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## Conflicts and Professional Work Relationships: Impacts on Gender Relations in Educational Institutions in Jos, Nigeria

Plangsat Bitrus Dayil

Coordinator, Centre for Gender and Women Studies, University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria

### Abstract:

Since 2001, Jos city and its environs in Plateau State have been enmeshed in cyclical ethno-religious violent conflicts which have resulted in huge carnage and divisions of the area into spasms and enclaves along ethno-religious backgrounds even in educational institutions. This paper is derived from my doctoral thesis based on information collected through interview narratives from two higher institutions and two high schools in Jos, utilised focus group discussions and interviews to investigate the impact of ethno-religious conflicts on gender and professional work relationships. The study reveals that women are subjected to scrutiny on the basis of religion and their gender making the school and workplace unsafe, leading to widespread alienation, gendered aggression with consequent impact on productivity and Women's Career progression. Also, the conflicts in Jos have significantly subverted codes and elements of professional work relationships. Also, the study shows that the conflicts have affected gender relationships in academic institutions leading to frustration, resentment and hostile behaviours.

**Keywords:** Ethnicity, religion, conflict, gender relations, professional work relationship

### 1. Introduction

Nigeria is one of the most diverse nations in the world, comprising between 250 and 450 multi-ethnic nationalities (Idahosa, 2010). Nigeria is also multi-religious with Islam and Christianity as dominant faiths. In each of the dominant religions are various sects. Among the Christian religion, there are broadly two groups, the orthodox Christians and Pentecostal Christians. Similarly, among the Muslims there are two dominant groups, namely, the orthodox and fundamentalists. It is instructive to note that the manifestation of various tendencies within each of the dominant religious group is not peculiar to Nigeria and it is also in itself not the direct cause of violent inter-faith eruptions. Rather, it is the violent mobilization and intolerant attitude and tendencies of the adherents that promote conflict relations.

Since the dawn of the current democratic era in May 1999 after protracted years of military authoritarian rule, the Nigerian political landscape had been dotted by numerous ethno-religious violent conflicts. Within the first three years of the country's return to democratic rule, the country had witnessed the outbreak of not less than forty violent ethno-religious and communal conflicts, which had resulted in huge carnage, internal displacement and destruction of livelihoods (Imobighe, 2003; Jega 2007).

However, ethno-religious conflict is not a unique feature of the Nigerian state alone. Indeed, several countries around the world have been plagued by ethno-religious conflicts with greater devastating consequences. According to Imobighe (2012:318) "Nigeria has been lucky to avoid any major religious conflagration of the type in places like Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and Sudan and between the Hindus and Muslims in India". However, it is feared that the frequency, persistence and intensity, and mobility of ethno-religious conflicts in parts of Northern Nigeria since the return to civil rule in May 1999 if not carefully handled could result in the disintegration of the country. It is not easy to calculate with mathematical precision the quantum of losses resulting from ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. Thus, there are various conservative estimates with different temporal dimension. In the ethno-religious and communal violent conflicts between 1999 and 2010 over 13,500 lives were lost (Geneva Declaration, 2011). Indeed, ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria have paralyzed considerably socio-economic activities in the hotbeds.

Since the emergence of the nascent democracy, Jos, the capital of Plateau State has become a permanent ethno-religious conflict flashpoint. The state which had hitherto been one of the most relatively peaceful in Nigeria has been deeply enmeshed and suffused in ethno-religious conflicts since 2001. Such conflicts have been characterized by genocidal attacks, maiming and killing of several persons, loss of business investment, industries and property worth several millions of Naira. The trend, dimension and casualties associated with the circle of violent ethno-religious conflicts in Plateau State have generated serious concern locally and internationally. The orgy of violent conflicts apart from being condemned by all has generated calls from the local and international arenas on the need to address them.

Expectedly the phenomenon of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria has generated sustained academic interest evident in the number of extant literatures in relation to the issue. The nature, scale, forms, propellants, consequences and management of ethno-religious conflicts have been examined (Odey, 2005; Onuoha, 2005; Fayeye, 2006; Jega, 2007; Imobighe 2012). As seminal as these earlier studies have been, they have paid little attention to how the various conflicts have been shaped or reshaped by gender and professional work relationships. This is the acknowledged gap this article

attempts to fill by examining the impact of the ethno-religious conflicts in Jos on gender and professional work relationships in the secondary schools and tertiary institutions.

