

Research Article

Causes and Consequences of Conflicts Among Agricultural Communities in Ethiopia: The Case of Tisho Kebele's Deliberate Attacks on the Yebeno People in Burji Zone, Southern Ethiopia

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Abstract

This research was conducted in Burji zone South Ethiopia region. The main intent of the paper was to assess the causes and consequences of Tisho kebele's deliberate attacks on Yebeno people in mid of April 2024. More precisely, the research was aimed to identify the underlying causes, to investigate the socio-economic effects of the conflicts, to assess the responses provided by Burji zone government to arisen conflict and to propose intervention strategies to end the conflict. As a result, the study employed a descriptive research design and followed qualitative research approach. Besides, the primary data of the study was collected from the kebele leaders, elders and religious leaders through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. To select the respondents who have ample understanding about the conflict the researcher was used the purposive sampling techniques. Moreover, the conceptual information about the conflict was collected from secondary data sources such as journals and articles. Above all, the deliberate attack of Tisho kebele on the Yebeno people were out of the norm of Burji people in their long time history and it was destructive in nature. Due to this, a number of people were displaced and wounds within combination of burning and stealing of resources that estimated in millions of Birr. Thus, it is expected from the concerned stakeholders to search ways how to resolve the arisen conflict as soon as possible.

Keywords

Conflict, Causes of Conflict, Consequences of Conflict, Tisho and Yebeno

1. Introduction

Diverse perspectives regarding goals and approaches, varying opinions; simultaneously interpersonal tensions may accelerate and hinder effective teamwork and collaboration among people [1]. When a group member's actions or beliefs are deemed unacceptable or unsupportable by another member of the group, conflict within the group

occurs. Two or more parties (states, groups, or individuals) are engaged in conflict in order to pursue competing or similar objectives [2]. The causes of the conflicts are as complex as the challenges of resolving them. But their costs cannot be in doubt. Millions of people can be killed, injured and are forced to migrate due to the devastating

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impact of conflicts [3]. Due to social conflicts millions of societies are forced to leave their living environment every year, and millions are also displaced within their innate countries [4]. Conflicts relocate populations, destroy a state's resources and organizational structure, disturb the educational system, and threaten civil rights, damage the community's social and cultural values. In addition, conflict causes health and famine like disasters, generates political, financial, and social disturbances that result in destruction and creates huge fear among smallholder families, which is an obstacle in the production supply chain [5]. Conflicts reduce employment opportunities and cause the excessive rate of unemployment among people in societies that are involved in various radical activities [6]. Also, conflicts are the foremost intimidation to agricultural production as well as reduce the success rate of the farming culture. Further, conflict damages the livelihoods and socio-economic status by causing psychological or emotional disturbances in communities [7]. The farmers' conflicts are responsible for creating situations like food insecurity, loss of lives, loss of labor force, loss of livestock, and loss of capital along land and in their residential areas. Farmers' conflicts run downstream from ancestors to descendant and cause social insecurity. The issues like irrigational water or input supplies are huge conflicts among farmers. Due to these conflicts, farmers lose their properties as well as, in extreme situations, they kill the opponents because of their dominant attitude. Conflicts disturb all supply chains from agricultural production to consumption in agro-based industries and hence there is a decline in the overall national economy [2]. In the case of Ethiopia, conflicts and wars have been resulted in fatalities, infrastructural damage, and a halt to growth and development throughout time. Conflict is the main cause of Ethiopia's poverty and it also inhibits economic growth of the country. After a battle, the economy begins to recover more strongly [8].

In relation to this, conflict was arisen in the Burji zone in mid-April 2024 due to deliberate attack of the Tisho kebele on the Yebebo kebele. Thus, the main focus of this study was on the causes and consequences the deliberate attacks of Tishos on Yebebos.

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this paper was assessing the Causes and Consequences of Conflicts among Agricultural Communities in Ethiopia in the Case of Tisho kebele's Deliberate Attacks on the Yebebo People in Burji Zone, Southern Ethiopia. More specifically, the study was intended

- 1) To identify the root cause why the Tishos attacks Yebebos
- 2) To examine the consequences of the Tisho's attacks on the Yebebo people
- 3) To analyze the responses given to conflict by the zonal government of Burji
- 4) To suggest intervention ways to resolve the conflict

