

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF BOUNDARY DISPUTES IN IKWO LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT AREA OF EBONYI STATE: A CASE STUDY OF THE CONFLICT  
BETWEEN INYIMAGU AND IGBUDU COMMUNITIES FROM 1935-1996**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

*Boundary dispute is one of the social issues that have persisted at both individual and group relationship despite its negative attendant consequences. This study was carried out to examine the socio-economic effects of boundary disputes in Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. The study was anchored on Group theory analysis. The scope of the study was limited to the conflict between Inyimegu and Igbudu communities from 1935-1996. This study adopted survey approach as the research design. Population of the study is three thousand five hundred (3500) adult males between of the age of sixty five years and above. A sample size of one hundred and fifty was randomly drawn from the population through appropriate sampling technique. Four research question and two hypotheses stated in null and alternate form guided the study. While data collected were analyzed using simple percentages. Hypotheses tested shows that the conflict has significant influence in the socio-economic life of the people of Inyimegu and Igbudu. Among the findings made was that conflict has serious socio-economic effects on Inyimegu and Igbudu communities. Recommendations were made which include that government should proactively address the identified factors for communal crisis between Inyimegu and Igbudu Communities without playing unnecessary politics' with it.*

**INTRODUCTION**

**Background to the Study**

It is no longer strange and frightening in our daily prints and voice media to hear of sporadic cases of boundary disputes world over. While some are domestic, some take international outlook all in the bid to delimit and demarcate territorial scope occasioned by

expansionist tendency in man. However, boundary dispute is old as civilization of mankind in general and awareness in all spheres of economic and socio-political life in particular.

Boundary disputes among communities in Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State have received uneasy attention from both the state and local governments even as they take different dimensions such as village(s) against village or community against community. With particular reference to Inyimegu and Igbudu clashes between the two communities have been an age long catastrophe that has constantly threatened the unity of both communities and the supposed bilateral relationship that would have catapulted economic and social development to reasonable point. Indeed, no year passes without witnessing one outbreak or the other, and in each case, many lives and properties worth million of naira were destroyed. In consonance, Oji cited in Uwakwe (2017) observes that one of the common features of these conflicts is their confrontational and violent dimension which led to the lot of lives and properties of people who hitherto lives together in relative harmony. Therefore, looking at boundary dispute from the angel of such heavy material and human losses incurred in every instance of it, could be viewed in this modern era as barbaric and otiose that should be avoided for human societies to justify their existences in the world of interdependence of parts which is necessary for meaningful development to occur. In other words, loss of physical and human resources resulting from boundary dispute is antediluvian in every sense of reasoning and action. Contemplation of war in that direction could also be viewed as bunkum endeavor that does no good to parties involved.

However, since according to Marx's mechanistic view that "history is inevitable on the side of the people" (Chikendu and Kalu 1996:74), war must be executed any way. Undoubtedly, the boundary dispute between Inyimegu and Igbudu communities has wasted both human and economic resources since its eruption. The crisis has left a lot of people with untold hardship

hence my interest to go into a brain stormy study as a way of finding out the circumstance surrounding the constant outbreak of the clash and ways to its panacea.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Central to this study are the concepts of boundary dispute and conflict. Explanatorily, Adejuyigbe in UbongAbasi, Udoh and Okpaleke (2017) maintain that;

A boundary dispute exists when one of the parties separated by its objects to boundary being suggested or will desired by the order. The suggestion may be aimed at fixing a boundary where none was in existence before or replacing an existing one which unsatisfactory to party making the suggestion. An objection to the suggested boundary could be made because the objecting community feels that the suggestion does not accord its conception of its own territorial rights on, in the case of a previously fixed boundary, it is dissatisfied with the existing or demarcated boundary.

Oludoyi in UbongAbasi et al (2017) also posit that boundary dispute occurs when there are conflicting claims by two or more communities having contiguous territories over the right to ownership of title to an identified piece of land. On the other hand conflict according to Ekong (2010) is that form of social interactions in which the actors seek to obtain scarce reward by eliminating or weakening other contenders through various forms including fist fight, threats, litigation or total annihilation. It is the social process in which individuals or groups seek their by directly challenging the antagonist by violence.

