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Local Conflicts Around Mining Activities in Ibise-Komu Community in Oyo State, Nigeria

Adegbite A. Tella (Corresponding author)

George Williams School of Social Work

Aurora University, Aurora, Illinois

United States of America

E-mail: tellaranky@yahoo.com

Nathaniel D. Danjibo, PhD

Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies

University of Ibadan, Nigeria

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Abstract

The conflict between the mining companies and the people of Ibise-Komu community of Oyo State has become perennial. The interventions to manage the conflict have also been continuously applied with limited success. This study is motivated by this background to better understand the dimensions of the miners-community conflict and analyze the immediate and remote causes of the conflict. To do this, the researcher visited the community and implemented a purposive random sampling technique to select 200 locals to participate in the study. A self-designed questionnaire was administered among all the respondents while only 20 of them participated in the semi-structured interview sessions. The empirical analysis was guided by frequency counts, percentages, descriptive statistics and logit regression. Findings revealed that the miners-community conflict has indeed become existential. While the community lays claim of ownership and control over the mineral deposits in their land, the behaviors of the miners seem to be in opposite of the perspectives of the general members of the community. In particular, the respondents argued that the miners recruit less of the indigenes in their mining activities, destroy their roads, pollute their environment and

contribute minimally to the growth and development of the community. It follows that the solutions to the miners-community conflict should be addressed from the ends of the miners. This may be labelled with hurdles if the miners enjoy discriminatory backing of the government.

Keywords: conflict, mining activities, logit regression, Ibise-Komu community, Nigeria

1. Introduction

In the last decade, the share of the mining and quarrying sector in the Nigeria's GDP stands at about 7% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The economic contribution of the sector signals that it is one of the drivers of major economic activities and employment in Nigeria (Azubuike et al., 2023). However, community conflicts have been known to drag the mining and quarrying activities in Nigeria. According to the arguments of Eromosele (2022) and Azubuike et al. (2023), the GDP contribution of the mining and quarrying sector in Nigeria is underreported due to incessant community conflicts that characterise the sector. There are two main arguments which describe the community clashes associated with mining activities in Nigeria.

First, the Nigeria's mining sub-sector is structured with large array of illegal activities (Ogbonnaya, 2020). There are many unauthorised miners in the country, whose activities might be known to the host community, but not known to the government (Ogbonnaya, 2020). This breeds community conflicts because by the time government intervenes to uproot the illegality, the community and miners attempt to unsuccessfully collaborate in resistance. Second, where the miners are registered with the government and obtain the necessary licenses to carry out the mining activities, the host communities relate that they are denied the necessary information about the entry of miners on their lands (Otoijamun et al., 2021). This mostly applies to the authorised artisanal and small-scale miners. The community youths and leaders then rise up in protection of the mineral deposits which they had laid claimed to, resulting in miners-community conflict (Otoijamun et al., 2021).

Regardless of their forms, the mining-induced conflicts depress economic activities in the community, creates a slowdown in community development and sets the community up for long-term infrastructural deficits (Azubuike et al., 2023; Otoijamun et al., 2021; Ogbonnaya, 2020). These consequences are present in Ibise-Komu Community in Itesiwaju Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The miners in the community have been known with incessant clashes with their host community. Investigating the environmental issues around mining, Ahmed et al. (2018) mentioned that mining in Nigeria is characterised by the two sources of conflict explained above. More succinctly, Igbinadolor (2022) and Mining Review Africa (2023) discussed how the mining conflict incessantly evolves from corrupt practices of the mining stakeholders.

In some cases, the miners are "outsiders" who entered the mining sites without the awareness of the community leadership. Although such mining activity has been periodic, it always generates imminent conflict between the miners and the host community (Ahmed et al., 2018). Also, there are cases that the illegal miners are the indigenes of the community, who

had sought the approval of the community leaders before the mining commences. However, the government authorities have been dispersing such illegal mining, resulting in conflict between the miners and the government officials (Igbinadolor, 2022). Lastly, the community has also witnessed the rise of government-approved miners, but without the consent of the community (Mining Review Africa, 2023).

