, the institutionalisation of democracy is constrained by institutional and cultural factors in Nigeria. However, because “economic power is strongly correlated with political power [in Nigeria], economically empowered women may find it easier to take on policy-making and choice making roles” (Mazrui, 1998: 53). In contrast, female aspirants who are less well-off economically suffer because religion is constantly being used to dissuade and silence them. This research therefore emphasises the need for scholars to look beyond the form or the formal expression of democracy by looking at substance. This requires ethnographic research, especially the approach explored in this research, where lived everyday experiences of female political aspirants are carefully documented and studied. This is because in theory politics is open to all, but in practice it is only open to those men that have money and a few privileged women who are able to challenge the status quo. The next Chapter discusses the impact of ethno-religious conflict on professional relations.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON WOMEN AND THEIR PROFESSIONAL WORK RELATIONSHIPS: AN OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores and analyses the implications of the religious and ethnic divides on professional relationships in the wake of the conflicts in Jos and the Middle Belt, with particular reference to the education sector, i.e. the teaching profession. Literature on the exact impact of conflict on professional relations in Jos and the Middle Belt remains scanty, and that which is available pays little attention to understanding how these conflicts have changed the professional lives of women and had an impact on performance and the general wellbeing of the workplace. Consequently little is understood about the impact of conflict on the position of women, their everyday work experience and their professional lives.

The chapter shows that in the conflict-driven societies in Nigeria women have become subjected to exploitation, marginalisation and scrutiny even as they try to progress in their professional careers. Though both men and women suffer from the exploitative character of Nigerian society, especially in its conflict driven societies, women suffer additionally by virtue of their gender as they are in a subordinate and potentially more vulnerable position (Nwabara, 1989; Amundsen, 1977). Nwabara (1989: 7), for example, points out that women are discriminated against simply because they are women in a society that values the subordination of women to men. This discrimination starts when children first go to school and continues in the workplace. Amundsen (1977: 37) rightly points out that gender “discrimination in education is of course of

tremendous importance for the opportunities and advances of women into many [professional] fields,” education is therefore a “precursor to social and cultural independence” (Bloch, Beoku-Betts & Tabachnick, 1998: x) for women as it provides the right knowledge to fit into the modern day economy.

As discussed below, life in the workplace, in particular, does not favour women because it is where they come face-to-face with discrimination in terms of selection, promotion, salary, attitudes and structural violence due to the absence of policies that recognise and offer them direct protection. Nwabara (1989: 8) points out that, “men’s position of influence in a system and society that allows the exploitation” of women in subordinate positions implicitly supports discrimination and structural violence. In addition, since the conflict, there has been an increase in attitudes that put pressure on women’s behaviour in the way they are expected to behave in the workplace. For example, the professional conduct of women is often assessed in the context of two religions that both emphasise the importance of female subordination to religious rules. This means that women are subjected to unnecessary scrutiny from male colleagues in regards to appropriate conduct and dressing, which often leads to an unhealthy work atmosphere. This will be discussed further in the sections below.

7.2 Politics and the Nigerian Work Environment

In Nigeria, and the Middle Belt in particular, the perceived marginalisation and underrepresentation of one group over the other in the public service is a matter of everyday discussion. For instance, the apparent disadvantage of one’s own ethnic or religious group has been at the centre of political debate over appointments to public

office, political representation and employment in the civil service, while the concerns of women continue to be left out of group concerns. As pointed out in the earlier chapters, in situations of conflicts and the competition for the national cake, group boundaries have become hardened and affirmed and as a result women are increasingly seen, in all areas of life, not as potential links between these groups but as either intruders or threats to group cohesion because of inter-faith marriage or they are seen as subordinates. However, it should be noted that it is not only women who are marginalised as many of Nigeria's ethnic nationalities and religious bodies have also claimed marginalisation. In Kaduna State for instance, the Southern Kaduna people, who are mainly Christian, have over the years complained of their persistent marginalisation in the civil service and politics by Northern Kaduna Muslims (see Suberu, 1999: 63). In Benue State, the Idoma people complained of political marginalisation by the Tiv people. In Plateau State, the Governor Jonah David Jang's administration has since its assumption of office in 2007 faced accusations by other ethnic and religious groups. His administration was accused of favouring the Beroms (his kin) over the others in terms of political appointments and promotions in the civil service. And in Nasarawa state, the Eggon and other ethnic groups have complained of political domination by the Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri groups.¹²⁹

Throughout the Middle Belt and Nigeria at large, fears and ongoing mistrust accompany all forms of interaction among the different ethnic, regional and religious groups in their struggle for the control of local, State and Federal resources otherwise

¹²⁹ See Ostein, (2009) and Mavalla (2014), on the indigene settler divide, ethnic marginalisation and competition over resources in Jos and Kaduna. See also Suberu's (1999) discussion on power sharing strategies.

referred to the 'national cake' (Bayart, 2009). Often, these groups claim their struggle for emancipation is only possible through ethnic and religious mobilisation to push forward their demands (Mohammed, 2012). This form of competition is often encouraged by religious leaders and ethnic associations seeking to ensure their group is put in the most advantageous position. While such comparisons are not new,¹³⁰ the various ethnic nationalities and religious groups in Nigeria usually have different ways of explaining the perceived disadvantage of their own group. As pointed out in chapter two, political and community leaders study the personnel composition of every institution of government with a microscope to find a breach of the principle where they are not favoured (BBC, 2006). Golwa (2013:2), encapsulates the scenario of competition in the Nigerian system as follows:

Every appointment by government is scrutinized to ascertain whether the appointee is a Muslim or Christian, a Northerner or a Southerner, a Northern Christian or Southern Muslim. It is not enough that the appointees are Nigerians and are competent to hold those positions.

The existence of this approach points to the fact that the potential for conflict has increased in the wake of Federal competition, thus leading to the politicisation of ethnic and religious sentiments; and because only a few people control state resources, the State and its institutions are seen by many Nigerian citizens to exist only to make a few people rich (Oguntola, 2015). And, further, because Nigerian society has not

¹³⁰For instance, the Punch Newspaper of 22 March 2014 quoted the Secretary General of the Jama'atul Nasril Islam (JNI), Dr Khalid Aliyu, who accused the Federal Government under the leadership of President Goodluck Jonathan of the lop-sided appointment of delegates to the National Conference. According to him 62 per cent of the delegates to the conference are Christians while the remaining percentage is shared by Muslims and other religions in the land.

institutionalized liberal values, it means that women are almost always shut out, whether from formal organizations in the public sphere or religious circles, despite increasing international insistence on gender equality. And Nigerian society is unable to address the underrepresentation of women in different fields, such as trade, politics, and the teaching profession and in the wider context of societal norms and practices. In Nigeria, there is strong resentment among men over the perceived 'advantage' enjoyed by women such as the international conventions that seeks to eliminate discrimination and the various media campaigns seeking 30 percent reserved seat for women in both appointed and elected positions, has led to a form of backlash. As a result of the mobilisation of ethnic, religion, indigene-stranger (settler) and also gender boundaries, this resentment often further increases male scrutiny and control of women. This equally means that in the professional context another dividing line is drawn by gender. The scrutiny of women particularly has become politicised, often bleeding into and reinforcing other dividing lines such as ethnicity, religion and the indigene-settler dichotomy in the work place which will be discussed next.

7.3 Gendered Competition in Professional Context

The ethnic and religious hatred that is frequently directed at women in professional environments is seen as a category of violence which is often neglected in many professional discusses. In particular, in relation to the educational context, the professional experiences of women in Middle Belt schools and at institutions in Jos suggest that as ethnic and religious conflict redefines the work environment it also dramatically transforms gender relationships, particularly the way men relate to the

women they work with. Thus, a professional environment that is supposed to celebrate accomplishment, professional conduct, merit and respect is turned into an extended zone of conflict or violence manifested through the everyday gendered discrimination and violence in the workplace.

