

Religious Extremism and Violent Conflict in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria: An Exploration of Causes, Consequences, and, Solutions

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Abstract

This study investigates the complex relationships between religious extremism and violent conflict in Plateau State, Nigeria. A social survey design and stratified sampling technique were employed to gather data from a diverse range of participants. Data was collected through focal group discussions, in-depth interviews, and a review of judicial and research reports. The findings reveal that religious extremism, intolerance, social and economic inequality, leadership failure, and scarce land resources are key drivers of conflict. The study identifies early warning signals, immediate causes, and effects of violent conflicts, including paralysis of social and economic activities, destruction of properties and lives, and increased social vices. The research highlights the role of institutions such as traditional rulers, security agencies, and religious leaders in resolving conflicts. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on conflict resolution, religious studies, and social cohesion, offering valuable insights for policymakers, stakeholders, and scholars.

Keywords: religious extremism, violent conflict, Plateau State, Nigeria, conflict resolution, social survey design.

1.0 Introduction

Religious extremism has become a pervasive threat to peace and stability in Nigeria, particularly in Plateau State (Udofia, 2017). The state has witnessed a surge in violent conflicts, resulting in loss of lives, destruction of properties, and displacement of communities (Krause, 2010). According to Krause (2010), no fewer than 4,000 and possibly as many as 7,000 persons have been killed since late 2001, when the first major violence after decades broke out in Jos.

The Jos Plateau, once renowned for its peaceful coexistence, has been embroiled in a series of violent conflicts since 2001 (Sulaiman, 2016). These conflicts have been largely attributed to religious extremism, with both Christian and Muslim groups implicated (Gwaza, Dakum, & Bogoro, 2019). The devastating consequences of these conflicts have included the destruction of sacred places of worship, loss of livelihoods, and disruption of social cohesion. As noted by Gwaza, Dakum, and Bogoro (2019), the conflicts have had a significant impact on the economic development of the state, as well as the well-being of its citizens.

Despite the gravity of this situation, there is a dearth of research on the dynamics of religious extremism and its relationship to violent conflict in Plateau State. This study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by exploring the nature and trend of violent conflicts, the remote and immediate causes of these conflicts, and the role of religious extremism in perpetuating violence. By examining the complex interplay between religious extremism, ethnicity, and politics, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the root causes of violent conflict in Plateau State.

1.1 Concept of Religious Extremism

Extremism, as defined by Rainer (2004), refers to a state of fanaticism or radicalism that diverges from societal norms to promote narrowly accepted views. The term lacks precise meaning without a defined context—be it political, religious, or social. Prus (2005) describes religious extremism as intense ideological fervor manifested through activities reflecting devotion to specific belief systems, characterized by isolation, extensive proselytization, vilification of outsiders, and the criminalization of dissenters. He argues that religious extremists perceive their actions as normative rather than extreme. Liebman (2001) further views religious extremism as a desire to expand and enforce religious laws in both private and public spheres, leading to potential political conflict and social isolation. Crabtree (2015) adds that such extremism involves harmful actions based on strict adherence to religious teachings, often prioritizing religious guidance over secular law and human rights, ultimately leading to conflict due to unwillingness to accept differing perspectives.

1.2 Concept of Violent Conflict

Violent conflict, as defined by Frere and Wilen (2015), involves at least two parties using physical force to address competing claims, often associated with war when a government is involved. Conflicts are categorized based on annual battle-related deaths, with 25 deaths marking the threshold for distinction: under 1000 deaths classify as minor, 25-1000 as intermediate, and over 1000 as major armed conflict. The classification can also depend on the nature of the actors involved and the location, though the lines between national and international conflicts can be ambiguous, illustrated by the Congo war, which evolved from a national to an international conflict, earning the title of the 'First African World War' (Reyntjens, 2009).

1.3 Theoretical Framework

1.3.1 Functional and Structural Approach of Theories of Religion

The structural-functional approach in sociology views society as a cohesive system where various parts work together to maintain stability and solidarity. It emphasizes the role of social structures, such as families and religious organizations, in shaping individual lives and behaviors Kingsbury & Scanzoni (1993). Emile Durkheim's contributions to this perspective highlight religion as a vital element of social cohesion, providing shared beliefs, social control, and existential meaning (D'Orsi & Dei, 2018). Durkheim posited that religion is a reflection of society itself, emerging from collective consciousness, and its complexity varies with societal complexity. However, this approach faces criticism for neglecting the negative aspects of religion, such as its potential to justify violence and terrorism.