Given these variants of conflict, this study was aimed to explore the perspectives of the people and leaders of Ibise-Komu community towards uncovering the frequency and intensity of conflict between the miners and the community. It would also analyse the immediate and remote causes of the mining-related communal conflict which has ceased to be permanently managed.

2. A Review of Relevant Literature

Alade (2021) examined the conflict between miners and host communities in Ijesaland, Osun State, Nigeria. The author adopted the exploratory research design and applied the purposive random sampling technique to select a total of 29 respondents from Ijana-Wasare, Iyemogun and Iyere communities. The perceptions of the respondents were collected using a mix of key informant interviews, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. In addition, secondary data were collected from periodicals and archives in the local offices of community leaders. Content analytical technique was used to generate inferences from the data. Findings revealed that land degradation, water pollution and air pollution were the major causes of conflicts between the mining companies and the host communities. It was also found that socio-economic and compensation issues usually characterise incidences of the conflicts. It therefore follows that the mining companies should be more cautious of the environmental impact of their mining activities towards managing the conflicts that such impact may induce (Alade, 2021).

While Alade (2021)'s findings require the miners to be the first party to shift ground, further evidence was provided by Alao et al. (2019) that the mining communities can also initiate the conflict management measure. Where the miners shrug the environmental impact of their mining activities, the development of the affected communities becomes far-reaching. Therefore, Alao et al. (2019) urged the development-concerned community leaders to be the first to consider the long-term consequences of the mining conflicts on the development of their communities.

Bezzola et al. (2022) conducted a comprehensive study on the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on the incidence of conflicts between a large pool of communities and mining companies in Africa. The authors were motivated by the literature evidence that mines are open to high propensities of social conflicts in Africa (for example see Conde and Le Billion, 2017; Amengual, 2018; Bezzola, 2022). The authors therefore explored an extended dataset of CSR commitments from 292 miners across seventeen (17) countries in Africa, including Nigeria. The time-series data spanned a period of 8 years. Their findings indicated that the mining companies are more likely to engage in CSR activities when they are exposed to conflict in their areas of operation. And once conducted, CSR activities downsize the mining-related tensions (Bezzola et al., 2022).

This lends credibility to Alade (2021)'s results that management of miners-community conflict should be directed from the ends of the miners. Bezzola et al. (2022) offered conflict management lessons to Nigerian mining companies that a quick mechanism of attenuating their recurring conflicts with their host communities is through a regular CSR. Nevertheless, CSR commitments do not eliminate social conflicts in areas where the communities feel exploited by the mining activities (Bezzola et al., 2022). Earlier, Ogbemi (2020) analysed the role of CSR on the communal conflicts related with oil and gas exploration in Niger Delta, Nigeria. The researcher reported that the oil pollution-induced conflicts have been immensely downplayed by the switch of the oil and gas companies from periodic compensation to regular CSR from the host communities. Ogbemi (2020) added that the CSR payments achieve the remarkable success when the beneficiaries are directly impacted.

Beyond Africa, Chang et al. (2023) analysed the relationship between two mining companies and their host communities in Peru and Chile. The selected projects (Minera Yanacocha's Minas Conga extension project in Peru and Minera Los Pelambres' El Mauro Tailings Dam in Chile) were those that had been followed by community conflicts, right from inception. The authors found that it is more promising to resolve miners-community conflicts using informal approaches. While most mining companies focus on obtaining formal licence from the government to operate, they often disregard social licence from their host communities. This has been the major driver of conflicts between the two parties (Chang et al., 2023).

In addition, Fraser (2021) conducted a comparative analysis of two mining projects in the resource-rich region of Arequipa, Peru. The author submitted that poor risk assessment of the miners is a big contributor to the persistent conflicts they witness from the host communities. For example, where the mining companies intensively use the water supply which the communities rely on, the outcome is existential clashes which no amount of CSR payments can manage (Fraser, 2021). This assertion was earlier put forward by Banerjee et al. (2021) who argued that conflicts between mining companies and host communities are an outcome of incompatible organizational and societal goals.