Methodologically, this article relies on information derived from interview narratives, focus group discussions and desk information. A sample size of 50 respondents comprising women and men was drawn from selected secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Jos were used for the study. The method adopted for the analysis of information derived was descriptive.

The article is organized into six sections. Following this introduction, the second part of the article unpacks the central concepts of the discourse, ethnicity, religion, conflict, ethno-religious conflicts, gender and professional work relationships. The third section profiles the ethno-religious conflicts in Jos city and its environs. The fourth section explores the impact of conflict on the notion of professional conduct. The fifth part outlines the impact of the ethno-religious conflicts on communal, professional and gender relationships in workplace environment in secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Jos. The sixth concludes.

## 2. Conceptual Notes on Religion, Ethnicity, Profession and Gender Relations in a Conflict Context

Several scholars have attempted to define the concept of religion, without agreeing on a precise definition. Thus, there are various definitions of the concept of religion. Maclver (1946) defined religion as a relationship not merely between man and man but also between man and some higher power. To Bellah (1970) religion is a set of symbolic forms and actions that relate man to the ultimate condition of his existence. Adeniyi (1993) conceptualized religion as a body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to transcendent being. Yinger J. Milton (cited in Argawal et al 1994: 237) conceived religion as "the attempt to bring the relative, temporary, and the painful things in life into relations with what is conceived to be permanent, absolute and cosmically optimistic

Ethnicity like religion defies unanimous definition. Nnoli (1980) defined ethnicity as a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups. He referred to ethnic groups as social formation distinguished by the communal character (that is language and culture) of their boundaries. To Otite (1990) ethnic groups denote categories of people characterized by cultural criteria of symbols including language, value systems and normative behaviour, and whose members are anchored in a particular part of the new state territory. He defined ethnicity as the contextual discrimination by members of one ethnic group against others on the basis of differentiated systems of socio-cultural symbols.

Ethnicity does not exist in its pure form because of its association with political, sectional and religious factor. According to Richard A. Joseph (1991) ethnicity owes its continued vitality to the keen nature of the struggle for power and resources in the context of scarcity, insecurity and lack of confidence in official norms and regulations. The widespread Nigerian view of the state as an entity composed of strategic offices which can be capture as the outcome of a competitive process – openly electoral or through power of numbers and their collective influence – gives renewed purpose to constantly evolving networks of region, ethnicity and religion.

Drawing similar concern Garvin Williams (1980) noted ethnicity as a socially constructed relation. According to him "the competition for access to resources in Nigeria has taken place predominantly between ethnically defined constituencies. These constituencies were simply given but redefined in the process of political competition. Ethnic identities do not present themselves ready-made, determining in advance the lines of political conflict. They are socially constructed relation to the exigencies of specific historical situations.

The various ethnic nationalities and religious groups in Nigeria usually have different ways of explaining the perceived disadvantage of their own group (Best, 2005). In describing the impact of inter-ethnic prejudices and hostility and the struggle over scarce resources on the economy, Nnoli (1980:218) posits that:

Individuals .... begin to give and receive ethnic preferences and to act on the basis of such expectations. But this outlook sanctions nepotism and thrives on it, sharply contradicts the bureaucratic and entrepreneurial ideals of efficiency, meritocracy and universalism. It encourages the bureaucrat to devote his working hours more to the serious and lucrative business of watching who moves up in the hierarchy than his responsibility to the society as a whole. In the process he exacerbates interethnic tension.

Nnoli's (1980) point supports the argument put forward in this paper, that the struggle among groups and individuals within the society and within formal organisations is exacerbated by inter-ethnic tensions. These struggles increase the hostility between members of ethno-religious groups who fear and conceive of one another as untrustworthy, thereby making it easy for them to manipulate group sentiments, even in the workplace.

