

**INTRA-SECTARIAN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT MECHANISMS AMONG
WORSHIPPERS OF IGBE ORHE IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA**

BY

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this work was carried out by Onoseme Fortune AFATAKPA in Peace and Conflict Studies Programme, in the Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ibadan, under my supervision.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to the Almighty God for granting me the strength and courage to finish it. The study is also dedicated to all men and women who are working tirelessly to build peaceful societies that are free from all forms of negative religious stereotypes and prejudices.

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ABSTRACT

Intra-sectarian religious conflicts and violence are on the increase across the globe. Whereas some have been successfully managed, others seem to have defied solution. Existing studies have focused on the management of intra-sectarian conflicts especially among world religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, with little attention paid to monotheistic non-Abrahamic religions especially in Africa. This study, therefore, examined the management of intra-sectarian conflict among the adherents of Igbe Orhe, a monotheistic non-Abrahamic religion in Delta State, Nigeria with a view to investigating the causes, patterns and dimensions, conflict handling styles and challenges associated with the management mechanisms.

John Hicks' theory of Religious Pluralism and Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarianism Principle were used as framework for analysis, while case study research design was utilised. Primary data were collected with thirty five key informant interviews purposively selected: thirteen *Inori* (Chief Priests), eight *Ini Igbe* (Chief Priestesses), six lay adherents, four community leaders, two customary court registrars, two police officers and the head of reconciliation and reunification sub-committee of the religion. Eighteen in-depth interviews were conducted with one *Ose Isi* (Supreme Leader), nine *Uku* (Parish High Priests), and eight *Emete Uku* (Parish High Priestesses). A total of three focus group discussions comprising eight members each, were held with the youth, men and women of Igbe Orhe. Non-participant observation of mediation and religious arbitration methods were carried out. Secondary data consisted of relevant literature. Data were content-analysed using descriptive and narrative styles.

Springing up of splinter groups, deviation from the original doctrines of the founder, influence of western modernity, monopoly over ordination into the priesthood system, betrayal of trust by leadership, insubordination, poaching of members, were identified as major causes of intra-sectarian conflict among adherents. Misrepresentation of Igbe Orhe through false publications, inadequate distribution of food and drinks during the celebration of religious festivals were also discovered as other causes of intra-sectarian conflict among the adherents of Igbe Orhe. The dominant patterns of conflict outcomes in Igbe Orhe were non-violent because of a dominant orientation of sectarian pluralism. The conflict dimensions included schisms, non-recognition of any *Uku* or *Omote Uku* not ordained by *Ose Isi* (Supreme Leader), selective attendance of feasts and feeling of social exclusion. Igbe Orhe has an integrated conflict management mechanism built around negotiation, mediation, religious arbitration and adjudication which usually transformed the conflicts. Rigidity, arbitrariness in decision making, lack of adequate training in conflict management skills were identified as the major challenges in Igbe Orhe.

Igbe Orhe has potent and efficient intra-sectarian conflict management mechanisms. However, the practitioners needs to be flexible, more accommodating in its conflict management approaches and open to new conflict management skills.

Keywords: Igbe Orhe, Intra-sectarian conflict, Conflict management, Urhobo of Nigeria

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Igbe Orhe (also known as Igbe Ubiesha or Orhe Ubiesha Akpoeje, meaning the universal chalk of Ubiesha), a fully institutionalised monotheistic non-Abrahamic religion, is claimed to have been founded by an Urhobo man known as Ubiesha Etarakpor in the second half of the nineteenth century in a town called Kokori (Nabofa, 2005). Akama (1985), Nabofa (2003) and Akponwei (2009) affirm that Kokori in contemporary Nigeria is a part of Ethiope East Local Government Area in Delta State. Ethiope East Local Government Area is populated by people of the Urhobo ethnic group. Otive (2005) contends that the Urhobo people are found in Delta State in the Niger Delta region, South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. There are twenty-five (25) Local Government Areas of Delta State and the Urhobo people are spread across nine local government areas namely; Ethiope East, Ethiope West, Okpe, Ughelli South, Ughelli North, Sapele, Udu, Uvwie and parts of Warri South Local Government Areas. Though the Urhobo have a common language, they equally have many dialects. In addition, the Urhobo people are enterprising in nature because they engage in a wide range of economic activities including rubber tapping, commercial farming, fishing, and manufacturing amongst others. Like most ethnic groups in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria, the Urhobo men tie wrapper, don a big shirt, wear hats and hold a walking stick. While the women tie two wrappers while wearing a blouse and a head tie. Awolowo (1968) concedes that the Urhobo constitute the sixth largest ethnic group in Nigeria. The Urhobo were classified as part of the ten major ethnic groups in Nigeria after the 1963 census.

Igbe, as Igbe Orhe is popularly called, is a religion that engages dance as the principal medium of worship together with the ingestion of *orhe* (native white chalk). The revealed name of God in Igbe Orhe is Oweya. *Ose-Isi, Uku* Supreme Obaoga Ibodje, who is the spiritual head of Igbe Orhe worldwide, claims that “adherents of Igbe Orhe are approximately two million” (Interview at Kokori, October 18, 2016). Igbe Orhe functions on moral principles that are built on the purity of the mind and natural laws of justice. The Urhobo language is used to conduct its worship sessions (Akpojotor, 2011). In the 1890s, the British colonial administration imposed a ban on Igbe Orhe which affected its growth

and visibility (Nabofa, 2003). Despite this, Igbe Orhe kept growing and has been transformed from a purely ethnic religion into a universalising religion because of its spread to the entire Urhobo nation and beyond. Today, Igbe Orhe has a transnational presence with worshippers in the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Germany.

There are three major sectarian groups within the Igbe religion and they have been classified in this study as the orthodox, charismatic and traditional syncretic sectarian groups. Like the older institutionalised Abrahamic monotheisms, Igbe Orhe has been confronted with conflicts arising from leadership succession which has led to breakups within its structure. Some of its doctrines and practices are being challenged by some adherents, while some circles within Igbe Orhe have stopped paying homage to the headquarters in Kokori. These themes have equally played out in Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Interestingly, unlike the older and more organised monotheistic religions, these issues have not translated into violent clashes among adherents of Igbe Orhe. Rather, it has been observed that when conflict generating themes arise, the leadership and adherents of Igbe Orhe have tackled them without any reported recourse to violence. It is against this background that this study carried out an enquiry on the intra-sectarian conflict management mechanisms of Igbe Orhe.

Intra-sectarian religious conflicts, religious terror campaigns and violent behaviour under the guise of religion, are on the increase across the globe (Pew Report, 2015). Intra-sectarian religious conflicts usually stemming from contentions over denominational supremacy, fundamentalism, exclusive claims to truth or leadership have led to suffering and bloodshed worldwide. A profiling of nations shows that intra-sectarian religious conflicts are a global phenomenon. Countries like Northern Ireland, Spain, Iraq, Indonesia, The Philippines, France and some countries in Africa have experienced violent intrareligious sectarian conflicts on different occasions.

Some documented evidence of intra-religious sectarian conflicts across the globe are as follows: Northern Ireland, 1959, 1969 (Catholic versus Protestants); Lebanon 1975 (Shiites supported by Syria (Amal) versus Shiites supported by Iran Hezbollah); Iraq 1991 (Sunnis versus Shiites); Yugoslavia (Croatia) 1991, (Serbian orthodox Christians versus Roman

Catholic Christians); Yugoslavia (Bosnia) 1991 (Orthodox Christians versus Catholics versus Muslims); Afghanistan 1992 (Fundamentalist Muslims versus Moderate Muslims); Uzbekistan 1989 (Sunni Uzbeks versus Shiite Meschetes); Ireland, 2004 (Protestants versus Catholics); Lebanon, 1989 (Intra-Christian Violence); Vietnam, 2012 (Cao Dai versus Cao Dai); Indonesia 2012, (Sunni versus Shia); Ghana 1976, 1999 (Tijaniyyah versus Ahlus-Sunnah); Libya2013 (Salafist versus Sufist) (Ganzel,(1993); Friel,(2004); Ayuba, (2011); Grim, (2014); PEW,(2015). Regents Prep (2003) observes that intra-sectarian religious conflicts have the capacity to wreck a religion.

Robinson (2014) points out that severe conflicts have cropped up within the major Christian denominations such as Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Methodist churches. The conservatives inside respective denominations form renewal groups which operate within a state of tension with the leadership of their denominations. Also, Islam has a long history of intra-sectarian conflicts between the Sunni and Shia denominations. Members of the Shia believe that the Sunnis are hopeless and condemned to everlasting damnation because they rejected the authority of the first Caliph Ali and his descendants. On the other hand, believers of the Sunni denomination have declared the Shia to be heretics. Up to date, the intra-sectarian conflicts between these two major Islamic denominations have remained intractable.

While Christianity and Islam have contributed immensely to the growth and development of Nigeria, both religions have also produced a history of religious conflict and violence (Falola, 1998). The Christian faith tradition has many denominations, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion, the Nigerian Baptist Convention, the Lutheran, and Jehovah's Witnesses. There are a handful of home-grown indigenous Christian denominations like Celestial Church of Christ, Cherubim and Seraphim, Christ Apostolic Church, Deeper Life Bible Church, Living Faith Church, etc. Also, the Islamic religion parades different sectarian groups such as the Izala, Shiites, Tijanniyya, Sunni, and a host of others (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). These religious groups have at one time or the other experienced one form of intra-sectarian religious conflict. For example, the Maitatsine, Izala Movement, the Muslim Brothers or Shiites are Islamic sectarian groups that have faced both intra – and inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria. They have demanded the full implementation of Sharia law and the establishment of a theocratic state in Nigeria.

Likewise, it is well known that relationships between the various Christian groups in Nigeria are fraught with tension, wars of words, also known as polemics, campaign of hatred and blackmail, hate speech and intolerant preachers (Omotosho, 2004; Osaghae and Suberu, (2005); Okpanachi, (2013); Policy Brief, (2014). It will not be out of place to mention that a member of Deeper Life Denomination may find it very difficult to worship in a Roman Catholic Church and vice versa. It is very common to see some members of the Anglican Communion referring to people who go to Pentecostal Churches as “*Penterascals*”. This derogatory stereotype further confirms the not-too-healthy relationship that pervades sectarian divides in Christianity.

Indigenous African religions within Nigeria with any degree of followership are not exonerated from religious conflicts and violence. For instance, masquerade festivals which are often connected with Indigenous African Religion have triggered major conflicts in some parts of Nigeria (Osaghae & Suberu (2005). However, data from Simpson (2012) and Awoniyi (2013) concedes that Christianity and Islam have recorded more violent intra-sectarian conflicts when compared with indigenous African religion in Nigeria.

In his article titled “*Religious Pluralism*”, Basinger (2015) provides an exploratory insight into a better understanding of conflicts within religious sectarian groups using differences in theological ideologies. Basinger (2015) maintains that differences in theological ideologies are evident in how various religions such as Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism, etc. construct their concept of God, their judgment of the human being and their views of immortality in God’s presence. In addition, the theological ideologies of many religions, he contends, are connected to the basic claims to the truth which are categorised into three: religious exclusivism, religious non-exclusivism, and religious pluralism (Basinger, 2015:2). These differences have the tendency to be used in constructing unique identities capable of materialising into sectarian divisions within and between religious denominations.

In a related study, Emman El Badawy, Milo Comerford and Peter Welby (2015) contend that theological ideologies do not necessarily trigger intra-sectarian conflict. Rather it is the interpretation of differing sacred narratives. While Asghar (2013) submits that the sacred narratives are subject to the understanding practitioners of most religions have developed in the course of time, which may be contrary to what their founder had in mind. In

addition, El Badawy et al. (2015), conclude that it is also the way the sectarian divisions within a larger religious body apply their ideologies to certain realities that determine the outcome of conflicts in terms of violence or non-violence.

Taking the discussion further, Wuthnow (1988:133) argues that emergent intra-religious conflicts will be between the “religious conservatives” and “religious liberals”. Zuckerman (1999) affirms that conflicts within the fault lines of religion will no longer occur between the Roman Catholics and Protestants, rather, traditionalist Roman Catholics will be pitching their tent against other Catholics who are liberal minded; or conventional Protestants against other free-thinking Protestants. Inevitably, Hunter (1991: 490-122) categorises the whole subject of religious sectarianism into two broad groups: those with an “impulse towards orthodoxy” versus those “with an impulse towards progressivism”. According to him, those with orthodox tendencies are characterised by a commitment to an “external definable and transcendent reality”. The progressive-minded adherents are seeking to practice the religion in line with contemporary realities. Jost (2015) argues that the impulse towards orthodoxy is connected to the fact that human beings are resistant to social change and would prefer to hold on to their established custom and tradition. For Back and Lindholm (2014), challenging existing traditions is associated with increased efforts and risks. Therefore, it pays more to maintain the status quo than to route for change. Those with the inclination to orthodoxy are fixed to tradition and therefore resistant to change.

Sectarian groups within religions have their points of convergence and areas of differences. Granted that theological differences are breeding grounds for intra-sectarian conflict, should they degenerate into violence? Within perceived differences, is it not possible for the points of convergence to be strengthened as the various sectarian groups interact with one another? In view of these contending issues, Crabtree (2009) argues:

Atheists and Scientists do not kill each other over their beliefs. The adherents of superstring theory have never killed opposing theorists, and Lamarckian Evolutionists never killed any Darwinian Evolutionists on account of their beliefs. Newton and Einstein may have disagreed, but they refrained from violently attacking each other's followers. Like them, Arius and Athanasius disagreed over theory in the 4th century, although in their case it wasn't physics, but

about the nature of Christ. The Arians and Nicene Christians, however, soon ended up damning each other to hell because of the other's "wrong" beliefs, and then resorted to murder, aggression and burning until the Arians had been wiped out. Well, that is one way to settle a theoretical dispute. But why is it the religious way? (p.1).

Using the above statement as a basis, Ruthven (2007) warns that refusal to find the middle ground where it concerns religious differences is dangerous and can be a breeding ground for fundamentalism. Exploring the submission of Crabtree (2009:1) further, Boyer (2001), Ehrman (2003) and Fenn (2009) argue that it should be blamed on the framework of monotheism especially among the Abrahamic religions. They contend that the Abrahamic monotheistic religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, have dominant narratives of violence across time and space due to their prejudice of 'other' gods and a general sternness to the details of their beliefs and practices. Boyer (2001), Ehrman (2003) and Fenn (2009) further argue the Abrahamic religions project a history that is filled with the horrendous spectra of repression and violent intimidation; intra-sectarian tensions, schismatic inclinations and hostility towards other sectarian groups outside the mainstream body. But contrary to this submission, Igbe Orhe, a monotheist non-Abrahamic religion with major sectarian groups, presents a counter-narrative of non-violent conflicts outcomes. Extant studies have focused on Abrahamic religions of Christianity, Islam, Judaism and other world religions with dominant narratives of violent outcomes emanating from intra-sectarian conflicts. Meanwhile, there are some religions that share similar characteristics with these acclaimed world religions, originating from Africa but in contrast have counter-narratives of non-violent conflict outcomes. One of such is Igbe Orhe; the non-violent conflict narrative within its sectarian groups has not received empirical attention.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The question of how to deal with differences and manage intra-sectarian conflicts within religions is a worldwide challenge. Studies on intra-sectarian religious conflicts have advocated the active promotion of secularism and pluralism as management mechanisms for both inter-religious conflicts and intra-sectarian conflicts. Others tend to see mental reorientation and capacity building as a more appropriate approach to addressing issues relating to intra-sectarian religious conflicts. Equally it has been argued that inter-religious dialogue is a constructive and humane mechanism that can help address difficult religious

sectarian concerns without resulting to violence (see Policy Brief (2015); Basinger, (2015); Rowley (2015); Engender, (2015); Irvine, Rahim and Keegan, (2015). As important as these novel recommendations are, it is needful to anchor them on a case study.

Moreover, extant studies on Igbe Orhe, Nabofa (1973), Nabofa (1982), Akama (1985), Nabofa (2003), Nabofa (2005), Echekwube (1994), Akponwei (2009), Ikoba (2014), have been preoccupied with its historical growth and expansion; its response to Christian missionary activities and conflicts with the colonial government in Urhoboland; its monotheistic identity which is not in conformity with the normative features of classical African Traditional Religion and Igbe Orhe as a mechanism for social control; the effects of syncretism and the proliferation of different brands of Igbe religion across Delta State. However, these existing studies offer little insight into the management of intra-sectarian conflicts in Igbe Orhe and how conflicts within the religion are managed and resolved in a non-violent way. While many studies have focused on violent conflicts and their implications for development in Africa, this study transcends the clichéd domain to animate the implications of non-violent intra-sectarian conflicts among Igbe Orhe worshipers. The study filled the identified gaps.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How did Igbe Orhe emerge as a religion to the point of sectarian multiplicity?
2. What are the drivers of intra-sectarian conflicts in Igbe Orhe?
3. How are the evolutionary patterns and dimensions of intra-sectarian conflicts of Igbe Orhe identified?
4. How do Igbe Orhe adherents manage their intra-sectarian conflicts?
5. What are the challenges associated with the management of intra-sectarian conflicts in Igbe Orhe?

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the conflict management mechanism within the internal dynamics of Igbe Orhe with a view to highlighting their significance in the sustenance of peace within its fold.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Investigate the history of Igbe Orhe to the point of sectarian multiplicity.
2. Determine the instigators of intra-sectarian conflicts in Igbe Orhe.
3. Identify the patterns and dimensions of intra-sectarian conflicts in Igbe Orhe.
4. Examine the intra-sectarian conflict management mechanisms in the internal dynamics of Igbe Orhe.
5. Discuss the challenges of the intra-sectarian conflict management mechanisms in Igbe Orhe.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study covers the three visible sectarian groups of Igbe Orhe religion. They have been identified as: The Western Syncretic Sectarian group, which fuses Christian Bible with the orhe, the Classical Mainline Igbe Orhe, which practices the religion in its pure form and the Traditional Syncretic group which practices Igbe along the principles of African Traditional Religion (ATR). The study examined the intra sectarian conflict dynamics within Igbe Orhe from the “Peace and Conflict” point of view and how their conflict management strategies promote non-violence and social cohesion among the adherents of the religion despite their theological differences.

1.6 Justification of the Study

This research is focused on the intra-sectarian conflict management mechanisms of Igbe Orhe, a monotheist non-Abrahamic religion. This research is unique in the sense that it focuses on a monotheist faith tradition in the genre of Indigenous African Religion with a counter-narrative of non-violence despite its diverse sectarian groups. Intra- sectarian conflict management within the genre of Indigenous African Religion is an area of study rarely addressed. In this regard, the availability of works on the management of intra-sectarian religious conflicts, in general, does not override the need to undertake this research.

Olupona (2011) argues that the civilising wherewithal and religious heritage of Africa are largely studied with circumspection and the results documented with prejudice. This observation by Olupona underscores the point that if the perspectives of Indigenous

African religions are consistently ignored or marginalised in the academic domain, a highly significant portion of its adherents will be excluded from empirical investigations. This study examined the rich religious heritage entrenched in Igbe Orhe and documented its conflict management mechanisms. In addition, research efforts have been conducted on the historical evolution and growth rituals and symbols of Igbe as an institutionalised religion. However, to a very large extent, there is very little deployment of intellectual input on the intra-faith relationship model of adherents of the religion of which this study has provided useful insights. The research adds to the existing body of knowledge for researchers who engage in studies relating to the management of religious/intra-sectarian conflicts. It will encourage scholars to interrogate similar issues encoded in other indigenous African religions.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Conflict

In this study, conflict is defined as an interactive process manifested in the contest for power, incompatibility, disagreement, dissonance and tension, capable of producing functional or dysfunctional outcomes within or between individuals, groups, and organisations.

1.7.2 Religious Conflict

This study adopts the definition of Mayer (2012) which posits that religious conflict is a complex phenomenon that engages a combination of contested domains (ideology/morality, power, personality, space/place, and group identity). In Mayer's submission, a conflict is termed as religious when religion is involved.

1.7.3 Sectarian

In this study, sectarian is defined from the lens of Khuri (2006) as a segregated group of persons who may not necessarily disbelieve a religion but holds to certain fundamentals of the religion as a platform for connecting with the metaphysical realm. Considering this, every religion is inundated with different sectarian movements.

1.7.4 Intra-Sectarian Religious Conflict

Soharwardy (2014) defines a conflict as intra-religious to implicate conflicts within the various denominations of a religion or violent conflicts between different sects of the same religion. The definition was adopted in this study.

1.7.5 Conflict Management

Zartman (1989:24) also asserts that “conflict management refers to the elimination, neutralization, or control of means of pursuing either the conflict or the crisis...then seeks either to prevent conflict from erupting into crisis or to cool a crisis in eruption”. Management implies the ability to put mechanisms in place to prevent and control a conflict or class of conflicts and the effects through either individual skills or institutional mechanisms.

1.7.6 Violence

In this study, violence is defined as the premeditated use of physical power against a person leading to injury, termination of a person’s life, emotional, psychological pain and suffering.

1.7.7 Non-Violence

In this study, non-violence is defined as the engagement of peaceful approaches in the pursuit of a course whether it is religious, social or political.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Conceptual Clarification

2.1.1 Igbe Orhe as a Religion and Not a Cult

The landscape of Delta state is dotted with pockets of traditional religious bodies that are associated with both land and aquatic divinities which are generally referred to as “cults”. Likewise, there is a general misconception in the mind of most people residing in the Niger Delta that Igbe Orhe is not a religion, but a cult. Thus, it will be germane in this study to first clarify and establish Igbe Orhe anatomically a religion.

Richardson (1978:28) contends that the word “cult” has served “as a rug” under which were swept the troublesome and idiosyncratic religious experiences of mystics and other religious deviants. Similarly, Dillon and Richardson (1991) argue that the word “cult” has become a widely used term usually connoting some groups that are unfamiliar, feared or and disliked. In addition, Richardson (1993) maintains that the common use of the term “cult” has increased in acceptance that it has virtually wiped out the historical denotation of the word from the sociology of religion. Undeniably, some would claim that the word “cult” should be avoided because of the misconstruction between the historical import of the term and its contemporary derogatory application. However, within the sociology of religion, Richardson defines the term “cult” as:

a small informal group lacking a definite authority structure, somewhat spontaneous in its development (although often possessing a somewhat charismatic leader or group of leaders) transitory, somewhat mystical and individualistically oriented and deriving its inspiration and ideology from outside the predominant religious culture (1978:31).

However, a critical examination of Richardson’s definition reveals that Igbe Orhe does not fall into the mould and cannot be classified or called a cult. Contrary to Richardson (1978:31), Igbe Orhe has a formal, definitive leadership structure. In addition, its leadership frame is highly systematic and well organised. Though Igbe Orhe has an *Ose Isi*

(Uku Supreme who is the overall spiritual and political leader), he derives his authority from Oweya (Almighty God) and from other ordained leaders in the *Ogwa Igbe* (Temple of worship). As a result, the leadership of Igbe Orhe cannot be individualistic. In addition, the evolution of Igbe Orhe cannot be said to be spontaneous, because its growth and expansion has been gradual over the years.

From an ethnographic point of view, the following song also establishes the fact that Igbe Orhe should not be acknowledged as a cult:

Mera Mera	I am going, I am going
Mera mire nu ughe	I am going, I am going to watch
Mera Mera	I am going, I am going
Mera Mire nu Ughe	I am going to watch
Sa adjudju ravwo fabo	Is it the clapping of the traditional handheld fan
Koye ghini muo ohwo	that is “arresting people”
Mere Mera	I am going, I am going
Mera mire nu ughe	I am going, I am going to watch

The above song clearly indicates that Igbe Orhe is an open religion. The song simply explains that the actions and activities of Igbe Orhe are not shrouded in secrecy. According to *Oni Igbe Eloho*, the song is an open invitation to all and sundry to come to see how God is worshipped in Igbe Orhe. It is, therefore, the submission of this study that the song highlighted above is a call for people to come and worship in Igbe Orhe without any form of inhibition. To this end, Igbe Orhe ought not to be regarded as a cult.

What are the anatomic features of Igbe Orhe that qualify it to be called a religion? Scholars have not been able to reach a conclusion concerning the definition of religion. In order to straighten out the challenges that are associated with the definition of ‘Religion’, the researcher decided to use what scholars have identified as the anatomic features of religion as a benchmark to establish Igbe Orhe as a religion. Niels Nielsen in his book, *Religions of the World* (1993) presents some universal characteristics found in most religions. 1. Commonly, most religions have belief in some ultimate reality beyond, or a supernatural being that is connected to human experience and existence. 2. Religions distinguish between the sacred and profane in the context of space, human agents and objects. 3. Religions sturdily encourage or have arranged ritual conducts and activities for its adherents. 4. Most religions are wont to uphold certain moral codes or ethical philosophy

to guide the entire faith community. 5. Religious life engages and incorporates common emotional and intuitive human feelings. 6. Religions encourage communication and provide ways to communicate or connect with the divine. 7. Sacred stories and mythologies have been identified as part of the anatomic features of many religions across the world and it helps to articulate a coherent worldview. 8. Religions organise life for individuals, which include a proper dress code, personal sacrifices in the context of their respective worldviews. 9. Religions require and promote the social organisation and institutional forms to carry out the necessary functions of worship and leadership that institutionalise its teachings and practices. 10. Religions promise inner peace and harmony despite the vicissitudes of life. It has been observed that the features that have been identified are evident and visible in Igbe Orhe (see Nabofa, 2005: 325- 375). Therefore, it is the submission of this study that Igbe Orhe ought to be classified as a religion and not as a cult.

Taking the argument further, Nabofa defines religion “as man’s effort that is aimed at satisfying certain emotional, spiritual, moral and material needs by establishing and maintaining cordial relations between himself and his fellowman” (Nabofa, 2005: 304). Many adherents of Igbe Orhe have been socialised into the paradigms enumerated by Nabofa as part of the elements of religion. The Igbe Orhe adherent believes that there is a God who perfects all that concerns mankind and must be worshipped with the purity of heart (Ikoba, 2014). This God is called *Oweya* in the cosmology of Igbe Orhe. According to *Ose Isi*, Obaoga Ibodje, (*Uku Supreme* of Igbe Orhe worldwide) “we surrender our lives to *Oweya* in worship, prayers and praises. *Oweya*, in turn, gives us good health, financial and material prosperity” (Interview at Kokori, October 18, 2016). Juxtaposing the definition of Nabofa with the empirical explanation of Obaoga Ibodje, Igbe Orhe should indeed be called a religion.

In addition, the Christian missionaries and colonial British officials labelled Igbe Orhe as the “white chalk juju” (Akponwei, (2009); Nabofa (2005). However, Nabofa (2005:311) contends that the term is offensive and cannot be acknowledged as the right name for Igbe Orhe. Nabofa affirms that members of Igbe Orhe do not worship “juju” and that it is “a creation of Western imagination” (Nabofa, 2005:311). *Ose Isi* Obaoga Ibodje (*Uku Supreme*) explains that “in Igbe Orhe, we only bow to *Oweya*, because he is the creator and

the ruler of all” (Interview at Kokori, October 18, 2016). Therefore, it can be conceded that the phrase “white chalk juju” was coined by the Christian missionaries and British colonial officials to demonise and reduce Igbe Orhe to a second-rate religion, in order to create space for Christianity that was already gaining entrance into Urhoboland.

Johnstone (2007) and Breaux (1993) admit that religion is a social institution with many constituent parts and they identified five sociological characteristics that can make up a religion. Firstly, a religion is established and sustained by a group of persons who develop a set of common values and reverence for the same things; they are important to the establishment and the continuation of a religion. Secondly, a religion ought to have binding beliefs that are accepted by the adherents and are equally considered sacred. Thirdly, a religion must have a well-defined pattern of practices that become norms and prescribed rites which are known as rituals. Fourthly, religion has its own set of morals, beliefs which modify the behaviours of its adherents. Fifthly, religions also revolve around the veneration of certain things. Religion separates things that are sacred and things that are profane. Two different spheres emerge the sacred sphere and the profane sphere. Johnstone (2007) and Breaux (1993) conclude that without these five integral parts, a religion is not able to establish itself.

It must be mentioned that Igbe Orhe has binding beliefs that are acceptable among its adherents. It has transited from being an ethnic religion into a universalising religion even after the death of its founder, Ubiesha. Igbe Orhe has a well-defined ritual pattern and practices and the *orhe* (chalk), *adjudju* (traditional handheld fan), the bed that *Uku* (High Priest) sits on during worship session, are some of the sacred paraphernalia venerated by adherents of the Igbe Orhe. Igbe Orhe distinguishes between the sacred and the profane. For example, the grave of *Uku* Ibodje Ubiesha is believed to have potent powers and adherents have faith that when they pray by Ibodje’s graveside, they will be emancipated from whatever that is troubling them. The researcher observed many adherents making supplications at the graveside of Ibodje. It was Ibodje who took over as supreme leader of Igbe Orhe after the death of Ubiesha. It is important to state that adherents of the Islamic religion venerate the grave of the Holy Prophet Mohammed, located in Saudi Arabia. Here in Nigeria, the grave of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola, the acclaimed founder of the Christ Apostolic Church of Nigeria (CAC), is treated as a sacred space. Some members of CAC

sometimes visit the graveside of the late Apostle Babalola located at Efon Alaaye, Ekiti state, Nigeria to make supplications to God for divine intervention. Similarly, the grave of Prophet Elisha in the Old Testament of the Bible was reputed to have revived a dead man (2 Kings 13:21). Many religions across the world still venerate the gravesides of their founders because they are regarded as sacred spaces where spiritual powers are domiciled. This affirms the submission of Olaniyi and Bateye (2016: 129) that sacred spaces attract certain spiritual rituals and they are dynamic agents in the construction, development and persistence of religion. The *Ogwa Igbe* (worship temple) is a sacred space, highly revered by adherents of Igbe Orhe, especially when the Uku is sitting on the bed. The general belief is that Oweya (God) is ever-present within the premises of the *Ogwa Igbe*. These sociological characteristics are well articulated in Igbe Orhe, which establishes the fact that it is an independent religion.

2.1.2 Igbe Orhe as Monotheist Non-Abrahamic Religion

On one hand, religions evolving from Africa are often referred to as polytheistic (worship of many gods) or pantheistic, which means the presence of God in all aspects of nature. Some scholars have also argued that African religions are henotheistic. Henotheism is the belief that there is a big God who is over other gods. On the other hand, monotheism (the belief in only one universal God) is popular with Christianity, Islam and Judaism. In addition, Christianity, Islam and Judaism have been classified as Monotheist Abrahamic Religions because of their commonality of belief in the one and only God of Abraham, the gracious and compassionate creator, sustainer and adjudicator of all human beings (Kung, 1992).

The New World Encyclopaedia (2018) observes that Christianity, Islam and Judaism are known as Abrahamic monotheism because of ancestral commonality that is connected to the Biblical character called Abram, whose name was later changed to Abraham. He had two sons; Ishmael (son of Hagar) and Isaac (son of Sarah). According to biblical records, Abraham was assured by God through a promise that his children would grow to be the fathers of great nations (See Genesis 17, 21 and 25). Goldenberg (2007) argues that the Jewish religion (Judaism) evolved out of the writings of the Hebrew Bible. Judaism is a religion that worships God through prayer, sermons, the reading of scripture, and meets in buildings called synagogues under the leadership of learned rabbis. He contends that after

twenty generations of human history, Abram received an instruction from God that he should leave his primordial home which is situated in Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq) to the far-away land called Canaan. Available biblical evidence reveals that Terah, the father of Abram, had embarked on a similar journey, but he was unable to accomplish it because he died in the course of the expedition. Through a new divine order, Abram was able to fulfil the dream of his father by relocating to Canaan (Genesis 11 & 12). The Bible never quite accounts for God's choice of Abram, unlike Noah who was distinguished by his righteousness (see Genesis 6:9). But God using his divine prerogative chose Abram and entered a covenant with him that his children would inherit the land of Canaan and would become great nations to be reckoned with (See Genesis 15:10). As an indication of a change of status, Abram was given a new name, Abraham. His new status was complemented with a son called Isaac who was not born until Abraham was 100 years old. As time progresses, Isaac in time became the father of Jacob and Esau. The twelve sons of Jacob would later metamorphose into the tribes of Israel (See Genesis 33: 6-25).

Empirical findings indicate that Igbe Orhe has similar anatomic features of monotheism which have been identified with the Abrahamic religions. In the first instance, the adherents of Igbe Orhe commune directly with Oweya (God) in prayer and worship expressed through dance. Oweya (God) in Igbe cosmology is a God of mercy and justice. He rewards those who have accompanied their faith with good deeds in this world and punishes unfaithful devotees. Likewise, it was reported that Igbe Orhe evolved after Oweya called Ubiesha Etarakpor while he was working on his farmland in Kokori and was given the mandate to establish the religion (Reverend Emojevu, 2016). *Uku* Phillip Akpokovo, the oldest living grandson of Ubiesha Etarakpo also confirmed that "God revealed himself to Ubiesha through the name Oweya and was instructed to start this religion, using the orhe (native white chalk) as the symbol of authority" (Interview at Kokori, 16 Oct 2016). Ubiesha heeded the call of *Oweya* by going back to pick up the *orhe* (native white chalk) which he purportedly found on his farmland "for the sake of humanity" (Reverend Emojevu, 2016).

Adherents of Igbe Orhe maintain that *Oweya* appointed Ubiesha as a Messiah to deliver mankind from the oppression of witches and wizards through the "instrumentality of the orhe (native white chalk) and that is why the religion is also called '*Orhe Ubiesha*

Akpoeje’ which literally means the universal chalk of Ubiesha” (*Uku Supreme*, Obaoga Ibodje, Interview at Kokori, 19 Oct 2016). Nabofa (2005: 331) confirms the claim of the *Uku Supreme* with the following song:

Me mu’ obo mu awalakirimo, iye, iye

Kirimo, Iye; Iye!!

I arrested (defeated) fetish priests with all rattles, yes, yes

orhe r’Oghene gare kirimo iye iye

The orhe of God is really very potent, yes, yes...Hurrah! Hurrah!!

Orhenr’Oghene gare kirimo, iye, iye

The orhe of God is really very potent, yes, yes...Hurrah! Hurrah!!

This song establishes that real adherents of Igbe Orhe are only expected to worship Oweya (God) directly and the *orhe* is acknowledged to be spiritually potent. *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho (the senior *Omote Uku* in Igbe Orhe) affirmed that adherents must be faithful to Oweya (God) openly and secretly because, on the Judgment Day, they will all be rewarded or punished according to their deeds. Public prayer in houses of worship known as Ogwa Igbe (temple of worship) is a common feature in Igbe Orhe. Adherents worship on every Urhobo market day. However, due to the influence of modernisation, some adherents changed their worship days to Sundays.

The philosophy of purity in Igbe Orhe is symbolised through the wearing of white garments and the daily licking of the *orhe* (native white chalk). In addition, adherents of Igbe Orhe believe that through the consistent licking of the *orhe*, they are symbolically cleansed from all forms of impurities. It is the belief in Igbe Orhe cosmology that when adherents maintain a state of consistent purity, it guarantees a constant flow of blessings from Oweya(God). Apart from spiritual cleansing, adherents of Igbe Orhe have faith that the *orhe* also has the capacity to detoxify their body physically. According to Reverend Emojevu “one of the reasons adherents of Igbe Orhe enjoy long life is connected to the detoxifying powers contained in the *orhe*. In the words of Michael Nabofa “when a Fulani herdsman wants to detoxify their cattle from worms, they are given the native chalk to eat” (Interview at Wilberforce Island, August 10, 2014). Through the submission of Nabofa, it can be inferred that the *orhe* may contain some medicinal substances that can be explored to promote good health for the benefit of mankind.

Annually, adherents of Igbe Orhe embark on a yearly pilgrimage to Kokori to observe the *Ore Isi* festival of thanksgiving. During this event, Oweya (God) is appreciated for his love and protection. Adherents also seek forgiveness of sin, strengthen their connection with Oweya and seek for a fresh impartation of knowledge and spiritual blessings. Individuals and the community participate in worship and follow ethical, practical and religious laws. Adherents of Igbe Orhe consciously acknowledge only the patriarchy of Ubiesha Etarakpor as their spiritual father and ancestor.

Originating from Urhoboland, Igbe Orhe is conceptualised as a monotheist non-Abrahamic religion because it replicates features found among the Abrahamic religions but does not acknowledge the patriarchy of Abraham and his prophetic descendants. Igbe Orhe only acknowledges Ubiesha as its patriarch, Erukainure as its matriarch and Oweya as its God of history and revelation. It regards the *orhe* as its symbol of salvation for mankind.

Furthermore, it is the submission of this study that Igbe Orhe should not be regarded as an “African monotheism” because often in Western European thinking, whatever is categorised as ‘African’ is perceived as inferior and therefore accorded lesser status. This is predicated on the global afro- pessimism of western scholars who are wont to treat phenomena evolving from Africa as objects instead of treating them as subjects. In addition, the concept “African monotheism” to a large extent can apply to the “diffused monotheism” concept that is associated with African Traditional Religion as espoused by Idowu (1973) and Awolalu (1976). The African concept of monotheism is hinged on one “big” Supreme Being at its head who governs all earthly activities through the medium of divinities who are considered to be associates (Lugira, 2009). Therefore, the anatomic features of Igbe Orhe qualify it to be conceptualised as a monotheist non-Abrahamic religion.

2.1.3 Igbe Orhe as an ‘Evolving World Religion’

Scholars like Nabofa (2005), Akama (1985), Okolugbo (1990), Echekwube (1994) and Ikoba (2014) have classified Igbe Orhe under the genre of African Traditional Religion. Conversely, after critical comparative examination of the features of Igbe Orhe and that of African Traditional Religion (ATR), findings show that Igbe Orhe should not be classified as African Traditional Religion.

From a general perspective, Awolalu (1976) contends that African Traditional Religion pervades every aspect of the life of Africans and therefore it cannot be studied in isolation. He argues that African Traditional Religion must be studied in tandem with the study of the people who practise it. According to Awolalu (1976), one cannot delve into the study of African Traditional Religion without first clarifying the word ‘traditional’. Awolalu is of the opinion that the word traditional means indigenous, something that was handed down from generation to generation, upheld and practised by Africans today. It is a heritage identified with the past, yet is handled as a phenomenon of the present with probable impact for the future. In addition, Awolalu (1976) explains that the concept of African Traditional Religion is woven around what Africans believe and practise in relation to their environment. African Traditional Religion, Awolalu believes, evolves from the progenitors of Africans and they expressed themselves in different dimensions. He also contends that the practice of African Traditional Religions is not restricted to its devotees exclusively because Christians and Muslims are also patronising it.

Commenting on the essential elements of African Traditional Religion, Awolalu (1976) stresses it is established chiefly on oral diffusion, printed in the heart of its practitioners and its religious activities revolve around rituals and shrines. Mbiti (1969) affirms that African Traditional Religion is not established based on the idea of an individual. In his book, *African Religion: A Very Short Introduction*, Olupona (2014: 6), notes that African Traditional Religions are “less faith traditions than lived traditions”. He further remarks that African Traditional Religion places much emphasis on rituals, ceremonies, while it pays little attention to doctrines and homilies. Unlike the Abrahamic religions which place a lot of emphasis on proselytising and soul winning, Olupona (2014) suggests that African Traditional Religion tends to focus on lived practices. In the thoughts of Awolalu (1976) African Traditional Religion does not revolve around a religious hero like the Buddha of Buddhism, Jesus Christ of Christianity or Muhammad of Islam. Olupona (2014) also argues that African Traditional Religion is not based on conversions like Islam and Christianity. It has no missionaries; neither does it have religious reformers or religious renewal movements (Awolalu, 1976).

Ebohon (2015) concedes that African people have certain constant distinctive features in their religious world views. These include belief in a universal God who is ruling the

affairs of mankind through some divinities and deities; belief in ancestors, the engagement of magic, deployment of charms, and the practice of medicine. These features, Ebohon (2015) alludes, are the pillars of African Traditional Religion. In his assessment of African Traditional Religion, Amponsah (2009) affirms that adherents are taught to revere a Supreme Being (God) through other lesser gods and cultic divinities. He identifies the following as the essential belief system of African Traditional Religion: belief in smaller deities and ancestors to whom libations are poured and sacrifices offered; belief in the fact that the human being is weak and has to depend on benevolent transcendent powers for protection and sustenance and belief in 'causality', that things in this world do not happen by chance.

Even though Igbe Orhe evolved from Urhoboland, available evidence has shown that it should not be classified as an African Traditional Religion because it has many elements that are very much like the Abrahamic religions and other world religions. It is worthy to mention that just like in Christianity and Islam, Igbe Orhe has a founder who performed miracles and manifested great healing powers. In order to facilitate the growth and expansion of the religion, the founder commissioned Omonedo, Okinedo, Tambowei, Ojanonogha, Igugu, Idubor, Akpobome and Efenedo as early apostles of the religion. These men are also reported to have performed miracles in their various communities through the miraculous engagement of the *orhe* (native white chalk). Adherents of Igbe Orhe proselytise and the religion has a renewal movement known as Oweya Missionary Society. In 2017, another renewal movement known as *Aghwoghwo ri Igbe* (meaning Announcing Igbe Orhe) was formed in furtherance of a new vigour to give the religion more visibility and win new converts contrary to the submission of Olupona (2014) Awolalu (1976) and Ebohon (2009) in regards to the features of African Traditional Religion. An adherent of Igbe Orhe believes in the mystical power of songs, dance, visions and prophecies.

In the Igbe Orhe worldview, it is acclaimed that dance draws down the power and presence of Oweya(God) and this theological understanding resonates strongly with the Christian faith tradition. Contrary to the generic features of African Traditional Religion, the use of medicine, charms, amulets are strictly forbidden in Igbe Orhe. Divination which is also associated with African Traditional Religion is firmly prohibited in Igbe Orhe. Healing is

by faith through the application of the orhe (native white chalk) and *adjudju* (traditional handheld fan). Igbe Orhe is built around doctrines such as respect for constituted spiritual authority, sexual purity and faith in the power of Oweya. Considering the foregoing, this study postulates that Igbe Orhe should be deconstructed as an African Traditional Religion.

This study contends that Igbe Orhe should be re-conceptualised as an ‘emerging world religion’ because its make-up fits into the descriptive elements of world religions. Ninian Smart in his highly influential work *The World’s Religions* (1998), identifies seven characteristics that are associated with the so-called world religions. He argues that all world religions have ritual dimensions. Through these ritual dimensions, adherents of world religions are able to reinforce the sacred myth embedded in the religion. The ritual is expressed through worship in songs, prayers, regular gatherings in a sacred space and rites of passage. Furthermore, the study of Ninian Smart identifies an experiential dimension that is associated with the world religions which has to do with the feelings of security, awe and inexplicable ecstasy during worship sessions.

Also, there is the socio-institutional dimension which indicates that the world religions are well organised with sustainable bureaucratic and administrative structures. The social institutions help the succession processes of the world religions. Likewise, through the social-institutional element framework, most world religions are able to establish religious traditions which are preserved and passed on through their various temples and monasteries. The world religions also exhibit some mythical dimension which has to do with sacred stories that are passed from generation to generation. The stories are purported to be sacred because they reveal and explain what that tradition believes to be the ultimate nature of gods, humans and the universe.

In addition, the acclaimed world religions have been acknowledged to have a philosophical /doctrinal dimension. This is connected with belief systems which can help interpret the nature of the Ultimate Reality and how it affects mankind. The philosophical/doctrinal paradigms provide a framework which drives the activities of the religion. As well, the world religions have their ethical frameworks and they are established on rules that form the guidelines for conduct among adherents. With the ethical frameworks, members of the religious community can judge an action as good or evil depending on the level of conformity to an ethical framework. Finally, the world religions have a material dimension

and it is connected to the physical buildings, implements, paintings, statues, books, etc. associated with a tradition, as well as geographical places and features that are mythically associated with the tradition.

After careful examination of the dimensions in Igbe Orhe in relation to the submission of Ninian Smart, it was discovered that the seven dimensions that have been identified with the world religions are manifest in Igbe Orhe. Therefore, contrary to the submissions of Ikoba (2014), Akponwei (2009), Nabofa (2005), Akama (1985), Echekwube (1994), Igbe Orhe should be acknowledged as an ‘Evolving World Religion’ and not as African Traditional Religion.

The concept of ‘Evolving World Religion’ is postulated on the premise that certain theological, philosophical and sociological paradigms of Igbe Orhe have not been framed or fully developed. For example, Igbe Orhe is yet to have an official sacred text like the Holy Bible which is synonymous with Christianity or the Quran. Nevertheless, the votary songs and words of the *Uku* or *Omote Uku* are considered sacred by adherents. Nonetheless, Prophet Oyiboame Emojevu (JP) concedes that “we have started documenting our songs and putting the necessary machinery in place to go textual with our sacred narratives” (Interview at Emokpa, Ughelli North Local Government, January 1, 2017).

Therefore, in the context of this study, an ‘Emerging World Religion’ is conceptualised as the evolution, growth and spread of religion beyond its indigenous place of origin and developing religious themes through gradual transformation and routinisation of its charismatic leadership.

2.1.4 Conflict Management and Non-Violent Outcomes

Sprunger (1994) contends that conflict is wont to occur wherever religion is found. Yet, some scholars have argued that conflict cannot be totally avoided, but most importantly, it is the management that matters (Albert (2001); Danjibo (2009); Ikyase and Olisah (2014); Ilo (2014); Wani (2015); Madalina (2016). There is, however, a complex array of contributing influences that can determine the violent or non-violent outcome of conflicts while engaging conflict management approaches. Though many scholars have advanced arguments for the need of conflict management, little attention is paid to the fact that the

violent or non-violent outcome of conflict within the domain of religion is influenced by the theoretical leanings of its leadership and it trickles down to the followership. It is, therefore, the submission of this study that beyond religious instructions and doctrines, an examination of the theoretical leaning of Igbe Orhe will help to frame the paradigm that has defined its non-violent outcomes of intra sectarian conflicts.

The acclaimed progenitor of Igbe Orhe, Ubiesha Etarakpor was guided by the practical application of the principles of theory religious pluralism. According to Echekwube (1994: 32) when some adherents of Igbe Orhe made attempts to resist the Christian missionaries, Ubiesha warned them against it. This view was also confirmed by *Uku Phillip Akpokovo*, the eldest surviving grandson of Ubiesha Etarakpor. According to him, Ubiesha spoke to his adherents in the following words “these people have not come to hurt us. It is the same God we are all worshipping; though our approaches may be different” (Interview at Kokori, 16 October 2016). According to *Uku Phillip Akpokovo*, Ubiesha Etarakpor further instructed his adherents to allow the new Christian faith to flourish. He considered the introduction of Christianity into the Kokori community a welcome idea since it involves the salvation of souls to serve Oweya (God). The decision of Ubiesha to recognise and allow an alternative faith community thrives within Igbe Orhe’s circle of influence affirms that the thesis of religious pluralism is dominant in the psyche of Ubiesha Etarakpor.

These following words from the current *Ose Isi Obaoga Ibodje (Uku Supreme)* also establish the thesis of religious pluralism in Igbe Orhe, but from an intra-sectarian point of view:

We don’t go from *Ogwa* to *Ogwa* forcing people to practice Igbe Orhe according to own pattern. This is the work of “*erhi*” (meaning revelation through the spirit of Oweya). Since I don’t know what Oweya has revealed to the other person, why should I say that they are not genuine? The fact that they are not practising in my own pattern does not give me the power to call them fake. Only Oweya knows the genuine seekers. He will pay everyone according to their work. So, we face our own and allow others to face their own (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East Local Government, October 18, 2016).

Through these words from the *Ose Isi Obaoga Ibodje (Uku Supreme)*, the researcher discovers that it is dominant and conventional in the psyche of an average Igbe Orhe adherent. However, in the lifetime of Ubiesha, Igbe Orhe operated as a homogenous group,

hence he was guided by religious pluralism to deal with what would have degenerated into a religious conflict. At present, Igbe Orhe has many sectarian groups. Interestingly, the application of the theory of religious pluralism by the current *Ose Isi* Obaoga Ibodje (*Uku* Supreme) is in the context of its intra-sectarian plurality. Therefore, based on the submission of the reigning *Ose Isi*, Obaoga Ibodje which is also dominant in the psyche of an average Igbe Orhe adherent, this study postulates the theory of Sectarian Pluralism. Consequently, the theory of Sectarian Pluralism acknowledges the validity of all sectarian divisions within a religion despite their conflicting claims to truth or plurality in practice. Thus, while Religious Pluralism is targeted at providing lasting solutions to the challenges of religious conflict and peaceful co-existence among the plurality of religions across the world, Sectarian Pluralism as evident in Igbe Orhe can provide the platform for peaceful and seamless co-existence among various sectarian groups within a religion despite a conflict generating issues. Accordingly, while John Hicks theory of Religious Pluralism seeks to provide a solution to inter-religious diversity, the theory Sectarian Pluralism seeks to provide a solution to a denominational or intra-sectarian plurality within religious traditions.

It is, therefore, the submission of this study that what defines the narrative of violence or non-violence of conflict outcomes is the theoretical foundation of the leadership. This determines the mobilisation of adherents to either follow the path of peace or violence. Contrary to Golpin (1997), a vast reservoir of information in sacred texts of religions on prosocial and antisocial values can only breed more violence if the religious leaders and thinkers keep probing the sacred narratives with the theoretical lens of religious particularism, exclusive claims to truth and revelation of its meta-empirical realities.

In addition, the non-violent outcome of intra-sectarian conflicts in Igbe Orhe is connected to the application of the theory of utilitarianism popularised by Jeremy Bentham and Stuart Mills. This is evident in the phrase “*ufuoma akpoeje*” (for the peace of humanity). The central thesis of the utilitarian theory is connected to the making of rules and taking of actions that will benefit the good of a large people. This is also the dominant thinking pattern within the leadership of Igbe Orhe and most adherents have internalised this as a central orientation. Therefore, the socialisation of the leadership (religious elites) and followership into the framework of religious pluralism, sectarian pluralism and the

principles of utilitarianism has helped to channel the management of conflicts in Igbe Orhe in the direction of non-violent outcomes.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 The Evolution of Religion

Religious beliefs are ubiquitous across cultures and time, and understanding the origins and evolution of religion is a question that has attracted significant attention and debate. Johnson and Bering (2006) argue that religion evolved principally to solve the problem of cooperation among the genetically unrelated. Norenzayan (2013) developed a cultural and evolutionary theory of religion. He explains that when a religion evolves culturally, its beliefs and ritual practices tend to promote certain collective solidarity that will help to advance better collaboration within a community. They also stress that the cultural evolution of religion positions it as a powerful moralising agent, as well as being an active agent of change.

Scholars, for instance, Richerson and Boyd (2005), affirm that religion connects both biological and cultural dynamics. They argue that with the passage of time, religion has metamorphosed into an organised system capable of solving the challenges of cooperation in the community of men. It must be acknowledged that the dominant argument of the scholars cited so far revolves around the notion that religion evolves essentially to promote cooperation among people who are not closely related. How can this argument be sustained in the context of Igbe religion?

Johnson and Krüger (2004) maintain that the evolution of religion is hinged on the pre-existing cognitive capacities of human beings. Sanderson (2008:141) also contends that religion is an offshoot of man's cognitive adaptive capacity but disagrees that religion is a result of biological adaptation. He buttresses that those who hold on to the principle of adaptation are more focused on the benefits that are derived from religion and increased social cohesion has been identified as one of such benefits. In other words, as the cognitive capacities of man began to develop, religion also began to evolve as a tool for promoting social cohesion within a group of people. Subsuming his argument from the Neo-Darwinian perspective, Sanderson (2008) affirms that the human brain is not an epicentre for the evolution of any religious concept. He stresses that religion simply took

advantage of the manipulative and illusory minds of humans. The submissions of Sanderson (2008) can still be reckoned into the dominant argument that religion keeps evolving to provide mankind with the latitude for cooperation. However, the discussion of Sanderson (2008) revolves around the world religions and no reference is made to any religion with an African origin.

Robertson (1902) weaves the debate on the evolutionary history of religion around the concepts of myth. He contends that in the ancient history of religions, as in the ancient history of nations, the first account given of origin is almost always a myth. He argues that it is rarely possible to have confidence in the records of the beginning of any religion, even where it professes to derive from a non-supernatural teacher. He argues that in the absence of constant criticisms, myths concerning the evolution of religion will remain ungoverned (Robertson, 1902: 1).

In order to understand any historical phenomenon, Menzies (1917:10) is of the opinion that it has to be tracked down to the root. The postulation is that it is possible to use history as a tool for unveiling a phenomenon without recourse to chronological order. On the other hand, history can also be engaged as a narrative tool to tell the story of religion across the globe. In tracing the evolution of religion, Menzies (1917:14) further puts forward that what is true about civilisation can also be true with regards to religion. He substantiates his position by drawing on the claims of ethnologists who ascertain that every inhabited country was once populated by savages, and if every country was inhabited by savages then it can be concluded that the original religion of every country must have been a religion of savages. However, he does not refer to any of the known religions as they stand today.

A common way of addressing the evolutionary history of religion is to go back to a time prior to the existence of the phenomenon called religion. Rossano (2010:1) argues that there has always been religion. Indeed, some believers regard religion as a divine gift transcending human history. Treating it because of the same haphazard stew of historical forces that drive human affairs seems to border on sacrilege. Rossano (2010) concedes that the evolution of religion cannot be discussed outside the context of human historical evolution. Accordingly, religion came into existence after the creation of man.

The book *Supernatural Selection* was used as a framework by Rossano to provide a clearly specified, step-by-step model of religion's evolutionary history. Using facts from a wide range of academic disciplines, he sketches a model of the origin of religions beginning about half a million years ago. He argues that the progenitors of humans stumbled on what is known today as religion 70,000 years ago because it offered significant survival and reproductive advantages. In his judgment, religion is (or maybe was) an adaptation. He believes that religion first emerged as a healthcare system of our ancestors, and a critical part of that healthcare system was social support. This had important implications for group solidarity and cooperation. What are the religions that existed in Urhoboland before the emergence and growth of Igbe Orhe? Why did religions that existed before the advent of Igbe Orhe fail to stand the test of time?

Robinson (2014) explains that nobody can ascertain with accuracy how the first religions evolved. He speculates that before the culture of writing began to develop, many religions had been in place and the details of their origins had been forgotten. However, there is speculation that the first religions were a response to human fear. They were created to give people a feeling of security in an insecure world, and a feeling of control over the environment where there was little control (see Taylor, 1889 and Freud, 1928). Relating to the evolution of religion from a broad spectrum, the theories advanced by the scholars mentioned above only succeed in providing slight illumination on the factual beginning of religion. There seems to be a challenge in establishing the actual origin or evolution of religion among scholars within the available body of literature. The reason for the challenge in tracing the evolution of religion can be ascribed to man's undocumented past.

Writing on the evolution of religion, Garvie cited in Idowu (1973:33) contends that making use of the term "origin", in response to religion, is confusing and implies that the intellectual must clarify what he intends to investigate concerning intricacies of the subject matter. He argues that the word "origin" could be pointing to a source or the reason for being. He concludes that the word "origin" can also mean the manifestation of a phenomenon in its earliest form. In view of the submission of Garvie, this study seeks to trace the origin of Igbe Orhe in its earliest form to its current evolutionary state.

2.2.2 Historical Foundation of Some Religions to the Point of Sectarian Multiplicity

This section focuses on Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism. These religions have been chosen because they have been accorded the status of world religions. Efforts shall be made to identify their founder's origin, the ethnic identity of their founder, context of evolution and the state of the religion after the death of their founder. The study seeks to institute the fact that religions are established based on certain social, cultural and political circumstances across time and geographical space. It also establishes the uniqueness of each religion thereby lending credence to the theory of religious pluralism.

2.2.2.1 Christianity

Fredriksen and Adele (2008:8) note that before one can embark on an inquiry into Christianity, there must be a consensus on the meaning of the word "Christianity" in the first instance. He articulates that if Christianity is equivalent to the religious community that worships the triune God and it also acknowledges Jesus Christ as wholly God and fully man, then it can be concluded that the religion began probably around the fourth century. It is a well-known fact that Christianity is directly linked to a historical persona called Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who was acclaimed to have been born by a certain virgin called Mary (Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38). Christians who are the followers of Jesus Christ believe that he died on the cross at Calvary and rose from the dead on the third day (see Luke 23, 24 and 25).

It must, however, be mentioned that the followers of Jesus were called Christians for the first time in Antioch, many years after his death (see Acts 11:26). Fredriksen and Adele (2002) elucidate that Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew and his place of birth Judea was an obscure territory on the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. They further explained that after a period, Judea came under the oppressive Roman Empire. As a result of the political oppression from Rome, the Jews started looking out for the Messiah who can take up the challenge to liberate them from all forms of political oppression. It can, therefore, be established that Jesus Christ was born under an unfavourable political context. He also grew up within that socio-political context, which may have influenced his radical approach to his ministry. Thus, Christianity became a community visible for not following the exclusive traditions of the Jews. Adherents of Christianity refused to follow the Jewish laws and customs and it was acknowledged that the fledgeling religion of Christianity

enjoyed more patronage from the Gentiles (Fredriksen and Adele, 2002). In addition, Fredriksen (2002:8) reports that what defined Christianity in its evolutionary stage was its resentment of Judaism and Jewish antagonism. By the fourth century, Christianity had been fully established with tangible philosophical and theological sophistication, a strong leadership institution with powerful bishops. By the turn of the fourth century, the church was recognised and patronised by the Roman emperor. On the other hand, the international Gentile community was hostile as Christians outside the officially sanctioned church were persecuted as heretics, they increasingly became the object of legal harassment (Fredriksen, 2002:8). Furthermore, it is also debated that when Jesus was alive, the historians at that time failed to document his activities. What is known about Jesus was gleaned from the records of his early disciples. Fredriksen (2002) attests that the activities of Jesus which are a document in the synoptic gospels came in materialisation about seventy years after his death.

After the death of Jesus Christ, his followers remained unified for close to ten years. Thereafter, the religion split into many sectarian divisions with different and competing doctrines and practices. These are often grouped into four categories: The Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodoxy, the Anglican Communion, and Protestantism. Sometimes, the Anglican Communion is considered part of Protestantism. The various sectarian formations within Christianity have their distinct identities and essential features (The Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, 2008). The sectarian divisions in Christianity hold exclusive and essentialist claims that instigate sectarian divisions and tensions.

2.2.2.2 Islam

Islam considers itself the last major world religion in the current history of humanity and believes that there will be no other revealed religion until the end of human history (Nasr, 2003). In other words, among its faithful, Islam is the “terminal religion of humanity” (Nasr, 2003:6). Islam is a religion that considers itself as the ultimate bond of divine prophecy that is connected to Adam who is regarded as the earliest prophet and father of humankind (Nasr, 2003)

Founder of Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad was born into the Quraish tribe. In his days, Quraish was the ruling tribe of Mecca around 570 AD. The Holy Prophet

Muhammad lost his mother, Aminah, when he was six years old. It is believed that Mohammad does not know his father Abd al-Muttalib because he died before his delivery. The young Mohammad was raised up by his grandfather in a clan called Hashim. His Uncle, Abu Talib became his guardian after his grandfather died (Islam House 2013:3). After attaining the age forty, it was reported that Prophet Muhammad decided to go up into Mount Hera to spend some time in meditation. It was during his expedition to Mount Hera that he encountered the angel Gabriel who ordered him to recite “in the name of thy Lord who created, created man from a clot of blood” (Quran 96:1-2). In the narrative, Prophet Muhammad explained to the angel Gabriel that he cannot do the recitation. Eventually, he did and the words became the first five verses in chapter 96 of the Holy Quran. In the first instance, Muhammad divulged the incidence only to his wife and his associates. Consequently, after a series of encounters and revelations, he was mandated to proclaim the oneness of God universally. In the process of time, his followers began to grow; first among the poor, slaves, and later, prominent people started following him. Not everyone accepted God’s message transmitted through Muhammad. Even in his own clan, there were those who rejected his teachings, and many merchants actively opposed the message (A Brief History of Islam, 2013).

In AD 632, Muhammad died and the religion experienced schism. The most significant split between Sunni and Shiite Muslims took place as a result of leadership disputes which arose after the demise of the Holy Prophet. His followers were confronted with the question of who should lead the *Umma* (community), and on what criteria. Islamic faithful disputed over whether the new leader should emerge from the late prophet's family and, if so, in what lineage; or whether leadership should be hereditary at all (Kusserow & Pawlak, 2016: 2).

It is worth mentioning that despite the significant differences between Sunni and Shiite Islam, the two Islamic sects share common traditions, beliefs and doctrines. All Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad was the messenger of Allah (the Arabic word for God). All believe that they must abide by the revelations given to the Prophet by Allah (as recorded in the Quran) and by the *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet and his companions). The concepts of piety, striving for goodness, and social justice is fundamental to Islamic beliefs and practices. Additionally, all Muslims are expected to live in accordance with the five

pillars of Islam: (1) *shahada*—recital of the creed “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet”; (2) *salat*—five obligatory prayers in a day; (3) *zakat*—giving alms to the poor; (4) *sawm*—fasting from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan; and (5) *hajj*—making a pilgrimage to Mecca once during a lifetime if one is physically and financially able. The basic sources for Islamic jurisprudence, be it Sunni or Shiite, is the Quran, the *Sunna* (customs of the Prophet Muhammad) as relayed in the *Hadith*, *qiyas* (analogy), *ijma’* (consensus), and *ijtihad* (individual reasoning) (Kusserow & Pawlak, 2016:2)

2.2.2.3 Buddhism

Lopez (2001:37) traces the birthplace of The Buddha to the present-day southern Nepal. While there is controversy over the exact date of his birth, many scholars contend that perhaps he was born at 563 B.C.E. Lopez (Ibid) further explains based on the accounts of traditional biographies; his mother had earlier dreamt that she saw a white elephant entering her womb. After ten lunar months, she entered the palace garden and the child appeared from under her right arm which was an unusual route for babies to be born. Contrary to what obtains with other little children, it was reported that he talked and walked immediately. They also observed that a lotus flower budded under his foot with every step that he took and he announced that this would be his last lifetime. The child was named Siddhartha, meaning one who achieves his aim and his clan name was Gautama. Therefore, the founding figure of Buddhism is Siddhartha Gautama. Harvey (2013:1) explains that the history of Buddhism spans almost 2,500 years. From his birth among these people, Gautama is known in Mahāyāna tradition as Śākyamun who sought to find out the basis of true happiness. Insight from Goucher, LeGuin, & Walton (1998) reveals that Buddhism waned in its South Asian homeland as it began to spread from India to East and Southeast Asia, where it gained many followers and became a potent cultural, social, and even political force. In contrast to the monotheistic background of Christianity and Islam, Buddhism grew in a cultural and philosophical environment that recognised the co-existence of many deities and different pantheons. As it spread from India to China, Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia, it encountered and adapted many different cultures and Buddhism itself was transformed by exposure to these cultures. By the beginning of the first century C.E., Buddhist missionaries were carrying Buddhist beliefs and practices

beyond India to East and Southeast Asia. Before its diffusion beyond India, the religion had separated into two; Mahayana and Thera-vada Buddhism. It is equally observed that these sectarian divisions of Buddhism came into being after the death of the Buddha.

2.2.2.4 Judaism

Judaism, Goldenberg (2007) notes, is a religion that worships God through *words*—prayer, sermons, the reading of scripture, and the like—in buildings called *synagogues* under the leadership of learned *rabbis*. This religion is associated with the Jewish Nation. In the submission of the Pluralism Project, Harvard University (2015), Judaism embraces the intricate religious and cultural development of the Jewish people for about thirty centuries of history, stretching from Biblical times to medieval Spain, to the Enlightenment, and then to the Holocaust and the founding of the modern state of Israel. The result is an experience that reflects the elliptical relationship between religious practice and peoplehood. From a religious perspective, Judaism is an atheistic system, but from a peoplehood perspective, it is also the group memory of the manifold communities and cultures formed by Jews through the ages. It consists not only of *Torah* (divine revelation) and *mitzvot* (divine commandments), but also the diverse cultures of the Hebrew, Yiddish, and Ladino languages. Goldenberg (2007: 13–20) argues that the Jewish religion has seen much contention in its long history. Jews have disputed among themselves and do so still. Others have disputed with the Jews and do so still. Some of the ancient disputes have subsided; others remain bitter and passionate. Some of the modern disputes continue ancient battles; others revolve around new concerns. Some of the disputes involving Jews have turned violent or even murderous; others have remained “wars of words.” Although he claims that it bears repeating that the preceding narrative cannot be verified as history (Goldenberg, (2007:13), because most characters in the biblical saga do not appear in the historical writing of any other ancient nation, yet most incidents in this saga are not recounted in any other ancient document. The importance of the story lies not in the question of whether the events took place, which cannot be determined but, in the certainty, that the story was told time and again, over countless generations. This fact, of the greatest importance, is beyond all question. The epic narrative just summarised has shaped the consciousness of Jewish men and women since the dawn of Jewish history.

2.2.2.5 Hinduism

Hinduism is the religion of the Hindus, a name given to the Universal Religion which hailed supreme in India. It is the oldest of all living religions. This is not founded by any

prophet. Buddhism, Christianity and Mohammedanism owe their origin to the prophets (Sivananda, 1999:1). It is not based on a set of dogmas preached by a set of teachers. It is free from religious fanaticism. Hinduism is also known by the names Sanatana-Dharma and Vaidika-Dharma. Sanatana-Dharma means eternal religion. Hinduism is as old as the world itself. Hinduism is the mother of all religions. Hindu scriptures are the oldest in the world, Sanatana-Dharma is so called, not only because it is eternal, but also protected by God and can make us eternal. Vaidika-Dharma means the religion of the Vedas. The Vedas are the foundational scriptures of Hinduism. The ancient sages of India have expressed their intuitive spiritual experiences in the Upanishads. These experiences are direct and infallible. Hinduism regards the spiritual experiences of the Rishis of yore as its authority. The priceless truths that have been discovered by the Hindu Rishis and sages through millennia constitute the glory of Hinduism. Therefore, Hinduism is a revealed religion (Sivananda, 1999:1). Hinduism, unlike other religions, does not dogmatically assert that the final emancipation is possible only through its means and not through any other. It is only a means to an end and all means which will ultimately lead to the end are equally approved.

2.2.2.6 The Commonalities within the Context of Religions

Discoveries from the acclaimed world religions show that there are universal themes that tread across the five religions that have been examined so far. In the first instance, these religions have been traced to a geographical, ethnic and cultural milieu. It is, therefore, the submission of this study that religion is a product of different ethnocultural backgrounds. Consequently, culture or ethnic group cannot claim superiority over another. In line with the thesis of religious pluralism, this study postulates that no religion should establish itself as a voice of dominance or assert superiority over other religions. In the second instance, apart from Hinduism, the founders of Buddhism, Islam and Christianity had their divine call from their local environment. It is, therefore, the submission of this study that the spirit of God is not restricted to a specific geographical location when in the context of choosing a religion to execute a divine mandate for the whole of mankind. God can decide to visit whosoever and empower such a person to carry out a salvific mission at any given time despite their ethnic or geographical location. In the third instance, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism split into multiple groups after the death of their founders.

Using Igbe Orhe as an example explains how religions emerge through socio-cultural conditions. According to Nabofa (2005: 304- 305) at a certain period in the historical evolution of the Urhobo people, inter-community and inter-tribal wars became a phenomenon. In order to defend their territories, the people began to develop spiritually charged mystical charms through diviners and other spiritual mediums. In the course of time, many of cultic activities developed and became identified as divinities. Nabofa (2005) explains that the ethnic divinities provided a spiritual covering for the people when they were under distress. Nabofa (2005:306) further contends that as a result of the evolution of cultic divinities and cult of ancestors, the Urhobo religious milieu devolved from a culture of monotheism into polytheism. It was under this condition God was said to have called Ubiesha Etarakpor and given the mandate to start Igbe Orhe for “the sake of humanity” (Interview with Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu at Emokpa, Ughelli North, January 2, 2017).

In addition, the fear of witchcraft activities and potential evil forces forced many Urhobo people in the late 19th century and early 20th century to seek available avenues whereby they can protect themselves. The solution was readily available in Ubiesha who came with what seems to be a lasting solution, which is the *orhe* (native white chalk) (Ikoba, 2014). With his *orhe* (native white chalk), it was deduced that Ubiesha Etarakpor was able to build up the confidence of his followers to confront anyone who claims to be a witch or wizards and whoever they identify to be the agents of some evil forces.

