

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the methodology employed in this study to investigate the root causes, impacts, and resolution strategies for ethno-religious conflicts in Kwara State, Nigeria. It begins by describing the qualitative approach chosen for its ability to investigate context-dependent insights required to understand complex social dynamics. Following this, the chapter explains the sampling strategy, detailing how purposive and stratified sampling methods ensured a representative and relevant participant pool. It then presents data collection methods, emphasizing the importance of semi-structured interviews in gathering in-depth, firsthand information from key stakeholders. The data analysis section outlines the thematic analysis process, detailing the steps taken to systematically interpret participants' responses and extract meaningful themes. Finally, ethical considerations are addressed, describing the measures taken to protect participants' rights and ensure the study's rigor and credibility.

3.2. Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative research methodology, specifically utilizing an in-depth investigation design. This design is particularly suited to adequately describe the complex, multi-dimensional nature of ethno-religious conflicts in Kwara State, Nigeria, as it allows for a thorough investigation of the underlying causes and current

resolution efforts within a real-world context. Qualitative methods, especially in-depth study designs, are instrumental in generating rich, descriptive data that can reveal not only the overt but also the subtle factors influencing conflict dynamics. This approach provides flexibility, permitting the researcher to engage in deep, open-ended questioning that adapts as insights emerge, enhancing the study's capacity to uncover nuanced understandings that may be overlooked by more structured research designs.

The use of in-depth interviews as the primary data collection tool was considered in this research because the method facilitates direct engagement with key stakeholders—such as community leaders, religious figures, government officials, and residents of conflict-prone areas—who have firsthand experiences and insights into the factors driving these conflicts. Interviews enable participants to articulate their perspectives, beliefs, and experiences in their own words, providing contextually rich data that bring greater authenticity and depth to the study findings. By capturing these voices, the study is positioned to accurately represent the diverse viewpoints within affected communities, making it possible to identify patterns and contrasts across different stakeholder groups.

The research also adopts a descriptive approach, aiming to comprehensively document the status and dynamics of ethno-religious conflicts in Kwara State. Descriptive research supports a systematic exploration of participants' opinions, attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours, facilitating an understanding of how these subjective factors interact with broader social, political, and economic contexts. In alignment with the study's objectives, both observations and interviews are utilized to capture information relevant to specific study variables. Through careful observation, the study examines both verbal and non-verbal cues during interviews, helping to

contextualize responses within participants' lived realities. This integration of descriptive elements provides a holistic view of the conflicts, ensuring the research reflects not only participants' perspectives but also the collective attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours within the community.

Therefore, this qualitative, in-depth study design, paired with descriptive methods, allows the study to comprehensively investigate the root causes, impacts, and current resolution efforts surrounding ethno-religious conflicts in Kwara State, capturing the complexities of these conflicts through authentic, participant-driven insights.

3.3. Research Approach

The research approach used in this study was qualitative, specifically designed to investigate the root causes, impacts, and resolution strategies of ethno-religious conflicts in Kwara State, Nigeria. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the complex social phenomena surrounding these conflicts, focusing on context-specific factors that quantitative methods might overlook. The study utilized in-depth case investigations in three key local government areas—Edu, Ifelodun, and Ilorin West—which were selected due to their history of recurring conflicts. Data collection relied heavily on semi-structured interviews with key informants, including community leaders, religious figures, and government officials, who provided rich, firsthand insights into the dynamics of the conflicts. To ensure accuracy and depth, interviews were conducted in either English or the participants' preferred local languages, recorded with consent, and later transcribed for analysis. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns and themes in the data, ensuring a systematic and rigorous interpretation of the findings. This qualitative approach

enabled the study to capture the lived experiences and perspectives of those directly affected by the conflicts, offering a comprehensive understanding of the underlying issues and potential solutions.

By focusing on specific communities through in-depth case investigations, the research traces historical and contextual factors contributing to present-day conflicts (Lombard & Rakodi, 2016). This method enables the study to identify linkages between past events and current tensions, offering a longitudinal perspective that sheds light on how long-standing grievances, socio-political structures, and intergroup relations have evolved. This historical depth enhances the study's capacity to produce insights relevant to both micro-level (individual and community perspectives) and macro-level forces (regional and national influences on local conflicts).