1.3.2 Conflict theory

Conflict theory posits that society operates as a competition for limited resources, a perspective largely associated with Karl Marx (Bartos & Wehr, 2002). Marx viewed social structures as composed of various classes vying for essential resources like food, housing, and education, which reveals inherent inequalities in institutions such as government and religion (Allman, 2019). . This struggle allows certain individuals and organizations to accrue more resources, perpetuating a cycle of power and influence that sustains social hierarchies. Expanding on Marx's ideas, Ludwig Gumplowicz argued that war and conquest shape civilizations, with cultural and ethnic conflicts leading to dominance by specific groups (Horowitz & Horowitz, 2020).

2.0 Methodology

This study employed a social survey design (De Juan & Koos, 2021), targeting a population of approximately 1.75 million people in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria. The target population consisted of male and female citizens who spent at least 10 years in the study area and were 18 years or older. Stratified sampling techniques were used to ensure representation from various segments, including religious leaders, professional associations, policy makers, traditional rulers, and senior citizens. Data collection methods included focal group discussions, in-depth interviews with 80 participants, and review of judicial and research reports to provide additional insights and context to the study. The quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. The researcher coded and analyzed qualitative data thematically. The presentation of the data was through frequency and tabulation tables.

3.0 Results

3.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics

The survey results (Table 1) indicated that 84.0% of respondents are male, while 16.0% are female. Age distribution shows that 2.6% are aged 18-25 years, 13.1% are 26-35 years, 29.4% are 36-45 years, and 54.9% are 45 and above years, with a clear majority in the older age bracket. In terms of education, 14.0% have FSLC, 20.0% hold WAEC/SSCE, 21.7% obtained a Diploma/NCE, 24.9 % have

an HND/BSc, and 14.6% pursued postgraduate studies, while 4.9% reported no formal education. Regarding residency time period, 2.0% have lived in Jos for 0-10 years, 9.7% for 11-20 years, and a significant 88.3% have resided there for over 21 years, indicating long-term residence among respondents. The marital status reveals that 96.9% are married, and religious affiliation shows that 72.3% identify as Christians, while 26.6% are Muslims and 0.9% have no religious affiliation.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	294	84
	Female	56	16
	Total	350	100
Age	18-25 years	9	2.6
	26.35 years	46	13.1
	36-45 years	103	29.4
	45and above years	192	54.9
	Total	350	100
Education	FSLC	49	14
	WAEC/SSCE	70	20
	Diploma	76	21.7
	HND/BSc	87	24.9
	Postgraduate	51	14.6
	None	17	4.9

	Total	350	100
Marital Status	Single	11	3.1
	Married	339	96.9
	Total	350	100
Time Residing	0-10 years	7	2
	11-20 years	34	9.7
	21 and above years	309	88.3
	Total	350	100
Creed	ATR	1	0.3
	Christianity	253	72.3
	Islam	93	26.6
	None	3	0.9
	Total	350	100

Source: Field Survey 2019

3.2 Respondents aware of the violent crises in Jos and its environment

Table 2 revealed that 94.6 percent of the respondents strongly agree that they are aware of the violent crises in Jos and its environment and 5.4 percent of the respondents agree that they are aware of the violent crises in Jos and its environment.

This was further buttressed by the participants in the in-depth interview who said they have heard of crises in Jos and its environs.

We are aware that there is conflict in Jos and environs. This conflict has lasted over two decades. All those who have lived in Jos for about 25years now, are aware of the conflict because most of them have been affected by the conflict either directly or indirectly as they have either lost valuable property or lives. Some are still traumatized as they are still living with the scars and the experiences of the conflicts.