Throughout the Middle Belt and Nigeria at large, fears and ongoing mistrust accompany all forms of interaction among the different ethnic, regional and religious groups in their struggle for the control of local, State and Federal resources otherwise referred to the 'national cake' (Bayart, 2009), often resort to conflict. These groups claim their struggle for emancipation is only possible through ethnic and religious mobilisation to push forward their demands (Mohammed, 2012). This form of competition is often encouraged by religious leaders and ethnic associations seeking to ensure their group is put in the most advantageous position.

Many nations of the world have diverse ethnic groups. According to Otite (1990) over 90 % of the world's independent states are plural and are in various degrees of stability at different stages of development. Thus, ethnic diversity is not bad in itself except when it negatively manipulated for self-serving purpose. Ethnicity and religion have severally been manipulated to generate suspicion, mistrust and conflict.

Conflict, which represents a condition of disharmony within an interaction process, usually occurs as a result of a clash of interest between parties involved in some form of relationship. Such clash of interest s could occur because either they are

pursuing incompatible goals or they are using incompatible means of pursuing their chosen goals. It is incontrovertible that there is consensus among scholars that conflict is inevitable within and between ethnic or religious groups in a state (Imobighe, 2003). Ethno-religious conflict in this discourse denotes risks, tension, mutual fear and suspicion, lack of cordiality, quarrelsomeness and tendency towards violent confrontation by an ethnic group whose members are unified by common religion.

In Nigeria because ethnic and religious groups form the basis for violent competition for power and resources, there is such a high level of inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts that perpetually push things beyond the precipice and overstretch the bond of the country's unity (Imobighe, 2003; Jega, 2007).

The context of violent ethno-religious conflicts although all suffer, there is the notion the major victims are women. The study of gender relation does not constitute conflicts between women and men at the individual level, although it may consider this. As a concept gender is simply a social construction, which denotes to be male or female in any place or time. The gender notion about male and female include; traditional stereotypes that characterize women as submissive, illogical, passive, talkative, emotional, easily moved to tears, etc. men on the other hand are assumed to be competent, logical, and independent. These stereotypes tend to reflect men and women as belonging to opposite ends of bipolar adjectives in which men have desirable qualities while women have undesirable ones... Societal norms and stereotypes also function as a traditional ideology that relegates women to housewife roles while men as actors, provides and final authority (Enemuo 1999).

There have been international conventions on insistence of gender equality and elimination of marginalization of women. Yet, there is resentment among men over the perceived advantages enjoyed by women. In the wider context of societal norms and practices women are discriminated against. Religion is also mobilized against women. Gender boundaries are also drawn in the professional context.

A professional environment is a context which celebrates accomplishment, professionalism, merit and mutual respect. Professional work relationships are defined by various elements such as equality, friendship, cordiality and honest communication (Mcloy, 2017, Causewell, 2017). Equality in professional work relationship implies that people of different ages, gender and ethnic nationalities are expected to be treated as equal (Mcloy, 2017). In other words, there should be no form of discrimination against any person or harassment of any person on the basis of his or her age, gender and identities or affiliation (Causewell, 2017). Friendship in professional work relationships implies being happy with colleagues at workplace rather than engagement in negative politics, religion or gossip related ties. It is also the encouragement, protection and defence of colleagues through constructive responses to stress and concern about their welfare or recognition of their progress. It is difficult to maintain professional friendship when workers are enmeshed in constant feud or gossip related ties (Mcloy, 2017).

Good, open and honest communication in professional work relationships aims at promoting understanding and minimizing hostility and confusion at workplace (Causewell, 2017). Conflict management as a cornerstone of professional work relationships encapsulates brainstorming solutions to emerging crisis, willingness to compromise and show respect for other persons (Mcloy, 2017).