This means that widely-held notions of equality in many workplaces in Nigeria only exist in print,¹³¹ as narratives suggest. In practice, notions of equality are not easy to achieve because the open and indirect injustices many women (and some men) face in the workplace makes it difficult for them to progress in their career and have a dramatic impact on their well-being and performance. In many professional contexts there has actually been an increase in the competition among ethnic and religious groups for career progression with regard to promotion and positions since the beginning of the conflict, and religion and/or ethnicity are often used to reinforce this competition for access to the civil service. This situation was explained in more detail by one of the interviewees Dr Shar Lagwen,¹³² who explained that the competition is worsening day by day. He narrates:

A lot of the unhealthy competition you see in the workplace [is] emphasised by religious groups. Because if you have denominationalisms where you have a Muslim, and within the Muslims they belong to different denominations like the

¹³¹ Information on workplace equality and gender equality in general is contained in the Nigerian National Gender Policy and the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, especially chapter IV- fundamental human rights. The National Gender Policy is meant to ensure women's empowerment and the eradication of unequal gender power relations in the workplace and economy, in trade unions and in broader society; Increase the participation of women in leadership and decision making; Increase awareness and gender sensitivity in all sectors; Defend and advance women rights; Ensure that through labour legislation and collective bargaining, the particular circumstances of women are considered and that measures are promoted to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender; Fight against stereotyping on the basis of gender in the workplace; Ensure that there is a gender perspective in all sectors of development.

¹³² Dr Shar Lagwen is a lecturer with the University. Interviewed in Jos. 8/1/2013.

Izala, Sufi, Derika, competing. And the differences [are] very serious within these different groups, to the extent that one group cannot pray in another's Mosque. So when members of these groups come to work together, they are full of differences. And sometimes even to lead or hold a position, they feel and prefer their denomination member to others. Within the Muslim community, they struggle over who should be elected; if you elect the Sufi, they will say no, he will give preference to the Sufi. And so they take some of these differences to the workplace, they go with them to work.

He continues:

I have this Muslim friend, who was really worried that there is so much bias where he works and he was looking for who to salvage the situation. Then someone came with a Muslim name and this is supposed to be the boss of the unit. So everyone goes to meet him with their complaint and when he went in, he said to the boss, that my only problem is that the Christians here are truly biased, so I want you to help. So he told him that I also want you to be bias towards the Muslims, not knowing that the guy is a Christian and only bears [a] Muslim name. So you see how far this has gone even through the military, and even the police.

The statement above indicates that since the conflict, mistrust and division cut across almost every sector of the formal economy, which affects both men and women. More particularly several factors have been outlined as being responsible for the minimal presence and active participation of women in the formal sector. For example, Nwabueze and Nnadi (2009: 27) argue that "Nigerian women always encounter gender

specific obstacles in various fields of their national life” due to structural imbalances. Religion is used to “dominate women and exploit their labour at home and in social production” (Imam, 1989: 2).

7.4 Overview of Structural Discrimination in the Professional Work Environment

As we have noted, indirect injustices and competition affects many women in the workplace and it dramatically affects their well-being and performance. Gender discrimination in the workplace “endorses the subordination of women by affecting their ability to control their life chances in...the labour market” (Beoku-Beths, 1998:158). For instance, a recent survey of the Security Sector Institutions (SSIs)¹³³ in West African Countries shows that women are discriminated against through the restrictions for women in the armed forces in relation to marriage and pregnancy. The Nigerian penal services additionally discriminate against women by limiting recruitment to unmarried women. Not only are few women recruited in the first place, but female personnel are subjected to restrictions as to when they are allowed to marry and become pregnant, and those who become pregnant during the first 6 years of employment they are dismissed (Gaaderse & Valasek, 2011:9). Further, the professional environment of the SSIs (in terms of policies, institutional and physical infrastructure) rarely accommodates the needs of male and particularly female staff.

¹³³ The result is based on the 2011 survey of 14 ECOWAS Countries Security Sector Institutions (SSIs) - Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. The survey indicates that female representation in SSIs is low: on overall average, women represent approximately 12 percent of the Police services, Armed Forces, justice systems and the penal services. Refer to Gaaderse & Valasek, (2011) for the full survey.

In the medical profession, female doctors who get pregnant after medical school and before starting their one year compulsory residency programme are often denied the opportunity to participate in the training programme. In an informal interaction, a female resident Doctor in Jos, who only agreed to talk to me on condition of anonymity, told me that:

I got married just before my final medical examination. I was very happy because I passed and when I discovered I was pregnant it looked to me a double blessing... [a] few weeks before the start of the residency programme, I to a general hospital and was shortlisted... When I went to assume duty, I was told I cannot practice at that time because they noticed I was pregnant... I was shocked to my bone marrow. I was denied my right just because I was pregnant, someone must have assumed it is unsafe for me to practice. This was my worst moment ever.

This example shows women are controlled in the public sector by senior male colleagues who often assume control of female subordinates by making, prescribing and implementing policies that discriminate against women as individuals and as part of the broader perception that women's ability should be limited because. This structure of inequality then becomes part of the system, since "structural violence is often invisible and may not be recognized" (Action Aid, 2014: 10).

To support this point further, Nwabueze and Nnadi (2009) have stressed that the discrimination of women exists in many other professions. Just as in the Military and the medical profession, the judicial system does not allow women to request bail for a person in police custody, despite the fact that there are proportionally more female

judges and female lawyers¹³⁴ (Gaaderse & Valasek, 2011:9). Thus, the absence of policies and procedures to address gender inequality in the workplace nonetheless contribute to an unhealthy work environment.

Having provided examples of some of the difficulties women face in the workplace, the next part of the chapter will address their situation in the teaching profession, beginning with an overview of education in Nigeria as it relates to the differences between the North and South.

7.5 The Disparity in the Acquisition of Western Education in Nigeria

The disparity in educational development in Nigeria's North and South has been a long standing phenomenon (Imam, 2012). Between 1910 and 1929, a carefully controlled programme of education was sponsored in the North by the colonial government (Okpu, 1977; Turaki, 1993). The model that was used differed from the system already being followed in the South. Its aim was to ensure that schooling did not radically disrupt the traditional feudal order of the North. For this reason, the primary schools were constructed and run by the emirs, appointed by the colonial state as Native Authorities, and the main subjects taught were the Islamic religion and Arabic. Character training in all matters of dress, especially as it relates to women, as well as behaviour and traditional forms of salutation were supervised by the traditional teachers -the mallams- and pupils were required to conform to local customs, while the South accepted and adopted the Western system of education with minimal

¹³⁴ Nigeria has produced a female Chief Justice in the recent past, Aloma Mariam Mukhtar, who became the Chief justice of Nigeria from July 2012 to November 2014.

involvement of the traditional rulers as teachers. These differences in the system of education not only created an educational imbalance between the North and the South, but, as far as the emergence of ethnicity was concerned, widened the social distance between people in the two parts of the country (Nnoli, 1980: 119).

In an effort to bridge the widened gap in education between the North and the South, private schools are being established, along un-going government campaigns to encourage every child at primary school age has access to free education. Private initiatives of the graduate youths particularly in the North is particularly commendable. The picture in Figure 6 shows one of the schools established by graduate youths in Jos, it offers free education and girls are particularly encouraged to enrol.

Figure 6: Community Secondary School in Jos



Source: Field notes 2012/2013 © Plangsat Dayil

The secondary schools is run by graduates of the community to assist students who are unable to attend other fee-paying government and private schools. During my visit to the school, I was really impressed by the manner in which the students conducted themselves and especially the salutation I was given. The teachers confirmed to me that they take issues of respect and discipline very seriously. Even though the school appears to have a good female enrolment ratio, the picture is just a presentation of one class.

7.6 Regional Disparity in Access to Education

As mentioned above, the various regions in Nigeria advanced at varied levels, with the Northern region lagging behind (cf. Okpu, 1977) due to partial implementation of the policy on education and the interference of the traditional teachers. Nnoli (1980: 117) equally notes that, one section of the country differed significantly from the other because education in the South received greater investment than that in the North as it was deemed capable of subverting the authority of the emirs, especially since its major harbingers were Christian missionaries. The next sections describe the education system from the colonial to the post-colonial era.

7.6.1 Education During the Colonial Era

As described in the previous section, during the colonial era, missionary activities were restricted in the predominately Muslim North in order to curtail the spread of Christianity and Western education (Okpu, 1977, Turaki, 1993; Fagbumi, 2005) while Quranic education was allowed to flourish, leading to a considerable educational gap between the Northern and the Southern parts of Nigeria (Ogunsola, 1982). Although Western education did not prove to be of any immediate benefit to the Northern region the subsequent “demands for more Muslim administrators and teachers, [and] the acquisition of Western education and skills widened the cultural differences between them and their [Southern] neighbours” (Okpu, 1977: 50). This differentiation was to have a serious impact on politics and employment in the public service as the differential patterns of knowledge and skill acquisition meant that women in the North were held back educationally, affecting their chances to access formal employment.