Table 2: Respondents aware of the violent crises in Jos and its environment

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	331	94.6
Agree	19	5.4
Disagree	0	0

Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	350	100

Source: Field Survey 2019

3.3 Respondent conversant with the series of violent crises Witnessed in Jos and its environs

Table 3 reveals that 64.0 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that they are conversant with the series of violent crises witnessed in Jos and its environs and 30.0 percent of the respondents agreed that they are conversant with the series of violent crises witnessed in Jos and its environs and 5.1 percent of the respondents disagree that they are conversant with the series of violent witnessed in Jos and its environs while 0.9 percent of the respondent strongly disagreed that they are conversant with the series of violent crises witnessed in Jos and its environs.

This was further buttressed by the participants in the in-depth interview as shown below

We are very much conversant with the nature of the series of violent crises that have bedeviled Jos and its environs since 1994. Indeed we do not see religion as the major factor causing the conflict in Plateau State. Rather it is only being manipulated by conflict merchants, bearing in mind the sensitive nature of religion amongst Nigerians. We view the conflict to be socio-political and ethnic in nature which revolves round political power and resource control. There is the feeling that some ethnic or religious groups are being seen and treated as foreigners on the Plateau, although they have settled and lived there spanning two to three generations, yet they are still denied indigeneship which they are qualified for as provided for in the Nigerian Constitution. They are equally denied the right to buy and own land for grazing. This is a breach of their Fundamental Human Rights as citizens of Nigeria. This perceived denial goes to the root cause of the conflicts. There is also the issue of failure on the side of government in ensuring that justice is given to all and sundry. Citizens ought to be treated equally and fairly, regardless of who they are; but this has not been the case. In addition, the security agencies have also had their own fair share of the blame with regards to the prevalence of injustice. There are instances where security agents demand for bribe before they can perform their legitimate duty when crimes are committed against some sections of the citizenry.

**Table 3: Respondent conversant with the series of violent crises
Witnessed in Jos and its environs**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	224	64
Agree	105	30
Disagree	18	5.1
Strongly Disagree	3	0.9
Total	350	100

Source: Field Survey 2019

3.4 Responses on violent conflicts in Jos and its environs are usually preceded by early warning signals

Table 4 reveals that 54.3 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that violent conflicts in Jos and its environs are usually preceded by early warning signals and 34.9 percent of the respondents agreed that violent conflicts in Jos and its environs are usually preceded by early warning signals and 8.3 percent of the respondents disagreed that violent conflicts in Jos and its environs are usually preceded by early warning signals while 2.6 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that violent conflicts in Jos and its environs are usually preceded by early warning signals.

This was further buttressed by the participants in the in-depth interview as shown below

Clear signs of eminent attacks that featured prominently in these conflicts in Jos and environs included mass movement of herders moving into our communities to graze. Most times when such

happens, it is a clear signal that conflict is imminent. However, other signals preceding attacks include, mass movement of herdsman and cattle out of our communities; sometimes letters or anonymous calls are made, announcing intended attacks, which most times prove accurate whether immediately or at a later time with most of the attacks carried out at night.

Table 4: Responses on violent conflicts in Jos and its environs are usually preceded by early warning signals

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	190	54.3
Agree	122	34.9
Disagree	29	8.3
Strongly Disagree	9	2.6
Total	350	100

Source: Field Survey 2019

3.5 Respondents opinion of the Root Causes of Violent Conflicts in Jos

Table 5 outlines the varied opinions of respondents regarding the root causes of violent crises in Jos Plateau state. A significant majority identified religious intolerance (79.7%) and religious extremism (71.4%) as leading factors contributing to these conflicts. Economic (58.5%) and social inequality (57.4%) were also acknowledged as critical issues. Leadership failure and political/structural imbalances each received agreement from 75.8% of participants. Additional contributing factors included scarce land resources (58.8%), ethnicity (72.6%), the indigene/settlers divide (70.3%), and poverty (72.9%).

This was further buttressed by the participants in the in-depth interview as shown below

The Fulani community in Plateau State views several key issues as the root causes of conflict, rather than religion. They feel marginalized despite having lived in the region for generations, facing denial of indigeneship and land ownership rights, which they argue contravenes the Nigerian Constitution. The perceived injustices extend to government failures in ensuring equal treatment for all citizens and inadequate action from security agencies, which have been accused of corruption. Poverty exacerbates the situation, contributing to youth crime and substance abuse, while a lack of faith in the judicial system hampers accountability for offenders. Additionally, biased media reporting has further stigmatized the Fulani, often labeling them as culprits without thorough investigation, thus deepening tensions in the community.

