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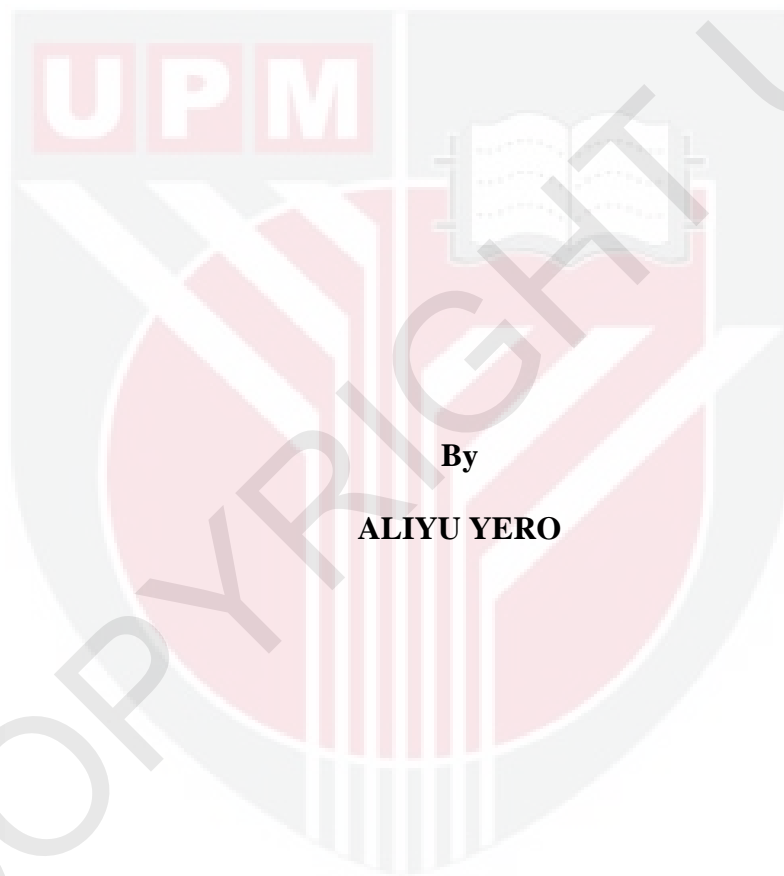
CONFLICT EXPERIENCES OF NORTHERN NIGERIAN CIVILIANS

ALIYU YERO

IPSS 2015 5



CONFLICT EXPERIENCES OF NORTHERN NIGERIAN CIVILIANS



By

ALIYU YERO

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillment of the Requirements For the Degree of Master of Science**

February 2015

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to late Hajiya Bayi, late Alhaji Balarabe Yero, my sister late Hajiya Hannatu, my entire family and all the civilians that have lost their lives in the conflict in Northern Nigeria.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

CONFLICT EXPERIENCES OF NORTHERN NIGERIAN CIVILIANS

By

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February 2015

Chairman: Associate Prof. Jamilah Othman, PhD

Faculty: Institute for Social Science

Peace and security are two major requirements for any human society to flourish; however the trend seems to be declining as societies are facing less peace basically from internal conflicts. In Africa and Nigeria in particular, civilians have had to carry on the burden of protracted conflict despite the fact that they are not conflicting with anyone. Since 2009, Northern Nigeria has been facing a decline in peace as a result of the conflict between Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah lid da'awati wal Jihad. Regrettably, often in conflict situations, a lot of attention is given to the parties involved (the two elephants) in seeking for peace, while the civilians only assume the victim status (grasses). Subsequently, using qualitative phenomenology, one on one in-depth interview was conducted with twelve Northern Nigerian civilians who are studying in a Malaysian public university to answer two research questions; what is the living experience of Northern Nigeria civilians about the conflict currently going on? And how has these experiences shaped the meaning civilians attach to their social reality? Essentially, this study is about "reality from lived experiences". Two sampling methods were employed to select participants in this study; the first is criterion purposive sampling which was used in identifying the first participant and followed by snowballing sampling which was used to identify the remaining participants and data collected was transcribed, coded and analysed through inductive and comparative methods. The results showed that participants have various types of experienced since the conflict began. Using the lens of human needs theory of John Burton as a guide, the study found that participants exhibit emotional experiences which have the potential of leading to psychological instability; these include sadness, intense fear, self-pity and frustration. The data further revealed that strenuous constraints hinder the realization of basic needs with little concern for prioritization. In particular, the need for identity and security is earnestly sought while meeting immediate family basic daily needs have become a challenging experience to participants. Using the constructivist viewpoint that perception is reality and building on the Social Reality theory "collective intentionality", the study found out that the reality of life civilian's face is entirely different from what existed before the conflict began in 2009 especially when participants consistently narrate their experiences while comparing the present and the past. Furthermore, loss have been a glaring