### **3. Profile of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Jos City**

The town of Jos as a city was established in 1915 as a tin transportation camp. Jos is the capital of Plateaus State, which stretches across 8,600 square kilometres. It is a veritable mini-Nigeria, with its mosaic of indigenous ethnic communities an estimated at 54, about 100 linguistic groupings and 40 spoken languages) (Orifia, 2010). Many of the inhabitants are sedentary and pastoralists. The leading sedentary ethnic groups are the Afizere, Anaguta and Berom. Other ethnic groups (mainly the Hausa-Fulani, but also the Igbo, Yoruba and Urhobo) from other parts of the country are also inhabitants of the state (or so-called settlers). Most of the sedentary communities are associated with Christian faith. According to the 1952 census figures, Christians formed 84.5 percent of the population of Jos town, with Muslim making 12 percent and the remaining 3.5 percent adherents of traditional religions. By 2010, the Christian population of Plateau State was put at nearly 95 percent (Abah, 2012). Among the pastoralist communities, the Muslim Fulani and Hausa are the largest. Most of these groups are concentrated in Jos.

Since 2001, Jos city and its rural environs have witnessed cyclical ethno-religious violent conflicts. At the heart of the cyclical violence is religious domination, political power sharing, electoral competition and political representation, indigene-ship rights, resource control or land ownership rights and external forces. The cyclical ethno-religious violent conflicts have resulted in loss of several lives on both sides of the divide. The 2001 riots resulted in the death of at least 1,000 (Adam, 2008). In 2004, about 700 people were reportedly killed in the sectarian violence. Still another violent conflict between Muslim and Christian youths in November 2008 led to the death of 700 people. In year 2010, over 10,000 people were killed (Ibrahim, 2013). Between May 29, 2011 and June 30, 2013, there were 785 sectarian related deaths in Jos and its rural environs. Between January and June 2013 alone 481 people were killed in sectarian violence (Geneva Declaration 2011).

The cyclical violent conflict in Jos and its rural environs since 2001 have engendered humanitarian crisis and internal displacement. For example, the conflict which broke out in 2008 displaced up to 220,000 people while about 18,000 people were displaced in the year 2010 riots (Abah, 2012). As Fukshi we (2010: 37) points out, "one of the most potent effects of violent conflicts is the displacement of people from their residences." Displacement is often experienced as a terrible loss and a form of victimisation because residents run to safety without any hope of returning to their original homes where the conflicts are escalating. This means that many people in Jos have lost not only their property and neighbourhood, but also their businesses, networks and offices.

Another implication of the cyclical violence in Jos and its rural environs is the division of the city into spasms or enclaves along ethno-religious lines. The Christians and Muslims now live in enclaves where their kith and kin live. There is little or no conscious interaction. The two main religious group adherents stalk each other and there is no love lost between them.

Furthermore, the conflicts have resulted in exodus of people from the Jos city and its environs to the neighbouring communities in outside Plateau state. And those who opt to stay move to areas where adherents of their religion are dominant. The city has become polarized along ethnic and religious divides. The indigenes who are predominantly Christians stay in some settlements with other Christian settlers while Hausa / Fulani who are predominantly Muslims stay in some areas with Muslims settlers. Some Christians have refused to visit their Hausa Muslim associates and vice versa for fear of being killed. There have been cases of people missing in suspicious circumstances and other who were foolhardy enough to wander into enemy territory who never returned home. In 2010, 3 journalists were reportedly killed without any offence besides belonging to different religion (Isa, 2010)

Violence and displacement have reshaped Jos and the social relations of its residents. As neighbourhoods become ethno-religiously segregated, 'no-go areas' alter patterns of residency, business, transportation, and trade. Throughout Jos, the hate, suspicion, fear and animosity associated with the conflicts has filtered into the public institutions of learning. This is partly a process that has resulted from the segregated settlement patterns that have come to define residential choices. The conflicts have also forced many families to relocate. Action Aid (2014: 18) in a recent study found out that "...most of the schools in the conflict areas are not functioning. Many of the pupils have fled with their parents. Some other children have been transferred to other schools either outside of the state or to relatively more peaceful communities where schools are running. Similarly, in Plateau state, "ethno-religious crises have led to the de-population of [some] areas" (Action Aid, 2011: 10), causing a serious strain on school attendance for the girl child. It is also a major challenge to education in general as it puts a lot of pressure on female teachers who are forced out of paid employment due to displacement. This displacement also has a negative impact on the education sector due to hundreds of learning hours wasted during conflicts and when relocating. The de-population of some of the areas in Jos and the Middle due to conflict has created a culture of antagonism and hate in the new communities to which refugees have escaped and told people their stories. Evidence from the narratives indicates that some of this antagonism also affects the gender and professional work relationships in secondary and tertiary institutions.