Table 5: Respondents opinion of the Root Causes of Violent Conflicts in Jos

Root Causes of Violent Conflicts	Frequency (%)				Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Religious intolerance	179(51.1)	100(28.6)	64(18.3)	7(2)	350(100)
The rise of religious extremism	126(36)	124(35.4)	81(23.1)	19(5.4)	350(100)
Economic inequality in Jos and its environs	102(29.1)	103(29.4)	90(25.7)	55(15.7)	350(100)
Social inequality in Jos and its environs	97(27.7)	104(29.7)	95(27.1)	54(15.4)	350(100)
Leadership failure	178(50.9)	87(24.9)	66(18.9)	19(5.4)	350(100)
Political and structural imbalance	185(52.9)	80(22.9)	60(17.1)	25(7.1)	350(100)
Scarce land resources	151(43.1)	55(15.7)	69(19.7)	75(21.4)	350(100)
Ethnicity	171(48.9)	83(23.7)	44(12.6)	52(14.9)	350(100)
Indigene/Settler dichotomy	198(56.6)	48(13.7)	41(11.7)	63(18)	350(100)
Poverty	196(56)	59(16.9)	66(18.9)	29(8.3)	350(100)

Source: Field Survey 2019

3.6 Respondents opinion on the immediate cause of the conflict in Plateau State

The respondents identified multiple immediate causes of conflict (Table 6) in Jos and surrounding areas, with notable factors including security failures (74.5%), drug abuse (86.6%), and hate preaching (71.1%). Other significant contributors included ethnic sentiments (69.7%), perceived injustices (70.0%), and youth restiveness (78.0%). The data underscores that the persistent violence in the region stems from a complex interplay of societal issues, including religious and social dynamics. This perspective was echoed in

interviews, reinforcing the identified factors as catalysts for the ongoing unrest. Equally, the participants of the interview also cited the aforementioned factors as the immediate causes of the violent outburst in study area. These are:

There is laxity on the part of the Government, as Government is not proactive but corrective. Nepotism, favoritisms and godfatherism has been a common phenomenon. The negative use of social media, promotion of hate speech and derogatory messages against other religions, ethnic and political groups which have further deepened the crises and these in most instances have caused conflicts in the State. Other immediate causes to the conflicts in Jos and environs include the destruction of crops by herdsmen with impunity, rustling and killing of cows by farmers, build-up of sentiments among groups in both the social and print media. Furthermore, the use of derogatory words or terminologies on the natives who are considered “pagans”, the increase in rape cases of local women by herdsmen in the bushes and forceful invasion of farmlands for grazing, sometimes done at night have also been some of the immediate causes of conflict in our area.

Table 6: Respondents opinion on the immediate cause of the conflict in Plateau State

Immediate Cause of Conflict	Frequency (%)				Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Hate preaching/homilies by religious leaders	195(55.7)	54(15.4)	61(17.4)	40(11.4)	350(100)
Ethnic sentiments	165(47.1)	79(22.6)	41(11.7)	65(18.6)	350(100)
Government policies	166(47.4)	66(18.9)	59(16.9)	59(16.9)	350(100)
Security failure/lapses	172(49.1)	89(25.4)	56(16)	33(9.4)	350(100)
Election malpractice	125(35.7)	67(19.1)	94(26.9)	64(18.3)	350(100)
Perceived injustice	164(46.9)	81(23.1)	60(17.1)	45(12.9)	350(100)
Reprisals	209(59.7)	64(18.3)	28(8)	49(14)	350(100)
Youth restiveness	127(36.3)	92(26.3)	66(18.9)	65(18.6)	350(100)
Social hate speeches	139(39.7)	110(31.4)	48(13.7)	53(15.1)	350(100)
Wrong Media Usage	140(40)	90(25.7)	69(19.7)	51(14.6)	350(100)