In addition, Nabofa (2005:307) stresses that Ubiesha’s Igbe Orhe evolved in Urhoboland at a time when the priests of some ethnic and cultic divinities started taking advantage of their adjudicatory position when it comes to the settlement of disputes. They were also found wanting for exploiting disputants. These priests were wont to give judgment in favour of any disputant who was ready to pay more money. Ubiesha came on the scene with Igbe Orhe when people began to lose confidence in the priests of the so-called ethnic divinities. According to Nabofa (ibid), Ubiesha could not be bribed and delivered true and honest judgments. As a result, many people flocked to him in search of true justice. This affected not only the priests of the ethnic divinities but also the Native Court at Kokori, Ubiesha's hometown. When the chiefs in the court felt that Ubiesha’s activities were about to make them jobless and redundant, they petitioned Captain Adam, the British Colonial

Assistant District Officer at Abraka and in 1919, Ubiesha was arrested and detained in Abraka (NAI, Kwale District, File No1/147, Handing over Notes, 1920). In conclusion, comparison with other world religions, especially Christianity, Buddhism and Islam, the spirit of the God manifested through Ubiesha in Urhoboland with a salvific message through the orhe for the sake of humanity; which agrees with the main thesis of John Hicks theory of religious pluralism.

2.3. Instigators of Intra-sectarian Conflict

Dollhopf and Scheitle (2013) expound many religions encounter their most challenging moments when it comes to leadership succession. They contend that if not properly handled, leadership transition can lead to membership loss and it can stir conflicts in the congregation. They conclude that transiting from one leadership to another in the church is a complex phenomenon because it is influenced by many factors, including spiritual soundness. In the same vein, Awojobi (2013) identifies leadership succession as one of the instigators of violent intra-sectarian conflicts. He specifies that in most cases, leadership succession conflicts manifest whenever there is going to be a change of leadership. He maintains that it has posed a great challenge to the Celestial Church of Christ after the death of Prophet Oshoffa, the founder of the church. The Church of God Mission, Foursquare Gospel Church, Christ Apostolic Church Worldwide and Assemblies of God Church have been confronted with leadership succession conflicts. Mudhafar (1993) uses the leadership succession conflict that occurred in Islamic *Umma* also to opine that it is a major driver of conflict among many religious traditions.

While agreeing that leadership succession provides an avenue for contestations, Atkinson (2016) posits that it can be avoided with proper succession planning. His study indicates that the ministry of Jesus saw the importance of succession and he planned for it. In the same vein, Iqbal and Ritter (2015:16-18) affirm that leadership succession and leadership succession conflict can either reinforce the long-term goals of an organisation or destroy it. Consequently, for an organisation is to maintain its momentum after the founder's death, succession planning must not be undermined. Solveiga Buoziute-Rafanaviciene, Tadas Šarapovas, and Aurelijus Cvilikas (2011) capture leadership succession in the context of personality and character. In other words, mere succession planning is not enough, because, beyond the skills and dexterity of the successor, it is correspondingly important to

take into consideration, character and personality of the successor because traits are not transferable.

Beyond succession planning, inordinate ambition has been identified as one of the drivers of leadership succession conflicts by Carter (2017). The overriding argument is subsumed within the context of individuals within a group or an organisation having an excessive aspiration to lead. The argument is that such persons have the capacity to usurp for themselves the lordship of the group or organisation. In addition, Carter (2017) buttresses that disaster will always follow the person who tries to take over the leadership of a place with a self-centered mind. It must, however, be noted that the leadership succession conflicts that have been discussed so far, are in the milieu of the Abrahamic religions and the corporate business world.

Religious diversity has been identified as a major instigator of conflict within and across religions. Dowd (2014) observes that diversity in religious beliefs and practices among different religious traditions is responsible for conflict and violence in Nigeria and many parts of the world. Taking the discussion on diversity further, Limon, Ghanea and Power (2014: 1-3) concede that intolerance is one of the fall-outs of religious diversity. They also argue that the international community must give critical attention to combat religious intolerance. It is also their suggestion that the United Nations must make it an important political focus. They advocate the spirit of tolerance in combating conflicts emanating from religious diversity. But the study is limited to inter-religious conflict and not intra-religious conflict. Igbe religion has diverse beliefs and practices within her sectarian divisions, yet despite their operational diversity, it has not triggered violence. This is a poser addressed by this study.

The perception of the nature and character of God as a driver of intra-sectarian conflict is the central argument of De Conick (2011). Anchoring her discussion on the activities of a man called Marcion in the early Church, De Conick (2011: 88) explains that after a rigorous study of the Old Testament and New Testament Bible, Marcion, who was then an active member of the early Church discovered huge difference between the God of the New Testament Bible and Yahweh the God of the Old Testament Bible. Marcion, it was reported, concluded that the God of mercy, grace and love proclaimed by Paul in the New Testament Bible was opposite of YAHWEH, the God described in the Jewish Scriptures.

The Old Testament describes God as vengeful and jealous. Based on this new discovery, Marcion concluded that the Christians were saved from the cruelty of YAHWEH by the unknown God Paul spoke about, who appears to be more merciful. In addition, Marcion began to teach that Jesus appeared on earth as an adult male in a body that seemed to be human. Consequent upon this teaching, Marcion was accused of heresy by the Episcopal authorities of the early Church for saying that Jesus was a phantasm. This new theology generated internal conflict and was met with stiff resistance from the Apostolic Church. He was excommunicated when he shared his new-found doctrine with the Church leaders. Marcion later pioneered a renewal sectarian movement within the Christian faith tradition which generated a serious confrontation from the Apostolic Church (De-Conick, 2011). It must, however, be mentioned that the focal point of De Conick is on the Christian church and on the Christian God. This study interrogates the conception of God in Igbe religion. Also, where the conception of God among the sectarian divisions does not align with the classical concept of God in the religion, how does this generate conflict and how has it been managed?

Monopoly over ordination into the priesthood is another driver of intra-sectarian conflict. According to Robertson (1904:14-15), a major conflict the early church had to deal with borders on who had the right to ordain devotees into the order of the clergy or the priesthood system. In his summation, when the Bishop of Caesarea ordained Origen as a priest, it instigated conflict between him and Demetrius, the Bishop of Alexandria. In the same vein, Nemeroff (2016) notes that the reformative work of Pope Gregory which led to the elaborate “Dictates of the Pope” of 1075, partly borders on who has the rightful authority to ordain priests and Bishops within the Roman Catholic Church. Feeling that restricting the monopoly of ordination would reduce their influence, the reforms of Pope Gregory brought him in conflict with the feudal lords in the Church who, prior to the reforms, dictated the ordination of people into the order of the clergy. Maner and Mead (2010:482) are of the opinion that it is the responsibility of a leader to seek for the positive welfare of every group member and some may want to use it as an avenue to foist their domination on the entire group. Thus, instead of exercising their power for the greater good, they might be desirous to use it in egotistic ways. They may use their influence to dictate, rather than lead. Similarly, Manner and Mead (2010:494) believe that it is inherent

in every human being to desire to have command over others and with such powers; a leader may decide to engage it either for the general good or not.

The monopoly over ordination right can be subsumed within the framework of substantive oriented conflict espoused by Rahim (2001), which has to do with the clarity of task. Aula and Siira (2010) submit that clarity of task is the function of organisation growth. Aula and Siira (2010:125) submit that when organisations begin to expand, their chances for openness increases. In addition, the challenges that are linked with organisational expansion can lead to an increase in task-oriented conflict among its employees. The dynamics of organisational growth can cause conflict when the roles are not clearly specified. This is more challenging within a closely-knit group (Acas, 2014). Framing substantive conflict from a Christian organisational point of view, Akerlund (2015), notes that when a mission agency is sending out a missionary to the mission field, it will be an aberration for such a missionary to advance any personal agenda in the field. The principal objective of the missionary is to protect the plan of the mission agency that he or she is representing. The sender must operate under the strict conditions of the sending organisation. Akerlund (2015) concludes that it is a lack of understanding of tasks that leads to contestations even in issues of ordination. While Robertson (1904) discusses the monopoly of ordination from a general history of the early Church, Nemeroff (2016) looks at it as a specific issue within the Roman Catholic framework. The substantive conflict orientation dimension was discussed by Rahim (2001), Aula and Siira (2010) and Acas (2014) from the standpoint of a corporate business organisational milieu. Can monopoly over ordination into the order of the clergy occur in a non-Abrahamic religion as exemplified in Igbe? This is one sub-theme that is being explored in this study.

Fundamentalism in religious practice has been pinpointed as a driver of intra-sectarian conflict (Umar, 2015; Haar and Ellis 2006; & Danjibo, 2009). According to Umar (2015: 1-5), fundamentalists within religious groups want to dictate everything; how people should live their lives and they force people to embrace a lifestyle. According to him, these fundamentalists do not allow for individual expression or multiplicity of thoughts. They are not interested in inter-religious dialogue of any kind and they deny their members from expressing their views freely. Fundamentalists have zero tolerance for alternative faith communities. This corroborates Haar and Ellis (2006) that initially it was thought that

religion had been pushed away from the public space into the private space. But the reverse is now the case because religious activities have become more visible and more importantly, it is the force behind fundamentalism.

From the point of view of Komonchak, Collins and Lane cited in Danjibo (2009:3), fundamentalism is an extensive word that can be interpreted from a logical understanding. It is their submission that fundamentalism could be associated with someone scripturally versatile and having a feeling moral superiority; or from a cultural theological context, such a person expresses opposition to religious and cultural freedom, while upholding the defence of orthodoxy and religious traditions. In addition, they argue that fundamentalism could be ideological when viewed from a social movement perspective. They conclude that fundamentalism can also denote organisational and ideological exclusivity that is distinct from other religious traditions. Danjibo (2009) affirms:

Religious fundamentalism is a microscopic but also a literal understanding of religious practices and teachings, especially in its relation to the direct transliteration of the Holy Scriptures and its insistence on the sacred perpetuation of the traditions (p.4).

Religious fundamentalist movement(s) may employ several strategies including violence, even against groups within the same faith tradition. From the viewpoint of Crabtree (2012), Ruthven (2007) religious literalism and fundamentalism are clearly linked. In the words of Crabtree (2012):

As we know from the Reformation, the ability to read and write allowed the believing masses to come to better terms with the tenets of their religion. Text is (literally) black and white. Correct beliefs can be underlined and highlighted. Incorrect ones can be thrown out. There is something more compelling and demanding in the *written word*. As soon as people start writing down official statements and creeds, then, it is more possible to oust people if their statements differ from the group's official norm (p.4).

Crabtree (2012) argues that when literary competences begin to increase among adherents of a religion, the possibility of an increase in religious fundamentalism cannot be ruled out. He reasoned that textualism empowers adherents to become more aware of the details about their religions. Crabtree (2012) by the same token contends that the trend towards

textualism continues to spread with monotheism. But this study disagrees with Crabtree that textualism is gaining more ground with monotheism because Buddhism, a non-theistic religion and Hinduism, a polytheistic religion are fully textualised. Therefore, literalism and textualism are not only spreading with monotheism. Some relate the issues of fundamentalism, literalism and textualism to the Abrahamic monotheistic religions (Umar, 2015; Haar, 2005; Crabtree, 2012). The dynamics of religious fundamentalism and a strong literary culture as a driver of intra-sectarian conflict in indigenous African religion is excluded in their analyses and it will give this study a sense of direction. Igbe is a monotheistic religion and this study probes into her textual and literary culture and to what extent it has defined her intra sectarian nonviolent conflict narrative.

How the religious elites in the various religions teach the ethics of reciprocity has been identified as one of the major instigators of both religious and intra-sectarian conflict. According to Robinson (2014), most religious professionals have abandoned the collective application of the ethics of reciprocity. He queries the rationale behind the selective application of the ethics of reciprocity by most of the religious elites. It is worth mentioning that the ethics of reciprocity is the code of behaviour taught by all religious traditions. Non-believers are excluded from the universal application of the ethics of reciprocity by members of the different religious traditions. The broad argument is that certain factors that are present in Christianity, Islam and many other religions have helped to perfect the tendency of restricting the application of the ethics of reciprocity to non-believers. This aligns with El Badawy *et al.*, (2015:10) that the application of narratives among religions drives conflict. Yet, Robinson fails to mention the various ways these religious elites ignore the teaching of the ethics of reciprocity. Furthermore, the enforcement strategy of the various faith traditions as touching their ethics of reciprocity is not mentioned. Above all, he links the concept of ethics of reciprocity to the Eastern and Western religions. Does it mean that indigenous African religions do not have standing ethics of reciprocity? In this study, the ethics of reciprocity of Igbe religion and how it is applied within her various sectarian divisions is investigated. Furthermore, the study probes the extent to which Igbe ethics of reciprocity propels peace among the various sectarian divisions.

In addition, Robinson (2014) identifies binary thinking as a veritable driver of both intra-sectarian and inter-religious conflicts. According to him, each religion teaches a different concept of God. The binary thinking may be seen to be a simple undivided unity, a dual divinity, a trinity, a pantheon of deities. Even monotheistic religious faiths that teach the existence of a single deity describe their God differently. In Judaism, Christianity and Islam, God has different attributes, names, history, requirements and expectations. Many believers in one religion will treat believers in other religions as following false Gods. Robinson (2014) discloses:

Too often, groups teach the principle of extreme particularism, the belief that one's own faith group in the same religion possessed all of the truth as revealed by God. Other faith groups in the same religion and other religions worship demons and are led by Satan. The end result is fear of and contempt towards other faith groups or religion (p. 3).

Betraying a person or group of people indicates disloyalty because trust is vital in all aspects of social interactions. Betrayal of trust can be a critical driver of conflict within groups (Fitness, 2001; Elangovan & Shapiro, 1998; Wilson, 2017). Fitness (2001:2) notes that all through the history of mankind, one of the worst challenges people have been confronted with is betrayal and deceitfulness. This explains the importance of trust and its connection with human existence. Putting his thought on betrayal in perspective, Wilson (2017) asserts that when trust in a person is breached it is tantamount to betrayal. He believes that betrayal can manifest in several ways such as telling a lie and divulging official secrets can be regarded as betrayal. For Elangovan and Shapiro (1998:550) betrayal in the workplace is evident when people can no longer take into confidence someone who they have initially held in high esteem because somehow their expectations have been disappointed. These expectations can include taking one into confidence by not revealing the secrets that have been entrusted to a person. Therefore, trust is established when all parties involved recognise the need that conjointly meeting expectation is very cardinal in any relationship. Elangovan and Shapiro (1998:551) also note that betrayal entails conduct, attitude or behaviour. It goes beyond thinking about betraying. They conclude that betrayal can be harmful to someone who is too trusting.

Fitness (2001:73) engages betrayal from a behavioural point of view. The central argument is that the betrayer believes that his/her needs are more important than the other party in

the relationship. Fitness (2010:72) also claims that “trusting others exposes one to the risk of betrayal if they violate confident expectations”. In the same token, Hepner (2017:2) put forward that “when trust is betrayed, the pain and shame that are experienced are usually very deep”. Betrayal of trust has been framed as moral injury (Antal, 2017). Probing the concept of moral injury further, Shay (2014:182) expounds that it can damage trust, stoke despondency and fan the embers of interpersonal violence. He further explains that when a person who is in the place of legitimate authority betrays, the stakes are always high. The threat to social connection and emotional pain Shay (2014) concludes is one of the major fall-outs of moral injury.

MacDonald (2009:2-3) posits that beyond the physical pain that comes as a result of injury, emotional pains, social pains and holding of grudges can be outcomes of a moral injury. The overriding argument is that since moral injury ultimately results in harbouring of grudges, it can lead to other ancillary issues like social disconnection, social injury and emotional pains. Struthers, Elizabeth van Monsjou, Ayoub and Guilfoyle (2017) uphold that grudges and bitterness may also have emotional, physiological and other negative health implications on the person holding it. They counsel that people should learn to forgive when they are hurt because it can bring about healing and restore damaged relationships (Struthers *et al.*, 2017). Undeniably, it is worth mentioning that Wilson (2017) and Hepner (2017) discussed betrayal of trust and its attendant consequences from the angle of Christian interpersonal relationship and not in the context of intra-sectarian conflict. In the same vein, Fitness (2001) probed betrayal as a phenomenon outside the context of religion. Shay (2014) and Antal (2017) premised their analyses of moral injury from the medical point of view. Elangovan and Shapiro (1998) examined betrayal as a phenomenon within the secular business organisation. Is there a possibility for this kind of conflict to exist in Igbe Orhe? This question further gives depth to this study.

Seidler, (2007) and Olupona, (2011) identify collective memory as a driver of conflict in some climes across the globe. Seidler (2007: 27) argues that “the echoes of the crusades and *jihads* still haunt relationships between Islam and the West. Also, the Jews are still recollecting, and rehearsing the memories of the Holocaust”. The concept of collective memory also helps in defining the interfaith relationship and conflict patterns in religion. Olupona (2011) articulates the notion of the collective memory of a people in the shaping

of conflicts in the present using the Ife/Modakeke ethnic conflict as a case study. While Seidler (2007) links his study on collective memory to inter-religious conflicts, Olupona beams his searchlight on inter-ethnic conflict. The insights provided by the scholars offer a unique opportunity for this study to unearth the collective memories of Igbe adherents and how it has defined the prosecution of activities within its internal dynamics.

In the book, *Divided by Faith*, Kaplan (2007) identifies the acknowledgement of the patriarchy of Constantinople by Orthodox Christians over the Pope, as a major factor that led to violent conflicts within Christian denominations. He further explains that the Roman Catholic Church went all out to subdue the Protestants because they were heretics. Likewise, the challenge of relating with members of different religious sectarian groups was a major source of conflict within Christianity in the 17th century. The bottom line of Kaplan's argument is that Christianity in the 17th century was in violent opposition to people known to worship any god that is different from the Christian God. He reasons that Catholic authorities destroyed Protestantism in Italy, Spain and Portugal. England, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, the Dutch Republic adopted Protestantism as their official religion. In Germany and Switzerland, a Protestant/ Catholic split occurred. Protestantism itself was fragmented into rival denominations or confessions in many territories. This situation devastated Christendom in the West. In other words, the denominations were entangled in competition over the supremacy of doctrines and beliefs, making it a fertile ground for conflict. Yet, Kaplan (2007) focused on the Christian faith tradition. It must be noted that there are denominations within Igbe religion, each having a patriarch.

Selegnut (2003) focuses on the essential non-rational elements of religion and its ability to whip up conflict and violent fury. He contends that the relationship between religion and conflict is due to a special commitment that is beyond rational conception. He submits that there is a wide gulf between rationality and religion. Selegnut (2003:144) puts forward the promise of reward for being a religious martyr and religious suicide can only be possible in an environment that undermines rational thinking. In other words, religious fundamentalists believe that they should refuse the enticement to replace rational thinking with sympathy when the need to fight arises. In addition, Selegnut argues that the actions of religion do not depend on scientific explanation or any logical sequence. Rather, they are dependent on keeping faith with God's instructions and without any recourse to its

physical implications. Selegnut opines that what is termed as a holy war cannot be solved by mere rational thinking. For him, those who fight in the context of religion believe that they are being faithful to God for the cause of their religion. Their actions and behaviour are not based upon science or logic but on keeping faith with the word of God not minding the eventual outcomes. With this understanding, the assumption is that a Holy war is not solved by rational solutions. Religious warriors, whether in Afghanistan or Palestine, live in a social reality that is totally different from people who bother less about religion. Their perception of killing, martyrdom, life and death are at variance with people who think rationally. Thus, Selegnut (2003) believes that the violence in holy war is not conventional human violence, where individuals or groups contend with one another for secular goals such as money, power or status. To a certain extent, they believe that their actions are sacred because they are fighting to help God protect His honour. According to Danjibo (2009), it is the rationale for radicalised devotees of Islamic religion because by dying for the cause of Allah will be accorded the eminence of a martyr.

Van-Cappellen, Fredriksen, Soroglou and Corneille (2017), Kagema and Muguna (2014) and Sollid (2013) acknowledge the movement of adherents from one congregation as one of the causes intra-sectarian conflicts. Kagema and Muguna (2014:13) identify factors like leadership ineptitude, financial fatigue due to excessive collection of offering, emphasis on prosperity, over-invoicing church projects, failure to embark on evangelism as partly responsible for members desire to leave their local congregation for another. In addition, they mention a loss of hunger for spiritual growth as some of the reasons for the rapid desire of church members to change their denominational or congregational affiliation. However, the scope of this study only covered some churches in Kenya. Van-Cappellen *et al.*, (2017:24) reinforces the notion that one of the cardinal reasons people identify with a religious group and congregations has to do with the guarantee of a haven and enhancement of their personal fulfilment. They argue that the congregation is expected to provide the needed social, cognitive and emotional resources that will help adherents to experience well-being and personal satisfaction. Therefore, religious persons search and affiliate with groups that can fulfil their needs. Where these needs are not fulfilled, the trend is to look out for the religious congregation or platforms that can help to fulfil those needs (Van-Cappellen *et al.* 2017: 27-29). The submission of Van-Cappellen *et al.*, (2017) is strengthened by Hills and Olson (2009) that people generally want to identify with

religious groups and congregation that can meet their peculiar religious needs. Therefore, the plurality of religious congregation gives room from people to look out for what can satisfy their religious need; a phenomenon Hills and Olson (2009) identify as demand matching mechanism.

Sollid (2013) identifies competition for growth between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Evangelical church is an instigator of the intra-sectarian conflict. The study points to the fact that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has suffered immense membership decline because they accused the Ethiopian Evangelical Orthodox Church of stealing their members. Also, Gathuki (2015) ascertains that strained relationship among members, weak administrative structures, and lack of leadership skills, leadership struggles and mismanagement of finances are some of the factors responsible for people wanting to leave their local congregation for another. The study of Okunlola *et al.* (2016), examines the movement of adolescents from one church to another in Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria. It discovers that the phenomenon is largely due to their dissatisfaction with the style of worship at their local churches; the influences of their parents, pastors' lack of creativity and innovative skills that are relevant to their current realities. Okunlola's study was restricted to the Christian faith, but this study seeks to uncover the phenomenon of intra-sectarian congregational within Igbe Orhe and the factors responsible.

Glowacki (2011) and Picard (2003) contend that perception is at the root of conflict especially when there are a threat-to-cares. According to Glowacki (2011:4) "the term "cares" refers to the needs, interests, goals, beliefs, and values of a person. "Cares" exists at three levels which are; personal desires and needs, expected patterns of interaction and standards to judge the right or wrongness of decisions". Conflict, thus, occurs when one person's "cares" are perceived and felt as threatening to another person's "cares". Thus, "conflict is rife if the leadership of a religion feels that these three levels of "cares" have been violated by some devotees through their religious activities (Picard, 477-483).

Building about perception as a driver of conflict, Richards (2015) opines that since the advent of publishing, many books have been resisted and some have been banned due to some certain controversies. For example, the book, *The Satanic Verses* were written by Salman Rushdie was banned in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Somalia, Sudan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Qatar, Indonesia, South Africa and India for blaspheming Prophet

Mohammed, insulting and undermining the Islam. In 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran issued a *fatwa* calling on all good Muslims to kill the author. As a result of that pronouncement, Rushdie was forced to go into exile. The book *Frankenstein* written by Mary Shelley was greeted with protest by Christian groups who claim that it conflicted with the principles of their faith. Equally, despite widespread acclaim and popularity, *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding attracted a lot of criticism ranging from complaints about violence, language, sexuality and racism.

Rappaport (1992:120) contends the violence that seems to follow intra-religious and inter-religious violence is domesticated through the manipulation of images and religious language. He buttresses that religious language is full of violence. As a result, it influences religion to propagate bloody causes. Abraham Stem's words cited in Rappaport (1992) illustrate how the manipulative use of language can cause conflict which may eventually lead to violence if not proactively managed:

Like my father who carried his bag with a prayer shawl to the synagogue in the Sabbath, so I will carry holy rifles in my bag to the prayer service and iron with a regenerated quaver. Like my mother who lit candles on the festival eve, so I will light a torch for those revered in praise. As my father taught me to read in Torah, I will teach my pupil; stand to arms, kneel and shoot because there is a religion of redemption, a religion of the war of liberation, whoever accepts it be blessed, whoever denies it be cursed (p. 121).

To put it succinctly, this quote is an orientation into violent communication and it can be instrumental in creating an extraordinary violent atmosphere. Though a compassionate and inspiring message that cuts right to the heart, it has the capacity to steer violent conflict. Still, on the use of language, Omotosho (2004) espouses that violence can be domesticated in religion through language, but he blames the violent use of language on the leadership and clerics of the two major faith traditions in Nigeria, namely Islam and Christianity. Likewise, Oz (2005) affirms that the language of hate is dangerous, not necessarily for Jews, but for whoever is targeted. Each time language is used as an axe, there is need to act fast because the aftermath may result in killings and maiming of innocent lives. In the same vein, several media-related cases associated with violent communication, polemics and hate speeches were brought forward in relation to the genocide in Rwanda. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2011-2012) reports:

Among them was one against Simon Bikindi, a popular Rwandan singer and songwriter whose songs—like “Twasezereye” (“We Said Goodbye to the Feudal Regime”), “Nanga Abahutu” (“I Hate the Hutu”), and “Bene Sebahinzi” (“The Sons and Fathers of the Cultivators”), were filled with inflammatory anti-Tutsi hate speech and pro-Hutu solidarity messages. “The outcome of these hate speeches shocked the entire world with genocide that resulted (p.3)

Nevertheless, Rappaport (1992), Omotosho (2004) and Oz (2005) dealt extensively with Christianity and Islam and most importantly, within the context of inter religious conflicts. This current study is focused on the internal conflict dynamics of Igbe religion. The manipulation and appropriation of religious language as conflict triggers, as identified by the scholars mentioned, investigated from the point of view of internal conflicts.

Moreover, language, according to Iwara (2005), can be a melting pot for national and cultural conflict. As one of the most important elements of a culture’s identity, language can also be used in an inflammatory way. According to him, a group’s language is very essential to its own very existence. He argues that in a group, each member assimilates the language used and understands the cultural references employed by co-members. Members of a group usually share a common linguistic key which allows them to understand one another. Sharing a common language enables members of the same group to understand each other and create a bond that unites them. His argument can also apply to religious groups. It can be inferred that when adherents of religion fail to be properly socialised into the common linguistic framework of their group, the prospect for conflict cannot be ruled out. It takes time, efforts and consistency to fully grasp the symbolic language and communication codes of a religious group. Iwara (2005:65) maintains “that language is the principal medium of culture and socialisation”. Iwara concludes that the use of language can lead to social segregation, deny people access to certain resources within the group and inhibit some members from actively participating in the group.

Ayantayo (2005:56) believes that “as long as people interact whether within a religious or social context, in these confluences of relationships there is a general longing for safety and satisfaction. However, there are certain dynamics that can be instigators of conflict”. Therefore, the inability to interact seamlessly even within the religious community can be a trigger of conflict. The model of relationships within the domain of religion is the concern

of Bat (2002). He ascribes ethnic exclusivism to Judaism; contends that the faith-exclusivism is attendant with Christianity and Islam is responsible for the dysfunctional relationship and intolerant engagement of each religion in the Middle East. This has ultimately set the platform for both inter- and intra-religious sectarian conflict. This ethnic exclusivism and the faith-based exclusivism imputed to traditional Judaism, Christianity and Islam have introduced a superiority mentality in the psyche of their adherents. The followers of these religions including their various sectarian groups are wont to see members of other religions as inferior and relate to them with an air of superiority which frequently brings about conflict.

The study of Bat (2002) captures the concepts of faith exclusivism and ethnic exclusivism within the context of inter-faith relationship and ethno-religious conflict. In addition, his central focus was on Islam, Judaism and Christianity. Furthermore, the study fails to capture how ethnic exclusivism and faith-based exclusivism affect the social interaction within the congregational polity of the identified religions. Since Igbe religion is acclaimed to be a revealed religion by her adherents, this study explores the concept of faith exclusivism and how it affects their relationship with one another.

The notion of “the mixed multitude” is traceable to the Book of Exodus 12:38. This has to do with a class of people who accompanied the Israelites as they journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. The mixed multitude is purported to be people from different social backgrounds and cultural orientations that surrounded the Israelites. An insight provided by Dillon (2016:2) and the narratives from the Book of Numbers 11:4 clearly establish how the presence and activities of the “mixed multitude” became a major driver of conflicts in the camp of Israel. Initially, when the “mixed multitude” joined the Israelites, they were well behaved. But when they became more familiarised with the nuances of the Jews, they began to complain, criticise, and inciting the Jews against the leadership of Moses. Some amongst the “mixed multitude” sought to completely redefine Judaism, the people of Israel, and their faith practices (Dillon, 2016:2-3).

All through the journey of the Israelites in the wilderness, the “mixed multitude” reputed to be a thorn in their flesh. The mixed multitudes were wont to communicating their desires through intimidating and terrorising attitudes. Cecy (2012) notes that threatening or terrorising behaviour from someone who has a real or imagined power is capable of

driving conflict within a group. It also makes the environment vulnerable to conflict and threatens human security. The mixed multitudes deride the established order and try to contravene the norms of a given society. Thus, they can be categorised as deviants and dissenters from the point of view of Jetten and Hornsey (2014). Deviants and dissenters who refuse to internalise and practise collective norms within a given society can be potential instigators of conflict. The activities of “mixed multitude” prompted violence and bloodshed in the name of Jehovah, the God of the Israelites (Deuteronomy 31:15-21). The “mixed multitudes” could infiltrate and identify with the children of Israel on the premise that the Israelites were open and receptive to them. For Meada (2005) being truly open portends some risks, especially for a business enterprise. Therefore, the “mixed multitude” took advantage of the simplicity of the Israelites which led to conflict in the process of time.

Beyond the business point of view which Maeda (2005) articulates, associating risk with the openness of a society or group has historical precedence in Igbe Orhe. Echekwube (1994:14) discloses that when Christianity was introduced into Kokori, where the headquarters of Igbe is situated, Ubiesha did not discriminate against the religion. At that time, Igbe Orhe was the dominant religion in Kokori and Ubiesha welcomed the new Christian religion with an open heart. It was reported that he embraced members of the Christian religion because he felt both religions preached essentially the same ethics. In his evaluation, the God of the Christians is also the God of the Igbe adherents. However, when Christianity became fully established, it became a stumbling block to Igbe religion. Ubiesha’s belief that the God of the Christians is evil challenges the binary thinking thesis of Robinson (2014). It later turned out that the Christian missionaries colluded with the colonial officers to arrest Ubiesha, and some of his prominent followers such as Okinedo and Omonedo (See Nabofa, 2005:259-363) and adherents of Igbe Orhe came under the persecution of the adherents of Christianity.

Bodo (2005) posits that a major disadvantage of an open society is that it has the tendency to lose control over the members. Thus, taking into consideration the dynamics often associated with the plurality of interests, it will be of paramount importance to have a strong regulating mechanism in an open society. How does the concept of the mixed

multitude that is established within a monotheistic Abrahamic religion fit into a monotheistic non-Abrahamic religion?

Soharwardy (2014) contends that Islam forbids the creation of sectarian groups, but ironically many denominations and sects have emerged from the religion. He blamed this phenomenon on the activities of Muslim scholars and clerics. He further contends that many Muslims are claiming to have a better understanding of Islam and such disposition makes the ground very fertile for intra-religious conflict. To worsen the condition, they either use the Hadith or Qur'an to authenticate their claims. Soharwardy (2014) notes that it is heartbreaking to observe that there is intra-Muslim hatred within the *Umma*. In addition, he indicts the Umma for spreading hatred and accusing the adherents who belong to the Wahabis sectarian group calling the Shia non-believers (*kafir*) and vice versa. He also mentions that the Sunnis are also in the habit of condemning other Muslim faithful who do not belong to their group to hell.

Situating the driver of intra-sectarian conflict within the Nigerian context, Danjibo (2009) argues that a lot of analysis would like to limit the reasons to issues of religious fundamentalism and fanaticism. But he is of the opinion that the issue of ideological radicalism is traceable to the transnational organisations in Asia and the Middle East. He submits that many Muslims have been convinced into thinking that when they fight for the cause of Islam, God would bestow on them the blessings of martyrdom. Consequent upon the promises of a reward, some Muslim faithful is ready to give up their lives. He also mentions that these transnational organisations are in the habit of recruiting unemployed youth, paying them some stipends and then arming them to kill and maim. He blames this phenomenon on the failure of successive Nigerian governments to provide the necessary structures that will engage Nigerian youths meaningfully.

Without taking the submission of Danjibo (2009) for granted, it must be noted that his findings were limited to the Islamic faith tradition. There are citizens of Nigeria who are adherents of other faith traditions and are equally faced with the challenges of bad governance, yet they refused to embrace the path of violence. A case in point is the adherents of Igbe Orhe. Therefore, it will be apt to investigate the philosophical,

sociological and theological undertones guiding adherents of Igbe religion and their various sectarian divisions from embracing violence during general national discontent.

Albert, (1999: 19-36); Zhang, (2013); Mwangi, (2014); Raphael, (2015); Auwal, (2015) and Ferguson, (2016) are undivided in their conclusion that communication is vital for critical engagements in any human society. They affirm that good communication helps people to make sense of their daily interactions. It is the submission of the scholars mentioned above that poor communication can transform latent conflict to violence within and outside the domain of religion. Using the Maitatsine Muslim-Muslim riots in 1981 as a case study, Albert (1999: 19) was able to establish that when communication becomes ambivalent it can lead to religious conflict or intra-sectarian conflicts. He makes it clear that the 1981 Maitatsine Muslim-Muslim riots and the 1991 Reinhardt Bonke Muslim-Christian riots in the city of Kano were both caused by the problem of a breakdown in communication and the bad use of language. Albert (1999) contends that Mohammed Marwa, who tried to equate himself with the Holy Prophet Mohammad, was considered a heretic by the conservative Muslim community in Kano. Upon rejection, Marwa decided to employ offensive and malicious language to propagate his religious ideals. In addition, Albert reports that Mohammed Marwa disclaimed Prophet Mohammad as the messenger of Allah and undermined the Holy Quran.

Furthermore, Albert (1999) was able to demonstrate how communication problems can lead to the escalation of conflict intra-sectarian or inter-religious. Drawing an inference from the 1991 Reinhardt Bonke crusade riots in Kano, it was alleged that the Kano Branch of the Christian Association of Nigeria, produced a poster that was considered offensive to the Muslim Umma in Kano State. Irrked by the brazen display of the message on the poster encouraging the Hausa-Fulani people who are predominantly Muslims to give their lives to Jesus, it noted that the youths took to the streets and began to attack the Christians. In the psyche of the Hausa-Fulani people, the Christians who are termed *kafir* have gone beyond their boundaries and must be dealt with.

The findings of Albert only capture the reactions of adherents of the Islamic faith tradition. He does not mention how adherents of indigenous traditional religion in Kano react to the use of provocative words on the crusade posters. It is worth mentioning that adherents of Igbe religion have been labelled as idol worshippers by Christian preachers

and often warn that members of the Igbe religion are not going to heaven. The research observed how a certain preacher in Orhruworhun market square was warning adherents of Igbe Orhe that they will perish in eternal hellfire if they fail to renounce the religion and embrace Jesus as Lord and saviour. Yet, despite these stereotypes, adherents of Igbe religion have not resorted to open confrontation and violence. This study unearths the reasons behind the nonviolent comportment of adherents of the Igbe religion.

National Disaster Interfaith Network (NDIN) (2014), Diamond (2011), Rackley (2010), and Rogers (2009) consider religious literacy to be of utmost importance in a pluralistic society. Communicating the values of religion through religious literacy and publications of books have been identified as drivers of both inter- and intra-religious conflicts. The National Disaster Interfaith Network (NDIN) (2014:2) clarifies that religious literacy has to do with members of a religion having the basic knowledge of theology, textual culture and their ritual practices. Likewise, the Religious Communication Council (RCC) (2015:1) affirms that “the absence of religious literacy and lack of understanding of the basic tenets of other religions in a plural society can contribute to more conflict”. In order to manage religious conflicts, it is important for every community to develop the capacity that will empower them to distinguish and scrutinise the major connections with religion, social, political or cultural life through multiple lenses. It is believed by the scholars that it is one of the core mandates of religious literacy. Therefore, in seeking to promote religious literacy, most communicators of faith are wont to write and publish books on how they understand and interpret the mandates of their religious tradition. Rogers (2009) nevertheless observes that the concept of religious literacy has been explored more as a conflict management tool for a religiously plural society. On the other hand, the promotion of religious literacy through the publications of books is examined whether it is an instigator of conflict within Igbe religion.

Silvestri (2016) identifies religious feasts or festivals as a fundamental feature of all religions. In his own appraisal, Roemer (2010) believes that religious festivals provide members of the religious community an opportunity to socialise in a generally enjoyable, entertaining and spiritually charged atmosphere. Nabofa (2005:419) and Onobrakpeya (2005: 383-384) submit that beyond helping adherents to gain authentic experiences, festivals help to generate a feeling of identity. Lee *et al.*, (2015), are of the opinion that

festivals are held tactically to ward off wicked spirits and to ensure prosperous harvesting seasons in traditional communities. Taking the Urhobo society as an example, Nabofa (2005:431) and Onobrakpeya (2005: 283), agree that festivals have survived till today, not only to offer fun and recreation, but also, they are meant to create unity and spiritual regeneration among the Urhobo people. Ronström (2011) points to the fact that festivals create prospective spaces for the intercultural interface. But the celebration of religious festivals has been identified as one of the causes of religious conflicts.

Given the importance of festivals, Kaplan (2007) recognises it as one of the instigators of violent intra-sectarian conflicts in early Western Europe. Activities such as processions, holiday celebrations accounted for a high proportion of conflicts both within and across religious groups. He argues that it is the public nature of religious processions and festivals that make it possible to stir up conflicts. Olupona (2011) also scrutinises that violent clashes have occurred during the celebration of certain traditional religious festivals in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. These clashes are sometimes with other religious faith traditions, especially Islam and Christianity.

In contrast to the writings of Kaplan, Igbe Orhe celebrates an elaborate thanksgiving festival for all her adherents known as *Ore-Isi*. The *Ore-Isi* annual festival of thanksgiving was instituted by the founder of the religion, Ubiesha Etarakpor in the early 20th century. The festival is held at Kokori, the spiritual headquarters of Igbe Orhe. The eleven-day annual festival which takes place in the month of May is dedicated to the offering of special thanksgiving and praises to Oweya (the Almighty God) for his protections, provisions and providence in the previous year and to seek fresh blessings and spiritual empowerment in the coming year (Afatakpa, 2016). The annual *Ore-Isi* festival brings together adherents of the Igbe religion from countries like the USA, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Here in Nigeria, adherents come from Lagos State, Ondo State, Rivers State, Delta State, Cross River State and all over Urhoboland. Equally, the *Ore-Isi* festival brings together the various sectarian groups in the Igbe Orhe. Part of the activities during the *Ore-Isi* festival is a city-wide procession and adherents use it as an opportunity to pray for the peace and progress of their host community. According to *Ose Isi* Obaoga Ibodje (*Uku* Supreme) with its many years of existence, this intra-sectarian festival has not degenerated into inter- or intra-religious violence, despite the seeming differences in

doctrines and practices among the sectarian divisions. This submission gives this study a sense of direction.

The inequitable distribution of food as a driver of intra-religious conflict is identified in the book of Acts Chapter Six Verse One (Acts 6:1) of The New Testament of the Bible. It was recorded while the Church was still at the stage of infancy that “the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration”. The Christian Church in its formative stage had to contend with conflict resulting from inequitable distribution of food. The event in the book of Acts Chapter 6 verse one reflects the thoughts of Ofure (2014:6) that conflicts are “inevitable in any human society where social and material resources are unequally distributed and, in a society, where inequity is resonant in people’s social and political relationships”.

Koran and Bagozzi (2016) present a contrary opinion that conflict does not necessarily emanate due to the scarcity of food. They argue that the availability of food can also be an instigator of conflict and violence. Despite the arguments and counter-arguments, Umoh (2016), Edinyang and Adie (2015) point out that what usually leads to the inequitable distribution of resources, and which of necessity will cause conflict, is favouritism, nepotism or the “man-know-man” syndrome. The “man-know-man” syndrome they argue has permeated all segments of our national life. It is the practice whereby people get certain advantages over others simply because of their connection with people in positions of authority and power. The prevalence of “man-know-man” changes the rules of the game and inculcates a sentimental attitude imbued with the capacity to compromise merit and equity. It is their belief that when people who are saddled with the responsibility of distributing resources, whether food or otherwise, are driven by the “man-know-man” attitude, such attitude can affect the equitable distribution of resources and in turn trigger conflict.

Idjakpo (2011: 131) affirms that Urhobo traditional system of government revolves around the system of “Ovieship”. This means that the administrative, legislative and judicial functions of the kingdom are concentrated in one body—the Ovie, who is the paramount ruler in any Urhobo community. One cannot say to what extent the Urhobo sociocultural background has influenced the leadership structure of Igbe Orhe, since the religion

developed from an Urhobo sociocultural context; taking into consideration the fact that both the administrative, legislative and judicial functions of the religion are built around the *Uku High Priest* (male) or *Omote Uku* (High priestess). It is worthwhile to state that the *Uku* or *Omote Uku* is the spiritual and political head in any *Ogwa Igbe* (temple of worship).

The overall spiritual head of Igbe Orhe is called *Ose Isi* the *Uku* Supreme; who resides in Kokori, the headquarters of Igbe Orhe world-wide. The office of *Uku* or *Omote Uku* commands certain honour and privileges which must not be violated. *Uku* or *Omote Uku* are in the parlance of Igbe Orhe is the viceroy of *Oweya* (God) and must be accorded full respect and honour during and outside the line of duty. Herbert (2007) observes that one of the drivers of religious conflict is the violation of honour. According to him, in some cultures, when the honour of a man or woman is violated or impinged upon, it triggers revenge. Herbert (2007: 18) affirms that “the central social value of honour or shame can be understood as a right to respect, or equal dignity and public recognition of this right plays an important role”. Thus, in some religious traditions, there is the institutionalisation of violence in the pursuit of honour. Equally, in some cultural backgrounds especially in the Middle East, honour is termed lost when a family member is murdered, raped or violated through some certain forms of molestation.

Sieff (2016) notes that among the strong emotions we feel, shame is the most painful because it comes along with an ominous feeling of unworthiness. Shame can also prompt one to cover our parts of the emotional self. Sieff (2016:3) maintains that “shame is a strong component of emotional trauma, a very uncomfortable and pervasive state of being”. In other words, shame can have some effects on both intra- and inter-personal relationship. Therefore, in a culture of honour, when a person’s honour is violated, it produces shame which in turn stirs up an intrinsic motivation to seek revenge. White (1999) stresses that seeking revenge because a person wants to recover his or her honour is more prevalent in a collectivist culture. Herbert’s (2007) interrogation of the concept of honour and revenge is within the sociocultural ambience of Asia and the Islamic religious tradition. However, his research engagement is more focused on inter-religious relationships and not on an intra-religious relationship, which is the focus of this study.

Engaging further the discourse on revenge, Schumann and Ross (2010) note that the extent to which people go in seeking personal revenge and vengeance is predicated on the support they get from the laws, norms and values of their religion. In other words, the quest for vengeance within the threshold of conflict can be interpreted in the context of a religion's perception of the morality behind certain actions. In addition, the thesis of interpreting the morality behind the quest for personal vengeance can be rooted in a cultural context. Al-Shawtabi (2008) and Smith cited in Schumann and Ross (2010: 1200) argue that "acts of personal revenge are more common in cultures of honour where avenging injustices against one's kin is normative and widely accepted". This is hinged on the assumption that when a person or group shuns personal revenge in certain cultures they will be stigmatised as cowards. It can, therefore, be inferred that an adherent of a religion will feel morally justified to seek vengeance and take violent actions against the other party to a conflict if he finds support in his religion and cultural context.

Likewise, Linquist (2016: 2) argues that the way people respond to the violation of their honour is "based on their cultural phenotype". Furthermore, he explains that an individual's psychological phenotype is his character to act in response to certain events; whether a threat or an insult. Linquist (2016) states further:

Honour cultures are a distinct category of cultural phenotype. In these societies, honour is closely related to social standing. Certain insults are recognized as a threat to one's honour and violent aggression is the only acceptable response to such insult (p.3).

Therefore, moralising vengeance and revenge should be culture-specific. This is however not the scope of this study. Do the laws of Igbe religion encourage people to seek personal revenge because they want to buy back their honour?

Finney (2013) examines the Epistle of Paul with regards "I Corinthians" and exposes the social life of the first-century Greco-Roman world where honour was of paramount importance. The argument in 1 Corinthians is grounded on the fact that the conflict that was experienced in the budding Church was driven by the lust for the honour. According to Finney, the Philotimia (the love and lust for honour) has the capacity to provoke an atmosphere of unhealthy competition within a group and which was quite evident in the Epistle of Paul in I Corinthians.

Still, on the discourse of honour as a trigger of conflict, Idjakpo (2011) and Otite (2005) believe that the concept of honour is driven by the ranking system among the Urhobo. The Urhobo are known to practise gerontocracy, the government of elders based on age grade organisation. The oldest person in the community is the head of government known as *Okahorho*. Therefore, an average Urhobo man or woman feels highly offended when his rank within a social system is undermined. In addition, Audergon and Audergon (2006) admit:

In order to prevent conflict and preserve the cohesion within certain groups, it is essential to understand the dynamics of ranking because insufficient rank awareness can create and perpetuate serious tensions and conflict within social-cultural groups.

Therefore, when people fail to take cognisance of the dynamics of rank and ranking within a religious or a cultural phenomenon conflict can be instigated.

Over-crowdedness has been identified as one of the instigators of conflict in more conventional literature. Morgan (2010), Penal Reform International (2012), Arisukwu *et al.*, (2015) explored over-crowdedness from the dimension of prison congestion; the Kaduna State Development Plan (2013) discusses the concept of overcrowdedness from the angle of educational classrooms; Reynolds (2005) and the Norwegian Refugee Council Report (2016) focuses on overcrowded homes and cities as possible areas that can trigger social conflict in families and communities etc.

Meanwhile, Tegenu (2013) identifies population growth as a factor responsible for the challenges of over-crowdedness. He argues that “when population grows beyond an accommodating capacity, conflict becomes imminent (Tegenu, 2013:2)”. According to Read and LeBlanc (2003), the effects of population growth can become a stress to humanity when there is lack of proper planning. The Habitable Planet (2017) notes when an increase in population competes with the earth’s carrying capacity, conflict is triggered. The earth’s carrying capacity has to do with the number of individuals an environment can sustain without having any substantial negative impacts on the environment. The notion of over-crowdedness and population increase as a source of conflict has not been explored within the framework of religion and it is a thematic area this study shall explore in the context of the intra-sectarian conflict in Igbe Orhe?

The Lawyers' Professional Indemnity Company (1998) has identified a conflict of interest as an instigator of conflict across the spectrum of human interactions. In its view, conflicts of interest can arise in any context—financial, political, social, moral or religious. Thomson (2004:1) sees “the expression 'conflict of interest' as referring to conflicting obligations or influences to which an individual is subject in the course of a relationship or activity”. However, the National Health Group (2006:30) contends that “conflicts of interest are not inherently bad, but it is how they are handled that can lead to improper, inappropriate, or bad outcomes”. How does the conflict of interest fit into the dynamics of personal and corporate interactions in the context of Igbe Orhe? This question further helps explore the subject of this study.

Newton and Elliott (2016), Poolman, Munamati, and Senzanje (N.D) believe that the non-involvement of stakeholders in the planning of certain activities can be a viable cause of conflict. So, when proper channels are not created to involve, incorporate and negotiate with stakeholders' conflict can erupt. Hence, it is important to identify stakeholders: the people, groups or organisations that must be involved in the planning of certain critical activities that can necessitate the growth and development of a community, group or society. Who are the stakeholders in Igbe religion? What kind of activities should they be included to avoid imminent conflict? These questions are important because the scholars that have been reviewed only examined the importance of stakeholders' involvement from the angle of water resources, land related and community development issues.

Several religious sectarian groups have been carefully nurtured and portrayed as too different through teachings that legitimise uncooperative relations (Osemeka, 2014) and these perceived differences have been reinforced from generation to generation in the psyche of adherents. Ultimately, it creates the platform for dysfunctional interactions, suspicions, tensions, conflicts and possibly violence within the community of adherents. The thoughts of Nwazie (1999) are amplified by Woolf and Hulsizer (2003) when they submit that one of the first steps along the path of violence is the process of stereotyping and stigmatisation. Beginning with an increase in labels and pejorative images of the religious group, the development lingers with the beleaguered group becoming more branded with negative characteristics and if not properly managed can lead to violent conflicts.

Basinger (2015) provides probing insight into a better understanding of conflicts within sectarian groups using differences in theological ideologies. He maintains that dissimilarities in theological dogmas are conspicuous and it affects how various religions such as Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Confucianism and others, construct their concept of God. It is also believed to influence their views about human beings and life in the hereafter. In other words, while some religions believe in the reality of a hereafter, that is conscious of afterlife practicality, other religions do not believe in the idea that there is life after death. Basinger (2015:2) contends that “the theological ideologies are also connected to the basic claims to truth as espoused by the religions, which are categorised into three: religious exclusivism, religious nonexclusive, and religious pluralism”. Schilbrack cited in Basinger (2015) explains that religious exclusivism is the notion that adherents of a religion believe that their religious perspective is closer to the truth than other religions. Likewise, a person is a non-religious exclusivist by not believing that a theistic system is better than others. Discussing religious ideological perceptions further, Meeker (2003:524) explains that a person can be called a religious pluralist because in his psyche no religion is seen as superior. Such a person considers all religions as valid. In the submission of Basinger (2015), these differences have the tendency to be used in creating unique identities capable of materialising into sectarian divisions within and between religious denominations.

Differences in religious doctrines and practices as an instigator of conflicts between and within religions have generated intense scholarly debates. Mathie, (2016), Yake, (2015), Olojo, (2014), Awoniyi, (2011), Treve, (2013), Adamolekun, (2012), and Ayuba, (2011) identify the plurality of doctrines and religious practices as instigators of conflict within the Abrahamic religions. In a related study, El Badawy *et al*, (2015) contend that it is not the differences in theological ideologies that drive sectarian conflicts but the application of the differing narratives. These narratives are subject to the interpretation of the theologies that have been developed in the course of time, by the followers of the various religions rather than the founders themselves (Asghar, 2013). El Badawy *et al*, (2015), therefore conclude that it is the application of their ideologies to certain realities that determine conflict outcomes in terms of violence or non–violence.

Seeking to introduce new ideas contrary to an existing tradition can lead to some resistance and the effort to modernise existing religious structures can be a driver of conflict. According to Eidelman and Crandall (2012), human societies are in constant evolution and more often, man tends to resist change in the first instance. Tradition, therefore, entrenches hegemony. The word hegemony traditionally indicates the domination of one sort or another (Bates, 1975). The hegemony thesis was popularised by late Antonio Gramsci, and establishes that “man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas of a certain class of men (Bates 1975:351)”. Leaders, whether political or religious tend to use the instrumentality of ideas that have been gleaned from religious text and traditions to diffuse and popularise their world-views in the psyche of their followers and devotees, thereby legitimising their hold or dominance.

Building on the discourse of tradition, Cavarnos, (1992: 2) argues that “sacred tradition originates from God; it is a divine revelation, whereas human traditions which originate from mankind are products of the human mind”. He contends that Jesus Christ explicitly distinguishes these two kinds of tradition, the divine and the human, when He disapproves of the Scribes and Pharisees because they disregard the Divine Tradition, the Divine Teaching, while they observe human traditions (see St. Mark 7:8). And the Apostle Paul clearly distinguishes the two kinds of traditions (divine and human), when he advises the Colossians, saying: "See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8). Yet, religious leaders and leaders of various sectarian religious groups use the so-called divine tradition to foist their grip on their followers.

No doubt an attempt to break away from a hegemonic threshold can cause conflict within a group. This may have prompted Awoniyi (2011), Orebiyi and Orebiyi (2017) to conclude that religion also legitimises hegemony and conflict is inevitable when the leadership of any religious tradition feels that the status quo is under threat. This lends credence to the thesis of Rangers (1982) that traditions can be invented in order to maintain certain hegemony. Putting the challenges of the forces of tradition and change in a clearer, light Krantz (2006:224) affirms that when one becomes a leader, he/she begins to live in a centrifugal pitch, pulled in opposing directions by the competing demands of continuity

within an institutional framework. Accordingly, there will always be a clash between novelty and the established order. Equally, they will experience tension between the institutional agenda and their personal agenda. Thus, conflict is rife when the custodians of religious traditions perceive that the introduction of new ideas will impact negatively on sacred traditions.

2.4 Patterns and Dimensions of Intra-Sectarian Conflicts

While the patterns and dimensions of leadership succession conflict have received much attention in the Abrahamic religions, it is relatively unknown in the context of Igbe Orhe. Scholars have acknowledged that splits within religious groups and the proliferation of denominations are more often connected to leadership succession conflicts. Mudhafar, (1993), Esposito, (2010), Awojobi, (2011), and Abdo, (2013) acknowledge that physical violence and sometimes bloodshed accompany a leadership succession conflict. In the Old Testament Book of Isaiah, chapter 14: 12-14, the ambition of Satan to take over the throne of Jehovah brought a permanent severance of their relationship. For Gathuki, (2015), Awojobi, (2011), and Treve, (2013), the contending argument is that leadership succession conflicts often result into splits because rival contestants take advantage of the conflict to pioneer their own sectarian group and ultimately become supreme leaders of the newly established groups. Iheanacho and Atheroma (2016) identify the entrepreneurial drive of leadership contestants as the reason behind splits within religions.

In terms of dimensions, Iqbal and Ritter (2015) note that leadership succession conflicts can lead to the loss of a business heritage. For Dollhopf and Scheitle (2013), Awojobi (2011), a noticeable dimension of leadership succession conflict is associated with membership decline. Leadership succession also has the propensity to produce toxic leaders. Toxic leadership in the perspective of Blumen (2005:652) refers to a “process in which leaders, by dint of their destructive behaviour and/or dysfunctional personal characteristics, inflict serious and enduring harm on their followers, their organizations, and non-followers alike”. Besides, toxic leaders can cause profound and lasting damage by bullying, undermining, demeaning and intimidating those they want to control. Thus, toxic leaders will find it difficult to retain members in their congregation.

Nemeroff, (2016), Bourgeois, (2015), Basic Manual for Priesthood Holders, Part B, (2000) and Robertson, (1904) acknowledge the ordination of adherents who desire to enter into the priesthood system of religion as a very complicated process in various religious traditions. Ordination into the priesthood requires endorsement from a legitimised ecclesiastical order. They agree that contentions have trailed issues on who has the power to ordain men and women into the priesthood system of religion. Iyer (2017) and Nemeroff, (2017) conclude that some the contentions over the monopoly of ordination have degenerated into physical violence. In terms of dimension, contentions over ordination have led to the division of congregations and in some instances the decisions by members to leave their congregations for another outright.

Krantz (2006), Hargreaves (2002), Elangovan and Shapiro (1998), are of the opinion that betrayals may not necessarily lead to violence. But it is recorded in the Synoptic Gospels that Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus committed suicide (see Matthew 27). Jamsari *et al.*, (2012:1400) contends that an “Islamic leader will be termed a betrayer if he fails to implement *Sharia* within his sphere of influence”. But their study did not specify the pattern and dimension such a conflict might generate. For Krantz (2006), the experience of betrayal can be destructive for everyone that is involved. In terms of dimension, a betrayal can lead to defensive withdrawal from a group. In the submission of Elangovan and Shapiro (1998), betrayal destroys trust within an organisation and the emotional consequences are more challenging to deal or cope with. Another dimension of betrayal is a deliberate attempt to stop interacting with the people who carried out the very act of betrayal.

In relation to patterns and dimensions, Koren and Bagozzi (2016) observe that grievance over the inequitable distribution of food has marginalised groups to participate in rebellion. They also argue that violent struggles have always accompanied challenges that are associated with food conflict. Furthermore, they discover that the availability or sufficiency of food can also lead to a general pattern of violence. In the Old Testament Book of Genesis, Cain reportedly killed his brother, Abel, because God accepted the food (animal) sacrifice of Abel and rejected the food sacrifice of Cain (see Genesis 4:1ff). The study of Anyanwu *et al.* (2015) reveals that stiff punishment is reserved for the violations

of food taboo among the Urhobo ethnic group. Forman (2016) and McBride (2016) note that food is also used as a kind of tool in peacebuilding.

Concerning the pattern and dimension of conflicts associated with undermining spiritual leadership, it is observed that Jehovah, the God of the Jews in the Old Testament Bible did not handle Miriam and Aaron lightly for despising the leadership of Moses. Likewise, the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram attracted violent consequence from Jehovah (see Numbers 12: 1ff, Numbers 16:1ff). Using Jezebel, wife of Ahab, as a case study, Frangipane (2017), enumerates how Satan uses some manipulative methods to undermine and destroy the saints. Under the influence of Satan, it was believed that Jezebel ordered the execution of all the prophets of God in Israel. He argues that Satan's demons, like Jezebel, can target and make efforts to destroy the relationship between a pastor and the Church's spiritual leadership.

Wheeler (2003), using Absalom as an analogy, contends that Church staff, Board members, and leaders are natural lightning rods for complainers. Afraid of voicing their objections publicly or confronting the pastor directly, the disgruntled often tend to undermine the leadership and personality of their pastors openly without any form of restraint. Cothorn (2011) argues that the pattern and dimension of conflict that is associated with undermining spiritual leadership are determined by the type of authority the pastor commands. Cothorn (2011) states:

The "hired gun" installed by a board that micromanages his message and methodology, leaving him feeling weak and unable to pursue his calling with passion. The other extreme is the pastor whose authority borders on "monarchical." This kind of pastor controls every detail of his congregants' lives, even what they wear. His control goes far beyond that which is biblical (p.3).

It can be deduced from the above statement that when the authority or personality of the pastor is undermined under any guise, their response is determined by the authority they wield. Tetsola (2014) believes that the general pattern by which spiritual leadership is undermined is through disloyalty. According to him, disloyalty penetrates through the spirit of betrayal and can lead to splits in the local church. But these findings have been limited to the Christian and Islamic faith traditions.

Given the importance of festivals, Kaplan (2007), Olupona (2011), Osaghae and Suberu (2005) contend that a visible pattern that has trailed conflicts emanating from the celebration of religious festivities is physical violence. They are however silent about the dimensions of such conflicts in the context of intra-sectarian conflict. While Kaplan (2007) makes his observation in the context of festival celebrations in early Western Europe, the discourses of Olupona (2011), Osaghae and Suberu (2005) focus on festivals that are associated with African Traditional Religions. They argue that activities such as processions, holiday celebrations often associated with the celebration of festivals account for high incidences of violent conflicts.

The poaching, snatching or cross carpeting of members from one religious temple to another, or from one denomination to another is not limited to monotheistic Abrahamic religions. Equally, contemporary discourses on pattern and dimensions of conflicts arising from members crossing from one sectarian group to another have attracted some scholarly attention. When some members of the Roman Catholic denomination moved and identified with the Protestant denomination, it led to the killing of many by the Papacy during the middle ages (Vincent, 2015; Plaisted, 2006). Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (2013) declares that sectarian hostilities are prevalent in Mexico. Using Chiapas locality of San Juan Chamula, Mexico as a case study, they affirm that conversion from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism was met with a violent reaction from the Roman Catholic authorities. Though the study was periodised between 1960 and the 1990s, it confirms a pattern and dimension of violence that is associated with sectarian conversion or congregational cross-carpeting. Ze'evi (2007) explains that anti-Shia sentiments have led Sunni Islamic clerics in the Middle East to issue a *fatwa* declaring the Shia Islamic adherents' infidels. Accordingly, converting from Sunni Islam to Shia will be met with strict penalties. These studies are carried out within the scope of the Abrahamic religions. The issues that have been identified are explored within the context of Igbe Orhe, a non-Abrahamic religion.

Richards (2015) maintains that violent reactions trailed the publications of books that have caused conflicts across time and space. The conflict associated with *The Satanic Verses* of Salman Rushdie attracted so much international outcry to the extent that it was banned in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia etc. In 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran issued a *fatwa* calling on

all good Muslims to kill the author; as a result, Rushdie had to go into hiding. The book *Frankenstein* written by Mary Shelley and *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding “are greeted with protest by Christian groups who claim that it conflicts with the principles of their faith. Equally, the books received criticisms ranging from violence, sexuality to racism (Richards 2015:2)”. According to Khan (2015), violent reactions welcomed the cartoon representation of the Prophet. Muslims believe that the visual depictions of all the Prophets should be prohibited. The Muslim Umma across were very angry at the visual representations of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). Also, when Martin Luther published the 95 theses and nailed them on the door of the Roman Catholic Church, it generated violent reactions from within the Church (Report of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity, 2017). This study explores the pattern and dimensions of conflicts arising from the publications of books in Igbe Orhe.

2.5 Management of Conflict in General

Loomis and Loomis (1965), theorise that conflict is an ever-present process in human relations. If human realities are connected on the platform of interdependence with other rational beings, the possibility of occasional frictions cannot be ruled out. Therefore, the ability to manage conflict should be of paramount importance in every human society. Likewise, Barker *et al* (1987) are of the opinion that conflicts are seldom resolved and most conflicts are managed as individuals try to work out differences. Robinson and Clifford (1974) contend that not all conflicts can be resolved; therefore, they should be managed in a constructive manner. Therefore, turning conflict from a negative paradigm into a positive one is linked to a dynamic conflict management capacity. The dominant argument is that conflicts not managed can cause delays in the execution of critical plans in a group, and in some extreme cases, it can cause a total collapse of the group.

Unmanaged conflict may result in withdrawal of individuals and aversion on their part to participate in other groups or assist with various action program of the group. It can, therefore, be inferred that conflict is a double-edged sword, depending on how and who is handling it. In other words, the disruptive and constructive tendencies of conflict are functions of management approaches and mechanisms. Mughal and Khan (2013: 153) declare that “as far as the history of conflicts is concerned, in the early 1900s, conflicts were usually considered as an indication of poor management within an organization and

were considered something to avoid”. For Kinnander (2011:1), “conflict management should be brought under two sub-themes: ‘the prevention of conflicts’ and ‘the management of functional conflicts”.

For McClinton (2014), the leadership of an organisation can have great implications and significance in the dynamics of conflict management. Buttressing further, Montes, Rodriguez and Serrano (2012) believe that because leaders guide and provide inspiration, their followers may naturally look up to them to help manage conflict at some point. Therefore, many leaders adopt the conflict management styles that they feel can be of benefit to the overall wellbeing of their organisation.

Scholars such as El Dahshan and Keshk (2014), Mughal and Khan (2013), McNamara (2013) and Dontigney (2013) identify conflict management approaches which include dominance, compromise, integration, avoiding cooperativeness/obliging. Aside from the corporate management of conflict, it has also been brought to the fore that some individuals have come up with their own unique conflict management styles (Mughal and Khan, 2013). Explaining further, Shaheryar (2016:1), Madalina (2016:810) and Verma (1998:6) equally admit that conflicts are managed through different conflict-handling styles. For example, Shaheryar (2016:1) “acknowledges competing”; Madalina (2016:810) “identifies fighting”; Verma (1998:6) “forcing conflict handling styles”. These identified conflict handling styles have to do with parties to a conflict seeking after their own priorities and paying little or no concern to the other party. It is an approach that encompasses the use of dominance through the imposition of one’s viewpoint at the expense of another. Encoded in this type of conflict handling style, is the win-lose mentality.

Shaheryar (2016:1) discloses another conflict handling style known as “accommodating” or “smoothing” according to Verma (1998:6). The accommodating or smoothing style is a conciliatory approach accentuating areas of settlement while evading facts of the discrepancy. Furthermore, Verma (1998:6) and Shaheryar (2016:1) recognise “compromise” as another conflict handling style. Compromise as a style of conflict management affords acceptable resolutions to parties in conflict; this is a win-win method. “Confrontation” is also recognised as a conflict handling style (Verma (1998:6). As a conflict handling style, confrontation entails open discussion between the parties to a

conflict, who must be mature in understanding. The broad notion is that confrontation as a conflict handling style can, in the long run, resolve the underlying problems.

Verma (1996:122) also recognises “collaborating” as a conflict handling style. “Collaborating” is essential if parties to a conflict desire to maintain future relationships. Equally, it offers a worthy prospect to learn from others. Active collaboration by both parties in contributing to the resolution makes it easier to get their consensus and commitment. Likewise, Shaheryar (2016:2) and Verma (1996:122) disclose “avoidance or withdrawal” to be another conflict handling style. Avoidance involves withdrawing and a refusal to deal with the conflict by disregarding it as much as possible. They argue that withdrawal is a passive makeshift way of handling conflict and usually it fails to solve the problem.

In other words, conflict ensues when an individual or corporate goal are not compatible. One's goal may be considered highly important, or it may be of little importance or one may require having a better capacity to interact effectively with the other person in the future. In this context, the relationship may be very important to the individual, or it may be of little importance. They conclude that the importance of these two areas will influence the ways in which one acts in any given conflict and the management approach they choose to adopt.

It must, however, be noted that the studies under review are carried out in the context of corporate organisational performance. Data collected for their study were mainly from the public and private sector organisations. Members and officials of religious faith traditions are not part of the study population. Therefore, to what extent can the conflict management approach apply to an indigenous African religion? Can the conflict management approach so far identified be applied to intra-sectarian religious conflicts? These are questions begging for answers.

Adam, Verbrudgge, and Boer (2014) identify the combination of the formal justice system with local traditional methods in Mindanao as a way of managing conflict and improving the level of security in their community. According to them, the formal justice system has numerous challenges ranging from being too expensive to the slow pace of judicial procedure. They, therefore, proposed a “hybrid system of conflict management” (Adam *et*

al., 2014:3). The hybrid or mixed systems seeks to syndicate formal and informal approaches to managing conflicts, by allowing the different systems (formal and informal) to draw strength from one another, strengthen the conflict resolution process, reduce violence, and eventually draw the informal working systems into the ambit of mainstream formal governance structures (Adam *et al.*, 2014:3). Likewise, they adopted what is known as “amicable settlement” mechanism (Adam *et al.*, 2014:14) and it involves mediation by a third party who commands influence within the community. Throughout the mediation procedure, “a high degree of confidentiality is observed so as not to risk degrading the honour of the warring parties. The traditional authorities, particularly the ‘Council of Elders’, often play a central role in the amicable dispute settlement (Adam *et al.*, 2014:14-15).

Taking into consideration the authoritative positions of the elders, they are also used as mediators in bigger conflicts. The research of Adam *et al* (2014) is limited to the Mindanao political community which was going through Muslim-Christian conflict as a result of political marginalisation and social exclusion. The acknowledged conflict management techniques were used to address inter-religious and ethnic conflicts. The implication of the amicable settlement mechanism and the hybrid system of conflict management in the intra-sectarian conflict was not given any attention in their study. Does Igbe religion have a single approach to the management of its intra sectarian conflict or its leadership employs a combination of other approaches? This is a critical aspect that is given attention in this study.

In the opinion of Madalina (2016), Ikyase and Olisah (2014), conflict management approaches should be based on the nature and diversity of the conflict. In the postulations of Ikyase and Olisah (2014: 188) “the management of inter and intrastate conflicts in Africa have often taken a combination of the following in exhaustive strategies: negotiation, conciliation, arbitration and peace-keeping”. They contend that “negotiation is a process whereby the parties within a conflict seek to settle or resolve their differences and the whole task of negotiation generally is to reach an agreement through joint decision between the conflicting parties”. Conciliation, they opine, generally “involves a third-party activity aimed at persuading parties to the conflict to reach a peaceful end in their differences”.

The fundamental position of the conciliation method of conflict management is to reduce tension among the conflicting parties (Ikyase & Olisah, 2014: 189). In the same vein, they maintain that “arbitration involves the use and assistance of a neutral third party in the conflict who listens to evidence from both parties and thereafter takes a decision, usually called ‘an award’, and it is expected to be binding on all the parties to a conflict (Ikyase and Olisah, (2014: 189). In addition, peacekeeping involves actions that can create provisions that can bring about enduring peace (Ikyase and Olisah, (2014:189). The conflict management mechanisms enumerated by Ikyase and Olisah (2014) fit into the alternative dispute resolution platform. However, they have been applied as a panacea for inter/intra-state conflict. Although this study is focused on conflict management mechanism within an intra-sectarian religious context, nevertheless, the relevance of the concept of arbitration, peacekeeping and conciliation are examined within the indigenous dynamics of the religion under investigation.

Mesko, Lang, Czibor, Szijarto and Bereczke (2014) examine the Machiavellian conflict management style. In the research “Compete and Compromise: Machiavellianism and Conflict Resolution”, they opine that a Machiavellian character is one who is likely to exploit others in a bid to achieve a purpose. Furthermore, a Machiavellian character is goal-oriented rather than person-oriented. In other words, they see people as objects of manipulation in interpersonal situations. Their behavioural attitudes are rationalistic and egoistic.