3. Methodology

This paper has a descriptive, ex-post facto design towards characterizing the incidence of conflict around mining activities. It showcases the frequency and nature of human conflict which has a dragging effect on the quantity and composition of mining output. Ibise-Komu community was selected as the study area due to the media reports of incessant conflicts between the mining companies and their host community. Thus, the perspectives of indigenes and residents of Ibise-Komu community were gathered and analyzed in this study. A purposive random sampling technique was used to select 200 residents (of whom 145 are indigenes). A major criterion which guided the sampling technique was that the participants have lived for at least a year in the community and have witnessed at least an episode of mining-connected conflict. This would accord relevance to the perspectives generated from the data.

Two instruments of data collection were used: interview and questionnaire. While the semi-structured interview was conducted among 20 leaders of the community, a

three-sectioned questionnaire was designed and administered among the 200 participants. Section A collects the demographic characteristics of the participants; Section B addresses the incidence and frequency of miners-community conflict; and Section C asks for the immediate and remote causes of the conflict. Due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, the author did not administer the questionnaire directly. Rather three locals volunteered as gatekeepers to ease the data collection. It is noteworthy that the gatekeepers were not financially induced to assist in administering the research instruments. They were rather motivated when they were informed that the research output would be published and this would project the community to the global community and attract government attention to grant their long-term request for community development.

In addition, the gatekeepers provided invaluable assistance during the interview sessions. The author conducted the semi-structured interviews in Yoruba which is the local language of the community. However, the gatekeepers assisted in interpreting some Yoruba words and terms which were used by the interviewees but which the author was not immediately familiar with. Having collected the data, they were cleaned in Excel spreadsheets. The qualitative data on the questionnaires were transformed into quantitative data using codes attached to the participants' responses. The interview responses were transcribed into English and were confirmed as complementary to the questionnaire responses. The data were then analyzed using a mix of methods such as frequency counts, percentages, descriptive statistics and logit regression model. The demographic data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages; the data on the incidence of conflict were analyzed using the first two methods combined with descriptive statistics (mean values of responses). Finally, the data on causes of the conflict were analyzed using all the methods including a logit regression model whose results were interpreted at 5% level of significance.

4. Empirical Analysis

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The analysis began with the demographic information of the respondents. It was gathered that while 65% of the respondents are male, the remaining 35% are female. More male respondents were represented because most female residents of the community declined to participate; those who were interested were rather encouraged by the male participants. It was observed that the female respondents were hesitant to welcome the researcher – it was later known that they were unsure of what to expect from a stranger in their community. The locals who volunteered as gatekeepers helped in downplaying the tension from the female respondents in particular and all the respondents in general.

Table 1. Gender of respondents

Gender distribution	Frequency count	Percentage count
Male	130	65%
Female	70	35%

The educational qualifications of the locals of Ibise-Komu allowed the researcher to generate further perspectives. Although majority of them (39%) completed secondary education and 21.5% had only primary education, about 23% did not have formal education. A further filtering of the questionnaire responses revealed that 80% of respondents with no formal education originally declined to participate in the study. Furthermore, 17% had post-secondary educational qualification.

Table 2. Educational attainment of respondents

Educational attainment distribution	Frequency count	Percentage count
No formal education	45	22.5%
Completed only primary education	43	21.5%
Completed only secondary education	78	39.0%
Completed tertiary education	34	17.0%

There are three major ethnic groups in Nigeria (Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo). The respondents were predominantly Yoruba, because the study area is located in the South-west which is the region of Yoruba ethnic group in Nigeria.

Table 3. Ethnic groups of respondents

Ethnic distribution	Frequency count	Percentage count
Yoruba	186	93.0%
Hausa	8	4.0%
Igbo	6	3.0%

On the age distribution of the respondents, it was revealed that majority of them (73%) were youthful within the age group of 11-40 years. The rest were adult population aged 41-100

years. Two (2) elderly respondents were recruited so that the analysis in this study would include the long-term historical conflict within the community.