Drug abuse	245(70)	58(16.6)	33(9.4)	14(4)	350(100)
Cultism	138(39.4)	95(27.1)	72(20.6)	45(12.9)	350(100)

Source: Field Survey 2019

3.7 Response on the Typology of Occurrences

The table 7 outlines the prevalence of various conflict manifestations in the study area, with notable findings indicating significant contributions from several factors: actions from security black spot areas (76.9%), youth agitations (62.6%), ethnic demonstrations (56.6%), religious reactions (67.7%), trade unions involving transportation (72.9%), herder responses (87.7%), and reprisals (78.3%). Conversely, civil society responses (36.6%), agitations from market unions (43.1%), farmer actions (42.2%), and reactions from party loyalists (42.0%) are identified as having a lesser impact on conflict occurrences in the area. This was further buttressed by the participants in the in-depth interview as shown below.

The pattern of the conflicts often comes in the form of the destruction of worship centers, houses, vehicles, shops, killings along ethnic and religious lines arising from the consumption of illicit substances/hard drugs thus heightening criminality such as rape, molestation of women and cultism. There is also political thuggery and interparty wrangling. It again creates segregated settlements which further heighten suspicion and tension among citizens along religious and ethnic lines.

Table 7: Response on the Typology of Occurrences

Typology of Occurrences	Frequency (%)				Total
	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		

	Agree		Disagree		
Reactions from security black spot areas	162(46.3)	107(30.6)	44(12.6)	37(10.6)	350(100)
Youth agitations	134(38.3)	85(24.3)	77(22)	54(15.4)	350(100)
Ethnic demonstrations and warning signals	133(38)	65(18.6)	69(19.7)	83(23.7)	350(100)
Religious agitations and reactions	116(33.1)	121(34.6)	55(15.7)	58(16.6)	350(100)
Civil society reactions	66(18.9)	62(17.7)	102(29.1)	120(34.3)	350(100)
Trade unions and market women/men agitations	56(16)	95(27.1)	132(37.7)	67(19.1)	350(100)
Trade unions (Okada, Keke napep, Taxis and Buses)	183(52.3)	72(20.6)	40(11.4)	55(15.7)	350(100)
Farmer actions and reactions	112(32)	37(10.6)	111(31.7)	90(25.7)	350(100)
Herder actions and reactions	218(62.3)	89(25.4)	29(8.3)	14(4)	350(100)
Party faithful reactions	85(24.3)	62(17.7)	118(33.7)	85(24.3)	350(100)
Reprisal	192(54.9)	82(23.4)	32(9.1)	44(12.6)	350(100)

Source: Field Survey 2019

3.8 Response on effect of the violent conflicts in Jos and its environs

The violent conflicts in Jos Plateau State have had numerous detrimental effects, as indicated by survey respondents. Key impacts include the paralysis of religious practices (90%), market and economic activities (88.5%), and social events (81.4%). Educational institutions have been heavily affected, with 92.5% of schools shut down. Additionally, there has been significant destruction of sacred places of worship (84.9%) and properties (77.2%), along with a tragic loss of lives (82.8%). The conflicts have also exacerbated poverty (86.6%), fueled ethnic hatred (86.0%) and religious intolerance (88.6%), and resulted in segregated and displaced settlements (78.8%). The population has been left traumatized (83.2%), leading to an increase in social vices (82.3%). This was further buttressed by the participants in the in-depth interview as shown below.

Apart from killings and physical destruction of properties that have always accompanied conflicts in Jos and environs, the conflicts have also interfered with commerce (economic activities) and inter-relations as a result of the emergence of segregated markets and settlements. The conflicts have also caused the suspension of religious and academic activities as a result of the closure of worship places and schools. This has resulted in high rate of illiteracy with an increased number of school drop-outs, poverty, crime, teenage pregnancy, spread of sexually transmitted diseases, drugs and substance abuse, moral decadence, and the deterioration of family norms and values in the society.