An elaborate probe of the topic under study will reveal that there is shortage of written work especially on the boundary dispute between Inyimegu and Igbudu communities in Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. However, we will not fail to avail ourselves the review of the available literatures. Africa in general as a continent has grossly received irresistible attack from other continent(s) such as Europe. The attack has unarguable distorted its political, social, economic and strategic influences. The ugly experience indeed, is not without interest connotation. The distortion was beautifying articulated by Boggs in Okanya (1995:201) when he asserts correctly that “the location of a boundary line may decide for millions of people the language and ideas which children shall be taught at school, the book and Newspaper which

people will be able to buy and read, the kind of money they shall use, the market in which they must buy and sell..." Although Boggs had on one part articulated the implication of boundary delimitation and demarcation and in another part failed to identify what give rise to incessant clamoring for boundary demarcation. It is worthy of note that the unilateral boundary delimitation of African lands by the European powers of 19<sup>th</sup> century, instigated and gave impetus to African tribes and communities on the need to subjugate one another under the influence of boundary dispute. In other words, the implication of European's action in Africa, following the Berlin conference of 1884/85, is the constant boundary disputes among Africa communities and clans. As can be deduced from Boggs view, all the boundary disputes are not without conflict of ideas explanation, as characterized by 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries world and Africa in particular. Alluding to this fact, professor Burns in his book: "ideas in conflict"; in Awake (1985) maintains that;

In all probability, historians of the future will look back upon the twentieth century as one of the most crucial invert neat characterizations for it, calling it perhaps the Age of world conflict, the Age of Revolution and counter Revolution, the Age of completing ideologies, or more imply the Age of Agony.

Unarguable, Europeans powers through Berlin conference of 1884/85 partitioned Africa without cognizance of the natural boundaries that were in existence before their arrival. Hence, what they destroyed eventually leads to ethnic, regional national conflicts all in the name of boundary disputes. In fact, there is scarcely any community, state or country in Africa per se that is not strangled by border clash. In the same vein UbongAbasi, Udoh and Okpaleke (2017) affirm that all the land border disputes have their root in the partition exercise conducted by European nation. According to Okanya (1995:201), "more often than not nations display utmost interest in boundary dispute for the fact that the outcome of such dispute is bound to have far reaching consequence on the life of the countries concerned".

Speaking over forty years ago, Mcewen (1971:1) maintains that:

Boundaries are the razor's edge on which hang, suspended the modern issues of war or peace, of life or death to nations and that just as the protection of the home is the most vital care of the private citizen, so the integrity of her borders is the condition of existence of state.

Although boundary disputes in developing countries and Africa in particular share common origin, to the extent that they all stem from imperial partitioning of African lands they also vary considerably in complexity and pedigree that some form part of present international boundary disputes or problems. Similarly, Northledge and Donelan (1971:70) state that "... of the various kinds of disputes between states, the most frequent is that in which two states or groups of states are in direct conflict with one another about a particular piece of territory or the like". They further maintain that communities value things they dispute for. It is therefore obvious at least for one of the disputant communities, that the value of a thing in question depends entirely on the belief that it is her own.

According to Rann in Mcwene (1971), human importance attached to territorial ownership more or less causes boundary disputes. With regard to human importance, Inyimagu community in 1935 sued Igbudu in AgubiaIkwu native court, case No. 370/1935. The claim was for Igbudu to stop encroachment on Inyimagu's land and to remove their houses from the land. Judgment was in favour of Inyimagu and a cost of 4/s (Four shillings) was awarded against Igbudu. The judgment was for the Igbudu community subjects living at "Isokpoto" and "Ofutu" farm lands to remove their houses that the land should remain farm land for both communities (Inyimegu and Igbudu). Signed by Utobo Ezaku warrant President, Agubia Native Court dated 26/1/1936.