reality that civilians have to live with which have reduced life to that of barely surviving, with the prevailing challenges experienced, results from this study have shown that civilians have come to realise that their destiny is in their hands as both the authorities and insurgents have inflicted proportional damages. Finally, civilians in this study have come to accept a reality of living life in a state which is entirely reduced to how basic needs can be attained in the face of conflicting demands of life. This study conclude that for any meaningful peace, civilian experiences must be involved in the process of making peace, building peace and keeping peace in Northern Nigeria.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi sebahagian daripada keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

PENGALAMAN KONFLIK DI KALANGAN ORANG AWAM DI UTARA NEGARA NIGERIA

Oleh

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Februari 2015

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Keamanan dan keselamatan adalah dua keperluan utama bagi mana-mana masyarakat manusia untuk berkembang hari ini; Walau bagaimanapun ianya sudah berubah, masyarakat berada dalam keadaan kurang aman lagi kerana percanggahan-percanggahan dalaman dan bukannya luaran. Data terkini dari indeks keamanan global 2014 telah menunjukkan bahawa keamanan global telah menurun secara berterusan sejak 2007 dan dalam semua senario; diman akhirnya orang awam telah diberi beban dan menerima beban secara langsung. Di Afrika, Nigeria dan khususnya, walaupun pada hakikatnya ia tidak bercanggah dengan sesiapa atau mana-mana kumpulan orang awam menanggung beban konflik yang berlarutan sejak beberapa tahun-tahun kebelakangan ini. Asas mengenai cabaran yang dihadapi orang awam, kajian ini menerokai pengalaman orang Utara Nigeria dan juga sejauh mana pengalaman mereka dalam bentuk realiti sosial mereka. Menggunakan fenomenologi kualitatif, satu lawan satu dalam temubual yang mendalam telah dijalankan dengan dua belas orang awam Nigeria Utara yang belajar di sebuah universiti awam di Malaysia. Dalam kajian ini, dua persoalan kajian telah dijawab; apakah pengalaman hidup orang awam Utara Nigeria tentang konflik yang sedang berlaku? Dan bagaimana telah pengalaman ini menghubungkan orang awam dengan realiti sosial mereka? Pada dasarnya, kajian ini adalah kira-kira "realiti dari pengalaman hidup". Dua kaedah persampelan telah digunakan; persampelan bertujuan yang telah digunakan dalam mengenal pasti peserta pertama dan diikuti dengan pendorong pensampelan yang digunakan untuk mengenal pasti peserta yang tinggal. Data disalin, dikodkan dan dianalisis melalui kaedah induktif dan perbandingan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa peserta telah mengalami cabaran dalam hampir semua aspek kehidupan mereka. Tambahan pula, manusia memerlukan teori John Burton sebagai panduan, kajian itu mendapati bahawa peserta mempamerkan pengalaman emosi yang serius yang mempunyai potensi yang membawa kepada ketidakstabilan psikologi, ini termasuk kesedihan, ketakutan sengit, kasihan pd diri sendiri dan kekecewaan. Data juga mendedahkan bahawa kekangan berat menghalang merealisasikan keperluan asas dengan kebimbangan sedikit untuk keutamaan. Khususnya, keperluan untuk identiti dan keselamatan adalah amat perlu dalam memenuhi keperluan asas harian keluarga yang merupakan satu pengalaman yang tidak dialu-alukan oleh para peserta. Menggunakan pandangan konstruktivis

