

Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Jos North Local Government Area: Contributing Factors

Ibrahim Ahmad ISAH

Department of Sociology, Federal University Dutse

Ismaila Abdullahi

Department of Criminology & Security Studies, Jigawa State College of education & Legal Studies

Huzaifa Aminu Yusuf

Huzaifaaminu555@gmail.com

Abstract:

This paper investigates the recurring ethno-religious conflicts in Jos North Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria, exploring the factors responsible for their persistence. The study identifies religious intolerance, political manipulation, historical grievances, and economic disparities as key contributors to the conflict. Data was collected from 382 respondents through quantitative surveys and 16 interview participants from key categories including traditional leaders, religious leaders, police and military personnel, and youth groups. The findings reveal that political elites often exploit religious and ethnic divisions to fuel tensions, while youth unemployment and weak law enforcement exacerbate the situation. Through a mixed-methods approach involving both surveys and interviews, this research highlights the need for comprehensive conflict resolution strategies. Recommendations include enhancing law enforcement, promoting intergroup dialogue, addressing unemployment through job creation programs, and improving educational access to reduce illiteracy and manipulation. These measures aim to foster lasting peace and development in the region.

Keywords: Ethno-religious conflict, Jos North, political manipulation, religious intolerance, unemployment.

Introduction

The ethno-religious conflicts plaguing Jos North Local Government Area, located in Plateau State, Nigeria, represent a persistent and deeply entrenched challenge that has defied easy resolution. These conflicts revolve around a legacy of historical contestations over land, resources, and political

power, dating back decades. Scholars such as Maren and Adi (2019) have highlighted how these historical grievances have fueled a cycle of violence and animosity between various ethnic and religious groups in the region. The struggle for control over scarce resources, including fertile land and economic opportunities, has often exacerbated existing tensions and served as a catalyst for conflict escalation. Moreover, the intertwining of religious and ethnic identities has further complicated the dynamics of these conflicts, with religion often serving as a marker of socio-political affiliation.

In Jos North LGA, individuals and communities align themselves along religious lines to assert their interests and maintain social cohesion, politicizing religious differences and creating fertile ground for the propagation of divisive narratives (Omeje, 2015). This fusion of religious and ethnic identities has profound implications for social trust and cohesion, eroding the fabric of community life and making it increasingly difficult for individuals from different backgrounds to coexist peacefully. The breakdown of social capital has hindered efforts to promote inclusive growth and sustainable development in the region (Agbibo, 2017). Furthermore, the protracted nature of the conflicts has fostered a culture of impunity, where perpetrators often evade accountability for their actions. The lack of justice and redress for victims of ethno-religious violence perpetuates cycles of revenge and retaliation, undermining faith in the rule of law and institutional mechanisms for conflict resolution (Ibrahim, 2018).

These conflicts have had significant human, economic, and social costs, with Plateau State experiencing over 1,500 fatalities between 2010 and 2020 as a result of ethno-religious violence (Council on Foreign Relations, 2021). However, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the ethno-religious conflicts in Jos North Local Government Area, offering insights into their causes, nature, consequences, and factors responsible for the reoccurrence. By examining the intricate interplay of historical, socio-economic, and political factors, the research aims to inform evidence-based policymaking and intervention strategies. The findings from this study will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders involved in conflict resolution efforts, facilitating informed decision-making and contributing to the promotion of sustainable peace and development in the region.

Indeed, most previous studies centered on factors responsible for Jos North conflicts. However, little or rather inadequate analysis were provided for the conflict reoccurrence. For example, episode of mass killing and destruction have occurred in Jos in 2001, 2002, 2008, and 2010 (Blench, 2004). Consequently, the current study is being undertaken to fill such gap and provide a comprehensive literature vis-à-vis the Jos North conflicts reoccurrence. Future researches are expected to add more insights and findings on the same course for other aspects of the conflicts that could not be covered under the current research.

Research Objective

1. To identify the factors responsible for the re-occurrence ethno-religious conflicts in Jos North Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria

Literature Review

The reoccurrence of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos North Local Government Area can be attributed to several factors, with religious intolerance playing a significant role. Nigeria, being a deeply religious country, experiences heightened tensions when there is a failure by authorities to prosecute those responsible for religiously motivated attacks. This failure exacerbates tensions between Christians and Muslims, violating the fundamental right to freedom of worship, which is guaranteed by the Nigerian Constitution. According to Abdulrahman et al. (2018), religious intolerance manifests through discriminatory acts, laws, and inflammatory statements from religious authorities, creating a hostile environment for inter-religious coexistence. When religious freedom is threatened, it leads to instability and chaos, making it a core factor in the recurrence of conflicts in Jos North.