Taking their study further, they query: Are Machiavellian characters willing to compromise with their partners in the hope of gaining the largest benefit? Do they behave in a power-oriented nature that the only thing they want is to win? How do they adapt themselves to changing circumstances, i.e. can they collaborate with other people to fulfil their own concerns? Or do they handle others in a selfish and malevolent manner? Do they use the tactic of avoidance, i.e. withdrawing from the conflict? Or do they permanently pursue their own interest? Their findings reveal that Machiavellians are comfortable with the competing and compromising conflict management style. However, going by the character traits of Machiavellians, Mesko *et al* (2014) discovered that compromise as a conflict management approach appeals to them:

At first glance, this result seems controversial; if Machiavellians are selfish and narcissistic persons who are less likely to be concerned about other people beyond their own self-interest, why would they adjust their decisions to the others' behaviour, and why would they engage in exchanging concessions?(p.16).

In providing an answer to the question raised by Mesko *et al* (2014), earlier studies conducted by Christies and Geis (1970) shows that Machiavellians frequently change their strategies. This confirms evidence that a crucial Machiavellian characteristic lies in their flexibility and ability to successfully adapt to the social environment. The study of Mesko *et al* (2014) brings to understanding the place of character and personality traits as determining factors in conflict management approaches. Though the Machiavellian character is espoused, the study focuses more on the interpersonal relationship; it does not take into consideration its implication on managing conflict as a corporate level. This provides further impetus for this study to look at the character traits of the leadership within some Igbe sects and to ascertain whether such traits have a direct bearing on the way conflicts are managed within the congregation.

Swanström and Weissmann (2005) believe that conflict prevention is critical to the management of conflicts. They classified conflict prevention into two thematic areas explicitly: direct prevention and structural prevention. Swanström and Weissmann (2005) claim that:

Direct conflict prevention refers to measures that are aimed at preventing short-term, often imminent, escalation of a potential conflict. Structural prevention focuses on more long term measures that address the underlying causes of a potential conflict along with potentially escalating and triggering factors. Economic development assistance or increased political participation is an example of structural prevention, while the dispatch of a mediator or the withdrawal of military forces is examples of direct prevention (p.19).

Therefore, structural prevention mechanisms can be subsumed within the framework of institutional measures that have been put in place to prevent the open manifestations of conflict. They also argue that structural preventive measures should be implemented at an early stage, and it should include the development of institutional capacity and building of trust and (longer-term) cooperation (Swanström and Weissmann, 2005: 20-23). From their

summation, one can advance the argument that a culture of conflict prevention can also be seen in the light of conflict management. The study of Swanström and Weissmann (2005) basically is from the perspective of social and political conflict. Does Igbe have an inbuilt system which prevents conflict from escalating into violence? How does the thesis of conflict prevention fit into the conflict management approach of Igbe religion? Empirical investigations will no doubt bring these issues to the fore.

The Search for Common Ground (2017:1) explains that music and songs can be used as a conflict management tool. They maintain that “songs are one of the most effective ways of moving people to action and a song is worth a thousand speeches. Songs speak to our emotions and tap into our senses of empathy and compassion” (The Search for Common Ground, 2017:1). Their dominant argument is that songs can be fundamental in the management and prevention of conflicts. Nabofa (2005) and Okon (2014) establish that songs are also instruments for conflict prevention. Central to their argument is that songs serve the purpose of checking moral decay among members of some societies. It is equally believed can caution people about the consequences of breaking the moral codes of society. It affirms Gilbert (2005: 117) that songs can be taken as historical documents relating to a certain epoch. In addition, songs can provide an understanding of how human collectively retort to and interpret the realities around them. Gilbert (2005: 117) further admits:

The value of songs is twofold: first, in a subject area where many sources originate, they are a significant body of texts originating from the time itself. In addition, they are distinctive among these contemporary sources as oral texts, disseminated and, ultimately, preserved within a group framework (117).

Likewise, Nabofa (2005: 356-359) submits that maladjusted attitudes among members of Igbe Orhe can be gravely reprimanded with songs. In Igbe Orhe, through songs, adherents are restrained from misbehaving to a large extent. Going by the structural preventive conflict thesis of Swanström and Weissmann (2005) songs can be used as a potential inbuilt mechanism to manage and regulate conflict.

Kohlrieser (2007), attempts to look at conflict management from the angle of the deployment of certain skills. For him, the inability to manage conflict makes it intractable,

and if properly managed, it is one of the biggest drivers of change. Kohlrieser (2007) believes that there six essential skills for managing conflicts which are:

To create and maintain a bond with your adversary; establish a dialogue and negotiate; “put the fish on the table” which means raising a difficult issue without being aggressive or hostile; understand what causes conflict; use of the law of reciprocity; building a positive relationship (p.1-2).

Kohlrieser (2007:2) suggests that it is important to build bonds with an organisation. Once a bond is established, relationships must be cultivated without undermining the pursuit of corporate goals. This will, in no small way, help to douse tension and effectively manage conflict within an organisation. It must, however, be mentioned here that these conflict management skills put forward by Kohlrieser were more focused on managers and business executives within a corporate business setting. Nevertheless, Igbe Orhe has an organised structure with congregations and established leadership. The leaders in the various congregations must be applying some skills managing some conflicts within and between their sectarian groups. What are these skills? Are they in alignment with the recommendations of Kohlrieser? This study unearths the indigenous skills used in the management of intra-sectarian conflicts by the leadership of the Igbe religion.

In a related study, Rahim (2002: 209) points to the fact that to ensure proper management of conflicts managers should strive to meet the need of the stakeholders and fulfil the organisation’s learning curve. According to him, most organisations are confronted with affective and substantive conflicts. He argues that an effective conflict can be defined as unpredictability in interpersonal relationships, what happens when the staff of an organisation discover that they are no longer feeling comfortable with certain happenings in the organisation (Rahim 2002:10). Also, he concedes that a substantive conflict finds expression when members of a business establishment disagree about task or content related matters (Rahim, 2002).

Kurtzberg *et al.* (2005), expands the types of conflict to three; the first is called work process conflict; the second is relationship-based conflict, where relationships between team members are the source; the third is task-based conflict, where disagreements about work become the conflict focal point. Ohbuchi *et al.* (2003) seem to acknowledge first the concept of conflict of interest, which concerns issues between people and their interests.

The second is cognitive conflict, which arises when people have different views on issues. The third is value conflict, and this occurs when there are disagreements concerning different values and expectations. After identifying the types of conflict, Rahim (2001:87) opines that conflict management approaches ought to follow a proper diagnosis has been carried out. A proper diagnosis brings about the causes and effects of different types of conflict in an organisation and it helps the conflict manager to get to the root of the matter. Rahim (2002: 210) further contends that the goal of every conflict management strategy is to first minimise the level of affective conflicts. Jehn (1997) affirms:

Summarily stated, relationship conflicts interfere with task-related effort because members focus on reducing threats, increasing power, and attempting to build cohesion rather than working on task.... The conflict causes members to be negative, irritable, suspicious, and resentful (p. 531–532)

Rahim (2002:210) believes that it is germane for organisations to sustain a little level of substantive conflict because it will bring about a better evaluation of the issues, which can help in better decision making. In addition, Rahim (2002; 2001), puts forward that conflict management is an entire process covering the identification of the types of conflict; conflict diagnosis; designing intervention strategies which will also include the management approaches to be adopted. Due process must be followed to arrive at the best conflict management approach that suits a situation. However, the findings of the scholars reviewed are focused mainly on corporate business organisation. Since religious bodies are also not immune to conflicts, bringing the dimension of religion into their work would have made their arguments more balanced and robust. Can the findings of Rahim and others apply to an indigenous religious organisation, which may not have an elaborate corporate management structure?

Akpuru-Aja (2007) advocates that conflict resolution or management practices should be premised on the indigenous tradition of a society. He argues that before the introduction of Western-styled conflict management approaches, African societies had their indigenous conflict management mechanisms that they adopted within their various societies. He counselled against the use of conflict management mechanisms that are the product of external importation. Alao (2014) observes that:

The notion of peace in African indigenous tradition encompasses a conscious and deliberate effort to ensure communal wellness and cooperation by all; everybody is seen as belonging to a single family. He puts forward that the agents of peace in African setting include indigenous personalities, kings or *emirs* and chiefs, ancestors, priests in charge of native gods, elders and family heads, age grade associations, secret societies (p.2-4).

These proxies of peace correspondingly play a vibrant role in managing conflicts within their communities. Olaoba (2010) also establishes that the management of conflict is deeplyrooted in the customs and civilisation of a people. He contends that the Yoruba ethnic group has traditional authority based indigenous judicial system which is driven by the people and aimed at societal development. In addition, Ademowo and Balogun (2014) opine that proverbs, maxims, precedents, taboos and folktales are conflict management tools in Yorubaland. But the study of Olaoba (2010), Ademowo and Balogun (2014) are focused on the traditional Yoruba civil society. The relevance of proverbs, maxims and folktale within the context of an indigenous religion was not addressed.

Ofure (2014) acknowledges the use of poetry as a tool for conflict management. Ofure (2014) observes that:

The poet employs his artistic talent and consciousness to create awareness either to avert conflict or reconcile people enmeshed in conflicts. The poet's engaged his creativity in the use of words “in poetic form for healing, moralizing, resistance and reconciliation.... poetry is such that they are vehicles for historical documentation, poetic truths, socio-cultural consciousness, or an expression of religious experience, a healing balm and/or mediation or a medium of reconciliation during opposition/struggle, fight or disharmony (p. 6,9).

This study may want to look at the role of proverbs and poetic words within the conflict management spectrum of Igbe religion and how poetry plays out in promoting the social cohesion of the group.

Ajayi and Buhari (2014:149) point out that “traditional conflict resolution technique such as mediation, adjudication, reconciliation, and negotiation” were employed by Africans in the past and they offered great prospects for peaceful co-existence and harmonious

relationships in post-conflict periods than the modern method of litigation settlements in law courts.

Boyes (2017), Umunadi (2011), Albert (2001), acknowledge negotiation as one of the principal mechanisms of conflict management within traditional African societies. Albert (2001) sees negotiation as a direct process of discussion and dialogue taking place between at least two conflict parties confronted with a problem and mutually conscious that by talking to each other, they can solve the issue in the conflict. Umunadi (2011) opines that if negotiation is properly handled, it can contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Arbitration is another method employed in the management of conflicts within the framework of alternative dispute resolution. Baril and Dickey (2017) note that arbitration is a private dispute resolution process where parties in conflict hire a third-party neutral(s) to hear their stories, examine the facts and decide for them on how the dispute should be resolved. Differentiating between arbitration and mediation, Henry (1988: 396-97) cited in Baril and Dickey (2017:2) points out that it is a function of different processes with different purposes. The fundamental difference lies in who makes the final decision—a neutral third party or the parties themselves. In traditional arbitration, a third party neutral conducts an adjudicative process like a court proceeding to reach a decision according to the law of the contract.

Walter (2012) discusses arbitration under the concept of religious arbitration using the United States of America and Canada as case studies. Walter (2012) affirms that:

In the United States and Canada, God and law intersect in the form of religious arbitration. Religious arbitration is as a voluntary dispute resolution process, conducted according to religious principles and such arbitration often serves as a substitute for proceedings in civil court (503-504).

Wolfe (2006) identifies religious arbitration as faith-based arbitration. Wolfe (2006: 427-428), confirms that “along with general arbitration, faith-based arbitration is a process in which arbitrators apply religious principles to resolve disputes”. However, the submissions of Walter (2012) and Wolfe (2002) are with specific reference to the Abrahamic religions.

Acas (2015) and Shinde (2012) capture conciliation under the genre of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). Like other methods in the genre of ADR, conciliation involves the resolution or management of conflicts without resorting to litigation. It seems to also help conflicting parties to reach a better understanding of each other's positions and underlying interests. Conciliation also looks for ways to encourage a positive relationship between parties in conflict (Acas, 2015; Shinde, 2012). So, in conciliation, efforts are made to individualise and direct parties in conflict towards a satisfactory agreement. The third party in conciliation tends to be less formal in the process of carrying out a conciliatory activity. Shinde (2012) notes that:

The conciliator is not bound by the rules of procedure and evidence. The conciliator does not give any award or order. He tries to bring an acceptable agreement as to the conflict between the parties by mutual consent (p.3)

Thus, in conciliation, the neutral is usually seen as an authority figure that is deemed capable of figuring out the best solution for the conflict parties. In addition, Sgubini, Prieditis and Marighetto (2004) are of the view that conciliation is used almost preventively, as soon as a conflict or misunderstanding arises.

Ajayi and Buhari (2014:150) assert that in traditional African societies, adjudication is one of the methods used in managing conflict. In their thinking, it involves assembling all the parties in the conflict to a spot within the vicinity of the clan head, the head of the family or in some cases they are summoned to the court of the king. This process corroborates (Olaoba, 2010) that dialogue was linked with the adjudicatory processes in African society. In other words, Africa has its unique endogenous conflict management approaches which must be fully explored.

Mutisi (2009:17) argues that “endogenous knowledge is wisdom that is initiated from within communities, rooted in and developed from local contexts”. According to Obadiah, Everisto and Sichelwe (2014:11) “Endogenous knowledge is based on local methods, wisdom, information, institutions and resources, and is a multifarious and holistic system that cuts across political, social, economic and religious aspects of people’s lives”.

From the lens of Mutisi, it can be argued that conflict management approaches or mechanisms are community and culture-specific. It is, therefore, the responsibility of

communities, whether religious or ethnic, to develop conflict management processes or mechanisms that best suit them. For Farah and Lewis (1993), indigenous conflict management and resolution mechanisms engage local actors and traditional community based judicial decision-making mechanisms to manage and resolve conflicts within or between communities. The local mechanisms aim to resolve conflicts without resorting to state-run judicial systems, police or other external structures.

Golpin (1997:5) believes that there “is an abundant supply of religious concepts and values around the globe that need to be identified in terms of their importance for conflict resolution theory”. He is of that view that all religions should develop specific values that will help to drive their conflict management mechanisms and the institutionalisation of peace within their religious traditions. He identifies non-violence and pacifism as central to the peace traditions of Eastern religious traditions such as Jainism, Buddhism or Hinduism. He establishes that *ahimsa* which was popularised by Mohandas Gandhi is a non-violence methodology. Likewise, the early Christians were impacted greatly by the concept of pacifism and many sectarian interpretations of Christianity. Also, the four sublime moods of compassion (*karuna*), equanimity (*upekkha*), joy in others' joy (*mudita*), and loving-kindness (*metta*) he identifies are important values that drive conflict resolution in the Buddhist context. They also have important pedagogic value for the general understanding of changes necessary in internal perceptions of the "other" who is an enemy.

Okon (2014:139) contends that communities sometimes manage conflicts through a strong sanction system that has to do with the “rewards and penalties which society stipulates for individuals according to performance and merit”. Furthermore, Andersen (1997) upholds the view that:

In all human societies, religious sanctions chastise those who violate religious norms, thereby, controlling the development of self and group identity. In the extreme, groups who deviate from religious proscriptions may be tortured, executed, or excommunicated; in more subtle ways, religious deviants may be ridiculed, shunned or ostracized (p.122)

In subtle ways, religious deviants may be ridiculed, shunned or ostracised. Thus, the consciousness of sanctions is a structural conflict preventive mechanism in some religious communities.

In some communities in Zimbabwe, the avenging spirit is used as a conflict management mechanism. According to Maruzani (2012), the avenging spirits is a proficient way of moderating crimes such as killings, especially where the appropriate policing establishments seem to be encouraging crimes. The activities of an avenging spirit manifest through psychological disturbance, mental breakdown, abnormal deaths and strange ailments, amongst others. Therefore, the mere thought that an avenging spirit will go on a rampage by tormenting the criminally minded is considered enough to further guide the social interaction of members of the community. Maruzani (2012) further explains:

What is interesting with the avenging spirits is that even if a perpetrator of crime is convicted in a court of law and serves a sentence, traditionally, some appeasement still has to be done to attend to the soul of the dead and the remaining family. In 2009, youth belonging to a particular political part murdered a man in Birchnough constituency at the instigation of an aspiring parliamentary candidate and another military officer. The body of the deceased man was later frighteningly seen seated in the mortuary after displacing other bodies. The avenging spirit has reportedly been visiting some of the leading personalities during the murder so much so that others have since consulted a traditional healer for cleansing (2).

Alao (2014) interrogates the involvement of native gods in contemporary African conflict management. Mbiti (1969) observes that in the African belief system, God or some other higher beings greater than man will inflict punishment on those who break the stipulations of an oath or swear falsely. The argument around the intervention of the native gods constitutes largely the last stage in the resolution of conflict through divination, incantation, administration of oaths or/and drinking of concoction, sacrifices and prayers to appease gods. Merry (1982) is of the view that the indigenous legal system as mirrored in the use of native gods depends on unwritten and oral guidelines and are regarded to be barbaric, satanic, and subject to manipulations by the priests. Isichei (1973) notes that the advent of Western civilisation particularly with respect to Christianity and the spread of Islam, coupled with modern administrative structures significantly eroded the relevance of the native gods within African society.

Fred-Mensah (2000: 34) contends that among the Buem ethnic group, the concept of *ortorkemelitemi* or “house matter must not be allowed to be heard by outsiders” is often

used as a conflict preventive mechanism. This approach increases social harmony and assists societies to manage conflicts and nurture communal relationships. It must, however, be mentioned that the study of Fred-Mensah (2003) only focuses on an ethnic community in Ghana. Nevertheless, his ideas are interrogated in the context of intra sectarian conflict management.

According to Aredo and Ame (2004), in the Borana community, somewhere in Ethiopia, when conflicts arise, mediators are called at the local level. The litigants meet before three to eight or more neighbours and plead their cases. The mediators and witnesses will be asked to come to help solve the dispute. Aredo & Ame (2004) further affirm:

There are certain men who will frequently be asked to preside over the council and their judgment is particularly respected. They are not necessarily old or rich but they may be either. What is most important in the eyes of the community is that they be noted for their altruism, their willingness to give their time, their knowledge of custom and precedent, and their good sense, to help solve their neighbours' problems and restore the peace (p. 4).

Another approach to conflict management identified by Aredo and Ame (2004:8) is the *Kallu* court, where respected elders attempt to solve disputes by using the same principles of *Arara* (peace) as the courts at the community level. This is acknowledged to be helping people solve their problems and keeping order according to the democratic principles of *Oromo*. They conclude that this social system is still functional in solving conflicts in resource management and in maintaining social relationships. It can, therefore, be inferred that very sacrosanct to conflict management approaches is the peace tradition and the ethics of reciprocity of a society. But the focus of the study of Aredo and Ame is not connected to sectarian religious conflict. Also, the study is tied to a community in Ethiopia. This study is looking at a religious community in Delta State, Nigeria. Therefore, while investigating the conflict management mechanisms in the internal dynamics of Igbe Orhe, its peace tradition and how it plays out in the management of intra sectarian conflicts will be considered.

2.6 Management of Intra Sectarian Conflict

In his contribution to the management of sectarian religious conflicts and violence, Minkov (2013) suggests the practice of inclusiveness by practitioners of all religious traditions. He anchors his point on the fact that since it is believed that God made beings in His image and being conscious of the fact that every human is unique, it is expected that humans ought to look out for a subjective interpretation of God in their life and situation. He further argues that God is not happy when someone's subjective interpretation is labelled "heretic" because it is different from that of the dominant group. He concludes that religion should focus on how a nation can be built based on shared commitment and collective responsibility. Minkov only centres his discussion on Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Also, his study is situated in the context of inter-religious or inter-faith relationships.

Menzies (1917:11) recommends the adoption of the principle of growth. The growth principle means that every religion should be regarded to be in their evolutionary stages. He argues that no religion or religious sectarian divisions within a religion should be classified as the true one. In other words, Christianity or Buddhism, for example, should not claim to be the true religion and classify others as false. The argument of Menzies (1917) captures the whole essence of the theory of religious pluralism espoused by John Hicks and religious sectarian pluralism that has been postulated in this study. There will be a drastic reduction in polemic teachings and religious communications that border of religious particularism or faith exclusivism. Therefore, adherents of various religions and religious sectarian groups should embrace inter-religious dialogue and seek to learn about the uniqueness of other religious traditions (Ilo, 2014)

As a way of managing intra-religious conflicts, Abdussalam (2010:1) affirms the role of linguistic representation in fostering good relations and mending worsening relations among Muslims, as well as fostering a greater understanding among the *Umma*. It also unveils the significance of studying the spoken and written concepts that are used in specific cases in order to help examine the role of linguistic representation in certain stages of such conflicts. Abdussalam (2010) identifies expressions such as:

tajannub al-`istifzaz (to avoid provocation) as used by al-Qaradawi in his writing on forging closer relations between Muslim sects, and advocating for avoiding provocation and for

adopting frankness with wisdom: *wamin al-mabadi' al-muhimmah fi al-hiwar al-islami al-islamiwa al-taqribibayna al-madhahibi al-islamiyahtajannubu al-istifzazminahdi al-tarafayni li al-akhar*(Among the important principles in Muslim-Muslim dialogue and in bringing different Muslim schools of thought and belief closer is to eschew provocation by one side of the other). Other expressions he identifies include *`inqadh al-mawqif* (to save the situation), *al-tasamuhbaynaalmukhtalifina* (tolerance among disputing groups), and *al- ihtiram al-mutabada* (mutual respect). Rida applies these expressions as follows; “We cooperate on what we agree upon, and every one of us will tolerate others on what we disagree upon (p. 6)

Abdussalam (2010:17) concludes that to reduce the harmful consequences of some expressions in intra-Muslim conflicts, it will be needful to develop and adopt alternative vocabularies. For example, Abdussalam (2010) proposes that Shi`ah should include phrases such as:

Radi Allahu `anhu/ `anha (may Allah be pleased with him/her) when referring to the Companions, without discrimination, and should stop using expressions that the Sunnis view as abusive. The Salafis may prefer using *ahl al-sunnahwa al-jama`ah* (the group that follows the traditions of the Prophet and consensus of the Muslims) to refer to themselves; however, they should realize that such terms as *al-firqah al-dallah* (the groups that have gone astray) for Sufis, as well as their allegations of *takfir* against all Muslim groups that do not defer to their chosen theological principles, only insult other Muslims and divide the global Muslim community (p.17).

This research on linguistic expression as a conflict management tool is only used in the context of intra-Muslim sectarian conflicts. The role of linguistic expressions in indigenous religion is not given attention. This area will also be explored in the study of Igbe.

Existing studies have identified indigenous leadership institutions as agencies for conflict management in Africa (Blench *et al.*, (2006); Mowo *et al.*, (2011); Kisoza, (2007); Mengesha, (2016); Alatas, (2016). The consensus is that leadership institutions whether, in corporate businesses, religious bodies and communities can exert a strong influence on conflict management issues within their sphere of influence. Mowo *et al.*, (2011:11-12) acknowledge the use of several local leadership institutions in the management of conflicts. They note that conflicts that are associated with land management and household

disputes are generally resolved by traditional leaders and the council of elders. Specifically, Riruwai and Ukiwo (2012: 3-5) argue that traditional modes of conflict management by community and religious leaders co-exist with formal governmental institutions charged with maintaining peace and security. It was discovered that community leaders tend to be more trusted than the officials of formal institutions. However, it was also reported that community and religious institutions sometimes help to fuel conflicts.

Pritchard (2017:3-5) affirms that leaders and clerics of religious institutions have a high potential in influencing peace positively in the long-term because the general assumption is that they can impact positively on the behaviour of people. The overriding argument here is that leadership at various levels can influence peace and act as agents for the management of conflict within their domains of influence. This is because of the referent power at their disposal. This study investigates how members of the Igbe religion seriously take the words of their leaders when it comes to the issue of conflicts and conflict management.

For Woolf and Hulsizer (2004:4-10), intra-religious conflict will be difficult to manage because a large chunk of religious groups are founded on hate and intolerance. Moreover, because some religious leaders are primary beneficiaries of conflict and violence, they are unlikely to change. The underlying assumption is that it would necessitate forfeiting their leadership influence and all the benefits that accompany that position. As a result, they are unlikely to tolerate change from their followers. However, they advocate an integrated approach to the management of either intra-group or inter-group conflicts among religions.

Woolf and Hulsizer (2004: 35-37) advocate that various religious bodies should adopt pluralism framework in their association with other religious groups. In addition, they suggest that “while teaching tolerance and respect for diversity is important, it is equally important to educate our children and ourselves in non-violent, effective conflict resolution skills(Woolf and Hulsizer, 2004: 38)”. It is worth mentioning that the studies were examined in the context of intra-religious hatred among the two dominant religions of the world (Christianity and Islam). Is there intra-religious hatred among the sectarian divisions in Igbe religion? What is responsible for the seamless cooperation within the various

sectarian divisions despite their sectarian differences? These questions enhanced the direction of the study.

Yu, Cai, Ma & Jiang, (2016); Deckwerth, Kulcsar, Lochau, Varr'ó & Schurr, (2016); Brun, Holmes, Ernst, & Notkin, (2013); Oracle White Paper, (2012); Kaloo *et al*, (2011) recognise conflict detection as a conflict management mechanism. The dominant narrative in their argument is premised on detecting situations which may lead to conflict and addressing them dispassionately before they become manifest. In their judgment, in order to have a smooth working relationship in a heterogeneous environment, early conflict detection is very important. Though the scholars reviewed are drawn from different academic disciplines, the consensus is that early conflict detection is sacrosanct to conflict management and resolution. However, the studies that have been reviewed did not engage the subject of conflict detection from the perspective of intra-sectarian religious conflicts. Does the concept of conflict detection fit into the conflict management mechanisms of Igbe Orhe?

2.7 Conflict Management Challenges

Chinwokwu (2013:102-104) identifies government responses to insecurity and conflict in Nigeria as a challenge to conflict management. According to him, one of the foremost strategies of government in response to insecurity and conflict is the engagement of governmental agencies established under the law. For him, the activities of these agencies are reactionary in nature. The challenges itemised by Chinwokwu are focused within the socio-political spectrum of Nigeria. In other words, what he has identified as conflict management challenges may not have bearing on the challenges faced by an indigenous religion because their operational dynamics are different. Jahun (2015: 1) looks at the challenges confronting traditional rulers in the management of conflict in Bauchi State. According to Jahun (2015):

The challenges are linked to inadequate map and survey data in their offices and at their local governments, lack of capacity building in all its ramifications that includes human and material to record and maintain such services which land conflict resolutions requires on a continuing basis (p.10).

In the same vein, Liddle cited in Crinland (2011: 4) notes that one of the challenges associated with conflict is that some organisations that are involved in the management of conflicts are unable to carry out their work effectively partly because of financial constraints.

Morake, Monobe, and Dingwe (2011) conducted a study on the challenges facing managers in managing conflict in schools of South- and South-Central Regions of Botswana. Their study identifies the absence of conflict management skills as one of the major challenges in many schools in Botswana. For example, most of the schools' managers are reported to be lacking in listening skills, conflict analysis skills, mediation and negotiation skills. The study recommends that school managers should be trained on the importance of managing conflict and equally, they should be encouraged to build their capacity on conflict management skills. In their view, training in conflict management skills will enable them to explore the positive sides of conflict for organisational change and transformation (Morake *et al.*, 2011:701).

In a related study, though conducted in Kenya, Barmao (2013: 14-22) examines the challenges and mechanisms head teachers engage in the management of conflicts in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality. In terms of conflict management challenges, the study discovers that conflicts in the workplace are not properly resolved because most of the head teachers are deficient in conflict management and resolution skills (Barmao, 2013: 18). Also, Billikopf (2014:31-32) observes that the inability of conflict parties to listen empathetically to one another is a major challenge in the management of conflicts. Equally, impatience on the part of parties to conflict greatly affects conflict management efforts. Billikopf (2014:33) stresses that “empathic listening is a major skill a manager of conflict must have”.

The Global Coalition for Conflict Transformation (GCCT) believes that discussing conflicts should not only be within the context of resolution or management. They contend that conflict management should also be discussed within the context of conflict transformation. In addition, GCCT is of the view that conflict transformation has a non-violent process and it focuses upon “the structural, behavioural and attitudinal aspects of conflict (GCCT, 2013)”. GCCT (2013) affirms that:

Conflict Transformation includes modifying actors, understanding perception, redefining issues that are central to the conflict, ensuring that conflicts are dealt with constructively and adjusting the prevailing power distribution. For conflict transformation to occur, tensions between parties to the conflict must be overcome – first, by ensuring all actors recognize that their respective interests are not served by resorting to violence; and second, by seeking consensus on what should be transformed and how (p. 3).

Taking the discussion further, Olaniyi (2008) believes that conflict transformation can be addressed from two positions.

The first is connected with non-violent conflict transformation associated with Gandhi otherwise known as the Gandhi theory. The second approach is a combination of approaches that does not presuppose resolution of the incompatibilities, but tries to freeze the conflict, negate it, and protect it, through all kinds of devices, including structural and direct violence (p.102)

In addition, Anderson and Spelten (2000:1) believe that beyond conflict management, societies must “create and maintain their own conditions for living together and pursuing shared goals”. Conflict transformation in their opinion should revolve around such principles since international interventions and aids may not necessarily stop the outbreak of violence. It must be mentioned here that the postulations of GCCT (2013) and Anderson and Spelten (2000) are discussed in the context of civil conflicts and humanitarian aids intervention in some societies. Furthermore, Galtung (2000) believes that conflict transformation is a product of peaceful actors, peace structure and having a culture of peace. In the opinion of Bloomfield (2006), transformation of a takes place when there is genuine reconciliation. He contends that reconciliation involves the telling of truth, dispensing of justice, the show of mercy, forgiveness and reparations. They failed to discuss conflict transformation within the context of religion. This offers this study a sense of direction.

2.8 Scholarly Perspectives on Igbe Religion

Akponwei (2009) submits that:

Igbe religion is the most misunderstood African traditional religion. This is due to a lack of understanding of its original

tenets and like Christianity or other world religions, a corruption of the mystical import and subjective twist of the esoteric aspect of the said religion by some practitioners over the years (xvi).

According to him, Igbe Orhe was first mentioned by a British administrator known as S.E Johnson in the year 1927. S.E Johnson christened the religion “Chalk-Juju”. Excerpt from S.E Johnson handing over notes reads:

The chalk juju requires watching. As far as I can gather it originated in Kokori but after the founder died it split into three sections, one with headquarters in Warri division another at Orogun and a third in Benin province (National Archives, Ibadan; Kwale District File No.10/4, S.D.74/1927

Akponwei (2009:1-8) traces the historical foundation of Igbe Orhe, its founding place, the founder, its tenets, structure, growth, the schisms that occurred in the Igbe religion, deviances of emanating from schisms and the effects on what is known of the religion today. Akponwei (2009:19) contends that the initial name of Ubiesha’s religion was Igbe Ubiesha but on account of the white chalk, it later became known as Igbe Orhe. The study of Akponwei (2009) is robust and offers profound insight into the evolution of Igbe Orhe. However, there are many conflict generating factors apart from the schisms that have confronted the religion. Even though the schisms did not degenerate into open violence, Akponwei does not establish in his research the factor(s) that accounts for the non-violence narratives acclaimed in the religion.

Echekwube (1994:1) posits that Igbe Orhe is a religion that is ordained by God, (the Supreme Being) and it is playing a very important role in the understanding of indigenous African religion, Islam and Christianity. His study on Igbe Orhe establishes the enduring values of the religion and the future it holds for its adherents (Echekwube, 1994). His study uncovered the likelihood of salvation in African belief systems especially as it is manifested in Igbe Orhe (Echekwube, 1994). The study affirms that Igbe Orhe has a monotheistic worldview and it is evident in the fact that all actions are referred to God, the supreme creator of the universe. In his observations, Igbe religion upholds salvation for the just. Echekwube (1994:24) concludes:

God desires that humankind may be saved and offers the possibility of salvation through their various religions.

Dialogue and a keen interest in understanding other faiths will help in overcoming prejudices against others and help to co-exist peacefully and harmoniously (p.24).

The study does not investigate the relationship model that guides the various sectarian groups in Igbe religion. Also, it does not describe in details the modus operandi of the major sectarian divisions in Igbe religion. It concentrates more on the historical evolution of the religion.

Nabofa (2003:305) contends that the Igbe religious movement is the one generally referred to as *Igbe Orhe* (also known as *Igbe Orise*, *Igbe Oweya*, *Igbe Uku* and *Igbe Ubiesha*). He establishes that “the devotees refuse to domesticate the name of the religion as Igbe Ubiesha, because in their cosmology, God used Ubiesha as a tool for the *orhe*, (the sacred white chalk) to be revealed (Nabofa, 2003:310). He traces the expansion of the religion to Benin, Isoko and Kwale, Ondo and Europe. The study also looks briefly at the split of the religion after the death of its founder (Nabofa 2005:318-320). But he argues that as the split in Christianity resulted in the increase of evangelism, the same is also applicable to the Igbe Orhe. He believes that the split in Igbe Orhe has given it more visibility within and beyond Urhoboland. Nabofa (2005) makes it known in his study that there were serious conflicts between Igbe Orhe, the colonial forces and Christianity at the latter part of the 19th century. Nabofa (2005) admits:

The active “pacification” of Urhobo by the British started in earnest in 1900. During this period, all the traditional institutions in Urhoboland, political, social and economic, which they felt were inimical to commerce, order and good government of the territory, were suppressed. This they also tried to do to Igbe Ubiesha but without success. He concludes that Igbe religion is more or less an Urhobo form of Pentecostal movement thus indicating an internal catalyst in Urhobo traditional belief system (p.359-360).

Furthermore, Nabofa (2005:303) affirms that some readers may feel uncomfortable with the opinion that Igbe Ubiesha is a religion in its classical meaning. Nabofa (2005) embarks on a conceptual definition of Igbe as a religion and uses the name Igbe Ubiesha in depicting Igbe Orhe as a mark of honour for the founder of the religion. After establishing Igbe Orhe as a full-fledged religion, Nabofa (2005) explores deeper into the historical growth and expansion of the religion.

Ikoba (2014:2-6) examines the role of Igbe Orhe and its methods of prescribing rules, norms and laws that can guide and influence human behaviour in the Urhobo society. The study also looks at the technique used by Igbe Orhe to avert afflictions that are affecting sanctity and healings of individuals in Urhobo society (Ikoba, 2014: 22-25). The study concludes that the moral elements of the people of Delta state, the traditions, customs, and laws are embedded in the indigenous Igbe Orhe which has been the custodian of the philosophy and ideology of the people (Ikoba 2014:58). How the norms and laws of Igbe religion play out in the management of intra sectarian conflicts is not given any attention in the study.

From the lens of Eyareya (2014), the Urhobo people have no uniform way of worshipping God. In her own assessment, the indigenous Urhobo person affiliates with different types of deities and chooses the one he/she would like to worship. According to her, the holy white chalk was introduced to Ubiesha for the Urhobo and the world at large to experience salvation. She affirms that the religion was introduced in the early 19th century and from generation to generation, it has survived till this present time. She argues further that Igbe is an Urhobo word which means dance. She claims that the word Igbe (dance) is used to refer to the religion not because it is the name of the religion but because it gives a better understanding to the inhabitants around Kokori, its place of origin and distinguishes the religion from others.

Furthermore, she explains that when adherents say “Igbe Ubiesha”, they simply mean Ubiesha’s pattern of dance. In her opinion, since Ubiesha was not educated, he did not name the religion until his departure to *Odjuvwu* (heaven). She contends that it was when Ibodje took over as supreme head that he named the religion ‘*Egha Orhe Ofuafo Ubiesha*’ meaning the “Ubiesha Holy White Chalk Salvation”. In her study, she explains the symbolic meaning and significance of the various sacred materials used in carrying out spiritual duties in Igbe Orhe. There is also a brief highlight of the commandments of religion. Among several other commandments, the holy white chalk does not tolerate religious intolerance and it does not encourage its members to be biased against other religions.

It must be mentioned that it was after the death of Jesus Christ, the movement that he established was called Christianity. Therefore, if Igbe Orhe was so named after the death of

its founder, it ought not to generate any controversy. Like most founders of religions, Ubiesha was more interested in carrying out his mission of deliverance, healing and bequeathing a legacy of faith to his followers. However, Eyareya (2014) fails to mention the sectarian groups of the religion and how they relate with each other. Equally, since the religion does not tolerate religious bias, its implication on the management of its intra-sectarian conflicts was not discussed in the literature.

Writing on "Igbe Religion Torn apart by Worship of Mermaids, Animals, and Conflicting Doctrines," Brisibe (2015) argues that following the death of Ubiesha the founder, Igbe Orhe had since split into over fifty denominations with some worshipping mermaids and other divinities, which they describe as custodians of the spirit of God. According to him, the devotees of Igbe Orhe are spread across Africa, Europe, North and South America and other parts of the world. He states that the leadership crisis over who would step into the shoes of the founder started with three of his children: Igbe Ibodje, Igbe Akpokovo and Igbe Emegalise.

Akama (1985) focuses on the advent of the Igbe religion in Isokoland. He refers to Igbe Orhe as a neo-primal syncretic religion. Akama (1985) explains how Christian missionary crusaders became the principal attackers of Igbe Orhe. The study examines the fundamental beliefs and organisation of the religion and tries to ascertain whether the Igbe religious movement had anything to do with the conflict arising from culture contact or from the people's reaction against foreign invaders. Akama's research basically focuses on the response of the Igbe religion to the activities of the colonial missionaries in Isokoland.

The reviewed literatures on the Igbe religion are mainly focused on the history, growth and general structure of the religion. Though there are differences in some of the historical narratives, they all offer very limited insight into intra-sectarian conflicts and management within the internal dynamics of the religion.

2.9 Criticisms of Igbe Orhe

Igbe Orhe has come under grave criticisms, probably because of its lack of aesthetic appeal in contrast to other religions, especially from the Abrahamic religions. The religion is demonised by adherents of the Abrahamic religions in Delta state and beyond. Adherents of Igbe Orhe have been labelled as fetish and stereotyped as idol worshippers.

It is worth mentioning that adherents of religions with religious particularistic and exclusivist world-views tend to demonise the religions that they don't understand. But over the years, Igbe Orhe has navigated through the negative images and stereotypes attached to it; the religion has enjoyed steady growth and expansion without violent clashes from within and without. Thus, this *emerging world religion* that has originated from Africa in general and Urhoboland can offer useful insights into the quest for a viable intra -sectarian conflict management framework.

2.10 Theoretical Framework

The theory of Religious pluralism and Utilitarianism are adopted for the study.

2.10.1 Theory of the Pluralism of Religions

The theory of religious pluralism was popularised by John Hicks (1989). The theory was built around a poem written to illustrate what happens when six blind men try to describe an elephant.

It was six men of Indostan to learning much inclined, who went to see the Elephant (though all of them were blind). That each by observation might satisfy his mind. The First approached the Elephant, and happening to fall against his broad and sturdy side, at once began to bawl: "God bless me! But the Elephant is very like a wall!" The second, feeling of the tusk, cried, "Ho! What have we here so very round and smooth and sharp? To me 'tis mighty clear this wonder of an Elephant is very like a spear!" The Third approached the animal, and happening to take the squirming trunk within his hands, thus boldly up and spake: "I see," quoth he, "the Elephant is very like a snake!" The Fourth reached out an eager hand, and felt about the knee. "What most this wondrous beast is like is mighty plain," quoth he; "'Tis clear enough the Elephant is very like a tree!" The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear, said: "E'en the blindest man can tell what this resembles most; deny the fact who can. This marvel of an elephant is very like a fan!" The Sixth no sooner had begun about the beast to grope, than, seizing on the swinging tail that fell within his scope, "I see," quoth he, "the Elephant is very like a rope!" And so these men of Indostan disputed loud and long, each in his own opinion exceeding stiff and strong, though each was partly in the right, and all were in the wrong! John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887)

Religious pluralism is of the view that all religions are equally valid. Mansour (2007:1) explains that religious pluralism discusses the idea that every religion should be regarded as authentic and equally salvific to human reactions to transcendent realism. According to religious pluralists, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism, Buddhism, are all worthy and equally true religions (Mansour, 2007: 11). The dominant argument is that each of these religions is an authentic manifestation of a distinctive cultural heritage, and to reject any religion as false is to reject a cultural heritage.

This study disagrees with Mansour's thesis that only Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism, Buddhism are worthy to be called true religions. It is the submission of this study that the exclusion of indigenous religions by Mansour is tantamount to undermining religions with African roots. This study postulates that religions emanating from Africa should be included in the schema of religious pluralism.

In Hicks explanation of religious pluralism, all religions have different ways of describing the same reality. Within the framework of religious pluralism, the great world faiths symbolise different perceptions of the Supreme Being in the context of different cultural variants. Hick's narrative on religious pluralism ensures more than the acknowledgement of religious diversity. It will, therefore, amount to "religious imperialism" to claim that one religion is superior to another. The central thesis of religious pluralism is that fundamentally all the religions are simply different explanations of the same divine reality (God). Hick's religious pluralism seeks to advance tolerance between the different theistic and non-theistic religions.

It must be noted that within religious systems are also sub-systems. These sub-systems can be said to constitute the various sectarian divisions within a religion. Each sectarian division has its own exclusive claim to truth. These exclusive claims to truth are known to be part of the drivers of intra-sectarian religious conflict. The religious pluralism theory of John Hicks fails to address the perception of religious exclusivism which is evident among the sectarian divisions of most religions. But unlike Hicks who applies the theory of pluralism in the context of relationships between different religions, this study shall apply religious pluralism in the context of intra-religious relationships.

2.10.2 The Theory of Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that is commonly associated with the phrase “the greatest good for the greatest number,” and it entails societies to act in ways that can produce utmost well-being, “where well-being is understood as closely related to happiness (Eggleston, 2012:452)”. Essentially, Eggleston (2012:452) notes that:

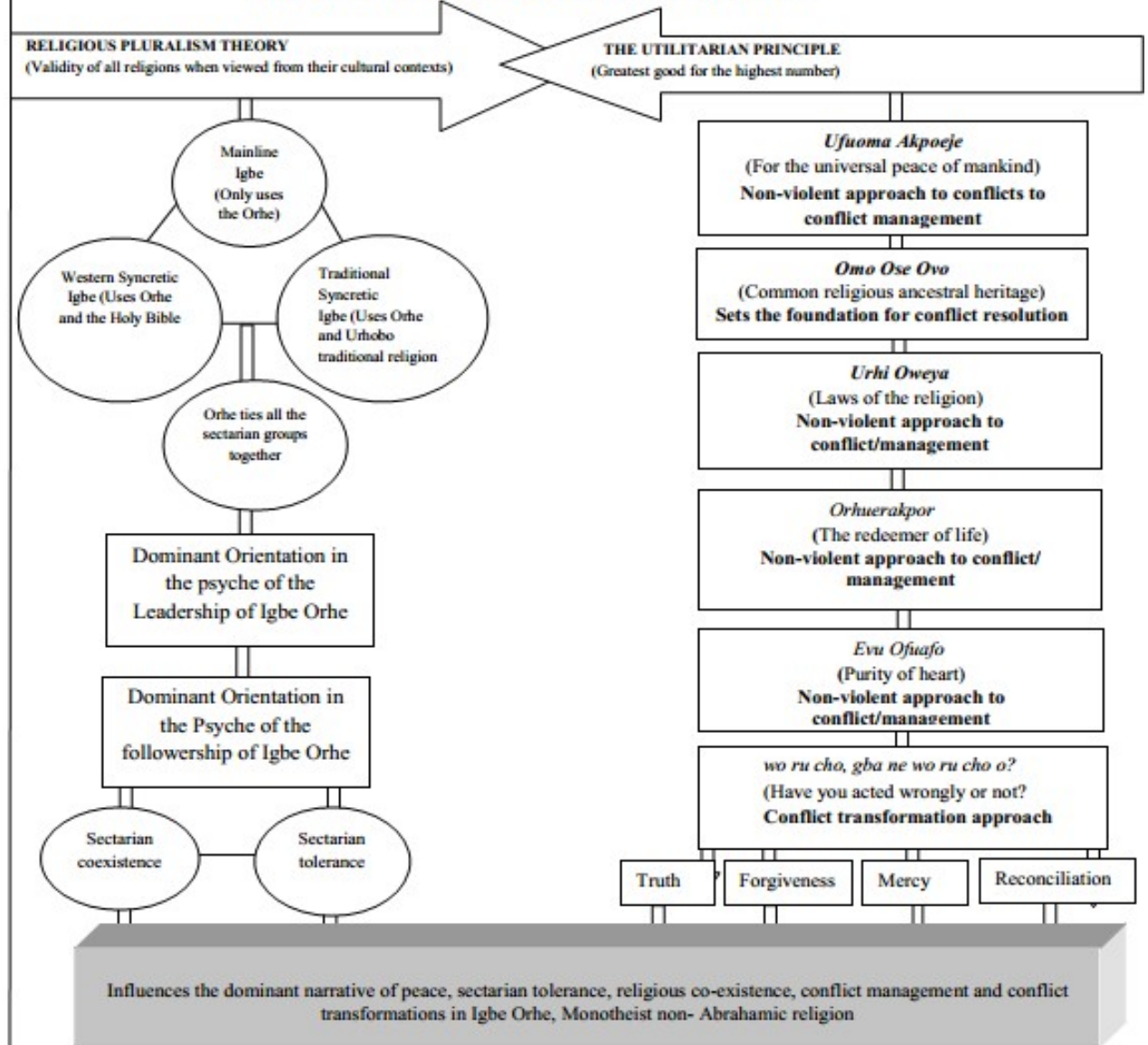
David Hume suggests that utilitarianism’s focus on well-being as a strong basis in human nature and Jeremy Bentham offers a detailed exposition of a form of utilitarianism and an application of it to such matters as criminal and penal law. John Stuart Mill seeks to formulate a version of utilitarianism that builds on the strengths of Bentham’s rigorous thinking but also included more thoughtful accounts of well-being, moral motivation, and the role of moral rules in utilitarian reasoning about moral problems (2012:452)

Eggleston (2012) identifies five defining characteristics of utilitarianism, namely consequentialism, individualism, maximisation, aggregation and welfarism. Eggleston (2012:456) however contends that the theory of utilitarianism has been criticised because “it does not adequately respect individual rights. It does not give adequate weight to what can be thought of as backwards-looking reasons. it is excessively demanding, in virtue of apparently imposing on people moral obligations that are more stringent than many people think are reasonable”.

A theory has no life except it is activated by human beings. It is the action of human beings that gives life to theory. Concepts are inactive except man engages them as instruments either for positive or negative ends. Therefore, the strength or weakness of a theory should be examined in the context of human rationality and not in isolation. The criticism against the utilitarian theory is outside the context of religion and the practitioners of religion. Hence, its applicability cannot be universal. The objections cannot be taken as total because it has not been tested within the framework of Igbe Orhe monotheism non-Abrahamic religion. Since religion and religious institutions are identified as the vanguard of morality and the utilitarianism is hinged on the ethics of moral rules, it will be of the essence to examine the nonviolent conflict narrative in Igbe religion from the utilitarian point of view.

2. 11. Conceptual Framework

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF NON VIOLENT CONFLICT AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT MECHANISMS IN IGBE ORHE MODEL



Developed by the researcher, 2019

2.11.1 Explanation of the Diagrammatical Representation of the Conceptual Framework

The central thesis of the theory of religious pluralism (Hicks, 1989) borders on the validity of all religions when viewed from their different cultural contexts. It is the submission of Hicks (1989) that no religion should be more superior to another. Hicks (1989) propounded the theory of religious pluralism in a bid to addressing the issues of religious intolerance, exclusivism, fundamentalism, conflict and binary thinking. These identified issues have contributed to religious conflagrations across the globe. The theory of religious pluralism also seeks to promote dialogue between different religious groups and encourage robust relation between religions of the world.

Empirical findings show that, within the fold of Igbe religion, there are three major sectarian groups with diverse theological orientations. The theory of religious pluralism is dominant in the world of the major sectarian groups in Igbe Orhe. This study classified Igbe Orhe into three major sectarian groups namely: Mainline Classical Igbe Orhe which practices the religion only with the use of the *orhe* (native white chalk); the Western Syncretic group which fuses the practice of Igbe with the Holy Bible; the Traditional Syncretic group that fuses the practice of Igbe with Urhobo Traditional Religion. The *orhe* (native white chalk) is the symbolic religious paraphernalia that binds the three sectarian groups together. All the sectarian groups are also bound by their allegiance to Oweya (the revealed name of God in Igbe Orhe). However, there has been no reported case of violent conflict outcome among adherents across the sectarian divisions of the religion.

This study discovered that the theory of religious pluralism is dominant in the psyche of the leadership of the religion and it trickles down to the follower. Consequently, there is a high level of sectarian religious tolerance and coexistence among all the sectarian groups in Igbe religion. By implication, the leadership and followership of Igbe Orhe recognise and allow alternative faith communities to thrive.

The utilitarian principle of Jeremy Bentham implies that actions and decisions are taken that will benefit the greater number of people positively is entrenched in the world view of Igbe Orhe. Thus, the utilitarian principle influences the non –violence narrative and conflict management approach in Igbe religion. There are some fundamental principles that reflect the values of the utilitarian principle in Igbe religion. For example, the concept of

ufuoma akpoeje (for the universal peace of mankind or for the sake of mankind) ensures that all adherents of Igbe religion, no matter their sectarian persuasion must not take actions that can upset or cause chaos for the existence of mankind no matter the provocation. This concept of *ufuoma akpoeje* influences the non-violent conflict management approach of Igbe Orhe. *Ufuoma akpoeje* is the ethics of reciprocity in Igbe Orhe.

Equally, the philosophy of *omo ose ovo* (common religious ancestral heritage in Ubiesha its founder) fosters the spirit of commonality among adherents of Igbe Orhe. It promotes brotherliness amongst adherents. Thus, *omo ose ovo* is invoked when a conflict is about to turn violent. Upon invocation, nerves are calmed and the way is paved for dialogue between the parties in conflict. Accordingly, it has a strong ambience on the conflict resolution paradigm of Igbe religion.

Furthermore, *Urhi Oweya* (Laws of the religion) does not permit the shedding of human blood. The law does not give room for any kind of discrimination. It is dominant in the psyche of adherents of Igbe Orhe that when the blood of a human is shed, it breaks the heart of Oweya. It is the belief by adherents of Igbe Orhe that the one whose blood was shed has not completed the assignment given to him by Oweya for the benefit of mankind. Therefore, *urhi Oweya* forbids adherents from embarking on actions that could lead to the shedding of human blood. Respect for *Urhi Oweya* has a great influence on the non-violent outcome of conflict and conflict management dynamics of Igbe Orhe.

In addition, the notion *orhuerakpor* (the redeemer of life) implies that all adherents of Igbe Orhe believe that they must only contribute towards the betterment of the society at large. Therefore, an Igbe adherent believes that he/she will incur the wrath of Oweya should they contribute to the escalation of a conflict. The notion of *orhuerakpor* empowers the average Igbe adherent to meditate wherever there is conflict in his/her community. Also, *evuofuafo* (purity of heart) is a concept that mandates adherents of Igbe speak out whenever they are offended. They believe that failure to speak out foreshadows great danger to the one who has offended because the consequences can affect even those who are not aware of the

offence. The idea of *orhuerakpor* and the *evuofuafo* have strong implications in the internal dynamics of conflict management in Igbe Orhe.

Finally, the concept of *wo ru cho, gbane wo ru cho o?* (Have you acted wrongly or not?); implicates the conflict transformation model in Igbe Orhe. This is concept entails the offender and the offended agreeing to the fact that they are architects of the conflict and pleads for the mercy and forgiveness of Oweya. The notion of *wo ru cho, gbane wo ru cho o* affirm the thesis of Galtung (2000) that conflict transformation is a function of peaceful actors, peace structure and peace culture and Bloomfield notion of reconciliation (2006).

It is, therefore, the submission of this study that the interface between the theory of religious pluralism and utilitarianism influences the dominant narrative of peace, sectarian tolerance, religious co-existence, conflict management and conflict transformations in Igbe Orhe, monotheist non- Abrahamic religion

CHAPTER THREE

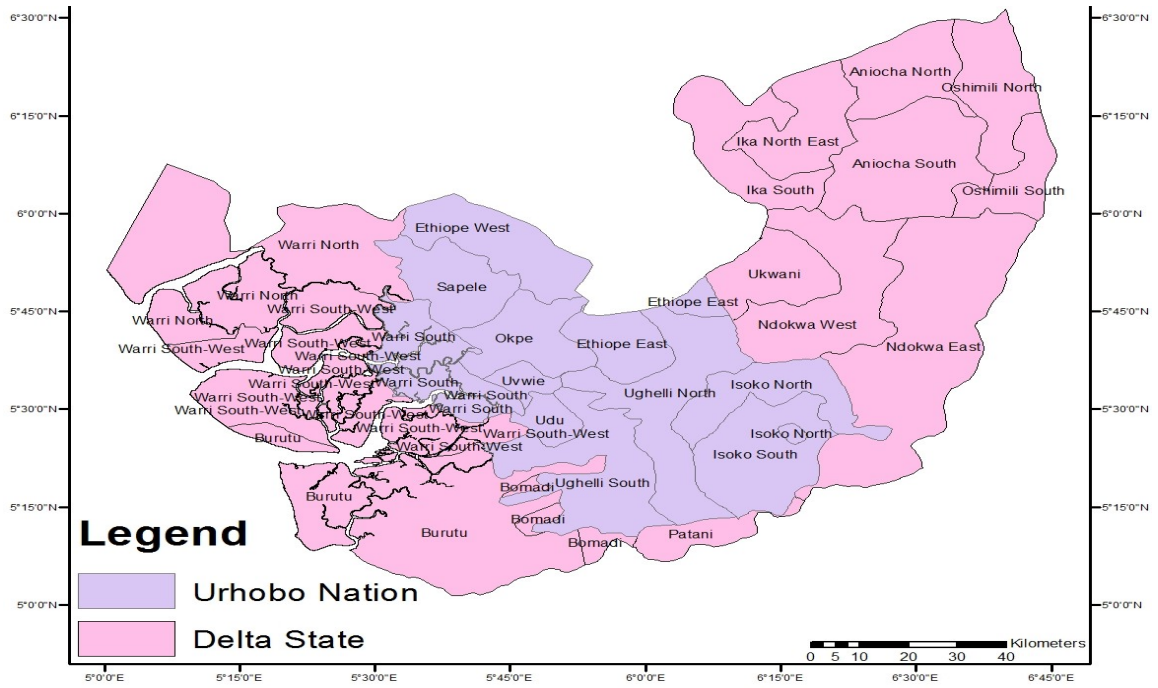
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a case study research design. Case study as a research design is used when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear. Furthermore, a case study is widely recognised in many social science studies especially when in-depth explanations of social behaviour are sought after (Zainal, 2007). It is worth mentioning that based on the research objectives of the study, the nature of conflicts interrogated and the conflict management approaches of Igbe Orhe, the case study research design was considered suitable for the study. Specific cases of conflict triggers were identified as well as some definite patterns and dimensions. Equally, specific conflicts and management approaches were dealt with on a case by case basis in order to establish the workability of the conflict management mechanisms in Igbe Orhe.

3.2 Study Area

The study was carried out in Delta state located in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Delta state comprises of distinct ethnic groups such as Ukuani, Ika, Ibo, Urhobo, Ijaw, Isoko and Itsekiri. Delta was created from the former Bendel State on August 27, 1991. The study was conducted among the Urhobo ethnic group. The Urhobo live in the territory bounded by Latitude 6° and 5°15' north and longitude 5° 40' and 6° 25' East, in Delta State, Nigeria. Their neighbours are the Isoko to the South East; the Itsekiri to the West; the Binis to the North and Ijaws to the South (Otive 2003). The Urhobo nation is spread across nine (9) Local Government Areas out of the twenty-five (25) Local Government Areas in Delta state namely: Ethiope East, Ethiope West, Okpe, Ughelli South, Ughelli North, Sapele, Udu, Uvwie and part of Warri South. Delta state has twenty-five local government areas. Igbe religion has a strong presence in the local governments that accommodate the Urhobo ethnic group in Delta state.



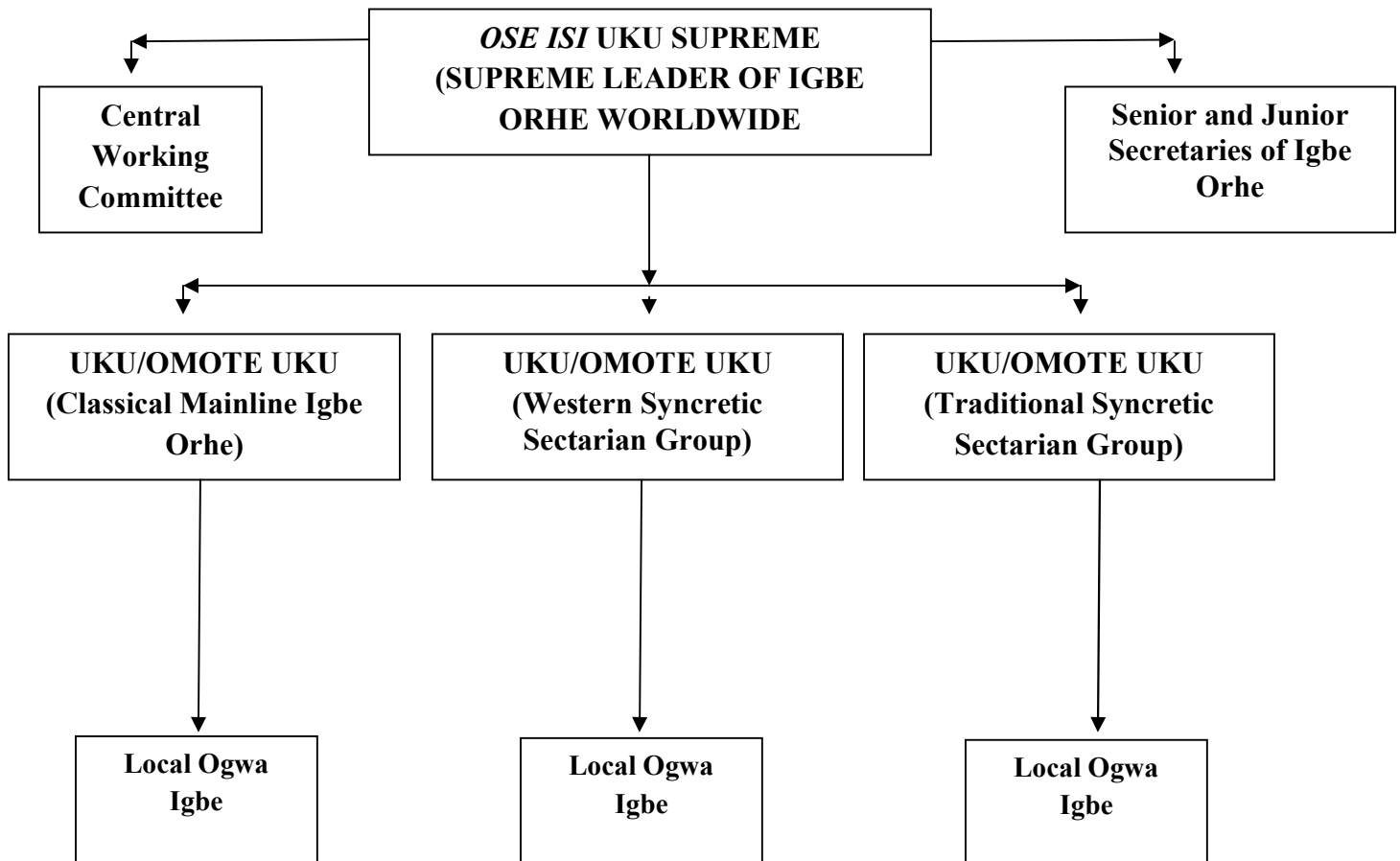
Map showing the study area

3.4 Study Population

The study is focused on the leadership and membership of Igbe Orhe. *Ose Isi Obaoga* *Ibodje* (*Uku* Supreme and spiritual head of Igbe Orhe), *Uku Festus Ikoba*, Chairman of the Reconciliation and Unification Committee of the Central Working Committee estimated the current population of Igbe adherents to be two million.

First to be considered is the *Uku* Supreme, who is the overall head of the religious movement. Next to this are heads from each of the sectarian divisions, who are known as *Uku* (male high priest) and *Omote Uku* (high priestess). The *Uku* performs the highest ritualistic and political ceremonies in the congregation. They are followed by the *Inori*, who are the chief priests and male leaders to whom members make confession in secret. They are followed by the *Ini-Igbe*, known to be chief priestesses who are always very active in every *Ogwa Igbe* (temple of worship), *Akpine* (votary singers) and ordinary members. In addition, the head of the Reconciliation and Unification Sub Committee of the Central Working Committee of the religion was part of the study population.

ORGANOGRAM OF IGBE ORHE EPISCOPAL SEE

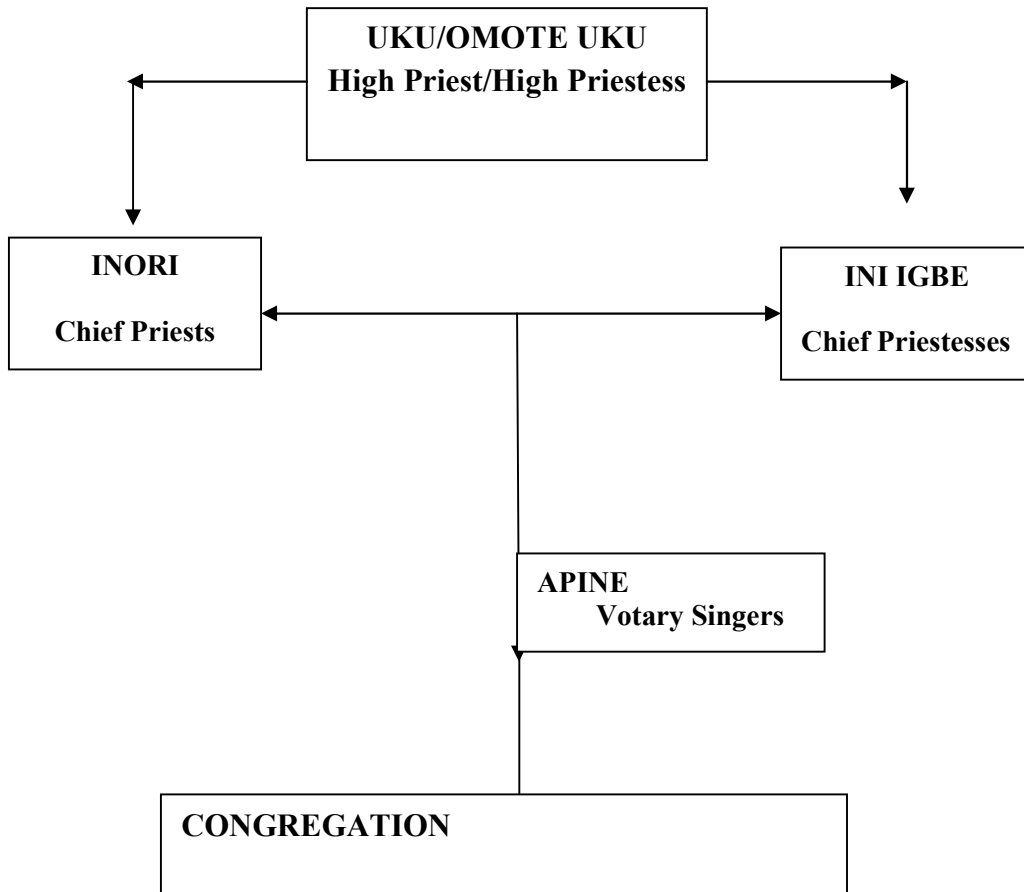


Source: Developed by the Researcher (2019)

Note 1: Members of the Central Working Committee are drawn from the different Sectarian groups. It is the Uku Supreme who selects members of the Committee, who are mostly *Uku* or *Emete Uku* from some selected Igbe sectarian groups. They report directly to the Uku Supreme. They also carry out duties that are assigned to them by the Uku Supreme.

Note 2: The Secretaries of the Igbe Religion are also appointed by the Uku Supreme and they keep records of meetings, minutes of meetings etc. Both Senior and Junior Secretaries are Inori (Chief Priests)

ORGANOGRAM OF A LOCAL OGWA IGBE (WORSHIP TEMPLE)



Diagrammatical Representation of Igbe Orhe Leadership Structure

Source: Developed by the Researcher (2019)

3.4 Sample Size

For the research, eighteen (18) in-depth Interviews and thirty-five (35) key informant interviews totalling fifty-three (53) respondents were conducted. The study interviews were conducted across the three identified sectarian divisions of Igbe Orhe, namely the Orthodox or Classical Igbe Orhe, the Traditional Syncretic Igbe Orhe and the Western Syncretic Igbe Orhe. During the study, three Focus Group Discussions were conducted for men, women and youth to generate data from the membership of the religion from the three sectarian divisions identified in the study. The sample size was identified through their categories. In the Priesthood Category: **Category A:** Uku Supreme (1); *Uku* (High Priest, 9); *Emete Uku* (High Priestesses, 8). (3) Selected *Uku* from the Mainline Classical Igbe Orhe; (3) *Uku* from the Traditional Syncretic practice of Igbe Orhe; (3) *Uku* from the Western Syncretic practice of Igbe. (3) *Emete Uku* from the Mainline Classical *Igbe Orhe*; (2) *Emete Uku* from the Western Syncretic practice of Igbe Orhe; (3) *Emote Uku* from Traditional Syncretic practice of Igbe Orhe. In the Leadership Category: **Category B:** the *Inori* (Chief Priests, 13): *Ini Igbe* (Chief Priestesses, 8). (5) *Inori* (Chief Priests) selected from the Mainline Classical Igbe Orhe; (4) *Inori* selected from the Western Syncretic practice of Igbe; (4) selected from the Traditional Syncretic practice of Igbe Orhe. (3) *Ini Igbe* (Chief Priestesses) selected from the Mainline Classical Igbe Orhe; (2) were selected the Western Syncretic practice of Igbe; (3) selected from the Traditional Syncretic practice of *Igbe Orhe*. (1) Senior Secretary of Igbe Orhe; (1) Junior Secretary of Igbe Orhe; The Head of the Reconciliation and Reunification sub-Committee in the Central Working Committee of Igbe Orhe (1). It is important to mention that the variation in the numbers of respondents from each of the sectarian divisions is predicated on their visibility. In the words of *Uku* Festus Ikoba, “we have more *Uku* and *Emete Uku* in the Mainline Classical Igbe Orhe and Traditional Syncretic Igbe Orhe because they are more in number than the Western Syncretic Igbe Orhe. The Western Syncretic Igbe Orhe which is more of the charismatic movement is an emerging phenomenon (Interview at Oria- Abraka, October 16, 2016)”. (6) Independent adherents (4) community leaders who are not adherents of Igbe Orhe, but had very close dealings with the religion along family lines; (2) Customary

Court Registrars and (2) Police officers. The three sectarian divisions constituted the participants in FGDs conducted.

Three (3) focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted for men, women and youth across the three sectarian divisions. The FGD conducted for men was made up of eight (8) members; three (3) selected from Mainline Classical Igbe Orhe, two (2) from the Western Syncretic practice of Igbe and three (3) from Traditional Syncretic practice of Igbe. The FGD conducted for women was made up of eight (8) members; three (3) selected from Mainline Classical Igbe Orhe, two (2) from the Western Syncretic practice of Igbe and three (3) from Traditional Syncretic practice of Igbe. The FGD conducted for youth (male) was made up of eight (8) members; three (3) selected from Mainline Classical Igbe Orhe, two (2) from the Western Syncretic practice of Igbe and three (3) from Traditional Syncretic practice of Igbe. The age category for the male FGD respondents was between 40-50 years. The same also applied to the women, while the youth (male) was between 20 and 30 years of age. The FGD collected data of the participants concerning the instigators of conflict and the conflict management approaches of Igbe Orhe as well as specific case studies.

Table 2.1: Focused Group Discussion for women across Sectarian Division

Classical Mainline Igbe Orhe	Western Syncretic Igbe Orhe	Traditional Syncretic Igbe Orhe	Total Numbers
3	2	3	8

Table 2.2: Focused Group Discussion for youth across Sectarian Division

Classical Mainline Igbe Orhe	Western Syncretic Igbe Orhe	Traditional Igbe Orhe	Syncretic	Total Numbers
3	2	3		8

Table 2.3: Focused Group Discussion for men across the Sectarian Division

Classical Mainline Igbe Orhe	Western Syncretic Igbe Orhe	Traditional Syncretic Igbe Orhe	Total Numbers
3	2	3	8

3.5 Sampling Technique

The study utilised snowball and purposive sampling techniques. Snowball technique was utilised for the pilot study because prior to this time the researcher has not had direct personal contact with an adherent of the religion. The researcher had to rely on his friend and sister-in-law. They helped him to contact some leaders of the religion. When the main study commenced, the Researcher deployed both Snowball and Purposive sampling techniques. The researcher deliberately chooses respondents who in his/her view are relevant to the study. This is important because the whole population cannot be studied. The selection enabled the researcher to study a relatively small part of the population and generating data that will be representative of the whole (Ashindorbe, 2016). The use of Snowball Technique was influenced by the fact that many of the leaders of the religion do not have Western education. As a result, there was a need to also interview leaders and followers with Western education. Consequently, some of the respondents personally helped the researcher to contact some *Uku* or Emete Uku who are well-read as participants in the study.