persepsi adalah realiti dan bangunan pada teori Realiti Sosial "intentionality kolektif", kajian itu mendapati bahawa realiti wajah kehidupan awam adalah sama sekali berbeza daripada apa yang sedia ada sebelum konflik yang bermula pada tahun 2009 terutamanya apabila peserta secara konsisten menyampaikan mereka pengalaman sambil membandingkan masa kini dan masa lalu. Tambahan pula, kehilangan telah menjadi realiti yang amat nyata bahawa orang awam yang terpaksa hidup dengan kekurangan, dengan cabaran yang lazim dialami, hasil daripada kajian ini telah menunjukkan bahawa orang awam telah menyedari bahawa nasib mereka adalah di tangan mereka sebagai kedua-dua pihak berkuasa dan pemberontak telah dikenakan ganti rugi berkadar. Akhirnya, orang awam dalam kajian ini telah menerima satu realiti kehidupan yang serba kekurangan untuk mendapatkan keperluan asas dalam menghadapi konflik. Oleh itu, bagi mana-mana keamanan adalah bermakna untuk dicapai, pihak-pihak berkepentingan perlu menitik beratkan dalam menyediakan keperluan seperti makanan, tempat tinggal dan pakaian tetapi juga keselamatan, keselamatan dan identiti mangsa awam tidak boleh diabaikan sama seperti kebimbangan pihak-pihak dalam konflik tidak boleh juga diabaikan dalam mengembalikan semula keamanan di Utara Nigeria.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 23 February 2015 to conduct the final examination of Aliyu Yero on his thesis entitled "Conflict Experiences of Northern Nigerian Civilians" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRT	Conflict Resolution Theory
HNT	Human Needs Theory
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IDP	Internally Displaced People
JASLDWJ	Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah lid Da'awati wal Jihad
MNLF	Moro national liberation front
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
UNHCR	Nations High Commission for Refugees
WMA	World Medical Association

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1:1 Background to the Study

In recent years, an increasing number of countries in Africa are faced with the challenge of internal security by the activities of Islamist groups of different kinds such as Al-Shabab in Somalia (Ekwueme and Obayi, 2012), Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in Algeria, and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JASLDWJ) popularly called Boko Haram, in Nigeria (Onuoha, 2011). In line with the above concerns, studies on how peace can be achieved in such areas has been given a lot of attention in the literature (Bar-Tal, 2000, Gartner and Bercovitch 2006, Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse, 2011). Peace research has over the years transformed tremendously due to the important need of the attainment of growth and stability around the world, expanding its tentacles both in depth and in breadth. Peace itself has grown maximal, refusing to accept a minimalist version that stops at security as the master idea (Samaddar, 2004). In effect, peace goes beyond just maintaining security in society but also addressing issues that are related to peace so as to prevent conflict.

Sociologically; a significant number of African countries are multi-ethnic in cultures with populations that are sharply divided along racial, linguistic, religious, and similar divides. Most constitute of numerous diverse traditional societies, each with unique establishments in which those who are members of other traditional societies are not only standing apart but also disinclined, if not essentially opposed (Jackson and Rosberg, 1998).

Nigeria has had a protracted and ill-fated accounts of communal conflicts and ethno-religious violence; specifically, from the time when civil rule returned in 1999 there have been a significant number of outbreaks of bloody violence between diverse communities. When observed from exterior, it seems that these conflicts can be presumed to be religious differences between blocs of Muslim and Christian populace. When one looks deeper and go beyond politics as a trigger, we find that socio-economic factors appearing as potential factors that could breed such violence (Agbibo, 2013).

It is therefore pertinent to peruse the study of peace by understanding the nature of conflict in a bid to draw up plans and models for the resolution of such conflict and attainment of peace. In particular it is important to know what peace means for people living in Northern Nigeria and what conflict means to them, is there any difference in how they perceive violence? To what extent does the conflict-violence-peace nexus determine the way they perceive social realities?

This study will endeavour to build on the two components related peace studies i. e. what should be added to achieve peace; or what should be removed to achieve peace (Durch and Berkman, 2010). In any discuss about the prevailing conflict in Northern Nigeria today, efforts to attain peace most take these two strands into cognisance.