To achieve accurate and rich data, the study employs the key informant technique. This method strategically involves interviewing influential community members and local leaders with in-depth knowledge of the conflicts owing to their positions and roles within their communities (Bergstrom, 2018; Marshall, 1996). These key informants provide valuable insights into the root causes and dynamics of the conflicts. Their perspectives offer a comprehensive picture of the community's historical background, collective memory, and complex socio-political relationships, which may not be accessible through other means.

A significant aspect of the qualitative approach in this study is its reliance on thematic analysis as the primary method for data interpretation. This method provides a systematic way to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within qualitative data, such as interview transcripts and field notes (Morgan & Nica, 2020). The steps undertaken during the thematic analysis are outlined in Table 3.1 below.

Hence, this qualitative research approach, with its emphasis on key informants and thematic analysis, allows for a thorough, multidimensional understanding of the root causes of conflicts, ensuring that findings are not only descriptive but also contextually grounded and reflective of the lived realities within these communities.

Table 3.1: Thematic Analysis Procedure

S/No	Thematic analysis steps	Description
1	Familiarizing with the data	Repeatedly reading the interview transcripts and field notes to immerse in the data and capture initial insights.
2	Searching for themes	Identifying patterns, recurring ideas, and relationships in the data that align with the study objectives.
4	Reviewing of themes	Cross-checking themes against the dataset to ensure consistency, depth, and relevance
5	Defining and naming themes	Assigning concise and descriptive names to themes, reflecting their essence and significance to the study.
6	Producing the final report	Synthesizing themes into a coherent narrative, supported by participant quotes to provide authenticity

3.4. Population and Sampling

3.4.1. Population

The population for this study encompasses all residents of Kwara State, Nigeria, with a specific focus on three local government areas (LGAs): Edu, Ifelodun, and Ilorin West. These areas were selected due to their high frequency of ethno-religious conflicts, making them particularly relevant for investigating the root causes, impacts, and resolution strategies of such conflicts. The target population includes key stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in or affected by these conflicts, categorized as follows: community leaders, who hold leadership positions and provide

historical context and insights into community dynamics; religious figures, who represent various religious groups and offer perspectives on the role of religion in these conflicts; government officials, including representatives from local governments, law enforcement agencies, and conflict resolution bodies, who shed light on policies, interventions, and governance-related issues; and youths, who represent the next generation and provide insights into how these conflicts impact younger demographics. To ensure diversity and inclusivity, the study considered demographic criteria such as age, gender, religious affiliation, and ethnic background when selecting participants. This approach allowed the research to capture varied experiences and perspectives, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of the conflicts.

3.4.2. Sampling

This study employed a purposive sampling strategy to identify and select participants who possessed relevant experience and knowledge to the research objectives. Purposive sampling is a non-probability technique in which the researcher deliberately chooses individuals or groups based on their expertise, lived experiences, or strategic importance to the subject under investigation. This approach was deemed most appropriate for the study of ethno-religious conflicts in Kwara State, as it ensured the inclusion of participants capable of providing in-depth insights into the causes, impacts, and potential resolution strategies of such conflicts.

Participants were selected from key stakeholder groups, including community leaders, elders, religious figures, government officials, and youths. Community leaders and elders were chosen for their deep understanding of historical grievances and cultural dynamics; religious figures were included to provide perspectives on the role of religion in either fostering or mitigating conflict; government officials

contributed insights into policies, interventions, and governance; while youths offered perspectives on how conflict impacts younger generations. To enhance representativeness and inclusivity, participants were also selected across demographic lines such as age, gender, religion, and ethnicity. Efforts were made to include both men and women despite cultural barriers that often limit female participation in leadership roles.

By relying on purposive sampling, the study ensured that each participant contributed meaningfully to the research questions. This approach facilitated the collection of rich, contextually grounded data that could not have been obtained through random selection, thereby safeguarding the validity and depth of the findings. The process continued until data saturation was reached, that is, when no new themes or significant insights emerged from the interviews.