3. Research Methodology

This research was conducted in Yebebo kebele in Burji zone South Ethiopia region. Here, the Burjis are the people who inhabit the localities lying the South of the Amaro mountains, situated on the eastern side of the Southern Ethiopian rift valley who practice mixed (livestock and crops) agriculture by growing different varieties of crops among which the 'Teff' and Haricot Bean/Bura Burje/ take the prominent shares [9]. In Burji zone the Yebebo kebele is the most populous kebele that located in Western parts of Zonal administrative center of Soyama town. It also shares its administrative borders with more than 12 kebeles of Soyama Zuria woreda. Too sadly, they were attacked by Tishos deliberately in the mid of April 2024. Thus, to identify the immediate causes of the conflict and the consequences caused to Yebebo people the research was used descriptive research design depending on the qualitative research approach. Besides, to collect primary information of the research the kebele leaders, elders and religious leaders were selected by using purposive sampling technique from the 'Harroo' and 'Qorroo' villages of the Yebebo Kebele. Meanwhile, the necessary primary data were collected through focus group discussions, interviews and the field observations. Conversely, secondary data were gathered from some sources of publications such as the journals and articles. At last, the information gathered through interviews, focus groups and field observations were analyzed qualitatively and presented in sentence form.

4. Results

4.1. The Causes of Tisho's Deliberate Attacks on Yebebo People

The factors like territorial boundaries, the quest for new economic opportunities, the spread of illicit firearms, insufficient state security, the waning influence of traditional institutions, and competition for access to and control over natural resources, are the root causes of conflict in Ethiopia [10]. In view of this, what were the main causes that push Tishos to attack Yebebos was the most heading question of this paper. Accordingly, three key reasons were mentioned by respondents for deliberate attacks of Tishos on Yebebos. Among these reasons, the first one was existence of weak administrative and security institution in Burji zone that featured with bad and irresponsible governance to the overall safety of the zonal communities. Also, the coming of the Tisho area man to the position of the Burji zone chief administrator position was related reason that pushes and gives full confidence to Tishos in order to attack Yebebos deliberately. Regarding to this, respondents were mentioned this in their language as 'Anaa issaka addadhedha worbichuhu angulaa lamimii bubinkamina dom'aa' meaning 'a sheep that trusts its father will fight everyone it sees'.

Besides, the respondents also spoken that the Yebenos were attacked by Tishos in similar site of the current conflict in the past when the men from the Tisho area came to power in 1987 E.C (1995) and 2005/2006 E. C /2013/ to the position of the Burji Special woreda chief administrators. At the second level, the reason that push Tishos to attack Yebenos were to take revenge and cause destruction on Yebenos deliberately by siding with the Daleo kebele, which had previously clashed with the Yebenos over farming land in the Sagan Valley. Since the Tishos and the Daleos belongs to one 'Olcho' in the 8 Olcho administrative system of the Burji. Lastly, the third reason that drove the Tishos to attack the Yebenos was the intention of expanding the land territory by beating the Yebenos with heavy weapons. Here, they were complained as the Tishos were attacked the Yebenos by crossing the historical boundary marker, which is a road that stretched between the Yebeno and Tisho for centuries, starting from Koira Gumure (Kore Zone) to Ila-lee Segoo and Ganbo, which was a historical, administrative and religious site for the nation of Burji and a religious site for the people of Kore before a long period of time. Too sadly, the Tishos were deliberately attacked the Yebenos by traveling more than 17 kilometers by crossing through the center of Soyama town which is the capital of Burji zone and Soyama zuria woreda where the zonal security institutions were placed.

4.2. The Consequences of Tisho Attacks on the Yebeno People

According to the respondents when Tishos came to attack the Yebenos most of the Yebenos were at the Sagan agricultural site for sowing of maize in their farms and they were unprepared for battle. Because of this, the intended war led by heavy weaponry of Tisho kebele were entered in "Harro" and "Korro" villages of Yebeno and caused multi-dimensional damages to the people of Yebeno. For the reason of that more than thousands of residents from "Harro" and "Korro" villages of Yebeno kebele were displaced from their homes. As well, 7 farmers' houses were burned down along with the grain they stored there. Besides, huge amount of crops and livestock were lost, and four farmers were wounded eventually. Furthermore, several farmers of Yebeno kebele were failed to sow their farms, which had a detrimental effect on their food security. In addition to intimidating and physically abusing the farmers; the farming' implements of Yebeno farmers and their seeds were set on fire and the battling gangs from the Tisho kebele stole more than six oxen from the farm of Yebeno. Furthermore, in Soyama town; the capital of Burji zone where the

zonal, woreda and city administer police and security institutions were available the Tisho kebele fighters also harassed the Yebeno natives in Soyama town, stole their stores, and set fire on the house of one Yebeno native Zonal officials of Burji zone prosperity party.



Source: Photo captured by Researcher, 2024

Figure 1. Property Damages Caused to Yebeno People.

Figure 1 above shows the damage that caused to the Yebeno people by the Tisho Kebele attackers. From this we understood that the damages caused to the Yebeno people by the Tisho troops were multi-dimensional and an act that did not accurately reflect the customs and culture of the Burji people in their long-time history. Because, in their history the Burjis prefer to accept the truth through mutual dialogues with opposing groups rather than burning and destructing of the resources even in cases of the conflict with another ethnic group. Because, the Burjis believed as the burning down of homes or stealing and destroying of properties are similar to the killing of human beings and they consider these acts as sin and crime and they call it 'farra or chubboo'.