The series of violence being let loose on Northern Nigerians civilians has amplified fears amongst the common people and the international community that the hostility has gone beyond religiosity or political. Looking at the latest report from the Human Rights Watch, 2012 as sighted by scholars; about 935 lives have been killed since 2009 when the sect began its onslaught on the country (Okpaga, Chijioke, and Eme 2012, and Oarhe, 2013). The perilous aspect of the insecurity has emerged to be a great cause of worry as experts in security affirm that what is on ground has shifted to the realm of terrorism, a world-wide occurrence phenomenon where no one is innocent. It is regrettable, however, that the security institution of Nigeria have little successes in tackling the menace of terrorism, they themselves are prime targets of the insurgents who have not for once concealed their contempt towards the intelligence and law execution community. The public demands a halt from this state of fear and insecurity.

Since peace research is basically concerned with the question of violence and the quest for peace (Höglund and Öberg, 2011). This study is determined to explore the experiences of Northern Nigerian through the lens of post-graduate students in Malaysian public universities. Onapajo and Uzodike (2012) observed that very few studies have provided scholarly responses to these questions with regards to the conflict in Northern Nigeria and the quest for peace. Furthermore, these studies have not offered adequate representation of the phenomenon. For instance, Adesoji (2010) observed that the group in Nigeria (JASLDWJ) is inappropriately equated with those of Islamic revivalism. Adesoji (2010) cited the Maitatsine uprising experienced in the same region of Nigeria in the 1980's (the name Maitatsine denotes "to damn's"). Onapajo and Uzodike (2012) further argued that Islamic revivalism as a concept infers a drive focused at dislocating apre-existing status quo, given its apparent inconsistency when compared with the values of the genuine Islamic tradition, and reinstatement of traditional Islamic communal order. Consequently, Maitatsine and JASLDWJ have a minute or no link with Islamic revivalism. Mohammed Marwa of Maitatsine adjudge himself to a messenger of God and innovate skeptic beliefs that obviously contravene Islam (Isichei, 1987). Basically therefore, Adesoji (2011) considers the Maitatsine conflict was a movement in the 1980's which challenged state authority.

Through the experiences of people that are living in Northern Nigeria, we can learn about the nature of the conflict and the path to peace. We will also understand the manner in which the people perceive there social reality. Analysis of the conflict will be captured at three levels. Social reality subsists at several levels, extending from the minute to the highest levels of human experience. Based on this position, social reality have often been analysed at levels base and is often used in social sciences to explain happenings of social life; so also to the phenomena under investigation which was first established in the field of political and international studies by Kenneth Waltz in his inspiring work *Man, the State and War*, in 1959 (Moore, 2003).

Recognizing the fact that, it is only when there is conflict that we seek peace. This study views conflict as a situation where there is the absence; or low level of peace as well as prevalence of violence it is important while we study experiences about the conflict situation in Northern Nigeria; we ought to understand the background of the conflict and the context within which the study will be carried out. As a qualitative research, the study aims to understand the conflict experience of Northern Nigerian post graduate students in Malaysia public universities with a view to thoughtful

comprehension of the conflict and its nature. In the end, the outcome of the study can serve as a stepping stone towards efforts at resolving the conflict and attaining peace. Through these experiences, we get to see how ordinary people perceive their social reality? What the conflict means for them and how it can possibly be approached. Let's look briefly at what the scenario look like when the conflict started.

1:1:1 Recent trends of conflict in Northern Nigeria

Northern Nigeria has had a long history of conflict which can be described as having religious inclination, political inclination, ethnic inclination or social inclinations. Simply, we can posit that the conflict possess a multidimensional source and also multifaceted consequences since independence in 1960 (Casimir, Nwaogo and Ogbozor, 2014). In the recent conflict under study violence erupted between July 24 and July 28, 2009 in six states of Northern Nigeria which are: Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Yobe, Katsina and Kano. Newswatch's (2010) a story which revealed that violence began 4 kilometers away from the centre of operations of JASLDWJ in Maiduguri following a bomb explosion which led to the death of one person and injured many others.