Table 3.2: Target Population Characteristics

Exclusion Criteria	Inclusion Criteria
Not a resident of Kwara State	Must be a resident of Kwara State
Has no direct or indirect experience with conflicts	Experienced or witnessed ethno-religious conflict between 2015–2020
Displays behavior that may compromise the study’s objectives	Aged 20–50 years at the time of the study
Unwilling to provide consent for participation	Willing to share personal experiences or perspectives
Reluctant or unwilling to participate in interviews	Belongs to any of the major ethnic or religious groups in Kwara State

Potential participants were required to meet all the inclusion criteria outlined in Table 3.2. Those who fell under the exclusion criteria were omitted to ensure that the study focused on individuals with relevant experiences and insights into the dynamics of ethno-religious conflicts in Kwara State. This selective approach is designed to safeguard the validity and reliability of the research findings while protecting the

integrity of the study process.

The research concluded upon achieving data saturation, which is the point at which no new themes or significant insights emerged from the interviews. This ensured that the collected data was comprehensive enough to address the research questions and objectives, contributing to a deeper understanding of the causes and impacts of these conflicts.

3.5. Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select individuals with expertise and direct experience in ethno-religious conflicts in Kwara State. This approach involves selecting participants based on their relevance and importance to the research questions and objectives. The purposive sampling technique is a sampling procedure in which a researcher purposively selects certain groups as a sample because of their relevance to the investigation under consideration (Adegboyega et al., 2019). All stakeholders were represented in the study to ensure triangulation in the sampling. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select 10 community leaders (4 from Edu Local Government, 3 from Ifelodun Local Government, and 3 from Ilorin west Local Government), 10 religious leaders (4 from Edu Local Government, 4 from Ifelodun Local Government, and 2 from Ilorin west Local Government), and 10 youths (3 from Edu Local Government, 4 from Ifelodun Local Government, and 3 from Ilorin west local Government).

3.6. Location of the study

The study was conducted in three local government areas within Kwara State that have been affected by conflicts. These areas are situated geographically in the Edu, Ifelodun, and Ilorin West local government areas, all of which are in Kwara State, Nigeria. They are positioned between Longitudes 4°25 E and 4°65 E and latitudes 8°20 N and 8°50 N. Kwara, located in the North-Central region of Nigeria, encounters a tropical wet and dry climate with an average annual rainfall of approximately 1200 mm (Orosun et al., 2020). Its average yearly temperature is about 26.2 °C, reaching a maximum of 30 °C in March, while the annual rainfall falls between 1000 and 1500 mm, and relative humidity ranges from 35 to 60%. The wet season typically spans from April to October, while the dry season lasts from November to March.

Ifelodun, the largest local government area in Kwara State, covers approximately 206,042 km², with a total land area estimated at 3,435 km² (NPC, 2006; KWSMI, 2002). The primary source of livelihood for the residents in these areas is agriculture, mainly traditional farming, with crops like rice, sorghum, cassava, yam, maize, and melon being cultivated. Melon is a prominent crop among local farmers.

Edu is in the northern part of the state and is primarily an agrarian region with farming communities involved in crop production such as maize, millet, and yam. The area's topography includes savannah and open plains, which support the pastoral lifestyle of its inhabitants, particularly the Fulani herdsmen, contributing to the area's history of land use conflicts.

Ilorin West, one of the most urbanized local government areas in Kwara State, covers approximately 105 km² and includes the state capital, Ilorin. Geographically, Ilorin West lies between Longitudes 4°30 E and 4°50 E, and Latitudes 8°30 N and 8°40 N. The area features a blend of urban and peri-urban landscapes, with a mix of residential, commercial, and agricultural zones. The elevation ranges from 290 to 305

meters above sea level, with rolling hills surrounding the city, contributing to the area's drainage system that leads to seasonal rivers. The urbanized parts of Ilorin West rely heavily on commerce, education, and government institutions, while some of the surrounding areas still engage in small-scale farming activities. The combination of its strategic location, diverse population, and economic significance makes Ilorin West a crucial study area for analyzing ethno-religious and socio-political conflicts (Bolu Steve F. N. Olawuyi B. Gbolade, 2017; Oyenpemi *et al.*, 2023).