Table 1. Damaged Items and their Costs in Ethiopian Birr.

No	Damaged Items	Place	Quantity	Unit Costs	Total Costs
1	Burnt homes	Harro village	7 house	100,000	700,000
		Soyama town	1 house	200,000	200,000
2	Burnt grains	Harro village	45 packs	5000	225,500
3	Fertilizer	Suboro farming area	25 packs	4500	112,500
4	Enset (False banana)	Harro Village	2000 Ensets	500	1,000,000
5	Stolen items from shop	Soyama town	---	---	300,000
6	Total cost				2,537,500

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2024

4.3. The Responses Given to Ascended Conflict

The government which is elected by the people has the great responsibility of leading the people peacefully by protecting them from any harm. However, those who responded to this paper expressed dissatisfaction with the Burji zone government's responses in protecting the people from conflict. Seriously, the respondents stated that the Zonal, Woreda, and Soyama town governments did not give priority to the safety and wellbeing of the people and responded slowly to Tisho Kebele's attack on Yebenos. Furthermore, the zone government failed to intervene and prevent the Tisho militias from engaging in clashes merely by observing and listening when the Tishos traveled to Yebeno for clash via Soyama town, the zone's capital. Furthermore, the Burji Zone, the Soyama Zurya Woreda, and the Soyama town police and security officials were not committed to prohibit the Tisho kebele militants whose armies were supported by heavy weapons from attacking the Yebeno people. Similarly, the Olcho leaders, who upheld the Burji people's traditional form of government, and elders paid little attention to safeguarding and repatriating Tishos from conflicts that resulted in fatalities and inflicted significant property damage and looting. In general, the Burji zone government's response was inadequate and unsatisfactory when the Tishos beat the Yebenos in Harro and Korro villages of Yebeno] as well as in Soyama town.

In addition, the research's informants stated that the Burji Zone government was keeping criminals hidden in Kenya rather than prosecuting them for justice. But, thanks to the Ethiopian Defense Forces and the Special Forces of the Southern Ethiopia Region, some of the individuals who led the Tishos troops to attack Yebeno were captured from Marsabit and Moyale towns of Kenya eventually. From this, it can be seen that the political leadership and security institutions of Burji Zone have little commitment to protect the safety of the people and they were irresponsible to fulfill the

responsibilities of the government properly. In addition to this, although Soyama town is a safe town for other Burjis, it is a town of suffering for yebenos to live in and generate wealth. Furthermore, it indicates that the elders in the Burji zone were not committed in protecting the communities from conflict and the elders of Burji wait for the voice of the political leaders rather than launching the reconciliations for conflicts as in other areas elders of Ethiopia like the elders of Gamo who are exemplary in traditional conflict reconciliation process of Ethiopia.

4.4. The Ways Forward to Resolve the Conflict

In this imperfect world no society lives in complete harmony that the conflict is an inevitable issue in human life. Thus, to end disputes by creating appropriate situations for agreement that satisfies all parties involved in conflict should be a prerequisite agenda for concerned stakeholders of the Burji zone. Because the Tishos and Yebenos were the people who lived together, related by blood, who had looked to each other in times of trouble and worshiped one sky God together for many centuries. Therefore, in order to resolve the conflict arisen between the Tisho and Yebeno, following the succeeding steps are important.

- 1) Initiating Dialogue between the Clashed Parties: To resolve the arisen conflict between Tisho and Yebeno it is better for concerned stakeholders, namely the government, local elders and religious leaders to come up together for bringing the people of Tisho and Yebeno. And when they do this, it should be based on the will of both groups. Also, Tishos and Yebenos should show their willingness to come together and resolve the conflicts that arise between them. Because, living closely by resolving their differences is better than living apart from both Tishos and Yebenos.
- 2) Analyze the source of the conflict- to resolve effectively the conflict between Tisho and Yebeno, the third neutral parties should take part in analyzing the sources

of Tisho-Yebeno conflict in responsible manner. At this step, the party that initiated the conflict should clearly state the reasons that forced them to participate in the conflict. Besides, third neutral parties like truth-telling elders, religious leaders, famous people and researchers should take participation in identifying and analyzing the root cause of conflict by promoting active listening among participants without interruption by focusing on mutually acceptable solutions. Above all, any events that have been generating conflicts between Tisho and Yebeno should get attention in identifying the root cause of the Tisho and Yebeno conflict.