The discrepancy in education between the North and South continued with the 1948 Education Ordinance which decentralized educational administration in the country, setting the stage for an uneven implementation of educational policy throughout the country (see Imam, 2012). By 1954 when Nigeria became a Federation of three regions (i.e. the Eastern, Western and Northern regions) and the Federal Capital of Lagos, the constitution gave each region the power of making laws, including its own educational policies (Imam, 2012: 185). An initial experiment to offer Nigerians Universal Primary Education was started in the Western region in 1955 and in the Eastern region in 1957 (Fafunwa, 2004). Considerable efforts were made to develop and expand educational facilities in the North (Ozigi & Ocho, 1981), but these were less successful due to the active distrust towards Western education. The majority of the people preferred to send their children to the Qur'anic schools and viewed western education with suspicion (Imam, 2012: 186).

In the Northern parts of Nigeria, Islam was deeply entrenched both in the religious belief and educational orientation of the people who relied on Quranic education (Ozigi & Ocho, 1981). So, in the North of the country, the Quranic school system with its often itinerant pupils continued to thrive and ran parallel with the national educational system but even though the Universal Primary Education (UPE) made primary education free and universal, no attempt was made to make it compulsory for all children (Imam, 2003; Imam, 2012: 191). In the Southern parts of the country, each ethnic group had its own traditional form of education based on its own culture and tradition, but, and unlike in the North, Western education was taken up widely (Taiwo, 1980; Imam, 2012: 182) as noted in the previous section.

7.6.2 Education in the Post-Colonial Era

In Nigeria, educational policy at independence was mainly concerned with using schools to develop manpower for economic development and the Africanisation of the civil service (Woolman, 2001). Equally, education was meant to provide the individual with the basic and necessary tools for informed interaction and participation in Nigeria today (Bing, 1984: 104). And the Nigerian government has revised its education policy with the aim of eradicating illiteracy and providing equal opportunity for all (see Imam, 2012) and to bridge the educational imbalance between the North and the South (Nnoli, 1978: 117-119). Consequently, in 1999 the Federal Government of Nigeria flagged the UBE programme as a means of achieving equal educational opportunities and eradicating illiteracy (Imam, 2012: 192-193). However, "... access to basic education is inhibited by gender issues and socio-cultural beliefs and practices, among other factors" (Imam, 2012: 194). As mothers, and first teachers to their children, women have been stereotyped as only being able to go into a "limited number of fields culturally approved for their sex" (Aluko & Alfa, 1985: 164) which in turn influences the manner in which they socialise their children.

With the revised National Policy on Education from 1998 to 2004 aimed at providing equal and adequate educational opportunities for all, at all levels of the educational system (Imam, 2012: 195-196) the imbalance in the North continues to pose new challenges. One of the problems is that Quranic schools in the North do "not provide a favourable environment for the inculcation of the right kind of values for the survival of the individual in the larger Nigerian society. As noted in the previous section, the Quranic schools adapt pupils for their own immediate community and to practice the Islamic religious rites" (Imam, 2012: 199).

Part of the problem of this lack of integration is the past leadership in the North and “British colonial policy which favoured the retention and protection of Islamic culture and values” (Okpu, 1977: 49-51). Kukah (1994: 6) equally opined that “Western education and the opportunities it offered was not available in the North... if Sardauna [Ahmadu Bello, the Northern Region’s leader at Independence] had [had] the chance, he would have outlawed Western education in Northern Nigeria and promoted Koranic education instead.” This statement points to the fact that educational backwardness in the North can partly be blamed on the leaders who have shown little support for its growth and expansion in the North. But it also implies that the educational uptake within Northern Nigeria was often higher among Christians than among Muslims. Following the legacy of the Sardauna, the Northern leaders have ignored the fact that by the mid-twentieth century western civilization had become dominant in the world and the main question was how one could function effectively within such a system. Muslims, or any religious group for that matter, have the right to educate their people according to their faith, but it could be argued that if they also want to function effectively in a modern society which has become hegemonic, and be relevant then they have to strategically find a way to educate themselves effectively while maintaining their faith.

The consequence of not being integrated or the feeling of not belonging to the larger society for national unity is enormous. If people are driven by their limited outlook, and by hunger and poverty, there is the potential for social instability and sectarian crises” (Imam, 2012: 199). Because education in this part of Nigeria is dominated by Christians, Muslims sometimes feel under-represented and marginalised in the school or university environment. At the same time, education is important in order to obtain the qualifications needed to work in the formal sector and political leadership, and

those who are educationally disadvantaged tend to feel insecure. Moreover, those who perceive that they are educationally disadvantaged may also feel disadvantaged at the political level. And within this context, Western education becomes politicised by the conflict and is seen as part of the conflict. It may therefore seem to some Muslims that the Christian bias within education contributes to their disadvantage.

As education is funded by the state, and thus supported by funds that theoretically belong to the citizens, this means that the sector is subject to extremely close scrutiny and debate by Christians and Muslims. The impulses deriving from the local constellation can be complex. While Muslims can suffer from their outsider status in education, Christian teachers are sometimes seen as potential agents of subversion because they might influence their pupils religiously. The local discrepancy was reinforced by the fact that both Christianity and Islam promote a system of belief that asserts that women are subordinate to male authority. As many primary school teachers are women, gender dynamics complicate the already difficult relationships between teachers and pupils of different religions further.

7.7 Gender Disparity in the Education Sector

As set out above, gender disparities exist throughout the public sector in Nigeria. In many parts of Nigeria “the public space is dominated by men in general and women are generally confined to areas where, in addition to being less visible, they also exercise little discretion and power.” (Action Aid, 2014: 9). This is particularly relevant in the education sector, even though the teaching profession in Nigeria has traditionally

been dominated by women (cf. Beoku-Betts, 1998: 172)¹³⁵, partly because it conveniently fits as an extension of women's domestic work as carers, there is a widely held notion that women's natural inclination and skill in teaching and managing the welfare of children equip them to succeed as teachers (Nwagwu, 1994: 176).

Nicholas (2006)¹³⁶ considers that the proximity of school buildings to residential areas is a contributing factor, because this proximity makes teaching in primary and secondary schools very convenient for many women as they can spend part of their lesson preparation time at home with their family. The acceptance of this situation reflects the fact that many women (and their families) view domestic responsibility as primary and other forms of formal responsibility as secondary. At the same time they face discrimination by a pervading culture of male dominance in private and public spaces (Para-Mallam et al. 2011). For example, in many instances women are relegated to teach elementary subjects such as general studies and social studies which are thought to be female staff subjects. It is also implicit that women will, through these subjects, teach the students about the traditional structure of the family, including the position of women within this system. In this way, these teachers are involved in reproducing and maintaining the gender status quo.

¹³⁵ In 2010 for example, Nigeria has more qualified female public primary and junior secondary school teachers. Though adult [female] literacy still varies widely across geopolitical zones: in 2008 it was lowest in the North West (22 percent female; 58 percent male) and the North East (23 percent; 1 percent). These figures contrast significantly to the southern zones, where there was an average literacy rate of 80 percent for women and 90 percent for men. See Action Aid (2011)

¹³⁶ On the impact of Changing Conditions of Service on the Recruitment of Teachers in Nigeria, see Nwagwu (2006).

Today, although some mothers prefer to take up jobs that enable them to have time for the family, motherhood is often used against women in formal sector employment (Williams, 1990). “Whilst all have acknowledged the need to uphold integrity and discipline and preserve the independence of the service, there have been cases where this principle has been sacrificed for political, tribal or other considerations” (Olusanya, 1975: 87). Just as in politics, women who take up public sector employment and desire to succeed are often labelled as *over-ambitious*. The use of the word *over-ambitious* is intended to demoralise women, to remind them of appropriate femaleness. The effect of all this is to “create in public officers [particularly women] a sense of insecurity and frustration” (Olusanya, 1975: 87).

Having discussed the regional disparity in education in Nigeria and gender discrimination in the education sector and other professions at large, I will now proceed to discuss the impact of conflict on the education sector in Jos.