Table 4. Age of respondents

Age distribution	Frequency count	Percentage count
11-25 years	58	29.0%
26-40 years	88	44.0%
41-55 years	39	19.5%
56-70 years	7	3.5%
71-85 years	6	3.0%
86-100 years	2	1.0%

Given that majority (66%) of the respondents were married, it could be deduced that early marriage was a common practice in the sample area. This is more relatable because the population dynamics suggest that a relatively youthful population is more likely to experience early marriage that an ageing population.

Table 5. Marital status of respondents

Marital status distribution	Frequency count	Percentage count
Married	132	66.0%
Not-married	68	34.0%

4.2 Respondents' Perspectives on Conflict between the Mining Companies and the Community

Table 6 presents the perspectives of the respondents on the dimension and intensity of conflict between the mining companies and Ibise-Komu community. The respondents were first asked of their years of living in the community. Majority of them (69%) have spent at least 11 years living in the community; about 20% have spent 6-10 years and only a minority of 11.5% have been living for only 1-5 years. This result casts high confidence on the researcher that the perspectives to be generated and analyzed in this study would indeed represent the available constructs of conflict within the community. Then, a large number of the respondents (72.5%) answered that they are indigenes of the community. This implied that they might have witnessed streams of events and circumstances around conflicts in the

community. When the respondents were asked if they had witnessed conflict between the miners and the community, a very large number (93%) gave an affirmative response. While only 5.5% declined that they have observed conflict happening, 1.5% were undecided on whether to reveal such information.

Table 6. Respondents' perspectives on miners-community conflict

S/N	Item on the questionnaire	Distribution	Frequency count	Percentage count
1.	For how long have you been living in this community?	1-5 years	23	11.5%
		6-10 years	39	19.5%
		11-15 years	41	20.5%
		16-20 years	64	32.0%
		20+ years	33	16.5%
2.	Are you an indigene of this community?	Yes	145	72.5%
		No	55	27.5%
3.	Have you ever witnessed conflict between the miners and the people of this community	Yes	186	93.0%
		No	11	5.5%
		Undecided	3	1.5%
4.	What is the frequency of conflict you witnessed?	Rare	35	17.5%
		Often	146	73.0%
		Always	19	9.5%
5.	How intense is the conflict when it occurs?	Very low	24	12.0%
		Low	56	28.0%
		High	45	22.5%
		Very high	75	37.5%

It may be informative that the respondents who agreed to the existence of miners-community conflict did so only after the researcher assured them that their opinion would not cast against them. Apparently, they had witnessed strangers collecting information on conflict from them, which brought about outcomes they were not pleased with. A large fraction of the respondents (73%) who consented to conflict as an event in their community further claimed that the

conflicts occurred often, about 10% mentioned that the conflicts were always while 17.5% mentioned rare occurrence. Finally, 12% asserted that the intensity of miners-community conflict was very low; 28% believed it was low; 22.5% maintained that it was high; and 37.5% very high. When the researcher related the respondents' perspectives to their age structure and years of living, it was gathered that 80% of those who claimed the conflicts were often or always were more than 40 years old, are indigenes and had been living in the community for at least 11 years. It therefore follows that age, indigene status and years of living in the community played a huge role in determining the exposure of the respondents to conflicts between the mining companies and their host community.

4.3 Causes of Miners-Community Conflict

The immediate and remote causes of conflict between the mining companies and the people of Ibise-Komu community were investigated. The respondents' opinions regarding these causes are contained in Table 7. It was revealed that the participants generally agreed that the influx of mining companies in their community had destroyed their roads (mean response: 2.91). The interview sessions shed more light on how the road destruction played out. According to the respondents, the mining companies use heavy trucks to transport their output from the mining sites. Given the lack of government's attention on the existing roads in the community, the trucks destroy the roads on a daily basis. This usually results in complaints and agitations from members of the community. Also, the respondents affirmed that the miners hardly recruit indigenes to work on the sites (mean response: 2.89). This unsettles the youths of the community. Furthermore, mining results in pollution which is not properly managed by the miners (2.85). The respondents mentioned during the operating hours of the miners, the mining residues escaped to the community which makes their daily living uncomfortable. Moreover, the remote causes of conflict include government backing of the miners (2.81). The respondents claimed that their regular complaints to the government of the harmful effects of the miners have not been sufficiently addressed in their favor; instead, the government often takes the side of the miners. The participants also argued that the miners did not have sufficient interest in the development of their community (mean response: 2.64). Finally, the respondents were unable to pin corruption against their leaders (mean response: 1.82). They apparently live in minimum distance with the community leadership, so they were not aware of any undistributed financial compensation from the miners or the government.