Ethnicity is another driving force behind these conflicts, as elites often exploit ethnic divisions to secure political power. This manipulation of ethnicity, as explained by the instrumentalist theory, has historical roots in Nigeria's political landscape, most notably during the Nigerian Civil War. Ethnic competition for resources and power fuels tensions, particularly when groups feel marginalized or excluded. Musa et al. (2017) found that this struggle for dominance among ethnic groups is a critical factor in the violence witnessed in Jos North. However, inter-ethnic contact alone does not inevitably lead to conflict; other elements must also be present for tensions to escalate into violence. The failure to implement the recommendations of probe panels further contributes to the recurrence of violence in Jos North. Several committees have been set up to investigate past conflicts and suggest measures to prevent future occurrences.

For example, the Lar Panel established in 2010 and other panels before it provided critical insights into the root causes of conflicts. However, the government's failure to act on these reports has perpetuated a cycle of violence, with offenders going unpunished and victims left without justice. Akindele and Olaopa (2021) argue that this non-implementation undermines efforts to address underlying grievances and creates a sense of impunity, which further escalates tensions and violence in the region. Impunity is a crucial factor that perpetuates the cycle of violence in Jos North. When individuals or groups responsible for violent acts are not held accountable, it emboldens others to commit similar crimes. As noted by Abdulrahman et al. (2018), the lack of justice for perpetrators of ethno-religious violence in Jos North has deepened inter-communal tensions.

The absence of prosecution or appropriate punishment fosters an environment where violence can occur without fear of consequence, leading to repeated outbreaks of conflict. This culture of impunity erodes trust in law enforcement and the state's ability to maintain order, exacerbating existing divides between ethnic and religious communities. Partisanship within security agencies has also played a significant role in the recurrence of conflicts. Security forces in Jos North have been accused of favoring certain ethnic or religious groups during periods of violence, which undermines their ability to impartially maintain peace. Musa et al. (2017) found that the biased actions of security agencies have intensified feelings of injustice among communities, contributing to the escalation of violence. When security agencies are perceived as partial, it deepens mistrust and exacerbates the already fragile situation. Addressing this issue would require reform within the security sector, ensuring that personnel are trained to handle ethno-religious conflicts with impartiality and respect for human rights.

Lastly, the indigene-settler dichotomy remains a persistent cause of ethno-religious clashes in Jos North. The division between native populations and settlers often leads to conflicts over access to resources and political representation. Musa et al. (2017) found that this divide creates feelings of exclusion and marginalization among settlers, which fuels bitterness and conflict. The indigene-settler issue undermines the sense of national unity and peaceful coexistence, as settlers often feel unwelcome outside their place of origin. This ongoing conflict over indigeneity and the associated privileges further exacerbates tensions and contributes to the reoccurrence of violence in Jos North.

Theoretical Framework

Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT), developed by Ted Gurr in the 1970s, provides a framework for understanding how perceived inequalities between groups can drive conflict. The theory posits that when individuals or groups feel disadvantaged compared to others, this sense of relative deprivation leads to frustration, grievances, and collective actions, such as protests or rebellion. According to Gurr (1970), the gap between what people aspire to achieve and their actual circumstances creates emotional distress and a sense of injustice, often escalating into conflict, particularly when change seems attainable. RDT highlights the link between perceived inequality and the likelihood of individuals resorting to extreme measures to seek redress. Applied to the recurring ethno-religious

conflicts in Jos North Local Government Area, the theory explains how perceived inequalities between ethnic and religious groups, such as in economic opportunities, resource distribution, and political representation, contribute to persistent tensions. Feelings of marginalization intensify grievances, motivating collective action to address perceived injustices. RDT thus helps analyze the root causes of these conflicts, offering insights into how to develop strategies to address and resolve the issues fueling recurring violence in the area.