Writing on what could bring dispute and possibly stretching to boundary dispute, Northledge and Donelan (191:70) in a rather lengthy quotation state thus:

A state may value thing primarily or even exclusively because it is interested in the thing itself. In 1958, a dispute broke out between Iceland and Britain because Iceland claimed that its territorial waters should henceforth extend to twelve miles rather of deepest importance to Iceland's economy and of some importance to Britain's. More widely, what was at stake for Britain among others was the effect of this more in the current world-wide question of the extent of international waters. What was not at stake to any great degree was national honour but Iceland was not a competitor with Britain in this, it is simply a competitor in the fisheries. It was plainly not seeking to humiliate Britain; it wants only the fish.

It can be argued from the submission on Northedge and Donelan that the value of interest which is common to parties involved in boundary dispute is the major driving force of it in every society.

In summation, evidence from the literature reviewed shows that boundary disputes are pervasive social issue caused by conflicting interests over title of ownership of identified parcel of land. Although the review has helped to identify some causes of boundary dispute such as interest, expansionist quest among others, it has not pointed out the socio-economic effects of it on the people of Inyimegu and Igbudu communities in Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework chosen for analysis of this study is the Group theory propounded by Arthur F. Bentley. This is because of the theory's relevance to this study. The advocates of this theory treat interest as central to the understanding of politics and at the same time see it as the shared attitude concerning a claim or claims to be made by one group upon certain other groups in a social system. David Truman one of the proponents of this theory, in Verma (1975) asserts that it is through the social system that various groups seek to realize or maximize their interest. Against the backdrop of inherent display of interest on group activities,

this study looks at the activities of disputant communities (Inyimegu and Igbudu) as rooted on varied interests, ego inclusive. In other words, the belief by the key players that each community has a relative power advantage over the other, serves as a push factor on every display of physical combat.

### **Statement of Problem**

The period beginning from twentieth century has been described by Burns (1985:3) as the age of competing ideologies. Perhaps this might have been caused by civilization forces in the global world, European industrial Revolution, mankind sub-conscious enlightenment and awareness, changes in times and taste, to mention but a few.

Beginning from June 1935 series of legal actions have been taken against each other by Inyimegu and Igbudu communities as a way to ameliorate the dispute. Notwithstanding, the numerous legal actions and counter suits on both side, there have been horrible terrorizing display of physical combat over the disputed land hence putting observers and people concerned in a state of despair without solution hence the statement of problem of the study. In other words, the conflict has continued to develop, leading to frequent killing of people and destruction of people's properties despite repeated meetings and declaration to stop the dispute. The above cases are therefore problems that have occupied the mind of observers in general and the researcher in particular.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Accordingly, the main purpose of this study is to examine the socio-economic effects of boundary disputes in Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. Specifically, this study intends to:

1. Identify the factor that led to incessant boundary conflict between the two communities.

2. Examine the socio-economic effects of the conflicts on the inhabitants of the communities.
3. Find out the role played to solve the problem by governments and traditional rulers.
4. Proffer possible solution to the problem of such boundary dispute.

### **Justification for the Study**

The significance of this study is that readers of it shall be affected positively in their attitude toward conflict management and resolution. This without doubt will go a long way to preserve any level of development that may have taken place in the society. It is also expected that this study will be useful for settlement of dispute between Inyimegu and Igbudu communities in Ikwo and other Local Government within and outside Ebonyi State that share similar problem. Besides, community leaders and committee on boundary adjustment in Nigeria will also have the vantage of this study on addressing the issue of boundary disputes.

Finally, this study on completion will not only be useful to scholars of domestic conflict management and resolution but also to the public leaders in planning development programme in our present day everywhere communal boundary disputes.

