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Stakeholders Perceptions of Government Peacebuilding Communication Strategies in Taraba State

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ABSTRACT

The study set out to investigate stakeholders' perceptions of government peacebuilding communication strategies in Taraba State, Nigeria. The study was anchored on the Agenda Setting Theory. Furthermore, the research was a qualitative study premised on in-depth interviews. The researcher selected twenty-one stakeholders from different local government areas in Taraba State to gather data on the peacebuilding communication strategies employed by the Taraba State government. The findings revealed that the government has implemented various peacebuilding communication strategies, including leveraging local leadership, forming peace committees, conducting town hall meetings, and using peace jingles to promote messages of unity and reconciliation. However, the study also identifies challenges such as political interference, logistical constraints, and lack of proactive security responses during conflicts that hinder the effectiveness of these strategies. The study concludes that a comprehensive and inclusive approach to peacebuilding that addresses the root causes of conflict and promotes social cohesion and community engagement is essential for promoting sustainable peace in Taraba State. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the Taraba State government should ensure that peacebuilding efforts are apolitical, local leaders and community members should be actively engaged in peacebuilding efforts, security agencies should be proactive in responding to conflicts, and civil society organisations and international partners should provide support to peacebuilding initiatives.

Keywords: *Peacebuilding, Communication Strategies, Stakeholders' Perceptions, Taraba State, Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has long been embroiled in a variety of conflicts, mirroring challenges faced by many nations in sub-Saharan Africa. These conflicts often arise from ethno-religious tensions, political instability, and socio-economic disparities (Ja'afaru, 2025). As reported by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the prevalence of violence in sub-Saharan Africa extended into early 2022, with Nigeria among the countries severely impacted by terrorism. Other nations in the region, such as South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, also struggle with similar issues, highlighting a broader regional crisis (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022, as cited in IISS, 2022).

Within Nigeria, the nature of conflict varies significantly across regions. For example, the North grapples with the Boko Haram insurgency, while the South faces ongoing movements for self-determination. Nnabuihe (2024) notes that Nigeria's political landscape is deeply fractured, often influenced by complex religious and ethnic divisions, making issues of conflict and ethnic strife particularly pressing. Contributing factors include the marginalisation of minority groups, competition over limited resources, and a pervasive atmosphere of mistrust. Tanko (2021) underscores the alarming escalation of security challenges, from insurgency to rampant kidnappings, which have turned violence into a pervasive national concern. This ongoing insecurity erodes public confidence in the state's ability to maintain order and safety.

The humanitarian situation in North-East Nigeria has reached alarming proportions. In June 2022, the United Nations expressed grave concern over the humanitarian crisis affecting millions, with over eight million people needing urgent assistance due to a decade-long extremist insurgency (United Nations, 2022). Vulnerable populations, particularly women and children, have suffered disproportionately, often facing exploitation such as child trafficking and abuse. Reports indicate that women displaced by conflict frequently encounter additional violence in refugee and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, which are meant to provide safety (Ogbonna & Kagu, 2024).

The ongoing violence has resulted in devastating consequences for both lives and livelihoods. Since 2009, Boko Haram attacks have claimed around 20,000 lives in the North-East, displacing more than two million individuals (Yacob-Haliso, 2021). Despite the passage of time, the quest for peace remains elusive, with continuous violence impacting both the North-East and the broader Nigerian context (Ja'afaru, 2021). Regions that were once economically vibrant, like the Baga fish market in Borno State, now face severe downturns, with businesses shuttered and economic activities curtailed.

Taraba State, established in 1991, has not been spared from these conflicts. The state has witnessed ongoing violence, including ethno-religious clashes, farmer-herder disputes, and banditry. Areas such as Jalingo, Wukari, and Takum have been particularly

affected, leading to significant loss of life and displacement, thereby disrupting local economies (Deji & Shumo, 2021). With around 80 ethnic groups present, predominantly divided along religious lines, tensions are exacerbated, turning ethnic disputes into broader sectarian conflicts (Deji & Shumo, 2021).

In light of these challenges, the necessity for effective peacebuilding strategies in Taraba State is increasingly apparent. Peacebuilding involves fostering dialogue and reconciliation among conflicting parties to achieve lasting stability (John, 2023). It seeks to address the root causes of conflict and promotes a comprehensive approach that encourages sustainable peace. True peacebuilding goes beyond mere violence prevention; it aims to transform conflict resolution processes, recognising conflict as a natural part of human interaction and advocating for a culture of peace centred on unity and cooperation.