3.7. Research instrument (Interview Questionnaire)

Interviews were conducted via phone and video conferencing, depending on participant preferences and practical considerations. Each interview was audio-recorded (with participant consent) and supplemented with detailed notes to ensure accurate data capture. Qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews, provide depth to the study. Key informants, comprising community leaders, religious figures, and government officials, engage in interviews exploring historical context, contributing factors, and ongoing conflict resolution efforts. The interview involves residents of affected communities, business owners, and farmers in structured discussions on the broader impacts of conflicts. Once the interviews were completed, the data was transcribed and analyzed. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes and patterns in the responses. Triangulation was employed to enhance the credibility of the findings by comparing interview data with other sources of information, such as existing literature, official reports, and media sources. Interpreting the interview findings and reporting the research results. The report analyzed the root causes of the ethno-religious conflicts, the current efforts in resolving them, and the perspectives of various stakeholders.

3.8. Validity and reliability of instrumentation

Ensuring the validity and reliability of the research instruments is essential to the credibility and accuracy of this study. This section focuses on the measures taken to rigorously assess and enhance the validity and reliability of the primary instrument—the semi-structured interview protocol—employed to investigate the root causes of ethno-religious conflicts in Kwara State, North Central Nigeria, and the ongoing efforts to address them. Validity was addressed by designing interview questions that are closely aligned with the research objectives, ensuring that each question effectively captures relevant aspects of the phenomena under study. To further enhance content validity, the interview guide was reviewed by experts in conflict studies and qualitative methodology, who provided feedback to refine question clarity and relevance.

Reliability was maintained by standardizing the interview process, which included consistent use of the interview guide across all sessions, ensuring that each participant was asked the same core set of questions. This approach minimizes variations that could arise from interviewer bias or participant interpretation, promoting consistency in data collection.

Therefore, these measures collectively ensure that the instrumentation is both valid—accurately capturing the phenomena of interest—and reliable, providing consistent and dependable data throughout the study.

The rigor of this research is grounded in ensuring both reliability (consistency of findings) and validity (accuracy in reflecting the studied phenomena). In qualitative research, these criteria are addressed through strategies such as triangulation, reflexivity, and expert validation. Reliability was ensured through methodological consistency and systematic verification. A structured embedded case study design

provided a framework for investigating ethno-religious conflicts in Kwara State, enabling replicable data collection. Triangulation of multiple data sources—including interviews, observations, and document analysis—cross-validated findings, reducing bias. Member checking allowed participants to confirm the accuracy of preliminary results, ensuring interpretations aligned with their lived experiences. Peer debriefing further enhanced transparency, as academic peers critiqued methodologies and interpretations. These steps collectively reinforced the reliability of the data.

Validity was addressed through strategies prioritizing authenticity and contextual depth. A reflexive approach involved journaling to mitigate personal biases, while thick description provided nuanced insights into participants' perspectives, cultural norms, and historical contexts. External audits by independent experts assessed alignment with research objectives, ensuring conclusions were rooted in empirical evidence. Triangulation of data sources and methods strengthened validity, as did the use of pseudonyms to protect participant identities and foster candid responses. These measures ensured the findings authentically reflected the realities of ethno-religious tensions in Kwara State.

3.9. Validation of Interview Protocol by Field Experts

The researcher adheres to established best practices for conducting qualitative interviews, drawing on structured methodologies to ensure rigor and consistency in data collection. The interview process follows a structured framework that includes: (1) using an introductory and concluding script to maintain consistency, (2) obtaining informed consent from participants, (3) fostering a comfortable and rapport-building environment, (4) designing open-ended questions that encourage in-depth responses, (5) ensuring that questions are grounded in existing research and relevant literature,

(6) sequencing questions from basic to complex to facilitate ease of response, (7) incorporating prompts to elicit rich qualitative details, (8) allowing for iterative refinement of the protocol as needed, (9) being mindful of time constraints to ensure participant engagement, and (10) conducting interviews with a carefully selected sample of participants (Azmi et al., 2019).