Armed supporters of the JASLDWJ claimed to have attacked and burnt churches, police stations, prisons mosques, and government institutions. Concurrently, attacks also occurred in Kano, Bauchi, and Yobe states. Maiduguri, which is the capital of Borno state, was the most horribly hit leaving many civilians dead and quite a lot of houses, churches and government properties burnt and wrecked. Some of the churches that were affected by the attack in Maiduguri included the Celestial Church, the Eklesiyar Yan'Uwan Nigeria, the Deeper Life Bible church and several other evangelical churches. These were scorched and more than 30 vehicles were also destroyed in the site of the churches. The habitants of the Commandant, Police Training College Maiduguri, was also devastated. Also destroyed were 5 primary schools and the head office of the Universal Basic Education.

In the nearby state of Yobe, the city of Potiskum also had its own share of the sectarian violence as churches, the command centre of the Federal Road Safety Commission, a Police Command and the National Population Commission office as well as several vehicles were targeted and razed by the insurgents (Danjibo, 2009) as was reported in (Newswatch, 2009). In Borno, more than 500 sect members were killed by security forces. 41 persons including a soldier and a police officer lost their lives in Bauchi state, while 43 persons lost their lives with greater casualty on the section Yobe state. When eventually the violence was contained, between 1,000 and 1,400 civilians have died with incalculable destruction to assets.

JASLDWJ was claimed to have used propelled ammos, locally manufactured bombs and AK 47 riffles in executing the assaults. A certain Abdurashied Abdullahi was reported to have admitted to the police that he and another member JASLDWJ were sent to Afghanistan to receive training in the skill of explosive production devices (see, This Day, Thursday, September 3, 2009, p.1); which created the impression that the JASLDWJ had been getting monetary and armed support from overseas states and other radical groups.

Although the JASLDWJ fierceness did not happen with the same degree in some Northern states, the JASLDWJ movement enjoyed a wider spread popularity within a small period of time. The law enforcement agency also discovered huge amount of weapons and explosives in a sudden bust of the house and mosque of a certain Al-Amin Aljasawi, the fore runner of the Yusuffiya division of JASLDWJ in Kano.

Till date, the conflict persist and the number of victims is also increasing. Most important to this study is the fact that, most studies focus on the parties in conflict but hardly focus on those who are caught up in the violence and are not parties to it but suffer more than those who are parties to it.

1:2 Problem statement

Since 2009, the Northern part of Nigeria has been engulfed in a circle of violence between the state authorities and JASLDWJ. This conflict have plunged millions of civilians into hardship thereby undermining their capacity to meet up with their daily basic needs. The analogy of this conflict, like most conflicts of today can be described as the two elephants fighting while the grasses are suffering. The challenges civilians face from this conflict have changed the lives of many civilians and undermine the relative peace that existed in Northern Nigeria.

Though the challenges of unmet basic needs could be sited as one of the causal effects of this conflict, however, the conflict have come to further undermine civilian's basic needs thus compounding the already existing harmony in Northern Nigeria.

In conflict situations, there tend to be intentional and unintentional consequences especially on civilians; intentional consequences involves deliberate attempt to cause harm to civilians which could lead to death, physical or mental injury while on the other hand, unintentional consequences can be poverty, displacement and underdevelopment.

As it is now, peace has become an ever needed commodity for the civilians living in Northern Nigeria. The problems created by the conflict if unresolved will make peace a dream but never a reality, the inability of families to meet up with basic needs presently and in the nearest future will eventually perpetuate the overall conflict situation.

Previous studies conducted in relation to the current conflict which started in 2003 have focused on broader issues at Sub-regional and national levels without focusing at the micro level. In particular, Oftedal (2013) focused on international links of the insurgent group in Nigeria and other insurgent groups in west and central Africa, while Ebeleke (2013) was concerned about understanding the conflict in Northern Nigeria using three popular school of thoughts which are; economic (poverty), religion and political (elitist). Furthermore, Umar (2013) did his study of the conflict in Northern Nigeria with a view to ascertaining the root of the conflict and the best approach in resolving it. From these studies, it can be deduced that none of the researchers focus on the civilians who have been the victims of the unfortunate violence though they are not conflicting with anybody. On this note, this study will focus on filling this gap of research by exploring the experiences of civilians and how these experiences have

shaped their realities. This point goes in tandem with a view held by Sylvester (2012), who conceive war/conflict as a sub-set of social relations, to understand conflicts and war's, we most start from studying the civilians who experience it. That it is important to put human bodies as focal points when attempting to figure out conflicts around the world (Sylvester, 2012).