Table 8: Response on effect of the violent conflicts in Jos and its environs

Violent conflicts Effects	Very High	Frequency (%)		Very Low	Total
		High	Low		
Religious practices and places of worship are paralyzed	240(68.6)	75(21.4)	23(6.6)	12(3.4)	350(100)
Market and economic activities are paralyzed	278(79.4)	32(9.1)	28(8)	12(3.4)	350(100)
Social activities are paralyzed	246(70.3)	39(11.1)	42(12)	23(6.6)	350(100)
Learning activities and schools are shut down	270(77.1)	54(15.4)	15(4.3)	11(3.1)	350(100)
Destruction of sacred places of worship	210(60)	87(24.9)	37(10.6)	16(4.6)	350(100)
Destruction of properties	141(40.3)	129(36.9)	67(19.1)	13(3.7)	350(100)
Destruction of lives	146(41.7)	144(41.1)	33(9.4)	27(7.7)	350(100)
Poverty is elevated	209(59.7)	94(26.9)	27(7.7)	20(5.7)	350(100)
Ethnic hatred	190(54.3)	111(31.7)	24(6.9)	25(7.1)	350(100)
Religious intolerance	211(60.3)	99(28.3)	21(6)	19(5.4)	350(100)
Segregated and displaced settlement	159(45.4)	117(33.4)	51(14.6)	23(6.6)	350(100)

Traumatized population	211(60.3)	80(22.9)	41(11.7)	18(5.10)	350(100)
Increase in social vices	150(42.9)	138(39.4)	33(9.4)	29(8.3)	350(100)

Source: Field Survey 2019

3.9 Responses on the efforts of some institutions to help resolve the conflict

Table 9 highlights the involvement of various institutions in resolving violent conflict in the study area, as assessed by respondents. Traditional rulers emerged as the most significant contributors, with 87.2 percent recognition, followed by security agencies at 81.7 percent, and community leaders at 78.8 percent. Other notable contributors included religious leaders (74.8 percent), sports entertainment (64.9 percent), NGOs and civil organizations (61.7 percent), and family (60.0 percent). In contrast, institutions such as the mass media (44.9 percent), market vendors (37.4 percent), trade unions (35.7 percent), and schools (26.3 percent) were found to have a minimal impact on conflict resolution. This was further buttressed by the participants in the in-depth interview as shown below.

Generally, the Nigeria nation needs restructuring in its entirety and the question of indigeneship and citizenship dichotomy needs to be settled constitutionally. The people should be involved in the process of restructuring and policy formulation. Government should involve relevant stakeholders in addressing sensitive issues such as appointments and demarcation of boundaries. There is need for continued sensitization to help mitigate conflicts. There should be constant dialogue amongst religious, ethnic and youth leaders; creating awareness on the consequences of conflict as people can be impacted negatively. Especially through displacement, loss of lives and properties etc. The need for peaceful coexistence cannot be over-emphasized and government must have the political will to punish individuals or groups who are found to be responsible for perpetuating conflicts. There is the need for dialogue, all parties need to sit down and iron out their differences, even if the conflict is yet to become destructive or violent. Religious leaders need to be encouraged to avoid preaching hatred, there is need for mutual respect, peace, tolerance and harmony between Christians and Muslims. Finally, there is also need for collaboration with Drug law enforcement agencies to help curtail the abuse of illicit drugs and substances by youths who are the foot soldiers in every conflict.

Table 9: Responses on the efforts of some institutions to help resolve the conflict

Institutions in Resolving Conflicts	Frequency (%)				Total
	Very High	High	Low	Very Low	

Traditional rulers	205(58.6)	100(28.6)	33(9.4)	12(3.4)	350(100)
Religious Leaders	187(53.4)	75(21.4)	77(22)	11(3.1)	350(100)
Community Leaders	179(51.1)	97(27.7)	56(16)	18(5.1)	350(100)
Trade Unions	64(18.3)	61(17.4)	111(31.7)	114(32.6)	350(100)
NGOs and Civil Organization	127(36.3)	89(25.4)	109(31.1)	25(7.1)	350(100)
Family	98(28)	112(32)	104(29.7)	36(10.3)	350(100)
Mass Media	63(18)	94(26.9)	141(40.3)	52(14.9)	350(100)
Political Leaders	77(22)	102(29.1)	116(33.1)	55(15.7)	350(100)
Security Agencies	183(52.3)	103(29.4)	52(14.9)	12(3.4)	350(100)
Market Men and Women	53(15.1)	78(22.3)	99(28.3)	120(34.3)	350(100)
Schools	52(14.9)	40(11.4)	154(44)	104(29.7)	350(100)
Sport Entertainment	129(36.9)	98(28)	90(25.7)	33(9.4)	350(100)