3.5 Sources of Data Collection

Data were collected through primary and secondary sources. The primary method of data collection included interviews, focus group discussion, and archival materials from the records of the religious organisation. Secondary data was obtained from books, journals, theses, internet sources and other published research works relevant to the subject. This multi-faceted nature of the sources helped the validity and reliability of the findings of the study. Secondary data were used to supplement the primary data collected.

3.6 Instruments and Methods of Data Collection

3.6.1 Entering the field

In order to embark on the study, the researcher had to carry out a pilot study on Igbe Orhe in the study area. The researcher contacted one of his friends, Oghenekevwe Hitler who resides in Okhrerhe, Agbarho, Ughelli North Local Government Area. He took the researcher to an Igbe *Uku* (*Uku* Okpako Orere) who lives close to his house. The *Uku* was

initially sceptical about the mission of the researcher. However, after a careful explanation that the researcher's intention was purely for an academic purpose, he took the researcher to his *Ogwa* (worship temple), where he (the researcher) met with some other members of the group. They informed him about the different sectarian divisions in Igbe religion. Furthermore, the researcher's Sister –in- Law (Eloho Afatakpa) who resides in Warri informed the researcher about a big *Ogwa* Igbe (worship temple) very close to her parent's house located at Otor-Udu, the headquarter of Udu Local Government Area. The researcher in the company of his Sister-in-Law visited the *Ogwa* Igbe at Otor - Udu where he met with the *Omote Uku* who is the High Priestess of the temple. On explaining his mission, the *Omote Uku* instructed her son to attend to the researcher because she was attending to some of her members. Her son (Onori Onobrevune Onoriode) who was then 27 years old (in 2014) briefed the researcher about the types of conflicts pervading the sectarian divisions of Igbe Orhe. The young man also directed the researcher to an influential *Omote Uku* at Ughelli (*Omote Uku* Ogheneruemu Alidi). When the researcher visited the *Omote Uku* at Ughelli she was very friendly and warm. She told the researcher that to enable him to carry out research successfully; he would have to visit the *Ose Is Si* (*Uku Supreme*) the leader of Igbe Orhe religion worldwide who lives in Kokori, Ethiop East Local Government Area. According to her visiting Kokori would give the researcher unhindered access into the field. Then, she made a telephone to *Uku* Festus Ikoba, leader of *Oweya* Missionary Association, an independent organisation in Igbe Orhe and briefed him about the intention of the researcher. *Uku* Festus Ikoba then invited the Researcher to Oria-Abraka, Ethiop East Local Government Area, where he resides. Due to other pressing engagements, the Researcher had to leave for Ibadan. The first Pilot study was conducted for a period of two weeks (October 1-14, 2014).

The second Pilot study took place in December (10-22, 2014). The Researcher visited *Uku* Festus Ikoba at Oria- Abraka who took his time to explain the vision of *Oweya* Missionary Association in Igbe Orhe. He also agrees with the counsel of the *Omote Uku* at Ughelli that it would be germane to pay a visit to *Ose Isi* (*Uku Supreme*). *Uku* Festus Ikoba ensured that the Researcher attended a meeting of the *Oweya* Missionary Association, the day he visited Abraka. It was in that meeting the Researcher took the telephone numbers of some people who became useful while conducting the study. The Researcher in the company of *Uku* Festus Ikoba visited the *Ose Isi* (*Uku- Supreme*) at Kokori. The Researcher was

formally introduced to the *Ose-Isi(Uku Supreme)*, who was pleased to meet the researcher. The researcher then presented a bottle of Schnapps to the *Ose –Isi* because it is customary among the Urhobo people to present drinks to an elder when a person is entreating his/her favour. The *Uku Supreme* later took the Researcher into the *Ogwa* and introduced him to some leaders who were present in the temple. Then, he took a drink, blessed it, drank from it and gave it to the researcher to drink. *Ose- Isi* later asked the researcher to kneel before the *Urhoro* (the place of glory) and he was prayed for. When the researcher embarked on the full research in 2016, on getting to the field, the first question each respondent would ask was “have you gone to Kokori?” This provided an insight into the leadership structure of leadership. Upon the positive response of the researcher, the respondents will then open and respond to the interrogations of the research.

Accordingly, its insight from the study revealed to the Researcher that Igbe Orhe has many sectarian groups. Furthermore, the Researcher discovered that there are conflicts across the sectarian groups of the religion and there have been no reported case(s) of violence among the adherents. In addition, the pilot study influenced the research design and interview question guide for the study.

3.6.2 Method of Data Collection

Data was collected qualitatively. Fifty-three (53) interviews with key leaders, members, police officers, community leaders and the Registrars of two customary courts. The respondents are believed to have a good knowledge of the management of conflict within the sectarian divisions of the religion. The interviews were conducted with the help of an interview guide. The interview guide was made up of open-ended questions that were designed to cover all the objectives of the study. In addition, the interview process was dynamic making room for flexibility during the interview sessions. It assisted the researcher to gain better insight into the respondent’s view on the issues that were being interrogated. The researcher also made use of a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide with open-ended questions. The interviews conducted are electronically recorded with the aid of an Android Telephone with recording device. Sometimes interviews were disrupted with an incoming call. In order to make up for this shortcoming, the Researcher made use of notes and jotted down salient points. The interviews were conducted in Pidgin English and in the Urhobo Language. The recorded interviews were transcribed into texts using

modern-day English. Where the Urhobo language was used for want of better expression, it was immediately interpreted into the English Language with the help of an Urhobo native speaker, who also versatile in the English language. The researcher also took pictures of some of the happenings in the field. The researcher also engaged the services of an experienced 'religious encounter' in the course of the field work. In this study, a 'religious encounter' is an adherent of a religious tradition well vast in the traditions of his/her religion and willing to satisfy the curiosity of a researcher. The researcher also made use of non-participant observation of mediation and religious arbitration processes.

Table 2.4: Table of Matrix of Sampling Technique and Study Population

S/N	No of Persons	Respondent	Justification	Objective	Method of Data Collection
1.	1	Uku Supreme	Being the ecclesiastical head of Igbe religious movement	Obj. 1&4	IDI
2.	9	Uku	Being Male High Priests	Obj. 2, 3,4 & 5	IDI
3	8	Emete Uku	Being High Priestesses	Obj.2,3,4, & 5	IDI
3	13	Inori	Chief Priests in each congregation	Obj. 2,3 4& 5	KII
4	8	Ini Igbe	Female Leaders in each congregation	Obj.2, 3,4& 5	KII
5	1	Chairman Reconciliation and Unification Sub Committee	Representing the Igbe Central Working Committee	Obj. 2,3,4 & 5	IDI
6	4	Community Leaders	Who have had very close dealings with Igbe Orhe	Obj. 2 &4	IDI/KII
7	6	Lay Adherents	Chosen to help leaders better express themselves	Obj.2, 4 & 5	KII
8	1	Senior Secretary	Being the scribe of the religion	Obj. 2,3,4 & 5	IDI
9	1	Junior Secretary	Assistant to the Scribe of the religion	Obj. 2,3,4,5	IDI

10	2	Customary Court Registrar	To Confirm some claims by respondents that adherents of Igbe do not drag fellow members to court	Obj. 4	KII
11	2	Police Officers	To confirm that adherents of Igbe do not take fellow members to the Police Station	Obj. 4	KII

8	8 no	Women	Membership	Obj. 2,3,4,5	FGD
9	8 no	Men	Membership	Obj. 2,3,4,5	FGD
10	8 no	Youth (male)	Membership	Obj. 2,3,4,4	FGD

3.7 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Respondents for this study were drawn from the leadership of the religion comprising of *Uku Supreme, Uku, Omote Uku, Inori* and *Ini Igbe*. This is hinged on the fact that they are leaders and custodians of the religious traditions of Igbe Orhe. Through the FGD, the membership of Igbe Orhe was included as respondents because they will be able to affirm or disprove the claims of the leadership. The police and customary courts were also included to help the researcher confirm claims that adherents of Igbe Orhe do not go to court and that they do not take each other to a police station when they have misunderstandings among themselves. The study also included some community leaders who have some knowledge about the religion, as well as some former adherents.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

The transcribed data were also broken down into themes and sub-themes. Data collected was content analysed descriptively using the deductive approach.

3.9 Challenges of Data Collection

The major challenge encountered in the field was the death of Justice Omo Agege in the month of October 2016. Justice Agege was the administrative head of Omonedo circle of Igbe Orhe. He would have been a veritable source of data collection for the work. Furthermore, because most of the practitioners of Igbe are not literate, it took a lot of efforts to get them to bare their minds on the issues raised during the interview sessions. In addition, tracking those that agreed to grant interviews became a difficult task because of clashes with other spiritual engagements. Likewise, the three *Akpine* (Votary Singers) slated for an interview at Eginni and Otor -Udu failed to turn up. However, these challenges did not affect the quality of data collection, because the researcher was able to get robust data pertaining to the subject matter from the leadership and membership of Igbe Orhe and non-members.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS OF THE EMERGENCE OF IGBE ORHE AS A RELIGION, DRIVERS OF INTRA-SECTARIAN CONFLICTS, PATTERNS AND DIMENSIONS OF INTRA-SECTARIAN CONFLICTS IN IGBE ORHE

In this chapter, the researcher presents field data from the study area. For the purpose of providing clear oversight, data was analysed using narrative and descriptive styles in line with the following study objectives: the emergence of Igbe as a religion to the point of sectarian multiplicity; instigators of intra-sectarian conflicts in Igbe religion; patterns and dimensions of intra-sectarian conflicts in Igbe religion; intra-sectarian conflict management mechanisms in Igbe. Where necessary, these questions are broken into sub-themes to enable a systematic presentation of data collected.

4.1 Research Question 1: How did Igbe Orhe emerge as a religion to the point of sectarian multiplicity?

4.1.2 The Founder and Founding Origin of Igbe Orhe

Writing on the origin of religion, Garvie cited in Idowu (1973:33) points out that “the term “origin “with reference to religion, is ambiguous and implies that it is necessary for the scholar to make clear in his own mind what he actually seeks to know as he approaches this baffling and elusively delicate subject”. In addition, Garvie cited in Idowu (1973:33) contends that making use of the term “origin”, in response to religion is confusing and implies that the intellectual must clarify what he intends to investigate concerning intricacies of the subject matter. He argues that the word “origin” could be pointing to a source or the reason for being. He concludes that the word “origin” can also mean the manifestation of a phenomenon in its earliest form. This study focuses on the third thematic issue raised by Garvie and that is to investigate the earliest form in which Igbe religion manifested as much as it can be historicized.

There are multi-dimensional accounts to the historical emergence of the Igbe Orhe religion. This is predicated on the fact that during the time of Ubiesha, historians in Urhoboland did not really give formal recognition to his historical emergence, life and times. Much of what is known about the historical emergence of Ubiesha and Igbe Orhe is a product of oral transmission from his followers and songs of the religion. This

substantiates the narrative of Fredriksen and Adele (2002) that in the days of Jesus Christ, historians did not bother to document his life and times. Instead, most of the information about him comes from the writings of his follower. The gospels were gleaned from oral and written sources about 30 to 70 years after Jesus died". Thus, it can be established that at some point in their evolution, some of the world religions depended on oral sources in order to establish much of what is known today about their theological, sociological and philosophical world-views which are being termed as sacred.

There is no consensus on the exact year Ubiesha Etarakpo started his religious movement known as Igbe Orhe. While respondents such as *Uku* Festus Ikoba and Matthias Orhero agree with Nabofa (2005) that the religion started in the 19th Century, Akama (1985) maintains that Igbe Orhe religious movement of Ubiesha Etarakpor started in the 20th Century. Akponwei (2009: xvi) acknowledges the testimony of S.E Johnson, a British administrator in 1927 that:

The chalk juju requires watching. As far as I can gather it originated in Kokori but after the founder died it split into three sections, one with headquarters in Warri division another at Orogun and a third in Benin province (National Archives, Ibadan; Kwale District File No.10/4, S.D.74/1927

Though there are discrepancies over the founding date of Igbe Orhe, it is accepted by all respondents that Ubiesha Etarakpor was the founder of Igbe Orhe in Urhoboland. *Ose Isi* Obaoga Ibodje (*Uku* Supreme), the head of Igbe Orhe worldwide, recounted that when Ubiesha Etarakpor started the Igbe Orhe religious movement, his initial audience were the Urhobo people. But with time, the religion began to attract people from other ethnic groups who came seeking protection from malevolent spirits or in search of solutions to some health difficulties, and for some, it was purely for material prosperity. Thus, within a short time, Igbe Orhe became a phenomenon in Urhoboland. This confirms the claim of Nabofa (2005) that the fame of Ubiesha spread far and wide because of his ability to heal all types of illness, including leprosy, impotence, blindness, deafness and dumbness, mental illness, bareness. His spiritual intervention was also seen as capable of giving people freedom from witchcraft and all forms of evil spirits. These made many more people flock to him. It was at this time that the following people became his disciples: Omonedo of Orhomuru in Orogun, the father of Chief Agege, Okinedo of Ozoro in Isoko, Ojanonogha of Oweh also

in Isoko; Idubor of Benin; Akpobome and Efenedo both of Kokori in the western part of Urhobo.

In the context of the initial homogeneity in ethnic patronage of a religion, Fredriksen and Adele (2000) affirm that the early followers and disciples of Jesus are Jews. Harvey (2013) acknowledged the fact that those who initially embraced Buddhism were the Indians and the followers of Muhammad in the first instance were Arabs. In the same vein, Igbe Orhe started from Urhoboland as an ethnic homogenous religion because its initial adherents are the Urhobo people. But today, Igbe Orhe has gone beyond Urhoboland and embraced by other ethnic groups. This study, therefore, postulates that religion will most probably start from the point of ethnic homogeneity and with time transit into the status of ethnic heterogeneity either through missionary diffusion or hierarchical diffusion.

Victoria Idogho, the most *Senior Omote Uku* in Igbe Orhe, indicated that Ubiesha Etarakpo was the founder of Igbe Orhe. According to her, before Ubiesha established Igbe Orhe, there were some dominant divinities and spiritual movements in Urhoboland and Isokoland such as the *Eni* water divinity spirit, the *Ugo* (Eagle) divinity spirit. These spiritual agencies, she pointed out, offered spiritual protection and deliverance from witchcraft oppression and other avenging malevolent spirits. She recalled further that during the days of Ubiesha, Urhoboland was filled with all kinds of spiritual oppression and the people lived at the mercy of spiritual diviners. She contended that the leaders of these divinity spiritual movements, at some point, began to profiteer from the ignorance and vulnerability of the people patronising them through financial/material extortions. It was under such socio-economic circumstances that Ubiesha Etarakpo grew up and later introduced Igbe Orhe. The explanation of *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho is in tandem with Fredriksen and Adele (2000:8) that Jesus pioneered the religious movement which would later be christened Christianity at a time when the Jews were under political oppression of the Romans. Likewise, Igbe Orhe evolved at a time when Urhoboland was presumed to be under a sort of spiritual oppression (Nabofa 2005). It is the submission of this study that certain human circumstances which may border on political, economic or spiritual happenstance can influence the establishment of religious movements or organisations in order to provide a measure of psycho-spiritual security and provide sense hope for a

collective human entity. In other words, the advent of Igbe Orhe provided an alternative relief.

In addition, *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho explained that Etarakpor was the father of Ubiesha, who hailed from a village called Awhirhe in Agbarha Kingdom under the present day Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta state, Nigeria. Etarakpor, according to legend, grew up in Awhirhe village and married to a Kokori lady called Ikekeraye who was unable to give birth due to countless miscarriages and stillbirths. Etarakpor finally decided to move to Kokori with his wife Ikekeraye after many years of childlessness. It was at Kokori that Ikekeraye conceived and gave birth to a boy. As a result of Etarakpor's age and past experiences, he named the newborn child "Ubiesha". Literally, Ubiesha is a combination of two Urhobo words. "*ubi*" which means single and "*esha*" in Urhobo means bean seed. Therefore, combining both words, "Ubiesha" means "a single seed of bean". In a symbolic context, Etarakpor named his son Ubiesha with the belief that since a bean plant can produce plenty of seeds, his son will give birth to many children. According to *Uku* Festus Ikoba "Ubiesha Etarakpor actually had many children before he was called by Oweya to *Odjuvwu* (heaven). However, after his final call to *Odjuvwu*, he was survived by Ibodje, Akpokovo and Mary (Interview at Oria- Abraka, October 16, 2016)".

From the point mentioned above, it is interesting to note that Jesus Christ was born in a little town called Nazareth in the city of Judea (Fredriksen and Adele, 2000); the Founder of Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad was born into a family belonging to a clan of Quraish, the ruling tribe of Mecca, about the year 570 AD (Islam House 2013:3). Lopez (2001:37) traces the birthplace of the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama to present southern Nepal. There is, however, the controversy over the exact date of his birth as many scholars contend that perhaps he was at 563 B.C.E. Situating these men in the context of race, Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew from the continent of Asia. Mohammad was an Arab from the continent of Asia and Siddhartha Gautama hailed from the Indian sub-continent, also in Asia. This study has likewise established that Ubiesha Etarakpor was an Urhobo born in the continent of Africa.

It must be acknowledged that the founders of religion were born in different centuries and at different times. They are known to have great followership as a result of their exemplary

supernatural lifestyles. Even in death, they still exert influence over the lives of many across the globe. These are men who in their lifetime were considered morally impeccable. Their followers acknowledge them as messengers of the highest God. This study, therefore, submits that the spirit of God can manifest through whosoever He wills at any given point, across time and geographical space to carry out salvation activities on His behalf. It also affirms the validity of the theory of religious pluralism that all religions are valid when viewed from their socio-cultural and geographical context (Hicks, 1989; Mansour, 2007: 11).

Furthermore, the fact that the founders of these religions evolved from dissimilar ethnic backgrounds presupposes that their world-views and operational patterns must have been influenced by the antecedence of their cultural and social milieu and it also validates the religious pluralism thesis of Hicks (1989). Thus, it is the submission of this study that apart from carrying divine messages, founders of religions can also be influenced by the socio-cultural dynamics of their place of origin, social status and experiences. This submission substantiates the theory of religious pluralism (Hicks, 1989; Mansour, 2007: 11).

Uku Festus Ikoba(head of the Unification and Reconciliation Committee of Igbe Orhe) expounded that Ubiesha grew up to become a farmer and married a young lady called Medemraye and the union was blessed with three children, namely, Ibodje, Akpokovo and Mary. On a certain morning, Ubiesha woke up and told his wife and children that he had a revelation. According to him, God told him that he had a purpose in the world and that the time for it to be fulfilled had come. Ubiesha told his wife that he was going to start a spiritual training which would be strictly controlled by God. It was reported that after a few months, Ubiesha started to behave funny. The narrative had it that everyone around him thought he was mad. Even his beloved wife Medemraye thought the same way and after enduring and hoping for the healing of Ubiesha, she became frustrated when no result was forthcoming. It was reported that she later ran away with her children to her parent's place on the ground that her husband was completely mad and she could no longer tolerate him. To worsen matters, the wife claimed that Ubiesha had refused to be treated.

Uku Phillip Akpokovo (the eldest surviving grandson of Ubiesha) gave another dimension to the story of how Igbe Orhe originated. According to him, Ubiesha the founder of Igbe Orhe was a businessman who usually travelled to Benin and to other coastal areas of the

Niger Delta to buy and sell. After a while, he decided to abandon the business of buying and selling and went into farming. According to *Uku Phillip Akpokovo* cited in Afatakpa (2016:322, 2017:317), one day, Ubiesha and his wife Erukainure went to plough their farmland in preparation for planting yam seedlings. While tilling the ground, Ubiesha unearthed the indigenous white chalk (known as *orhe* in the Urhobo language), to which he did not initially attach importance.

Back home, however, an unknown man, who refused to disclose his identity, appeared to Ubiesha in a dream, appealing to him in his own best interest and that of humanity, to return to the farm and take the chalk (*orhe*) to his house. It is believed that the “mystic man” taught Ubiesha some songs and dance steps and then instructed him on how to organise his new movement and what he should avoid maintaining a state of ritual purity. In addition, Ubiesha was taught how to use the *orhe* for healing diseases and for protection against all forms of evil spirits. The following morning, Ubiesha went to his farmland and brought the Orhe to his house. Soon after, Ubiesha began to heal people, see visions, pronouncing words beyond human comprehension and prophesying with passion all through with the power of the *orhe* (native white chalk). A major turning point in the religion was the healing of Idubor, a leper from Benin, and the visit of the prominent Oba Eweka the 2nd of the Benin Empire (Akponwei 2009:17). The Oba was said to have disguised into a little boy with the intention of testing the authenticity of the claims about Ubiesha’s prophetic discernment. As a result of this encounter, Ubiesha soon gathered a large following, constituted predominantly by people who were seeking healing and protection against witchcraft and other evil spiritual forces.

In his account, Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu narrated that Ubiesha was in his farm working with his wife Erukainure when he suddenly heard a voice. He explained that Ubiesha wanted to know who was calling him because his legs got stuck on the very spot where he heard the voice. According to Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu (JP), it was there that God told him about a religion he had committed into the hands of Ubiesha and he revealed his name Oweya to him. Nabofa (2005:310) contends that “the name Oweya is so ancient that its etymology is lost to history. But to the Urhobo, it carries the idea of a Supreme Being” It must be noted that since Jehovah or Yahweh is the generic name of God to the adherents of Judaism, Allah as the generic name of God to adherents of Islam,

Satchidananda Para-Brahman as the generic name of the Supreme Being to adherents of Hindu (Sivananda, 1999), *Oweya* is the generic name of God to adherents of Igbe Orhe. Therefore, it can be justified that God reveals himself in specific terms to specific messengers who are randomly chosen across the various ethnic groups, thereby reinforcing the theory of religious pluralism popularised by Hicks (1989).

In due course, Igbe Orhe through the healing powers of Ubiesha got diffused beyond Urhoboland into non-Urhobo territories such as Benin, Isoko, Itsekiri, Kwale and other coastal areas in Nigeria. According to *Uku* Festus Ikoba, “the religion began to spread gradually to all of the Urhobo nation and southern Nigeria at large. In the mid-1970s, Igbe Orhe assumed a transnational dimension through the establishment of a chapter in London. Today, Igbe religion also has practising adherents in the United States of America”. (Interview at Oria- Abraka, October 16, 2016).

4.1.3 The Death of Ubiesha

The consensus from all respondents is that Ubiesha died around 1920 as a result of the retributive justice of *Oweya*. The dominant narrative is that he disobeyed one of the cardinal instructions of *Oweya*. According to *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP), (a one-time Senior *Onori*, who is now a Christian convert) and Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu (JP), (the leader and pioneer of what this study has identified to be the Western Syncretic Igbe), before the commencement of the religion, *Oweya* strictly warned Ubiesha that he must avoid sexual sin at all cost, especially adultery. Both respondents admit that Igbe Orhe does not frown at polygamy; however, a man must be legally married in order to have sex with a woman.

Likewise, *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho narrated how Ubiesha dissolved a marriage and went ahead to marry the woman whose marriage was dissolved without going through the traditional procedure. As a result, he incurred the wrath of *Oweya* and would pay the ultimate price which was death. She further narrated that on the day of Ubiesha’s death, he gathered all his followers to bid them farewell. They all resisted and beckoned on him to plead for forgiveness with *Oweya*. He refused, saying that he must pay the ultimate price for his sin of disobedience. It was reported that he went into his room to sleep in the company of his wife Erukainure. His disciples locked the door from outside in order to

prevent him from escaping. To the amazement of all, his wife raised alarm in the early hours of the morning that Ubiesha had disappeared from the room, meanwhile all doors and windows leading to his room are still firmly locked. *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho narrated that search parties were immediately dispatched to look for him. *Uku* Festus Ikoba corroborated the narrative of *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho but added that it was after seven days that Ubiesha's body was found standing upright but lifeless. The death of Ubiesha was reported to be mysterious because he was found dead standing upright on his two feet without any physical support. According to *Uku* Festus Ikoba, he was suspended three metres above the ground with both hands lifted to the heavens bearing the *adjudju* (traditional handheld fan) *orhe* (native white chalk).

It is worth mentioning that the deaths of some erstwhile founders of religions are shrouded in mysteries. For instance, Lopez (2016) notes that before the founder of Buddhism died, Ananda, one of his close attendants asked the Buddha thrice if his lifespan can be extended for an aeon. Mara then appeared and put the Buddha into remembrance of the pledge he made soon after his enlightenment to transit into nirvana when his teaching was complete. Thereafter, the Buddha decided to pass away three months after. Legend has it that at the point of his death, there was an earthquake. Ananda questioned the rationale behind the earthquake and the Buddha responded that there are eight occasions for an earthquake, one of which was when a Buddha surrenders the willpower to live.

According to the New World Encyclopaedia (2017) the death of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, also recorded some mysterious encounters. There was a dispute among his followers over how he should be buried when he dies. His Hindu followers wanted to cremate the remains while his Muslim followers wanted to bury the body following Islamic tradition. It was reported that Guru Nanak managed the conflict by suggesting that each group should place a wreath of flowers beside his body, and those whose wreath remained unwithered after three days could dispose of his body according to their tradition. The next morning, upon raising the cloth under which the Guru's body laid his followers only saw the wreath of flowers. The body of Guru Nanak was nowhere to be found. Consequently, his followers shared the flowers amongst themselves. The Hindus cremated their flowers whereas the Muslims buried theirs (New World Encyclopaedia (2017)). It is

worthy to mention that the veil of the temple was torn into two and there was an earthquake when Jesus Christ was crucified (Matthew 27:51-53).

Though there are conflicting accounts concerning the origin and history of the Igbe religion, an overriding theme its historicity reveals that Igbe orhe was founded amongst the Urhobo ethnic group in present-day Delta state and the religion is embraced by the Urhobo and other ethnic groups that are domiciled within and beyond Delta state. There is a consensus that Ubiesha Etarakpor was the founder of the religion. Also, there is common agreement that the *orhe* (native white chalk) was revealed to Ubiesha as the principal salvific symbol of the religion. The authority of the religion is derived from the *orhe*. Another important theme in the historical narrative of the Igbe evolution is the claim to divine revelation and divine selection, thereby establishing it as a revealed religion. These are themes that equally cut across Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Equally, the narrative of the mystery surrounding Ubiesha's death bears resemblance with the narratives of the death of Moses and Elijah of the Old Testament Bible and great religious figures across the globe.

4.1.4 Sectarian Multiplicity

Evidence from data derived after the responses of *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP), *Olorogun* Ubieshakparobo Samuel Ibodje (the last son of Ibodje), *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho, *Onori* Joseph Akpore (Senior Secretary of Igbe Orhe) and *Uku* Festus Ikoba revealed that Igbe Orhe started as a single and uniform religious entity when it was founded by Ubiesha Etarakpor. Matthias Orhero (an adherent of Igbe Orhe), while agreeing that Igbe Orhe started as a single homogenous religion, submitted that after the death of Ubiesha, the religion with time divided into different sectarian groups and certain doctrines which were never part of the religion when Ubiesha was alive got incorporated into it. This confirms S.E Johnson in his handing over notes states that:

The chalk juju requires watching. As far as I can gather it originated in Kokori but after the founder died it split into three sections, one with headquarters in Warri division another at Orogun and a third in Benin province (National Archives, Ibadan; Kwale District File No. 10/4, S.D.74/1927).

The split of Igbe Orhe into sectarian multiplicity is also expressed in a song composed by its Isoko adherents (see Nabofa: 2005: 386):

Uku Igbe ma ziigbe	Uku we come to worship
Uku yo Igbe me z igbe	Uku, listen we come to worship
Okene Ose ravwejevapor	When Our father (Ubiesha) was alive
Iruo bue bu joakporho	There were no factions in the world
Okene Ose ra vwareghinekpo no	When our father (Ubiesha) has gone home
Iruo bue bu itooto re	Many factions sprang up.

The song further confirms the allusion that Igbe Orhe started as a homogenous religion. Probing the fifth and sixth verses of the song “when our father (Ubiesha) has gone home, many factions sprang up”; practically demonstrated that the death of Ubiesha led to the division of the religion into different sectarian groups. Using the song highlighted above is an authentic proof to justify the beginning of Igbe Orhe sectarian multiplicity and it substantiates Gilbert (2005) that songs can be taken as historical documents relating to a certain epoch. In addition, songs can provide an understanding of how human collectively retort to and interpret the realities around them. Gilbert (2005) concedes that:

The value of songs is twofold: first, in a subject area where many sources originate, they are a significant body of texts originating from the time itself. In addition, they are distinctive among these contemporary sources as oral texts, disseminated and, ultimately, preserved within group frameworks (p.117).

4.1.5 Sectarian Multiplicity in Igbe Religion

It has been mentioned in the preceding chapter that this study classified the sectarian groups in Igbe Orhe into three. The first is the Mainline Classical Igbe Orhe, the second is the Charismatic Western Syncretic group and the third is the Traditional Syncretic group.

4.1.6 Basic Features of the Mainline Classical Igbe Orhe

The Mainline version of Igbe religion is fully practised in Kokori, the primordial home and birthplace its founder Ubiesha. Here, Igbe religion still retains its original form. That is, the religion is practised according to the pattern that was laid down by its founding leader. It was under the mainline group that Omonedo of Orhomuru in Orogun, the father of Chief Agege, Okinedo of Ozoro in Isoko, Ojanonogha of Oweh also in Isoko, Idubor of Benin, Akpobome and Efenedo, were commissioned as apostles of the religion. The spiritual leader of the mainline practice of the Igbe Orhe is called *Ose* or *Uku* (father). The *Uku* and

Emete Uku in the Mainline Classical Igbe are conservative in their disposition. The symbol and power of the religion is the Orhe (white native chalk) and adherents' don pure white garments when they have services. White symbolises purity in Igbe Orhe.

Dance is the principal means of their religious expression. In the Mainline Classical version, ancestors are not venerated and deities are not appeased. The Mainline Classical version of the Igbe religion adheres to the oral tradition in performing its liturgy and transmission of its doctrines. In the *Ogwa* (temple of worship), there are no pictorial representations of any deity. The Orhe (white native chalk) is the pillar of the Igbe religion. It the major instrument of fellowship and communion with Oweya. The *Orhe* and *adjudju* (traditional handheld fan) play preventive, protective and curative roles against witchcraft activities and sicknesses. The Mainline Classical version of Igbe religion does not engage in the use of charms and divination and there are no poles erected in front of their temple. They also make use of the local lantern which symbolises divine light. On the altar of Mainline Classical version, Igbe sect is a bed. The bed signifies the highest spiritual authority of the religion. The *Uku* or Omote Uku sits on the bed and from that position, administers all salvific activities. The Uku or Omote Uku only stands up when certain occasions demand, such as when he wants to pronounce blessings upon the congregation.

The level of female participation in Igbe Orhe is high because women are given enough opportunities to express themselves. There are many women who are occupying leadership positions in Igbe Orhe. According to *Ose Isi* Obaoga Ibodje (*Uku* Supreme), women are not discriminated against in the practice of Igbe Orhe. There are many high priestesses known as *Emete Uku* (plural) in Igbe Orhe and the researcher observed that they are not marginalised in terms of expressing their spiritual gifts. It was also observed by the researcher that the *Akpine* (votary singers/choristers) has more female members. *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho notes that women are given equal opportunities alongside their male counterparts in Igbe Orhe because of the role Erukainure (the wife of Ubiesha), played in the life of the founder during the early stage of the religion.

4.1.7 Basic Features of the Western Syncretic Sectarian Division

The Western Syncretic groups can be likened to the Pentecostal/Charismatic group in Christianity. The study discovered that the ecclesiastical head and leader of this group does not answer the appellation *Uku*, rather, he preferably goes by the title Reverend or

Prophet. They use white as their symbol and they equally dress in pure white when they have services. The symbolic meaning of purity associated with the white colour is maintained by the charismatic sect. The white chalk is also the pillar of the Western Syncretic group of the Igbe religion. The Christian Bible is fused into the Igbe practice in the Western Syncretic group. However, the group focuses more on the Old Testament portion of the Bible. The leader and pioneer of the Western Syncretic group Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu explains that they use the Bible “because most of the moral teachings of Ubiesha align with the instructions of God to the children of Israel as contained in the Old Testament Bible” (interview at Emokpa, Ughelli North Local Government, January 2, 2016). In the Western Syncretic practice of Igbe Orhe, the consumption of alcoholic beverage is strictly prohibited. They also engage in charismatic activities such as television evangelism, religious debates and proselytising. The worship temple has aesthetic appeal and the musical equipment is modern and sophisticated.

A remarkable feature of the Western Syncretic version of the Igbe Orhe is the christening of its worship centres after the fashion of the Pentecostal Christian movement. For example, there are some Parishes with nomenclatures such as “The Success Parish”, “Holy Salvation Centre” or “The Arena of Power” and in the temple of the charismatic Igbe Orhe, there is no bed on the altar. Unlike the Mainline Classic Igbe Orhe, there is much sophistication around the Western syncretic group. This sophistication may have been influenced by the exposure of its charismatic founder Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu to Western education, accompanied by his exploration of Western Europe and America. Women also play very prominent roles in the Western Syncretic practice of Igbe Orhe. Women are accorded great respect along with their male counterparts. It is worth mentioning that the founder of the Western Syncretic group of Igbe Orhe, Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu died in July 2018 and was buried on the 3rd of August, 2018.

4.1.8 Basic Features of the Traditional Syncretic Sectarian Division

The traditional syncretic movement of the Igbe religion combines the practice of Urhobo traditional belief system. They believe in both nature and aquatic divinities. It is established in their world-views that divinities are the messengers of Oweya and it is their

general belief that they can commune with God through the various divinities. There are several groups in this sectarian division such as *Igbe Ame* (water divinity), *Igbe Everhe* and *Igbe Oghenuku* (Nabofa 2005:305). Nonetheless, the empirical investigation revealed that there are other smaller sectarian divisions such as *Igbe Agwarhode*, *Igbe Aziza*, *Igbe Ogu*, and *Igbe ebon*. One must, however, emphasise that the most prominent of the traditional syncretic group in Igbe Orhe is *Igbe Ame* which is associated with aquatic divinities. The group dons a white garment mixed with red. They make use of the talc powder, expensive perfumes and soft drinks in their liturgical activities. The use of alcohol is not prohibited and they make use of candles in their worship sessions. They also derive their spiritual power and authority from the *Orhe*. It is the principal spiritual element for provoking miracles in the religion. The spiritual head of each temple of worship is called *Uku* (male high priest) and *Omote Uku* (high priestess). They run the same leadership structure as exemplified in the Mainline and charismatic group of the religion. Women are very prominent in this sectarian division. It must also be mentioned that unlike the Mainline Igbe Orhe with conservative *Uku*, the *Igbe Ame* sectarian group have highly charismatic *Uku* and *Emete Uku*. According to *Omote Uku* Victoria Amajatoja, the High Priests and Priestesses in Igbe Ame are charismatic because water is highly charismatic and full of life.

4.1.9 Shared Commonalities of the Igbe Orhe with Some World Religions

It is evident that Igbe Orhe shares sectarian commonalities with other world religions having a monotheistic tradition and it brings into context the submission of The Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance (2008), that after the death of Jesus Christ, his followers remained unified for close to ten years. Thereafter, Christianity split into many sectarian groups with different, competing doctrines and practices. They are grouped into four categories: The Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodoxy, the Anglican Communion and Protestantism. The various sectarian configurations within Christianity have their distinct identities and essential features (The Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, 2008). However, they have a common point of convergence and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Another principal point of convergence for all the sectarian groups in Christianity is the belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ which is very central.

Likewise, there are significant differences between Sunni and Shiite Islam, but the two Islamic sects share some commonalities in belief and doctrines. All Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad was the messenger of Allah (the Arabic word for God). All believe that they must abide by the revelations given to the Prophet by Allah (as recorded in the Quran) and by the *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet and his companions). All adherents of Islam also believe in the five pillars of Islam namely: (1) *shahada*—recital of the creed “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet”; (2) *salat*—five obligatory prayers in a day; (3) *zakat*—giving alms to the poor; (4) *sawm*—fasting from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan; and (5) *hajj*—making a pilgrimage to Mecca once during a lifetime if one is physically and financially able (Kusserow & Pawlak, 2016:2).

Unlike most monotheistic Abrahamic religions, Igbe Orhe acknowledged in this study as a monotheistic non-Abrahamic religion does not hold on to the worldview of religious particularism. Despite their seeming differences and not minding conflict generating issues within the polity of the religion, adherents have come to acknowledge the uniqueness in their diversity. Dominant in the psyche of most adherents of Igbe Orhe is the perception that its diverse sectarian groups can provide unique salvific experiences for their adherents, thereby validating the theory of religious sectarian pluralism earlier proposed in this study.

4.2 Research Question 2: What are the drivers of intra-sectarian conflicts in Igbe Orhe?

Sprunger (1994) contends that the cultural and institutional systems entrenched within a religious group, aside other religious expressions provide the opportunity for social interactions. This assumption informs his conclusion that conflict is pervasive in the social appearance of religion. Conflict is endemic within organised institutions because they do not operate in isolation of human beings. Wherever humans congregate and interact consistently, whether, at a formal or informal level, the possibility of conflicts cannot be ruled out. Religious systems, whether formal or informal, are therefore not exempted from conflicts and tensions that emanate from human interactions from within and without. Therefore, conflict is a common characteristic of most religious communities because it expresses the human side of congregational life.

Igbe Orhe is not immune to conflicts within its fold. It has been confronted with instigators such as splits into splinter groups, “the mixed multitudes”, leadership succession, the authority to ordain *Uku/Omote Uku*, doctrinal differences and practices, language barrier, wrong perception of intent and sectarian separation, among others. These conflicts also reflect the religious challenge that the Igbe communities of faith are trying to understand, articulate, and live by. The instigators of intra-sectarian conflicts in Igbe religion can be categorised under three broad themes; **Leadership, Feasts of Thanksgiving and Dynamics of Social and Intra-religious Relationships**

4.2.1. Leadership Succession

According to *Omote Uku* (Dr) Victoria Odaighofa (leader of one of the traditional syncretic group) “one of the major instigators of conflict within Igbe Orhe basically had to do with who will become the spiritual head of the religion between Ibodje and Akpokovo” (Interview at Eginni, Udu Local Government Area, in December 29, 2016). Leadership succession conflict was identified as an instigator of conflict in Igbe Orhe by a consensus among members of the Focused Group Discussion (FGD) conducted for men across the sectarian divisions in Kokori, Ethiope East Local Government (FGD December 20, 2016, Kokori). *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP), who served four successive *Uku* Supreme and the most senior *Onori* (Chief Priest) in *Igbe Orhe* at some point before converting to the Christian faith tradition, gave an insight into the manoeuvres and intrigues that led to the leadership succession conflict in Igbe Orhe after the death of Ubiesha:

When Ubiesha died in 1920, Ibodje the first-born male child was asked to take over as spiritual head of the religion. He declined on the excuse that he does not know much about Igbe. Ibodje pleaded with Akpobome, the most Senior *Onori* at that time to serve in an acting capacity to enable him (Ibodje) understudy the dynamics of the practice. Later Akpobome died. After the death of Akpobome, Akpokovo the younger brother of Ibodje took over the priesthood of the religion. Akpokovo refused to hand over power to Ibodje. The refusal of Akpokovo to handover leadership to Ibodje led to the split in the religion (Interview Kokori, Ethiope East LGA, Delta State, October 16, 2016)

Uku Festus Ikoba confirmed that based on the culture of the Urhobo people, the eldest male child or first-born male child is granted the right of inheritance. Therefore, by traditional right, being the eldest male, Ibodje was entitled to take over as the supreme leader of the religion. This finding synchronizes with submission by Awojobi (2013) and Mudhafar (1993) that leadership succession conflict especially when it has to do with the death of a founder is an instigator of the intra-sectarian conflict.

In their deference, *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho at Ughelli and *Omote Uku* Odaighofa at Eginni maintained that the leadership succession conflict between Ibodje and Akpokovo would not have arisen had Ubiesha, the founder of the religion made a formal pronouncement of his successor. They hinged their argument on the impression that Ubiesha had a premonition that he was going to die on a specific day and that he ought to have made it known to all his followers who would step into his shoes. Therefore, it would not be out of place to say that Ubiesha did not pay attention to the issue of succession while he was alive. Research on succession planning shows that early preparation for leadership transition before it occurs can minimise potential negative impacts. Drawing inference from the example of Jesus, Atkinson (2016) contends that leadership succession was of importance to Jesus and he planned for it. The initial stability Christianity enjoyed after the death of Jesus is traceable to the early pronouncement of Peter as the de facto leader (see Matthew 16:18 KJV). In the same vein, Iqbal and Ritter (2015:16-18) affirm “that leadership succession can either strengthen the vision of an organisation or expose discord”. Consequently, for any organisation to maintain its momentum after the founder’s death, succession planning must not be taken for granted.

Respondents such as *Onori* Abel Egofovwe (a leader in Igbe Orhe), *Onori* Godday Etairue (a business tycoon and also leader in Igbe Orhe), *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) and *Uku* Festus Ikoba contend that because Ubiesha the founder of Igbe religion did not pay attention to leadership succession in his lifetime, the character of the dramatic personae that are involved in the conflict played a crucial role in its protraction. The following words from *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) give an insight into the personal traits of Ibodje and Akpokovo:

Ibodje pleaded that Akpobome should serve in an acting capacity because he claimed that he was as at that time

ignorant in the practice of Igbe religion, while he understudied the depth of practice (Interview held at Kokori, Ethiope East Local Government Area. October 16, 2016).

It can be deduced from this statement that Ibodje is not a man driven by overt ambition, because he openly acknowledged his inadequacies and was ready to submit himself to the discipline of learning and apprenticeship. In contrast to Ibodje, *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) indicated:

When Akpobome died, Akpokovo took over the leadership of the religion by force and started going from *Ogwa* (temple of worship) to *Ogwa* demanding and compelling adherents to give him money before he could offer prayers on their behalf (Interview held at Kokori, Ethiope East Local Government Area. October 16, 2016).

Such a statement portrays Akpokovo as a self-centred and desperately ambitious person. It also explains the reason for his refusal to relinquish the leadership position to Ibodje, who in the context of culture and tradition was the rightful heir-priest. This confirms Buoziute-Rafanaviciene *et al* (2011), that the intractability of a leadership succession conflict and outcome is predicated on the character and personality of the contestants. It also affirms the argument of Carter (2017:1) that individuals, who are driven with an overt desire for power to gain control over others, often arrogate to themselves the lordship of the group. When this happens, only conflict can result. Carter (2017:2) further expounds that “when people are allowed to exercise their need for self-centred ambition, the end result is always disastrous”.

The assertion of Carter (2017:2) will be contextualised in the proceeding narratives espoused by *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) concerning Akpokovo:

In the company of some police officers, he embarked on a mission to arrest some high priests. On their way to arrest Ojanogha at Isoko, Akpokovo, all of a sudden, started slapping the police officers that were detailed to help him in effecting the arrest of the erring high priests. His delinquent actions compelled the driver of the police van conveying to stop. They started shouting he is a mad man. Consequently, the police officers carried Akpokovo and locked him up in the cell. There is a song in *Igbe* to that effect. But I cannot remember now. The song simply means that *Oweya* deliberately took away the sense of Akpokovo because he

was embarking on a mission which was contrary to the laws of the religion simply because the leadership position was intoxicating him. It is a disaster to take an *Uku* to police station and it is worse than a disaster to lock him up inside a cell. (Interview held at Kokori, Ethiope East LGA, October 16, 2016).

Uku Phillip Akpokovo (the last surviving son of Akpokovo and head of Akpokovo circle of *Igbe Orhe*) presented a counter-narrative to the dominant narrative that his father Akpokovo usurped the position that was meant for Ibodje. The following words explain the position of Phillip Akpokovo:

My father was closest to the founder of *Igbe Orhe*, Ubiesha my grandfather. My father did not contest the headship of *Igbe Orhe* with Ibodje. After the death of Ubiesha, *Onori* Akpobome was ordained to take over the leadership of the religion. After the death of Akpobome, Akpokovo took over as both administrative and spiritual head because spiritually he was most qualified. As *Owaran* (senior heir), Ibodje has right over the physical estate of Ubiesha. Prior to this time, Ibodje was not a member of *Igbe Orhe*. But later on, Ibodje joined the faith and tried to use his position as *Owaran* (senior heir) to take over the leadership of *Igbe Orhe* from Akpokovo. When the contention became unbearable Akpokovo moved out of the family house to set up his own *Igbe Ogwa*. That was how the religion split (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East LGA. October 14, 2016).

The claim of Phillip Akpokovo confirms Akponwei (2009:21-22) that “the rivalry about who ought to be the head of the household and organisation grew out of hand. Akpokovo at this point moved away from his elder brother at Erukainure premises. This led to the birth of two factions in Kokori”. This narrative contradicts the accounts of *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho and *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko that it was Ibodje who left the family compound for Akpokovo.

Despite the submissions of *Uku* Phillip Akpokovo, the dominant narrative across the sectarian groups is that Akpokovo usurped the leadership of the religion and refused to relinquish it to Ibodje who is the rightful heir to the father’s inheritance. In conclusion, the fact remains that the conflict between Ibodje and Akpokovo whether it is based on succession or inheritance led to the split of *Igbe Orhe* as a homogenous religion and marked the springing up of splinter groups.

4.2.2 Monopoly of over Ordination

According to Akama (1985) and Nabofa (2003), the *Uku* or *Omote Uku* is the highest-ranking authority in any *Ogwa Igbe* (temple of worship). The *Uku* or *Omote Uku* is the high priest/priestess in any *Ogwa Igbe* and they have a retinue of *Inori* (plural for chief priests while singular is *Onori*) or *Ini Igbe* (plural for chief priestesses, singular is *Oni Igbe*) who assist in carrying out some functions as assigned to them by the *Uku* or *Omote Uku*.

Onori Godday Etairue, *Uku* Festus Ikoba, *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho, *Uku* Osete Ame, *Oni Igbe* Eloho Onotu, admitted that one of the instigators of intra-sectarian conflict in *Igbe Orhe* to be the monopoly of ordination into its priesthood system. The three FGDs conducted for men, women and youth across the sectarian divisions unanimously agreed that monopoly over ordination instigates conflict in *Igbe* religion. This finding affirms Robertson's (1904) and Nemeroff (2016) assertion that contestation over the monopoly of ordination is rift within the body polity of religion and can be a driver of conflict. *Omote Uku* Mary Ibodje, (leader of *Igbe Ame* traditional syncretic practice of the religion and eldest granddaughter of *Ubiesha*), explained that monopoly over ordination into the office of *Uku* became an instigator of conflict when the founder of the religion decided to expand the practice of the religion beyond *Urhoboland*. In her words:

When the religion began to grow, *Ubiesha* set up branches in other villages and commissioned some *Inori* to go as overseers of the newly established branches. When they left for their mission fields, after a while they began to give some adherents the title of *Uku*. Is that not overstepping their boundaries? Are they supposed to engage in such activity? Did they decide to take on a responsibility that was not meant for them? It is only *Ibodje* that has the power to ordain into the office of *Uku*. This brought conflict in *Igbe* (Interview at *Kokori*, *Ethiope East LGA*. October 17, 2016).

This overriding response from all respondents indicated that the ordination of anyone into the office of *Uku* is a task reserved only for the *Uku Supreme* in *Kokori* and usurping this task under the assumption of growth has triggered conflict in *Igbe* religion. This finding validates the submission of *Aula and Siira* (2010:125) that “growth and expansion make organisations be more open, but the complexities associated with growth and expansion

increases the chances of substantive conflict”. Though the study of Aula and Siira (2010) situates within the corporate business environment, empirical evidence has established it as a phenomenon in Igbe Orhe.

In exploring this theme further, *Olorogun* Ubieshakparobo Samuel Ibodje (last son of Ibodje), *Omote Uku* (Dr) Victoria Odaighofa, *Omote Uku* Victoria Amajatoja (spiritual head of a traditional syncretic sect), *Onori* Joseph Akpore, *Onori* Steven Udumebrae (Junior Secretary of Igbe Orhe), *Uku* Johnbull Unumegume (Spiritual head of an Orthodox Igbe Orhe temple of worship), *Onori* Godspower Jimisawho (leader in Igbe Orhe), and *Uku* Gabriel Obonofuogha (spiritual head of an Igbe Orhe temple of worship) are unanimous in their response that monopoly over ordination would not have arisen had the *Inori* who were sent out to oversee the new branches of the religion stayed within their area of responsibility. *Olorogun* Ubieshakparobo Samuel Ibodje expounded that consequent upon the growth and expansion of the religion, Ibodje saw the need to upgrade the *Inori* that were sent out to oversee the mission outstations from the rank of *Onori* (chief priest) to *Uku* (high priest). They were equally saddled with the task of ordination, but restricted only to the *Onori/Oni Igbe* cadre and below. But when they left for their mission field, Ubieshakparobo stated that Omonedo who was posted to Orhomuru and Okonedo who was sent to Ozoro started pursuing their own agenda;

They saw it as an opportunity to raise followers and even took up the task of upgrading some of their members from the rank of *Onori* to *Uku* or *Omote Uku* without the consent of Ibodje, thereby undermining him as *Uku Supreme* and it caused conflict in the religion (Interview, Kokori, Delta State, and October 18, 2016).

This disclosure synchronises with Akerlund (2015: 4) that “the missionary being an agent of the sending organisation is not meant to promote his own agenda, but must act according to the will of the sender. The sender must operate under the strict conditions of the sending organisation”. It is a lack of the understanding that leads to contestations on issues of ordination, snowballing into a task-oriented conflict.

Accentuating about who has authority to ordain *Uku* or *Omote Uku*, *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) believes that it is borne out of the human need and desire to exercise control over “others”. According to him, in the tradition of Igbe Orhe, loyalty is tied or connected

to whoever ordains a person as *Uku* or *Omote Uku*; such a person is bound to pay homage to his spiritual head. Invariably, the more *Uku* you ordain the more influence and power you command. When you come to pay homage, you also come with your members. The paying of homage has a lot of economic and material benefits attached to it. To some extent, the response concurs with Maner and Mead (2010:482) that “although leaders are responsible for promoting the welfare of their groups, they may also be motivated to enhance their personal capacity for power and domination”. Thus, instead of exercising their authority for the greater good, they might be desirous to use it in egotistic ways. They may possibly use their influence to dictate, rather than to lead. It invariably contravenes the utilitarian theory because wielding power to establish one's domination cannot be said to be in the overall interest of all.

4.2.3 Betrayal of Trust by Leadership

Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu (JP), (leader and pioneer of the Western Syncretic practice of Igbe religion located in Ughelli), *Omote Uku* Ivie Designer, Upper Agbarho, *Uku* Osete Ame, Agbarha, *Onori* Godday Etairue, Otokutu, Ughelli South Local Government, *Oni Igbe* Mary Jowhoma, Okhrerhe, Agbarho identified betrayal of trust as an instigator of conflict in Igbe Orhe. This was also corroborated by the FGD conducted on December 20, 2016, for youths across the sectarian lines in Oria, Abraka. Therefore, beyond the corporate business environment (Elangovan and Shapiro, 1998), betrayal of trust is a reality in Igbe Orhe.

Onori Godday Etairue narrated an incident that occurred which was interpreted to be a betrayal of trust by the leadership of the religion. It occurred under Ibodje who was then the *Uku* Supreme. *Onori* Godday Etairue mentioned that a certain sick man was brought to the Ogwa (worship sanctuary) of Omonedo for some spiritual interventions. After some days of administering the *orhe* (native white chalk) and offering prayers on his behalf to Oweya(God), the man died. Furious as a result of his death, members of the dead man's family decided to involve the police. Omonedo was arrested and taken to the Colonial District Officer at Abraka and was later charged to court for murder at Obetem, Kwale. On getting to the court, Omonedo told the trial judge that he was not a murderer, but a minister of Oweya(God) in the practice of Igbe Orhe. He pleaded that the death of the man in

question was an isolated case because the *orhe* (native white chalk) had been used to heal many sick people.

The trial judge then asked him about the source of the religion. Omonedo declared that Ubiesha founded the religion in Kokori and equally commissioned him to practise as a High Priest of the religion. Omonedo affirmed to the judge that though the founder was dead, his son Ibodje who was then the spiritual head of the religion could be summoned to come and testify on his behalf. The trial judge then ordered Omonedo to produce Ibodje to come and testify in court that indeed his father founded Igbe orhe and gave him (Omonedo) the right to carry out healing activities through the agency of the orhe (native white chalk). Thus, the fate of Omonedo hanged on the testimony of Ibodje. Omonedo sent several messages to Ibodje, unfortunately, he failed to show up. Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu confirmed this narrative and the following were his response “Omonedo was disappointed because it was very painful. To Omonedo, it was more than a betrayal. It is still hurting the religion till today” (Interview at Emokpa, Ughelli North LGA, January 1, 2017).

This case study enumerated above can be subsumed within the frameworks of both affective and substantive in the exposition of Rahim (2001). It is substantive because as *Uku* Supreme, Ibodje ought to have braced up to the task of coming out to defend his member. Equally, it is affective because it hurt the feelings of Omonedo. That hurt would later redefine his relationship with Ibodje from a dysfunctional point of view. Equally, the narrative of *Onori* Godday Etairue and comment from Reverend Oyiboame fits into the description of Elangovan and Shapiro (1998:550) that betrayal is voluntary in that “trustees either lack the motivation to conform to the expectations of the trust or become motivated to violate these expectations”. These expectations can include taking one into confidence by not revealing the secrets that have been entrusted to a person. At this point, it was assumed that Ibodje failed to provide the needed interpersonal support for Omonedo because of his failure to appear in court. Elangovan and Shapiro (1998:551) also note that “betrayal involves behaviour, rather than just the thought of betraying. Finally, betrayal has the potential to harm the well-being of the trustor”.

Perhaps the explanation of *Uku* Festus Ikoba and *Onori* Godday Etairue that the action of Ibodje must have been influenced out of fear that the police may arrest him made him to

lose the motivation to conform to the expectations of trust. The Focus Group Discussion conducted for men also speculated that Ibodje must have succumbed to the advice from his cabinet not to go and testify on the grounds that he might be arrested. These views were dismissed by Prophet Oyiboame Emojevu (JP) that using fear as an alibi to justify the failure of Ibodje to appear and defend Omonedo is not tenable because the life of Omonedo who happened to be a prominent leader and one of the shining lights of Igbe Orhe was at stake. This view underscores the argument of Fitness (2001:73) that “the betrayer believes that his/her needs are more important than the other party in the relationship”. In a deeper sense, betrayal sends a portentous indication about how little the betrayer cares for, or values the relationship with the betrayed partner.

Prophet Oyiboame Emojevu (JP) also narrated from his personal experience how under the leadership of MacDonald Ibodje, he felt embittered and betrayed after the death and burial of his father. These are his words:

When my father died, none of Ibodje's children came to console me, including the *Uku* Supreme, MacDonald. I felt so bad and personally betrayed because I know how I served Ibodje. So, I had to bury my father all alone (Interview, Emokpa, Ughelli North LGA, 29 December 2016).

This indicates a lack of social support from the family of the leadership of the religion and it was a source of pain and hurt for Oyiboame. Eventually, his confidence in the leadership of the Igbe Orhe at Kokori got eroded with the passage of time. This admission supports Fitness' (2010:1) claim that “trusting others exposes one to the risk of betrayal if they violate confident expectations”. In addition, the picture painted by Prophet Oyiboame Emojevu (JP) that the leaders of the religion and his brethren abandoned him in his time of grief confirmed the thesis of moral injury explicated by Shay (2014) and Antal (2017). But contrary to Rahim's (2002) submission that substantive conflict can contribute to the higher work performance, findings in Igbe religion reveal that it contributed to the demotivation of those who were affected by it. Therefore, a substantive conflict may or may not contribute to higher work performance depending on the milieu of materialisation

4.3 Festivals of Thanksgiving

Feasts, festival celebrations and thanksgiving are norms that are common to all religions. The consensus is that religious feasts or festivals tend to foster close bond and they are believed to be agents of both spiritual and physical unification (Nabofa, (2005); Onobrakpeya, (2005); Roemer, (2007); Ronström, (2011); Lee *et al.*, (2015); Silvestri, (2016). Religious feasts or festivals help adherents to gain new experiences that subsequently generate a feeling of identity. Yet, conflict is also synonymous with the celebration of religious feasts and festivals (Kaplan, 2007; Olupona, 2011).

Conflicts that are associated with the celebration of religious feast in Igbe Orhe are discussed under the inequitable distribution of food, undermining the personality of spiritual leadership and overcrowded schedules of feasts.

4.3.1 Inequitable Distribution of Food during Festivals

Food is important for human and animal survival. Likewise, food plays a critical role in many cultural and religious belief systems around the world. Thus, understanding the importance of food in cultural/religious practices is part of showing respect and responding to the needs of people from a range of religious communities.

The dominant narrative is that when there is adequate food supply, the tendency for human conflicts will be reduced. It is affirmed by some respondents that food is always in abundance during religious festivals in Igbe Orhe. The following words from His Eminence Obaoga Ibodje, the *Uku Supreme* of Igbe Religion worldwide is an attestation to the claim that food is always in abundance during Igbe festivities.

In Igbe, we invest a lot in food and drinks during our festival celebrations because people come from far and near and they will stay here for days and they must feed well” (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East Local Government, October 18, 2016).

Onori Joseph Akpore, *Onori* Steven Udumebrae and Shimeji Ogheneruemu (an adherent) are of the same conclusion with the *Uku Supreme*. These words from *Uku* Anthony Ogedengbe (spiritual head of an Igbe centre) also confirmed the statement of *Uku* Supreme:

One of the reasons adherents of Igbe Orhe invest so much on food and drinks during religious festival celebrations is because people travel from very far

distances just to come and celebrate with you. Some may not have eaten anything before embarking on the journey. Now you can imagine how someone will feel when he/she arrives and no adequate provision is made for their feeding? (Interview at Ozoro, January 2, 2017).

In spite of claims concerning the adequate provision of food during religious festivals, respondents such as *Omote Uku* Sarah Okoloba, *Uku* Matthew Itegbere, *Onori* Abel Egofovwe, *Onori* Godday Etairue, *Omote Uku (Dr)* Victoria Odaighofa, and *Omote Uku* Queen Ejina who Ogitie contended that it is not the scarcity of food or drinks that is the challenge, but rather the inadequate distribution of food during religious festivities that instigates conflicts in Igbe Orhe religion across the sectarian divides. Equally, the overwhelming response of the women FGD conducted across sectarian lines admitted that the inequitable distribution of food is a driver of conflict during religious festival celebrations in Igbe Orhe. This is a counter-narrative to the dominant narrative that adequate provision of food reduces the potential for human conflict. This counter-narrative upholds the claim of Koren and Bagozzi (2016) that even an abundance of food resources can cause conflict within a society. In the book of Acts Chapter Six Verse One (Acts 6:1) of The New Testament of the Bible, it is recorded “and in those days when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations”. The Christian Church in its formative stage had to contend with conflict resulting from inequitable distribution of food. The event in the book of Acts Chapter 6 verse 1 reflects the thoughts of Ofure (2014: 6) that conflicts are “inevitable in any human society where social and material resources are unequally distributed and, in a society, where inequity is resonant in people’s social and political relationships”. It can, therefore, be deduced that inadequate distribution of food as a conflict trigger is not only a biblical phenomenon as explicated in the Book of Acts Chapter Six verse one, it is also a phenomenon in Igbe Orhe.

One may want to probe, why should food be an instigator of conflict in Igbe Orhe which can be seen in the context of the transportation of everyday social relationship to the religious space. The researcher observed that the distribution of food and drinks is a strong popular culture in Igbe Orhe. The researcher observed that the quality of food that is distributed during the celebration of festivals of thanksgiving in Igbe Orhe is not measly; meals are sumptuous and extravagantly served. Likewise, the researcher observes that

expensive brands of spirits such as Gold Label, Blue Label, Black Label, and other alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages are lavishly distributed during feasts. When the researcher attended the mid-year feast of *Omote Uku* Victoria Amajatoja in the month February 2015, he went home with three brands of Blue Label, and several packs of non-alcoholic beverages. Unlike some religious bodies where offerings are taken, it seems not to be a popular culture in Igbe Orhe. The popular culture in Igbe Orhe is that those who attend feasts are showered with financial gifts by the convener. Equally, the researcher was invited to attend a mini-thanksgiving feast organised by *Onori* Abel Egofovwe on the 3rd of January, 2017; he went home with drinks estimated at about nine thousand naira (N9, 000) and a big “cooler” of rice. It will not be out of place to conclude that beyond the spiritual value, the celebration of feasts also delivers practical economic value to the people who are privileged to attend such feasts.

Engaging the phenomenon from another point of view, *Uku* Matthew Itegbere (spiritual head of an Igbe congregation in Orhomuru) and *Oni Igbe* Tina Olowu (female leader one of the temples) argue that food is always more than enough to cater for every guest. But they discovered in some cases, when it is time to serve, devotees who have been saddled with the task of distributing food and drinks tend to favour their acquaintances at the expense of others. This, in their submission, is the underlying factor behind the inequitable distribution of food.

Umoh (2016), Edinyang and Adie (2015) contends that what can lead to the inequitable distribution of resources which invariably instigates conflict is favouritism, nepotism or the “man-know-man” syndrome. The man-know-man syndrome, Umoh (2016) and Edinyang & Adie (2015) in their opinion has infused all segments of society. It is now a norm for people to be appointed into certain offices or get certain advantages over others simply because of their connection with people in positions of authority. The prevalence of man-know-man sacrifices professionalism on the altar of sentiments. A sentimental attitude has the capacity to compromise merit and equity not minding the platform. The overriding submission is that when people saddled with the responsibility of distributing resources, whether food or otherwise, are driven by the man-know-man attitude, it can sabotage the equitable distribution of resources and in turn trigger conflict whether within or outside a religious environment.

Using Rahim's paradigm (2002:10), the inequitable distribution of food as an instigator of conflict can be categorised as a substantive conflict because if the people who are saddled with the responsibility of distributing food had carried out the distribution equitably, the conflict would not have arisen in the first instance. *Omote Uku* Victoria Odaighofa believes that issues that border on the inequitable distribution of food can dampen the spirit, thereby affecting the mood of the celebration. Going by the submission of the respondent and contrary to Rahim (2001), a substantive conflict in Igbe Orhe has the inherent capacity to affect the spiritual productivity of a devotee(s).

4.3.2 Undermining the Personality of a Spiritual leader

A close observation of the office of *Uku* or *Omote Uku* shows that it is highly revered by adherents of Igbe Orhe. *Uku* John Akpiri disclosed that the office of *Uku* or *Omote Uku* comes with some special privileges. But in the opinion of Matthias Orhero, it is not only the *Uku* or *Omote Uku* that enjoys certain privileges because there are other categories of spiritual leaders in Igbe Orhe that deserve honour and respect. Corroborating the submission of other respondents, *Oni Igbe* Eloho Onotu identified the other categories of leaders as *Inori* (male chief priests), *Ini Igbe* (chief priestesses) and *Akpine* (song leader). She reasoned that they are equally held in high esteem and their presence is not to be undermined in any social and religious gathering of Igbe. It is worthy to also mention that one of the principal reasons for according respect to *Uku* or *Omote Uku* is connected to their spiritual authority and moral rectitude. Nevertheless, *Uku* Albert Ogievwege attested to the fact that the attitude of some *Uku* or *Omote Uku* leaves less to be desired because their character with conduct is not a true reflection of what the *Uku* institution represents in general and the overall leadership of Igbe Orhe in particular.

Omote Uku Ivwie Designer revealed that the way a spiritual leader is received and entertained in Igbe social or religious gathering shows whether the personality of the leader is honoured or undermined. In other words, in Igbe Orhe a critical element that plays out in its mechanisms for social relations is honour and dishonour. This phenomenon has been identified as one of the instigators of conflict in Igbe religion. She backed up her submission by recounting an incidence:

About three years ago, an influential *Akpine Aziza* was invited to a feast and felt highly dishonoured as a result of the poor

reception she was given. She is very wealthy and highly connected in this Delta State. This woman was even qualified to be ordained as *Omote Uku*, but she refused to take the title for reasons best known to her. She was invited to a feast and was not properly welcomed. When you are inviting such a person, you must know how to receive and entertain her. When it was time to serve, her table was not properly served. She felt bad and decided to leave. It took a lot of persuasions for her to stay back (Interview at Upper Agbarho, Ughelli North LGA, January 1, 2017)

This reflects an affective conflict in the context of Rahim (2002:10) because the feelings and emotions of the woman were hurt due to the undermining of her social and spiritual status. Thus, her response corresponds with Herbert's (2007:18) that when the honour of a man or woman is violated or impinged on, it triggers conflict. Moreover, her response affirms Herbert (2007: 18) that "the central social value of honour or shame can be understood as a right to respect, or equal dignity and public recognition of this right plays an important role". However, contrary to the submission of Herbert (2007), the purported violation of the woman's honour did not provoke her to embark on any revenge mission.

In the context of Igbe Orhe, ranking is important and a person's rank is not determined by age. These words from His Eminence Obaoga Ibodje, the current *Uku* Supreme confirmed the above perception:

In Igbe Orhe, your age does not determine your rank in the leadership hierarchy. You can be sixty years old and become *Uku* or *Onori*. But if a forty-year-old man is made *Uku* or *Onori* before the sixty-year-old man, the forty-year-old man is entitled to more privileges because he is senior in rank (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East LGA. October 18, 2016).

This exposition from the *Uku* Supreme to some extent contradicts the claims of Idjakpo (2011), Otite (2005) because contrary to the Urhobo practice of gerontocracy, the leadership system in Igbe Orhe is not determined by age or the length of service a person has invested to worship in the *Ogwa* (temple of worship). For *Uku* Osete Ame, it depends on the call of *Oweya* (God) and after undergoing spiritual apprenticeship successfully. Respondents such as *Onori* Abel Egofovwe, *Oni Igbe* Margaret Alidi, *Uku* and *Uku* Anthony Ogedengbe strongly maintained that Igbe Orhe does not meddle with ranking and seniority within its leadership. Thus, undermining the seniority or ranking of *Uku* or *Omote*

Uku during religious gatherings is an established intra-sectarian conflict instigator in Igbe Orhe. These words from Uku Anthony Echekume validate this assertion:

An *Uku*, *Omote Uku*, *Onori*, even *Akpine* are very mindful of their rank. As a result during a feast or at religious gatherings, if you serve someone who has been *Uku* or *Onori* say for five years less and you now serve another person who is a year old as *Uku* more, the older *Uku* usually feels offended, because going by ranking and seniority, the *Uku* who is five years in spiritual service not minding his physical age deserves to get more (Interview at Ogume, Kwale LGA, January 2, 2017)".

Oni Igbe Tina Olomu, *Uku* Albert Ogievwege, *Oni Igbe* Mary Jowhoma, *Oni Igbe* Margaret Alidi also confirm the argument of the last respondent. They conclude that adherents who are not conversant with the ranking principle in Igbe Orhe will get into problem. The following comment from *Onori* Godspower Jimisawho drives home the point:

Sometimes the people who are in charge of serving food are ignorant of the rankings of leaders who are present. For example, let us say *Uku* Salubi who was made *Uku* very recently was served three bottles of beer and *Uku* Josiah who has been *Uku* for more years was only served a bottle of beer and *Uku* Josiah saw what transpired. Of course, it will make him angry. Such issues usually cause conflicts during feasts (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East LGA. October 16, 2016).

Audergon and Audergon (2006:3) note that "in order to prevent conflict and preserve the cohesion within certain groups, it is essential to understand the dynamics of ranking because insufficient rank awareness can create and perpetuate serious tensions and conflict within social-cultural groups". Within the internal dynamics of Igbe religion, ignorance of these undercurrents has stoked the fire of conflict. Therefore, to avert conflict and in the general interest of the religion, it will be germane for adherents to be fully aware of the leading ranking in the religion and how important it is in general polity of the group.