#### 4. Conflict and Notions of Professional Behaviour and Conduct

Our survey results indicate that the ethno-religious conflicts have significantly affected gender relationship and professional conduct and behaviour in workplace in secondary and tertiary institutions in Jos. In the workplace, our respondents held that the conflicts have generated unhealthy rivalry along ethnic and religion divisions. As one of the interviewees, Dr Shar Lagwen,<sup>1</sup> noted

A lot of the unhealthy competition you see in the workplace [is] emphasised by religious groups. Because if you have denominationalisms where you have a Muslim, and within the Muslims they belong to different denominations like the Izala, Sufi, Derika, competing. And the differences [are] very serious within these different groups to the extent that one group cannot pray in another's Mosque. You discover then that some members of these groups come to work full of these differences. And sometimes even to lead or hold a position, they feel and prefer their denomination member to others. Within the Muslim community, they struggle over who should be elected; if you elect the Sufi, they will say no, he will give preference to the Sufi. And so, they take some of these differences to the workplace, they go with them to work. Some of the respondents complained that the conflicts have increasingly reinforced the centrality of religion and ethnicity in influencing job progression particularly when colleagues are competing for the same position. In the competition for positions and promotions in workplace, the issues of marginalization of some worker on the basis of ethnic and religious divisions has become recurrent and pervasive. As one of the respondents, a visiting professor who is a resident outside Nigeria that has chosen to return to work in one of the tertiary institutions observed

There were cases you keep working, while someone who is below you is elevated above you because of ethnicity or religion. That makes you so uncomfortable, so I prefer to go to places where there are more people of the same ethnicity and religion as mine and I can easily be given certain positions.

Besides, the issues of unhealthy rivalry and marginalization, the conflicts have created huge gap in the interpersonal relationship among colleagues in their workplace. They go to work conscious of their difference or pick difference and frustrations to the workplace. They look out for dress codes, which can easily be used to label one Muslim or Christian. In many secondary schools since the conflicts began teachers sometimes openly refer to each other as enemies. Both Muslims and Christians narrated their experiences of encountering people who disapprove of them. One of the Focus Group Discussants who is a Christian and teacher in one of the Government Secondary Schools opined that Now when we relate with colleagues, we try as much as possible not to mention things that we know will be offensive, and you know now anything can be offensive. When you smile at someone in the morning, all you see is irritation on the face already. So, when it comes to interaction, you have to be very careful. As colleagues, we sometimes visit each other's family during festive seasons, or when there is an occasion, but now, one cannot visit like those days. We now understand that the differences in our communities are affecting the workplace.

Drawing similar concern, Dr (Mrs) Matlu Gube<sup>2</sup> remarked thus:

<sup>1</sup> Dr Shar Lagwen is a lecturer with a tertiary institution in Jos. Interviewed in Jos. 8/1/2013.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Dr (Mrs) Matlu Gube, is a teacher in one of the tertiary institutions in Jos. Interview in Jos. 20/1/2013.

Since...this conflict started, I noticed my colleagues [who are non-Muslims] are suddenly becoming very cold towards me; they will greet me in a hurry, ask me questions in a hurry and never want to spend an extra moment listening to me. It is as if they are tactically avoiding any form of discussion that we would normally have before the conflict. In the past, they would care to ask me about the welfare of my family and my welfare as a person. But nowadays it is just as if I have become an internal suspect, and in fact pronounced guilty as someone who is a part of the conflict in Jos. They do not necessarily say that, but I can read it from their faces and actions and how cold they have suddenly become towards me. The hostility among colleagues in workplace reach greater crescendo where some have lost their loved ones in the conflicts. An interviewee who is Christian, Mrs. Silvia Boki stated that she finds it extremely difficult to forgive her offenders. In the words of Mrs Silvia Boki<sup>3</sup>:

Conflict has affected me, because, in those days when I lived amidst Muslims in Angwan Doki (aka Rahol Kanan), we use[d] to have [a] good relationship with the Muslims. During Christmas, they will come, we will give them food and they will eat. But after the conflict started, we hardly sit together to discuss as neighbours like we used to. We hardly enter each other's house. Even in our place of work, the relationship we use[d] to have with our Muslim brothers is no longer there. It has created a division in our homes, our children no longer play with them like they used to play before. I still live in Angwan Doki, but there is no form of relationship. We now look at each other as enemies. I see those of them who burnt down part of my house and my small shop passing every day. When I am sitting down and I see them passing to the mosques, I use to abuse them, because there is that hatred in me. The crisis has created so much hate that it will be difficult for us to forgive one another. It will only take the Grace of God. Because I was affected and how will I now forgive these people if not for the Grace of God that will help me.

### 5. Conflict and Gendered Notions of Professional Behaviour and Conduct

There is a gender dimension to the impact of the ethno-religious conflicts on professional behaviour and conduct in secondary and tertiary institutions in Jos. While the ethno-religious conflicts affect both men and women in their workplace, there are revelations that the conflicts particularly affect women more. To illustrate this, point a contrast of the concerns and feelings of Dr Bakwando Dan'azumi a male teacher and Christian with those of Dr Marot Yohom,<sup>4</sup> a female and Christian lecturer in the same tertiary institution will suffice. While Dr Dan'Azumi was concerned about his minority status and inability to gain recognition, Dr Yohom had to deal with issues relating very specifically to the fact that she is female. Dr Bakwando Dan'azumi,<sup>5</sup> noted that:

For me as a Hausa-Fulani in this institution I feel I belong to the small minority group and that actually keeps me in a very uncomfortable situation. And so, whatever I do, or wherever I go, I have that feeling in me... whether in the office, I feel that am in the minority. Sometimes people look at me differently or they throw questions that ought not to have been asked.

Dr Yohom expressed her concerns and experiences with colleagues of a different religion thus: Our relationship is not so cordial. Particularly a colleague who I will say is a kind of a very strong practitioner of his faith, I would not want to use the word fundamentalist... will attack you on every little thing you do; from the way you dress, to the way you greet him or behave. It was really very difficult relating to this particular colleague... that relationship was not too good for me especially when I had to work under him as a postgraduate student, he will complain about everything I wear, which makes me a little uncomfortable.

The statement by Dr Yohom points to the fact that the conflicts have not only drawn sharper boundaries between colleagues of different backgrounds, but have also encouraged some men to criticise individual women behaviour such as how they dress and greet people.

The experience of Muslim female teachers in tertiary institutions is similar to the experience of the Christian female teachers interviewed. For instance, in an interview with Hajia (Dr.) Miriam Ladi'le,<sup>6</sup> she expressed concern over how she feels she is being monitored closely and viewed by her other male colleagues, both Muslim and Christian. She told me that this sometimes makes her uneasy, especially when her colleagues make jokes about other Muslim women who are under purdah, which they seem to do frequently when she is around. In one of her narratives, she recollects how one of them said to her: "The day you become the minister of education in Nigeria, I am sure banning purdah and liberating other women will be the number one on your agenda." She continues:

- I know they think that is a compliment, but I know they are saying that with a bit of sarcasm with the looks on the face, and I know that comment would never have been said to a male colleague.

This stigmatisation of women in the workplace creates fear and erodes the confidence of some of these women. It also excludes women from having the opportunity to feel equal and safe in the workplace. Thus, the conflicts in Jos and the Middle Belt have not just created new problems for women but have also served to enforce the existing status quo.

Our Christian and Muslim respondents narrated their experiences of encountering people who disapproved of them and how people come to work conscious of their differences (in most cases ethnic or religious) from those they work with as well as look out for dress codes which can easily be used to label one as Muslim or Christian. When confronted with others,

<sup>3</sup> Mrs Silvia Boki is a teacher in one of the Government Secondary Schools in Jos. In the past, she combined her teaching and petty business to make ends meet. She had a small shop in front of her compound where she retails provisions and call cards. She lost the shop to the crises and part of her house was demolished during the crises. Interviewed in Jos. 24/9/2012.