7.8 Impact of the Conflict on Professional Relations in Institutions of Learning

Throughout Jos, the hate, suspicion, fear and animosity associated with the conflicts has filtered into the public institutions of learning. This is partly a process that has resulted from the segregated settlement patterns that have come to define residential choices. As Fukshiwe (2010: 37) points out, “one of the most potent effects of violent conflicts is the displacement of people from their residences.” Displacement is often experienced as a terrible loss and a form of victimisation because residents run to safety without any hope of returning to their original homes where the conflicts are escalating. This means that many people in Jos have lost not only their property and

neighbourhood, but also their businesses, networks and offices. Returning to other examples from the Middle Belt, in Nasarawa State for instance, the conflict has also forced many families to relocate. Action Aid (2014: 18) in a recent study found out that “...most of the schools in the conflict areas are not functioning. Many of the pupils have fled with their parents. Some other children have been transferred to other schools either outside of the state or to relatively more peaceful communities where schools are running. Similarly, in Plateau state, “ethno-religious crises have led to the de-population of [some] areas” (Action Aid, 2011: 10), causing a serious strain on school attendance for the girl child. It is also a major challenge to education in general as it puts a lot of pressure on female teachers who are forced out of paid employment due to displacement.

This displacement also has a negative impact on the education sector due to hundreds of learning hours wasted during conflicts and when relocating. The de-population of some of the areas in Jos and the Middle due to conflict has created a culture of antagonism and hate in the new communities to which refugees have escaped and told people their stories. Evidence from my fieldwork indicates that some of this antagonism also affects the educational workplace. Here, anyone sharing the same or similar identity with the perceived enemies of the majority is often instantly labelled an enemy too. In one my interviews with the teachers at one of the Government Primary Schools in Jos, some of them explained in an FGD that:

One of the challenges we have here is that we have 95 percent of the teachers as Christians, out of about 45 staff and only about 5 percent are Muslims. We have more than 600 students who are majorly Muslims. When we go to teach, they [the students] will not listen to us, they will not give us attention, but once

their *Mallam*¹³⁷ or the Muslim [male] teachers come into the class, they give them full attention, they listen to them. But if it is the Christian [female teachers], they will be playing.

But the focus here is not with the (mostly female) teachers who feel that they are not accorded the respect they deserve from their employers for their work to improve the children's future; rather the fact that the children disrespect the teachers, and that the teachers are helpless in the face of this, indicates a total lack of trust between pupils (and their parents) on the one hand and teachers on the other hand. The interview above also describes the acrimony and hardening of opinions that has greatly affected gender relations in the workplace. All the participants in the FGD from which this testimony was drawn were female, but the *Mallam*, and the other teachers – including the Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK) teacher – to whom the children allegedly paid attention were male. So, here a complex mix of religious rivalry and gendered disadvantage is at play, and it seems as if the distance between men and women in this particular school has become much greater since the start of the conflict because it coincides with the religious divisions in other aspects of the community.

The gap is further widened by the fact that the female teachers I met are especially resentful of male students who pay little attention, a practice which appears to be tacitly encouraged by the parents. In another FGD in a primary school in Jos, the teachers narrated some of the experiences they have had with the male students. According to them:

¹³⁷ *Malam* is a Hausa name usually referring to a male teacher, while *Malama* refers to a female teacher.

Some of them [male students] come to school with light weapons such as lighters, pocket/ kitchen knives, we can even show you some of them, which we seized and [that] are in the office. And when you ask them why they carry them around, they will not respond. So we are feeling frustrated. And when we send words for their come, see and explain, they will simply say “*wannan aikin yara ne.*”¹³⁸ That they are just small children and do not know what they are doing. But how can you believe what these parents are saying.¹³⁹

While this causes uneasiness for the teachers, fear is also likely to be the rationale behind the students’ need to carry light weapons for their own protection. Another possible explanation for the students’ threatening behaviour is that they learnt it from the neighbourhood which has become militant over the years. Either way, for these children the schools are dominated by people (teachers) whom they have only heard about as their enemies. As the schools are located in the pupils comfort zones is not surprising that they feel the need to be armed or vigilant or protective should there be any intruder.

Another example of the impact of the conflict is segregated settlement, and is described in the next section.

7.9 The impact of Segregated Settlement on Institutions of Learning

¹³⁸ My translation. “They are just kids’ stuff”. In other words, it is just the children trying to be mischievous and nothing more.

¹³⁹ FGDs Government Primary School in Jos. 28/8/2012.

One of the major impacts of the segregated settlements on the education sector is that the separation of schools has reinforced social divisions within communities in Jos. For example, while the impact of conflict on relations between pupils and staff is not clear, its effects on required work hours has been drastic. This is because most of the teachers stay away from school for days without coming to work whenever there is a conflict. Some of them feel frustrated because they have to stay off work against their wishes although a few, in contrast to the narrative above, are happy working in schools in the *no-go-areas* and one informed me that:

I am very happy working here...even though the School is located in a *no-go-area* for me. The kids in this school are very obedient and it is surprising how much interest they show and their willingness to learn. You can sometimes...notice a few of them struggling to catch up with the others, but generally they are enthusiastic learners and I love to teach them. One of the major setbacks for me since this conflict is that most of us have to relocate far from the school...we have to stop coming to work when there is conflict...the head of our school and some of our Muslim colleagues are quite understanding. They keep us up-to-date with the security situation around the area and often we are advised to stay off work until the situation improves.¹⁴⁰

This narrative is in contrast to the preceding interview, as the pupils in this case are better behaved and the teachers are satisfied with their conduct. This means that inability of teachers to work regularly in the narrative above might have led to resentment and resulted in a lower educational standards in these schools.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Mrs Asabe a teacher with the Government Primary Muslim School. Interviewed in Jos. 27/8/2012.

Educational attainment by the children might have been lowered because they are being denied the opportunity of full-time learning as a result of restriction in movement during conflicts and displacement as a result of the conflicts. This situation further narrows the interaction and relational gap for these pupils as unlike their parents' generation they have not had the opportunity of growing up in communities where Christians and Muslims lived together happily and studied under the same roof.

Born into mono-religious communities confined to often bounded settlements, they play only with children of their own background. Having had no contact with Christians apart from hearing about them in relation to the conflicts, they then have to go to school to be taught by people of that faith as discussed earlier. In the medium term, the situation may contribute to mistrust from students and their parents, who may feel that the teachers are not really committed to their work because of their absence from school. In many other schools, however, relations are far worse. In an FGD held in one of the Government Primary Muslim Schools in Jos, the teachers told me that:

Now when we relate with colleagues, we try as much as possible not to mention things that I know will be offensive, and you know now anything can be offensive. When you smile at someone in the morning, all you see is irritation on the face already. So when it comes to interaction, you have to be very careful. As colleagues, we sometimes visit each other's family during festive seasons, or when there is an occasion, but now, one cannot visit like those days. We now understand that the differences in our communities is affecting the work place.

This narrative points out the impact of conflict on how teachers feel they have to behave, which since their personal relationships are not cordial, one can easily assume

gradually affects the children. It is possible that some of these teachers might have lost loved ones or faced forceful displacement, or live in segregated settlements, and that these experiences will also inculcate hate and antagonism towards the students they teach. To illustrate this, one of the teachers I interviewed told me how difficult it was for her to forgive her offenders. Mrs Silvia Boki¹⁴¹ said:

Conflict has affected me, because, in those days when I lived amidst Muslims in Angwan Doki (aka Rahol Kanan), we use[d] to have [a] good relationship with the Muslims. During Christmas, they will come, we will give them food and they will eat. But after the conflict started, we hardly sit together to discuss as neighbours like we used to. We hardly enter each other's house. Even in our place of work, the relationship we use[d] to have with our Muslim brothers is no longer there. It has created a division in our homes, our children no longer play with them like they used to play before. I still live in Angwan Doki, but there is no form of relationship. We now look at each other as enemies. I see those of them who burnt down part of my house and my small shop passing every day. When I am sitting down and I see them passing to the mosques, I use to abuse them, because there is that hatred in me. The crisis has created so much hate that it will be difficult for us to forgive one another. It will only take the Grace of God. Because I was affected and how will I now forgive these people if not for the Grace of God that will help me.

¹⁴¹ Mrs Silvia Boki is a teacher in one of the Government Primary Schools Jos. In the past, she combined her teaching and petty business to make ends meet. She had a small shop in front of her compound where she retails provisions and call cards. She lost the shop to the crises and part of her house was demolished during the crises. Interviewed in Jos. 24/9/2012.

This teacher's narrative is typical of some of the responses obtained during the interviews. Some of the respondents said that such issues had not been part of their thinking in the past, but that now they were beginning to worry and think about the religious and ethnic hatred they experienced at the workplace and sometimes from their work associates. This has negative consequences for workplace cohesion because normal everyday behaviour becomes subject to wrong interpretation particularly when viewed from a religious point. Similarly, communication is constantly politicised and misinterpreted because people internalise ethnic and religious intolerance as result of the lingering conflicts. Likewise, in many schools, there is segregation with people/teachers sometimes openly referring to each other as enemies. As the example from the schools illustrates, the children are fast learning from what they see going on in their community and neighbourhood.