- 3) Identification of the Damages Caused to both Sides: Regarding this, the stakeholders that involved in resolving the conflict between Tisho and Yebeno must fulfill the responsibility of identifying any damage that was caused to both conflicting parties. When they did this, particular questions like who caused the damage? Where was the destruction? Who is the victim? What is the nature of the victim? And related questions should be answered properly. In relation to identifying the damage caused to both parties, identifying the criminals who were actively participated in crime should take the next position. Also, the resolving parties should act responsibly to determine the amount of compensation for compensatory damages or to end the conflicting cases with forgiveness.
- 4) Establishing a Border Mark between Tisho and Yebenos based on historical truth: if it is desired to bring peace and a threat-free environment that benefits both sides, it would be appropriate to place a border mark between the two kebeles. When doing this, chances should be given to both sides to show their own historical land boundaries. Besides, the representatives of both parties should stand on their boundaries in front of the elders and the mass by taking fire, soil, weapon, sword and ashes to make a swear before erecting the boundary stone or before marking the boundary marker in the practice of Burji culture. This is called 'Kaho' or swears in Burji's ethnic pronunciation. The implication or belief of 'kaho' or swearing is the calling of the creator to reveal the truth.
- 5) Select and Implement the appropriate Conflict Resolution Model-the Conflict resolution model is a framework that helps you to address the different dimensions of a conflict. In the conflict resolution process, competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating models are more common in most conflict resolution processes. But, applying all these models is not feasible and selecting the best one is a mandatory matter. Besides, before the introduction of the 'modern' ways of dispute management methods, different societies, including Burji, had been using their own indigenous conflict management methods. Consequently, identifying and implement-

ing socially acceptable, win-win, holistic and indigenous conflict management method which have been experienced among the people of Burji is vital. At this moment, the Burjis believe in truth and forgiveness in finalizing the arising conflicts between or between two groups. So, based on truth, encouraging forgiveness to resolve the Tisho and Yebeno conflict is recommendable.

5. Conclusion

This study was conducted in Burji zone regarding the causes and consequences of the Tishos deliberate attacks on Yebenos. Accordingly, the findings of this research show the taking power of the Burji zone chief administrator from the Tisho area, intentional revenge and the motive of destructing the Yebenos by taking sides with Daleo kebele and the intention of expanding a land territory by beating Yebenos with heavy weapons were the main reasons that enforce the Tishos to generate conflict to Yebenos. Besides, displacement of the population, wounds to farmers, burning of (houses, grain, enset and shops) and physical harassments were damages caused to Yebeno people in 'korro', Harro and soyama towns. Before and after the arisen of the conflict between Tisho and Yebeno, the commitments of the Burji zone government to protect the participants from the conflict were unsatisfactory and slow. This was a factor that gave a great opportunity for a conflicting party that initiated the conflict (Tisho) to cause huge destruction to another party (Yebeno). Also, the Burji Zone government was keeping criminals hidden in Kenya rather than prosecuting them to justice if the Ethiopian Defense Forces and the Special Forces of the Southern Ethiopia Region had not entered the zone and captured the criminals who actively participated in destroying and looting of the properties of Yebenos. Further, to resolve the Tisho and Yebeno conflicts, it is expected from the government and other stakeholders to initiate and implement feasible dialogues between the clashing parties based on the will of both groups, based on historical truth, in socially acceptable ways experienced based on win-win, holistic and indigenous conflict management mechanisms which has been experiencing among the people of Burji.

6. Recommendations

The following are recommendations given to concerned stakeholders based on the findings of this research.

- 1) Top level cabinets and security institutions' officials of Burji zone should be identified and prosecuted for not fulfilling their responsibilities while conflict was arisen
- 2) For the next time the coming of Tisho area person to chief administrative position of Burji zone should not

be a reason for the conflict between Tisho and Yebeno people.

- 3) Tishos and Yebenos should express their readiness to get out from the conflict they entered in.
- 4) The government of the zone and the relevant security agencies should give priority to law enforcement based on information and evidence.
- 5) The government of the zone and the relevant security agencies as well as elders and religious leaders should educate and explain to the people not to return to conflict.
- 6) The elders, religious leaders, the people who know a long-time history of the Burji, Kebele leaders, researchers and other members of the community should come up with a joint plan and work hard to bring the Tishos and Yebenos closer.
- 7) A permanent boundary should be established between the Tisho and Yebeno people based on historical truth, logic and law; not on the basis of one-side interests and the majority views of political cadres of the Burji zone.
- 8) Educated people who are able to do research should do research on the causes and consequences of conflicts that arise in the Burji zone and give recommendations on the ways that avoid the occurrence of the social conflicts.
- 9) The individuals, who provoked the conflict, led the conflict by firing weapons, burn people's houses and destroy property should be identified, prosecuted and punished by the criminal law of the country.
- 10) The government should ask and compensate the parties affected in the conflict and giving priority to forgiveness is important to all!

Author Contributions

Jilo Wolde Bulcha is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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