<sup>4</sup> Dr Marot Yohom: A teacher in one of the tertiary institutions in Jos. Interviewed in Jos. 8/1/2013

<sup>5</sup> Dr Bakwando Dan'azumi: A teacher in one of the tertiary institutions in Jos. Interviewed 9/1/2013 in Jos.

<sup>6</sup> Hajia (Dr) Ladi'le is a teacher in one of the tertiary institutions in Jos. Interviewed in Jos. 9/1/2013.

both Christians and Muslims pay unnecessary attention to every move around them and become suspicious quickly. This narrative by Dr (Mrs) Matlu Gube<sup>7</sup> is another relevant example to support this point. According to her:

Since...this conflict started, I noticed my colleagues [who are non-Muslims] are suddenly becoming very cold towards me; they will greet me in a hurry, ask me questions in a hurry and never want to spend an extra moment listening to me. It is as if they are tactically avoiding any form of discussion that we would normally have before the conflict. In the past, they would care to ask me about the welfare of my family and my welfare as a person. But nowadays it is just as if I have become an internal suspect, and in fact pronounced guilty as someone who is a part of the conflict in Jos. They do not necessarily say that, but I can read it from their faces and actions and how cold they have suddenly become towards me.

On another plane, the conflicts have spawned impact on the notion of gender teacher-student relationships in schools. Accord one of the respondents "children and students are fast learning from what, (the divisions or segregation) they see going on in the community and neighbourhood". Another of our respondent, a Christian female teacher in one of the Government Secondary Schools in Jos, narrated one of their challenges thus:

One of the challenges we have here is that we have 95 percent of the teachers as Christians, out of about 45 staff and only about 5 percent are Muslims. We have more than 600 students who are majorly Muslims. When we go to teach, they [the students] will not listen to us, they will not pay attention, but once their Mallam<sup>8</sup> or the Muslim [male] teachers come into the class, they give them full attention, they listen to them. But if it is the Christian [female teachers], they will be playing.

This attitude of the students has made some female teachers to become resentful of male students who pay them little attention. In contrast to the narrative above, there are some teachers who are happy working in schools despite the ethno-religious and gender divisions created by the conflict. According to one of the respondents, Mrs. Asabe:

I am very happy working here...even though the School is located in a no-go-area for me. The kids in this school are very obedient and it is surprising how much interest they show and their willingness to learn. You can sometimes...notice a few of them struggling to catch up with the others, but generally they are enthusiastic learners and I love to teach them. One of the major setbacks for me since this conflict is that most of us have to relocate far from the school...we have to stop coming to work when there is conflict...the head of our school and some of our Muslim colleagues are quite understanding. They keep us up-to-date with the security situation around the area and often we are advised to stay off work until the situation improves.<sup>9</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

This paper set out to evaluate the impact of the cyclical ethno-religious violent conflicts in Jos and its environs which began in 2001 on gender and professional work relationships. It revealed that the cyclical violence subverted elements of professional work conduct and behaviour as well as gender relations in workplace as it bred mistrust, loss of confidence, lack of cordiality and team spirit. It also revealed that conflict influenced gendered notion of professional work relationships. Religion has become a weapon of discrimination and control of women in workplace. The mobilization of religion as weapon of discrimination against women in workplace makes them feel unsafe there and the idea of subjecting them to scrutiny significantly affects their confidence. This can fuel widespread alienation and engender gendered aggression, resentment and hostility.

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Dr (Mrs) Matlu Gube, is a teacher in one of the tertiary institutions in Jos. Interview in Jos. 20/1/2013.

<sup>8</sup> *Malam* is a Hausa name usually referring to a male teacher, while *Malama* refers to a female teacher.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Mrs Asabe a teacher with the Government Secondary School in Jos. Interviewed in Jos. 27/8/2012.

<sup>9</sup> added that 14 civilians were killed in the raids and that the task-force killed 21 assailants (Information Nigeria, 2013).

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