7.10 The Impact of the Conflict on Trust Confidence in Tertiary Education

This section addresses the fact that the impact of the conflict affects not only schools but also tertiary institutions. Although in the past both Christians and Muslims worked confidently and peacefully together in groups and in offices in Jos and the Middle Belt, they are now very conscious of their differences. The ethnic and religious crises have created a lot of gaps between colleagues and are gradually eroding trust and mutual confidence between people of different faiths and ethnic groups. This has dramatically affected people, particularly women's, perception not only of their ability to have a voice

in the workplace, but also their confidence, as illustrated by Dr Bakwando Dan'azumi,¹⁴² who said that:

For me as a Hausa-Fulani in the University, I feel I belong to the small minority group and that actually keeps me in a very uncomfortable situation. And so whatever I do, or wherever I go, I have that feeling in me... so wherever I go, whether in the office, I feel that or have the feeling of being in the minority. Sometimes people look at me differently or they throw questions that ought not to have been asked.

So therefore, like in ASUU [Academic Staff Union of Universities] meetings or during elections, I have this feeling that I cannot be elected to a certain position because I do not belong to the majority. Worse still is that I am always careful to say some things in order not to be misunderstood... this feeling is with me all the time.

Such feelings in the educational workplace reflects the general impact of the conflict on the wider society and the new forms of identity that have emerged in the workplace as a result of ethnic and religious intolerance. A significant number of those people that I interviewed in the university explained to me that they normally observed the way people looked at them when they stood before a class. In one of the informal discussions I had, a visiting professor who is resident outside this country decided to come back to work in one of the universities in Nigeria. When he arrived he found that

¹⁴² Dr Bakwando Dan'azumi: A Lecturer at the University.

there were a lot of politics in the department where he now worked, with unhealthy competition amongst colleagues. He told me that:

There were cases you keep working, while someone who is below you is elevated above you because of ethnicity or religion. That makes you so uncomfortable, so I prefer to go to places where there are more people of the same ethnicity and religion as mine and I can easily be given certain positions.

This clearly shows that religion and ethnicity now play a big role in determining job progression, particularly when colleagues are competing for the same position. While most ethnicities, as mentioned earlier, have complained of marginalisation of some sort within their community, most of these groups now work to prevent this by jealously guarding their professional career path with that mind-set that their jobs will be taken over if not protected violently. This means that the issue of competition for positions and promotion now pervades the workplace, similar to what is on-going in political arena, where opposing parties resort to violence. Further, people working together who come from different ethnic, religious and social backgrounds have conflicting ideas of how work life should be organised in terms of attitudes towards female behaviour.

Having focussed on the impact of conflict on workplace relations in the primary and tertiary institutions, the next section will discuss the gendered notions of professional behaviour and dress.

7.11 Conflict and Gendered Notions of Professional Behaviour and Dress

There has been increasing emphasis on gendered notions of professional behaviour in most institutions of learning in Jos and the Middle Belt. And now “gender difference

invades the workforce not simply through the conflict of work and family for women, but more subtly, through workplace structures and assumptions” (Morris & Lyon, 1996: 4). While the ethnic and religious divisions in the educational sector clearly affect both men and women, women suffer more because their male colleagues tend to equate their domestic control of women with their control of women in the workplace. In other words, it is usual for women in the educational sector to be regarded as being under the control of men.

The control exerted over women in the educational sector might not be unrelated to the strategy of exclusion in the face of competition for the retention of one’s position, just like in the Federal competition for the centre, women are tactically oppressed using religion and notions of an acceptable dress standard, just to frustrate them as a subordinate class. It is interesting to contrast Dr Dan’Azumi’s experiences with those of Dr Marot Yohom,¹⁴³ a female and Christian lecturer in the same department at the University. While Dr Dan’Azumi was concerned about his minority experience and inability to gain recognition as a representative of the University union, Dr Yohom had to deal with issues relating very specifically to the fact that she is female. She explained that her relationships with colleagues of a different religion could be difficult:

Our relationship is not so cordial. Particularly a colleague who I will say is a kind of a very strong practitioner of his faith, I would not want to use the word fundamentalist... will attack you on every little thing you do; from the way you dress, to the way you greet him.

¹⁴³ Dr Marot Yohom: A Lecturer at the University. Interviewed in Jos. 8/1/2013

It was really very difficult relating to this particular colleague ... that relationship was not too good for me especially when I had to work under him as a postgraduate student, he will complain about everything I wear, which makes me a little uncomfortable.

Her statement points to the fact that the conflicts have not only drawn sharper boundaries between colleagues of different backgrounds, but have also encouraged some men to criticise individual women Behaviour such as how they dress and greet people. As both Islam and Christianity emphasise male authority, it is likely that the growing hostility of religious discourse have given individuals the courage to express their hostility towards members of the other group not just in terms of their general dislike but, especially where women are concerned, also as a very personal critique of their character and upbringing.

The experience of Muslim female lecturers at the University is similar to the experience of the Christian female lecturers interviewed. For instance, in an interview with Hajia (Dr) Miriam Ladi'le,¹⁴⁴ she expressed concern over how she feels she is being monitored closely and viewed by her other male colleagues, both Muslim and Christian. She told me that this sometimes makes her uneasy, especially when her colleagues make jokes about other Muslim women who are under *purdah*, which they seem to do frequently when she is around. In one of her narratives, she recollects how one of them said to her:

The day you become the minister of education in Nigeria, I am sure banning *purdah* and liberating other women will be the number one on your agenda.

¹⁴⁴ Hajia (Dr) Ladi'le is a lecturer at the University. Interviewed in Jos. 9/1/2013.

She continues:

I know he thinks I think that is a compliment, but I know he was saying that with a bit of sarcasm with the looks on his face, and I know that comment would never have been said to a male colleague.

Such patronising comments, even though seemingly of minor importance, paint a picture of the way in which men have extended their control of women beyond the domestic arena. This stigmatisation of women in the workplace is similar to the control exerted on women in politics which creates fear and erodes the confidence of some of these women. It also excludes women from having the opportunity to feel equal and safe in the workplace, and these tensions in the educational sector, just as in the political arena, have turned what is otherwise a professional environment into an extended zone of conflict and competition. Thus the conflicts in Jos and the Middle Belt have not just created new problems for women but have also served to enforce the existing status quo.

Both Christians and Muslims narrated their experiences of encountering people who disapproved of them. Such comments support the fact that increasingly people go to work conscious of their differences (in most cases ethnic or religious) from those they work with. They look out for dress codes which can easily be used to label one as Muslim or Christian. When confronted with others, they pay unnecessary attention to every move around them and become suspicious quickly. This narrative by Dr (Mrs) Matlu Gube¹⁴⁵ is another relevant example to support our argument. According to her:

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Dr (Mrs) Matlu Gube, a staff of the University. Interview in Jos. 20/1/2013.

Since...this conflict started, I noticed my colleagues [who are non-Muslims] are suddenly becoming very cold towards me; they will greet me in a hurry, ask me questions in a hurry and never want to spend an extra moment listening to me. It is as if they are tactically avoiding any form of discussion that we would normally have before the conflict. In the past, they would care to ask me about the welfare of my family and my welfare as a person. But nowadays it is just as if I have become an internal suspect, and in fact pronounced guilty as someone who is a part of the conflict in Jos. They do not necessarily say that, but I can read it from their faces and actions and how cold they have suddenly become towards me.

This attitude in my opinion is aimed at belittling women and affecting their ability to do their job well and be successful. It also creates a kind of gendered relationship where the men are the controllers and the women are the controlled in the workplace. As mentioned in my earlier chapters, the experiences of women in conflict, their associational and social interactions and daily lives are often not reported and the implications of this on their general wellbeing is often underestimated.

It is argued that Hajia (Dr) Miriam Ladi'le's experience might be similar to that of other women across the various professions beyond the teaching and education sector, where the biology of an individual is projected ahead of their competence and experience with religion used as a controlling factor. Beyond the rhetoric of equal opportunity and access in Nigeria's Federal system, there is the need for a holistic approach that ensures that the rights of women and minor voices are heard. This is very crucial because women are facing an increased violation of the human right in the workplace especially the right to freedom. It is very common to hear women say that

the recent conflicts in Jos and the Middle Belt have brought a lot of mistrust into the workplace and thereby affecting the cohesion that would hitherto be essential to productivity.