4.3.3 Overcrowded Schedules of Feast Celebrations

Omote Uku Ivwie Designer identifies overcrowded schedules of the feast as one of the drivers of intra- sectarian conflict in Igbe Orhe. She substantiated this claim with the following words:

People now fix date of feast indiscriminately. For instance, you are aware that this person always celebrates his religious feast of thanksgiving by second week of February; you too will go and fix your feast for second week of February. It brings confusion to the whole thing. This is a cause of conflict across Igbe (Interview at Upper Agbarho, Ughelli North LGA. January 1, 2017)

Oni Igbe Eloho Onotu, *Oni Igbe* Margaret Alidi, *Onori* Jonathan Okpako and *Shimeji* Ogheneruemu affirm this observation. They explained that it is a general norm within Igbe Orhe for every *Uku* and *Omote Uku* to celebrate annual feasts of thanksgiving in their local parishes. Since they are at liberty to choose a convenient date, it has generated a challenge of overcrowded schedules. *Uku* Festus Ikoba blamed it on lack of proper coordination. Consequently, adherents are faced with the dilemma of which person's feast they would want to attend. This further affirms the substantive and effective thesis of Rahim (2002:10). It can be presumed to be substantive oriented because, in its current stage of evolution, Igbe Orhe ought to have developed a framework for the proper coordination of the celebration of the feast. The conflict also can be said to be affective because it has the potential of creating interpersonal conflict. Accordingly, over-crowdedness as an instigator of conflict is not only restricted to homes and cities (Reynolds, (2005); Housing Trap (2012); Norwegian Refugee Council Report (2016); neither, is it limited to the classrooms according to Kaduna Development Plan, (2013). It is also not restricted to the prisons (The Penal Reform International, (2012); Arisukwu *et al.*, (2015).

It is significant to mention that the occurrence of overcrowded schedules of feast celebration as a conflict-generating theme across the sectarian groups of Igbe Orhe is not predicated on the contest of sacred space, visibility or the affirmation of identity since they are issues most indigenous religious festivals celebrations have to contend with according to Olupona (2011), Beaver (1998). *Onori* Godday Etairue conceded that overcrowded schedule of feast celebration has to do with the challenges of growth in the Orhe:

In time past, what was our population? Inside this Otokutu some years back, how many *Ogwa Igbe* do we have? Just one! Today, we have close to eight (8) in this community. We have grown. This one will fix his feast today, another person will fix feast tomorrow. Feast clashing with feast my brother. How many will you attend and one cannot divide himself?(Interview at Otokutu, December 30th 2016).

The view of *Onori Godday* strengthens The Habitable Planet (2017) assertion that when an increase in population competes with the earth's carrying capacity, conflict is triggered. The earth's carrying capacity has to do with the number of individuals an environment can sustain without causing any substantial negative impacts on the environment.

Empirical findings showed that in Igbe Orhe, the challenge associated with the rising population is connected to the increase in the numbers of adherents and the ordination of more *Uku* and *Emete Uku* (high priests and priestesses). Contextually, natural resources can be interpreted from the purview of the allotment of time and physical presence would be attendees. Connecting this finding to the proposition of Read and LeBlanc (2003), the effects of overcrowded schedules of feasts which has related to the continuous growth and expansion of the religion has aptly caused stress the adherents of the religion.

Beyond the notion of The Habitable Planet (2017), the population of adherents of Igbe Orhe can be of central importance in helping to determine the social impact of activities within the religion. These words '*feast clashing with feast my brother. How many will you attend and one cannot divide himself*' raises questions about the endurance capacity of adherents since they have been socialised in the mould of "*omo ose ovo*" (children of one father) collectivist orientation. It will therefore not be out of place to conclude that increase in the population of adherents, the ordination of more adherents into the office of *Uku* and *Omote Uku* has brought an increase in the numbers of feasts that are celebrated across the sectarian groups. Since a person cannot be physically present in two or more places at the same time, this reinforces the argument of Tegenu (2013:2) that "population growth is a factor responsible for the challenges of overcrowdedness and when the population grows beyond an accommodating capacity, conflict becomes imminent". Though the position of Tegenu references economic growth, it can also apply in the framework of population growth in religion.

Probing the subject of overcrowdedness further, *Uku* Albert Ogiewwege, a traditional syncretic practitioner, explains that adherents are saddled with many invitations to attend the religious feast. Failure to meet up with the obligation of attendance often prompts sentimental statements like “you value *Uku* XYZ more than me that is why you attended his feast and refuse to come to my own...Is that not so?” (Interview, at Okhrerhe - Agbarho, Ughelli North Local Government, 30th December 2016). A critical reflection on the above statement suggests that the overcrowded celebration of feast across the sectarian groups can dovetail into an affective conflict because if the person that is being questioned fails to use discretion in responding, it can affect his/her relationship with the *Uku*. Furthermore, the observation of *Uku* Ogiewwege to some extent agrees with The Lawyers’ Professional Indemnity Company (1998) that the conflicts of interest can arise in any context; ranging from monetary, administrative, communal, moral or religious. Thomson (2004:1) sees “the expression conflict of interest as referring to conflicting obligations or influences to which an individual is subject in the course of a relationship or activity”. The stand of Thomson (2004) fits into the scenario of Igbe religion.

It appears that the shared relationship that exists among adherents of Igbe Orhe tends to influence their desire to attend feasts whenever they are invited. As a result of overcrowdedness, certain human dynamics such as a preference for an *Uku* over another, wealth and social status of an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* etc. become determining factors for attending a feast. However, the National Health Group (2006:30) believes that conflicts of interest are not fundamentally evil, but it is how they are handled that can lead to improper, inappropriate, or bad outcomes.

Apart from conflicts of interest, *Oni Igbe* Tina Olomu believes that conflict resulting from overcrowded schedules of feast occur due to the failure of the conveners to carry along some of the stakeholders of the religion in their locality. The resultant effect is that the ranking *Uku* or *Omote Uku* who lives in the locality may feel offended, especially if he or she is planning a feast at the same time. In her opinion, it is tantamount to undermining their spiritual position. She narrated this incidence to establish her point:

About five years ago, an *Omote Uku* wanted to celebrate her feast. She went ahead and fixed date without carrying the senior *Omote Uku* in our community along. Unknown to her, the date clashed

with that of the senior *Omote Uku*. The senior *Omote Uku* told her point-blank that she did not regard her as a spiritual mother in the community. Several of our people have made this mistake and it has caused conflict (Interview, Okhrerhe -Agbarho, December 30, 2016)

Respondents such as *Omote Uku* Sarah Okoloba, *Oni Igbe* Asenemo Jiyovwi, *Omote Uku* Tuwere Echeke, and Jonathan Okpako also agree with the point mentioned above. They argue that the ranking *Uku* or *Omote Uku* in the community ought to be consulted and carried along as a stakeholder because they are able to know whether someone else has picked the same date. It is also important for them to be carried along as stakeholders because they have the capacity to mobilise people to attend the event based on their spiritual influence within the community of adherents. Therefore, failure to carry an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* along as stakeholders in the planning of feasts has been identified as a trigger of conflict across the sectarian divisions of Igbe religion. This point is in consonance with Newton and Elliot (2016) and Poolman, Munamati and Senzanje (N.D) that the non-involvement of stakeholders in the planning of certain activities within their sphere of influence can instigate conflict. When proper ways are not negotiated to incorporate stakeholders in agreeing to disagree, conflict can erupt. Hence, it is important to identify stakeholders, that is, the people, groups or organisations that must be involved in sitting, building and planning certain critical activities that can necessitate the growth and development of communities. In the context of Igbe Orhe, the stakeholders are supposed to be consulted when planning a feast include the ranking *Uku* or *Omote Uku* in that community, not minding their sectarian predisposition underscores the applicability of the theory of religious pluralism and sectarian pluralism in Igbe Orhe.

4.4 Dynamics of Social and Intra-religious Relationships

Discourses about relationships admit that the quality of relationships people have is entrenched in four domains: a personal domain where a person intra-relates with self; communal domain, in-depth inter-personal relationships; environmental domain, connecting with nature; transcendental domain, relating to something or someone beyond the human level (Fisher 2011). Furthermore, in this confluence of relationships, there is a general longing to find safety and satisfaction.

Bat (2002) and Ayantayo (2005) put forward that, if people interact, whether, within a religious or social context, certain dynamics can instigate conflict. In Igbe Orhe, the underlying forces that trigger conflict within its socio and intra-religious relationships have been identified as ‘The Mixed Multitudes’, ‘Intra-sectarian Poaching’ ‘Modernisation vs. Orthodoxy’ and ‘Language Barrier’.

4.4.1 ‘The Mixed Multitude’

The concept of ‘the mixed multitude’ is traceable to the Book of Exodus 12:38. It has to do with a class of people who accompanied the Israelites as they journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. Dillon (2016: 2) opines that they are mostly presumed to be sycophants to the Israelites. *Uku* Anthony Echekume explains:

Igbe Orhe is now an all-comers' affairs. We now have mixed multitude. People who go to the cemetery now claim to be practitioners of Igbe Orhe. The native doctors and those pounding leaves are claiming to be Igbe. They are the ones causing problem in this religion (Interview at Ogume, Kwale Local Government Area. January 2, 2017).

It can, therefore, be inferred that “the mixed multitude” are not real adherents of Igbe Orhe, thereby making them potential intra-sectarian conflict instigators in the internal workings of the religion. *Uku* Festus Ikoba disclosed that one of the avenues Igbe Orhe was infiltrated by the “mixed multitudes” is through the celebration of feasts. He contends that:

Since there are several pockets of groups around, even the unscrupulous elements who profess to be Igbe Orhe and we know they are pretenders who want to use our celebrations as an opportunity to affiliate with mainstream Igbe Orhe because of its credibility. They seek to identify with Igbe Orhe and use that to launder their already battered image (Interview at Oria, Abraka, October 14, 2016).

The activities of the mixed multitude can be categorised under the affective conflict because of the implications on interpersonal and intergroup relationship. Their activities are known to have generated personal hurt and pains in the religion. An insight provided by Dillon (2016), reveals that the activities of the ‘the mixed multitude’ became a major driver of conflicts within the camp of the Israelites.

In the view of Comrade Gilbert Isoko, the ‘the mixed multitude’ in Igbe use intimidating expressions to create fear in the heart of people. He speaks further:

They talk with arrogance because of their spiritual power. You hear them say words like “we shall see who is more powerful”. One person wants to show that he or she has more power than the other; they are always threatening to deal with people. It actually causes conflict here. But genuine members of Igbe do not try to prove anything to any person that they are spiritually empowered (Interview, Okhrerhe Agbarho, Ughelli North Local Government, Delta State, January 5, 2017).

This submission substantiates Dillon (2016: 2-3) that the mixed multitudes could not fit into the normative lifestyle of the Israelites. Consequently, they made attempts to introduce their worldview into the camp of Israel. Some amongst the “mixed multitude” sought to completely redefine Judaism, the people of Israel, and their faith practices. It is worth mentioning that the introduction of intimidating expressions by the supposed mixed multitudes contradicts the established norms of Igbe religion. *Uku* Gabriel Igugu contends that:

Any person who uses his or her power to threaten people is not our member. We don’t use our powers to threaten people. The people who do that can claim to be Igbe, but in the actual sense, they are not real Igbe people (Interview at Ugono, Ughelli North LGA, January 2, 2017).

This song in Igbe Orhe further confirms claims that real adherents are not socialised into the use of intimidating language in their social interactions whether within or without:

Odiriewo (2ce)	Patience.... Patience
Oke me wo shigwe ibaba	When I knelt before Baba (Uku)
Da no me sa mesa yo urhi	Asked me if I can hold on to the laws
Odiriewo,Odiriewo	Patience.... Patience
Oke me wo shigwe ibaba	
Da no me sa mi yo uhri	When I knelt before Baba (Uku)
Odiriewo	Patience

Uku Festus Ikoba interpreted the song thus:

We sing this song to all our converts when they are being admitted into the religion. The song means you must be patient because this religion deserves patience. Be patient in the practice, patient in your marital home, patience with neighbours in the face of provocation. As a matter of importance, be patient in life's endeavours (Interview at Oria - Abraka, Delta State, and October 14, 2016).

Through this song, one gets an understanding that the valve controlling the social and intra-religious relationship in Igbe Orhe is fortified by the norms of patience. The mixed multitudes fit into the deviant and dissenter's thesis of Jetten and Hornsey (2014). They postulated that on deviants and dissenters are a group of people who refuse to internalise and imbibe the norms of a society. This vividly captures the presence of the 'the mixed multitude' in Igbe Orhe as instigators of conflict.

There is however a point of divergence in the discourse of "mixed multitude" among the Israelites and Igbe Orhe. While activities of the "mixed multitude" prompted violence and bloodshed in the name of Jehovah, the God of the Israelites (Deuteronomy 31:15-21), the worrisome behaviour of the "mixed multitude" in Igbe Orhe has not degenerated into any reported violence in the name of *Oweya*, the God of Igbe Orhe. Boyer, (2001), Ehrman, (2003), Ruthven, (2007), Fenn, (2009), and Crabtree, (2012) attested the God of Abrahamic monotheism encourages violence in his name. But *Oweya* the God of a monotheist non-Abrahamic religion presents a counter-narrative.

Deepening the discussion on the notion of 'the mixed multitude' as an instigator of intra-sectarian conflict in Igbe Orhe, *Uku* Albert Ogievwege explained that:

Many fraudulent minded people are trying to spoil our religion because we are simple and open. We know what obtains in other religions. These fraudulent persons are the ones who try to show supremacy of power, intimidating people and using Igbe as a cover-up (Interview at Okhrerhe-Agbarho, Ughelli North Local Government Area. December 30, 2016).

Uku Albert Ogievwege believes that because Igbe Orhe runs an open system, one that embraces people without complexities, the "mixed multitude" abuses the privilege. Liberty Oghenesiwho, a participant in the Focus Group Discussion conducted for male youth across the sectarian groups, agreed with the last respondent. For Liberty Oghenesiwho,

the “mixed multitude” is fanning the embers of conflict across the religion due to their untoward behaviour, because the conditions for acceptance into the fold are not strict enough. Their position justifies Maeda (2005) that being truly open portends some risk because openness tends to simplify things. Open systems place unique demands on the policy of trust.

Associating risk with being open has historical precedence in *Igbe Orhe*. Echekwube (1994:14) discloses that when Christianity was introduced into Kokori in the early 1900s, Ubiesha did not discriminate against the religion. It must be mentioned that Igbe Orhe, at that time was the dominant religion in Kokori. Ubiesha with an open mind supported the new Christian faith. According to Echekwube (1994:14), Ubiesha felt both religions preached essentially the same ethics. In his perception, the God of the Christians is also the God of the Igbe adherents, which negates the “binary thinking thesis” of Robinson (2014:3). However, when Christianity became fully established, it became a stumbling block to Igbe religion. Christian missionaries colluded with the colonial officers to arrest Ubiesha, and some of his prominent followers such as Okinedo and Omonedo (See Nabofa, 2005:259-363). Can it, therefore, be argued that allowing Christianity to hold sway in Kokori was a mistake on the part of Ubiesha? Is Igbe Orhe a victim of its open system? Rounding off the discourse on openness and risk, Bodo (2005) posits that a major disadvantage of an open society is the tendency to lose control over the society and its members. Thus, taking into consideration the dynamics that are often associated with the plurality of interests, it will be of paramount importance to have a strong regulating mechanism. This indicates that the absence of a strong regulating mechanism may have been responsible for the positioning of “mixed multitudes” as a conflict instigator across the sectarian divisions of Igbe religion.

4.4.2 Intra-sectarian Poaching

Conflicts emanating from poaching or “stealing” of members have been identified by some scholars like Sollid, (2013); Kagema & Muguna, (2014); Gathuki, (2015); Okunlola *et al.*, (2016). From the perspectives of these scholars one gets the impression that conflicts emanating from the “poaching” of members from one religious’ denomination to another are only limited to the Abrahamic religions. The phenomenon of poaching, snatching or cross carpeting of members from one religious temple to another, or from one

denomination to another is not limited to monotheistic Abrahamic religions. It is also a phenomenon in Igbe Orhe. Several respondents in Igbe religion use the expression “stealing” of members when they talked about members joining another sectarian group or changing one *Ogwa* (temple of worship) to another. In view of the postulation of Rahim (2002), this type of conflict can be termed as an affective or relationship-oriented conflict.

Onori Godday Etairue expounded that "stealing" of members is widespread and it is posing a serious challenge within and across the sectarian groups of Igbe religion. He explained that it used to be a common practice in Igbe for an *Uku* (High Priest) to recommend a member of his *Ogwa* (temple of worship) to another *Uku* who he believes has more spiritual powers to deal with the issues affecting his member. According to *Onori* Godday, once the member completed his spiritual sojourn with the external *Uku*, he returns to his main *Ogwa*. He lamented it is no longer the case because most of the adherents no longer return. *Omote Uku* (Dr) Victoria Odaighofa says “it is common knowledge in Igbe” (Interview, December 29, 2016, at Eginni, Udu Local Government Area). The FGD conducted for women across the sectarian groups agreed with the last respondent but blamed it on the unhealthy competition that has entered the religion (FGD at Ovwian, Udu LGA, October 2, 2016).

From the above responses, some critical issues have been brought to the fore. First is the personal well-being and satisfaction of the adherents. It must be acknowledged that an adherent pitching his/her tent with an *Uku* who is instrumental in helping to solve a long-standing problem or need that his/her primary *Uku* could not solve, simply activates the first law of nature which is self-preservation. He/she has come to terms with the fact that staying under the spiritual umbrella of the new *Uku* will guarantee his/her spiritual or personal well-being. So, beyond the dominant argument that business investors deploy their resources in environments where their security is guaranteed, it can also be argued that one reason people identify with a religious group and congregation has to do with the guarantee of their spiritual security and personal fulfilment. The point correlates with the view that every religion is expected to provide the needed social, cognitive and emotional resources that will help adherents to experience comfort and personal satisfaction (Cappellen *et al*, (2017). According to *Uku* Obonofuoga, sending one’s member to another *Uku* who can be trusted to help in providing solutions to his/her problems is anchored on

the spirit of commonality which is entrenched in the expression *omo ose ovo* (*children of the same father*). To him, it increases vibrancy within the religious community. *Uku Obonofuoga* lamented that in recent times, the purpose has been defeated because in most cases the members that are sent to another *Uku* for spiritual intervention no longer return. This disclosure from *Uku Obonofuoga* brings to the front burner the submission of Hills & Olson (2009) that with the involvement of more competing groups, people can find a religious group or congregation that meets their religious needs. The submission of *Uku Obonofuoga* also agrees with the concept of demand-matching mechanism. It means that when numerous and more diverse competing religious groups are available, more people will participate in religion and the average commitment levels of the participants will become higher (Hills and Olson, 2009). Interpreting the concept of demand matching mechanism in the milieu of Igbe religion means that for an *Uku* to contact another *Uku* or *Omote Uku* that he feels has more spiritual capacity to solve a problem for a devotee under his watch can help meet the diverse spiritual and physical needs of a religious community.

On the other hand, while Hill and Olson did not situate the demand matching mechanism as a conflict generating theme within the domain of religion, empirical evidence shows that it is a veritable instigator of intra-sectarian conflict in the sense that it has led to membership loss, thereby causing a measure of grievance in the religion. For example, *Uku Festus Ikoba* cited an instance between a senior *Omote Uku* and another low-ranking *Omote Uku* in Port Harcourt. The low-ranking *Omote Uku* accused the senior *Omote Uku* of “stealing” her members because some who were sent to the senior *Omote Uku* for spiritual intervention did not return to her *Ogwa*.

This brings this discussion to the second critical issue: why should the refusal of an adherent to go back to his primary *Ogwa* after securing spiritual solution elsewhere on the strength of his *Uku's* recommendation be an instigator of conflict within and across the religion? Ideally, introducing a member of one's *Ogwa* to another *Uku*, to find a solution that will lead to the general well-being of one's member aligns with the principles of religious pluralism. It is reckoned that an *Uku* does not possess absolute truth or revelation concerning the situation of his member.

Furthermore, a typical consideration of the theory of religious pluralism, a member of an *Ogwa* crossing to another *Ogwa* ordinarily ought not to generate conflicts when one takes into consideration the principle of *omo ose ovo* (*children of the same father*) which synchronizes with the idea of religious pluralism. Principles, however, cannot be practised without human collaboration characterized by human fallibility. Therefore, certain human factors can make members of Igbe cross from one *Ogwa* to another thereby causing intra-sectarian conflict. In the words of *Omote Uku* Victoria Amajatoja:

How do you expect me to feel? I have laboured and invested my time, emotional, spiritual and financial resources on these people with the help of *Oweya*. It is the same labour that made me send them to another *Uku* to work on at least to compliment my efforts. At the end of the day, they turn their back on me. No matter your spiritual level, as a human being, you will feel deep pain and hurt inside. You will always see the person as an ingrate (Interview at Upper Agbarho, Ughelli North LGA, December 28, 2016).

This is consistent with MacDonald's (2009:2) assertion that physical injury may not be the only cause of pain. Outside physical injury, threats to social connection may also stimulate painful feelings or social pain. He affirms that “emotional pain is activated by any inducement other than physical injury and social pain is activated in response to threats to, or losses of, social connection (MacDonald's, 2009:3)”. Therefore, emotional pains, social pains and hurt feelings are the fallout of cross-carpeting which is dubbed as “stealing” of members in Igbe religion. These factors are natural human expressions that can cause conflicts within Igbe religion despite the philosophy of *omo ose ovo* (children of one father) and the thesis of religious pluralism which see all religions as different avenues to approaching a common Ultimate Reality. Despite these facts, the crossing of adherents from one *Ogwa* to another has not degenerated into violence across the sectarian divisions of Igbe religion.

While respondents such as *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko JP, *Omote Uku* Ivwie Designer, *Onori* Felix Udumebrae, *Onori* Shimeji and *Oni Igbe* Maria Okugoni agree that “stealing” of members is a common occurrence in Igbe, they maintain that ordinarily it ought not to be an instigator of conflict as long as they see the other *Ogwa* as belonging to the same father whether they recommend a devotee there or not. But the reverse is the case because

the priest perceives his spiritual labour over a devotee as an investment. They also reasoned that as human beings, it is a natural expectation for an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* having invested so much on a devotee, in terms of prayers and prophetic guidance, to reap the harvest from their spiritual labour. They concluded that it is the selfish nature of man which is yet to be mortified that has come to the centre stage. Clarifying this point, Nabofa (2005) opines that

The priests of Igbe regard the religion as a special blessing that God has bestowed on them and their descendants here on earth because they are usually succeeded by their offspring and with the income they derive from vows of the devotees, the family builds up a lot of fortune. Thus, the families of the various heads of Igbe congregation constitute commercial ventures from which the chief *Uku* is greatly enriched (p.366).

Omote Uku Sarah Okoloba, *Omote Uku* Queen Ogitie, *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho, *Onori* Abel Egofovwe, *Onori* Johnson Akpofure, *Uku* Osete Ame and *Uku* Johnbull Unumegume, blamed the phenomenon of “poaching” of members on devotees who left their primary spiritual leaders to establish their own *Ogwa* Igbe because they feel they have the gift of prophecy. The respondents contend that they are the ones who have introduced unhealthy competition to members in Igbe by trying to convince people to leave their spiritual centres and join them. They equally agreed that while they feel pained that a devotee who was recommended to another *Uku* for spiritual help decides to desert them after getting their miracle, it is not because they see their devotee as a source of wealth. They argued that if a devotee desires to cross carpet to another *Ogwa*, it should be done in a civilised way. According to them, the priest who sees his or her devotee as a commercial resource is not a genuine priest of *Oweya*. From the arguments and counter-arguments, there is a consensus from all respondents that “stealing” of members is a common occurrence in Igbe religion. There is also unanimity that ordinarily devotees cross carpeting from one sectarian division to the other or from one *Ogwa* to another ought not to generate conflict in the light of the spirit of commonality situated in the cliché *omo ose ovo*. They also agreed that moving from one *Ogwa* to another which ordinarily should not be as a conflict generating theme is caused by the interference of human nature and processes in the practice of religion. Although Matthias Orhero contended that the concept *omo ose ovo* did not evolve with the advent of Igbe religion as claimed by most

respondents, he pointed out that the concept was imported into religion from the Urhobo cosmology. However, Igbe religion has succeeded in preserving the concept of *omo ose ovo* which he claimed is gradually losing its relevance in contemporary Urhoboland.

4.4.3 Tradition and Modernisation

Cavarnos (1992) and Rangers (1982) have extensively examined religion in the context of tradition and modernisation. On the other hand, most of the studies are conducted within the ‘cultural zones’ of Western Christianity, the Orthodox world, the Islamic world, and the Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, African, and Latin American Zones. The over-riding theme in these studies reveals that tradition will always want to resist modernisation. But gaps still exist in scholarly discourse on tradition and modernisation as a conflict generating theme within ‘cultural zone’ of monotheism non-Abrahamic religion, the genre in which Igbe religion is situated. Tradition and modernisation as instigators of conflict are both affective and substantive in nature. It is substantive because the custodians of the religious tradition reckon that it is their sole responsibility to preserve the sacred values of the religion. While those pushing for change feel that as adherents of the religion, they have an equal stake to bring in innovations that will modernise the religion. It can also be affective because, in the process of negotiating the space or meeting point for tradition and modernisation, it is possible for the feelings of people to be hurt and toes stepped upon.

In the words of *Uku* Festus Ikoba, “breaking away from tradition and trying to modernise has been very challenging. It really requires a lot of effort and developing a thick skin” (Interview at Oria, Abraka, October 14, 2016). Buttressing the point of *Uku* Festus, Prophet Oyiboame Emojevu (JP) explained that many people within Igbe Orhe have accused him of watering down the religion. He retorted that there are insinuations from several quarters that he has turned Igbe into a church. According to him, people have queried his use of modern musical instruments in his *Ogwa*. Likewise, he has been faulted for using the Christian Holy Bible to preach during his worship sessions. He also mentions that he is being accused of using the appellation Reverend/Prophet instead of *Uku*, which is the official ecclesiastical title for all recognised high priests in Igbe religion. Furthermore, he explained that he does not wear the traditional *Uku* ceremonial dress because it looks too local and outdated. In his assessment, introducing new innovations have helped to improve the visibility of Igbe Orhe and the successes recorded so far show that *Oweya* is in

support of his modernising efforts. He concluded that people would rather stick to their traditional ways of doing things. It can be deduced from Reverend/Prophet Oyiboame's submission that injecting new ideas into the religion has generated biased perceptions from some adherents within the religious group.

These scenarios of differing judgments have the capacity to instigate conflict and it confirms the thesis of Jost (2015) that human beings are prone to honour custom and tradition over progress and social transformation. It further justifies the claims of Wuthnow (1988:133) that “emergent intrareligious conflicts will be between the religious conservatives and religious liberals”. It also justifies the assertion of Zuckerman (1999) that conflicts within the fault lines of religion will not be Catholics against Protestants, but rather, (conservative) Catholics divided against other (Liberal) Catholics or (conservative) Protestants against other (Liberal) Protestants’. As well, it agrees with Hunter's (1991:49) summation that intra-sectarian conflicts will be driven by broad groups within the polity of religion: those with an “impulse towards orthodoxy” versus those “with an impulse towards progressivism”. The progressive-leaning folks tend to interpret notable faiths according to the contemporary way of life.

Omote Uku Tuwere Echekeume agrees with the view of Reverend Oyiboame. She argues that this is the 21st century and it will be an aberration not to modernise the practice of the religion in order to appeal to the 21st-century mind. In her judgment, the world is not stagnant. She argues that new innovations are showing forth daily and people are either adapting or adopting what can fit into their context. She warned that “though it takes a lot of risks to modernise something, the hard truth is that we cannot continue to stick to the old ways. We need to be open to new ideas in Igbe” (Interview at Ogume, 2nd January 2017 Interview). This affirms Back and Lindholm (2014) view that challenging the status quo is associated with increased efforts and risks. It also upholds the findings of Eidelman and Crandall (2012) that organisations and societies are in constant transition, evolving and changing from one form to another. At the same time, because people usually prefer to keep things the way they are, they would make attempts to resist change.

It must be noted that trying to bring in new ideas that are contrary to the traditional ones on the ground can lead to some resistance and the effort to modernise can be a driver of conflict. *Uku* Osete Ame, *Omote Uku* Iwue Designer, *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho, *Uku*

Anthony Echekume, *Oni Igbe* Eloho Onotu, *Onori* Abel Egofovwe and *Uku* Festus Ikoba attested to the fact that the drive to modernise the religion by seeking to introduce some changes is facing stiff resistance because certain people feel that it will break their hegemony over the religion. So, they would rather stick to tradition than lose their hegemony. *Uku* Osete Ame maintained this point in the following words:

Our problem is such that anytime you want to introduce something new, the people at the headquarters will always challenge it. They will be asking who gave us permission to do it. So, you find them resisting it. It appears the leadership is afraid of losing control (Interview at Agbarha- Otor, Ughelli North LGA. December 30, 2016).

Conventionally, the word hegemony traditionally signifies domination of one sort or another (Bates, 1975). The hegemony thesis which was popularised by Antonio Gramsci, establishes “that man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas of a certain class of men (Bates 1975:351)”. The general understanding is that political leadership is hinged on a pact with the led. However, the accord is fortified by propagating the worldview of the ruling elite. Though Gramsci’s thesis of hegemony is within political discourse, it can also be situated in the context of tradition and modernisation of Igbe religion. In Igbe Orhe, the ruling leadership elites under the *Uku Supreme* in Kokori cannot rule by force; they equally need the submission of adherents to their spiritual and moral authority. The leadership also use the instrumentality of sacred laws and the traditions of the religion handed over by the founder to diffuse and popularise their world-views in the psyche of their devotees. Since hegemonic struggles require the leadership of intellectuals, adherents who can organise their thoughts against existing traditions in the religion are perceived as competitors and rivals by the leadership in Kokori. This, no doubt can cause conflict within the religion. Therefore, the struggle substantiates the claim that that religion legitimises hegemony and conflict is inevitable when the leadership feels that the status quo is under threat (Awoniyi, 2013; Orebiyi & Orebiyi, 2017).

His Eminence, Obaoga Ibodje, *Uku Supreme* of Igbe Orhe worldwide, opined that the religion is receptive to change and modernisation. According to him, part of their modernisation drive is the acquisition of a vast expanse of land in Kokori meant for the construction of an ultra-modern Ogwa (temple of worship). He equally mentioned ongoing

plans to establish a leadership school that will provide formal training programmes for the religious clerics because it will enable them to measure up with their counterparts in other religions. In addition, the *Uku Supreme* revealed that they have started to focus on youth and children development because they are the future of the religion. This study postulates that religions die with time when they are no longer embraced by children and youth. Furthermore, he explained that plans are ongoing to produce the songs of Igbe Orhe in written text so that their members can have access to them. Nevertheless, he stressed that any idea that will affect the sacred traditions of the religion will be resisted. According to him, Igbe Orhe operates based on divine instruction from *Oweya*. He also explained that there are sacred traditions that have been handed down by the fathers of the religion, and part of staying true to his divine call is by upholding those sacred traditions. According to the Uku Supreme, the people who are saying that Kokori is resisting the drive for modernisation have hidden motives. *Uku* Godwin Igugu, *Uku* Gabriel Obonofogha, *Uku* Johnbull Unumegume and *Omote Uku* Victoria Amajatoja validated the submission of the *Uku* Supreme. They argued that specific instructions that have been handed down by *Oweya* through the founder may be altered because of modernisation.

This finding is in tandem with Cavarnos (1992:2) observation that “sacred tradition originates from God, it is a divine revelation, whereas human traditions that originate from mankind, are products of the human mind”. He contends that Christ Himself openly separates the divine and the human tradition when He disapproved the Scribes and Pharisees because they disrespected divine tradition and divine teaching, while they observe human traditions (see St. Mark 7:8).

In addition, Apostle Paul clearly distinguishes between these two kinds of traditions when he advised the Colossians that "See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8). Thus, conflict is rife when the custodians of religious traditions perceive that the introduction of new ideas will impact negatively on their sacred traditions. Equally, conflict is endemic when the intellectuals within the leadership polity of a religious system notice that their impulse to modernise is being resisted by the ruling religious elite within the same religion by holding tenaciously to established traditions.

4.4.4 Communication

Several studies view communication as a driver of conflict within the domain of religion. Albert, (1999: 19-36); Zhang, (2013); Nwangi, (2014); Raphael, (2015); Auwal, (2015); Ferguson, (2016) concede that communication helps people to make sense of their daily interactions and their world. According to Albert (1999:19) “poor communication can transform latent conflicts into violence. On the other hand, good or effective communication can facilitate peaceful conflict resolution”. Extant studies have focused on world religions, especially Christianity and Islam in terms of communication and conflict but within the purview of Igbe Orhe monotheism very little is known.

This section examines the language barrier, misrepresentations of Igbe religion through publications and interpersonal communication as conflict generating themes in the religion.

4.4.4.1 Language Challenges

The language barrier has been known to be a source of conflict since the time of the Tower of Babel when people were punished in view of the loss of the possibility to communicate (Minasova, 2008). Beyond the domains of business enterprises, information technology, sports, entertainment etc., increased globalisation is forcing a growing number of religions to interact across linguistic boundaries. The question of language barrier is particularly critical for intercultural encounters. It must be acknowledged that religion provides a breeding ground for intercultural encounters because adherents or devotees come from different cultural and linguistic expressions. Such intercultural encounters may be influenced not only by cultural differences but also by language barriers. Language barrier can affect interpersonal relationships. Therefore, language challenges can be identified as an affective or relationship-oriented conflict.

The fact that Igbe Orhe conducts its worship services and rituals in Urhobo language may greatly affect adherents who do not understand the Urhobo language. Adherents may find it difficult to communicate or even get necessary spiritual information that will be of benefit to them. *Uku* Echeke, a non-Urhobo worshipper confirmed that language is a driver of conflict in Igbe religion with the following words:

For example, if I go to Kokori I don't understand what they are talking about because I am not an Urhoboman. That language difference is always there and if you do not understand somebody's language, when she/he is talking you will think she/he is insulting you. The leadership should understand that it is not only Urhobo speaking people that are patronising Igbe religion (Interview at Ogume 2nd January 2017).

Unlike the claims of Rappaport (1992), Omotosho (2004) and Oz (2005) that violence is domesticated in religion through the bad use of language, the concern of *Uku* Echekume is not in the use of religious language to mobilise people towards violence. *Uku* Echekume contended that the leadership of Igbe ought to understand that the religion has transited from being a homogenous/monoculture assemblage of adherents into a heterogeneous/multicultural one. Consequently, it is imperative to accommodate the needs of devotees who do not understand the Urhobo language in order to avoid certain perceptions which may lead to conflict. The argument of *Uku* Echekume corroborates Orebiyi & Orebiyi's (2017) view that heterogeneous religious and ethnocultural composition of people can be a breeding ground for conflict when people from the other cultures do not receive the sender's envisioned message. In this vein, the variances between the sender's and the receiver's cultures determine the chance for cross-cultural miscommunication. Moreover, cross-cultural language communication continually shows the depths of understanding and misunderstanding caused by perception, interpretation and evaluation of the sender of a message that comes from one culture and the receiver from another culture (Hilton cited in Orebiyi & Orebiyi, 2017).

Also, Solomon Enite of the male Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted at Kokori revealed that:

Igbe is not localised. We have branches beyond Urhoboland, even overseas. When devotees come from outside the country during the yearly feast, you donot expect all of them to understand Urhobo. We have been telling them from time to time that those of us who are not from Urhoboland should be made to understand what Igbe is talking about. Conflict can ensue when we do not understand ourselves because Igbe now accommodates people from different cultural and

language orientation (FGD at Kokori, December 20, 2016.).

The contention substantiates the claims of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Workforce Development Board (2002) that language and cultural barriers can generate conflict and it can get in the way of effective communication, thereby creating some complications. It also recognises that it is in the best interest of employers to better understand and help bridge the cultural and language divide as more foreign-born workers stream into the workforce.

Though the observation of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Workforce Development Board is strictly from a corporate business standpoint, it can also apply to the subject under discussion in Igbe Orhe. In the context of Igbe religion, the ‘foreign-born’ workers can be compared to the adherents who are not from the Urhobo ethnic group but have embraced the Igbe religion. Therefore, it will be in the interest of the leadership of the Igbe religion to ensure that the language challenges are addressed.

The general argument among some respondents is that the Christian Bible has been translated into many languages and linguistic expressions because Christianity is embraced by people from diverse cultural and language backgrounds. For example, Silas Ogundayomi, an adherent of Igbe from the Ijaw Apoi ethnic group stressed that a Yoruba man can read the Bible in his language and equally the Itsekiri man. Respondents like Anthony Anie and Tina Ogievwege lamented that Igbe religion has not been able to do such. They concluded that if the trend continues, problems will continue to persist because of a lack of understanding of the Urhobo language among adherents who are not from the Urhobo ethnic extraction. Their conclusions substantiate Orebiyi and Orebiyi (2017) that language is vital to the heart of civilisation, it can serve to bridge the gap between persons and their immediate sphere of influence.

Putting the entire discourse of language barrier as an instigator of conflict within Igbe religion is not unconnected with the dynamics of the evolution associated with the religion. Igbe has evolved from the status of an ‘ethnic’ religion into a ‘universalising’ religion. According to Grenz (2014: 4), “ethnic religions appeal to one group of people living in one place. On the other hand, universalising religions appeal to people of many cultures regardless of where they live in the world”.

Igbe now appeals to people from other ethnic and social identities. It must be stated in this discussion that the world religions such as Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism emerged first as ethnic religions. But through missionary and hierarchical diffusion, they metamorphosed into the status of universalising religions. When a religion transits from being an ethnic religion into a universalising religion, it invariably means a paradigm shift from a monoculture/linguistic orientation into a multilingual/multicultural orientation. As a result of this change in dynamics, it is possible for adherents who are not from the linguistic origin of a universalising religion, despite the theistic commonality, to feel a sense of exclusion from the ecclesiastical community. The general assumption is that since the homily and rituals of the religion are conducted primarily in the Urhobo language, devotees from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds that do not understand the Urhobo language may feel uncomfortable. It, therefore, affirms Rappaport, (1992), Albert, (1999), Omotosho, (2004), and Oz, (2005) that language can be a potential driver of conflict. It is the submissions of this study that when adherents or devotees of a religion are ignorant or do not understand the dominant language of expression conflicts can ensue.

4.4.4.2 Religious Literacy/ Misrepresentation of Igbe Religion through Publications

Religious literacy is considered to be of utmost importance in a pluralistic society (National Disaster Interfaith Network (NDIN), (2014); Diamond, (2011); Rackley, (2010); Rogers, (2009). NDIN (2014:2) defines religious literacy “as the basic understanding of each faith community, its theology, rituals, practices and sacred texts”. Religious Communication Council (RCC) (2015) submits that the deficiency of religious literacy and want for the understanding of the fundamental system of belief of other religions in a plural social order can contribute to more conflict. In order to manage religious conflict, Moore (2015), reasons that the ability to recognise and evaluate the central connections between religions, social/political or cultural life through many lenses is part of the objectives of religious literacy.

In the quest to promote religious literacy, most communicators of faith are wont to write and publish books on how they understand and interpret the mandates of their religions. But in general terms, it has also been observed that the concept of religious literacy has been explored as a conflict management tool for a religiously plural society (NDIN). On

the other hand, the promotion of religious literacy through the publications of books is examined as an instigator of conflict within Igbe religion. The following statement from Akponwei (2009) sets the tone for the discussion on religious literacy as an instigator of conflict in Igbe religion:

The Igbe religion today is the most misunderstood African Traditional Religion. This misunderstanding is due to a lack of understanding of its basic original tenets, and like Christianity or other world religions, a corruption of the mystical import and subjective twist of the esoteric aspects of the said religion by some practitioners through the years (p.xvi).

Equally, from field observations, in the eyes of adherents of other faith traditions especially the Christians, practitioners of Igbe Orhe are perceived as ‘devilish’ people. According to *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho, to correct the negative public perception of the religion, some adherents decided to embark on doing some publications about the religion. In her words:

Some of us decided to write and publish books with the purpose of enlightening people about the Holy White Chalk Salvation known as Igbe Orhe and to correct the negative public perception about us in the community. But unfortunately, the move irked some people in Kokori who feel that we are doing it to gain popularity (Interview, at Upper Agbarho, Ughelli North December 28, 2016).

Uku Osete Ame corroborates the above statement with the following comment “whenever we try to make such efforts, Kokori will challenge us by saying who gave us the authority to publish and the irony is that we are using our personal resources for the publications” (Interview at Agbarha Otor Ughelli North LGA, December 29, 2016). In his contribution, *Uku* Anthony Echekume explains that after several complaints, *Uku* Festus Ikoba decided to publish some materials that will help to interpret the service rituals, worship and other ancillary activities that are connected with the practice of the religion. In his opinion, it will in no small way to assist people within the faith community who do not understand Urhobo language. According to him, the effort was resisted because the powers that be in Kokori felt he knows too much and may want to use that as an avenue to mobilise followers.

This conflict can be said to be both substantive and affective in the light of Rahim's (2001) affirmation. One would expect encomiums to be showered on people who have decided to take it upon themselves to embark on religious literacy activities through the publication of books and other literary materials in order to improve and showcase the rich religious heritage of their faith community. Why should such innovative endeavour be a source of conflict in Igbe Orhe? In responding to the poser, *Olorogun* Ochuko Mukoro (JP) asserts that “the family of the founder wants to oversee everything. When an initiative is not coming directly from them, they feel threatened and insecure. Insecurity breeds suspicions which can lead to the resistance of novel ideas” (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East Local Government, October 16, 2016).

A close examination of these phrases “the move irked some people in Kokori who feel that we are doing it to gain popularity”, “Kokori will challenge us by saying who gave us the authority to publish” and “the powers that be in Kokori who feel he knows too much and may want to use that as an avenue to mobilise followers unto himself” seem to validate the claims of Mukoro Ochuko (JP). It establishes the position of Krantz (2006) that powerful cross-currents are created when the forces of change and innovation collide with an emotional investment in the status quo. This is predicated on the fact that leaders live in a centrifugal field, pulled in opposing directions by the competing demands of novelty and continuity and by those of the institutional and personal resource. Therefore, there will always be a clash between novelty and the established order, the tension between the institutional and the personal. In the context of Igbe religion, the clash of novelty with the established order has to do with the idea that some adherents have initiated and embarked on the idea of promoting mass literacy of the religion through publications. The institutional/personal in this context has to do with the leadership of Igbe Orhe at Kokori not showing much enthusiasm because the idea does not originate from them.

Onori Joseph Akpore, Senior Secretary of Igbe, *Onori* Felix Udumebrae, Junior Secretary of Igbe Orhe and *Oni Igbe* Asenemo Jiyovwi disagree with the views that the leadership of Igbe at Kokori is resisting the efforts of its members concerning promoting religious literacy through the publications of books. According to them, beyond religious literacy, books on Igbe can also be used for evangelical purposes. By implication, people can meet any of those books and reading them can make them convert to Igbe. They argued that

with all intent and purpose, the leadership only wants to ensure that proper information about the religion that is devoid of misconception is disseminated to the public. According to them, it is the duty of the leadership of Igbe Orhe at Kokori to ensure the protection and integrity of the religion. *Omote Uku* Iwue Designer cited the example of how a book written by someone caused serious conflict in the religion:

Around 2010 our father Prophet Oyiboame commissioned one Professor Akponwei to write a book on the history of Igbe Orhe religion. When he finished writing the book, the leadership of Igbe at Kokori was very angry because they complained that the book only favoured Akpokovo and left out their father, Ibodje. That created a serious conflict between Oyiboame and Kokori (Interview at Upper Agbarho, Ughelli North LGA. 1 January 2017).

Correspondingly, *Oni Igbe* Asenemo Jiyovwi and *Onori* Abel Egofovwe noted that the book written by the professor ought not to generate any conflict if there was input from the leadership of the religion at Kokori. It will not be out of place to reason that the controversy over the promotion of religious literacy through publications of books on Igbe religion by the followership and leadership also boils down to the question of perception. From the submissions of all the respondents, it is evident that both the leadership and followership of Igbe religion are interested in publications and production of books that will engender more visibility and patronage for the religion. But the leadership at Kokori wants to be in full control by contributing to the textual contents and giving approval to all publications because they claim to be the principal custodian of Igbe religious heritage.

On the other hand, adherents who have decided to take on the task of using books to promote religious literacy in Igbe are of the opinion that it is not all publications that require the involvement and approval of the leadership. This agrees with Glowacki (2011:4), who submits that “perception is at the root of conflict especially when there is a threat-to-cares. The term “cares” refers to the needs, interests, goals, beliefs, and values of a person. “Cares” exists at three levels which are: personal desires and needs, expected patterns of interaction and standards to judge the right or wrongness of decisions”. Conflict, thus, results when one person’s “cares” are perceived and felt as threatening to another person’s “cares” (Picard, 2003). In trying to situate these three levels of “care” within Igbe religion, that is the level of needs, interest, goals and values can be interpreted

to mean the desire of its leadership to exert and maintain general oversight on all aspects of the religion.

Expected patterns of interaction can be interpreted to mean the desire of its leadership for adherents of who intend to embark on religious literacy activities to constantly seek its input and approval of the textual contents of all publications. Standards to judge the right or wrong of decisions can be interpreted to mean that as the custodian of Igbe religious heritage, the leadership at Kokori feels it reserves the right to approve and validate any publication as fit for consumption by its devotees. The leadership of the religion feels that these three levels of “cares” have been violated by some devotees through their religious literacy activities, leading to conflicts and tension in their interactions.

Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu (JP) revealed that some practitioners of Igbe have written books that painted a wrong picture of the religion. This according to him is one of the drivers of conflict within Igbe religion:

In those days, a man from *Igbe Ame* went to Delta Broadcasting Service (DBS) and advertised a book that he published on Igbe. The book was a complete misrepresentation of Igbe. In fact, the book painted a wrong picture of Igbe religion. In the book, the man wrote that his wife in Igbe comes from water every Friday and goes back on Sundays. Everything he wrote in that book is diabolic. Another one again published a book and mentioned that God in Igbe is known as a boa, a species of snake. Through these books, they will be feeding people with lies. We warned them to stop circulating such books about the religion (Interview at Emokpa, Ughelli North Local Government, January 1, 2017).

The disclosure of Oyiboame further confirms Richard’s (2015) opinion that almost since the dawn of publishing, certain books have been resisted and some have been banned due to certain controversies and misconceptions.

4.4.4.3 Doctrinal Differences and Deviation from Original Practices

Differences in religious doctrines and practices as instigators of conflicts between and within religions have generated intense scholarly debates (Ayuba, (2011); Adamolekun, (2012); Treve, (2013); Awoniyi, (2013); Olojo, (2014); Yake, (2015); Mathie, (2016). The

central argument is framed around the plurality of doctrines and practices as sources of violent contestations and divisions within the Abrahamic monotheism. But doctrinal differences and deviations from original practices will be discussed as an instigator of intra-sectarian conflicts within the context of Igbe Orhe, a monotheist non-Abrahamic religion.

Uku Phillip Akpokovo, the eldest grandson of Ubiesha, the founder of Igbe religion expounded that adherents of the religion have introduced different doctrines and practices that are not originally known with Ubiesha, the founder of the religion. He maintained that many devotees have gone against the norms of Igbe Orhe. He further claimed that many devotees now worship elemental spirits; ancestral spirits, animals and some have also imported elements of Christianity into the practice of Igbe Orhe. He further contends that what many devotees claim to be practising today is contrary to the tradition laid down by Ubiesha. In agreement with *Uku* Akpokovo, Gabriel Obonofuoga declared that:

The general norm in the practice of Igbe that Ubiesha left behind is the worship of one God who was divinely revealed to him as *Oweya*. The principal belief is that the mystical powers of God can be contacted through dance and *evu ofuafo* (purity of the mind) typified through the licking of the *orhe* (the native white chalk). Igbe in its pure form does not believe in approaching *Oweya* (God) through an intermediary. But after the death of Ubiesha, all manner of practices have been incorporated into the religion and it is causing confusion (Interview at Ekrethavwe, Ughelli North LGA, 28 December 2016).

The submissions of the above respondent agree with Soharwardy (2014) that after the death of a founder, more often, devotees tend to introduce and incorporate new doctrines and practices that are different from the established order, thereby causing conflicts within the body of the religion. De Conick (2011) also establishes that in the second century AD, a certain man called Marcion tried to introduce some strange doctrines into Christianity which generated internal conflict and was met with stiff resistance from the Apostolic Church. Soharwardy (2014) argues that one of the factors responsible for acts of deviance/heresy borders on the influence of the leaders within the religion. He contends that the ordinary member of a religion cannot proclaim and institute certain practices

except an established leader who also has the charisma and capacity to mobilise people within that religious order.

While holding onto the position of Soharwardy, the possibility of members of religion trying to introduce new doctrines and practices should not be overlooked. A case in point is recorded in the Bible book of Exodus Chapter 32 verse 1. It shows how the children of Israel compelled Aaron (who was acting instead of Moses) to introduce them to another god. As a result of their pressure, Aaron built a molten calf and the children of Israel started offering sacrifices and burnt offerings to it. Aaron took this action in the absence of Moses, who was at that time the ordained leader of the Jews. It was an action that generated serious conflict within the camp of Israel in the wilderness. By implication, when the charismatic leader hands over authority to a weak associate, the possibility of a vibrant followership at enforcing a new agenda against the established order cannot be ruled out. This establishes the fact beyond charismatic religious leadership; a vibrant and cognitively functional followership can introduce new doctrines and practices that are capable of challenging or upsetting the existing order, thereby causing conflict.

Matthias Orhero, a devotee of Igbe Orhe at Oria, Abraka, contends that Ubiesha died without documenting his teachings and philosophy which paved way for the emergence of different doctrines and teachings in the religion. He blames this shortcoming on Ubiesha's lack of exposure to formal western education. Thus, he never saw the need to document his teachings for his followers. Therefore, Igbe religion diffused beyond Kokori through different brands of practices and doctrines. This agrees with the position Saylor Academy (2015) that during the early development of Christianity, it was hard to speak of a united "Christianity". The thrust of Saylor Academy (2015) is that there are various forms of Christianity, with different takes on religion and its message. There are several important Christian writers christened Fathers of the Church; men like Tertullian, Justin the Martyr and a host of others who defined the doctrines of Christianity as they would be recognised in the future. It also affirms the postulation of Asghar (2013) that the interpretation of the theologies is developed in the course of time by followers of the various religions rather than the founders and more often after their death.

Stressing further the reasons for the differences in doctrines and practices, Matthias Orhero claimed that after the death of Ubiesha, some of his early disciples left Kokori to establish

their own brands of Igbe, a point that corroborates Nabofa (2005:340) that consequent upon the death of Ubiesha, two of his most prominent disciples, Omonedo of Orhomuru–Orogun and Okinedo of Ozoro declared their independence from the mainstream Igbe at Kokori. In the words of Matthias Orhero:

At this time Christianity has started to flourish in Urhoboland, certain dynamics began to play out because both Igbe and Christianity started competing for members. Adherents who left Kokori to found their own Igbe practice in communities that had the predominance of worshippers of traditional religion decided to incorporate some of their practices so as to attract members. Those who moved to communities with strong presence of Christianity decided to incorporate some elements of Christian practice in their temple. (Interview at Oria-Abraka, January 5, 2017)

Matthias cited the example of Igbe Oghenuku in Abraka that also celebrates the Christmas festival known to be associated with Christianity. From field observations, in many *Igbe Ogwa* (temple of worship), the Holy Bible is a common sight. In some instances, some adherents of Igbe pray in the name of Jesus Christ. This correlates with the submission of Nabofa (2005:334) that “Arabian social context and pre-Islamic religion in Arabia facilitated the shaping of the doctrine and liturgy of Islam. Also, Jewish, Roman religious and social structures also helped to shape Christianity”. Nabofa (Ibid) notes that as religions develop in a society, they are subject to certain social conditions and influences. It goes to further support the argument that traditions can be invented by adopting a set of practices which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past (Hobsbawm,1983). Therefore, within the domain of religion, the invention of tradition can mean that existing traditional practices can be modified, ritualised and institutionalised for new purposes. One can, therefore, submit that the difference in doctrines and practices that have pervaded Igbe religion is the invention of traditions with a purpose of ensuring their survival.

In this section of the study, it has been established that Igbe Orhe is equally saddled with both substantive and affective conflict. Rahim (2001) argues that substantive or task-oriented conflicts can lead to better organisational performance, while affective or relationship-oriented conflicts has the potentials of causing demotivation in a group and

decreasing the intention of members to stay. But contrary to his argument, empirical evidence in Igbe Orhe shows that substantive and affective conflicts have the capacity to affect intra-group relationships negatively. However, despite the substantive and affective conflicts that have assailed the religion, it presents a counter-narrative of non-violence conflict outcomes.

4.5 Research Question 3: Patterns and Dimensions of Intra-Sectarian Conflicts in Igbe Religion

The drivers of intra-sectarian conflict can be understood as the factors threatening the sacredly preserved identity of a religious group. Regents Prep (2003) notes that intra-sectarian religious conflicts have the capacity to split a religion apart from within. This section shall examine the patterns and dimensions of the conflicts that have confronted Igbe Orhe with specific references to the identified issues in research question Two.

4.5.1 Patterns and Dimensions of the Leadership Succession Conflict

Conventional discourses have identified certain patterns and dimensions that are associated with leadership succession conflicts. Awojobi (2011) and Mudhafar (1993) note that leadership succession conflict has led to violence and splits in religion. The Old Testament book of Isaiah, chapter 14: 12-14 acknowledges that the ambition of Satan to take over the throne of Jehovah brought a permanent severance of their relation. Iqbal and Ritter (2015) note that leadership succession conflicts can lead to the loss of a business heritage. While the patterns and dimensions of leadership succession conflict have received much attention in the Abrahamic religions, it is relatively unknown in the context of Igbe Orhe.

4.5.1.1: Case Study of Ibodje and Akpokovo:

Pattern: *Uku* Festus Ikoba, the Chairman of the Unification and Reconciliation Subcommittee, *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho, *Omote Uku* (Dr) Victoria Odaighofa, *Oni Igbe* Eloho Onotu, *Onori* Abel Egofovwe and several other respondents agreed that the leadership succession conflict between Ibodje and Akpokovo did not lead to the shedding of blood among their followers. Likewise, respondents in the FGD conducted for men, women and youth across the sectarian divisions unanimously agreed that the leadership succession between Ibodje and Akpokovo did not lead to violence and bloodshed. The dominant pattern identified in the literature shows that leadership succession conflicts in

the domain of religion have more often turned out to be violent (Iyer, (2017); Abdo, (2013); Awojobi, (2013); Esposito, (2010). Contrary to the dominant narrative, Igbe religion presents a counter-narrative that leadership succession conflict may not necessarily degenerate into violence. In the response of *Uku* Anthony Echekume:

Going by the customs and traditions of the Urhobo, the eldest son is entitled to the family inheritance. When Akpokovo refused to give up the leadership position, his elder brother Ibodje did not insist on his right and he refused any further contestations with Akpokovo. He left everything in the hand of *Oweya* (God). (Interview at Ogume, Kwale LGA January 2, 2017).

One can, therefore, argue that leadership succession conflicts can degenerate into violence when contestants to leadership position refuse to shift grounds due to ego and personal interests. Furthermore, it can be reasoned from the actions of Ibodje that he must have put aside his bruised ego and considered the overall interest of the religion before taking the hard decision of not insisting on his right to take over the leadership of the religion forcefully from Akpokovo. According to *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho, it will not be out of place to contend that the action of Ibodje to give up his right seems to have been influenced by the dominant Igbe philosophy which is expressed in this song:

<i>ejovwo k Oweya</i>	<i>leave all for God</i>
<i>ejovwo k Oweya</i>	<i>leave all for God</i>
<i>ogaga r akpoeje</i>	<i>the power of all creation</i>
<i>ejovwo k Oweya</i>	<i>leave all for God</i>

The song is consistent with the utilitarian theory which posits that the right and wrong of acts depend entirely on facts about the maximisation of overall well-being. It is commonly associated with the phrase ‘the greatest good for the greatest number,’ and it typically requires people to act in whatever way that will result in the greatest possible amount of well-being, where well-being is understood as closely related to happiness (Eggleston, 2012). One may, therefore, argue that what influences the actions of men towards peace or violence is a personal choice of aligning with the dominant orientation of the religious group.

Though the sacred narratives are consistently reinforced in the psyche of adherents, the agency of application within the context of peace or violence still rests on the personal

choice of the adherents. This is evident in the action of Ibodje towards Akpokovo in the leadership succession conflict.

Dimensions: The leadership succession conflict has some noticeable dimensions. According to *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko, “the leadership tussle between Ibodje and Akpokovo actually led to the rise of splinter groups in Igbe Orhe. Ibodje decided to leave and went to Egbo Street, his father’s original compound to set up his own *Ogwa* of worship” (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East Local Government, October 16, 2016). All respondents that were interviewed agreed with the fact that a major outcome of the succession conflict in Igbe Orhe was the breakup. The FGDs conducted for men, women and youth across the sectarian divisions also agree to the same fact. It will not be out of place to hypothesise that one of the resultant effects of leadership succession conflict is schism.

Schism is the division of a social group into two or more relatively distinct and sometimes antagonistic factions and it is consistent with Gathuki, (2015); Awojobi, (2013); Treve, (2013) that one of the reasons leadership succession conflicts often result in splits has to do with rival contestants riding on the crest of the conflict to establish and become supreme leaders of their newly established religious groups. Iheanacho and Ughaerumba (2016) identify the entrepreneurial drive of leadership contestants as the reason behind splits within religion. However, in the context of Igbe religion, *Omote Uku* Mary Ibodje, granddaughter of Ubiesha, the founder of Igbe explained that “the split that occurred as a result of the leadership succession conflict between Ibodje and Akpokovo is for the survival of the religion. It has helped in the expansion of Igbe” (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East Local Government, 17 October 2016).

Respondents like *Onori* Godspower Jimisawho, *Onori* Godday Etairue, *Omote Uku* Sarah Okoloba and *Omote Uku* Ejina who Ogitie also agreed that the split to a large extent aided the expansion of the religion. This view corresponds with Abdo's (2013) suggestion that one of the factors that aided the diffusion of Islam is partly connected to the leadership succession conflict that rocked the religion after the death of its founder, Prophet Mohammed. The splits within Islam and the emergence of different Islamic sects have, to a large extent, contributed to its diffusion beyond the Mediterranean region. Though not within the context of leadership succession conflicts, Christianity which is acclaimed to be

the most diffused religious traditions across the world suffered from many splits beginning from 1054 AD down to the period of the Reformation. Also, the diversity of sectarian groups arising from splits in Christianity also aided the spread of the religion (Adamolekun, 2012). Therefore, the general assumption within Igbe religion is that the leadership succession conflict that led Ibodje to establish his own *Ogwa* helped to diffuse *Igbe Orhe* to all the nooks and crannies of Urhoboland. The following song in Igbe Orhe cosmology articulates it succinctly:

Erhi sivwu Ubiesha vwo odjuvwu
Erhi roforo sivwu Ubiesha vwo odjuvwu
Oyo vwi ku Ubiesha roghwi Igbe rhe

Ibodje da gharo orhe vwo ruiisi
Ohwo ra akpo no ye geruvwe
Rimi she mi se she ghengorhe-eebevwe
Erhi roforosivwi Ubiesha vwo
Odjuvwu.

English Translation

Spirit adore Ubiesha in Heaven
Holy Spirit adore Ubiesha in Heaven
Abundant blessings follow Ubiesha who founded Igbe
Ibodje spread the Orhe to all nations
Man conspired to push me to fall
I cannot fall because Orhe is beside me
Holy Spirit adores Ubiesha in Heaven.

Uku Festus Ikoba revealed that “during the early period of its evolution, there was no strong evangelical movement to carry out missionary activities for Igbe. The succession conflict between Ibodje and Akpokovo which led to a split in the religion indirectly helped it to expand” (Interview at Oria-Abraka, 14 December 2016). Therefore, schisms within the religion which may have resulted from leadership succession conflicts or otherwise remain a catalyst for growth and expansion of such religions.

Uku Osete Ame, *Uku* Johnbull Unumegume, *Onori* Stephen Udumebrae, *Omote Uku* Victoria Amajatoja, Mathias Orhero and Reverend (Prophet) Oyiboame Emojevu are unanimous in their submissions that after the split, the practice of Igbe flourished more in the hands of Ibodje, while that of Akpokovo began to dwindle. When the researcher paid a

visit to the *Ogwa* of Akpokovo, it had very negligible traffic of adherents compared to the bustling *Ogwa* of Ibodje. This partially underscores the assertion that that leadership transitions are associated with conflict and membership decline (Dollhopf& Scheitle, (2013); Awojobi, (2013). This answer from *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) gives an idea of what must have transpired that probably led to the decline of the religion in the regime of Akpokovo:

Beyond usurping the leadership position from Ibodje, Akpokovo started going from one *Ogwa* to another compelling the priests to pay him homage. He was also demanding money before he could offer prayers on their behalf. There was a particular occasion that Akpokovo took police and embarked on a mission to arrest the other high priests. On their way to arrest Ojanogha at Isoko, Akpokovo went berserk and started slapping the police officer that was assigned to accompany him. They were forced to abort the mission and Akpokovo was locked up in the police cell. God deliberately took away the senses of Akpokovo because he was embarking on a mission that was contrary to the laws of the religion (interview at Kokori, Ethiope East LGA, 16 October 2016).

The purported actions of Akpokovo can be situated within the context of toxic leadership notion. Toxic leadership, according to Blumen (2005:652) “wreak profound and lasting damage by bullying, undermining, demeaning and intimidating those they want to control”. Thus, toxic leaders find it difficult to retain members in their congregation. Beyond the thesis of toxic leadership attitude, *Oni Igbe* Asenemo Jiyovwi argues that the congregation of Akpokovo circle began to decline and she ascribed it to divine retribution, while the prosperity Ibodje circle is enjoying up till today is ascribed to divine benevolence because he acted within the confines of the laws of *Oweya* (God). The general belief is that Akpokovo took over the mantle of leadership in an improper way which attracted the retribution from *Oweya*. This song in Igbe supports her claims:

Oka ri yosa.... oka ri yosa (2ce)
Ohwo ro rui ruo ri Igbe oma da
Vwe rho oghene, oka ri yosa

They will surely be rewarded (2ce)
Working for Igbe will be rewarded
Those working for God will be rewarded

4.5.2 Pattern and Dimensions of the Monopoly of Ordination into Igbe Priesthood (*Uku/Omote Uku*) Conflict

Ordination of adherents who desire to enter into the priesthood system of a religion is a very complicated process. Ordination into the priesthood requires the endorsement of a legitimised ecclesiastical order. The designated and exclusive authority for the administration of the sacrament of ordination has generated conflict situations within the internal dynamics of religions across the globe. The monopoly over the ordination of priests as a driver of conflict has received scholarly attention (Bourgeois, (2015); McKinnon, (2011); Butler, (2007); Basic Manual for Priesthood Holders Part B, (2000). However, their discussions on this conflict generating theme are limited to the Christian faith tradition. The pattern and dimensions of the monopoly of ordination conflict will be discussed through the lens of Igbe religion.

4.5.2.1 Case Study of Ibodje and Agege

Pattern: According to *Olorogun* Ubieshakparobo Samuel Ibodje, the last son of Ibodje, when Agege was made the leader of the Igbe religion at Orhomuru, information got to Ibodje that Agege was ordaining people as *Uku*. Agege's action incurred the wrath of Ibodje who was the reigning *Uku* Supreme then. Confirming this narrative, *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) explained that Ibodje warned Agege to desist from such acts because, in the order of the religion, Agege only had the right to ordain *Onori* or *Oni Igbe*. The authority to ordain *Uku* or *Omote Uku* is the exclusive right of the *Uku Supreme*. Any other contrary action will be insubordination. Corroborating the account of the first two respondents, *Uku* Festus Ikoba attested that Agege failed to yield to the warning of Ibodje because he continued to make people *Uku* and *Omote Uku*. According to him, he was claiming that he too had the right and power to make people *Uku* or *Omote Uku*.

Olorogun Ubieshakparobo revealed that when Ibodje later got to know, he resisted the pressure to go violent. He simply said that he would not fight because judgment belongs to *Oweya*. Thus, in terms of pattern, the ensuing authority to ordain *Uku* or *Omote* did not degenerate into violence. One may want to ask, why did it not degenerate into violence? Ubieshakparobo's response offers an insight:

It is because of *Urhi* (law); the orhe (chalk) has guiding laws. One of the cardinal laws of this orhe (chalk) is that you must not act in violence against your fellow man. This orhe says don't fight. You must leave vengeance for *Oweya* (God) because he is the final judge (Interview at Kokori, October 18, 2016).

The submissions of Ubieshakparobo agree with Schumann and Ross's (2010) assertion that the extent people go in seeking personal vengeance is predicated on the support they derive from the laws, norms and values of their religion. In other words, the quest for vengeance within the threshold of conflict can be interpreted in the context of Igbe perception of the morality behind certain actions. Also, the thesis of interpreting the morality behind the quest for personal vengeance can be rooted in a cultural context. Al-Shawtabi (2008) and Smith (2008), cited in Schumann and Ross (2010), argue that acts of personal revenge are more common in cultures of honour where avenging injustices against one's kin is normative and widely accepted and people who shun personal revenge in these cultures risk being perceived as cowards without honour. It can, therefore, be concluded that an adherent of a religion will feel morally justified to seek vengeance and take violent actions against the other party to a conflict if he finds support in his religion and cultural context. Equally, when religious or cultural support for seeking personal revenge is absent, adherents tend to be restrained from embarking on personal vengeance missions that may degenerate into violent outcomes.

Dimensions: One of the noticeable dimensions to the conflict originating from the monopoly of ordination is the non-recognition of anyone who professes to be an *Uku* or *Omote* without legitimising it from Kokori. *Uku* Festus Ikoba, *Olorogun* Ubieshakparobo, *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP), *Onori* Godday Etairue acknowledge that devotees who have been ordained *Uku* or *Omote Uku* from other sectarian groups such as the Agege section at Orhomuru and Okonedo section at Ozoro are not recognised by Kokori. There was a unanimous agreement in the FGD conducted for men across the sectarian divisions that the leadership of Igbe religion at Kokori does not recognise anyone who claims to be *Uku* or *Omote Uku* outside its jurisdiction. While Matthias Orhero agreed that Kokori does not recognise *Uku* or *Omote Uku* that is not directly ordained by the *Uku Supreme*, he affirmed it does not affect their recognition at the interpersonal relationship level. He notes that since most *Uku* and *Omote Uku* ply their trade through the power of clairvoyance and

prophecy, the average Igbe devotee does not care whether it was Agege or Ibodje who carried out the ordination exercise if their personal problems are solved. Therefore, the theory of utilitarianism can be applied in the realm of individuality. Putting it more succinctly to the average Igbe Orhe adherent, the source of the ordination of an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* does not really matter if personal contact with such an *Uku* can bring a lasting solution to the spiritual and physical problem plaguing the individual.

Another dimension to the conflict over the monopoly of ordination is social withdrawal by the affected members. *Onori Abel Egofovwe* admitted that “in order to avoid shame or humiliation some *Uku* or *Emete Uku* has stopped attending programmes organised by Kokori because at such gatherings they are either isolated or not given the honour due to an *Uku*” (Interview at Ovwian - Aladja, December 26, 2016). Putting the statement of *Onori Abel Egofovwe* in perspective, Sieff (2016) is of the view that shame is a strong emotion human feel and it is very painful. Shame in the appraisal of Sieff (2016: 3) motivates us to “hide parts of our emotional selves to protect our hearts. Shame is a strong component of emotional trauma, a very uncomfortable and pervasive state of being. It does not only poison our relationship with ourselves; it also poisons our relationships with others”. *Onori Abel Egofovwe* further explained that by way of protecting themselves from shame, most *Uku* and *Omote Uku* who are not accorded due recognition by Kokori because of the source of their ordination have decided to stop attending a programme at Kokori to maintain their honour and dignity.

4.5.3 Patterns and Dimensions of the Betrayal of Trust by Leadership conflict

The pattern and dimensions of betrayal of trust have received a measure of empirical study. Elangovan and Shapiro (1998) discuss the issue from the angle of the victim’s perception within a corporate organisation. Krantz (2006) explores the impact of betrayal on leaders. Jamsari *et al.* (2012) contend that an Islamic leader will be termed a betrayer if he fails to implement *Sharia* within his sphere of influence. Biblical narratives in the New Testament book of Luke, Chapter 22, also record how Judas betrayed his master Jesus Christ. However, these case studies have been drawn from the corporate business world, the Islamic and Christian faith traditions. But examples of the patterns or dimensions of betrayals within Igbe religion are largely unknown.