Source: Field Survey 2019

4.0 Discussion of Findings

The findings indicate that respondents are generally aware of the ongoing violent crises in Jos and its surroundings, attributed to decades of persistent conflicts in the region (table 2). This aligns with Gwaza et al. (2019), who reported that Plateau state has been plagued by insecurity manifesting as ethno-religious communal strife. Most participants are familiar with the early signs of violent incidents, such as the spread of rumors and threatening letters (table 4). This agreed with Katu (2016) who reported the spread of rumors and threatening letters are early signs of violent incidents in Jos. The root causes of these conflicts are identified as religious extremism and intolerance, social and economic disparities, leadership failures, scarcity of land, structural imbalances, the indigene/settler divide, ethnicity, and poverty (table5). This perspective is supported by Thakur (2022), who noted that poverty arising from economic inequality, marginalization, and corruption fuels extremism and violence, while Rotberg (2010) and Samuel, Nguvugher, & Tsilpi (2024) emphasized that state failure to safeguard its citizens exacerbates conflict.

The conflict in Plateau State is primarily driven by factors such as hate speech from religious leaders, ethnic tensions, and government policies, failures in security, electoral malpractice, perceived injustices, youth unrest, and drug abuse (Samuel (2017)). Specific incidents in Jos have arisen from various issues, including administrative appointments related to welfare, election disputes, herder-farmer clashes, and communal land conflicts. Violent outbreaks are often triggered by actions related to security hotspots, youth protests, ethnic demonstrations, religious tensions, and responses from transport unions Samuel (2017).

The findings indicate that violent conflicts have severely disrupted various aspects of life, including religious practices, economic activities, social interactions, and educational institutions. According to Samuel (2017), these conflicts have resulted in thousands of lives lost and have displaced many, creating a persistent climate of instability in the region. Abdullahi, Wika & Abdul-Qadir, (2016) and (Krause, 2011) reported that the violence in Jos has claimed as many as 4,000 to 7,000 lives and halted significant development and facilities. Additionally, Bonkat, (2016) highlighted that market destruction has stalled commercial activities in the affected areas, further exacerbating issues such as poverty, ethnic hatred, and social vices.

Findings reveal that that some of the following institutions have helped in resolving the conflict in Jos and its environs (Krause, 2011). Such institutions include traditional rulers, security agencies, religious leader, community leaders, sport entertainment, NGOs and Civil Organization, family, and political leaders (Krause, 2011). Community leaders and traditional rulers have involved their people in various town hall meetings in order to curb the upsurge of another conflict (Krause, 2011). Other non-governmental organizations, civil societies, religious leaders, political leaders have made several efforts to ensure that there is no reoccurrence of the conflict in the state (Abdullahi, et al., 2016). Government and other civil sports have organized peace cups and other sporting activities and held a lot of entertaining events in an attempt to foster peaceful co-existence in the State (Alrashid, 2017).

4.1 Conclusion

The violent conflicts in Jos and its surrounding areas are increasingly common, characterized by communal clashes, ethnic tensions, and inter-religious disputes. The root causes encompass religious intolerance, clashes between herders and farmers, poverty, social and economic disparity, minority ethnic dominance, the settler-indigene divide, and political instability. Notably, these conflicts often manifest with a religious undertone, leading to attacks on places of worship. The consequences are severe, resulting in loss of lives, destruction of homes and businesses, and significant displacement of residents. Ultimately, these conflicts foster an environment of fear and suspicion, jeopardizing peaceful coexistence among diverse ethnic and religious communities.

4.2 Recommendation

There is an urgent need for dialogue among all parties involved in potential conflicts to resolve their differences before they escalate. Religious leaders should promote messages of peace rather than hatred. Emphasizing mutual respect and harmony between Christians and Muslims is essential, alongside collaboration with drug law enforcement agencies to address youth drug abuse, as these individuals often play critical roles in conflicts.

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