Table 7: Causes of the miners-community conflict

S/N	Cause of conflict	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	Mean
1.	Destruction of roads by miners	185	11	4	2.91
2.	Refusal of miners to recruit the indigenes	183	12	5	2.89
3,	Pollution caused by the mining activities	178	14	8	2.85
4.	Government backing of the miners at the expense of the community	172	18	10	2.81
5.	Corruption among leaders of the community	15	134	51	1.82
6.	Insufficient interest of the miners in the community development	144	39	17	2.64

4.4 Logit Regression Estimates

Further inferences on the causes of miners-community conflict were anchored by the logit regression model. The regression estimates are produced in Table 8 where it is noted that refusal of miners to recruit indigenes is the factor with the most likelihood (23.2%) to generate conflict between the miners and community. Other factors in the order of likelihood are lack of miners' interest in the community development (18.5%), destruction of roads by miners (15.6%), pollution from mining activities (13.7%), government backing of miners (10.5%) and corruption among the community leaders (3.02%). As indicated by the t-ratios, these estimates are all statistically significant at 1% or 5% level of significant, with the exception of the corruption among the community leaders. On the elasticity of means, all the significant factors of conflict have elastic response except government backing of the miners. This suggests that while spontaneous reactions are generated by other factors of conflict, the people of Ibise-Komu community take time before they induce conflict from government support of the miners.

The Chi-square statistic (61.57) indicates that the differences in the respondents' opinions are large and significant. The F-stat (25.44) shows that the investigated causes of conflict are jointly significant to actually induce conflict between the miners and the community. The R^2 demonstrates that about 84.5% variation in miners-community conflicts are accounted for by the factors included in this study. This shows that there could be other determinants of the conflict which this research has not explored.

Table 8. Causes of miners-community conflict (Logit estimates)

Variable	Co-efficient estimate	Standard error	Asymptotic t-ratio	Elasticity of means
Constant	0.002	0.001	0.087***	0.02
Destruction of roads by miners	0.156	0.348	3.922*	1.15
Refusal of miners to recruit the indigenes	0.232	0.510	2.181**	1.01
Pollution caused by the mining activities	0.137	0.239	2.650*	1.04
Government backing of the miners at the expense of the community	0.105	0.116	1.952**	0.84
Corruption among leaders of the community	0.0302	0.004	0.104***	0.57
Insufficient interest of the miners in the community development	0.185	0.323	3.293*	1.12
Chi-square: 61.57**	F-stat: 25.44**		Cox and Snell $R^2 = 0.845$	

* denotes statistical significance at 1%

** denotes statistical significance at 5%

*** denotes no statistical significance

5. Discussion of Findings

The foregoing findings indicate the role of socio-economic dimension of the host communities in determining their clashes with the miners. For example, the conflict resulting from the miners' refusal to recruit the locals bears on the low socio-economic status of the community. This finding extends the earlier arguments of Alade et al. (2021) that conflict develops in the local communities if the locals perceive the presence of miners in their community to have limited influence on their socio-economic status. In a similar perspective, Igbinadolor (2022) maintained that the proliferation of illegal mining activities is primarily due to the community's stance to self-uplift their living conditions using the mineral deposits beneath their land. Although there are no justifications for illegal mining, the findings in this study rather portend that the likelihood of mining-induced local conflicts can be downsized if the locals are made to feel the positive impact of the mining on their socio-economic development. In other words, the conflict management mechanisms should result from focused consideration of the needs of the community and the shared perspectives of the community members towards meeting the needs.