The interview protocol underwent rigorous validation by field experts to ensure rigor. Dr. Ibrahim Fahad (Universiti Sains Islam) and Dr. Kazeem Alasinrin Babatunde (Management and Science University) were selected for their expertise in conflict resolution and qualitative research—reviewed the protocol for clarity, ethical safeguards, and cultural sensitivity. Their recommendations refined open-ended questions and enhanced ethical protections. Once finalized, experts signed a verification form attesting to the protocol’s alignment with research standards, ensuring credibility.

Participant verification was critical due to the sensitivity of ethno-religious conflicts. Identities were confirmed via government-issued IDs, contact details, or virtual/in-person meetings, with pseudonyms assigned to anonymize data. Informed consent emphasized voluntary participation and confidentiality. Post-interview, participants reviewed transcripts and findings; all confirmed accuracy, with no revisions requested. This process upheld ethical standards while validating data integrity. During analysis, pseudonyms replaced identifiers to protect privacy, maintaining confidentiality throughout.

By integrating reliability and validity measures—triangulation, reflexivity, expert validation, and participant verification—the study ensures robustness in its

findings. These strategies collectively address the multifaceted nature of ethno-religious conflicts, ensuring the research accurately captures Kwara State's realities while upholding ethical and methodological standards.

3.10. Data Collection and Procedure

The primary data collection method employed in this study was in-depth, semi-structured interviews. This approach was selected due to its suitability for investigating the detailed perspectives of key informants and stakeholders directly affected by and involved in the ethno-religious conflicts in Kwara State. The in-depth interviews provided a flexible yet structured format for participants to share their experiences, perceptions, and insights related to both the root causes of these conflicts and the ongoing efforts to resolve them. The interview protocol was developed with a series of carefully designed open-ended questions, crafted to encourage participants to reflect deeply on their experiences and provide rich, comprehensive responses. These questions focused on the historical, socio-political, and cultural dimensions of the conflicts, as well as the participants' views on current conflict resolution initiatives and their effectiveness.

Before beginning the data collection process, the researcher sought and obtained the necessary permissions to conduct field research in Kwara State. This process began with securing an introductory letter from the Office of the Division of Graduate Management at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, which outlined the study's purpose and objectives. The researcher then presented this official letter to the Ministry of Education, local community leaders, and other relevant authorities in the study areas, which included various communities and sub-villages within the selected local government areas. These permissions were essential for establishing credibility,

gaining community trust, and ensuring smooth access to participants. The permission letter for data collection can be found in Appendix B, providing documentation of institutional support for the research.

The data collection team comprised the primary researchers and three trained research assistants who are natives of Kwara State and reside in the areas under study. Being locals, the research assistants brought cultural knowledge and familiarity with the dialects, customs, and local dynamics, which was invaluable for facilitating rapport with participants and conducting interviews in a respectful and context-sensitive manner. Prior to data collection, the research assistants underwent a comprehensive training session conducted by the primary researcher. This training, which lasted a full day, covered the study's objectives, the importance of maintaining confidentiality and ethical standards, and specific techniques for conducting effective, respectful interviews. The training session included mock interviews and discussions on managing potential challenges in the field, such as addressing sensitive topics and navigating varying comfort levels among participants.

The interview sessions were conducted in either English or the participants' preferred local languages, depending on individual comfort and fluency, to ensure that participants could express themselves freely and without language barriers. Each interview was conducted at a location chosen by the participant to provide a comfortable, private setting and to ensure confidentiality. The interviews typically lasted between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours, with sessions recorded (upon obtaining verbal consent) to ensure accuracy in capturing responses. Where recording was not feasible, detailed notes were taken to document responses comprehensively. This flexible, participant-centered approach to conducting interviews allowed the researchers and assistants to gather rich, authentic insights that reflect the lived experiences of

individuals affected by and knowledgeable about the ethno-religious conflicts.

These in-depth interviews provided a wealth of qualitative data, capturing the unique perspectives of diverse stakeholders on the intricate causes of conflict and the effectiveness of various resolution efforts. Thus, through this robust and carefully managed data collection process, the study ensures that the voices of those most affected by the conflicts are accurately represented, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand.