In describing the impact of inter-ethnic prejudices and hostility and the struggle over scarce resources on the economy, Nnoli (1980:218) posits that:

Individuals to begin to give and receive ethnic preferences and to act on the basis of such expectations. But this outlook sanctions nepotism and thrives on it, sharply contradicts the bureaucratic and entrepreneurial ideals of efficiency, meritocracy and universalism. It encourages the bureaucrat to devote his working hours more to the serious and lucrative business of watching who moves up in the hierarchy than his responsibility to the society as a whole. In the process he exacerbates interethnic tension.

Nnoli's (1980) point supports the argument put forward in this chapter, that the struggle among groups and individuals within the society and within formal organisations is exacerbated by inter-ethnic tensions. These struggles increase the hostility between members of ethno-religious groups who fear and conceive of one another as untrustworthy, thereby making it easy for them to manipulate group sentiments, even in the workplace.

7.12 Conclusion: The Failure to Institutionalise Liberal Values in the Workplace

Since independence, Nigeria's institutions are said to be run based on liberal values. But how women are treated in institutions in the Middle Belt and Nigeria suggests otherwise and that liberal values have not been institutionalized in Nigeria, particularly

considering the way and manner in which women and their concerns are almost shut out, whether in formal organizations in the public square or in religious matters. Given the general disparity in women's employment in other sectors of the economy and the context within which women experience discrimination and violence during conflict, this thesis argues that what makes competition in Nigeria's workplaces so serious is the idea of the 'national cake.' The non-implementation of liberal values certainly favours this principle and men who are able to introduce and influence policies that disadvantage others are ensured exclusive access to this cake.

In addition, by not educating women and encouraging the gender gap in employment to persist Nigerian society is losing out in terms of the economic productivity that would result from increased investment in human capital; and the impact of women's education on how children are raised will in turn will affect the future development of the country. By keeping Northern women relatively uneducated and backward, both the North, Middle Belt and Nigeria at large are losing by not developing the human resource of a majority of its population. Further, the attitude of men towards women and of certain religious groups towards others is a significant part of a broader strategy to maintain control of the labour market and reduce competition by discrediting others and increasing ones chances of retaining success. There is the danger that suspicious or negative attitudes towards most of the increasing numbers of female teachers in the schools may adversely affect the students they teach. First, the students will be taught by "disgruntled, uninspiring teachers. As such, their interest in learning may become blunted. Secondly, those students who may be looking at their teachers as role models and motivators in their search for career choice may develop hostile and negative

attitudes towards teaching, and hence reject it as a possible career option” (Nwagwu, 1994: 177).

Another significant point is that discrimination in the workplace contributes to making women feel unsafe there. In addition existing policies in many other organisations like the military are discriminatory and not liberal, thereby constituting a barrier to women’s career progression. Furthermore, there are no complaint procedures for women to report any form of structural violence they face. This is because their complaints are not normally taken seriously. As in many other professions in the world, reporting such complaints may increase their vulnerability and they end up falling victims of the same crime that was committed against them.¹⁴⁶

In the public sphere, local debates about inclusion and exclusion centre on ethnic and religious boundaries rather than on the relations between different social groups, meaning that women are less likely to be accepted as equal partners in the formal sector. The ever-increasing focus on, and control of, female behaviour and dress within the public sector significantly affects confidence in the workplace. The idea that women are subject to scrutiny, fuelled by the widespread sense of alienation at the communal level from those public sector workers who belong to another group, also increasingly shapes the interaction of public sector workers with the public. In professions dominated by Christian women, such as education, this can lead to particular forms of gendered aggression and alienation.

¹⁴⁶ For instance, Dr Caroline Tan who was a surgical student at a Melbourne hospital in Australia filed in a case of sexual harassment. When she won the sexual harassment suit against a superior, she was “blackballed” as a result and had not been able to get work at a hospital. See McMullin, (2015).

Equitable human resources policies and policies to ensure a respectful work environment are both crucial to supporting female recruitment, retention and advancement (Gaaderse & Valasek, 2011:9). As this chapter illustrates, experiences of ethno-religious conflict affect relationships at the workplace negatively and destructively, especially for women who are at the receiving end of criticism directed both at their religious group and their gender. The workplace has also become what Gwamna (2010) refers to as a ceaseless battleground for ethnic and religious demagogues who are continually fanning the flames of religious intolerance. They use religion and ethnicity not just to support their general dislike but, especially where women are concerned, also as a very personal critique of character and good upbringing. The contribution of women to education and the formal sector is seen through a doubly critical lens that criticises them both as members of particular groups and as women.

The professional positions/status of men and women cannot be considered to be equal, since women usually occupy less senior positions and men make laws that affect organisations and women in obviously negative ways. This is exacerbated where religion has become a weapon of control and discrimination, especially when women are expected to conform to certain behavioural and dress patterns. This is done with the aim of checkmating the growth of women in the teaching and many other professions. While it is hard to imagine the hostility and opposition faced by many women in whatever organisation they work in, the research evidence suggests that such discrimination and violence is not limited to the female gender but also other men who tend to be in a minority in a particular situation. However, this needs to be studied further in understanding group dynamics.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

8.1 Summary of the Findings

This study is an exploration and analysis of the impact of ethno-religious conflict both on the everyday lives of women and on gender relations more generally in Nigeria. It has shown that as a result of conflict in Jos and the Middle Belt, gendered differences and difficulties have increased, and that even outside direct conflict situations women are disadvantaged in many aspects of life, including their marital and family lives, trade and work in the formal sector, and the political system. It has also explained that both ethnicity and religion have been mobilized in the context of competition for the national cake (Bayart, 2009). While this mobilization primarily aims at excluding others, it also contributes, directly and indirectly, to the exclusion of women.

This research has established that, within Nigeria's Federal system, resource distribution and control encourages ethnic and religious leaders to mobilize group sentiments and fan conflict in pursuit of personal and political gains through access to, and control of, the local state and its resources. Although conflicts have existed in Jos for decades before the present day, the beginning of the democratic era in 1999 offered increased opportunities for groups to mobilize and compete. Even where this has led to conflict, leaders have been able to legitimize their actions on the grounds of demanding recognition within a democratic Federal system.

Federalism in Nigeria was expected to integrate and encompass all the differences and minority groups, providing a level playing ground for even development (Elaigwu, 2005; Suberu, 2001), it denotes a principle of minority-group inclusion in Federal

government and its affairs.¹⁴⁷ This initial role of Federalism led to the creation of many States and Local Government units in response to demands for representation by ethno-religious and ethno-linguistic groups. However, each time a new Federal unit was created to satisfy what became a new majority in that unit new minorities also were created, and all down the line women's concerns and voices were not usually considered as part of the process (see Sawyer & Vickers, 2010). Worst still, many of the people and leaders who have promoted democratic Federalism in Nigeria have done so as a strategy for pursuing their private economic interests (Mill, 1861). Thus, the actual practice of Federalism breeds competition as is the case in Nigeria where the mobilization of ethnic and religious identities offers a network and a clientele in support of competitive local politics.

Chabal and Daloz (1999: 16) emphasize that the mobilization of group identities enables political entrepreneurs to maintain relevance and to accrue gains. Since Nigeria's return to civilian rule, many sections of its elite have deliberately intensified competition in order to ensure that they gain access to the 'national cake'. This process is not just linked to the political liberalisation of the country, but also reflects its economic effects. As the public sector has declined, politics now offers an alternative area in which individuals can pursue self-realisation. Bayart's metaphor of the 'politics of the belly' illuminates the rationale governing a society based on personal networks, where links based on family, alliance and friendship – as well as of course ethnicity and religion – ensure access to power (2009: 260-262). He specifically points out that

¹⁴⁷Refer to the 1979 and 1999 Nigerian Constitution. It provided for the even representation of Nigerians through the Federal Character principle.

“ethnicity is almost never absent from politics in Africa...It exists mainly as an agent of accumulation- both of wealth and power” (Bayart, 2009: 55).

These tactics are linked to the widespread belief that in Nigeria people could only run for office in units in which their ethno-religious group was the majority and in control. In democratic Federations like Nigeria, the constitution is supposed to protect individuals of different ethnic and religious groups when they are in the minority. One might imagine that this protection should also extend to vulnerable groups like women. But neither is the case, as long as parties and politicians continue to rely on personalised power and draw legitimacy from practices of redistribution (Chabal & Daloz, 1999: 2). As a result, many believe that minorities can only achieve fair treatment if they too become majorities, which has led to the clamour for ever smaller areas of local government. In Jos, most of the ethnic groups and religious bodies believe that if they take control of government, they can use its power to drive others off the land they consider their own, or to deny them access to locally held resources. As this thesis illustrates, the growing importance of identity politics have also led to a transformation of gender relations.