4.5.3.1 Case Study: Fallout of the Court Case Omonedo/The Burial Ceremony of the Father of Oyiboame

Pattern: There is a consensus from all respondents and the FGDs that the death of a sick man who was initially brought to the *Ogwa* of Omonedo at Orhomuru for possible healing eventually led to the arrest of Omonedo. The incident led to the prosecution of Omonedo, who they claimed was first arrested and taken to the Colonial District Officer at Abraka and later charged to court at Obetem, Kwale; he was charged for murder. *Onori* Godday Etairue recalled that:

Omonedo told the trial judge that Ibodje could testify on his behalf that he was a true high priest of Ubiesha. However, when Ibodje was summoned to come and testify on behalf of Omonedo, he failed to show up in court. Omonedo felt betrayed because he was left to his fate. Omonedo was really hurt. His hurt, however, did not result in an open confrontation between him and Ibodje (Interview at Otokutu, Okpe Local Government Area. 29 December 2016)

Equally, Prophet Amos Oyiboame Emojevu (JP), also felt betrayed under the leadership of MacDonald Ibodje who took over as *Uku* Supreme after the death of Ibodje. He contended that despite the role he (Oyiboame) played during the burial of Ibodje, he was shocked that nobody came to console him from Kokori when his father died. So, he had to bury his father all alone.

There was a consensus from all respondents, including the FGDs that the fallout of the court case did not lead to violent confrontations between Omonedo and Kokori. *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho explained that “Omonedo and Oyiboame must have been restrained by the *urhi* (law) of the *Orhe* (native white chalk) that explicitly advocates that an *Uku* must be very patient in the face of provocation” (Interview at Upper Agbarho, Ughelli North Local Area, 28 December 2016). This song justifies her claims:

Uku yamuo odiri o
Uku ra anibor yamuo odirio o
Yamuo odiri ko Oweya

Uku follow the path of patience
Uku Anibor follow the path of patience
the path of patience for Oweya

According to Kadayifci-Orellana (2003), religious traditions offer rich resources for resolving conflicts by advocating values such as repentance, forgiveness, justice and patience, among others. Just as the song reflects, patience while looking up to *Oweya* to dispense justice may have been the overriding reason for Omonedo and Oyiboame to resist the impulse towards violence. However, putting the song in context, Kadayifci-Orellana (cited in Kadayifci-Orellana 2003), notes that religion offers a language and symbolism through which human beings can interpret reality as well as get comfort for trauma and injuries.

Consequently, it can be argued that though sacred religious narratives can be taken as the direct word of God, they still must go through the human cognitive analysis. The assertion confirms the proposition of El Badawy *et al* (2015) that violent response in the face of provocation within the domain of religion is closely associated with who and how the narratives are interpreted.

Also, it can be debated that despite the song in Igbe that preaches ‘endurance for the sake of *Oweya*’, Omonedo and Oyiboame could still have decided to go violent with Ibodje. Rather, he opted to follow the pattern of non-violence. It underscores Kadayifci-Orellana's (2003) view that beyond the laws of a religion, a violent pattern of response is a result of human choices. It is constructed through the actions of individuals situated in relation to the discursive and institutional continuities that enable the occurrence of war and renders it a legitimate human behaviour.

Dimension: Withdrawal of Relationship with Kokori/Sectarian Detachment

Onori Godday Etairue, *Uku* Festus Ikoba, *Olorogun* Ochuko Mukoro (JP), *Onori* Abel Egofovwe and Matthias Orhero affirmed that after Omonedo dispensed with the murder case; he lost faith in the leadership of Igbe. *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho, *Omote Uku* Sarah Okoloba and *Omote Uku* Ejina who Ogitie, noted that the trust Omonedo placed on Ibodje was violated when he (Ibodje) failed to show up in court. Consequently, he decided to detach himself completely from Kokori. In other words, he stopped relating to Kokori and decided to stand as an independent Igbe sectarian group. Equally, Prophet Oyiboame confirmed that after he buried his father, he decided to kick- start his own brand of Igbe. According to him, the incidence made him lose confidence in the leadership of Igbe at Kokori.

Apart from losing confidence in the leadership, Prophet Oyiboame explained that the incident gave him the courage to heed the call of *Oweya* to go and start his own brand of Igbe Orhe. It confirms the thesis of Krantz (2006: 8) that when a leader is betrayed within an organisation, the tendency is for the said leader to mobilise followers to embrace new visions of emerging necessity and harmonise their evolving connections within the transcendent context.

Furthermore, Prophet Oyiboame Emojevu argues that since Omonedo is one of the major leaders of the religion, Ibodje ought to have looked beyond his personal fears and attend to the ordeal Omonedo was going through at that time. For him, it would have benefitted the interest of the entire Igbe religion. To some extent, the view correlates with Krantz's (2006) observation that one of the defining elements of betrayals has to do with a leader focusing on his personal position, influence and interest rather than those of the institution.

Uku Festus Ikoba opines that it was trust in the leadership of Igbe at Kokori that made Omonedo to boldly declare before the trial judge that Ibodje would come and testify on his behalf. It can be inferred that Ibodje was faced with a conflict of interest. The first which is personal interest in terms of risking arrest and the second is institutional interest in terms of openly standing by Omonedo and affirming before the trial judge that he is indeed a genuine devotee of Igbe. To this end, Krantz (2006:3) argues that when leaders are confronted by irreconcilable conflicts between the institutional and personal, they face the challenges of betrayal.

Prophet Oyiboame Emojevu identified the gradual dearth of miracles in Igbe as major fallout of the conflicts leading to splits. Matthias Orhero contended that the conflicts have brought setbacks to Igbe religion. He further argues that miracles are no longer witnessed in Igbe Orhe, unlike the days of Ubiesha and Ibodje. *Uku* Osete Ame and *Omote Uku* Victoria Amajatoja agreed with Matthias Orhero but summed it up to the violation of one of the principles of "*e vu ofuafo o ye vwo gbi Igbe*" (it means we dance Igbe with a pure heart). The argument is that to a large extent, since the leaders of the religion have not been able to settle their primordial differences (primordial in the sense that the conflicts under discussion date back to history), it will be difficult to enjoy divine benefits from *Oweya* because one of his laws is being intentionally violated (purity of heart and purpose). Apart

from the physical dimension of the conflict which has to do with sectarian detachment, there is also the spiritual dimension which borders on the dearth of miracles.

4.5.3.2. Patterns and Dimensions of the Inequitable Distribution of Food at Festivals conflict

Dimensions of food conflicts have been explored in the context of security and sustainability, humanitarian assistance, agricultural production including genetically modified vegetable nutrition and food waste (Forman 2016). Beyond meeting the nutritional needs of mankind, food is also a tool for the communication of culture. McBride (2016) discusses how culinary diplomacy can be used in shaping the dimensions of conflict. Forman (2016) and McBride (2016) look at the patterns and dimensions in the context of food insecurity and sustainable development. Anyanwu *et al.*, (2015) explores the pattern and dimensions of conflicts arising from violations of food taboo among the Urhobo ethnic group of Nigeria. The inequitable distribution of food as a source of conflict also dates to biblical times. Cain in the book of Genesis reportedly killed his brother Abel because God accepted the food sacrifice of Abel and rejected the food sacrifice of Cain, an action that triggered a violent reaction. However, this explored the patterns and dimensions of food conflict during the celebrations of festivals in Igbe religion.

Case Study 1: *Uku Ogievwege* Feast

Uku Albert Ogievwege narrated how a few years back his feast celebration was almost marred by the inequitable distribution of food. According to him, after making elaborate planning, in terms of food and drinks, he was surprised to receive reports from some of his *Inori* (chief priests) that people were complaining about not being sufficiently served. Upon investigation, it was discovered that the people saddled with the task of distributing food and drinks mismanaged the whole process. According to him, they were serving only their friends and the people they knew. As a result, food and drinks did not go around. He further mentioned that some people quietly left, while others managed to stay until the end of the programme. He, however, attested that the agitation for food did not lead to violent confrontations.

Case Study 2: *Omote Uku Ivwie Designer's* Feast

In the case of *Omote Uku Ivwie Designer*, it was the case of hoarding food that almost marred her feast. She explained that after fixing the date of her feast, her team specifically

planned for the entertainment of guests. She said that apart from being a high priestess of the religion, she is also the Medical Director of a thriving maternity centre. As a result, she ensured perfection of all arrangements concerning her feast because of the calibre of guests that will be in attendance. On the day of the feast, her attention was drawn to the fact that souvenirs were not being distributed equitably. According to her, five *Emete Uku* and three *Uku* approached her and complained that some people were leaving with souvenirs, drinks and packs of food while some were going empty-handed, especially people who are not from her own sectarian group. After investigations, to her utter amazement, not only were their complaints about souvenirs, many of the guests were not served with food. Amida surplus of food and drinks, many people were denied access.

Most of the respondents agreed that sometimes the inequitable distribution of food during feasts is an instigator of conflict across Igbe religion, yet there are no known reported cases of adherents engaging in open violent confrontations over food. This negates the submission of Koren and Bagozzi (2016) that grievances over food and the necessity to secure access to food resources can motivate marginalised groups to participate in rebellions.

What must have been responsible for the non-violent narrative in the course of food distribution? *Onori* Joseph Akpore, Senior Secretary of Igbe religion at Kokori explained that:

We make our people realise that when attending a feast, they must have it at the back of their mind that they there principally to seek the face of *Oweya*. As such, they must be contented with whatever they are served (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East LGA, October 18, 2016).

In addition, *Onori* Udumebrae mentioned that it is a thing of shame for any of their members to go outside and fight over food. According to him, the leadership of the religion avoids whatever will bring shame. He further revealed that when they give such a report and it is confirmed to be true, the person will be severely punished. This point correlates with Anyanwu *et al.* (2015) position that when punitive measures are decreed in the course of the attitude of deviance, it regulates certain human behavioural tendencies. The lack of prompt punitive measures against social ills has been identified as a societal pitfall.

For *Uku* Anthony Echekume, the feeding of guests during feast is sacrosanct because people come from far distances. However, he emphasised that to a large extent, they have been able to sensitise their devotees that distribution of food during feast should not be a right. Rather it should be a privilege. He further reasoned that since people attend feasts on the strength of an invitation, they should bear with whatever shortcoming that is evident during the programme. In other words, they have been able to build the capacity of a huge number of their followers to embrace the value of contentment. Some studies have emphasised that the mental reorientation of followers of various religions is very crucial and should be a more appropriate approach to addressing the issues of sectarian violence (see Rowley, (2015); Engender, (2015)).

In his contribution, *Uku* Johnbull Unumegume aligned with other respondents by affirming that most members of Igbe do not go to feasts alone but in the company of their *Uku*. Since their *Uku* or *Omote Uku* will never scramble for food or drink, the members will not attempt such. These orientations, according to him, have to a large extent helped in building a culture of non-violence. Whitehurst (2016) observes that culture is learned behaviour. She argues that leaders construct organizational culture through their actions. A change in an organisations corporate culture originates when leaders model and mirror the behaviour they want the organisation to emulate.

The notion of Whitehurst (2016) can be applied to any kind of culture, whether religious or political. Within the context of Igbe Orhe, the culture of adherents not fighting one another when confronted with the inequitable distribution during feast has been implanted in their psyche by the behavioural agency of their leaders and through peace teachings on several platforms. Thus, the behaviour religious leaders' model before their followers is critical to building a culture of violence or non-violence.

Dimensions:

Selective Attendance and Comparison

Oni Igbe Eloho Onotu, *Oni Igbe* Mary Jowhoma, *Oni Igbe* Maria Okugoni, *Emegalise* Mariam Achinedu Echekume, *Onori* Abel Egofovwe and *Oni Igbe* Tina Olomu identified selective attendance of feast as a fall-out of conflicts associated with the inequitable distribution of food. According to the respondents, devotees now carefully choose the feast

they attend based on their personal relationship with the convener or host. In other words, if the relationship with the convener or host is not at a personal level, some devotees will not attend such a feast. Moreover, *Uku* Anthony Echeke, Jonathan Okpako, Shimeji Ogheneruemu and Matthias Orhero argue that the inequitable distribution of food has led to devotees making comparison with other feasts that they have attended in times past.

4.5.3.3 Patterns and Dimensions of undermining the Personality of a Spiritual Leader

Discourses on the patterns and dimensions of conflict relating to the undermining of spiritual leaders have been well documented in literature (Frangipane, (2017); Tetsola, (2014); Wheeler, (2011); Cothorn, (2011); Javedanfar, (2009). However, these investigations are limited to the Christian and Islamic faith traditions. The book of Numbers Chapter 12, in the Old Testament Bible, also records the dimension of the conflict that ensued after Miriam and Aaron undermined the personality of Moses. In this section, undermining the personality of a spiritual leader and its implication in the conflict pattern and dimensions is discussed in the context of Igbe Orhe.

Pattern

Case Study 1: The Undermining of *Uku* Akpiri

Uku Mathew Itegbere at Orhomuru- Orogun, recounted how about six years ago in a town called Jesse, a certain *Uku* by name Akpiri was left unattended to during a feast that he was privileged to witness. According to him, it appears the *Uku* at that time was not well known in the circle that was hosting the feast. During the entertainment session of the programme, he was neglected. According to *Uku* Matthew Itegbere, the man expressed his grievances to the convener, who duly apologised for the oversight. The host was very angry and ordered the people serving to take care of the *Uku*. The *Uku* and his team were later served and they stayed till the end of the programme.

Case Study 2: The Undermining of Akpine Aziza

Omote Uku Ivwie Designer related how an influential Akpine Aziza was invited to a feast. According to her, the woman is very wealthy and highly connected in Delta State. The woman in question she claimed is even qualified to be ordained as *Omote Uku*, but she refused to take the title. But she was served as an ordinary person when it was time for

entertainment. She felt bad and opted to leave. It took a lot of persuasions from the host before she could rescind her decision.

Case Study 3: Researcher's Observation

The researcher was invited to attend a mini feast at Ovwian, Aladja, and personally observed how a certain *Omote Uku* felt her personality was undermined by the wife of the convener of the feast. The researcher observed that towards the end of the feast, the *Omote Uku* arrived with her entourage. At the time of her arrival, entertainment of guests was almost over. After sitting for a while, the host beckoned on his wife to serve food to the *Omote Uku* and her entourage. The *Omote Uku* was duly entertained but her entourage was neglected. The wife of the host explained that they had exhausted the entertainment provisions. The expression on the face of the *Omote Uku* showed that she was not pleased with the scenario. The researcher observed further that the *Omote Uku* approached the host. Her actions and gesticulations showed that she was expressing her grievances. Equally, the researcher observed that the host started making apologetic gestures to the offended *Omote Uku*. After a while, the *Omote Uku* returned to her seat. She and her entourage stayed until the end of the meeting.

These case studies show another established pattern of non-violence. According to Mathias Orhero, an average Igbe adherent is very good at bearing hurt and to a large extent, it informs their level of tolerance in the face of provocation. It is this level of tolerance that makes them stay behind in the face of an embarrassing situation. This corroborates the observation of Limon *et al* (2014) that tolerance will always create an atmosphere of non-violence. Furthermore, Tony Sakpra affirmed that “when an *Uku* or even an ordinary Igbe adherent fails to voice his or her grievance, it portends great danger (Interview at Ovwian-Aladja, December 27, 2016)”. So, when an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* or a spiritual personality is offended, instead of reacting in an untoward manner, he or she is inclined to express the annoyance immediately. This corroborates the Old Testament Book of Proverbs Chapter 27 verse 5 that “open rebuke is better than secret love”. Tony Sakpra further emphasised that once the offending party renders an apology, the *Uku* or *Omote Uku* or any spiritual leader in Igbe is pacified. He concludes that it is a general attitude and culture that the average Igbe member also exhibits. It agrees with Whitehurst (2016) view that leaders create organisational culture by the actions they take, not the other way around. Culture

change begins when leaders start to model the behaviour, they want the organization to emulate and the best way to cultivate and reinforce that culture is to lead with behaviours and take actions that promote the importance of such.

In her response, *Omote Uku* Victoria Amajatoja explained that another factor that is responsible for the non-violence pattern when a spiritual personality in Igbe is offended has to do with the concept of “*evu ofuafo*”. Interpreted literarily, *evu ofuafo* means purity of the heart or having a pure heart. According to her, a spiritual leader in Igbe must voice his or her grievances because bottling it will affect the spiritual underpinning of *evu ofuafo* (purity of the heart). In Igbe Orhe, it is the person with a pure heart that can attract and command the constant presence of *Oweya* (God). Such a person is equally empowered to see visions and work miracles. Consequently, when grievances are bottled up it means that the spirit of the person bottling up hurt or grievance is disconnected from the power of *Oweya* (God). What this portends according to her will be the inability to see clear visions and have credible insight into the challenges of mankind, which is the major strength of an *Uku* or *Omote Uku*. According to her, the idea of *evu ofuafo* is not only important to a spiritual leader in Igbe Orhe, but it is also equally important to its entire adherents. It can, therefore, be deduced that the consciousness of the loss of spiritual power that is connected to the concept of *evu ofuafo* in Igbe Orhe cosmology is one of the cardinal factors responsible for the non-violent pattern in the context of the undermining of spiritual personalities.

Dimension

From the FGD conducted for women across the sectarian division, it was unanimously agreed that when a spiritual personality, for example, an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* is embarrassed in the public, immediately the host will summon those who are responsible and they will be reprimanded. They also added that in some instances the offender can be fined by the leaders who are present at the occasion. Furthermore, *Omote Uku* Echekume expounded that conflict resulting from undermining of spiritual personalities have inspired many *Uku* and *Omote Uku* to introduce new innovations into their entertainment procedures. For example, she highlighted the fact that at many social gatherings before any entertainment takes place, the host personally ensures the full identification of the important spiritual

personalities that are present. Then, they will personally oversee how their entertainment is carried out.

4.5.3.4. Patterns and Dimensions of Conflicts resulting from Overcrowded Schedules of Feasts Celebrations

Case Study 1: *Omote Uku* Dolor Siakpere (*Igbe Ame*) vs. *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho (*Igbe Orhe*)

Onori Abel Egofovwe historicised the clash of the celebration of a feast between *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho and *Omote Uku* Dolor Siakpere. Both reside at Ughelli. According to *Onori* Abel, *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho was the first to send out an invitation for the celebration of her feast. Later, information got to her that *Omote Uku* Dolor Siakpere was planning her own feast on that same date. He further stated that in terms of hierarchy, *Omote Uku* Dolor Siakpere was far junior to *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho. As a result, *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho became very upset with the development. The attention of *Omote Uku* Dolor Siakpere was called to the logjam that had resulted from the clash of date and she was counselled to reschedule her feast because *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho was a very senior spiritual leader in Igbe and she must be given the honour. Furthermore, she was told that she ought to have sought clearance from *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho before proclaiming the date of her feast. *Onori* Abel further mentioned that *Omote Uku* Dolor Siakpere duly acknowledged that it was an oversight for her not to have gone to see *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho before fixing her date. Consequently, she had to reschedule for a later date.

In explaining this case study, *Onori* Abel mentioned that *Omote Uku* Dolor Siakpere was not forced to reschedule her feast. She was able to listen to the voice of reason. She was quoted as saying “why should I be celebrating a feast when I have in the process offended an *Omote Uku*?” (Interview at Ovwian, Udu Local Government Area. 18 October 2016) Her response in the view of *Omote Uku* Ejinawho Ogitie is established in this song that is popular among devotees of the Igbe religion:

Ibaba vwe be rhe na ghwo
Erukainure vwe be rhe naghwo
Owo piopio, ugbunu chororo
Si hwive ri gbigbe sai je ghwo

Our father has instructed do not quarrel
Erukainure has instructed do not fight
Wrong association, bad communication
Is it possible for Igbe adherents to quarrel?

In the words of *Omote Uku* Ejinawho Ogitie, “the song means that should two people who are dancing together to quarrel? We should watch our mouth. We should equally watch our actions. Two people dancing Igbe ought not to fight. We sing this song from time to time” (Interview at Aladja, Udu Local Government Area. December 25, 2016). From the response of the last respondent and from the statement credited to *Omote Uku* Dolor Siakpere, one can deduce that her decision to reschedule the feast was guided by the utilitarian theory which posits that the rightness and wrongness of acts depend entirely on facts about the maximisation of overall well-being. It is commonly associated with the phrase ‘the greatest good for the greatest number,’ and it typically requires people to act in whatever way that will result in the greatest possible amount of well-being, where it is understood as closely related to happiness (Eggleston, 2012).

Case Study 2: *Omote Uku* Queen Ikpe (*Igbe Ame*) and *Omote Uku* Endurance Edjeren (*Igbe Orhe*):

Uku Festus Ikoba, the Chairman Unity and Reconciliation Committee in Igbe, cited the case of *Omote Uku* Queen Ikpe, a member of *Igbe Ame* Sectarian group and *Omote Uku* Endurance Edjeren, a member of *Igbe Orhe* Mainline Classical sectarian group. According to him, they are contemporaries in terms of hierarchy because they were ordained the same day. It was reported that *Omote Uku* Endurance Edjeren was the first to circulate the invitation for her feast. Much later, *Omote Uku* Queen Ikpe announced her own date and it, unfortunately, clashed with the date of *Omote Uku* Endurance Edjeren. It was however reported that both parties decided to host their feasts on the said date. According to *Uku* Festus Ikoba, the understanding was that the blessings of certain people are tied to certain days as determined by *Oweya*. Since both parties claimed that it is *Oweya* (God) who instructed them to host the feast, cancelling one for another would be holding back the hand of *Oweya* (God). As a result, the conflict maintained a non-violent pattern. The action of the *Omote Uku* was guided by the theory of religious pluralism popularised by John Hicks. For both parties to decide to host the feast on the same day means that the spirit and power of *Oweya* are not exclusive to a person. As a result, it possible to hold ten feasts on the same day and all attendees can still experience the touch of *Oweya*.

Case Study 3: *Uku Unumegume (Igbe Orhe)* and *Uku Reuben Oteri* vs. *Uku Amos Idiale (Igbe Ame)*:

Onori Joseph Akpore gave the story of how *Uku Unumegume* attended the feast of one *Uku Reuben Oteri*. *Uku Reuben Oteri* is a protégé of another *Uku*, by name *Amos Idiale*. *Uku Reuben Oteri* and *Uku Amos Idiale* are members of the *Igbe Ame* sectarian division, while *Uku Unumegume* is from the *Igbe Orhe Mainline Classical* sectarian division. The story had it that *Reuben Oteri* invited *Uku Unumegume* to his feast. But *Uku Unumegume* was ignorant of the fact that *Uku Reuben Oteri* had clashed with his spiritual father *Uku Amos Idiale* and they were no longer on talking terms. According to *Onori Akpore*, after the ordination of *Reuben* as *Uku*, he began to feel too big before *Uku Amos* his spiritual father and leader. *Uku Unumegume* and *Uku Amos Idiale* are bosom friends. But information got to *Uku Amos Idiale* that *Uku Unumegume* was attending the feast of *Uku Reuben Oteri*, which further aggravated the annoyance of *Uku Amos Idiale*. To make matters worse, the time *Uku Reuben* fixed his feast clashed with that of *Uku Amos Idiale*, his spiritual father. Somehow, *Uku Unumegume* got to know that *Uku Amos Idiale* was also celebrating his own and wondered why *Uku Reuben* should fix his feast at the same time. Besides, he silently questioned why an invitation was not extended to him by *Uku Amos Idiale*. After probing the issue, *Uku Reuben Oteri* admitted to *Uku Unumegume* that he had fallen out with his spiritual father. *Uku Unumegume* felt very bad because he was just getting to know about it for the first time. Also, he felt *Uku Amos Idiale* would think that he had been fraternising with *Uku Reuben*. *Uku Unumegume* decided to pay a visit to *Uku Amos Idiale* in the company of *Uku Reuben*. According to *Onori Akpore*, when they eventually got to the *Ogwa* of *Uku Amos Idiale*, would not welcome them. But after much plea and persuasion from his *Inori* (chief priests) who were present during their arrival, he came out to receive them. *Uku Unumegume* explained to *Uku Amos Idiale* that he was unaware that his relationship with *Reuben* had gone sour. That he innocently attended the feast and had no intention of spiting him. After listening to the explanations of *Uku Unumegume*, *Uku Amos Idiale* narrated what transpired between himself and *Reuben*. He also mentioned that he did not extend an invitation to *Uku Unumegume* because of his relationship with *Uku Reuben*. According to him, when he heard that *Uku Unumegume* attended the feast of *Uku Reuben*, the initial thought that came to his mind was to call and to insult *Unumegume* because he felt that he must have heard about the conflict and

attending the feast of *Uku* Reuben meant they were both in solidarity. However, he chose to restrain himself because enduring offences is one of the watchwords for an *Uku*. As a result, he decided to leave judgment to *Oweya*.

Putting this case study in context, the conflict followed a non-violence pattern because *Uku* Amos Idiale first made a conscious effort to restrain himself from engaging in malevolent communication, because calling and raining insults on Unumegume may trigger a counter-reaction. This corroborates Albert (1991:21) view that:

Silence could deescalate conflict. On the other hand, intensely offensive and negative remarks of disputants could worsen a conflict...Malevolent and ambivalent communication problems can contribute to the escalation of the conflict, whether it is interpersonal, intergroup or intra-group.

From the narrative of *Onori* Akpore, it can be explained that the non-violence narrative associated with this case study is also connected with the demands placed on the office of an *Uku*. But Matthias Orhero disagrees with the idea that the non-violent pattern purely has to do with the demands placed on the office of *Uku*. He contends that there are some *Uku* whose actions betray the essence of the office. He further argues that *Uku* Amos Idiale was not under any kind of threat that will make him take the path of non-violence. It was his personal choice and decision. The argument of Matthias Orhero agrees with the conclusion of Kadayifci-Orellana (2003) that a violent pattern of response is the result of human actions and decision. Accordingly, following the path of non-violence is dependent on the responsibility of the office a person is occupying and the laws or ethics of the religion.

Dimensions

Respondents such as *Uku* Albert Ogiewwege, *Oni Igbe* Tina Olomu, *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP), and Jonathan Okpako agreed that one of the dimensions of conflict emanating from overcrowded schedules of feast celebrations depends on the personalities that are involved in the conflict. They revealed that while some will simply overlook the issue, others will get so angry to the extent of taking the matter to the *Uku Supreme*. *Omote Uku* Tuwere Echekume indicated that in some instances prior to a resolution of the conflict some very healthy relationships between *Uku* have been severed, especially if the person

affected is a senior *Uku* or *Omote Uku*. In the opinion of *Onori* Godspower Jimisawho, beyond the negative dimensions, when people are planning their feasts, they make special efforts to first communicate with members of their sectarian division and the adherents from other sectarian groups in their locality to avoid a clash of dates. In other words, it has helped in developing better communication flow.

4.5.3. 5 Patterns and Dimensions of conflicts resulting from “The Mixed Multitude”

According to *Uku* Anthony Echekume, Igbe Orhe has become an all-comers affair. He contends that mixed multitudes have flocked Igbe and their influence has brought about strange happenings into the religion. He contends that people who go to the cemetery and worship dead spirits also claim to be practitioners of Igbe Orhe. *Uku* John Akpiri affirms that even though they are aware that the religion is now mixed with all sorts of people, no case of physical violence has so far been reported or brought to his *Ogwa* for his intervention. Comrade Gilbert Isoko, a community leader in Okhrerhe Agbarho, Ughelli North Local Government, observed that though the ‘the mixed multitude’ often threatens people with their so-called spiritual powers, he attested to the fact such threats have not degenerated into a physical confrontation.

Another noticeable pattern is that most Igbe priests are not keen on separating their genuine members from mingling with the mixed multitude. According to *Uku* Samuel Igugu:

I am fully aware that there are people who claim to be our members in this *Ogwa* but in the real sense they are not. I know that many who come here are witches and wizards. Many have come to test our powers, but they have failed. I cannot drive them away because they can find their salvation and deliverance in this place. *Oweya* did not tell me to drive them away (Interview at Ugono, Ughelli North LGA, January 2, 2017).

Using the Church as an example, Heise (2015:1) points out that they are not “museums for saints; rather they are hospitals for sinners, a spiritual arena for repentance, forgiveness and a chance to put aside earthly cares”. Equally, an *Ogwa* in the Igbe faith tradition provides an avenue for the spiritual and physical transformation of recalcitrant devotees. Therefore,

the conclusion of *Uku* Samuel Igugu that they cannot send away the mixed multitude in their midst aligns with Heise (2015:1) position. Furthermore, the idea of not separating genuine members from the mixed multitudes because of the possibilities of their salvation is in synchronises with the utilitarian theory that seeks to uphold an action or an ideal that is meant for the general good of all. *Uku* Obonofogha also reasons that if the mixed multitude is sent away from their midst, whatever evil that befalls them means that the blood of the victim will be on their head.

While *Uku* Albert Ogievwege agreed that they are not fully disposed to sending away those identified as mixed multitudes in their midst, that does not mean that they cannot be disciplined. He gave an example of a man who decided to become a member of his *Ogwa*. According to him, he started to receive reports that the man was going about threatening the people who seemingly offended him that he would deal with them. He narrated how the man specifically threatened a woman who was also a member of the *Ogwa*. As the head of the *Ogwa*, *Uku* Albert Ogievwege reported he had no choice but to expel the man from the *Ogwa* because he was not remorseful of all his atrocities. He, therefore, argued that the activities of the mixed multitude can be nipped in the bud if tough disciplinary measures are taken against them. The views of *Uku* Albert Ogievwege agree with the action Moses took against the mixed multitude in the book of Numbers Chapter 11. It was recorded in the fourth verse of Numbers Chapter 11 that the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting and before long the whole congregation in the wilderness followed suit. Their murmurings attracted punishment from God. Though the punishment did not completely take away the negative influence of the mixed multitude, to a large extent it reduced it. While agreeing with *Uku* Albert Ogievwege on the need for discipline to curtail the activities of the mixed multitude, Matthias Orhero and *Olorogun* Ubieshakparobo talked about the seeming difficulties. According to them, it is challenging because when a member is expelled from an *Ogwa*, he will join another *Ogwa*. In most cases, because most *Ogwa* are looking for new members, they will not bother to do a thorough investigation into why they left their former *Ogwa*.

Dimension

In terms of dimension, *Uku* Albert Ogievwege observed that the mixed multitudes especially those he called “*fake Uku* and *Omote Uku*” use their office to manipulate

people. According to him, because the average Igbe devotee has very high regard for their spiritual leaders, they easily fall prey to some of their deceptions, especially those of the mixed multitudes breed. Expounding on the argument of *Uku* Albert Ogievwege, Matthias Orhero maintained that the surge of fake *Uku* and *Omote Uku* is connected to the commercialisation of the title of *Uku*. This also corroborates the view of *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP). In his words, “the *Uku* title now goes to the highest bidder. It now depends on how much you can pay. So, you find all manners of people coming to take the title of *Uku* and *Omote Uku*” (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East LGA, Delta State, October 16, 2016)

The FGD conducted for youth across the sectarian divisions equally revealed that not until the leadership of the religion tightens the protocol around the ordination of members as *Uku* or *Omote Uku*, the menace of the mixed multitude will continue. *Uku* Osete Ame argued that deception of innocent members which is a dimension of the menace of the mixed multitude in Igbe religion to some extent can be reduced if Kokori can focus on the diligent screening of whoever wants to become an *Uku* or *Omote Uku*. According to him, the root cause of the mixed multitude syndrome is connected to the fact that people who are not properly schooled in the basic tenets of the religion find themselves occupying priestly positions because they can pay their way through. *Uku* Osete Ame further claims that spiritual leadership involves using the values, norms and behaviour that have been inculcated in the leaders to motivate followers.

Therefore, if those who are being ordained into the leadership of the religion are not properly checked, their activities will continue to give the religion a bad name. Still using the Church as an example, Heise (2015) also supports the reasoning of *Uku* Osete Ame. Heise (2015:2) believes that “background checks are important because the activities of some religious leaders are causing damage to the credibility of their religious institutions and loss of confidence in spiritual leaders”. Also, religious institutions are supposed to be places of refuge and joy, not for criminality and abuse. So, in order to create and build credible environments for devotees, due diligence is required to ensure that persons with character issues are not allowed to occupy positions of trust in Igbe.

4.5.3.6 Pattern and Dimensions of Conflict emanating from Poaching /"Stealing" of Members /Intra-sectarian Proselytising Nuance:

Intra-sectarian poaching, "stealing", snatching or cross carpeting of members from one religious temple to another or from one denomination to another, has been identified as a phenomenon in monotheistic Abrahamic religions (Vincent, (2015); Berkeley Centre for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (2013), Ze'evi, (2007); Plaited, (2006). Similarly, it is also a conflict generating phenomenon with established patterns and dimensions in Igbe religion.

Pattern

Omote Uku Victoria Idogho, *Omote Uku* Iwvie Designer, *Onori* Steven Udumebrae, *Uku* Festus Ikoba, *Omote Uku* Ejinawho Ogitie attest to the fact that it is a common phenomenon in Igbe that adherents are crisscrossing from one sectarian division to another. In some cases, it is labelled as "stealing of members". However, in this study, it is called intra-sectarian poaching. *Omote Uku* Iwvie Designer substantiates this claim:

Some people leave your *Ogwa* for certain reasons. For example, they feel their problems are not receiving the needed attention. Others leave because of outright convincing by other priests. To me, that is stealing" (Interview at Upper Agbarho, Ughelli North Local Government Area. 1 Jan 2017).

However, the consensus is that tempers may have risen as a result of the crisscrossing activities of members; they have not recorded any act of physical violence or violent confrontations on that account. It has been mentioned earlier on by respondents that one of the factors that create room for the crisscrossing of adherents from one sectarian or *Ogwa* to another is when an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* lacks the spiritual capacity to solve the problem confronting the devotee. *Omote Uku* Iwvie designer cited the case of how a certain male member of her *Ogwa* was persuaded to leave her temple and eventually joined another brand of Igbe. She said that being human, she felt bad because to some extent through her spiritual interventions the man was able to pick up the pieces of his life. Sadly, according to her, someone was still able to convince him under the guise that she lacked prophetic insight and discernment into the issues challenging the man's life. That still did not make her take up arms and go to war against the other leader. In her words "what is my stress?

As long as his spiritual needs are met in the new *Ogwa* that he is attending, all well and good” (Interview at Upper Agbarho, Ughelli North Local Government Area. 1 Jan 2017). Her conclusion upholds the thesis of utilitarianism and the religious pluralism theory of John Hicks.

For *Omote Uku* Victoria Odaighofa, when they leave for other sectarian groups in search of a solution, after a while you find some of them coming to beg that they are accepted back into the *Ogwa*. The experience is common with members who must have been deceived by fake seers or diviners. Enite Solomon who is a member of the Charismatic version of Igbe religion and a participant in the FGD conducted for youth across the sectarian divisions cited an example of how a woman was brought almost dead into their *Ogwa*. According to him, she has been taken to several spiritual houses for healing without any solution. But when they brought her to Reverend Oyiboame, through the instrumentality of the chalk and water, the woman was healed. According to him, after a while, the woman stopped coming to the *Ogwa* and later they received a report that she went to testify of her healing in a church. According to him, it did not go down well with them but they had to let go because it was a service unto *Oweya*. This submission also agrees with the theory of Utilitarianism.

The disposition of some of the respondents who are leaders of different sectarian groups in Igbe shows that the theory of religious pluralism can be applied within the internal dynamics of Igbe religion. This is established on the fact that the psyches of the various sectarian division leaders are driven by the thesis of religious non-exclusivism (Meeker 2003, 524–534, Heim 1995). It can be deduced that it is the non-exclusivist philosophical undertone that has to a large extent restrained the leaders of some *Ogwa* from taking violent actions against other leaders who have snatched or persuaded their members to leave their places of worship. It is non-exclusivist in the sense that they believe the power of *Oweya* is not only restricted to their own *Ogwa* or sectarian group. Empirical evidence in Igbe religion has established that religious non-exclusivism and the thesis of religious pluralism can be applied to promote religious tolerance and acceptance of alternative faith traditions within and without their circle of influence.

Dimension:

Conflict emanating from intra-sectarian poaching that is the “stealing of members”, has some certain fallouts. In the submission of *Onori* Godday Etairue, to avoid the conflict of losing one’s member they have reduced to the barest minimum the idea of sending their members to other people for spiritual help. However, Matthias Orhero counters the supposition of *Onori* Godday on the grounds that it is born out of selfishness and the desire to maintain control over the resources of the devotee. According to him, some of the *Uku* are looking at losing a member of their *Ogwa* from an economic perspective when they recommend to another *Ogwa* for spiritual help. Furthermore, *Omote Uku* Victoria Odaighofa mentions that those who left unceremoniously are not usually free with her when they meet at some religious or social functions. She believed that it ought not to be that way, thus she claimed to extend her hands of fellowship to such people. In her own evaluation wherever they choose to worship, if *Oweya* can meet their needs, it is permissible with her. This view upholds the Utilitarian theory of Bentham and Mills which maintains that a given distribution of benefits and burdens in society is to be justified by the amount of happiness it produces for people in the society. It also validates the theory of religious pluralism that all religious groups are valid when viewed from their cultural perspective.

4.5.3.7 Patterns and Dimension of Tradition and Modernisation Conflicts

For respondents like *Uku* Festus Ikoba, *Uku* Osete Ame, Prophet Oyiboame Emojev, *Uku* Samuel Igugu, *Omote Uku* Tuwere Echeke, *Omote Uku* Victoria Odaighofa, *Omote Uku* Victoria Amajatoja, the word “modernisation” is an exceptionally appealing word, one that is full of hope for the religion. On the contrary, for respondents like *Olorogun* Ubieshakparobo Ibodje, *Uku* John Akpiri, *Onori* Steven Udumebrae, *Omote Uku* Mary Ibodje, *Onori* Godspower Jowhoma and *Uku* Phillip Akpokovo, the word “modernisation” evokes a feeling of fear because they believe it will destroy the traditional heritage of Igbe religion that was handed down by Ubiesha, the founder. It has been observed despite the different schools of thought on the issue of tradition and modernisation, that there is no known reported case of violent clashes among the adherents.

Uku Supreme Obaoga Ibodje argues that while they respect other religious traditions, people must realise that Igbe religion is guided by *erhi* (the revelation of the spirit of *Oweya*). Therefore, not until *Oweya* reveals that the present status quo should change, they are bound to hold on tenaciously to the existing tradition. But he cautioned:

That does not mean we should be going from one *Ogwa* to *Ogwa* disturbing people that they must follow our belief. We leave everybody to practise if they are guided by the revelation of *Oweya* (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East Local Government Area. 19 Oct. 2016).

Encoded in the words of the *Uku Supreme* is the thesis of religious pluralism and religious non-exclusivism, (Basinger, 2015:2). By implication, the *Uku* Supreme does not claim that his own sectarian group has absolute claims to the truth. *Onori* Steven Udumebrae argued that Igbe does not need to borrow from any other religion. According to him, all the leadership needs to do is to review its activities in line with modern developments and trends. However, he contended that the sacred rituals of the religion cannot be tampered with. But Rowland Adagbrassa, a participant in the FGD conducted for youth across the sectarian divisions, disagreed with the position *Onori* Udumebrae and maintained that while it is important for Igbe religion to hold on to her sacred traditions, it can still draw on the successful experiences of other religious traditions in a bid to achieve modernisation. This supports the thesis of Gusfield (1967) that the relations between the traditional and the modern do not necessarily involve displacement, conflict or exclusiveness. Modernisation does not necessarily weaken tradition. Both tradition and modernisation form the basis of ideologies and movements in which the opposites are converted into aspirations, but traditional forms may supply support for or against change.

One of the major dimensions associated with the conflict emanating from tradition and modernisation is that conflict is the personal resolve of the champions of modernisation within the religion to introduce the modernisation drive in their local *Ogwa*. *Uku* Festus Ikoba affirmed that if Kokori refuses to introduce changes in line with modern trends, he will personally take it up in his local parish. Therefore, one of the major reforms in his modernisation drive is the fixing of his feast celebration in the daytime as against the traditional night practice. According to him, they have been advocating that they should

stop celebrating feast during the night, because of the negative perception it creates in the minds of members of the larger society.

Oni Igbe Eloho Onotu argued that when feast activities are conducted during the day, people will see what they are doing and come to terms with the fact that they are not engaged in clandestine practices. In his response, Matthias Orhero maintained that the generally negative perception and challenge that Igbe is facing is not unconnected with the fact that religious rituals are more often held at night. Therefore, one of the areas calling for modernisation has to do with the call for the celebration of feasts during the daytime. Their position corroborates Robertson's (1904) view that one of the early challenges Christianity faced had to do with holding clandestine meetings. The Christians were forced in its early days of evolution to hold their worship in secret, and mostly at night, or very early in the morning because it would not be safe to meet openly. As a result, the heathens who did not know what was done at their meetings were tempted to fathom the idea that the Christians practised magic; that they worshipped the head of an ass; that they offered children in sacrifice and that they ate human flesh.

Another fall-out of the dimension to conflicts emanating from the clash of tradition with modernisation is the adoption of religious expressions that are synonymous with the Christian charismatic/evangelical movements by some leaders in Igbe religion. It must also be mentioned that fallout of the dimension is that in some Igbe denominations they keep the Bible in their *Ogwa* (worship). Their practices are therefore syncretised with the Christian faith. For example, expressions like “touch not my anointed and do my prophet no harm”, “come and be blessed”, “the blind shall see, the lame shall walk” are getting popular in Igbe Orhe. These are expressions that relate to the Pentecostal-Charismatic denomination of the Christian faith. Furthermore, many leaders of Igbe, especially members of the *Igbe Ame* sectarian division, now construct their *Ogwa* (temple of worship) with engaging modern architectural designs. There are some *Ogwa* that are fully furnished with air cooling systems. According to *Uku Osete Ame*,

Why should I not beautify my temple of worship? People should say whatever they want to say, as for me things are changing and I must also move with the trend of things (Interview at Agbarha- Otor, Ughelli North Local Government Area. December 30, 2016).

However, despite the modern architectural structure, they still make sure that outside the *Ogwa* (temple of worship) the floor is not cemented. *Uku* Osete Ame explains that the outside ground is filled with white sharp sand because in the cosmology of Igbe Orhe it is a healing instrument. But *Onori* Joseph Akpore is of the view that too much flamboyance all in the name of modernisation will corrupt the very essence of Igbe religion.

In addition, the christening of Igbe Orhe temples is another dimension to the clash between tradition and modernisation in Igbe religion. According to Reverend Oyiboame Emojevú:

A befitting temple also needs a befitting name. Initially, I was sternly criticised for naming my *Ogwa* ‘The Holy Salvation Centre’. People said I have turned Igbe to church. Today, the same people who have accused me have also christened their *Ogwa*. There are over fifty *Ogwa* that have proper names in this Ughelli. It is when you enter the place of worship you will realise that you are inside an Igbe temple (Interview at Emokpa, Ughelli North LGA, January 1, 2017)

A symbolic paraphernalia that enhances the spirit of communality and strengthens the fabric of brotherhood in Igbe religion is the *Igoni*. The *Igoni* is made from thin white wool thread. It is worn as a bracelet or band on the wrists, neck and around the ankle of adherents. However, as a result of modernisation, *Uku* Supreme Obaoga Ibodje affirms that some adherents now wear beads as a replacement (Afatakpa, 2016). Another dimension to the conflict emanating from the tradition and modernisation is loss of confidence in the corporate polity of the religion. *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho opines that “since the headquarters at Kokori sees every attempt to modernise certain things in the religion as a threat to their position, I have decided to direct my energy in building my congregation” (Interview at Upper Agbarho, Ughelli North Local Government Area. December 28, 2016).

Corroborating the point of the last respondent, *Oni Igbe* Margaret Alidi maintained that they are not in competition with Kokori, who are the traditional custodians of the religion. As a result, they will not argue with them when they resist any proposal to reform the religion through modernisation. However, an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* has direct control over his/her local assembly; they are free to initiate any change that aligns with modern trends. However, unlike the Church in its early evolution crushed attempts at reforms, describing them as “heresies” worthy of severe punishment before they spread (Becker *et al*, 2015),

the leadership of Igbe religion did not interfere with whatever change or modernisation efforts devotees have introduced or are introducing to their parishes. This is a counter-narrative to the violence and bloodshed that greeted the Protestants effort to modernise the practice of Christianity from the hegemonic and monotonous rituals of the Roman Catholic Church (Becker, 2015). The refusal of the Igbe leadership to react violently or micromanage modernisation and reformation drive in the various local assemblies to a large extent can be attributed to the values of religious pluralism and Utilitarianism that resonate in the psyche of the leadership.

4.5.3.8 Pattern and Dimensions of Conflict emanating from Language Barrier

Language and communication are at the heart of all human relations. Iwara (2005:65) maintains that “language is the principal medium of culture and socialisation”. Oz (2005) subsumes the discussion in the context of the symbolic use of language. *Uku* Anthony Echeke, Silas Ogundayomi and Tony Anie who are non-Urhobo adherents agree that language barrier is a trigger of conflict in Igbe. But they are more focused on the use of language as an instrument of social and spiritual mobilisation. Iwara (2005) submits that:

Language has two major functional properties: instrumental and symbolic. Under the instrumental, language is used as a tool or an important instrument for giving or receiving information, or expressing emotions and desires in interpersonal/social interactions. But under the symbolic property, language is used as a symbol of identity (p.75)

It must be noted that the complaint of *Uku* Anthony Echeke and other respondents is not about their ethnic identity as adherents of Igbe religion. Since the liturgy, rituals and homilies of Igbe religion are mainly conducted in the Urhobo language, adherents who are not of the Urhobo ethnic extraction and who do not understand the Urhobo language feel shortchanged. It upholds the proposition of Iwara (2005) that the politics of ethnic identity and language are very often intertwined. Language also frequently raises issues of security and insecurity that emanate from ethnic identity.

Even though the language barrier has not led to any reported case of open physical violence within the religion, *Oni Igbe* Tina Olomu maintained that devotees who constitute the ethnic minority in the religion sometimes feel socially excluded in the scheme of things. It will be apt to mention that social exclusion involves the denial of resources and

the inability to participate in the normal relationships that a society avails people. It affects the quality of life of individuals, equity and cohesion of society. People who suffer social exclusion experience several barriers to full involvement in society.

4.5.3.9 Patterns and Dimensions of Religious Literacy and Misrepresentation of Igbe Religion through Publication of Books Conflicts

Case Study 1:

Uku Festus Ikoba, Chairman of the Reconciliation and Unification Committee in Igbe religion, indicates that the need to fully document the history of the religion led to the commissioning of one Professor Akponwei to write a book on the evolution of Igbe religion. After the book was completed, a committee was set up by Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu to superintend over the book launch. It was reported that after sending out an invitation to people, the leadership of the religion at Kokori gave direct instruction that the book launch should be suspended.

Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu affirmed that the book launch was halted by Kokori because they complained that the author underrated Ibodje, their father in the book. *Onori* Joseph Akpore, the Senior Secretary of Igbe religion at Kokori confirmed that the book launch was stopped by the *Uku Supreme* because the author of the book only gave a one-sided perspective. He further argued that since there is a reigning *Uku Supreme* who is the grand custodian of the religion, the author ought to have widely consulted stakeholders before putting pen to paper. Therefore, the *Uku Supreme* Obaoga Ibodje mandated that the portion of the book where his father Ibodje was underrated should be expunged and rewritten.

Reverend Oyiboame said they had no choice but to cancel the book launch. According to him, he was not ready to make trouble with Kokori, so he had to let go, not minding the huge financial and intellectual investments that had gone into it. While expressing regrets that huge resources had been expended on the printing of the book, *Onori* Joseph Akpore insisted that it would not be fair and just to allow such a book to be released for public consumption because of the half-truth it contained. Therefore, *Uku Supreme* decided that not until the portion that disfavoured his father is rewritten, no formal approval would be given for the book to be released. Therefore, for peace to reign, the book launch was cancelled.

Case Study 2:

Omote Uku Victoria Idogho explained that she decided to venture into the publication of pamphlets and tracts in order to enhance the visibility of Igbe religion. She further expounded that since religion is suffering from negative public perception, it has become imperative to come up with publications for public consumption to correct the wrong impression people have about the religion. Unfortunately, she claimed that her intentions were misinterpreted by certain people in the headquarters. She said they openly accused her of using the name of Ibodje through her publications to make money. According to her, as an *Omote Uku*, she must not be embroiled in any controversy and therefore decided to stop her publication activities for peace to reign.

Case Study 3:

Prophet Oyiboame Emojevu (JP) narrated how an adherent of Igbe went to Delta State Broadcasting to advertise a book he wrote on Igbe. According to him the content of the book grossly misrepresented the whole essence of Igbe religion. As well, he said the content of the book could destroy Igbe religion, but he mentioned that his encounter with the author did not degenerate into violence. Neither was there a violent exchange of words. Equally, the author did not react in violence or throw caution to the wind when he was asked to withdraw the book from circulation, even though it did not go down well with him. In general terms, beyond these case studies, several other respondents also agreed that they have not heard of any violent actions involving members of Igbe religion as a result of the wrong perception from publications.

The pattern of non-violence that is associated with these case studies can be subsumed in the context of the utilitarian theory. A critical analysis shows that beyond the leadership of Igbe, some actions of its adherents are equally guided by the utilitarian theory. Utilitarianism is about the evaluation of a wide range of things that involve choices people will have to make. Among the things that can be evaluated are actions, laws, policies, character traits, and moral codes. In evaluating the case studies, one would realise that violence would have been inevitable if Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu had insisted on going ahead with the book launch when there was an obvious resistance and insistence from Kokori that it should be cancelled. In the third case study, one can also conclude that the author could have insisted on his right to publish or better still mobilise against

Reverend Oyiboame who personally confronted him. Yet, he decided to heed to the counsel of Reverend Oyiboame.

In the second case study, it will not be out of place to resolve that *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho could have continued her publications not minding whose ox was gored. In this context, one can observe the conflict of personal desires and overall group interest. Will the personal desires and ambition of these followers override the general interest of the group? The thesis of utilitarianism stipulates that when desires conflict within a group, the utilitarian reasoning can be applied to taking a decision about which action is best for a group. Therefore, it is logical to affirm that the dramatic personae in the three case studies must have decided to follow the path of non-violence because they decided to take into consideration the well-being of their religious group. In the thesis of utilitarianism, the well-being of the group is simply the sum of the interests of all its members. Though the dramatic personae pursued the path of non-violence, one may need to ask: what the kind of peace pervades the Igbe religious setting, especially on account of the cancellation of the book launch?

The observation of the researcher indicates that each time Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu referred to the cancellation of the book launch, he still felt personally embittered. Equally, *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho exuded an expression of sadness whenever she referred to the accusations that were levelled against her as a result of her religious literacy activities. Corroborating the observation of the researcher, *Uku Osete* Ame and *Omote Uku* Sarah Okoloba attested that the decision of the leadership of Igbe to cancel the book launch had further polarised the religion. The elicitation of bitterness and emotional outburst from the respondents shows that the peace that is associated with their action can be categorised as negative peace. The capacity to maintain calm during their bitterness shows the strength of the office of the *Uku Supreme*, whose authority on certain issues cannot be questioned. Furthermore, the bitterness is ventilated through this song:

Ejovwo ko Oweya (2ce)
Ogaga akpo eje
Ejovwo ko Oweya

leave judgment for Oweya (2ce)
for the sake of sovereign power
leave judgment for Oweya

4.5.3.10 Doctrinal Differences and Deviation from Original Practices

Granted that theological differences are breeding grounds for intra-religious sectarian conflict, should they degenerate into violence? Within perceived differences, can points of convergence be strengthened as the various sectarian divisions interact with one another, thereby making room for positive peace to rein despite the visible differences? Should differences always bring about tensions and violence? In view of the contending issues, Crabtree argues:

Atheists and scientists do not kill each other over their beliefs. The adherents of superstring theory have never killed opposing theorists, and Lamarckian Evolutionists never killed any Darwinian Evolutionists on account of their beliefs. Newton and Einstein may have disagreed, but they refrained from violently attacking each other's followers. Like them, Arius and Athanasius disagreed over theory in the 4th century, although in their case it wasn't physics, but about the nature of Christ. The Arians and the Nicene Christians, however, soon ended up damning each other to hell because of the other's 'wrong beliefs', and then resorted to murder, aggression and burning until Arians had been wiped out. Well, that is *one* way to settle a theoretical dispute. But why is it the *religious* way? (2009:1)

This phenomenon has been blamed on the framework of monotheism (Boyer, (2001); Ehrman, (2003); Ruthven, (2007); Fenn, (2009). Taking the argument further Crabtree (2012) posits that the Abrahamic monotheistic religions such as Judaism, Christianity have dominant narratives of violence across time and space due to their intolerance of other alternative faith expressions. Religious differences (whether intra-sectarian or inter-religious) have often resulted in violent and endless struggles because of exclusive claims to truth.

On the contrary, Igbe, a monotheistic religion with major sectarian groups, presents a counter-narrative of non-violent conflicts. No doubt, after the death of Ubiesha, some leaders within the Igbe started incorporating some elements that are alien to the original practice of the religion, Kokori did not move against them. According to Obaoga Ibodje, the *Uku Supreme* of Igbe religion worldwide, people should be allowed to practise their faith because spiritual experiences are unique. It affirms the assertion of Hicks (1989) that

the beginning of faith is experience and encounter with the divine. As a result, they cannot get violent with the people who have incorporated foreign elements into their religion.

Pattern and Dimension:

While conflicts emanating from doctrinal differences follow a non-violent trend, Reverend Oyiboame believed that the different doctrines and practices pervading the Igbe Orhe have also introduced high levels of disaffection within the religion. Furthermore, Matthias Orhero argued that as it stands, there is no unified pattern of worship in Igbe religion. He submits that through dance, the use of *adjudju*, the licking of the *Orhe*, songs and celebration of feasts are still central to the religion, there are however some identity markers such as variation in dressing. For example, the Mainline Classical practitioners of Igbe Orhe wear pure white apparel and the syncretic practitioners of the religion put on a mixture of white and red. *Uku* Osete Ame also maintained that the differences in doctrines and practices have also affected the construction of their *Ogwa Igbe*.

Adherents of the orthodox practice of Igbe religion still maintain that the traditional *Ogwa* (temple of worship) design, but the syncretic practices of the religion have transited into modern architectural designs. *Omote Uku* Tuwere Echeke claims that without a strong aesthetic appeal, influential people in the society will not embrace the religion. Part of the aesthetic appeal has also influenced the use of modern musical instruments and the introduction of expensive candles in the *Ogwa Igbe* instead of the lantern that is customary with the practice of the religion. During these differences, the mainstream Igbe Orhe at Kokori has allowed all the various sectarian divisions to thrive without any hindrance. It substantiates the theory of religious pluralism within the ambience of intra sectarian relationship. It also establishes the notion of sectarian pluralism that has been postulated earlier in the study. Unique to the religion is the fact that despite the sectarian variants, only Kokori can legitimise one to practice the religion as an *Uku* or *Omote Uku*.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS OF INTRA-SECTARIAN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT MECHANISMS AND ITS CHALLENGES IN IGBE ORHE

In this chapter, the researcher shall engage the data narratively and descriptively under the following sub-themes: examining the intra-sectarian conflict management mechanisms in Igbe religion; challenges confronting their conflict management mechanisms. These objectives will be further divided into sub-themes to allow for a deeper engagement with data collected.

Research Question 4: How do the adherents of Igbe Orhe manage their intra-sectarian conflicts?

Conflict is assumed to be a natural life dynamic (Ikyase & Olisah, 2014). Madalina (2016) identifies conflict as one of the major outcomes of group interactions. Expounding further, Albert (2001) notes:

Conflicts emanate from socialrelationship and the conflicting groups must reside in proximity whether physically or psychologically and when constructively managed conflicts lead to development and satisfaction of the contending groups (p.2)

Ikyase and Olisah (2014) point out that conflict management involves a process of limiting the negative aspects of conflict while increasing the positive aspects of it. They also affirm that the aim of conflict management is to enhance learning and group outcomes, including effectiveness or performance in a given situation. They equally admit that not all conflict can always be resolved; therefore, what practitioners can do is to manage and regulate them. Madalina (2016) believes that conflict management involves planning measures to avoid it when possible and taking rapid and effective measures to manage it when it arises. While Ikyase and Olisah, Madalina and Albert focus on conflict management from a generic point of view, Wani (2015), Ilo (2014) Minkov (2013) and Abdussalam (2010),

narrow their discourse in conflict management to intra-sectarian religious conflict. In the summary of Kadayifci-Orellana (2009), religious traditions are perceived as legitimate and credible, therefore engaging their local traditional conflict management framework to some extent can guarantee sustainable peace in the context of intra sectarian conflicts. In this section, the intra-sectarian conflict management mechanisms of Igbe Orhe will be interrogated within the framework of conflict detection, conflict management institutions, conflict management mechanisms and conflict transformation mechanisms.

5.1 Conflict Detection in Igbe Orhe

Some scholars concede that identifying situations which may lead to conflicts can help in the prevention of conflicts (Yu, Cai, Ma & Jiang, (2016); Deckwerth, Kulcsar, Lochau, Varr'ó & Schurr, (2016); Brun, Holmes, Ernst& Notkin, (2013); Oracle White Paper, (2012); Kaloo *et al*, (2011). These scholars drawn from different academic disciplines equally agree that conflict detection is sacrosanct to conflict management and resolution. *Omote Uku* Ejinawho Ogitie justifies the assertion that early conflict detection is a precursor to its management with the following words:

We cannot talk about conflict management without first detecting the conflict. It is when we have been able to detect the conflict either before it is blown open or it is just brewing that we can now think of the measures to adopt to solve or manage the outcome of the conflict (Interview at Aladja, Udu Local Government Area, December 25, 2016).

The FGD conducted for women across sectarian groups supported the conclusion of *Omote Uku* Ogitie that one must first detect a conflict before setting up the necessary mechanisms to deal with it. But Queen Odafe, a participant in the FGD conducted for women across the sectarian divisions, further explained that conflict must be detected and exposed because when people enter the *Ogwa* with grudges and bitterness in their heart, it makes the spiritual atmosphere unhealthy for the spirit of *Oweya*. Therefore, in order to keep on enjoying the supernatural power of *Oweya*, its members must ensure the purity of the atmosphere by exposing any form of bitterness or hurt. The reasoning behind adherents resolving their conflicts so that other members in the congregation can enjoy the blessings of *Oweya* substantiates the notion embedded in the Utilitarian Theory of Jeremy Bentham.

The submissions of the respondents fall within the ambience of conflict sensitivity. Therefore, conflict detection is a symbolic process in Igbe Orhe. It helps in maintaining the supernatural equilibrium between adherents and the spirit of *Oweya*. Nevertheless, beyond the spiritual implication that has been projected by the FGD, scholars have also observed that holding grudges may also have emotional, physiological and other negative health implications for the person holding it (see Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan (2001); Struthers, Elizabeth van Monsjou, Ayoub & Guilfoyle, (2017).

5.1.1 Mechanism of Conflict Detection in Igbe Religion

Oni Igbe Tina Olomu stated that conflict is detected in Igbe through revelation from the spirit of *Oweya*. According to her, during congregational worship, if any person in the congregation has been offended by someone or has offended anyone, the spirit of *Oweya* will bring such to the open. Her view is corroborated by *Oni Igbe* Margaret Alidi. In her response:

Once we congregate to worship, it does not take up to an hour into the service for *Oweya* to reveal that someone is in the congregation who has issues with another person. Once it is revealed the person will be called out (Interview at Imode, Ughelli South Local Government, December 29, 2016).

Oni Igbe Tina Olomu cited how the spirit of *Oweya* exposed two men who came to worship in their *Ogwa* sometime ago. According to her, it was a coincidence for both men to find themselves in the same temple of worship. She further added that both men were from different sectarian divisions, but they decided to fellowship in their *Ogwa* for reasons best known to them. But when they started dancing, the *Uku* at a point stopped the service and announced that two people are having issues with each other and pleaded that they come out and amend their ways before *Oweya* so that the blessing for that day would not elude them. She reported that to the surprise of all the congregants, the two men confessed that they were nursing grudges against each other and before the service could continue, they needed to resolve their outstanding conflict. This narrative, therefore, aligns with the notion that conflict detection helps the organisation to function optimally (Yu, Cai, Ma & Jiang, (2016); Deckwerth, Kulcsar, Lochau, Varr'ó & Schurr, (2016); Brun, Holmes, Ernst & Notkin, (2013).

The researcher had a real-life experience of how a conflict was revealed among some adherents of Igbe religion in line with *Oni Igbe* Tina Olomu and *Oni Igbe* Margaret Alidi assertions on conflict detection mechanisms in the religion. The incident happened in the residence of *Onori* Abel Egofovwe. The programme started with the rituals of prayers, after which adherents began to dance. In the course of dancing, an *Uku* was inspired to prophesy. His prophecy was surprisingly directed to the host of the programme, *Onori* Abel Egofovwe. The *Uku* called out *Onori* Abel and told him openly that he was angry with his wife to the extent that he almost refused to sleep at home the previous night. Indeed, *Onori* Abel confirmed before the congregation that the *Uku* was very correct. He explained that he was undeniably bitter with his wife because she insulted their neighbour who is a very prominent *Omote Uku* of the *Igbe Ame* sectarian division, who by the way was also a participant in the programme.

According to him, when the *Omote Uku* she first reported the incidence, he had to plead with her to give him some time to deal with the issue. He stressed that when he confronted his wife with the report from the *Omote Uku*, instead of her to show remorse, the reverse was the case. The conflict was eventually resolved and the programme continued. While they were rounding off the programme, the researcher observed that an *Uku* walked in. By observing the way, he was welcomed into the gathering and the air of reverence around him showed that he was a high ranking *Uku*. After the usual exchange of pleasantries, he was offered a seat. Without being aware of what had earlier transpired, the *Uku* who had just walked in called on *Onori* Abel and stated before the entire congregation that *Oweya* instructed him to urge *Onori* Abel to forgive his wife so that his family will not be denied the blessings of *Oweya*. This instruction of the *Uku* to *Onori* Abel Egofovwe is in tandem with the Utilitarian theory of Jeremy Bentham. After delivering what was revealed to him, a member of the congregation stood and informed the *Uku* that earlier on, it was revealed that *Onori* Abel had some issues with the wife and it has been resolved in the course of the meeting.

It can be argued that revelation, through the spirit of *Oweya*, as a conflict detection mechanism, helps in preparing the grounds for the people who will eventually participate in the handling of the conflict. The researcher arrived at this conclusion because when the case was mentioned, *Onori* Abel Egofovwe became very remorseful and penitent.

Therefore, conflict detection provides the opportunity for the conflict management institution to leverage on their moral and spiritual authority. Therefore, the revelation of conflicts in Igbe Orhe operates as an early warning sign. Early warning has been posited as a conflict prevention mechanism engaging the tools of matrixes and indices. However, in the context of Igbe Orhe, it relies on the revelation from the spirit of Oweya through the priesthood hierarchy as exemplified above. Furthermore, it must be mentioned that the *Uku* who revealed the conflict between *Onori* Abel and his wife are not of the same sectarian division. Yet, he could prophesy. This upholds the thesis of religious pluralism and sectarian pluralism that within the plurality of religious ideologies, one should not claim superiority over the other. Therefore, beyond the macro application of the theory of religious pluralism, it can also be applied in a micro sectarian religious setting.

In the same vein, another mechanism for conflict detection in Igbe religion is “confession”. According to *Uku* Festus Ikoba, when they congregate to worship, at the point of individual supplication where adherents are mandated to stand before the *Urhoro* in order to get a positive response from Oweya, they are admonished to confess their grievance(s). The *Urhoro* in the cosmology of Igbe Orhe means the centre of glory. It is generally believed that the spirit of Oweya resides in the *Urhoro*. According to *Uku* Obonofuogha, no one dares to tell lies while standing before the *Urhoro*, because the consequences are usually grave. Furthermore, confessing by standing in front of the *Urhoro* is in sync with the concept of *evu ofuafo* (purity of heart). Without it, one cannot have access to the spirit and blessings of Oweya. This theology is established in this sacred song:

<i>Ewe – ovuovo mi vwo kpi</i>	<i>I have come to worship with one mind</i>
<i>Igbe vwu u Kokori</i>	<i>in the Igbe temple at Kokori</i>
<i>Evu-ofuafo mi vwo kpi</i>	<i>with a pure heart I have come to worship</i>
<i>Iruo vwu u Kokori</i>	<i>I have come to Kokori</i>
<i>Obo me yoru urhi wa</i>	<i>the way I uphold the laws of the religion</i>
<i>Orhe ri Ibaba vwo gharo vwe</i>	<i>the same way through the chalk will bless me</i>
<i>Vwu Kokori ooooo</i>	<i>in Kokori</i>

The researcher witnessed a worship session in the *Ogwa* of *Omote Uku* Sara Okoloba at Ovwian where he had a first-hand experience of a “confession” as a conflict detection mechanism. He noticed that when it was time for supplication some adherents went and stood before *Urhoro*. The first thing each person did was to kneel and bow before the

Urhoro. The *Urhoro* stands between the *Uku* bed and the adherent. The researcher noticed that each adherent began to mention the names of people who must have offended them in the course of the week. After the confession, the *Omote Uku* admonished them to forgive, so that the spirit of Oweya would not be grieved and their supplication hindered. Also, it is important for them to confess so that the entire congregation will not suffer collectively from the anger of Oweya. This is in line with the utilitarian theory which encourages people to take actions that will lead to the greater benefit of the group.

“Personal reporting” is another conflict detection mechanism in Igbe religion. In this case, either party to a conflict will go and report a grievance to an authority figure who he or she respects in the religion. According to *Uku* John Akpiri, a member of Igbe can go to any *Uku* not minding his sectarian persuasion to report any wrong done to him and the *Uku* has the capacity to intervene after an issue has been brought to his attention. The idea of reporting an issue to someone who does not belong to one’s sectarian division also practically demonstrates the internal application of the theory of religious pluralism in Igbe religion.

In his own contribution, the *Uku* Supreme Obaoga Ibodje admits that once a matter is brought before him, the sectarian group of the complainant does not matter because the central philosophy of the religion is “*ufuoma akpoeje*” meaning for the peace of mankind. For him, therefore, what matters most in that instance is how the issue on ground can be resolved in the overall interest of peace. This further affirms the thesis of utilitarianism that what should justify an action is its positive contribution to human (and perhaps non-human) beings. Within the theoretical ambience of utilitarianism, the actions of mankind must be evaluated in line with the best result that will be produced for the overall benefit of all. It also establishes the theory of religious pluralism because no matter the sectarian division, the conflict is settled expeditiously.

In the context of Igbe religion “*ufuoma akpoeje*” (peace for the whole of mankind) means the overall best result which overrides every sectarian sentiment. Therefore, when a conflict generating issue is personally reported by an adherent, the philosophy of “*ufuoma akpoeje*” confers on whosoever the issue is reported the moral obligation to step in not minding the sectarian group of that person.

5.2 Leadership Institutions for Conflict Management in Igbe Orhe

Existing studies have been able to establish that indigenous leadership institutions are agents of conflict management in many African communities (Olaoba, 2005; Blench *et al*, 2006; Kisoza,2007; Rasul, 2009; Mowo *et al.*,2011; Riruwai &Ukiwo,2012; Mengesha, 2016; and Pritchard,2017). The consensus is that leadership institutions whether in corporate businesses, religious bodies and communities can exert a strong influence on conflict management issues within their sphere of influence.

Based on these established realities, this section explores the strategic indigenous leadership institutions that are responsible for managing conflicts in Igbe religion which include *Uku Supreme*, *Uku/Omote Uku* and *Onori/Oni Igbe*. They are the elite groups in Igbe religion.

5.2.1 Uku Supreme

The *Uku Supreme* in Igbe is the highest spiritual and political figure. He is called *Uku Supreme* because the various sectarian groups in Igbe Orhe have their spiritual and administrative heads. *Onori* Joseph Akpore maintains that the *Uku Supreme* is the highest spiritual rank one can attain in the priesthood order of Igbe Orhe. He is the overall spiritual and political leader of Igbe Orhe worldwide. Becoming the *Uku Supreme* of Igbe religion is by inheritance. *Uku* Festus Ikoba notes that the position of *Uku Supreme* is reserved for the eldest male child from the paternal side of the family according to the custom of the Urhobo people. His position contradicts Nabofa (2005: 343) who contends that it is only *Oweya* who can select his *Uku*, and that is why the most senior sons are being considered. According to *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP):

After the death of Ubiesha, the founder of the religion, Ibodje Ubiesha succeeded him as the spiritual head. When Ibodje Ubiesha died, Macdonald Ibodje succeeded him as *Uku Supreme*. Jackson Ibodje took over as *Uku Supreme* after the death of Macdonald. The current *Uku Supreme* Obaoga Ibodje ascended the position after the death of Jackson Ibodje (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East LGA, Delta State, October 16, 2016)

Uku Phillip Akpokovo gave an insight into how *Uku* became the established traditional title for priests in Igbe religion. In his narrative, a certain Oba of Benin who wanted to test the prophetic and visionary power of Ubiesha disguised as a child. Prior to the day, the Oba intended to visit, Ubiesha announced to his members that *Oweya* revealed to him that they would be playing host to a very important personality soon. On a certain worship day, a small boy entered the *Ogwa* of Ubiesha. On sighting this small boy, it was reported that Ubiesha ordered the entire congregation to stand to their feet in honour of the supposed small boy.