### **Scope of the study**

This study exclusively concentrates on Inyimegu and Igbudu communities in Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. It is therefore, specifically concerned with examination of socio-economic effects of boundary dispute between the two communities on the inhabitants. There are many conflicting communities in Ikwo Local Government Area but our area of study is Inyimegu and Igbudu communities. This is to avoid result different from that to be deduced from our case study. Therefore boundary dispute between Inyimegu and Igbudu communities.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the factors for boundary dispute between Inyimegu and Igbudu communities?
2. What are the socio-economic activities in Inyimegu and Igbudu communities?
3. What are the roles played by government and traditional rulers in combating the crisis?
4. What are the possible solutions to the problems associated with boundary dispute between Inyimegu and Igbudu communities?

## **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses states in null and alternative form are formulated for this study.

Ho: Boundary dispute has no significant effect on socio-economic activities in Inyimegu and Igbudu communities.

H1: Boundary dispute has a significant effect on the socio-economic activities in Inyimegu and Igbudu communities.

## **METHOD**

The researcher in this section concisely presented the procedure and methodology employed in carried out the study. These include the following sub-heading: Research Design; Area of the Study; Population of the Study; Sample and Sampling Techniques; Instrument for Data Collection; Validation of the Instrument; Reliability of the Instrument; Method of Data Collection and Method of Data Analysis.

### **Research Design**

This study being a descriptive survey design was designed to identify the socio-economic effects of boundary dispute on the inhabitants of Inyimagu and Igbudu communities and other parts of Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. Descriptive design according to Osuala (1993) gives a picture of a situation with full understanding of the phenomena for making a wide range of policy decision.

### **Area of Study**

The research was carried out in Inyimegu and Igbudu communities of Ikwo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

### **Population of Study**

The population of this study comprises all adult males between the age of 65 years and above of Inyimegu and Igbudu Communities as well their brothers from (Amegu) the same ancestral father of “Ngbabuinyi”. Therefore the total population is three thousand five hundred (3500).

### **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

A sample of 150 adult males was selected using random sampling techniques from the three brothers’ autonomous communities of same ancestral father (NgbabuInyi). These communities in addition to Inyimegu and Igbudu include Amegu. Fifty (50) out of the total sample of 150 was selected from each autonomous community.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

This study being descriptive survey study employed the use of questionnaires as well a few open-end question to elicit information needed for data presentation. The questionnaire was four points likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

### **Validation of the Instrument**

The content validity of the instrument was determined with a test and measurement at which all items of the questionnaire were matched with the research questions to find out whether or not the instrument actually measured what it is supposed to measure.

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

Reliability of the instrument was determined using the test-retest reliability technique. The instrument on the first test was administered to 45 male adults in three communities in Ikwo

Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. After a period of three weeks the instruments were re-administered to the same respondents.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The method of data collection was used in this study was questionnaire. This was effectively done with the use of research assistant. Returns from 150 respondents were used for this study. This made it possible for the researcher to collect information from the respondents on opinion and attitude about the causes and the socio-economic effects of boundary dispute on the people of Inyimegu and Igbugu communities in Ebonyi State.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data analysis of this study was based completely on the use of statistical technique known as simple percentage. With it we were able to determine whether a set of observed frequencies correspond to the questionnaire under which the questionnaire will agree or disagree, accepted or rejected. Finally, the data collected were analyzed using percentages, questionnaire and the test-rest, while the hypotheses will be tested for significance at 0.05 alpha levels.

## PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

### Research question 1

What are the factors responsible for the conflict between Inyimegu and Igbudu Communities?

**Table 1:** Responses on the factors responsible for the conflict between Inyimegu and Igbudu Communities

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	DECISION
1	The presence of solid mineral deposit in the disputed areas	17 11.3%	32 21.3%	63 42%	38 25.5%	150 100%	Rejected
2	The presence of fertile soil for agriculture	51 34%	68 45.3%	19 12.6%	12 8%	150 100%	Accepted
3	The availability of natural forest and wild life reserves	42 28%	73 48.6%	14 9.3%	21 14%	150 100%	Accepted
4	The absence of an ancient land mark at the disputed area	61 40.6%	64 42.6%	15 10%	10 6.6%	150 100%	Accepted
5	Competition for supremacy by war lords of the rival communities	48 32.6%	54 36.6%	26 17.3%	22 14.6%	150 100%	Accepted

Table 1 indicates that items 2, 3, 4 and 5 had average percentage score above 50% which is the bench mark for the acceptance of any item as a factor influencing the study. The shows that the respondents agreed with those item statements as the factors responsible for the conflict between Inyimagu and Igbudu communities.