The majority of the women interviewed for this thesis – regardless of faith, belief, religion, culture and ideology – face daily discrimination. Their experiences suggest that as ethnic and religious conflict redefines society it transforms gender relationships in many walks of life. As discussed in chapter four, it was seen that women in inter-faith marriages become easy targets of mistrust and suspicion. The fact that the position of women in Nigerian society is related both to their ability to negotiate acceptability within the family and within the larger and more general religious communities to which the families belong, means that “they often are in a theoretical

position of choice to demonstrate loyalty to their own husband's clan" (Strathern, 1995: 281). In Jos and the Middle Belt, this perception means that these women's loyalty is continuously tested. And because the women already hold a position of in-betweenness between their natal families and their in-laws, knowing the inner workings of the two families, the contradiction is that these women are widely recognised not only as mediators but also as potential 'enemies within' as they are in the perfect position to play off one group against another.

Thus, as group boundaries are hardened and affirmed, women are increasingly seen, in all areas of life as well as in the family, not as potential links between groups but as intruders and threats. The situation described in chapter six illustrates that as political leaders, even at the lowest level of government invest great energy to maintaining exclusive control of their political territory, women are increasingly considered untrustworthy simply on the basis of their sex.

At the political level, the desire for ever smaller groups to be recognised works against the representation of women. At the private level, the growing importance of group boundaries means that women's life choices are increasingly subject to control. Beyond the private, the growing importance of group boundaries makes it increasingly difficult for women to participate in the informal sector, especially in typically female activities such as trading and selling, because many trading networks historically cut across ethnic and religious differences. As existing networks are replaced by parallel ethno-religiously based economic structures, the increased violence and insecurity of change, as well as the growing control of female activities, is often associated with a relative empowerment of men vis-à-vis women. Chapter five shows how market and trading networks have been restructured in the wake of many conflicts. Market traders,

like politicians, have also been faced with forced displacement and violence and affected by growing insecurity, which has reduced their ability to access resources they had used previously. The conflicts have forced them increasingly into relations where they relied only on trust if they must remain in business.

As the exclusion of women in Nigerian politics shows little sign of ending, one can also understand the 'politics of disorder' (Chabal & Daloz, 1999) as an ongoing gendered struggle in which women and other social groups are disadvantaged. As political leaders mobilise their teeming supporters through a focus on shared religious and ethnic identities, the implicit disadvantage of this discourse to women is indirect and not always clear to their audience. Despite the fact that the increasing political competition disadvantages them, some women may be as convinced of the need to patrol group boundaries as men. The in-between position associated with women on the basis of their gender also encourages others to try to overcome these growing social divisions.

Discrimination and violence have also affected the professional environment. Unhealthy forms of competition have implicitly institutionalised structural violence in the workplace to the disadvantage of women. For example, in this context, Chabal and Daloz (1999: 6) point out that "offices are allocated to clients on the basis of patronage, rather than according to the criteria of professionalism and competence which [is supposed to] characterise the civil service." The situation described in chapter seven shows that, women occupy subordinate positions and are at the receiving end of oppressive practices of organisations. Women's oppression in the formal sector goes to show that not all clients are equal, especially when the suspicion of women, both as

representatives of their group and as potential transgressors of group boundaries, has led to an increasing scrutiny of women.

Further, in the public sphere, competition and conflict exclude women partly because of their greater –perceived or real – vulnerability to violence. In addition to this, the fact that local debates about inclusion and exclusion centre on ethnic and religious boundaries rather than on different social groups means that women are less likely to be included in the local political elite; because given the association of women with the transcendence or transgression of group boundaries in private life, they are, in the Nigerian context, seen as being less capable than men of representing overall group interests. Moreover, the privileging of ethnic and religious difference in political discourse means that the representation of different social groups, including those defined by gender, appears to many people as having secondary importance.

Finally, experiences in Jos and Middle Belt suggest that the struggles over the control of resources; the national cake, the increasing political division of the population into separate factions even within the formal professional environment of public sector workers, and the displacement of markets is the starting point for mistrust and discrimination. Similarly, the control of female behaviour and the widespread mistrust about inter-faith marriages has left women vulnerable in their homes and community. This means that differences are increasingly reinforced in everyday relations leading to increasing alienation of women in all aspects of life.

8.2 Contribution to Knowledge

The strength of this study is its exploration and analysis of the implication of the struggle for scarce resources on gender relations and on the everyday life experiences of women through personal narratives. This thesis is a modest contribution to the discourse on ethno-religious conflict, gender relations and democracy in Nigeria and in Africa. It also offers a new perspective on the study of women in conflict by studying the disadvantages faced by women in everyday life, instead of focusing on the aspect of physical loss and injury which constitutes much of the existing research on conflict, both in Jos and the Middle Belt and beyond. By exploring the way in which everyday social relations are gendered, this research also offers a contribution to the understanding of various aspects of the social life of ordinary women in Nigeria. By exploring the areas of marriage, politics, trade and professions, it also offers an insight into the way in which gendered inequality is linked to other forms of social inequality.

Although this research has focused on the impact of conflict on gender relations and the everyday life of women in Nigeria's Middle Belt, the findings may potentially be useful for other African countries that experience recurring conflicts. Exploring the everyday problems faced by women in a conflict zone, this study offers a valuable means of understanding how various peace intervention measures or conventions on the rights of women, like the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the Beijing Platform of Action and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR-1325), can become successful. This can be achieved by integrating the various aspects of this study into the implementation strategy because it provides an understanding of the everyday life experiences of women. Although this approach might be time consuming, it is the most productive means of understanding the impact

of social dynamics on a large and comprehensive scale. Because of its subtlety, further research into the everyday lives of women also offers the possibility of ensuring the success, not just of these conventions, but also achieving durable peace and gender equity in society.

8.3 Areas for Further Research

This thesis has described an alternative approach to understanding the impact of conflict on the everyday lives of women and gender relations in Nigeria by using appropriate and rigorous methods to explain the experiences of these women especially when it comes to conflicts. As discussed, the conflicts are a result of the incessant struggle and intense competition for power which characterise the Federal system in Nigeria. And this study has revealed the suffering this has caused as well as the impact it has had on many women, their children, as well as their spouses. And because very little is known about the impact of the conflict on men in inter-faith marriages and their children, It is necessary for further research to seek an understanding of how these issues disadvantage men and the children in inter-faith families.

There is equally a need for more comprehensive research which fully addresses the gender constraints of women in divided communities. The focus should be on opening up discussions on other ways in which conflict continues to disadvantage women and therefore impacts on gender inequality. The possible research areas could include the long term impact of conflict in increasingly segregated settlements and on social integration. This in turn may have repercussions for the implementation of gender equity policies and conventions. This is important because these policies are the

blueprint for the vital involvement of government and other decision-makers and power brokers in the country.

More in-depth research is required also into the integration of the four areas explored in this research, namely inter-faith marriage, economic and professional lives, and politics. Such research should precede any further research and policies directed at incorporating both men and women in conflict and post-conflict societies. For any development policy to be successful, it has to take into account the effect of conflict on women's everyday lived experiences as persons who are at the extreme end of the power relations in society. Only by so doing will we understand the causal link between women and their disadvantaged position in many other aspects of society. This approach will be helpful to understanding the persistent inequality between men and women.

Finally, further research is also needed on the role of traditional and religious institutions in Jos and the Middle Belt in shaping gender discourses and relationships.

8.4 The Way Forward

First, there is an urgent need for society to deconstruct the structure of violence and unhealthy competition in relation to power and economic resources, and construct networks of peace among ordinary people, most especially women. This can be achieved by integrating women into different positions of power and giving them a role as effective actors in the management and resolution of conflict (see Elaigwu, 2012). Secondly, there is the need to open up channels of communication to break down "sentimental walls as well as stereotypes, and erode prejudices that were deeply

entrenched” (Elaigwu, 2012: 3) as a result of the lingering conflict. To really address this, there is need for strong leadership among women who are very courageous to challenge the system. In pursuing this goal, the political machinery, and especially male dominated party executives, should be encouraged to give women leadership positions and give women the opportunity to stand for/compete for leadership positions. Husbands and male relatives who act as gatekeepers who prevent women being able to act as independent persons should be condemned. One way might be to expose, or even punish, anyone found guilty of using provocative words or messages, especially directed at female politicians. Such condemnation should be extended to the various professions and the community at large.