Furthermore, *Uku* Phillip Akpokovo stated that Ubiesha ordered elaborate entertainment for the supposed small boy to the amazement of the entire congregation. Later, the small boy left the hall of worship. After some weeks, the narrative has it that the Oba of Benin sent emissaries to Ubiesha with a gift of a specially crafted *adjudju* (traditional handheld hand fan) and a stool; the Oba then called Ubiesha *Uku*, meaning one who is highly revered. This narrative resonates among all the respondents. It was also confirmed by the three FGDs conducted for men, women and youth across the sectarian lines. The relics of the traditional handheld fan can still be found in the *Ogwa* of *Uku* Phillip Akpokovo at Kokori, Delta State.

According to *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP), Ibodje was the first to use the title *Uku* Supreme. According to him, when they started ordaining people as *Uku* in order to take charge of local Igbe assemblies, it became imperative to distinguish the overall spiritual leader of the religion from others. As a result, the appellation *Uku* Supreme was invented and it has remained so till today. This lends credence to the thesis of Rangers (1982) that traditions can be invented in order to maintain certain hegemony.

The *Uku* Supreme resides in Kokori and from there he superintends over the affairs of Igbe religion. The *Uku* Supreme is the Viceroy of *Oweya* and highly revered by the adherents of the religion. The authority to ordain anyone as *Uku* or *Omote Uku* is the sole responsibility of the *Uku* Supreme after such a person must have fulfilled certain obligations. *Uku* Osete Ame explains that though the *Uku* Supreme is the direct representative of *Oweya*, he still must submit himself to certain discipline and laws otherwise he will incur the wrath of *Oweya*. According to the current Ose Isi Obaoga Ibodje (*Uku* Supreme):

As *Uku*, I work for the peace of the entire humanity. As an *Uku*, I must not shed the blood of any man no matter how I am provoked. Your actions must not lead to the death or destruction of anyone. No genuine *Uku* of *Oweya* pronounces a curse on anybody. I must lead my members with fairness. I must not show partiality not minding the status of the person. As *Uku* I must play the role of father to all adherents of the religion worldwide. That is why they sometimes call me *Ose Isi*, which means the father of the religion. As *Uku* I must not be sexually involved with other women other than my wives. As *Uku* I must not meddle into whatever will put the name of *Oweya* to shame. The laws that guide the office of the *Uku* are very strict (Interview at Kokori, October 19, 2016).

Attesting to the strictness of the law, *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) detailed that Ubiesha, the founder of Igbe Orhe, was sanctioned by *Oweya* because he took another man's wife without going through the laid down traditional procedures of the people. *Uku* Gabriel Obonofuogha, *Omote Uku* Victoria Odaighofa, *Uku* Johnbull Unumegume and *Omote Uku* Ejinawho Ogitie agreed with *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP).

Striking a priest dead because of the non-observance of the traditional norms of the people, establishes that *Oweya*, the monotheistic God of Igbe religion, has the pluralism mentality. Matthias Orhero explained that *Oweya* frowns at adherents when they take actions that satisfy their selfish interests at the expense of another people's happiness.

The submission of *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) and Mathias Orhero further establishes that apart from pluralism, the theistic view of *Oweya* is utilitarianism. Inevitably, since one of the operational frameworks of religions is built around their theistic worldview, one is wont to argue that the non-violent narrative in Igbe Orhe can be closely tied to the utilitarian and pluralism worldview of *Oweya*. This defines partly the religious convictions of Igbe leadership when it comes to their interventions in conflicts. It captures the conclusion of Policy Summary (2011) that religious beliefs constructively shape the terms of conflict and provide an ideational framework through which conflict is interpreted. Contrary to the position of Boyer (2001); Ehrman (2003); Ruthven (2007); Fenn (2009); Crabtree (2012), non-Abrahamic monotheism in the context of Igbe religion is open to and tolerant to the alternative faith communities within its circle of influence.

Anthony Sakpra claims that the *Uku* Supreme is the final go-between when it comes to the management and resolution of conflicts in Igbe religion. The office of the *Uku* Supreme is sacrosanct to the management of conflict in Igbe religion. It must be mentioned that the *Uku* Supreme only enters into conflicts that are directly reported to him. The *Uku* Supreme steps into cases that are beyond the powers of an *Uku*, *Omote Uku* or *Oni Igbe* and *Inori*.

Uku Anthony Echekume, *Omote Uku* Victoria Amajatoja, *Olorogun* Ubieshakparobo Ibodje maintained that when they intervene in conflicts and their intervention is not satisfactory to parties in conflict, they often refer such cases to the *Uku* Supreme in Kokori. While *Uku* Osete Ame mentioned that as far as Igbe religion is concerned, the *Uku* Supreme has the final say on any matter. No one flouts or faults the judgment of *Uku* Supreme otherwise such a person will be challenging the wisdom of *Oweya*.

In the words of *Ose Isi* Obaoga Ibodje (*Uku Supreme*) “when they bring any matter to me, once I make my pronouncements on it, nobody goes against it” (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East Local Government. October 19, 2016). *Uku* John Akpiri affirms that ordinarily, not all matters should get to the *Uku* Supreme. But because some *Uku* and *Emete Uku* have compromised their calling, some adherents no longer trust their judgment. Hence, they would rather prefer to take their conflict challenges to the *Uku* Supreme. Once he pronounces on a matter, his words are regarded as sacred and his decisions are considered as direct revelation from *Oweya*. This confers on him the power to mediate in any conflict issue that is brought before him.

Uku Festus Ikoba cites a personal example of how he was brought before the Central Working Committee to respond to some allegations that were levelled against him. After the case was dispensed with, the Central Working Committee found him guilty. According to *Uku* Festus, he refused to accept the judgment and insisted that the matter be brought before the *Uku* Supreme. The case was duly taken before the *Uku* Supreme. Even though the judgment still did not favour him, it is a pointer to the trust and confidence adherents have in the leadership institution of the *Uku* Supreme when it comes to managing and resolving conflicts.

5.2.2 Uku/Omote Uku

The appellation *Uku* refers to a male high priest, while *Omote Uku* refers to a high priestess. Igbe religion operates an Episcopal pattern of administration because each *Igbe Ogwa* has a presiding *Uku* or *Omote Uku* who must have been ordained by the *Uku Supreme* at Kokori. All *Uku* ordained from Kokori report to the *Uku Supreme* and they also pay homage to him from time to time to renew their spiritual authority and allegiance. *Omote Uku* Victoria Odaighofa, *Omote Uku* Tuwere Echeke, *Onori* Joseph Akpore, Prophet Oyiboame Emojev and three FGDs conducted across the sectarian divisions all agreed with the fact that *Uku* or *Omote Uku* in Igbe Orhe is highly revered.

The office of *Uku* or *Omote Uku* has both spiritual and administrative responsibilities. In each *Ogwa*, the *Uku* or *Omote Uku* performs the highest ritualistic functions. Nabofa (2005:341) notes that they carry out all the major introduction ceremonies, healing processes and all confessions are made to them. In the local *Igbe Ogwa*, the *Uku* has the final say in every matter and their words are believed to be as sacred as the *Orhe* (Ibid). The following words from *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) establish the enormous authority of an *Uku* or *Omote Uku*:

Once you sit on the bed as *Uku* or *Omote Uku*, it does not matter your age; the same honour that was given to Ubiesha, the founder of the religion will be given to you. No one dares to say that because he/she is older than the *Uku* or *Omote Uku* physically, therefore will not respect him. No...you must not say that because you are older than him age wise then you will not give him his due respect. An *Uku* or *Omote Uku* must be respected as a representative of *Oweya* (Interview at Kokori, Ethiopie East Local Government. 16 Oct. 2016)

Uku Osete Ame disclosed that there are certain dynamics that play out before someone can be made an *Uku*. He explains that to become an *Uku*, such a person must first be a fully established member of the religion. Becoming a full member entails the licking of the chalk after renouncing all forms wickedness and surrendering any paraphernalia termed fetish by the leadership. The process of licking the chalk and surrendering all fetish items unveils the concept of total repentance in Igbe Orhe known as “*shi gwekei’ Baba*” (literally it means kneeling before our Father God). *Uku* Festus Ikoba revealed that when an Igbe adherent says “*vwo ke shi gwekei’ baba*” it means that you have to repent from sin and completely surrender your life to God. In addition, relinquishing all fetish, items means

that one is ready to live a holy life that is fully dependent on *Oweya*. The symbolic licking of the chalk means that the heart of the adherent has been cleansed from all forms of evil and must strive to live a life of purity. The “*shi gwekei’ Baba*” concept of repentance in Igbe Orhe can be likened to the “Born Again” concept that is popular in the Pentecostal/Charismatic group in the Christian religion. Then the person would be called to serve under an *Uku* for a certain number of years as an apprentice. The number of years for apprenticeship varies, depending on the direction from the spirit of *Oweya*. It must be mentioned that some *Uku* serve as full-time ministers in the *Ogwa*, while there are some who are owners of businesses and other commercial ventures. The training to become an *Uku* is largely informal; those aspiring to become *Uku* learn by close observation of the presiding *Uku*. Up till the time of rounding off this research, Igbe Orhe does not have a formal educational institution where they train ministers into the priesthood of the religion. Upon satisfactory performance as an apprentice, the Senior *Uku* will take the aspiring *Uku* to meet with the *Ose Isi Uku* Supreme at Kokori on a specified date. He will introduce the man or the woman and explain to the *Uku* Supreme that the person standing before him is a devoted member of the religion and very active in the *Ogwa* and that he /she desires to answer the call of *Oweya* by becoming *Uku*. *Uku Osete* Ame further explained that the *Uku* Supreme will ask how many years he or she has served as an apprentice. Depending on the guidance of *Oweya*, the *Uku* Supreme will recommend additional years or months of training.

As they submit themselves for further training intermittently, the *Uku* Supreme will send for the intending *Uku* or *Omote Uku* for more interrogations. After a while, their power of clairvoyance will be tested. Matthias Orhero maintained that a major prerequisite for becoming an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* is having the power of clairvoyance, which means the ability to assess visions and prophesy. *Olorogun* Ubieshakparobo Ibodje attests to the fact that any *Uku* or *Omote Uku* who can effectively “make use of his/her eyes” can never go hungry. *Uku Osete* Ame adds that depending on the programme going on at the headquarters, the *Uku* Supreme will give the would-be *Uku* some assignments that will require the engagement of the gift of prophecy, visions and discernment. Through the assignment, it will be confirmed whether his spiritual gifts are genuine or not. Once the *Uku* Supreme is satisfied, he will then pronounce him/her fit to be ordained *Uku* or *Omote*

Uku. There is yet a proviso: one cannot become an *Uku* without going through the rank of *Onori* (male chief priest) or *Oni Igbe* (chief priestess).

However, undertaking a critical assessment of the current trend of things in relation to the *Uku* office, *Uku Osete Ame* noted that things have changed. In his evaluation, things are no longer the way they used to be concerning ordination into the office of *Uku*. He claims that some adherents now use all sorts of means to get the *Uku* title and influence, some use money, while many others are using the *Uku* as a means of arrogance and pride. According to him, the title *Uku* in some cases has been commercialised. He further laments that because of the wealth and influence that accompany the office of *Uku*; some devotees no longer subject themselves to the rigour of apprenticeship. He concludes that it has resulted in the ordination of some questionable characters as *Uku*.

Olorogun Mukoro (JP), Matthias Orhero, *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho, *Uku* Mathew Itegbere and *Oni Igbe* Eloho Onotu blamed the phenomenon of the commercialisation of the *Uku/Omote Uku* title on the leadership of the religion at Kokori. They contended that the leadership is only interested in the financial and material gains that the religion can afford. Matthias Orhero observed that the more people you ordain as *Uku*, the better the financial reward for the leadership of the religion.

The same law that binds the *Uku* Supreme holds sway over any *Uku* or *Omote Uku* in Igbe Orhe. *Uku* Obonofuoga expounded on the strict regime of discipline that accompanies the office of *Uku*:

An *Uku* or *Omote Uku* must not tell lies, an *Uku* must be very frank; must not be partial; an *Uku* must not claim to see what he has not seen, and they must not engage in a quarrel or be a trouble maker; an *Uku* must not incite people into committing crime or violence. (Interview at Ekrerhavwe, Ughelli North Local Government. December 28, 2016)

Omote Uku Tuwere Ehekume also explained that an *Uku* must be very careful with the wives of other men and vice versa. Likewise, *Uku* or *Omote Uku* must not engage in whatever will tarnish the image of the religion. Above all, whatever affects one *Uku* or *Omote Uku* affects all. The last point, according to Matthias Orhero, is the reason behind the ties that exist between the rank and file of *Uku* and *Omote Uku*. But *Onori* Godday

Etairue, *Uku* Albert Ogievwege, *Onori* Jonathan Okpako, *Oni Igbe* Mary Jowhoma, and Erukainure Ovie Eyaa disagreed with Matthias Orhero. They contended that there are still some petty jealousies and envy among some *Uku* and *Emete Uku*. Using her experience as a personal example, *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho specified that she voluntarily resigned as the Chairperson of the Central Working Committee in 2006 because she could no longer endure the petty jealousies that pervaded the committee. *Olorogun* Ubieshakparobo Ibodje, *Omote Uku* Mary Ibodje, *Onori* Godspower Jimisawho, *Uku* Samuel Igugu and *Uku* Johnbull Unumegume maintained that as practitioners of classical Igbe Orhe they refuse to have anything to do with any *Uku* or *Omote Uku* who engages in divination and use of herbal concoctions in their practice. They insisted that such people have deviated from the original practice of Igbe which entails only the use of the *orhe* and reverence for *Oweya*. Despite their disagreements, there is no known reported case of violence. This establishes the fact that differences may not necessarily lead to violence, contrary to Crabtree (2009).

Olorogun Mukoro Ochuko (JP), *Onori* Akpofure Salubi, and *Uku* Osete Ame indicated that a major factor that confers an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* with the moral authority to intervene in conflict is the concept of “*orhuerakpor*” which literarily means redeemer. As “*orhuerakpor*”, an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* is socialised into the mould of a bridge builder. In the words of *Uku* Supreme Obaoga Ibodje:

An *Uku* is a peacemaker; he builds bridges. The sects of conflict parties do not matter. Even Christians bring quarrels to me and I settle them because as *Uku* I am *orhuerakpor* and *ufuoma akpoeje* (meaning peace for mankind) is our watchword (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East Local Government. October 19, 2016).

Corroborating the *Uku* Supreme, *Omote Uku* Ejinawho Ogitie explained that it is mandatory for all adherents of Igbe to pray for people of other faith traditions that it shall be well with them an action which according to her has influenced their commitment to “*ufuoma akpoeje*”. Comrade Gilbert Isoko agreed with the assertion of *Omote Uku* Ogitie by citing the example of his neighbour, an elderly Igbe adherent who consistently prayed for Christians and Muslims after her early morning service. This upholds the thesis of religious pluralism.

A critical examination of the literal meaning of “*orhuerakpor*” (redeemer) and the expression “*ufuoma akpoeje*” (peace for mankind) from a theoretical point of view shows that they are entrenched in the concept of utilitarianism. As “*orhuerakpor*”, an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* overlooks any form of interest and takes an action that can galvanise conflicting parties to embrace peace. Therefore, as *orhuerakpor*, an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* must not make inflammatory comments that can incite violence. Moreover, as *orhuerakpor*, the sectarian group does not matter when they are intervening in conflicts. What matters most the general interest of every person that is involved in the conflict and it substantiates the Utilitarian theory. It also underscores Policy Summary (2011) view that a pivotal factor in the escalation of social tensions into violent strife along ethnic, religious, or sectarian lines is the critical role of elite mobilisation. Religious elite can take advantage of their referent power and sue for tolerance and coexistence. Secondly, from an operational perspective, the concept of “*orhuerakpor*” and “*ufuoma akpoeje*” upholds the values of religious pluralism, because while intervening in the conflict, an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* does not consider himself or herself as the repository of truth and wisdom. Therefore, when conflicting parties are not satisfied with the intervention of an *Uku* or *Omote Uku*, they are free to seek redress from another *Uku* or better still pursue justice in the court of the *Uku Supreme*. Finally, in the context of linguistic religious representation, the word “*orhuerakpor*” and “*ufuoma akpoeje*” as dominant orientation in the psyche of an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* provides them with an intrinsic motivation to work as ambassadors of peace for the sake of humanity. A deep understanding and proper deployment of linguistic representations can be used as a tool to nurture good relationships and mend fences within the internal dynamics of a religion (Abdussalam, 2010:1).

5.2.3 Onori

In the leadership hierarchy of Igbe Orhe, the *Onori* (singular) or *Inori* (plural) is next to the *Uku* or *Omote Uku* in any Igbe *Ogwa*. *Olorogun Mukoro Ochuko* (JP) explained that in Igbe, it is possible for an *Onori* to own and manage an *Ogwa*. This is also confirmed by *Nabofa* (2005:341) that any *Onori* who is not attached to the *Ogwa* of a presiding *Uku*, that is, the central *Ogwa* Igbe, has his own *Ogwa* Igbe in his compound and he is the one who directs all acts of worship under his jurisdiction. But *Omote Uku* Ivwie Designer reasoned that such an *Onori* still must surrender to an *Uku* for proper superintending.

Omote Uku Victoria Idogho and *Onori* Steven Udumebrae pointed out that an *Onori* after some diligent years of service can apply to be ordained as an *Uku* if he perceives that there is a call of *Oweya* on his life. This corroborates Nabofa (2005: 344) “that after some years, when he has acquired much knowledge, wisdom and in fact spiritual development, an *Onori* could apply to be elevated to the status of *Uku*”. According to *Uku* Osete Ame, the law that binds *Uku* also applies to *Onori* and it aligns with Nabofa’s observation (Ibid) that every *Onori* is seriously enjoined to uphold the good name of the religion by adhering to the rules and acting as the light within his/her sphere of interest. Just like the *Uku*, after ordination, the *Onori* pays homage annually to the one who ordained him.

According to *Uku* Festus Ikoba, as chief priest in Igbe, the *Onori* assists the *Uku* or *Omote Uku* to carry out some specific religious functions in the *Ogwa*. Part of the functions of the *Onori* is to take new members to the presiding *Uku* or *Omote Uku*. They also follow up members in their circle and pay visits to the sick among them. An *Onori* also carries out other specific administrative or spiritual functions that are assigned to him by the presiding *Uku* or *Omote Uku*. The status of an *Onori* also confers on him the privilege of intervening in issues of conflicts whether it is congregational or sectarian. But their intervention must be within the terms of reference specified by the presiding *Uku* or *Omote Uku*. In her comment, *Omote Uku* Sarah Okoloba revealed that, in some instances, conflicting parties report their issues directly to an *Onori*. But once the *Onori* or *Inori* resolves the matter, the presiding *Uku* or *Omote Uku* must be fully briefed. In her response, *Omote Uku* Victoria Amajatoja expounded that when conflict issues are brought to their court depending on the magnitude of the conflict, they will first delegate a team of *Inori* to investigate the matter. If they cannot resolve it, then it will be referred to the presiding *Uku* or *Omote Uku*. Nabofa (2005:341) notes that “*Inori* are the set of priests that members confess to in secret”. Also, he identifies issues like backbiting and grumbling as issues within the purview of *Onori* or *Inori* to handle. He also identifies offences such as bewitching, sorcery, stealing and adultery as grievous issues that must be brought before the presiding *Uku* or *Omote Uku*. Therefore, the *Onori* or *Inori* is an established leadership institution for managing conflict in Igbe religion.

5.2.4 Oni Igbe

The *Oni Igbe* is a leadership institution that also engages in conflict management in Igbe religion. Nabofa (2005: 341) affirms that “*Oni Igbe* literally means the mother of *Igbe*”. *Omote Uku* Victoria Odaighofa explained that *Oni Igbe* (singular) or *Ini Igbe* (plural) possesses spiritual powers to unravel mysteries. As a result, their ministry is taken with seriousness. The *Oni Igbe* is also guided by the law that binds an *Uku* and *Onori*. *Oni Igbe* Tina Olomu and *Oni Igbe* Eloho Onotu made it known that *Uku* or *Omote Uku* can designate *Oni Igbe* to investigate conflict issues among adherents. But if the issue is beyond the capacity of the *Oni Igbe* to resolve, it will be brought to the notice of the presiding *Uku* or *Omote Uku* to handle.

In her contribution, *Oni Igbe* Mary Jowhoma pointed out that part of the responsibility of an *Oni Igbe* is using the *adjudju* (traditional handheld fan) to exorcise evil spirits from people who are believed to be possessed. The dominant understanding is that when the *adjudju* (traditional handheld fan) touches any part of the body, the ailment or evil spirit will automatically be expelled. The narrative is confirmed by this song:

<i>Adjudju me ifue</i>	<i>The breeze from the traditional handheld fan</i>
<i>Adjudju ro turi Igbe</i>	<i>The traditional handheld fan of Igbe</i>
<i>Adjudju me ifue</i>	<i>The breeze from my traditional handheld fan</i>
<i>Ohwo ro ma rha</i>	<i>Someone is sick</i>
<i>Emo ri Igbe ayoba</i>	<i>The person was taken to Ayoba</i>
<i>Ayoba so turi Igbe</i>	<i>Ayoba called her Igbe brethren</i>
<i>Werhi-fue vwo kevwe</i>	<i>They fanned me gently</i>
<i>Adjudju we vwo fue</i>	<i>The breeze from the traditional handheld fan healed me</i>

Oni Igbe Jowhoma explains that in any healing or spiritual rituals, the *Oni Igbe* takes a very active part. Correspondingly, she is of the view that an *Oni Igbe* exorcises evil spirits from an afflicted person by using the *adjudju* (traditional handheld fan) to tap gently and fan the whole body of the patient. The *Oni Igbe* is an active manager of conflict in *Igbe Orhe*.

5.3 Conflict Management Dynamics in Igbe Religion

Scholars like Olisah (2014) and Madalina (2016) put forward that conflict management involves planning measures to avoid conflict when possible and taking rapid and effective measures when it arises. In the context of their explanation, empirical findings reveal that

the conflict management dynamics in Igbe religion is built around conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and conflict management techniques. These dynamics are discussed pragmatically in line with some case studies.

According to Matthias Orhero, adherents of Igbe religion do not like their issues to come to the public domain. As a result, they engage certain indigenous frameworks within the internal dynamics of the religion to manage and resolve conflicts. Elder Patrick Otomi, a community leader and a nominal Christian, who has lived all his life at Kokori, attested to the notion that adherents of Igbe Orhe do not discuss their issues in the open. Buttressing this point, *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) maintained that adherents of Igbe do not take people to court. But as law-abiding citizens, when they are invited to a court of law, they do not refuse to appear.

The researcher visited the Divisional Police Headquarters at Isiokolo, Ethiopie East Local Government Area to confirm the claims of some respondents that adherents of Igbe do not take people to the police station. The station officer confirmed the claims of the respondents. According to him, as far as his memory can take him, the station has not witnessed an Igbe adherent bringing a fellow Igbe member to the station. He also disclosed that sometimes members of other faith traditions bring adherents of Igbe to the station, but they do not stay long in custody because their members will quickly plan to get the person released.

Likewise, the researcher visited the customary courts at Oria Abraka and Isiokolo. The registrars of the court confirmed to the researcher that from the best of their knowledge, they hardly attend to cases involving two or more Igbe adherents. This affirms Anderson and Spelten (2000:1) thesis on conflict transformation that beyond conflict management, societies must evolve, develop and define “create and maintain their own conditions for living together and pursuing shared goals”.

5.3.1 Conflict Prevention Mechanisms

Structural conflict prevention mechanism has been identified by Swanström & Weissmann (2005) as institutional measures that have been put in place to prevent the open manifestations of conflict. Empirical findings show that Igbe religion has its unique

structural preventive mechanism built around the fear of *Oweya*, camaraderie among *Uku/Omote Uku*, songs and sanction system.

5.3.1.1 Fear of Oweya

All the monotheist Abrahamic religions have the name of their Ultimate Reality revealed to the patriarchs of the religion. For example, in the Judeo-Christian faith tradition, the revealed name of God is Jehovah. In the Islamic faith tradition, the revealed name of God to the Prophet is Allah. In Igbe Orhe, the revealed name of God is *Oweya*. Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu (JP) historicised how the name was revealed to Ubiesha Etarakpor, the founder of the religion. According to him, legend had it that Ubiesha was in the forest meditating when he heard a voice calling him. As a result of fear, he left the forest and returned to his house. After a while, he summoned fresh courage to go back to the forest and ascertain who was calling him. On getting to the exact location in the forest, it was reported that Ubiesha cried aloud asking the voice calling him to reveal himself. Continuing the narrative, Oyiboame affirmed that Ubiesha got stuck in the forest; he could neither move forward nor backwards. He remained in that position until God revealed himself to him as *Oweya*. He was also instructed to use the name *Oweya* formally in the new religion about to be established by him. Nabofa (2005: 310) contends that “the word *Oweya* is so ancient that its etymology is lost in Urhobo history”. From the submission of Nabofa (2005:310), one gets the impression that the word *Oweya* had been in existence before Ubiesha founded the religion.

Speaking on the nature of *Oweya*, *Uku* Festus Ikoba remarked that *Oweya* is a God of love and equally of justice. He also maintained that *Oweya* hates any form of impurity. This informed the use of white clothes by all adherents of the mainline Igbe Orhe. However, the traditional syncretic sectarian group combines white and red colour. It must also be mentioned that all Igbe *Ogwa* are painted in white, which further drives home the idea of purity in the religion.

The researcher observed that the surroundings of most Igbe *Ogwa* are very neat. Explaining this phenomenon, *Omote Uku* Tuwere Echekume affirmed that the spirit of *Oweya* cannot stay in a dirty environment. As a result, adherents make conscious efforts to ensure the neatness of their surroundings. The researcher also noticed during the field work

some of the Ogwa Igbe visited are not looking neat. It, however, does not negate the theology of purity that is associated with the neatness of the surroundings.

Onori Abel Egofovwe specified that many people are running away from religion because of the strictness of the laws of Oweya. Substantiating the retributive nature of Oweya, *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) indicated that in one of the Igbe Ogwa (temple of worship) some years back, the *Uku* discovered that a certain amount of money was missing from the temple. Instead of doing a proper investigation, the *Uku* decided to accuse the temple attendant of stealing the money. He stated that the youthful temple attendant passionately pleaded that he had never stolen in his life, but the *Uku* insisted that he stole the money and compelled him to stand before the *Urhoro* to swear to that effect.

Two days after taking the oath, the *Uku* discovered where he had neatly kept the money. After calling the attendant and apologising to him for being wrongly accused, the *Uku* died mysteriously three days later. It confirms the position of Mbiti (1969) that in African belief systems, God or some other higher beings greater than man will punish the person who swears falsely or breaks the stipulations of an oath, agreement or statement.

Oni Igbe Tina Olomu also narrated how some five years ago, in their *Ogwa* (temple of worship) they lost a member as a result of the retributive justice of Oweya. According to her, for certain reasons, the supposed *Onori* was forced to leave their *Ogwa*. After withdrawing his membership of the *Ogwa*, he went about discrediting the *Uku* in the community. Pained in his heart, the *Uku* stood before the *Urhoro* and asked Oweya to judge between him and the *Onori*. The story had it that after a while, the legs of the *Onori* began to swell. When the situation started to get worse, the *Onori* began to send emissaries to beg the *Uku*. But the *Uku* insisted that the man must be brought to him personally to make his apology. Unfortunately, the *Onori* died. Therefore, the retributive justice of Oweya is attested to as a phenomenon in Igbe religion by most respondents. Adherents of the religion are very conscious of the retributive dimension of Oweya and that to a large extent moderates and tempers their tendency for violence and it establishes the claims of Essien (2011) that God is the ultimate judge who is impartial and no mortal can escape his judgment.

It is also worth mentioning that Oweya is not just a God of retributive justice, he is also very benevolent in the view of *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP). He opined that to those who keep his laws, Oweya blesses them beyond measure. Recounting from his personal experience, he told the researcher that for eighteen years he was without a child and nothing was working for him. He embraced the practice of Igbe and was encouraged to keep the laws of the religion. In the process of time, Oweya began to bless him and the entire story of his life changed. The FGD conducted for men across the sectarian divisions confirmed that Oweya is very benevolent to adherents who keep his laws. Six out of the eight participants confirmed that they began to enjoy social mobility when they embraced the religion and strictly followed the laws of Oweya. Thus, putting these empirical experiences in context, it can be inferred that the wrath of Oweya and his benevolence inform the disposition of Igbe adherents to pursuing peace.

5.3.1.2 Songs

Songs are pivotal in the cosmology of Igbe Orhe. Although the traditions of Igbe religion are largely unwritten, their preservation and continued existence have been ensured through songs. The internalisation of the songs through their ritual performances makes them lively and tacit. *Omote Uku* Ejinawho Ogitie affirmed that songs have several functions in Igbe religion. She explained: “as we sing, people get healed. As we sing, we are advising. As we sing, we dance to the glory of God” (Interview at Ovwian- Aladja, Udu Local Government Area. December 25, 2016). This supports the observation of Nabofa (2005:356) that most of the songs in Igbe are either historical, theological or convey praise or censure. The meanings and teachings that the songs of Igbe Orhe convey among its adherents establish songs as a structural conflict prevention mechanism in the religion. This also confirms the thesis of Okon (2014:139) that “social criteria for truth are not always monolithic, but rather products of complex hybridisation, such that truth can be gleaned from wise sayings, proverbs or songs”.

According to *Uku* Festus Ikoba, “our songs are socialisation tools that regulate our behaviour in the threshold of conflict (Interview at Oria - Abraka, Udu Local Government Area. December 20, 2016)”. The submission of Ikoba agreed with Nabofa (2005: 358) that:

Songs in Igbe serve the purpose of checking moral decay among members and to caution them about what awaits those who break their oath of allegiance to *Oweya* and the religion. Misbehaviour among adherents is seriously censured with songs (p.358).

It must be noted that Nabofa discusses the concept of songs in Igbe from a sociological point of view, and not as a structural conflict prevention tool as this study indicates.

Omote Uku Victoria Idogho explained that most of the songs in Igbe are revealed to adherents either through dreams or visions. The researcher observed that songs in Igbe Orhe are not documented, but in all worship sessions the songs are well orchestrated and synchronised with musical instruments. It is generally believed that the vibrations that proceed from the music and songs help adherents to contact spiritual powers from *Oweya*.

Olorogun Mukoro Ochuko (JP) states that songs in Igbe Orhe come as an inspiration from *Oweya*. Also, certain events that have been programmed to happen might be revealed to the *Akpine* (votary singers) and they will articulate such through songs. In addition, when the spirit of *Oweya* descends on the *Akpine*, it was reported by many of the respondents that they will begin to see visions and relay such to the congregation. *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) also mentioned that the songs of Igbe Orhe sometimes teach the people what to do and how to conduct themselves in life. Therefore, beyond the thesis of Bergh and Sloboda (2010) that music and songs should be engaged as tools for conflict transformation. It has also been established that songs can be used as indirect tools for conflict prevention. Songs serve as a prophetic agency in Igbe Orhe.

According to *Ose Isi* Obaoga Ibodje, (*Uku* Supreme), there are songs that caution *Uku* and *Omote Uku* to be very patient when dealing with adherents. He insisted that sometimes the misconduct of an adherent can provoke *Uku* or *Omote Uku* to make certain pronouncements that may not augur well for the adherent. The following song socialises *Uku* or *Omote Uku* to embrace the path of patience in the face of provocation:

<i>Uku ya muo diri o</i>	<i>Uku follow the path of patience</i>
<i>Uku ra anibor ya muo diri o</i>	<i>Uku of the most High follow the path of patience</i>
<i>ya muo ediri k' Oweya</i>	<i>Follow the path of patience for Oweya</i>

This song in the opinion of the FGD conducted for men across the sectarian divisions is an exhortation for *Uku* or *Omote Uku* to be temperate even when adherents display

maladjusted attitudes. According to them, the allegiance of *Uku* or *Omote Uku* is first towards the pleasing of Oweya. As a result, provocation from adherents or non-adherents must not frustrate *Uku* or *Omote Uku* to abdicate the path of temperance. They concluded that following the path of patience is essential because *Uku* or *Omote Uku* is the agent carrying revelations and blessings from Oweya. Refusal to follow the path of patience and temperance will deny them the privilege of enjoying divine revelations from Oweya which is sacrosanct to the office of *Uku* or *Omote Uku*.

In the words of *Onori* Joseph Akpore, “we have songs that encourage our members to avoid anything that will stain their name. As a result, our members try as much as possible to avoid anything that will pollute their name” (Interview at Kokori, Ethiopie East Local Government Area. October 18, 2016). The Focus Group Discussion conducted among women from across the sectarian divisions also agrees that the songs in Igbe exert a stronghold in helping to restrain them from untoward behaviour. For example, the following song socialises adherents towards the avoidance of evil:

<i>Jo vwo, jo vwo</i>	<i>Avoid it</i>
<i>mo me jo vwo (2ce)</i>	<i>my child avoid it</i>
<i>umwe mu yo ma re</i>	<i>bad attitude is not good</i>
<i>mo me jo vwo</i>	<i>my child avoid it</i>
<i>umwe mu yo ma re</i>	<i>bad attitude is not good</i>
<i>mo me jovwo</i>	<i>my child avoid it</i>

The FGD conducted for women across the sectarian division also shows that songs in Igbe Orhe can be proverbial, warning them about the possibility of incurring the wrath of Oweya when their actions do not favour the cause of Oweya. Matthias Orhero intimated that Oweya frowns at embarking on actions that are not in the favour of mankind. Therefore, the following song constantly reminds adherents of an impending judgment when they take an action that offends Oweya:

<i>Oka ri yosa....oka ri yosa (2ce)</i>	<i>They will surely be rewarded (2ce)</i>
<i>Ohwo ro rui ruo ri Igbe oma da</i>	<i>Working for Igbe will be rewarded</i>
<i>Vwe rho oghene,</i>	
<i>oka ri yosa</i>	<i>Those working for God will be rewarded</i>

There are songs that socialise adherents not to engage in open confrontation with one another. This is the judgment of the FGD conducted for youth across the sectarian divisions. However, they admitted that it is not possible not to have conflict occasionally,

but adherents should identify the potential causes of conflict and do everything within their means to solve them. This song embodies their claims:

Ibaba vwe be rhe na ghwo
Erukainure vwe be rhe na ghwo
Owo piopio, ugbunu chororo
Si hwive ri gbigbe sai je ghwo

Our father has instructed do not quarrel
Erukainure has instructed do not fight
Wrong association, bad communication
Is it possible for Igbe adherents to quarrel?

In literal terms, the song warns adherents of Igbe on the implication of unbridled use of the mouth, keeping good company and ensuring benevolent communication among adherents. Thus, adherents are encouraged to stay away from bad company and to equally use their mouth constructively. According to the last stanza of the song “Is it possible for two people dancing Igbe not to fight?” mirror the notion of Albert (2001:2) that “conflict emanates from social relationships and the conflicting groups must reside in proximity whether physically or psychologically”.

Furthermore, *Omote Uku* Ejinawho Ogitie mentioned that new entrants are taught songs that socialise them into recognising the importance of the laws of Igbe Orhe and the attendant consequences for violation. The song goes thus:

Odiriewo (2ce)
Oke me wo shigwe ibaba
Da no me sa me sa yo urhi
Odiriewo
Oke me wo shigwe ibaba
Da no me sa mi yo uhri
Odiriewo

Patience....Patience
When I knelt before Baba (Uku)
Asked me if I can hold on to the laws
Patience..... Patience

When I knelt before Baba (Uku)
Patience

Omote Uku Ejinawho Ogitie admits that:

The song teaches the newcomers to be patient in the practice of the religion; patience in their marital home; patience with neighbours; patience in the face of provocation; patience in all life endeavours (sic). The socio-religious implication is that when there are conflicts that may want to lead to violence, the members through this song would have already been socialised into the domain of resisting the temptation to go violent (Interview at Aladja, Udu Local Government Area. December 26, 2016).

The concept of pluralism in the context of the plurality of religions is encoded in some of the songs of Igbe Orhe, which also signifies a platform for conflict prevention. Take this song for example:

<i>E ku shoshi mu kpa vwi Igbe (2ce)</i>	<i>the church people are oppressing us</i>
<i>Ohwo lo kpi shoshi omo lo Oghene</i>	<i>church attendees are children of God</i>
<i>Ohwo lo gbi Igbe omo lo oghene</i>	<i>Igbe attendees are also children of God</i>
<i>Ufuoma la akpoeje me yo vwi</i>	<i>it is the global peace that matters</i>

Through this song, *Omote Uku* Ejinawho Ogitie contends that adherents of Igbe Orhe have been socialised into tolerating members of other religious traditions. The song establishes that the Igbe Orhe religion does not subscribe to religious particularism or faith exclusivism contrary to the monotheist Abrahamic religions. The song also mirrors the theory of religious pluralism and the utilitarian theory. The second and the third stanza of the song uphold the thesis of religious pluralism, while the last stanza substantiates the thesis of utilitarianism.

Uku Johnbull Unumegume, Reverend Oyiboame Emojevnu, *Omote Uku* Mary Ibodje, *Omote Uku* Tuwere Echekume, *Uku* Osete Ame and *Uku* Albert Ogievwege all concur that adherents of Igbe Orhe don't fight on behalf of God. They also submit that no matter the provocation, they allow the will and judgment of *Oweya* to take its course. As a result, it restrains both the spiritual leaders and followers of the religion from any form of violence. This song establishes their theology and also mirrors the utilitarianism principle:

<i>ejovwo k' Oweya</i>	<i>leave it for Oweya</i>
<i>ejovwo k' Oweya</i>	<i>leave it for Oweya</i>
<i>Ogaga akpoeje</i>	<i>sovereign universal power</i>
<i>E jovwo k' Oweya</i>	<i>leave it for Oweya</i>

Songs have been used as tools for the promotion of violence in Rwanda, Sudan and Darfur (African Rights (1995); Carlisle, (1973); Lacey, (2004). Likewise, Prudente (1984) substantiates the fact that among the Buwaya Kalinga people in the Philippines, songs are used to seal up peace treaties. Nevertheless, empirical findings in Igbe Orhe show that beyond the use of songs in promoting or resolving conflicts, the proper socialisation of adherents into the norms and values of a religion, and with constant reinforcement from the

religious elites through religious rituals, songs can be an effective internal mechanism in the prevention of conflict.

5.3.1.3 Camaraderie among Uku/Omote Uku

In the opinion of Mathias Orhero, the mutual trust and friendship among *Uku* and *Omote Uku* is a critical conflict prevention mechanism in Igbe religion. In his words, “the relationship that exists between the vast majority of *Uku* and *Emete Uku* makes it very difficult for our people to engage in violence” (Interview at Oria, Abraka 5thJan 2017). In buttressing this point, *Uku* Albert Ogievwege admits that:

In Igbe Orhe as *Uku*, we support one another. We do things together because in this work some people are far knowledgeable. Because we respect one another, it also reflects in the positive way our members treat themselves, even in conflict. As a result, when issues arise between adherents, they will approach their *Uku* and report the matter. Through this, issues that ought to have caused violence have been resolved (Interview at Okhrerhe-Agbarho, Ughelli North Local Government Area. October 21, 2016).

The FGD that was conducted with the youth across the sectarian divisions also subscribes to the assertion of Ogievwege that most *Uku* and *Emete Uku* have very close interactions as friends and to a large extent they know each other despite sectarian differences.

The FGD conducted for women admit that misunderstandings do occur among *Uku* or *Emete Uku*, but the friendship and fellowship that exist amongst them encourage speedy resolution of conflict at their echelon. According to *Omote Uku* Victoria Odaighofa, “it is very rare to hear an *Uku* or *Omote Uku* running down a fellow *Uku* in the *Ogwa* (temple of worship). No matter the offence, we stand by one another and we seek the good of one another” (Interview at Eginni, Udu Local Government Area. December 29, 2016). The FGD involving women from different sectarian groups affirms that another major factor responsible for the camaraderie among *Uku/Omote Uku* is connected to the relationship that is maintained between an *Uku* and his/her spiritual apprentices who have also been ordained as *Uku* or *Emete Uku*. They reveal that former apprentices often maintain close affectionate ties with their masters after completing their spiritual training. As a result, when faced with conflict instigating issues, they first consider their spiritual connection

before acting. This study, therefore, postulates that close ties and friendship between religious leaders across and within different sectarian groups can play an important role on the dynamics of conflict prevention for potential religious conflicts.

5.3.1.4 Sanction System

Sanctions systems are methods employed in most indigenous societies in order to establish social control. Like ethics, norms and values, sociologists are of the opinion that sanction systems can help in promoting social cohesion and can also be used for controlling people externally. Sanctions systems can be used formally or informally to enforce compliance. Also, it can be used positively in the context of giving rewards or negatively, that is in the context of serving punishment.

Okon (2014) opines that:

Sanction system has to do with the rewards and penalties which society stipulates for individuals according to performance and merit...the structure of society depends on the way values, beliefs, norms and sanctions are interrelated (p.139).

Onori Joseph Akpore admits that “we have a strong sanction system in this religious group. Any member who is found wanting is thoroughly sanctioned” (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East Local Government Area. October 18, 2016). *Omote Uku* Mary Ibodje confirmed that they encourage their adherents to avoid whatever will bring shame to the religion and any adherent who embarks on an activity that stains the name of the religion is seriously sanctioned. *Onori* Shimeji Ogheneruemu revealed that the fear of sanction is a factor that keeps an Igbe adherent in check because of the attached stigma.

Ose Isi Obaoga Ibodje (Uku Supreme) identified expulsion from the *Ogwa* as one of the grave sanctions in Igbe Orhe. The consensus from the women FGD confirms that the *Ogwa* offers protection from malevolent spiritual forces and no member would want to risk being expelled from the *Ogwa*. But contrary to the position of the women FGD, *Uku* Obonofuogha and *Uku* Samuel Igugu are opposed to the idea of sending an adherent away from the *Ogwa*. In their opinion, it is dangerous because anything can happen to them and the person’s blood will be on them. Therefore, they recommended other forms of sanctions such as denying an adherent the opportunity to work in the *Ogwa*, or certain welfare

packages. In some instances, they may not be allowed into the presence of *Uku* or *Omote Uku*. The general idea is that sanctions are established as a structural conflict preventive mechanism in Igbe religion.

Matthias Orhero argued that in most cases the fear of sanctions from the *Ogwa Igbe* (temple of worship) restrains most adherents from engaging in maladjusted or deviant behaviours because they want to be in the good book of the *Uku* or *Omote Uku*. This point affirms Okon's (2014: 140) remark that "the religion functions by providing social cohesion and collective identity which ultimately culminates in social control". Furthermore, Andersen cited in Okon (2014) contends that:

All human societies, religious sanctions chastise those who violate religious norms, thereby controlling the development of self and group identity and in the extreme, people who deviate from religiously established norms of their faith traditions may face sanctions such as torture, execution, or excommunication; in more subtle ways, these religious deviants may be ridiculed, shunned or ostracized (p.140)

Apart from physical sanctions, adherents are also afraid of divine sanctions. *Uku Festus Ikoba* affirmed that divine sanctions are incurred when the laws of *Oweya* are violated. *Uku Festus Ikoba* further notes that there have been instances when people are reported to have died mysteriously as a result of a supposed divine sanction from *Oweya*, especially when the issue involved has to do with adultery and witchcraft. But *Onori Shimeji* admits that most adherents do comply and conform to disciplinary measures, therefore the weapon of sanction is rarely applied.

Consequently, the fear of divine sanctions, whether real or perceived has helped to regulate the conduct of Igbe Orhe adherents within their faith community and by extension the society.

5.3.3 Foundation for Conflict Management in Igbe Religion

Ose Isi Obaoga Ibodje (Uku Supreme) pointed out that they are compelled to adopt conflict management of mechanisms within their localised context because the laws of the religion are averse to the protraction of conflict. He also admitted that unresolved conflict opens the door for evil spirits to operate in the congregation. So, to avoid negative spiritual intrusions, they seek to stimulate a healthy spiritual atmosphere through timely

management and resolution of conflicts. The FGDs conducted for women, men and youth across the sectarian divisions concurs with the rationality of the *Uku* Supreme.

Beyond the spiritual justification that was enumerated by the *Uku* Supreme, Taye Akpoyibo, a participant in the FGD conducted for women across the sectarian divisions, concedes that the foundation for conflict management in Igbe Orhe is also determined by its socio-environmental context. According to her, the religion is facing perception challenges in the community and as such, bringing their problems to the public domain will not be in their best interest. This view is like the Buem ethnic group concept of *ortorkeme li temi* or “house matter must not be allowed to be heard by outsiders”. It is a concept that explains the desire to contain all manner of conflicts among themselves at the lowest level of the social and the political order (Fred- Mensah, 2000: 34).

Uku Festus Ikoba explained the foundation for conflict management in Igbe Orhe in the context of its existential plurality of relationships among adherents. According to him, certain dynamics play out in the plurality of relationships. In the first instance, if conflicts are not managed, resolved and transformed on time, relationship with the spirit of *Oweya* can be affected. It can also stall the manifestations of his goodness that comes only through *evu ofuafo* (purity of heart) which is exemplified through the symbolic daily licking of the *Orhe* (native chalk). The second instance is the relationship with *Uku* or *Omote Uku* who are recognised as the viceroys of *Oweya* (God). Ikoba admits that adherents in Igbe Orhe are often encouraged to maintain a healthy relationship with their *Uku* or *Omote Uku* because it is through their agency that the blessings of *Oweya* can be transmitted. The third instance according to *Uku* Festus Ikoba is tied to their relationship with one another under the concept of “*omo ose ovo*” (children of one father). Under the concept of *omo ose ovo*, they draw strength from one another based on their common spiritual ancestry which is rooted in the founder, Ubiesha. *Uku* Festus Ikoba concluded that as a result of these dynamics, what matters most in the world-view of an average Igbe Orhe adherent is maintaining a healthy balance across these continuums of relationship. These points tend to uphold the utilitarian theory of Jeremy Bentham and Stuart Mills; in practical terms, they seek to project group interest above personal interest. Also, they seek to favour actions and possibly influence decisions that will inevitably benefit the community of adherents.

5.3.4 Method of Conflict Management

5.3.4.1 Justification for Indigenous Mechanism

There are remarkable assertions by scholars that conflict management should be established within indigenous mechanisms. These indigenous mechanisms are termed as informal (Alao, (2014); Olaoba, (2010); Ofure, (2014); Akpuru-Aja, (2007)). The formal method of conflict management has to do with the engagement of the British colonial court system which has been termed adversarial because of its winner-takes-all disposition (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014; Albert, 2001). In the explanation of Farah and Lewis (1993), indigenous conflict management and resolution mechanisms are wont to use local actors and traditional community based judicial mechanisms to manage and resolve conflicts within a community. Engaging the local mechanisms to resolve conflicts means that actors manage, resolve and transform conflicts without resorting to state-run judicial systems, police or other external structures. Empirical findings in Igbe religion show that its conflict management method borders on the informal and indigenous mechanisms.

Olorogun Mukoro Ochuko (JP) acknowledged that the adherents of Igbe religion do not take their issues outside. According to him, “Igbe members do not go to court and they do not take each other to court” (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East LGA. October 16, 2016). According to Nabofa (2005:362), “judgments given in *Ogwa Igbe* prove to be more reliable than those of the British courts”. *Olorogun* Ubieshakparobo Ibodje, Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu and *Uku* John Akpiri are also in support of the claim that adherents of Igbe Orhe do not take their matters to the law court because they believe that the dispensation of justice could be influenced with money based on historical antecedents. Nabofa (2005) may have captured why adherents of *Igbe Orhe* do not take their cases to the formal court based on the following words:

In July 1927, when Omonedo the leader of Igbe in Orogun was arrested; there was no sufficient evidence to convict him. He was arrested a second time and his accusers offered a bribe of fifty pounds to one Chief Osugo, the government interpreter in Ndosimili District, in order to pervert judgment (p.363).

This, according to *Uku* Festus Ikoba, may have justified why Igbe adherents do not go to the formal court to seek redress. Matthias Orhero explains that the introduction of the colonial British court made friends to become enemies in Urhoboland and because an Igbe adherent believes in the preservation of human relationships based on their world of

“*ufuoma akpoeje*”, they prefer to settle conflicts within their localised indigenous institutions. This is in tandem with the Yoruba perception of litigation that people who follow the modern court system do not return from the court and still be friends. This is the interpretation of the Yoruba popular proverb that goes thus “*A kiitikootuboki a sore*”.

In the words of *Oni Igbe* Margaret Alidi, “to a large extent and as far as I know, hardly can you find members of Igbe discussing their matters outside. Igbe has its indigenous way of solving its problems internally” (Interview at Imode, Ughelli South Local Government Local Government Area, January I, 2017). The FGDs conducted for women, men and youth across the sectarian divisions correspond with the view of *Oni Igbe* Margaret Alidi. Therefore, contrary to the claims of Vasti (2014), the colonising enterprise of the West has not affected the engagement of traditional conflict management approaches in Igbe Orhe.

Silas Ogundayomi a member of the Western Syncretic Igbe Orhe movement from Ijaw Apoi, Anthony Anie, a member of the Orthodox Igbe Orhe and Jonathan Okpako, a member of the Traditional Syncretic Igbe Orhe movement maintained that adherents of Igbe believe in the credibility and capacity of their local leadership institutions to solve their problems. As such, they seek redress on conflicts within their body polity. This is a point that underscores Kadayifci-Orellan’s (2003) claim that since religious traditions are perceived as legitimate and credible, engaging their local traditional conflict management framework to some extent can guarantee sustainable peace.

5.3.4.2 Mediation, Negotiation, Religious Arbitration, Conciliation, and Adjudication

Ajayi and Buhari (2014) identify mediation as a traditional method for conflict management in African societies. They contend that mediation, arbitration, adjudication, and negotiation are old methods of conflict management within African society. Mediation is a process whereby two or more parties to a dispute attempt on a voluntary basis, to reach an agreement on the settlement of their dispute with the assistance of a mediator who is neutral to the issue (Johnson and Helen, 2012). With adjudication, unlike other means of third-party interventions, the outcome is a decision by a third party which is binding on the parties in conflict and is the final unless and until reviewed by litigation (Olaoba, 2005). Negotiation is a direct process of dialogue and discussion that takes place between at least two parties who are faced with a problem. Parties to the conflict are aware that by talking to each other, they can find a solution to the problem (Umunadi, 2011).

According to Ade-Balogun (2015), within the African setting, arbitration is a process which may involve an authority figure to listen to the issues in conflict, demands and counter demands of parties in conflict and decides on a final settlement which is expected to be binding on all parties to the conflict. There is another dimension of arbitration known as “religious arbitration” or “faith-based arbitration”. Walter (2012) discusses arbitration under the concept of religious arbitration using the United States of America and Canada as case studies. According to Walter (2012:503-504), in the United States and Canada, “God and law intersect in the form of religious arbitration. He defines religious arbitration, as a voluntary dispute resolution process, conducted according to religious principles and such arbitration often serves as a substitute for proceedings in civil court”. Wolfe (2006) identifies religious arbitration as faith-based arbitration.

According to Wolfe (2006: 427-428), “along with general arbitration, faith-based arbitration is a process in which arbitrators apply religious principles to resolve disputes”. In line with the submissions of the scholars cited above, empirical findings showed that the conflict management methods that are engaged in *Igbe Orhe* fall within the ambience of negotiation, conciliation, “religious” arbitration and adjudication. The FGD conducted for women and men across the sectarian divisions’ advances that cases of infidelity, witchcraft or poison are handled directly by *Uku* or *Omote Uku*. Likewise, *Omote Uku* Victoria Amajatoja admitted that cases such as two fighting, marital conflict, theft or interpersonal relationships can be handled by *Onori* or *Oni Igbe* and they make recommendations on the appropriate sanctions that should be taken. It can, therefore, be deduced that the conflict management method in *Igbe Orhe* is not static but dynamic. The conflict management methods that have been engaged to address some specific conflicts in *Igbe Orhe* are discussed in the context of the following case studies.

5.3.4.3 Engaging the Method of Negotiation

Rowland Adagbrassa, a participant in the FGD conducted for youths across the sectarian divisions, declared that an Igbe adherent believes in negotiation as a way of solving issues, whether personal or corporate. Silas Ogundayomi admitted that if an adherent of Igbe Orhe is offended either by a member of his/her *Ogwa* or by ‘an outsider’, he will look for an appropriate time to seek an audience with the one who has offended him and talk things over. Once it is done, his conscience before *Oweya* is clear because he feels that he has

taken the right step. In explaining this point further, *Uku* Anthony Echekume revealed that an environment of peace is paramount for the spirit of *Oweya* to operate. It is therefore incumbent on genuine adherents of Igbe to negotiate and settle issues in conflict expeditiously in order not to grieve the spirit of *Oweya*.

Negotiation in Interpersonal Conflict: Case Study 1

Oni Igbe Eloho Onotu recounted an incidence that transpired between her and a friend who is a member of *Igbe Ame* sectarian group. She narrated how her *Igbe Ame* friend borrowed some amount of money from her and declined to pay back. According to her, the so-called friend began to avoid picking her calls. So, she decided to pay an impromptu visit to her friend. After exchanging pleasantries, she requested for her money and her friend replied she had no money, but pleaded for more time. According to her, the friend complained of miscalculating her profit projections. *Oni Igbe* Eloho said she explained to her friend that she also needed money to sort out some business issues. The amount in question was two hundred thousand naira (N200, 000). In the course of the discussion, her friend proposed payment in instalment to the tune of twenty thousand naira (N20, 000) monthly. According to *Oni Igbe* Eloho Onotu, she was satisfied with her proposal. She, however, mentioned if her efforts had not yielded any result, she would have pursued the case further in the court of an *Uku*. This case study demonstrated the use of negotiation as a conflict management method. It substantiates the view of Boyes (2017:3) that negotiation “takes place when two or more people with differing views, come together to attempt to reach agreement on an issue.” Going by the explanation of the respondent, their verbal exchanges were not inflammatory, which is supportive of the assertion that negotiation also involves persuasive communication (Boyes, 2017).

But Matthias Orhero argued that an Igbe adherent opts for soft negotiation and makes concessions principally because of his relationship with *Oweya*. The consensus from the women FGD is that Igbe devotees would rather prefer to be cheated or exploited to cheat others. They contend that whoever cheats an Igbe deliberately cannot escape the judgment of *Oweya*. The following words from Comrade Gilbert Isoko confirm their claims “from my personal observation, you cannot cheat an Igbe person and go free. This is one of the reasons people fear them in the community” (Interview at Okhrerhe- Agbarho, Ughelli

North LGA. January 5, 2017). In addition, this case study upholds the integrative method of negotiation, also known as win-win in the exposition of Boyes (2017:4).

Negotiation in Managing Succession Conflict: Case Study 2

The dominant narratives in Igbe affirm that when Ubiesha, its founder died in 1920, Ibodje the older male child was asked to take charge as the spiritual head of the religion. It was reported that he declined the offer on the ground that he was ignorant about certain things in the practice of Igbe. Legend had it that Ibodje pleaded with Akpobome, who was the most Senior *Onori* at that time to serve in an acting capacity in order to enable him (Ibodje) understudy and learn more about the practice of the religion. Not long after, Akpobome died and the younger brother of Ibodje by name Akpokovo assumed duty as the spiritual head of the religion in the absence of Ibodje. When Ibodje returned to Kokori, he demanded that Akpokovo relinquish the leadership of the religion to him based on existing tradition. Akpokovo, on the other hand, refused to give up the position claiming that he was the closest person to their father in the practice of the religion when he was alive. In the end, they failed to reach an amicable settlement and Ibodje gave up contesting for the position.

This case study corroborates the distributive negotiation notion of Boyes (2017). Empirical findings reveal that because Ibodje and Akpokovo were unable to settle the leadership succession conflict amicably, it mirrors the school of thought that not all conflict can be resolved.

5.3.4.4 Engaging the Method of Religious Arbitration

Uku Gabriel Obonofogha identified the use of “religious” arbitration as a method of conflict management in Igbe Orhe. He explained that adherents bring their cases to the *Ogwa Igbe*, where they prosecute and settle in line with the traditions and laws of the religion. This submission substantiates Walter (2012) that the dispute resolution process can be conducted according to religious principles and such arbitrations can even be used in civil court proceedings. It also validates Wolfe (2006: 427-428) that religious arbitration is a dispute resolution process, “conducted according to religious principles”

In the context of Igbe Orhe, the arbitrators are not commercially hired. They are the local leaders in the *Ogwa Igbe* who can be delegated to manage conflict issues. It is also

important to note that adherents of Igbe Orhe can take their cases to any *Ogwa Igbe* for settlement as long as they are sure of the integrity of the *Uku* or *Omote Uku* presiding, an action that upholds the thesis of religious pluralism. It also justifies the customary arbitration basis of Balogun (2015) who contends that when disputes are presented for resolution, the resolution should be fostered by persons who are versed in the custom that governs the issue in dispute.

Onori Godday Etairue points out that matters such as adultery, witchcraft accusations, stealing, spiritual oppression, poison are more often handled by *Uku* or *Omote Uku*. But issues such as "two fighting", interpersonal issues, and business disagreements can be delegated to *Inori* and *Ini Igbe*. *Oni Igbe* Tina Olomu discloses that when matters are delegated to them, they listen very carefully to the parties in conflict and if need be, they can counsel or take a joint decision on the matter in line with the *urhi* (laws) of the religion. However, *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) mentioned that within the Igbe Orhe because the *Inori* or *Ini Igbe* is not the final line of authority, their ruling can be rejected by either party in the conflict. In the event of such, the issue will be referred to the presiding *Uku* or *Omote Uku*.

According to *Omote Uku* Victoria Amajatoja, *Uku* or *Omote Uku* is still not the final arbiter because they still have the right to appeal to *Uku* Supreme if they are not satisfied with the decision of an *Uku* or *Omote Uku*. This is the dominant narrative of all respondents including the three Focus Group Discussions. Thus, empirical evidence has revealed that religious arbitration is widely practised amongst adherents of Igbe Orhe. Consequently, beyond the thesis of Wolfe (2006) that religious arbitration is a phenomenon within monotheistic Abrahamic religions and that it is a time-honoured practice in the United States of America and Canada, this study has also established that it is also a dominant phenomenon in Igbe Orhe.

Mediation/Religious Arbitration in Managing Business Related Conflict:

Case Study 3

Silas Ogundayomi narrated how the business relationship between two adherents went awry and explained how the issue was managed and eventually resolved. The incident occurred between two adherents who reside in Warri. The story had it that one of the

adherents got a Local Purchasing Order (LPO) to supply a company with building materials. Unable to finance the supply, she approached a fellow Igbe Orhe adherent who assisted her with the amount needed to fund the business, with an understanding that they would share the profit equally after deducting all expenses. It was reported that after the business was executed, the one who secured the business paid an amount that was far less, contrary to the initial agreement. Her action infuriated the adherent who financed the business. The matter was reported to the *Omote Uku* of the woman who secured the contract for possible intervention. The *Omote Uku* invited both to her *Ogwa Igbe*. After listening patiently to both parties in conflict, the *Omote Uku* admonished the woman who secured the deal against allowing greed to take precedence over faithfulness to her words and knowing that *Oweya* hates cheating. She then asked her to honour the initial agreement or risk judgment from *Oweya*. After some days, the report reached *Omote Uku* that she had honoured the agreement. There is a confluence between this case study and the explanation of Baril & Dickey (2017) who alluded to Henry (396-97) that in traditional arbitration, “a third party neutral conducts an adjudicative process similar to a court proceeding to reach a decision according to the law of the contract”. Furthermore, it affirmed Walter (2012) that the dispute resolution process can be conducted according to religious principles and such arbitrations can even be used in civil court proceedings. Equally, Wolfe (2006: 427-428) contends that religious arbitration is a dispute resolution process, “conducted according to religious principles”. It also affirms Johnson and Helen (2012) that mediation is a process whereby two or more parties to a dispute attempt on a voluntary basis, to reach an agreement on the settlement of their dispute with the assistance of a mediator who is neutral to the issue (Johnson and Helen, 2012).

Religious Arbitration in Managing False Accusation Conflict: Case Study 4

Omote Uku Victoria Amajatoja narrated the story of a certain woman who had issues with another female Igbe member was resolved in her *Ogwa*. The first woman accused the second woman that she was having an affair with her husband. But the second woman denied the allegation as unfounded. *Omote Uku* Amajatoja recounted that the case was brought to her *Ogwa Igbe* and in the company of some *Inori* and *Ini Igbe*. Both parties in conflict stated their case. The husband of the first woman was also invited to say his own side of the story. After examining the case, they discovered that the husband of the first woman was only trying to render some sort of financial assistance to the second woman.

Omote Uku Amajatoja said she pleaded with both to sheath their sword and they fined the first woman for wrongful accusation.

While others accepted the decision, they discovered it did not go down well with the first woman. It was reported that the first woman angrily stood up and left the *Ogwa*. In addition, they observed that the first woman stopped coming to *Ogwa* and started attending a church. *Omote Uku* Amajatoja reported that after some months a strange sickness befell the woman. When they could not find a solution to the sickness, she was brought back to the *Ogwa Igbe*. She apologised to *Omote Uku* Amajatoja and the *Inori*, paid the fine and her health was fully restored. Notaras and Bartle (2015) affirm that one of the challenges facing arbitration in Nigeria borders on the issue of enforcement. But empirical evidence in Igbe religion also shows that faith-based arbitration as an ADR is also faced with the challenges of enforcement. However, contrary to the views of Wolfe (2006) and Balogun (2015) that a party can seek redress in a formal court of law if unsatisfied with a ruling emanating from arbitration, findings in Igbe Orhe show that an adherent would rather leave judgment in the hands of *Oweya*, who is acclaimed to be the final arbiter or seek redress in the court of *Ose Isi Uku Supreme*.

In the cosmology of Igbe Orhe, no defaulting member can escape the judgment of *Oweya*. This finding is also upheld by Olaoba (2001) that the wrath of the gods is used for eliciting facts of the dispute. Such gods as *Sango* (god of Thunder), *Yemoja* (goddess of rivers) and *Ayelala* (guardian of social morality) are used to ascertain the veracity of the story told by disputants (Olaoba, 2001: 15-16). The sickness that befell the woman puts into context the avenging spirit thesis of Maruzani (2012). According to Maruzani (2012:1), "the effects of avenging spirits are seen through psychological trauma, mental break-down, strange deaths and weird ailments amongst others". Therefore, the thought of torments from the avenging spirit is deemed enough to constructively guide the social interaction of members of the community. From a deductive point of view, it can also be inferred that *Oweya* can also manifest as an avenging spirit for the sake of justice amongst adherents of Igbe. It further reinforces the utilitarian theory in the sense that the fear of the avenging dimension of *Oweya* can to some extent ensure that adherents stick to genuine prescribed punishments that have been pronounced or agreeably reached during the resolution of conflicts.

The FGD conducted for men across the sectarian divisions expounded that there have been instances where some *Uku* or *Omote Uku* have not been fair in their judgments or decisions on certain matters especially if the person presiding is not skilful enough. Under such circumstances, an adherent can take his/her case to the *Uku Supreme* in Kokori who is understood in the cosmology of Igbe religion to be the viceroy of *Oweya*. He is the last arbitrating point in Igbe religion. *Uku* Anthony Echekume, *Uku* John Akpiri, *Onori* Stephen Udumebrae, *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho and several other respondents also confirmed this point. The following assertions from the current *Uku Supreme* His Eminence, Obaoga Ibodje attest to the claims of the respondents:

I as *Uku Supreme* am the final arbiter in all matters relating to conflict in this religion. As *Ose Isi* (father of the religion), once I make a pronouncement on any matter it is final. Anyone who cannot accept my pronouncement as wisdom from *Oweya* will be expelled from the *Ogwa Igbe* (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East Local Government, October 19, 2016)

The statement of the *Uku Supreme* agrees with Ajayi and Buhari (2014) and Olaoba (2001) that conflict management and resolution in Africa occur in stages. *Uku* Gabriel Obonofogha explains that at the macro level, which is at the headquarters in Kokori, the *Uku Supreme* is the final arbiter for the settlement of all conflicts. But at the micro level, that is, at individual local, *Ogwa Igbe*, the presiding *Uku* or *Omote Uku*, is the final arbiter with regards to the settling conflict.

Religious Arbitration in Managing Marital Infidelity by Uku Supreme: Case Study 5

Uku Albert Ogievwege narrated how the *Uku Supreme* used religious arbitration to resolve a case of marital infidelity. According to him, the man who was accused of marital infidelity did not agree with the decision to pay the fine that was imposed on him for defiling another man's wife, arguing that it was the woman who tempted him in the first instance. The accused decided to take the matter to the *Uku Supreme*. *Uku Supreme* invited all the parties involved in the case to Kokori. *Uku* Albert Ogievwege said he was part of the people invited because the woman involved in the case happened to be a member of his *Ogwa*.

After all the parties had stated their own side of the story, *Uku Supreme* asked the man to state the position of the religion on adultery and its spiritual implication in an *Ogwa Igbe*.

The man confessed that the religion frowns at adultery and that it affects the flow of the powers of *Oweya* in the *Ogwa*. *Uku Supreme* further asked that since the accused understands the implication of adultery, why he indulges in it? He ordered the man to pay the fine that was imposed on him while reprimanding him that a refusal to pay would lead to his expulsion from the *Ogwa Igbe*. The woman had earlier owned up to the offence and *Uku Supreme* asked her husband if he was still interested in the marriage. The woman's husband said though he had forgiven her, he was no longer interested in the marriage. *Uku Supreme* pronounced that the man should follow the custom that is associated with divorce in Urhoboland. Olorogun Mukoro Ochuko (JP) attest to the fact that in Igbe Orhe divorce is permitted but it must in line with the custom of the people.

It must be mentioned that not all the parties that are involved in this case study belong to the same sectarian group of the *Uku Supreme*. Yet, they all surrendered to his judgment without question. This validates the manifestation of the theory of religious pluralism and sectarian pluralism in Igbe religion.

5.3.4.5 Engaging the Method of Conciliation

Like other alternative dispute resolution methods, conciliation involves the resolution or management of conflicts without resorting to litigation. It seeks to help conflicting parties to reach a better understanding of each other's position and underlying interests. Conciliation also looks for ways to encourage a positive relationship between parties in conflict (Acas, 2015; Shinde, 2012). According to Shinde (2012:2) "conciliation court is a place where people can go to resolve legal disputes in a simple and informal manner. There are no jury trials in conciliation court and there is no adjudication or judicial verdict. Each person involved in the case tells his or her side of the story to a judge or referee who then makes a decision about the dispute". He further notes that the conciliator is not bound by the rules of procedure and evidence. The conciliator does not give an award or order. He tries to bring an acceptable agreement as to the conflict between the parties by mutual consent (2012: 3).

According to Mercy Iyoyin, a participant in the Focus Group Discussion organised for women across the different sectarian groups, there are some non-titled adherents who are well respected among the brethren and such individuals can be invited as conciliators by parties to a conflict. The FGD conducted for men across sectarian divisions affirms the

position of the women FGD, but are wont to mention that through conciliation many conflicts amongst adherents have been resolved, but there have been instances where failures are recorded.

Mathias Orhero noted that when such individuals who are usually seen as father or mother figure in Igbe religious community are called upon to manage conflict, they do not pass judgments or trade blames between the conflict parties, rather they try to persuade parties in a conflict to sheath their swords. They help to fashion out the best approach to solve conflicts without being adversarial. Framing conciliation from the purview of Sgubini, Prieditis & Marighetto (2004), the neutral is usually seen as an authority figure that is responsible for proffering the best solution for the parties. In the view of *Oni Igbe Eloho Onotu*, conciliation is often deployed when conflict has not come to the open which further corroborates Sgubini, Prieditis and Marighetto (Ibid) that conciliation is used almost preventively as soon as a conflict or misunderstanding arises.

However, contrary to Arbitration and Conciliation Act, Cap 18, LFN of 1990, which stipulates that the conciliator must be appointed, what qualifies one as a conciliator in Igbe according to *Olorogun Mukoro Ochuko (JP)* is the social capital of the person before the parties in conflict. He also mentioned that *Uku* or *Omote Uku* can also appoint men or women who are well respected in the Igbe religious community to act as conciliators. *Uku Johnbull Unumegume* further explains that conciliation is often used when the conflict is among members of the leadership cadre of the religion.