Methodology

Jos North Local Government Area in Plateau State, Nigeria, is recognized for its diverse ethnic and religious groups, beautiful landscapes, and historical significance. With a population of around 1,001,000, it features predominant ethnicities like Berom, Hausa, Fulani, and Afizere, as well as major religions such as Christianity and Islam. The region has faced ethno-religious conflicts driven by identity differences and political power struggles, significantly affecting social cohesion and economic development. The study adopts a survey design, using both questionnaires and interviews for data collection, and a cross-sectional and descriptive approach. The sample size includes 398 respondents, with 382 for quantitative data and 16 for qualitative interviews, selected through multi-stage cluster sampling and purposive sampling techniques. **These participants** include traditional leaders, religious leaders, police and military personnel, and youth groups. Data collection instruments include questionnaires and interview guides, with trained research assistants aiding in the fieldwork. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative data were thematically organized and complemented by verbatim quotations.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	263	68.8
	Female	119	31.2
		382	100.0
Age Distribution	18-23	10	2.6
	24-29	20	5.2
	30-34	56	14.6
	35-39	160	41.9
	40-44	115	30.1
	45 and above	13	3.4
		382	100.0
Marital Status	Single	109	28.5
	Married	207	54.2
	Divorced	36	9.4
	Widow	21	5.5
	Separated	9	2.4
		382	100.0
Religious Belief	Islam	206	53.9
	Christianity	176	46.1
		382	100.0
Ethnic Group	Hausa/Fulani	138	36.1
	Berom	110	28.8
	Afizere	49	12.8
	Miango	43	11.3
	Others	42	11.0

		382	100.0
Educational Attainment	Primary	10	2.6
	Secondary	171	44.8
	Tertiary	165	43.2
	Non-formal	36	9.4
	Others	0	0.0
		382	100.0
Occupational Distribution	Trading	89	23.3
	Wage earner	22	5.8
	Self-employed	76	19.9
	Student	27	7.1
	Artisan/craft	30	7.9
	Unemployed	138	36.1
	Others	0	0.0
		382	100.0

The table above reveals the demographic characteristics of the respondents. It shows that majority of the respondents are **male (68.8%)**, with a significant portion of them being **married (54.2%)** and belonging to the **Hausa/Fulani ethnic group (36.1%)**. The most represented age group is **35-39 years (41.9%)**, and a substantial number have attained **secondary education (44.8%)** or higher. In terms of religion, **Islam (53.9%)** is the dominant belief system. Despite many being educated, a notable proportion of respondents are **unemployed (36.1%)**, indicating potential socio-economic challenges in the study area.

Table 2: Factors that trigger Ethno-religious Conflicts in Jos North Local Government Area

Factors that trigger Ethno-religious	Frequency	Percent (%)
Culture of impunity	11	2.9
Economic factors	42	11.0
Political manipulation	78	20.4
Religious intolerance	251	65.7
Others	0	0.0
Total	382	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 2 presents the factors that trigger ethno-religious Conflicts in Jos North Local Government Area where religious intolerance is perceived by 65.7% of respondents as the most significant factor triggering ethno-religious conflicts in Jos North. The persistent inability of different religious groups to coexist peacefully is a major source of tension. However, religious differences do not operate in isolation. As 20.4% of respondents point out, political manipulation plays a key role in escalating conflicts. Political elites often exploit these religious divides to mobilize support or strengthen their own positions, which intensifies existing tensions.

As one religious leader explained,

Religious differences often serve as a trigger, but the underlying causes are usually political and economic. Many conflicts start when religious practices are misinterpreted or when leaders from different faiths fail to reach a consensus **(Religious Leader 1/Male/Christian/58)**.

This illustrates how religious intolerance serves as a flashpoint, but deeper political and economic dynamics fuel the continuation of conflicts. Similarly, a police officer added that

One major factor is the involvement of political elites who use ethnic and religious sentiments to mobilize support. This often results in the escalation of tensions (**Police Officer 1/Male/39**).

This statement highlights the manipulative role of political leaders in exacerbating existing religious tensions, which further intensifies the conflict.

Table 3: Whether historical grievances strongly contribute to ethno-religious conflict in Jos North

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	371	97.1
No	11	2.9
Total	382	100.0

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 3 shows that 97.1% of the respondents believed that historical grievances strongly contribute to ethno-religious conflict in Jos North while 2.9% of the respondents does not believe that historical grievances strongly contribute to ethno-religious conflict in Jos North. This indicates that majority of the respondents believed that historical grievances strongly contribute to ethno-religious conflict in Jos North.

A staggering 97.1% of respondents believe that historical grievances are a significant contributor to ethno-religious conflicts in Jos North. These grievances often revolve around longstanding disputes over land, political power, and perceived injustices that have festered over generations. Such unresolved issues create an environment of mistrust and tension between ethnic and religious groups, leading to recurrent conflicts. This view is echoed by a traditional leader who emphasized that:

Historical grievances between different ethnic groups are a major source of conflict. These historical issues are often fueled by contemporary disputes over resources or political power (**Traditional Leader 1/Male/59**).