3.11. Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitivity of ethno-religious conflicts, strict ethical standards were observed throughout the research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw at any stage without consequence (Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden, 2001). Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity; pseudonyms were used in transcripts and reporting to protect identities. Care was taken to avoid questions that could provoke discomfort or re-traumatise respondents, and interviews were conducted in neutral, safe environments. Research approval was obtained from the relevant university ethics committee prior to data collection, ensuring compliance with institutional guidelines. These measures helped safeguard the dignity, safety, and rights of all participants (Bryman, 2016).

3.12. Data Analysis

The data analysis process involves thematic analysis, as Section III outlines. Thematic analysis is an effective approach for determining people's views, opinions, knowledge, and experiences. It also helps establish values from a set of perspective data,

such as interviews, transcripts, social media profiles, or various surveys. To find the answers to the qualitative research questions, data was collected from the relevant participants and thereafter analyzed. This analysis technique also has flexibility in interpreting data, even with large data sets, such as easily sorting them into broad themes. However, the thematic analysis also bears the risk of missing nuances in the data, as this approach is often subjective and relies on the judgment of the researcher. For that reason, it is essential to control one's interpretations while dealing with the raw data. The manual method was adopted for qualitative analysis in the study since it allows the researcher to control the research process and maintain a better understanding of the data and a close connection. The manual approach involves analyzing qualitative data without computerized data analysis software. The researcher uses a manual method to systematically study the content to derive characteristics or trends without software since it offers a more hands-on approach to data analysis and allows researchers to maintain control over the research process (Basit, 2003; Lester et al., 2020; Mattimoe et al., 2021). The researcher uses this method to analyze the data collected from interviews and documents. The analysis identifies patterns, themes, and key findings related to the research questions and objectives.

3.13. Analysis of Responses by Research Questions of the Study

3.13.1. Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results

The analysis of the result is a cornerstone of qualitative research, where raw data is transformed into structured, actionable insights that directly address research objectives (Clarke et al., 2022). In this study, qualitative data obtained through interviews and discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method recognized

for its adaptability, rigor, and theoretical flexibility (Braun et al., 2021). Thematic analysis is particularly suited for this context, as it facilitates an in-depth examination of diverse, nuanced datasets, including participant testimonies from interviews conducted in Ifelodun, Edu, and Ilorin West Kwara State.

The first phase of analysis involved conducting interviews via the Zoom platform, a decision motivated by the need to ensure participant comfort, reduce potential external biases, and allow uninterrupted, confidential discourse. As a remote data collection tool, Zoom proved invaluable in maintaining the integrity of the research process, especially in sensitive studies like ethno-religious conflict. Detailed verbatim transcripts from these interviews, included in Appendix A, formed the foundation for the subsequent thematic analysis. These transcripts were adequately reviewed to ensure accuracy and completeness, aligning with the trustworthiness criteria outlined by Nowell et al. (2021).

The second phase centered on thematic analysis, following the six-step framework proposed by (Braun and Clarke 2021). This frequentative process began with familiarization, where the transcripts were read repeatedly to gain an immersive understanding of the data. Initial coding followed, identifying recurring ideas, keywords, and phrases that pointed to broader themes. For instance, participants' discussions of resource-based disputes were coded under "economic inequalities," while mentions of political manipulation were categorized as "political dynamics." These codes were refined, grouped, and synthesized into broader themes such as "historical grievances," "socio-economic disparities," and "religious intolerance."

The final phase involved reviewing these themes against the entire dataset to ensure coherence and relevance. This approach not only allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the data but also facilitated the identification of subthemes, such as

"youth exclusion" under "socio-economic disparities" and "role of religious leaders" under "religious intolerance." Each theme was contextualized within the lived experiences of the respondents, revealing the root causes and surging effects of ethno-religious conflicts in Kwara State.

The thematic analysis method adopted in this study is noteworthy for its flexibility in accommodating the complexity and depth of qualitative data. The approach goes beyond surface-level descriptions to uncover latent patterns and relationships, providing actionable insights for policy and practice. Moreover, its theoretical flexibility ensured that the analysis remained grounded in the study's objectives while remaining open to emergent findings, reflecting the dynamic nature of conflicts in Kwara State.