However, item number 1 had an average percentage of 32.6% which is below the acceptable bench mark. This shows that the respondents were of the view that the presence of solid mineral is not a factor in the conflict.

### Research question 1I

What are the socio-economic effects of the Inyimagu and Igbudu conflict

**Table II:** Responses on the socio-economic effects of the Inyimegu and Igbudu conflicts.

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	DECISION
6	The destruction of lives and infliction of injury on inhabitants of the two communities	52 34.6%	56 37.3%	26 17.3%	16 10.6%	150 100%	Accepted
7	Stranded relationships between the two warring communities	56 37.3%	52 34.6%	22 14.6%	20 13.3%	150 100%	Accepted
8	Retard economic development of the affected communities	39 26%	74 49.3%	17 11.3%	20 13.3%	150 100%	Accepted
9	Destruction of the property of the inhabitants of the two communities	41 27.3%	53 35.3%	38 25.3%	18 12%	150 100%	Accepted
10	Promotion of fear, anxiety and suspicion among the inhabitants of the two communities	35 23.3%	59 39.3%	32 21.3%	24 16%	150 100%	Accepted

Table 2 shows that items 6, 7 8, 9, and 10 obtained average percentage score above 50%. This indicates that the respondent accepted those items as socio-economic effects of the Inyimegu and Igbudu conflicts. This is supportive of Forsyth (1990) who opined that conflict occurs when the actions of beliefs of one of more members of a group are unacceptable to and hence are resisted by one or more groups or members. Therefore, the negative impact of these factors on the communities make this study a worthwhile venture.

### Research question 1II

What are the roles of government and traditional rulers in preventing the crisis?

**Table III:** Responses on the roles of government and traditional rulers in preventing the crisis

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	DECISION
11	Hosting of peace talks by rulers of the communities	60 40%	68 45%	12 8%	10 6.6%	150 100%	Accepted
12	Litigations by the affected communities through their leaders in the court of law	72 48%	48 32%	18 12%	12 8%	150 100%	Accepted
13	Boundary demarcating by government	18 12%	21 14%	45 30%	66 44%	150 100%	Accepted
14	Signing of peace treaties by rulers of the warring communities	75 50%	48 32%	15 10%	12 8%	150 100%	Accepted
15	Arrest and detention of war lords of the warring communities by government	20 13.3%	35 23.3%	60 40%	35 23.3%	150 100%	Rejected

Table III shows that items 11, 12, and 14 recorded percentage average above 50% showing that the respondent accepted those items as the roles of government and traditional rulers in preventing the crisis. However, the respondents objected to items 13 and 15. This was because there was never a time the government carried out boundary demarcation exercise between the two warring communities. There was also no report of arrest of any war lord of either communities by the government. This is a further indication that war lords of the warring communities were not after personal glory but....

### Research question 1V

What are the solutions to the conflict between Inyimegu and Igbudu Communities?