1:3 Research Question

1. What is the experiences of people living in Northern Nigeria about the conflict based on the social realities on ground?
2. How have these experiences shaped the meaning they attach to their social reality?

1:4 Purpose of the Study

1. The purpose of this study is to explore the experience of civilians about the conflict in Northern Nigeria from the perspective of post-graduate students in Malaysian public universities who have been living in the affected areas of the North.
2. The study strive to comprehend the process of a normal day for the participants, what are those occurrences that shape the social reality they live.

1:5 Limitation of the Study

This study focus mainly on the living conflict experience of Northern Nigerians and the social reality they are faced with in their daily lives. The need for this study was motivated based on the fact that civilians are continuously being caught up in the middle as conflicts rage around the world. More and more civilians are becoming face to face with war and violence in their homes, communities, provinces and nations which if not handles effectively can be a serious problem to the growth and development of human societies.

This study will be limited to Northern Nigerians who are studying in Malaysian Public Universities and must have come to Malaysia from 2013 onward. The sample is also limited to male civilians and did not cover females which may likely have a different experience. Also all the participants were interviewed in Malaysia, the researcher is of the opinion that it will give them the opportunity to express themselves freely. This gives a higher level of psychological confidence to fully participate without fear. The finding of this study is therefore limited to the participants of this study. Further study on women, children and the old people could further give this study more credence or otherwise.

1:6 Definition of terms

Experience: this signifies a present state of consciousness (VandenBos, 2007). This signifies awareness gained through the process of perception. It involves observation, encountering or undergoing something consciously as it occurs in the course of time, which at the end a person can reflect back and narrate.

Terror: Signifies actions intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act (Rupertz, 2006). It is a state of extreme fear which people go through, it can be described as a life and death phenomenon characterized by violence and threat to intimidate or coerce for the attainment of a political, economic or religious goals. It is seen to be an illegal act of direct and indirect violence with the intention to raise fear.

Peace: Peace is seen as a period of harmony between different social groups that is characterized by lack of violence, conflict behaviors and the freedom from fear of violence (Nowak, 2012). Peace represents a scenario whereby conflict is at its minimal level. As an ideal form, peace is a state of being connected with the nonexistence of violence and the satisfaction of human needs.

Civilians: A civilian is a person who is not an active member of the military, police or a belligerent group in a conflict (Watkin, 2013). In this study, a civilian is a person that is not directly hostile in combat situations such as wars; he is not a combatant and does not belong to any party in any violent conflict situations such as that which is in this study.

Conflict: It is a set of belief or understanding that one's own needs, interests, wants, or values are incompatible with someone else's... Conflict also involves an emotional reaction to a situation or interaction that signals a disagreement of some kind... Conflict also consists of the actions that we take to express our feelings, articulate our perceptions, and get our needs met in a way that has the potential for interfering with someone else's ability to get his or her needs met. (Mayer, 2012). In this study, conflict is situation where the goals of people are incompatible thus leading to squabbles for the attainment of each other's. To attain these incompatible goals, parties use every means possible which include violence and killings, destruction and maiming, as well as extreme fear and terror.

Social reality: The attitudes, beliefs and opinions that are held by the members of a society or a group (Cardwell, 2014). This is a product of perceptual process which is acquired through a period of time based on series of experiences. In the end the sum total of these experiences and perceptions give birth to the social reality. And it is based on this reality that people's decisions and judgments are determined.

1.7 Summary

This chapter presented a general of this study. It covers the background of the study, purpose statement; theoretical frameworks used which are human Needs theory and the constructivist theory. Also, the chapter presented the two research questions of this study which are; firstly, what constitute the experiences of civilians caught up in conflict situation and secondly, what constitute the social reality. Furthermore, the limitation of the study was presented which was followed by definition of key concepts in this study.



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