By employing this rigorous and detailed analytical process, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of ethno-religious conflicts and demonstrates the importance of using methodologically sound approaches to describe the multifaceted realities of social issues. The findings not only enhance academic discourse but also offer practical implications for designing conflict resolution strategies that are both inclusive and context-sensitive. Transcripts containing testimonies from participants in Kwara State, Nigeria, can be found in Appendix A. Subsequently, thematic data analysis is conducted as the second step, wherein critical concepts derived from the interviews and group discussion are identified and highlighted.

3.13.2. Qualitative Data Analysis Techniques

Primarily, qualitative data comprises non-numerical information and is composed of the data held in the interview transcripts, notes, videos, audio recordings, photographs, texts, and documents. The raw data in the current study is comprised of

interview transcripts. Edwards & Holland, (2020) reported that qualitative data analysis can be done through content, discursive, framework, narrative, and grounded theory. This research uses the thematic analysis approach to analyze the interview responses from the perspectives of familiarization, generating categories, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and results.

3.13.3. Interview Guide

An interview guide is a valuable tool for interviewers. It provides a structured framework of questions and research areas to be addressed during the interview process. It is designed as a reference point rather than a rigid script, allowing flexibility and adaptation as needed. According to Wallace, (2022), interviewers typically have a prepared set of questions that serve as a guide, with deviations from this framework not viewed negatively but often encouraged. In line with this approach, interviewers may incorporate additional questions on unforeseen yet relevant topics that arise during the interview or areas that the respondent may have overlooked or not addressed. However, it is essential to prioritize the participants' perspectives and experiences during the interview, as emphasized in previous studies. Beginning with straightforward questions, elicit factual responses can help establish rapport and put participants at ease (Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022). Also, timing plays a crucial role in the interview process, considering that interviews may vary in duration based on participants' communication styles and experience levels.

Therefore, it is prudent to emphasize the key questions that are essential for obtaining meaningful insights and responses. This approach ensures that the interview remains focused and productive, allowing for a thorough exploration of the relevant

topics while respecting the participants' time and contributions.

3.13.4. Interview Transcriptions

According to Rutakumwa et al., (2020) data transcription represents a crucial step preceding data analysis. For this study, interviews were conducted via phone and video calls. Consent was obtained from all participants (respondents), and the resulting interviews were recorded. Each interview lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes on average. To maintain confidentiality, details about participants and their employers were omitted. As agreed in the consent form (Appendix 1), participants remain anonymous and are assigned numbered pseudonyms (Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2).

While no universal rules exist for transcribing interview data, accuracy is essential. Transcripts should ideally capture words verbatim or focus on primary answers following the questions posed (Rutakumwa et al., 2020). Studies reported that transcription involves complex issues related to translating spoken words into written form (Rowlands, 2021; Rutakumwa et al., 2020). Also, Rowlands, (2021) highlights that thorough transcription contributes to the researcher's credibility and facilitates subsequent data analysis. Once interviews are transcribed, the next step is data analysis.

3.14. Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used to explore the root causes and resolution strategies for ethno-religious conflicts in Kwara State. The study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing in-depth case studies of three key local government areas: Edu, Ifelodun, and Ilorin West. These areas were selected due to their history of recurring conflicts, making them relevant for investigating both the triggers of violence and the efforts toward conflict resolution. The chapter describes the sampling strategy

used to select participants, which included community leaders, religious figures, and government officials with firsthand experience and insights into the conflict dynamics in the region. The research instruments used include structured interviews, and data were collected and analyzed using thematic analysis.

Finally, this chapter discusses the procedures for ensuring the reliability and validity of the data collection tools. Ethical considerations, such as obtaining informed consent from participants and ensuring confidentiality, are addressed. The methodology also provides a step-by-step explanation of the data analysis process, with particular emphasis on how thematic coding was used to extract meaningful patterns from the qualitative data. The chapter concludes by justifying the chosen methodology as the most appropriate for capturing the nuanced and complex nature of ethno-religious conflicts in the selected study areas.