The persistence of unresolved historical issues is seen as the foundation upon which current conflicts are built. However, a minority (2.9%) of respondents do not believe that historical grievances play a significant role in conflicts.

As one respondent stated,

While historical grievances are present, the current issues are more about economic survival and political power plays rather than the past (**Youth 2/Female/28**).

This perspective suggests that, for some, the focus should be on present-day issues rather than unresolved histories.

Table 4: Rating the influence of political manipulation in fuelling the occurrence of ethno-religious Conflicts in Jos North

Rating the influence	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very strong	30	7.9
Strong	352	92.1
Weak	0	0.0
Very weak	0	0.0
Total	382	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 4 rated the influence of political manipulation in fuelling the occurrence of ethno-religious Conflicts in Jos North where 7.9% rated it as very strong while 92.1% rated the influence as strong.

This consensus indicates that political actors are perceived as instrumental in stoking divisions for personal or political gain, exploiting ethnic and religious identities to manipulate public sentiment and mobilize support, particularly during election periods in Jos North

One police officer explained,

One major factor is the involvement of political elites who use ethnic and religious sentiments to mobilize support. This often results in the escalation of tensions (**Police Officer 1/Male/39**).

Another religious leader added,

Political leaders sometimes fuel these conflicts for their own personal gain, deepening divides among communities (**Religious Leader 1/Male/Muslim/56**).

However, not everyone agrees with this view. A youth respondent commented,

While political manipulation is a factor, the root causes are much deeper poverty and unemployment make people vulnerable to being manipulated (**Youth 1/Male/31**).

This indicates that some respondents see political manipulation as only one part of the problem, with economic factors also playing a role.

Table 5: Ways in which economic disparities play a significant role in the occurrence of ethno-religious tension in Jos North

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Competition over resources	167	43.7
Poverty and unemployment	89	23.3
Economic marginalization	109	28.5
Ethnic/religious favoritism	17	4.5
Total	382	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 5 reveals that a significant majority (91.6%) of respondents believe that religious differences contribute to the polarization of narratives in ethno-religious conflicts in Jos North, while 8.4% do not share this view. This indicates that religious differences are widely perceived as a major factor in fueling conflict narratives.

The overwhelming agreement that religious differences contribute to polarization reflects the critical role religion plays in shaping conflict dynamics in Jos North. Religious leaders corroborate this view. As one noted:

Religious differences serve as identity markers, and unfortunately, they are often used to mobilize groups for conflict (**Religious Leader 1, Male, Muslim, 56**)

This statement emphasizes how religion, while a deeply personal aspect of life, is often leveraged as a divisive tool, with leaders exploiting these differences to gather support for violent actions. Similarly, Traditional Leader 1 highlighted how religion intertwines with ethnic tensions, stating:

Religion plays a significant role in creating a divide between ethnic groups, and this polarization leads to further tension (**Traditional Leader 1, Male, 59**)

Such perspectives suggest that religious and ethnic identities become inseparable in conflict contexts, where religion magnifies existing ethnic divides and complicates peacebuilding efforts. In support of this, a military officer noted:

When religious leaders fail to bridge gaps between groups, these differences are exploited for political gain, leading to conflict (**Military Officer 2, Operation Safe Haven, Male, 54**)

Despite the overwhelming support for the view that religious differences contribute to polarization, a minority of respondents (8.4%) disagree. These respondents suggest that the issue is not the religious differences themselves but the external manipulation of those differences. A youth leader expressed this view, stating:

Religious differences are often manipulated by external actors, turning otherwise manageable disagreements into violent conflicts (Youth 1, Male, 31).

This response points to the idea that external actors whether political leaders, militants, or even foreign influences play a more substantial role in turning religious differences into conflict triggers. Rather than blaming religion itself, this group sees the exploitation of religious narratives as the real source of conflict.

Several respondents also highlighted the role of economic factors and poverty in fueling ethno-religious conflict. One respondent explained:

People focus too much on religious differences because they're struggling with poverty. If we address the economic situation, a lot of these conflicts would disappear (Community Member 1, Male, 45).