**Table IV** Responses on the solutions to the conflict between Inyimegu and Igbudu communities

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	DECISION
16	Sanctioning of political appointees of the warring communities by government	12 8%	9 6%	68 45.3%	61 40.6%	150 100%	Accepted
17	Proper boundaries demarcation between the two communities	72 48%	51 34%	18 12%	9 6%	150 100%	Accepted
18	The arrest and detention of war lords of the two communities by government	8 5.3%	30 20%	74 49.3%	38 25.3%	150 100%	Rejected
19	Effective monitoring and security of the disputed area by security agencies	65 43.3%	75 50%	6 4%	4 2.6%	150 100%	Accepted
20	The acceptance of the ruling over the disputed area by court of competent jurisdiction	54 36%	61 40.6%	19 12.6%	16 10.6%	150 100%	Accepted

In table IV items 17, 19, and 20 obtained average percentage score above 50%. This shows that the respondents accepted those items as the solutions to the Inyimegu and Igbudu conflicts. However, items 16 and 18 had average percentage score of 14% and 25.3% respectively showing the rejection of these items by the respondents as solution to the communal conflicts. This is because the respondent believed that both political appointees and war lords of the warring communities should not be punished undesirably while fighting for a common cause of the communities.

## **Summary of findings**

The findings of the study are hereby summarized thus,

1. There are some factors responsible for the conflicts between Inyimegu and Igbudu communities.
2. The conflict has serious socio-economic effect on Inyimegu and Igbudu communities.
3. The government and traditional rulers had played different roles previously to prevent the communal crisis.
4. A more functional strategies to combats the Inyimegu and Igbudu conflict was discovered.

## **DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section discussed the findings of the research. The conclusion and recommendations were also presented in this chapter.

### **Discussion**

Research question 1 was directed to identify the factors responsible for the Inyimegu and Igbudu conflict. From table 1 the respondent agreed that the cause of the conflict includes, the presence of solid minerals deposit, the presence of fertile soil for agriculture, availability of natural forest and wild life reserves, and the absence of an ancient demarcation land mark at the disputed area. However, the respondents did not agree that competition for supremacy by war lord of the two communities was a factor for the conflict.

The research question 2 sought to identify the socio-economic effects of the Inyimegu and Igbudu conflict. It was observed that the respondents agreed that item 6-10 were factors for the

conflict. It includes, destruction of lives and infliction of injury on inhabitants, strained relationships between the two communities, retard economic development of the two communities, destruction of property of the inhabitants and promotion of fear anxiety and suspicion among the people of the two communities.

Research question 3 sought to identify the roles of government and traditional rulers in controlling the conflict. It was discovered that the two communities have held peace talks. There have also existed litigations and counter litigations between the two warring communities in the court of law as well as signing of peace agreement by the rulers warring communities. However, it was discovered that the government has not actually carried out boundary demarcation between the two communities just as they have not been any arrest and detention of any war lord of the affected communities by the government. Lack of proper boundaries demarcation is perhaps the reason why the conflict has continued despite other measures adopted by both the government and the communities.

Research question 4 was designed to discover the solution to the Inyimegu and Igbudu conflict. It was observed that the respondents were of the opinion that one of the solution to the conflict was a proper boundary demarcation between the communities by government. This is very important as it appears there is no clear land mark and attack and counter attack between the communities occur mostly at the border area. Other strategies accepted by the respondents includes effective monitoring of the disputed area by security agencies. On the issue of litigation over the disputed area, the respondents accepted that it is important for the communities to accept court pronouncement on the disputed area. This measure can be supported by the deployment of enough security agencies to police the affected areas. However, sanctioning of

political appointees and war lords from the affected communities were not accepted by the respondents as solution to the communal crisis.

## **Conclusion**

Communities were created in Ebonyi State as one of the means of bringing development to the grassroots. Therefore, peace and unity are necessary factors for any meaningful development in the society. Unfortunately, this objective has not been fully realized in Ebonyi State due to the lingering crisis between Inyimegu and Igbudu communities. This crisis has brought retard development and strained relationship between people of the two communities. Therefore, for development thrive in Ebonyi State, there is need to have peace and unity among all the communities in Ebonyi state.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made,

1. The government should address the identified factors for communal crisis between Inyimegu and Igbudu communities.
2. The government in conjunction with the traditional rulers of the warring communities should address the identified socio-economic effects of the crisis.
3. The government and leaders of the affected communities should employ more than one strategy in combating the crisis.
4. The communities and their leaders should respect and accept government decisions on the matter.

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