Conciliation in Managing Conflict between Two Leaders: Case Study 6

Uku Osete Ame told the researcher how through a conciliatory effort, he was able to mend fences between one *Uku Awerote* and another *Uku* by name *Ogebia*. He recounted that conflict ensued between *Uku Ogebia* and *Uku Awerote* when he (*Ogebia*) went and took the title of *Uku* from *Kokori*. The story had it that *Uku Awerote* was embittered because *Uku Ogebia* who was then an active member in his *Ogwa Igbe* got ordained as *Uku* in *Kokori* without his consent. To make matters worse, it was reported that *Uku Ogebia* left the *Ogwa* of *Awerote* unannounced, an action that further polarised their already fragile relationship. *Uku Osete Ame* after visiting with *Uku Awerote* about thrice in his *Ogwa*, he observed the conspicuous absence of *Uku Ogebia* and out of curiosity requested to know what was responsible. *Uku Awerote* narrated what happened and how the actions of

Ogebia annoyed him. On returning to Ughelli, *Uku* Osete Ame said he invited *Uku* Ogebia to his *Ogwa* to hear his own side of the story. He then requested that Ogebia should meet him at the *Ogwa* of *Uku* Awerote on a stipulated date.

On the appointed day, they all met at the *Ogwa* of *Uku* Awerote. After the usual Urhobo customary entertainment, *Uku* Awerote expressed his hurt and grievance against *Uku* Ogebia. On his own part, *Uku* Ogebia said he went to Kokori to take the *Uku* title with the understanding that the power to ordain anyone as *Uku* is the sole responsibility of Kokori. He also stated he decided not to make his intention because *Oweya* specifically mentioned to him that he must not make it known to anyone. *Uku* Awerote corrected him that he ought to have recommended him for ordination as his spiritual son. It was at this point, *Uku* Osete Ame pleaded with *Uku* Awerote that since Ogebia referred to the fact that *Oweya* instructed him to be silent and that he knows the implications of breaking an instruction from *Oweya*, he should try to overlook the mistake of Ogebia. He also told Ogebia to kneel and apologise to *Uku* Awerote for undermining his authority as a spiritual head. Afterwards, they both stood up and embraced each other.

In this case study, *Uku* Osete Ame belongs to the traditional syncretic sectarian division of Igbe, while *Uku* Awerote and *Uku* Ogebia belong to the orthodox sectarian division. Yet, the parties to the conflict (Ogebia and Awerote) allowed *Uku* Osete Ame to reconcile both. This establishes to a large extent the integration of the theory of religious pluralism in the management of conflict in Igbe religion.

Conciliation in Managing Conflict regarding Membership Disobedience: Case Study 7

Salubi Brume, a participant in the FGD conducted for women across the sectarian divisions, narrated that some time ago in an *Ogwa Igbe* at Ovwian, it was agreed that all latecomers should be fined an amount of money. After the decision was reached, three women who were part of the meeting violated the order and to make matters worse, they refused to pay the fine. Their argument was that they were not present in the meeting when the decision was taken. So as not to comply with the directives to pay the stipulated fine, the three women left the *Ogwa Igbe* in annoyance. She pointed out that the *Omote Uku*

simply pronounced that they should all remember that the decision to pay a fine for lateness was a unanimous decision.

According to the story, some people visited the women and encouraged them to return to *Ogwa*, but they refused. After all, entreaties failed, the women were left alone. Then tragedy struck, one of the women who disobeyed died mysteriously, while her friend started having issues with her business. It was reported that when the third woman heard what had happened to her two friends, she ran to *Omote Uku* and pleaded for forgiveness. A critical examination of this case study accentuates Shinde (2012) that in conciliation, the decisions taken are the primary responsibility of the conflicting parties.

Conciliation in Managing Conflict Justice Omo Agege and Uku Supreme: Case Study 8

Uku Festus Ikoba narrated how in 1998 it was revealed to him in a dream that he should go and tell Chief Omo Agege, who was the spiritual head of Igbe Orhe, Orhomuru circle, that the malice between his branch and the headquarters in Kokori was long overdue for resolution. *Uku* Ikoba reported that he booked an appointment to see Omo Agege. According to him, he was well received by Omo Agege and after the usual customary entertainment, he related the message as it was revealed to him by *Oweya*. He claimed to have encouraged Justice Agege that the people responsible for the conflict were long dead. Therefore, he should find a means of reconciling with Kokori, so that unity can be restored in the religion. Justice Omo Agege, according to Festus Ikoba, listened carefully and promised to do something about the revelation. Equally, *Uku* Ikoba narrated that he went to Kokori and told the same revelation to the *Uku Supreme* and encouraged him to see how the headquarters could resolve the long-standing conflict with the branch at Orhomuru. After a period of three years, the headquarters sent delegates to Justice Omo Agege that they were ready for reconciliation if he so desires. In the passage of time, Justice Omo Agege died. After the death and burial of Agege in November 2016, *Uku* Festus Ikoba told the researcher that he made a fresh move to Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu the closest ally to Justice Omo Agege who confirmed to him that, on his death bed, Justice Omo Agege mandated him to see to the unification of Igbe. Oyiboame told the researcher in the

presence of *Uku* Festus Ikoba that after the three-month mourning period, he will set the machinery in place for the unification of Orhomuru and Kokori.

This case study intersects with the thesis of religious pluralism in the sense that Justice Omo Agege did not doubt the revelation of *Uku* Festus Ikoba. He accepted it as a direct instruction from *Oweya* and promised to do something about it. Furthermore, the indicator of religious pluralism was evident on his death bed, in the presence of his leaders, when Omo Agege mandated Oyiboame Emojevju, the leader of the Western Syncretic practice of Igbe to carry on with the efforts at reconciliation. This is because he understands that beyond sectarian affiliation, Oyiboame has the charisma, respect and social capital to bring all the sectarian groups in Igbe religion together.

5.3.4.6 Engagement of Adjudication as a Conflict Management Method:

Ajayi and Buhari (2014) posit that in traditional African society, adjudication involves bringing parties to a conflict to the house of the family head or in some other instances the court of the palace. This view correlates with findings in Igbe Orhe because parties to a conflict are usually invited to the *Ogwa Igbe* of the presiding *Uku* or *Omote Uku* for settlement. In the *Ogwa Igbe*, the *Uku* or *Omote Uku* can guide, persuade through dialogue or impose a decision on parties to a conflict. Deepening the discussion on adjudication Olaoba (2012) indicates that the adjudicatory processes in African society are imbued with dialogue.

The FGD conducted for youth across the sectarian divisions contends that there have been occasions where parties to a conflict refuse to kowtow to the judgments of the spiritual authorities in the religion. Oghenevwede Mamuyovwi, a participant in the youth FGD, mentioned that many of the cases had to do with accusations regarding theft and wizardry. *Uku* Festus Ikoba agreed with the Youth FGD that adherents sometimes reject the decision that is imposed on them especially when it has to do with witchcraft accusation, theft, poison, etc. and would insist on seeking an ultimate judgment in the hands of *Oweya*. In the words of *Uku* Matthew Itegbere:

When a member who has been found guilty of allegations such as witchcraft, theft, or poison and refuses our judgment, we leave him or her to the ultimate judgment from *Oweya*. As *Uku* I am bound

by the laws of the religion not to curse, but through the agency of the *Orhe* I can invoke the judgment of *Oweya* to vindicate me in the decision that I have taken (Interview at Orhomuru, Ughelli North LGA. December 24, 2016).

In the understandings of Anthony Sakpra, when adherents refuse to accept the verdict of *Uku*, *Omote Uku* or the *Uku Supreme*, they seek adjudication before *Oweya* through the instrument of “*e vwi rhe Orhe*”, (the breaking of the native chalk into two equal parts by the conflict parties). Affirming Anthony Sakpra, *Uku* Festus Ikoba revealed that when someone or a group is insisting before the *Uku* or whosoever that has been sent to settle a case that his or her judgment is not correct, then *Oweya* will be asked to take his place. According to him, that is where breaking the chalk comes in and the guilty will eventually confess when judgment comes from *Oweya*. He claims that it is only *Uku* or *Omote Uku* who can preside over *e vwi rhe Orhe*. But *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho was of the view that if adherents have licked the chalk, they can invoke *e vwi rhe Orhe* if they so desire. She insisted that it is not restricted only to the priestly class. Nevertheless, all respondents agreed that the consequences of *e vwi rhe Orhe* in *Igbe Orhe* are usually very grave.

Matthias Orhero, however, noted that *e vwi rhe Orhe* is usually applied in very extreme cases, especially witchcraft or accusations of wizardry. Alao (2014) contends that the native gods in Africa resolve conflicts largely through divination, incantation, administration oath-taking. These activities are usually carried out in either a shrine, village square or inside an ancestral groove. The breaking of the *orhe* is not before a shrine or in the village square. In contrast to the submission of Alao (2014), *e vwi rhe Orhe* is usually done inside the *Ogwa Igbe* (temple of worship), where it is believed *Oweya* (the Almighty God) is fully resident.

Adjudication in Managing an Accusation of Marital Infidelity: Case Study 9

This story was garnered from the personal experience of *Omote Uku* Iwwe Designer at Upper Agbarho Street, Ughelli. Being a nurse by profession, a woman in labour was brought into her private maternity home for delivery. But she discovered that the woman’s labour was getting prolonged. After deploying the knowledge within her professional boundary, the labour persisted and she decided to go spiritual even as the labour remained

prolonged. So, she had no choice but to ask the woman to confess her evil deeds or risk losing her life and that of the unborn child. When it became obvious that death was imminent, she decided to confess.

According to her in 2013, the woman accused her husband that his sister introduced a lady to him and that he had been having an affair with the girl. Her husband denied the allegation and pleaded with the wife that he was not involved in any extra-marital affair. As a result, the woman brought out the *orhe* (native chalk), broke it into two equal parts and took an oath that if indeed her husband was having an affair with any woman, the chalk should kill him, but if on the contrary, the chalk should kill her. After taking the oath, both licked the chalk. The prolonged labour was attributed to the vindication of her husband and punishment from *Oweya*. *Omote Uku* Iwue Designer recounted that immediately she called her spiritual head, *Uku* Osete Ame instructed her to lead the woman through some confession process. After going through the rituals of confession the woman delivered a boy. This case study contradicts the claims of *Uku* Festus Ikoba that engaging the tool of “*e vwi r’ Orhe*”, is the prerogative of the *Uku* and it affirms the position of *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho that any aggrieved members of the religion can invoke *e vwi r’ Orhe*, when they feel aggrieved or wrongly judged.

Adjudication in Managing Witchcraft Accusation: Case Study 10

Uku Albert Ogievwege narrated how sometime in 2010 he managed a conflict between two sisters born of the same parents. According to him, the younger sister was doing far better than her elder sister. The elder sister decided to visit a spiritual house where she was told that her younger sister had witchcraft spirit and she had used it to exploit her fortunes.

Her younger sister noticed a change in the attitude of her elder sister and beckoned on her elder sister to open. Her elder sister told her bluntly that she never knew that her younger sister was a witch. The younger sister was heartbroken with the accusation, considering all the efforts she had been making to give her elder sister a better life. To make matters worse, her elder sister dragged her to an *Omote Uku* who purportedly ordered the younger sister to confess. According to the story, the younger sister refused and insisted that they visit a neutral *Ogwa Igbe*. That was how they came to the *Ogwa Igbe* of Albert Ogievwege, who recommended the agency of *e vwi rhe Orhe*. He broke the chalk and

called on *Oweya* to intervene. After about a month, the elder sister began to lose weight mysteriously. Initially, it was assumed that she was ill, but her continuous weight loss became worrisome to all. All efforts at seeking medical solution failed. *Uku* Ogievwege recounted that they had to bring the lady to him so that he could entreat the mercy of *Oweya*. According to him, the strange sickness on the woman was a judgment from *Oweya* as a result of the wrong accusation.

Adjudication in Managing Land Dispute: Case Study 11

Omote Uku Mary Ibodje narrated how a member of her Ogwa Igbe bought a piece of land from a land vendor. After settling all expenses, the buyer travelled back to his place of work outside Kokori with a promise to return and start construction on the site. On his return about six months later, someone else had already put a foundation on the land. He called the vendor who sold the land and demanded what was going on. The vendor told him that he would refund his money, but pleaded for some time. After waiting for about a month, he approached the vendor that if he could not refund his money, he should provide an alternative land. The vendor pleaded that he should be given more time. After waiting for another month without any response, the buyer called the land vendor again. This time around the land vendor called his bluff and asked him to do his worse. According to *Omote Uku* Mary Ibodje, the land buyer reported the case to her and she asked him to invite the man that sold the land to the Ogwa. She recounted that the land vendor declined the invitation on the grounds that he was not an adherent of Igbe. Thereafter, *Omote Uku* said he asked the man whether indeed he bought the land from his sweat. She said the man confessed that he did not buy the land with ill-gotten money. *Omote Uku* then said they are free to call on *Oweya* to intervene on his behalf, as she broke the chalk. After fourteen (14) days of breaking the chalk, *Omote Uku* recounted that the land buyer received an early morning call from the vendor apologising for the wrong done to him and requested for his account number for a refund of his money.

According to her, the land vendor reported that strange forces had been appearing and beating him every night while he was asleep and when he woke up in the morning there would be visible pains and lacerations all over his body. After the money was refunded, the bad dreams ceased. The refusal of the land vendor to appear before the *Omote Uku* establishes the argument of Golpin (1997) that one of the shortcomings of managing

conflicts through the ethics of religion is the rejection of nonbelievers and traditional out-groups who feel that they cannot submit to the authority of spiritual leaders who do not belong to their religious or denominational persuasions.

5.4 Conflict Transformation in Igbe Religion

According to Golpin (1997:5), “there is an abundant supply of religious values around the globe that need to be identified in terms of their importance for conflict resolution theory”. Conflict transformation is subsumed within the conflict management framework of *Igbe Orhe*. The conflict transformation dynamics in *Igbe Orhe* according to *Olorogun Mukoro Ochuko* (JP) is built around the concept of “*wo ru cho, gba ne wo ru cho o?*” It means “have you acted wrongly or not?” It connotes the “confession of guilt by the offender” and the “acceptance of apology by the offended”. *Omote Uku Victoria Amajatoja* affirmed that anyone who is called upon to arbitrate or adjudicate in a conflict in *Igbe Orhe* will first allow parties in the conflict to state their case and make their positions known. Afterwards, the religious arbitrator or adjudicator will apportion blame to whoever deserves to be blamed and articulate judgment if need be. However, it does not end there. According to *Omote Uku Victoria Idogho*, to ensure a transformation of the conflict, the religious arbitrator or adjudicator will ask the one who had been pronounced guilty “*wo ru cho, gba ne wo ru choo?*”, meaning “have you acted wrongly or not?” The one who had been accused will then respond “*mi ru cho*” meaning “*I accept that I have acted wrongly*”. Then *Uku* will ask “*wo ji ru otio ye edefa?*” meaning “*will you do it another time?*” The one who has been blamed will respond by saying “*e jo*” meaning “no”. Once he/she says no, the *Uku* will then make the ultimate pronouncement “*ufuoma dia kevwe*” meaning “*peace is upon you*”. Likewise, the one who brought the case will be asked: “have you acted wrongly or not?” He/ she would respond “*I have acted wrongly*”. He/she will be further asked: “*will you do it another time?*” And the response will be “no”. The *Uku* will also pronounce blessings upon him/her. Once this process is completed, the *Orhe* will be administered to the parties in conflict to lick. The licking of the chalk symbolises that their minds are now clear and free from all forms of acrimony towards each other. The licking of the chalk also means that they are free to relate with Oweyaand with each other. The conflict transformation dynamics of *Igbe Orhe* substantiates GCCT (2013) that:

Conflict Transformation includes “modifying actors, understanding perception, redefining issues that are central to the conflict, ensuring that conflicts are dealt with constructively and adjusting the prevailing power distribution. For conflict transformation to occur, tensions between parties to the conflict must be overcome – first, by ensuring all actors recognize that their respective interests are not served by resorting to violence; and second, by seeking consensus on what should be transformed and how (p. 3).

The researcher observed this process at Oria Abraka in the *Ogwa Igbe* of *Uku Festus Ikoba*. It was a breach of contract concerning vehicle purchase. A party to the conflict reported to *Uku Festus Ikoba* that he gave money to one of their members to help him procure a bus for commercial purposes. The brother ended up swindling him by bringing a used Nigerian second-hand car. He, therefore, requested that the brother should either supply him with the agreed “*tokunbo bus*” (a second-hand imported bus) or refund his money. Then *Uku Ikoba* asked the supplier the reasons for his breaching the initial agreement. In his response, the supplier said they started talking about the vehicle five (5) months earlier. By the time funds were released, things had changed in the market. So, what he supplied was commensurate to the cash in hand. *Uku Festus* blamed him that he ought to have called the buyer and explained the current state of things to him. He pleaded with the buyer that it was evident that the supplier would not be able to get him a “*tokunbo bus*” and from the look of things he could not guarantee the refund of his money. Therefore, he pleaded with the supplier to fix everything that needed to be fixed in the Nigerian used bus he supplied at least to make the buyer happy. They all consented to his decision. Then he asked the man who supplied the bus “*wo ru cho, gba ne wo ru cho o?*” And he responded “*mi ru cho*”. *Uku Festus Ikoba* thereafter warned him to desist from acts of dishonesty or else he would not escape the judgment of *Oweya*. He later turned to the buyer and asked: “*wo ru cho, gba ne wo ru cho?*” And he also responded “*mi ru cho*”. Then he administered the chalk for them to lick and brought out drinks for entertainment.

The researcher also observed a similar proceeding at Ovwian in the *Ogwa Igbe* of *Onori Abel Egofovwe*, which was in sync with what transpired at Oria, Abraka. However, one is compelled to ask “why should someone or a group of persons who have been offended accept that they are guilty?” *Uku Supreme Obaoga Ibodje* responded with the following words:

In *Igbe*, we believe that no mortal can claim to be perfect and no man can claim to be 100% truthful; that is only reserved for *Oweya*. Therefore, in any conflict, we believe that none of the parties can also claim that they are 100% right because of the imperfections of mortals. (Interview at Kokori, Ethiopie East Local Government. October 19, 2016).

These words from the *Uku* Supreme uphold the notion of religious pluralism that truth is not absolute but relative when it is viewed in the context of individual experiences. In deploying this concept in the context of managing conflict, adherents of *Igbe* believe that the extent to which a party to a conflict reveals certain truth about the conflict is a function of how that truth will deliver certain advantage(s). Therefore, the acceptance of guilt by all parties to a conflict ultimately establishes the template for conflict management, resolution and transformation in the internal dynamics of *Igbe Orhe*.

5.5 Conflict Handling Styles

Handling styles are essential in the conflict management value chain. Scholars have argued that there are certain conditions that may warrant the deployment of certain conflict-handling styles. They equally argue that conflict handling styles can make a conflict to be prolonged, intractable and irresolvable (Shaheryar, 2016; McClinton, 2014; Montes, Rodriguez and Serrano (2012). Under this sub-theme, the researcher intends to discuss some conflict handling styles that have been engaged in the broad spectrum of the case studies that have been cited in the research.

5.5.1 Case Study 1: The Leadership Succession Conflict between Ibodje and Akpokovo

As earlier stated, after the death of Ubiesha, Ibodje was meant to take over the leadership of the religion, but he declined because he claimed ignorance of the practice of the religion. The most senior *Onori* at that time was asked to preside as interim leader, but he later died. Akpokovo seized the opportunity and took over the leadership of the religion in the absence of Ibodje. When Ibodje returned to Kokori, he demanded that Akpokovo relinquish the leadership of the religion to him based on existing tradition. Akpokovo, on

the other hand, refused to give up the position claiming that he was the closest person to their father in the practice of the religion when he was alive. They both stood their grounds and failed to reach an amicable settlement.

The conflict handling style that was engaged by the conflicting parties is “*Competing*” going by the explanation Shaheryar (2016: 1) or “*Fighting*” in the interpretation of Madalina (2016: 810). Furthermore, Verma (1998:6) calls it “*Forcing*”. In this conflict handling style, parties to a conflict pursue their own goals for their preferred outcome with less or no concern for the other party. This style involves the use of position and dominance through the imposition of one’s standpoint at the expense of another. Encoded in this type of conflict handling style is the win-lose mentality.

It must further be mentioned that the succession conflict between Ibodje and Akpokovo can be categorised as a power-based conflict. A conflict of this nature cannot be resolved or managed using *fighting, competing* or *forcing* handling style. In the opinion of Matthias Orhero, the refusal of Akpokovo and Ibodje to shift grounds made the conflict to be intractable. Scholars have argued that the conflict handling style of fight, forcing or competing cannot suffice when the power status of parties to the conflict is symmetric. This intractability ultimately led to fission in the religion; Ibodje left for his late father’s compound at Egbo Street and started his practice from scratch. Fred-Mensah (2000) affirms that protracted conflicts between or within clans are sometimes settled when one clan or a section of the clan breaks away from the others to locate a new settlement elsewhere. Furthermore, the conflict handling style of *fighting/competing/forcing* has very little concern for others. Its applicability as a conflict handling style in the spectrum of power-based conflict can resolve a conflict but it will terminally entrench ill feelings between the conflicting parties. Therefore, while the conflict between Ibodje and Akpokovo seems to have been resolved, the peace of a graveyard still exists between the two families even while this research was being concluded.

5.5.2 Case Study 2: Monopoly over Ordination

According to *Uku* Festus Ikoba, when his father died, there was a need to ordain a leader to act as the spiritual head in the *Ogwa Igbe* at Oria. He narrated that Ibodje who was the reigning *Uku Supreme* decided to ordain Erife Okeremeta as *Uku* to lead the congregation at Oria, Abraka. Prior to this time, Erife Okeremeta was worshipping at Orhomuru under

the leadership of Omonedo. But *Uku* Omonedo challenged Ibodje, the *Uku Supreme* for exercising that mandate. Omonedo contended that he should be the one to ordain Erife Okeremeta as *Uku* since he was worshipping under his leadership at Orhomuru. Having listened to the argument of Omonedo, Ibodje communicated to Omonedo that it is only the *Uku Supreme* who has the power to ordain anyone as *Uku*. All other *Uku* are only entitled to elevate adherents to the position of *Onori* or *Oni Igbe*.

This case study can also be framed in the context of power-based conflict. *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) explained that one of the undercurrents in the struggle for ordination is control. The more *Uku* one ordains, the greater the guarantee of allegiance. Though the stakes are high for both parties to the conflict, it was higher for Ibodje as *Uku Supreme*. *Olorogun* Mukoro Ochuko (JP) affirms that:

Prior to the time of ordaining Erife as *Uku*, the relationship between Ibodje and Omonedo had gone sour as a result of the accusation of betrayal (*the betrayal issue has already been cited under objective two in this study*). But Ibodje needed to use the ordination of Erife to prove the point that he was fully in charge as the overall spiritual head of the religion. Allowing Omonedo to have his way on the ordination matter would have been a contradiction on his spiritual authority as *Uku Supreme* (Interview at Kokori, Ethiopie East Local Government Area. October 16, 2016).

Therefore, in managing this conflict, Ibodje used the *fight* or *force* handling style, because of the need to affirm his authority as *Uku Supreme*.

It can be deduced that because of the asymmetric nature of the conflict in the sense that Ibodje was the stronger party to the conflict, he had to engage the conflict handling style of *fight* or *force* to manage the situation. This affirms the submissions of Verma (1996) that *force* as a conflict handling style can be used if a party feels stronger and the stakes are higher for either of the conflicting parties.

5.5.3 Case Study 3: Betrayal of Trust by Leadership

Olorogun Mukoro Ochuko (JP), Prophet Oyiboame Emojev, *Omote Uku* Victoria Idogho, *Uku* Osete Ame, *Omote Uku* Ivwie Designer, *Onori* Godday Etairue, *Onori* Abel Egofovwe, *Uku* Festus Ikoba and a host of other respondents, agree that the murder charge that was levelled against Omonedo and the absence of Ibodje to appear before the court in

order to testify that Omonedo was a bonafide leader in Igbe Orhe led to loss of faith in the leadership of Ibodje. They all confirmed that the decision on the part of Ibodje and his counsellors was arbitrary. Consequent upon what Omonedo felt to be a betrayal of trust he gradually withdrew and stopped identifying with Kokori.

This conflict can be regarded as a value-based conflict because while Omonedo expected Ibodje to appear in court as his spiritual leader, Ibodje for reasons best known to him failed to show up. So, in order to mitigate the hurt, Omonedo decided to stay away from Kokori. This approach to handling style is known as avoidance or withdrawal (Shaheryar 2016; Verma1998). Avoidance involves withdrawing, pulling out and a refusal to deal with the conflict by ignoring it as much as possible. *Uku* Festus Ikoba explained that “the approach did not really help matters because as we speak Omonedo circle of Igbe and Kokori do not really relate on cordial terms” (Interview at Oria-Abraka, October 16, 2016). The revelation by Mathias Orhero supports the claim of Verma (Ibid) that withdrawal is a passive stopgap way of handling conflict. Generally, it fails to solve the problem. Deductively, the withdrawal or avoidance conflict handling style should not be used if one is still interested in keeping or building long term relationship.

5.5.4 Case Study 4: Inequitable Distribution of Food during Festivals

In this case study, *Omote Uku* Ivie Designer explained that during one of her feasts, there were complaints from a cross-section of participants that food and drinks that are meant for the entertainment of guests did not go around. Her attention was drawn to this occurrence by five (5) *Emete Uku* and three *Uku* that approached her to complain about the selective distribution of the items that are meant for entertainment and adherents that have been invited from other sectarian groups. After investigations, she discovered many of the guests have not been served. Amidst a surplus of food and drinks, many people were denied access. She pleaded with the guests and thereafter personally monitored the distribution of the food, drinks and souvenirs, an action that led to the calming of nerves. She informed the researcher that, at the end of the feast, all the people that were delegated to serve were summoned and she educated them on the dangers such occurrence could portend for their *Ogwa Igbe*.

This conflict can be designated as a resource-based conflict. The conflict handling style that was used to manage this case is “smoothing” or “accommodating” (see Shaheryar 2016; Verma 1998). According to Shaheryar (2016:1), an accommodating style occurs where a manager prefers the ‘others’ side as compared to his own side. The respondent argued that she needed to listen to the complaints from the *Omote Uku* and *Uku* and pleaded with them because they are within the same leadership hierarchy. Equally, she insisted on personally monitoring the refreshments because what mattered to her at that instance was the happiness and satisfaction of all the attendees. Her position upholds the point of Verma (1998) that smoothing or accommodating is an appeasing approach by emphasising areas of agreement while avoiding points of disagreement. It can, therefore, be deduced that resource-based conflict can be managed through dialogue and by taking proactive steps to ensure the accommodation of the group’s interest.

5.5.5 Case Study 5: Undermining the Personality of a Leader

The researcher was invited to attend a mini feast at Ovwian, Aladja and personally observed how a certain *Omote Uku* felt her personality was undermined by the wife of the convener of the feast. The researcher observed that towards the end of the feast, the *Omote Uku* arrived with her entourage. At the time of her arrival, entertainment of guests was almost over. After sitting for a while, the host beckoned on his wife to serve food to the *Omote Uku* and her entourage. The *Omote Uku* was duly entertained but her entourage was neglected. The wife of the host explained that they had exhausted the entertainment provisions. The expression on the face of the *Omote Uku* showed that she was not pleased with the scenario. The researcher observed that the *Omote Uku* approached the host; her actions and gesticulations indicated that she was expressing her grievances. Equally, the researcher noted that the host started making apologetic gestures to the offended *Omote Uku*. After a while, the *Omote Uku* went back to her seat. She and her entourage stayed until the end of the meeting. The researcher approached the convener of the feast and asked how he was able to manage the aggrieved *Omote Uku*. He told the researcher that he personally took responsibility for the incidence and pleaded with the *Omote Uku* not to take offence. He also admitted that he ought to have instructed his wife to make provisions for guests who may likely come late for the programme. So, the convener had to make special arrangements for the entertainment of the *Omote Uku*’s entourage.

This conflict can be regarded as a value-based conflict. It is value based because of the honour that this accorded to *Uku* or *Omote Uku*. The conflict handling style that was used to manage the conflict is known as compromise. The consensus is that compromise as a conflict style usually produces acceptable solutions (Verma, 1998; Shaheryar, 2016). The convener of the feast informed the researcher that ideally, the *Omote Uku* ought to have given him prior information that she would be coming late but because the *Omote Uku* is a spiritual leader, he had to compel his wife against her will to make fresh entertainment arrangements and it conforms with the conclusions of Verma (1998) that compromise is a win-win approach because neither party wins, but both get some satisfaction in the relationship.

5.5.6 Case Study 6: Overcrowded Schedules of Feast Celebrations

Uku Unumegume attended the feast of one *Uku* Reuben Oteri who is a protégé of another *Uku* Amos Idiale. *Uku* Reuben Oteri and *Uku* Amos Idiale are members of the *Igbe Ame* sectarian division, while *Uku* Unumegume is from the *Igbe Orhe* sectarian division. But *Uku* Unumegume was unaware of the rancour between *Uku* Reuben Oteri and *Uku* Amos Idiale. It is worth mentioning that *Uku* Unumegume and *Uku* Amos Idiale are bosom friends. Information got to *Uku* Amos Idiale, who was also holding his feast, that *Uku* Unumegume was attending the feast of *Uku* Reuben. Somehow, *Uku* Unumegume got to know that *Uku* Amos Idiale was also celebrating his feast and wondered why *Uku* Reuben should fix his feast at the same time. Besides, they silently questioned why an invitation was not extended to him by *Uku* Amos Idiale. After probing the issue, *Uku* Reuben Oteri admitted to *Uku* Unumegume that he fell out with *Uku* Idiale. *Uku* Unumegume felt bad because he was just getting to know about it for the first time. Also, he felt *Uku* Amos Idiale would be thinking that he has been fraternising with *Uku* Reuben. *Uku* Unumegume decided to pay a visit to *Uku* Amos Idiale in the company of *Uku* Reuben. When they met, *Uku* Unumegume explained to *Uku* Amos Idiale that he was unaware that his relationship with Reuben had gone sour and that he innocently attended the feast with no intention of spiting him. *Uku* Amos Idiale later narrated what transpired between himself and Reuben. He also mentioned that he did not extend an invitation to *Uku* Unumegume because of his relationship with *Uku* Reuben. After the whole exercise, *Uku* Reuben was exhorted to

apologise to *Uku* Amos Idiale, his spiritual father and that led to the restoration of their relationship.

This conflict is both power and value-based because it borders on competing with a leader of higher spiritual status, disrespect and breach of trust. This conflict handling style that was used in handling this case is known as confrontation. It supports the thesis of Verma (1998) that confrontation as a conflict handling style requires open dialogue between participants, who must be mature, understanding, technically and managerially competent. But contrary to the submission of Verma (1998) that in most cases confronting or problem-solving may take longer than other techniques in the examined case study, it was resolved that same day. The general idea is that confrontation as a conflict handling style can provide final solutions by ultimately resolving the underlying problems.

5.5.7 Case Study 7: Poaching or "stealing" of Members

Omote Uku Victoria Odaighofa narrated how a certain man whose ailment defied medical solution was sent to her from another *Ogwa Igbe*. She detailed that after three months of worshipping in her *Ogwa Igbe*, the man's health started to improve and she kept briefing the man's *Uku* about his progress health-wise. After the man had fully recovered, he insisted on becoming a permanent member of her *Ogwa Igbe*. *Omote Uku* Victoria Odaighofa said she rejected the man's intention because he was sent to her for spiritual intervention and now that *Oweya* has healed him, the best thing is for him to return to his *Uku*. She revealed that the man told her nothing would change his mind. Consequently, she summoned the courage to call the man's *Uku* and explained to him the decision of his member to fully join her *Ogwa Igbe* and how all her persuasions against it fell on deaf ears. According to her, the man's *Uku* responded that the man was free if he felt spiritually safer under her watch and thanked *Omote Uku* Odaighofa for taking her time to call and discuss the matter with him.

It must be mentioned that the nature of the conflict is both value and power based. It is power based because the healing of the man in the *Ogwa Igbe* of *Omote Uku* Victoria Odaighofa can raise a sentiment that she was more powerful than the man's *Uku*. It is value based because it would have amounted to a breach of trust if *Omote Uku* Odaighofa accepted the man's proposition to remain in her *Ogwa* without getting a clearance from the

Uku that sent him to her. Collaborating is the handling style that was used in addressing this conflict case study. Verma (1996:122) opines that that as a conflict handling, “collaboration is important if parties to a conflict have a very high concern to maintain future relationships”. It is therefore imperative for parties in conflict to engage in active collaboration because it offers a good opportunity for learning and confidence building.

5.5.8 Case Study: Tradition and Modernisation

Prophet Oyiboame Emojevu (JP), leader and founder of the Western syncretic practice of Igbe religion in Emokpa, Ughelli, said he is being accused by many of watering down the religion. He intimated further that there are insinuations from several quarters that he has turned Igbe into a church. According to him, people have queried his use of modern musical instruments in his Holy Salvation Cathedral. Additionally, he has been faulted for using the Christian Holy Bible to preach during his worship sessions. He told the researcher some adherents have even called for his expulsion from the religion. He also mentioned being accused of using the appellation Reverend/Prophet instead of *Uku* and worst of all, his refusal to wear the traditional *Uku* ceremonial dress which he considers too local and outdated. Also, *Omote Uku* Tuwere Echekeume told the researcher that when she began to introduce modern innovations in her *Ogwa Igbe*, several adherents of the religion accused her of deviating from the practice of the religion and she was called all sorts of names. However, they decided to ignore whatever people were saying concerning them and focused on doing the work as dictated by the spirit of *Oweya*. Furthermore, they told the researcher they only align with people in the religion who are progressive in their thinking and choose to stay from those who refuse to align their thoughts with global trends. According to the respondent, her resilience seems to be paying off because gradually some of their accusers have started introducing new ideas into their practice.

From their explanations, it can be deduced that the respondents combined the use of force and avoidance in handling the conflict. Force in the sense that they stood their ground despite the pressures and name calling because of their firm conviction on the need for change. They refused to give up on their pursuit to introduce change and modernise the practice of the religion. In the context of avoidance, they decided to withdraw from the general collective of those that are driven with the impulse towards orthodoxy and decided

to build strong bonds with people driven by the impulse towards progressivism in the language of Hunter (1991).

The conflict handling style that was engaged here is “avoidance” and Fight (Verma, 1998; Shaheryar, 2016). But contrary to Verma (1998) that avoidance resolves conflict only in the short run, findings from this case study shows that it can also resolve conflict in the long run. This assertion is deduced from the response of the respondents that some of their accusers are gradually embracing the advocacy to modernise the practice of the religion.

5.5.9 Case Study 9: Language Challenges

Silas Ogundayomi, an adherent from the Ijaw Apoi ethnic group, who hails from Ondo state, but living in Ughelli, related from personal experience his participation in feasts at Kokori. He said that each time he goes to Kokori, his excitement usually gets deflated because the worship sessions are conducted in Urhobo language and he does not understand the language. He mentioned that he is not against the use of Urhobo as the official ceremonial language. After all, services are conducted in the Arabic language during worship sessions in Islam. But that the interests of other ethnic groups should be accommodated. He told the researcher that he made up his mind that if nothing is done about it, the best solution will be to stop going to Kokori.

In this case study, Silas Ogundayomi intends to use the avoidance or withdrawal conflict handling style. The conflict which can be categorised as a value-based conflict, in this case, cannot be fully resolved by mere avoidance because as an established tradition, the official ceremonial language of Igbe is the Urhobo language. Therefore, while avoidance may generate positive result at the personal individual level, using it as a conflict handling style against an established institutional tradition may not lead to any permanent or lasting solution to the conflict.

5.5.10 Case Study 10: Religious Literacy/ Misrepresentation of Igbe religion through Publications

According to Reverend Oyiboame Emojevu (JP), a man from *Igbe Ame* sectarian division went to Delta Broadcasting Service (DBS) and advertised a book that he published on Igbe. In his opinion, the book was a complete misrepresentation of Igbe and the public would be fed with the wrong impression about the religion. He said he had to go in search

of the man and when they eventually met, he told him that his book was a total misrepresentation of the whole essence of Igbe religion. At the end of their deliberation, he asked the man to withdraw the book from circulation.

The confronting style and joint problem handling style was used in addressing this conflict. The wrong information about Igbe religion that was contained in the book was treated as a potential problem for the religion. As a result, Reverend Oyiboame decided to meet with the author for a mutually acceptable solution to the issue. This approach according to Verma (1998), involves pinpointing the issue and resolving it objectively by defining the problem, gathering necessary information, generating and analysing alternatives, and selecting the best alternative. In this case study, the best alternative was for the author to withdraw the book from circulation to prevent further damage to the reputation of the religion.

This study contends that the engagement of conflict handling styles should not be cast in stone. Findings in Igbe Orhe reveal that adherents use different handling styles in addressing different conflict issues. To a large extent, available evidence shows that because preservation and sustenance of relationships are desired goals for every Igbe adherent, they tend to use conflict handling styles that will enable achieve that goal. This is a view that upholds the African ethics notion of Ozumba cited in Ette and Asukwo (2012: 56) that is premised on “an impressive pillar of humanism, meaning that, the welfare of man and community is the main thrust of African ethics”. This also aligns with the utilitarian theory that seeks the overall good through certain actions.

5.6 Igbe Orhe in the Context of Current Global Reality

Religious coexistence within and between the plurality of religions in Nigeria has been challenging. Truth claims which border on religious particularism and religious exclusivism, especially among the dominant monotheistic Abrahamic religions, have introduced competitions within the religious space and one major fall-out of such competitions is religious violence. According to Amoah (1998), a major source of conflict within and between religions across the globe is predicated on the Western approach to inter-religious relationships whereby different religious traditions converge to argue about their doctrines polemically or discreetly. In addition, the monotheistic Abrahamic religions

often make absolute truth claims that they possess the authentic way to salvation and sometimes they tend to be aggressive in their religious activities. More often, the target groups for the Abrahamic religions' aggressive mission activities are mostly adherents of Indigenous African Religions.

Furthermore, it is an obvious fact that one of the major drivers of religious violence globally is the inability of the leadership of mainline denominations accepting smaller sectarian groups as equal representatives of the religion's God or *Ultimate Reality*. However, Igbe Orhe, a monotheistic non- Abrahamic religion has demonstrated that religions can have peace and harmony despite their sectarian plurality and doctrinal differences. Igbe Orhe has a plethora of sects with their independent world-views. But dominant in the psyche of the leadership of Igbe Orhe is the fact that their pluralities of sects are an added advantage because they have helped in advancing the work of *Oweya*.

The world as it is often stressed is becoming a global village. Religion and sectarian plurality must be accepted as a reality within the religious space. The collectivity of people from different cultures and faith traditions ought to willingly desire to live together peacefully while tolerating their differences. Therefore, the world will be at peace within the realms of religion if the leadership of mainline denominations acknowledges the authenticity and validity of other religions and intra-sectarian plurality.

5.7 Research Question 5: Discuss the challenges of the Intra Sectarian Conflict Management Mechanisms in Igbe Religion

In this section, the conflict management challenges in Igbe will be discussed in the context of arbitrariness/rigidity in decision making, disobedience to sanctions, lack of financial resources, and lack of adequate training in conflict management skills. They are being discussed not in any special order of priority.

5.7 .1 Arbitrariness/Rigidity in Decision making

Uku Festus Ikoba agreed with the Youth FGD that adherents sometimes reject the decision that is imposed because they feel that it is arbitrary. *Onori Godday Etairue*, *Onori Abel Egofovwe*, *Uku Festus Ikoba* and a host of other respondents, agree that the murder charge that was levelled against *Omonedo* and the absence of *Ibodje* to appear before the court in order to testify that *Omonedo* was a bonafide leader in Igbe Orhe led to loss of faith in the

leadership of Ibodje. They all confirmed that the decision on the part of Ibodje and his counsellors was arbitrary. Consequent upon what Omonedo felt to be a betrayal of trust, gradually he withdrew and stopped identifying with Kokori. *Uku Festus Ikoba* explained that “as we speak Omonedo circle of Igbe and Kokori don't really relate on cordial terms” (Interview at Ori-Abraka, October 16, 2016). In addition, *Uku Ikoba* told the researcher that some time ago; he was summoned to answer to the allegation on why he should take certain people to the Ogwa of Mary Ibodje to settle a conflict and not the Ogwa at Kokori. He argued that since both parties to the conflict are *Igbe Ame* and Mary is the leader of that group, that he sees nothing wrong with his actions. In addition, he mentioned to the researcher that they insisted he was wrong and he should have brought the conflicting parties to the headquarters. Consequently, he was fined but refused to comply because the decision was rigid and harsh.

5.7.2 Disobedience to Sanctions

Within the African framework, it is believed that the fear of sanctions positively enforces moral order (Essien, 2014) and compels the general collective to shun deviant behaviour (Okon, 2014). Findings from the three FGDs conducted across the sectarian divisions are unanimous about the efficacy of sanction(s); they also agree that disobedience, especially with respect to the payment of guilt fines as sanction, is one of the challenges confronting conflict management mechanism in Igbe religion. Equally, *Uku Anthony Echekume* admits that the refusal to pay guilt fines which is one of the major sanctions in the religion is a major challenge, but adds that it is an exception rather than the rule. In his response, Matthias Orhero believed that there are adherents who deliberately refused to pay fine, while some may not have the financial resources to pay. He further commented that for those who deliberately refuse to pay fines, *Oweya* has his ways of catching up with such people. But as for those who do not have the resources to pay and have displayed open penitence, certain latitudes are given to them pending the time they can be able to pay. The argument of Walsh (2005) that there are people, who deliberately refuse to pay fine and those who are too poor to pay fines as a sanction, vividly captures the thoughts of Matthias Orhero. Walsh (2005:217) maintains that disciplinary measures against these different categories of fine defaulters should not be the same.

Uku Festus Ikoba, citing a case from his personal experience, maintained that one of the reasons people refuse to pay guilt fines has to do with wrong judgment. He argued that when a party to a conflict feels that justice is not properly dispensed, he/she will refuse to accept the guilt fine and seek redress from other channels within the religion. He narrated how he personally rejected a fine that was imposed on him by the Central Working Committee of Igbe religion because he reconciled two adherents in the *Ogwa Igbe* of *Omote Uku* Mary Ibodje. According to *Uku* Festus Ikoba, there was a musical band that a young man was managing on behalf of a certain *Omote Uku*. At some point, the young man became aggrieved because each time they returned from an entertainment outing, the *Omote Uku* was always in the habit of underpaying them. Unable to bear the situation, the young band manager confronted the *Omote Uku*, which led to a total breakdown of their relationship.

Since the *Omote Uku* was nurtured by *Omote Uku* Mary Ibodje, *Uku* Ikoba said he felt reconciling them in her *Ogwa Igbe* would be the best option. So, he invited the *Omote Uku* and her band leader to the *Ogwa Igbe* of Mary Ibodje for reconciliation. *Uku* Festus Ikoba mentioned that unknown to him, his action did not go down well with some people at the headquarters who felt the matter ought not to have been settled in the *Ogwa Igbe* of *Omote Uku* Mary Ibodje. *Uku* Festus Ikoba narrated that he was summoned to face a disciplinary committee. After the conclusion of proceedings, they pronounced him guilty and a fine was imposed. He told the researcher that he refused to pay because he felt persons who presided over the case were not dispassionate about it. As a result, he personally withdrew from going to Kokori. But he recounted that after some months, the spirit of *Oweya* appeared to him in the night and admonished him that as a leader he should not have refused the judgment of the committee. He said the spirit thereafter ordered him to go back and pay the fine, which he obeyed with dispatch as he stated: "I dare not disobey a direct instruction from *Oweya*" (Interview at Oria-Abraka, October 14, 2016). On this note, the case study from Ikoba supports the position of Ozumba cited in Etta and Asukwo (2012) that African religion has its moral codes which make an African be highly religious in the sense that everything he does is guided by the hopes and fears of not only the living but the departed, the gods or divinities and the Omnipotent Being. Furthermore, it justifies the claims of Matthias Orhero that somehow the religion has a way of making people comply with disciplinary measures.

5.7.3 Lack of Financial Resources

Onori Abel Egofovwe narrated that they are sometimes faced with financial constraints especially when they are called upon to intervene in a conflict outside their local environment. The FGD conducted for women confirmed that financial incapacitation often constitutes a major challenge as they seek to manage conflict. In the words of *Onori* Godday Etairue “at times you may be sent on an errand and you may not even have the transport fare that will take you to the place (Interview at Otokutu, Okpe Local Government Area. December 29, 2016)”. *Uku* Festus Ikoba also lends his voice to the issues of financial incapacitation. According to him, most of their activities are funded from their personal resources and the recent economic hardship has hindered their plans to visit and settle some of the conflict cases before them.

The FGD conducted for youth mentioned that sometimes parties to a conflict may be invited to a meeting for settlement and they discovered that some will fail to attend due to financial constraints. And once parties to a conflict are not complete, no settlement can take place. On this note, the lack of financial resources as a challenge blends with the opinion of Liddle (cited in Crinland 2011: 4) that financial constraints recognition is critical when embarking on mediatory roles. Furthermore, it affirms the view by Wondyrad (2014) that the absence of incentives given for Shemageles at least for their per diem while they roam from place to place for the purpose of reconciliation is another challenge. Shemageles is a social service without any payment.

Oni Igbe Eloho Onotu narrated how as a result of financial incapacitation she was unable to intervene speedily in a conflict that she was mandated to handle. It was a business conflict between some adherents and it occurred at Okpara Inland. She is resident in Warri. She reckoned that as a businesswoman her *Omote Uku* felt since she had settled quite several business conflicts among adherents this one would be a walkover. She explained that it was taken for granted that she had the financial capacity to foot all her expenses to Okpara. But at the time she was going through very difficult financial difficulty and she could not summon the courage to demand money or tell her *Omote Uku*. According to her, the conflict parties kept calling and she kept giving excuses. Eventually, she was able to find someone who lent her some money in order to embark on the journey. When she eventually made out time to visit parties in the conflict, one of the major stakeholders has

relocated to Port Harcourt. This according to her was just one out many experiences of failed conflict management expeditions due to financial constraints.

5.7.4 Lack of Adequate Training in Conflict Management Skills.

Billikopf (2014) Kohlrieser (2007), Verma (1998) believe that one of the major challenges confronting the managers of conflict is the lack of conflict management skills. The affirmation of *Uku* Anthony Echechume that several times he had received complaints of dissatisfaction in the way conflict issues were settled in many Ogwa Igbe confirms the importance of having certain skills when called upon to manage conflict. *Olorogun Mukoro* Ochuko affirms that many cases have been poorly addressed in Igbe Orhe because the people that were designated to handle such cases have no conflict management skills. He argues that spiritual gift is different from conflict management skills.

There is a consensus among the three FGDs that one of the major conflict management skills that are lacking is the inability to listen patiently before jumping into conclusions. This finding upholds the views of Billikopf (2014: 31-32) that empathic listening is a major skill a manager of conflict needs. They further explain that developing the capacity of their *Uku*, *Emete Uku* and other leaders in conflict management skill will be of great benefits to them.

The FGD conducted for the youths across the sectarian divisions contends that another major challenge is that some leaders and adherents in Igbe Orhe lack of human management skills. In their opinion, some parties to conflicts are very arrogant and full of themselves. That despite the laws of the religion, they still do not have regard and simple courtesy. Their views affirm the thesis of Verma (1998), Billikopf (Ibid) that interpersonal relationships, interpersonal skills, including effective communication and appreciation of individual differences are essential skills a conflict manager must have.

The absence of some of these skills can constitute a major challenge in the management of conflict. For *Olorogun Mukoro* Ochuko (JP) the lack of skills borders on the inexperience of some of the people that have been assigned to handle conflicts. According to him “for instance, the problem of *Uku* Onobruche and *Omote Uku* Omonigho was not handled well. It was lack of experience on the part of those who mediated in the case” (Interview at Kokori, Ethiope East Local Government Area. October 16, 2016). The response of

Olorogun Mukoro is very instructive because it aligns the findings of Morake, Monobe & Dingwe (2011) that lack of skills and inexperience was a major challenge facing the management of conflicts.

The last two chapters have focused on a critical evaluation and analysis of data collected against the background of the study research questions. Data have been analysed in the context of the evolutionary history of Igbe religion up to the point of sectarian multiplicity. Furthermore, the study probed and critically examined the instigators of intra-sectarian conflicts in Igbe Orhe. Likewise, the patterns and dimensions of intra sectarian conflicts in the internal dynamics of the religions were investigated and analysed. In addition, the intra sectarian conflict management mechanisms along its attendant challenges have received critical analysis. The analyses have been situated within the theoretical framework deployed in the study.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

Conflict is inevitable when humans interact. Likewise, conflict is endemic in the social expression of religion whether within congregations or across sectarian groups. This is because religion involves interactions with human and metaphysical realities. However, some scholars are of the opinion that violent or non-violent aftermath of conflict is predicated on how it is managed. This study was centred on the management of intra sectarian religious conflict which has been acclaimed to be a global phenomenon, using Igbe Orhe, a monotheistic non-Abrahamic religion as the focus of study.

The research revealed that Igbe Orhe, an emerging world religion, having features that are like other world religions, presents a counter-narrative of nonviolent conflict outcomes, despite its intra-sectarian ideological differences. Likewise, the management of conflict among the intra-sectarian groups in Igbe Orhe, as identified in the course of this research is established on the theory of religious pluralism and utilitarianism. Beyond the theory of religious pluralism and utilitarianism, the study has postulated the theory of religious sectarian pluralism. It has been established that critical to the non-violent outcome of conflicts within the internal dynamics of Igbe Orhe is the perception that all its sectarian groups are valid before *Oweya*. This perception is internalised and expressed in their daily interaction with other sectarian divisions.

The management of conflict by stakeholders in Igbe Orhe reveals a nexus of dynamics around its early conflict detection mechanism which is built on a framework of divine revelation through the spirit of *Oweya*, confession of hurt during worship services and personal reportage of conflicts issues by an aggrieved party. The religion exhibits an inbuilt structural conflict prevention framework that is informed by the fear of retributive justice from *Oweya*, the transformative powers of its sacred songs, mutual trust and friendship among collectivity of *Uku* and *Emete Uku*. In addition, the non-violent outcomes of conflict is closely connected to the fear of sanctions; an unfettered reverence for its leadership institutions; a guiding religious value for conflict resolution that is

anchored on the “confession of guilt by the offender” and the “acceptance of guilt by the offended”; coupled with engagement of alternative dispute resolution mechanism. These identified themes have established the foundation for the non-violent outcomes of conflict and have greatly influenced the narrative of peace in the religion.

Furthermore, covert nuances such as the concept of “*omo ose ovo*” (collective heredity) “*urhi of the orhe* (active laws), “*evu ofuafo*” (purity of heart) “*Ufuoma Akpoeje*” (universal peace for mankind), “*orhuerakpor*” (the moderator of life) “*e jo vwo k’ Oweya*” (God is Judge) are vital to the non-violent narratives and conflict management outcomes in the internal dynamics of Igbe religion.

A critical examination of these themes show they identify with the five defining characteristics of utilitarianism namely, consequentialism, individualism, maximisation, aggregation and welfarism. Equally, the leadership of Igbe Orhe socialises and mobilises its adherents into these concepts, thereby influencing the dominant non-violent orientation in Igbe Orhe. It is also identified in the course of the study that all the sectarian divisions in Igbe Orhe do not hold on to exclusive truth claims which align with the perspective of religious pluralism. It is equally important to mention binary thinking, faith exclusivism and religious particularism are not dominant in the worldview of Igbe religion. Consequently, it can be argued that the non-violent conflict outcome in Igbe Orhe is connected to the fact that it has developed a dominant religious philosophy that allows for the equal recognition of alternative faith communities.

6.2 Recommendations and Suggestion for Further Studies

Based on the research findings, it is therefore recommended that the values of religious pluralism, sectarian pluralism and utilitarianism be articulated into the world-views of other world monotheisms with a plurality of denominations or sectarian division. It is also recommended that this should be driven by the elites within the religious polity, notably the priests who interpret the sacred laws and equally command moral authority among adherents.

This study suggests that further studies can be carried out on how conflicts are managed within local Ogwa Igbe. Furthermore, Igbe Orhe is stigmatised by other religious traditions, especially among practitioners of Christianity. Yet the stigmatisation has not led

to violent altercations, this issue is therefore recommended for further studies. Also, there is a generally negative perception of Igbe Orhe as to how the leadership is managing the question of negative perception. Furthermore, Igbe Orhe has a renewal movement known as Oweya Missionary Society. It is suggested that its contribution to peace-making in Igbe Orhe should be explored.

6.3 Conclusion

The Igbe religion has been used as a case study to establish the workability and functionality of the theories of religious pluralism and utilitarianism as theoretical foundations for the management of violent intra-sectarian conflicts. In the context of obscurity, the study has brought to the fore the intra-sectarian conflict management mechanism of Igbe Orhe, a monotheist non-Abrahamic religion practised within and beyond Delta state, Nigeria. Therefore, lessons can be drawn from them. This study has decolonised the hegemony of Western scholarship that classical monotheism is only restricted to the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Therefore, from a comparative point of view Igbe Orhe fits into the classical definition of monotheism, but should be subsumed as a monotheism non-Abrahamic religion. Furthermore, while the dominant narrative favours Buddhism as a religion with non-violence as an overriding philosophy, Igbe Orhe's philosophy of "*Ufuoma Akpoeje*" situates it fully within the genre of non-violent religions. While most research dwells on intra-sectarian conflict, management strategies have revolved around the Abrahamic religious traditions and other Eastern religions. This study has added to the body of literature by documenting in detail the intra-sectarian conflict management structure of Igbe religion with valuable principles that can be applied to assuage the menace of religious fundamentalism and violent intra-sectarian conflicts.

6.4 Contribution to Knowledge

The non-violent conflict outcome in Igbe Orhe is connected to the fact that it has developed a dominant religious philosophy that allows for the equal recognition of alternative faith communities.



Plate 1: The Researcher with *Uku* Obonofogha at Ekrerhavwe



Plate 2: the researcher with *Onori* Godday Etairue at Otokutu



Plate 3: The Researcher with *Omote Uku* (Dr.) Victoria Odaighofa at Eginni. The *Omote Uku* is sitting on a Bed which signifies the highest spiritual office in Igbe. The bed is on the altar and from there the High Priest/Priestess the blessings of Oweya.



Plate 4: the researcher with *Omote Uku Iwue* Designer at Ughelli



Plate 5: the researcher with *Ose Isi Obaoga Ibodje*, *Uku* Supreme of Igbe Orhe Worldwide at Kokori.



Plate 6: The Researcher with the Most Senior *Omote Uku* in Igbe Orhe, Victoria Idogho at Ughelli. Among other traditional paraphernalia worn by the *Omote Uku*, on her left hand is a wedding ring and it speaks to the influence of modernisation on adherents of the religion.



Plate 7: the researcher with *Olorogun* Ochuko (JP) at Kokori; he was at a time the most senior Onori in Igbe Orhe. But today he is an elder in a Christian Pentecostal Church.



Plate 8: The researcher with Phillip Akpokovo at Kokori. There are five *adjudju* hanging on the wall. The first *adjudju* from the left was given to Ubiesha as a gift by Oba Eweka the 2nd of Benin Empire. Legend had it that the adjudju is made from the skin of a lion (Akponwei 2009).



Plate 9: The researcher with Uku Albert Ogiewege at Okhrere-Agbarho



Plate 10: FGD with women across Sectarian Divisions at Ovwian



Plate 11: Ancient Igbe *Ogwa* at Oria-Abraka



Plate 12: Modern Igbe Worship Centre at Agbarha-Otor Known as Saint Michael Healing Water Centre. The ground outside is not cemented; it is covered with white sand. In the cosmology of Igbe, the white sand has the power to heal people from any form of sickness or disease.



Plate 13: Interior of a modern Igbe worship centre at Eginni, well furnished with aesthetic appeal. This also speaks to the influence of modernisation in Igbe Orhe.

Table 6.1: Primary Sources

In-Depth Interview List

S/ N	Name	Designation	Place of Interview	Date of Interview	Sectarian Division
1	His Eminence Obaoga Ibodje, 78 years	Uku Supreme Current Spiritual Head of Igbe Orhe (Worldwide)	Kokori	October 18, 2016	Igbe Orhe Classical
2	Gabriel Obonofogha 43years	Uku	Ekrerhavwe	October 28, 2016	Igbe Orhe Classical
3	Phillip Akpokovo 90 years	Uku (Oldest Surviving Grand Son of Ubiesha)	Kokori	October 16, 2016	Igbe Orhe Classical
	Michael Osete Ame 56 years	Uku (Head St. Michael Healing Water Centre)	Agbarha- Otor	December 30, 2016	Traditional Syncretic
5	Oyiboame Emojevu 77 years	Reverend/Prophet (Pioneer of Western Syncretic)	Emokpa	January 1, 2017 December 29, 2016	Western Syncretic
6	Anthony Ogedengbe 70 years	Uku	Ozoro	January 2, 2017	Igbe Orhe Classical
7	Gabriel Igugu	Uku Head Igugu of Parish	Ugono	January 2, 2017	Igbe Orhe Classical

	51 years				
8	Anthony Echekume 65 years	Uku	Ogume	January 2, 2017	Western Syncretic
8	Albert Ogievwege 63 years	Uku Igbe Agwarhode	Okhrere-Agbarho,	December 30, 2016	Traditional Syncretic
9	Johnbull Unumegume 53 years	Uku Igbe Aziza	Imode	October 20, 2016	Traditional Syncretic
10	Festus Ikoba 60 years	Uku Chairman Reconciliation and Reunification sub-Committee of the Central Working Committee of the religion.	Oria, Abraka	October 14, 2016	Western Syncretic
12	Mary Ibodje 87 years	Omote Uku Head of Igbe Ame Eldest Grand Daughter of Ubiesha	Kokori	October 17, 2016	Traditional Syncretic
13	Dr Victoria Odaighofa 54 years	Omote Uku Igbe Ame	Eginni	December 29, 2016	Traditional Syncretic
14	Victoria Amajatoja 50 years	Omote Uku (Igbe Orhe)	Upper Agbarho	December 28, 2016	Igbe Orhe Classical

15	Ivwie Designer 45 years	Omote Uku Igbe Ame	Upper Agbarho	January 1, 2017	Traditional Syncretic
16	Queen Ejinawho Ogitie 60 years	Omote Uku	Eginni	December 25, 2016	Igbe Orhe Classical
17	Victoria Idogho 75 years	Omote Uku (Most Senior Omote Uku in Igbe Orhe)	Obaguarhe, Ughelli	September 23, 2015	Igbe Orhe Classical
18	Tuwere Echekume 56 years	Omote Uku	Ogume	January 2, 2017	Western Syncretic
19	Edirin Omas 49	Omote Uku	Agharah	Otokutu	Western Syncretic

Table 6.2: Key Informant Interview Lists

S/N	Name	Designation	Place of Interview	Date of Interview	Sectarian Division
1	Godspower Jimisawho 40 years	Onori	Kokori	October 16, 2016	Igbe Classical
2	Jonathan Okpako	Onori	Eginni	December 29, 2016	Traditional Syncretic

	37 years	Igbe Ame			
3	John Salubi 50 years	Onori Igbe Charismatic	Emokpa	January 1, 2017	Western Syncretic
4	Shimeji Ogheneruemu 30 years	Onori (Igbe Aziza)	Otor-Udu	January 4, 2017	Traditional Syncretic
5	Mary Jowhoma 80 years	Oni Igbe (Igbe Agwarhode)	Okhrere – Agbarho	October 26, 2016	Traditional Syncretic
6	Eloho Onotu 35 years	Oni Igbe Igbe Charismatic	Jakpa	October 15, 2016	Western Syncretic
7	Helen Akpotaire 40 years	Oni Igbe Igbe Charismatic	Sapele	October 13, 2016	Western Syncretic
8	Margaret Alidi 52 years	Oni Igbe (Igbe Ame)	Imode	January 1, 2017	Traditional Syncretic
9	Asenemo Jiyovwi 49 years	Oni Igbe	Ekue	October 22, 2016	Igbe Orhe Classical
10	Maria Okugoni 74 years	Oni Igbe	Ekue	October 22, 2016	Igbe Orhe Classical
11	Mariam Achinedu Eckekume 34 years	Oni Igbe	Ogume	January 2, 2017	Western Syncretic

12	Erukainure Ovie Eyaa 70 years	Oni Igbe	Kokori	October 18, 2016	Igbe Orhe Classical
13	Comrade Gilbert Isoko 53 years	Community Leader	Okhrere – Agbarho	January 5, 2017	Christian
14	Anthony Sakpra 49	Community Leader and erstwhile Chairman of Udu Community Relations	Ovwian – Aladja	December 27, 2016	Free Thinker
15	Patrick Etomi, 65	Community Leader	Kokori	October 16, 2016	Christian
16	Dr Matthias Orhero 45 years	Adherent (Igbe Orhe)	Oria	January 5, 2017	Igbe Orhe Classical
17	Silas Ogundayomi 48 years	Adherent Igbe Ame	Okhrere-Agbarho	December 30, 2016	Traditional Syncretic
18	Anthony Anie 60 years	Adherent Igbe Orhe	Oria-Abraka	October 14, 2016	Igbe Orhe Classical
19	Siakpere Onoriode 65 years	Onori Igbe Charismatic	Emokpa	January 1, 2017	Western Syncretic
20	Patrick Amakashe 62 years	Adherent Igbe Aziza	Imode	January 6, 2017	Traditional Syncretic

21	Blessing Odafe 69 years	Adherent Igbe Ame	Agbarha – Otor	December 30, 2016	Traditional Syncretic
22	ASP David Davipuvie 50 years	Police Officer	Isiokolo	September 11 2017	
23	Sarah Okoloba 58 years	Omote Uku (Igbe Ame)	Ovwian – Aladja	October 18, 2016	Traditional Syncretic
24	David Enate 39 years	Customary Court Registrar	Oria- Abraka	September 13, 2017	
25	Florence Oghenerunor 43 years	Customary Court Registrar	Isiokolo	September 14, 2017	
26	Anthony Ogedengbe 70 years	Uku	Ozoro	January 2, 2017	Igbe Orhe Classical
27	Olorogun Ubieshakparobo Samuel Ibodje 72 years	Youngest son Ibodje	Kokori	October 18, 2016	Igbe Orhe Classical
28	Tina Olomu 48 years	Oni Igbe (Igbe Agwarhode)	Okhrerhe – Agbarho	October 30, 2016	Traditional Syncretic
29	Onori Johnson Akpofure,	Onori	Otokutu	October 27, 2016	Western Syncretic
30					

	Onoriode Emojevu	Onori	Emokpa	January 2, 2017	Western Syncretic
31	Oghenevwede Diebikeko	Onori	Imode	October 6, 2016	Igbe Orhe Classical
32					
32	Efetobore Agbroko	Onori	Ughelli	November 7, 2016	Traditional syncretic
33	Onori Udumebrae Felix	Junior Secretary	Kokori	October 16, 2016	
34	Onori Joseph Akpore	Senior Secretary	Kokori	October 16, 2016	
35	Salomi Okpalefe	Oni Igbe	Agbarho	November 14, 2016	

Table 6.3: FGD Sessions

	Group	Place	Date of interview
1	Women Across Selected Sectarian Div.	Ovwian	October 2, 2016
2	Youths Across Selected Sectarian Div.	Oria- Abraka	December 20, 2016
3	Men Across Selected Sectarian Div.	Kokori	October 21, 2016

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**APPENDIX 1
PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES PROGRAMME
INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, NIGERIA**

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

Name of Interviewer.....
Date.....
Name of Interviewee.....
Designation of Interviewee.....

Good day, my name is Afatakpa, Onoseme Fortune. I am a student of the University of Ibadan, conducting a research on the topic “Sectarian Conflict Management Mechanisms among Worshippers of Igbe Orhe in Delta State, Nigeria. I will like to get your opinion on the above named subject. I am not here to give my opinion or share any information, your opinion is what matters. Notes and recording of the

session will be taken. The session is confidential and strictly for academic purpose. So no one will know what your contributions are.

1. How did Igbe religion come into existence?
2. Who founded Igbe religion?
3. At what point did Igbe split from being a homogenous group?
4. Identify the instigators of conflicts in Igbe religion
5. What are the conflict management mechanisms in Igbe Religion?
6. Identify the conflict management institutions in Igbe religion and their roles
7. Can you give us an insight into the internal conflict mechanism in Igbe Religion?
8. How are conflicts detected in Igbe Religion?
9. How effective are the conflict management mechanisms?
10. To what extent has the Oweya Missionary Association impact the Igbe religion on conflict Management
11. What is the role of the central working committee in the management of conflicts in Igbe Religion?
12. When ose presides over a case, takes a decision but one party to the conflict refuses, how is it handled?
13. Are there repercussions for those who refuse to accept the judgments of mediators?
14. How do you manage conflicts among Uku's or Omote Uku across sectarian lines?
15. What are the major cause conflicts among Uku's across sectarian lines
16. Are there conflicts during programs that entail Sectarian convergence?
17. If there are identify the types of conflicts and how they are managed or have been managed?
18. Does celebration of festivals lead to violence in the community? If yes can you explain the reasons? If your answer is no can you equally explain? If it happens how do you manage it?
19. How do you teach your members and to what extent has the teaching influence the non-violent narrative in the religion?

20. How do you manage the general negative perception of people about Igbe?
21. How are conflicts managed in Igbe religion?
22. How do you see other sectarian variants in the religion?
23. How do does Igbe manage the challenges that are associated with its conflict management mechanisms?
24. Institutions of conflict management in Igbe religion
25. Do they take the words of the Uku in Council seriously?

Thank you very much for your time.

**APPENDIX 2
PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES PROGRAMME
INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, NIGERIA**

FGD GUIDE

Name of Interviewer.....
Date.....
Name of Interviewee.....
Designation of Interviewee.....

Good day, my name is Afatakpa, Onoseme Fortune. I am a student of the University of Ibadan, conducting a research on the topic “Sectarian Conflict Management Mechanisms among Worshippers of Igbe Orhe in Delta State, Nigeria. I will like to get your opinion on the above named subject. I am not here to give my opinion or share any information, your opinion is what matters. Notes and recording of the

session will be taken. The session is confidential and strictly for academic purpose. So no one will know what your contributions are.

FGD GUIDE

(ONI IGBE ACROSS THE SECTARIAN GROUPS, ORHE, AME, AZIZA, CHARISMATIC

1. What are the causes of conflicts across the sectarian divisions in Igbe religion?
2. How do you manage conflicts across sectarian lines?
3. What are the steps your take in managing conflicts?
4. Kindly identify the institutions that manages conflict and their roles in Igbe
5. What are your conflict management challenges?
6. How effective are your laws as mechanisms for conflict management?
7. How do you manage the general negative perception of people about Igbe?
8. How do you see other sectarian variants in Igbe Religion?

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX 3

**PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES PROGRAMME
INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, NIGERIA**

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Name of Interviewer.....
Date.....
Name of Interviewee.....
Designation of Interviewee.....

Good day, my name is Afatakpa, Onoseme Fortune. I am a student of the University of Ibadan, conducting a research on the topic “Sectarian Conflict Management Mechanisms among Worshippers of Igbe Orhe in Delta State, Nigeria. I will like to get your opinion on the above named subject. I am not here to give my opinion or share any information, your opinion is what matters. Notes and recording of the

session will be taken. The session is confidential and strictly for academic purpose. So no one will know what your contributions are.

1. What are the conflict management mechanisms in Igbe Religion?
2. Identify the conflict management institutions in Igbe religion and their roles
3. Can you give us an insight into the internal conflict mechanism in Igbe Religion?
4. How are conflicts detected in Igbe Religion?
5. How effective are the conflict management mechanisms’
6. What is the role of the central working committee in the management of conflicts in Igbe Religion?
7. When ose presides over a case, takes a decision but one party to the conflict refuses, how is it handled?
8. Are there repercussions for those who refuse to accept the judgments of mediators?
9. If there are identify the types of conflicts and how they are managed or have been managed?
10. How do you teach your members and to what extent has the teaching influence the non-violent narrative in the religion?
11. How are conflicts managed in Igbe religion?
12. How do you see other sectarian variants in the religion?
13. How do does Igbe manage the challenges that are associated with its conflict management mechanisms?
14. Institutions of conflict management in Igbe religion
15. Do they take the words of the Uku in Council seriously?

Thank you very much for your time.