This view suggests that socio-economic challenges amplify religious tensions, as communities in Jos North are already vulnerable due to economic hardship. Another respondent added:

It is not just religion; it's a combination of factors like politics, poverty, and illiteracy. Religion is just the most visible difference (NGO Worker, Female, 38)

Table 6: Whether religious differences contribute to Polarization of narrative in ethno-religious conflict in Jos North

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	350	91.6
No	32	8.4
Total	382	100.0

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 6 shows that 91.6% of the respondents reported that religious differences contribute to Polarization of narrative in ethno-religious conflict in Jos North while 8.4% didn't believe. This indicates that majority of the respondents believed that religious differences contribute to Polarization of narrative in ethno-religious conflict in Jos North.

Religious leaders confirm this view, with one stating,

Religious differences serve as identity markers, and unfortunately, they are often used to mobilize groups for conflict (**Religious Leader 1/Male/Muslim/56**).

This statement highlights how religion, although a personal belief, becomes a tool for division in the hands of leaders seeking to mobilize support. Another traditional leader added:

Religion plays a significant role in creating a divide between ethnic groups, and this polarization leads to further tension (**Traditional Leader 1/Male/59**).

Demonstrating how religious differences deepen ethnic tensions. A military officer reinforced this point, saying:

When religious leaders fail to bridge gaps between groups, these differences are exploited for political gain, leading to conflict (**Military Officer 2/Operation Safe Heaven /Male/54**).

However, a minority of 8.4% of respondents do not see religious differences as the main cause of conflict. A youth leader expressed:

Religious differences are often manipulated by external actors, turning otherwise manageable disagreements into violent conflicts (**Youth 1/Male/31**).

Religious differences are seen by most respondents as a critical factor in polarizing narratives in Jos North, with political and religious leaders often using these divides to fuel conflict. However, a small minority believes that the manipulation of religion, rather than the differences themselves, is the primary issue.

Table 7: Whether youth unemployment and frustration are major contributors to the perpetuation of ethno-religious conflict in Jos North

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	380	99.5
No	2	0.5
Total	382	100.0

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 7 shows that 99.5% of the respondents believed that youth unemployment and frustration are major contributors to the perpetuation of ethno-religious conflict in Jos North while 0.5% of the respondents doesn't believe. This indicates that majority of the respondents believed that youth unemployment and frustration are major contributors to the perpetuation of ethno-religious conflict in Jos North.

A youth leader emphasized this, stating:

Many youths are recruited or incited by leaders and groups that seek to use them for their own purposes, especially when they are frustrated by unemployment (**Youth 1/Male/31**).

This highlights how frustration from unemployment creates fertile ground for conflict recruitment. Another respondent noted:

Without adequate opportunities for education and employment, young people are more vulnerable to manipulation and involvement in violent activities (**Youth 2/Female/28**).

This sentiment is echoed by an NSCDC officer, who remarked:

Unemployment among the youth is a major factor driving their involvement in conflicts, as they have little to lose and much to gain from violence (**NSCDC Officer 1/Male/43**).

Additionally, a community-based organization (CBO) member pointed out:

The frustration that comes with a lack of economic opportunities makes youth more susceptible to being manipulated by individuals with vested interests in conflict (**CBO Member 2/Male/35**).

Table 8: Whether inadequate governance or enforcement of law aggravates ethno-religious conflict in Jos North

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	379	99.2
No	3	0.8
Total	382	100.0

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 8 shows that 99.2% of the respondents believed that inadequate governance or enforcement of law aggravates ethno-religious conflict in Jos North while 0.8% of the respondents didn't believe. This indicates that majority of the respondents agreed that that inadequate governance or enforcement of law aggravates ethno-religious conflict in Jos North.

The perception that laws are not enforced uniformly leads to heightened tensions and feelings of injustice. A police officer highlighted the mistrust between security agencies and the community, stating:

This mistrust can undermine our efforts as communities may be reluctant to cooperate or provide vital information **(Police Officer 1/Male/39)**.

Coordination challenges among security agencies were also noted, with another officer saying:

Coordination among different security agencies often proves problematic, leading to uneven responses **(Police Officer 2/Male/42)**.

A religious leader reinforced this perspective:

The lack of effective governance and accountability is one of the major issues. Communities feel abandoned, and that breeds distrust **(Religious Leader 1/Male/Muslim/56)**.

Furthermore, a CBO member stated:

Inadequate governance and law enforcement allow conflicts to escalate because the rule of law is not applied equally to all parties involved **(CBO Member 2/Male/35)**.

Table 9: Whether cultural misunderstanding play a role in the reoccurrence of ethno-religious tension in Jos North

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	19	5.0
No	363	95.5
Total	382	100.0

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 9 shows that 5.0% of the respondent believed that cultural misunderstanding play a role in the reoccurrence of ethno-religious tension in Jos North while 95.5% which constituted the majority did not believe. This indicates that majority of the respondents didn't believe that cultural misunderstanding plays a role in the reoccurrence of ethno-religious tension in Jos North.