For women to move ahead in society, they have to find a way of working with men who are sympathetic towards the cause of women’s liberation. House-Midamba & Ekechi (1995: 31) demonstrates how this can be achieved- Firstly, they propose building links with prominent male members of parties and institutions who are willing to be incorporated into market organisations through offices and honorary titles. Secondly, men may be appointed as honorary consuls, not because women cannot undertake this role, but as a clever way of forging alliances with men who can deliver crucial linkages with power, authority and resources. It is important, however, to ensure that such men are unable to hijack such positions to the disadvantage of the women who invited them.

Finally, a very important task will be to find ways that encourage the more equitable position of women through moral reform. Every head, community leader, party and government institution should secure justice and truth in all dealings by ensuring that there are no more conflicts. In addition, those holding power and responsibility must

focus on establishing processes that ensure victims of the conflict are able to secure their rights to truth, justice and reparations, and they must guarantee that violations will not be repeated.

From my point of view as a Nigerian, it is also remarkable that the thesis has illustrated that religion itself can be a burden when it is used to discriminate, marginalise, dominate and control. Often religion is thought of by believers to be a source of peace, calm, blessing and strength. But the reality described in this thesis by the people that I interviewed suggests it is far more complicated. Rather it is an empirical question depending on the social context since, in the personal evidence presented in this thesis, religion appears to be a problematic and political issue, most especially for women.

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APPENDIX I Plateau State Indigenous Ethnic Groups

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Afizere | 18. Irigwe | 35. Mwachavul |
| 2. Amo | 19. Jere | 36. Ngas |
| 3. Anaguta | 20. Janji | 37. Nteng |
| 4. Attakar | 21. Jipal | 38. Paipung |
| 5. Atten | 22. Jar | 39. Piti |
| 6. Basher | 23. Jukun | 40. Pyem |
| 7. Berom | 24. Kadung | 41. Ribina |
| 8. Bogghom | 25. Koennoem | 42. Ron |
| 9. Buji | 26. Kulere | 43. Rukuba (Bache) |
| 10. Bwall | 27. Kurama | 44. Runzu |
| 11. Bwarak | 28. Kwagalak | 45. Takas |
| 12. Chakfem | 29. Lemoro | 46. Tal |
| 13. Chokoboko | 30. Miship | 47. Tambes |
| 14. Doemak | 31. Montol (Tehl) | 48. Tarok |
| 15. Fier | 32. Merniyang | 49. Tarya |
| 16. Gamai | 33. Mupun | 50. Youm |
| 17. Gusu | 34. Mushere | |

Source: Plateau Indigenous Development Association Network (PIDAN), The History, Ownership, Establishment and Misconceptions about the Recurrent Jos Conflicts. Vol. 1.

Appendix 2: Kaduna State Indigenous Ethnic Groups

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Adara (Kadara) | 19. Gbagyi | 36. Kuvori (Surubu) |
| 2. Akurmin (Kurama) | 20. Gure | 37. Kuturmi |
| 3. Anghan (Kamanton) | 21. Gwandara | 38. Lemoro |
| 4. Amo | 22. Gwong (Kagoma) | 39. Mada (Mardan) |
| 5. Aruruma (Ruruma) | 23. Ham (Jaba, Chori, Lungu, amba) | 40. Moroa |
| 6. Ataka | 24. Hausa | 41. Nandu |
| 7. Atachaat (Kachechere) | 24. Jangi | 42. Nduyah |
| 8. Atyab (Kataf) | 26. Kaibi | 43. Numana |
| 9. Atuku | 27. Kaje | 44. Ningeshe |
| 10. Ayu | 28. Kahugu | 45. Ninkyop |
| 11. Bajju | 29. Kaningkon (Nindem, Kanufi) | 46. Ninzo (Ninzam) |
| 12. Bakulu (Ikulu) | 30. Kigono | 47. Nunku |
| 13. Bhazar (Koro) | 31. Kinugu | 48. Nyenkpa (Yeskwa) |
| 14. Bur (Sanga) | 32. Kitimi | 49. Oegworok |
| 15. Binawa | 33. Kiwafa | 50. Pikal |
| 16. Dingi | 34. Kiwollo | 51. Pitti |
| 17. Fantswam | 35. Kono | 52. Ribang |
| 18. Fulfulde | | 53. Rishuwa |
| | | 54. Rumada |

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------|-------------------|
| 55. Rumayya | 58. Siyawa | 61. Tsam (Chawai) |
| 56. Shemawa | 59. Takad | |
| 57. Sholio (Marwa) | 60. Tarri | |

Source: Adopted from Hayab, P. (2014) Part of ongoing doctoral research on sociolinguistics at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. Additional Names and revisions have been added from 2012/2013 field notes © Plangsats Dayil.

Appendix 3: List of Ethnic Groups in Nasarawa State

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Agatu | 7. Gade | 14. Lijili |
| 2. Alago | 8. Goemai | 15. Basa-Gumna – is extinct |
| 3. Basa | 9. Gwandara | |
| 4. Ebira | 11. Ham | |
| 5. Eggon | 12. Kanuri | |
| 6. Gbagyi | 13. Kofyar | |

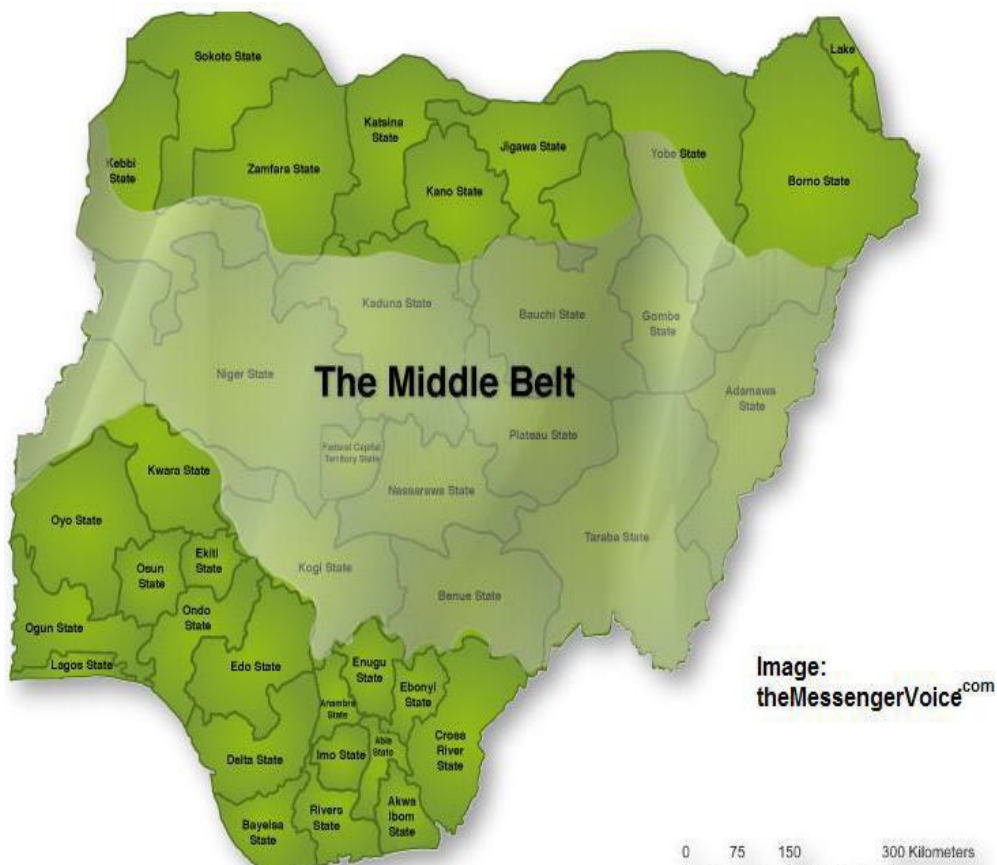
Source: Field Notes 2012/2013 © Plangsats Dayil.

Appendix 4: List of Ethnic Groups in Benue State

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Tiv | 6. Juku |
| 2. Idoma | 7. Hausa |
| 3. Igede | 8. Akweya |
| 4. Etulo | 9. Nyifon |
| 5. Abakpa | |

Source: Field Notes 2012/2013 © Plangsats Dayil.

Appendix 5: Map of Nigeria Showing the Middle Belt.



Source: The MessengerVoice.com 2013