Thus, the relationship between the miners and the community can be enhanced if the miners focus on developing and maintaining responsive CSR for the community. This is in tandem with Bezzola et al. (2022) who suggested that the persistent local conflicts between miners and their hosts can be effectively managed if the miners are consistent in rolling out CSR. However, the assessment of the community needs should precede the implementation of the CSR. If otherwise, the mining company's efforts of aligning with the community interests become inefficient. The community members who participated in the interview sessions in this study did not recall any tangible CSR from their miners in their community, pointing at the miners' failure to attract peace from their hosts. Nevertheless, calling for CSR is in variance from Alao et al. (2019) who called for the conflict resolution strategies to stem from the community. Although Alao et al. (2019) was clear not to have asked the community to finance the conflict control, they were instructive that peace can only be attained if the community is willing to accept the miners.

The sense of bias felt by the community from the government on mining activities has also been dragging peace in the area of this study. Such bias was described by Otoijamun et al. (2021) as fuelling the miners-community clashes. For example, the respondents in this study vehemently related that the level of pollution and environmental hazards in their community has not been noticeably high until the arrival of miners in their community. This tells that the occurrence of environmental-depleting hazards in the community was informed mainly by the mining activities, making local conflicts and violence inevitable. This finding echoes the executive summary contained in Mining Review Africa (2023). In the Review, it was stated that if the arrival of miners in the community has limited inputs from the community leaders, the mining companies would demote, rather than uplift, the economic and social development of the community. Ogbonnaya (2020) had also claimed that the initial rejection of miners by the host community is the major factor responsible for the community-backed illegal miners. As the illegal miners enjoy the favor of the community leaders, the licensed miners are supported by the government. This creates deviation of interests of both parties, resulting in far-reaching conflicts in the community.

6. Conclusive Summary

This study has considered the continuous miners-community conflict in the light of the perspectives of the community members towards understanding the dimension and causes of the conflict. The perspectives of the members were systematically collected as the safety risks involved were managed methodically. According to the respondents, the conflicting issues that characterise their relationship with the miners are multi-faceted. However, the existential conflict in the community emanates from the sheer perception of ownership and control of the community members over the mineral deposits in their land. They consider the miners as "alien" who has no social authority to invade their environment. Nonetheless, the presence of the miners might not have posed threats if a significant fraction of their employees are indigenes of the community. This would have showcased a sense of belonging that the community leaders have longed for. With the absence of such labour provisions from the miners, they become continuously in disagreement with the community. In addition, the community expects the miners to socialise themselves by sponsoring capital projects meant

for community development. This would enhance the social investment profile of the mining companies, generating the feelings of "they are one of us." However, the community members described the miners as negligent in their corporate social responsibility, contributing to the perennial conflict between the two parties. Even if the miners have unpopular investment in community projects, they are expected to be actively involved in the clean-up and repair of the roads and other infrastructure which have been damaged by their mining activities. This again is largely unresolved. It follows that the long-term solutions to the miners-community conflict can best be approached from the end of the miners. Thus, there is the need for extensive dialogue between the parties such that the causes of miners-community conflict are reversed holistically.

7. Limitations of the Study

The implications of findings in this study are limited on three grounds. First, the study adopted a descriptive design, implying that the findings only explained the existing phenomenon of mining-related conflicts in the study area. Therefore, the findings should be regarded as containing empirical information about obtainable community-based conflicts. It follows that this study is not particularly important to discuss existential conflicts which cannot be directly observed in the local community. As a result, readers and users of this study should not take the causes of conflicts described in this study as exhaustive of all possible causes of conflicts which might brew between the mining companies and the local communities. Second, an important caveat is that this study did not discuss armed conflicts. While violence often erupts when the local community members are dissatisfied with the activities of mining companies, there was never the case of the local agitators carrying arms. An indication of this is that gunmen have never been involved in the conflicts between miners and members of the selected community. It goes that the local conflicts analyzed in this study should not be confused with community-repressing armed conflicts. Third, the conclusions of this study are specific to the study area from which the data were collected. This means interested readers on the dimension of conflicts in other mining communities may not find this study of immediate use. This also calls for future researchers to extend the purpose of this study to other mines which are often in conflicts with their host communities. It is noteworthy that while there is plethora of evidence of mining-induced conflicts in many mineral-rich communities, this study was the first to explore local conflicts in Ibise-Komu community of Oyo State, Nigeria.

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