A military officer noted:

Stereotyping is common and often leads to escalations of conflict, as groups are unfairly judged or accused based on cultural differences **(Military Officer 2/Operation Safe Heaven/Male/54)**.

A CBO member added:

Cultural insensitivity can lead to misunderstandings that further divide communities, especially during religious celebrations **(CBO Member 1/Female/38)**.

While many respondents dismiss culture as a significant factor, they acknowledge that stereotypes can incite conflicts if left unaddressed. A youth leader remarked:

When leaders promote narratives that do not recognize cultural diversity, it can lead to tensions **(Youth 1/Male/31)**.

Table 10: Whether illiteracy play a role in the reoccurrence of ethno-religious conflict in Jos North

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	201	52.6
No	181	47.4
Total	382	100.0

Source: Field Work, 2024

Table 10 shows that 52.6% of the respondents believed that illiteracy play a role in the reoccurrence of ethno-religious conflict in Jos North while 47.4% of the respondents did not believe. This indicates that more than half of the respondents believed that illiteracy play a role in the reoccurrence of ethno-religious conflict in Jos North.

According to a **CBO Member**:

Illiteracy makes individuals more susceptible to manipulation, as they lack the necessary knowledge to critically assess situations or narratives presented to them (**CBO Member 2/Male/35**).

A **youth** also echoed this sentiment, noting that:

Illiterate youth are more easily influenced by those with vested interests, leading them into violence (**Youth 2/Female/28**).

Illiteracy not only limits understanding but also impedes dialogue, as a police officer pointed out that:

Individuals who lack education often struggle to engage in meaningful discussions or negotiations, making it harder to resolve conflicts peacefully (**Police Officer 2/Male/42**).

Furthermore, as a **military officer** noted:

Illiteracy perpetuates stereotypes and misinformation, which further inflame tensions. Misunderstandings born of ignorance can quickly spiral into violence, especially when communities are already divided along ethnic or religious lines (**Military Officer 2/Operation Safe Heaven /Male/54**).

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the data present an understanding of the factors contributing to ethno-religious conflict in Jos North. Demographically, the majority of respondents are male (68.8%), predominantly married (54.2%), and hail from the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group (36.1%). The largest age group (35-39 years) indicates a mature population, with secondary and tertiary educational attainment being high, but unemployment remains significant at 36.1%. The prominence of religious intolerance (65.7%) as a trigger for conflict reveals deep-rooted divisions along religious lines, exacerbated by political manipulation, as 92.1% of respondents confirm. These findings highlight how both historical grievances (97.1%) and political maneuvering perpetuate conflict, leveraging religious and ethnic differences to serve personal or group interests.

Further analysis shows that economic factors also play a substantial role in fueling tensions. Around 43.7% of respondents cited competition over resources, and 23.3% attributed poverty and unemployment as key contributors to the ethno-religious strife. Youth unemployment is particularly concerning, with 99.5% of respondents acknowledging its role in perpetuating conflict, as jobless youths are easily manipulated. Inadequate governance and weak law enforcement (99.2%) further aggravate these tensions, allowing conflicts to escalate unchecked. While cultural misunderstandings were dismissed by the majority as a significant factor (95.5%), illiteracy remains a contentious issue, with over half of respondents (52.6%) acknowledging its impact on escalating conflicts. Collectively, these findings illustrate that ethno-religious conflict in Jos North is driven by a complex interplay of socio-economic, political, and historical factors.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The ethno-religious conflicts in Jos North are driven by a combination of religious intolerance, political manipulation, economic disparities, and historical grievances. The high unemployment rate, particularly among youths, further exacerbates these tensions, creating a fertile ground for conflict recruitment. Additionally, inadequate governance and weak law enforcement contribute to the escalation of conflicts, while illiteracy perpetuates misinformation and deepens divides.

Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach. To mitigate these conflicts, it is recommended that the government strengthens law enforcement and promotes fair governance to ensure that justice is applied equally. Youth unemployment must be tackled through targeted job creation programs and vocational training to reduce vulnerability to manipulation. Dialogue between religious and ethnic groups should be encouraged, with religious and community leaders playing a pivotal role in fostering tolerance and understanding. Additionally, educational programs aimed at reducing illiteracy and promoting critical thinking will help diminish the influence of extremist narratives, ensuring a more peaceful coexistence in the region.

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