The media holds a significant role in peacebuilding efforts, acting as both a watchdog and an agenda-setter capable of identifying potential conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence through responsible reporting (Nwokolo, 2020; Inobemhe et al., 2024). Effective communication strategies in peacebuilding are crucial for fostering societal unity and stability. However, there is a notable lack of understanding regarding the specific peacebuilding strategies employed by the Taraba State government and their effectiveness. This study aimed to investigate stakeholder perceptions of these communication strategies and evaluate their impact on peacebuilding efforts in North-East Nigeria.

The main issue from the above context is the lack of empirical studies on the peacebuilding strategic communication approaches of Taraba State, and how the targeted beneficiaries receive, perceive, and make use of them. Documentation of government institution dissemination of peace messages and information on initiatives for the management of conflicts is one-sided, as they describe the efforts, yet they are not working on collated systematic analysis of these efforts and their actual effectiveness, impact, and character, or lack thereof, among target stakeholders such as local people, leaders of communities, traditional and religious people, civil actors, and people in the security domain.

From the perspective of communication theory, this constitutes a critical gap in understanding the process of communication, framing of the messages, communication channels used, and the responsiveness and engagement of the targeted audience in the communication process of conflict-affected groups. Without empirical data on these elements, it is impossible to make any assessment regarding whether the current strategies are attaining the targeted objective of promoting understanding and changing actions of the targeted audience, or whether there are other antagonistic variables such as distrust and message closing, and inclusion of other impacted people that support the lack of effectiveness of the current strategies. Analytically, therefore, the

challenge is that peacebuilding in Taraba State is being pursued in an environment where the effectiveness of government efforts in peacebuilding remains unmeasured and theoretically underexamined.

Consequently, the objectives of this study were to:
1. Find out the various peacebuilding communication strategies of Taraba State government
2. Find out the extent to which Taraba State government has adopted communication strategies for peacebuilding
3. Ascertain the level to which Taraba State government's peacebuilding strategies have advanced peace and stability in the state
4. Find out the challenges of using communication strategies for peacebuilding in Taraba State

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The Concept of Communication Strategies

Communication strategies are deliberate plans that outline how to convey messages to specific audiences, taking into account the complexities of human communication. According to Asak and Mbazie (2024), a communication strategy is a framework that guides the communication process, ensuring that messages are tailored to the needs and preferences of the target audience. Effective communication strategies are crucial for achieving communication goals, building relationships, and fostering mutual understanding. A well-crafted communication strategy should consider the communication context, audience analysis, and message design to ensure that messages are conveyed clearly and effectively (Ja'afaru, 2025). This involves understanding the audience's needs, values, and preferences, as well as the channels and media that are most effective for reaching them.

In the context of human communication, Asemah et al (2022) define communication strategies as a dynamic process that involves the exchange of meaning between individuals, groups, or organisations. This process involves the use of verbal and nonverbal cues, such as language, signs, symbols, and gestures, to convey messages and create understanding. Communication is a social process that shapes our understanding of the world and our place in it. Effective communication requires a shared understanding of the communication context, audience needs, and message goals. It also involves active listening, empathy, and a willingness to adapt to changing circumstances. By understanding the complexities of human communication, individuals and organisations can develop effective communication strategies that promote mutual understanding and achieve their goals (Usmonov, 2025).

Effective communication strategies are essential for building trust, resolving conflicts, and promoting social change. Nwaoboli and Asemah (2023) observed that communication is a critical component of conflict resolution, as it enables individuals and groups to express their needs, concerns, and interests in a clear and respectful manner.

Overview of Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is a multifaceted process that aims to address the root causes of conflict and promote sustainable peace. According to International Alert (2024), peacebuilding involves supporting individuals and communities affected by conflict to build resilience, promote social cohesion, and foster a culture of peace. This requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the complex dynamics of conflict, including the social, economic, and political factors that contribute to violence and instability. Peacebuilding involves working with local communities, civil society organisations, and governments to develop effective strategies for conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution.

Peacebuilding can also be defined as a process of empowering communities to manage conflicts in a constructive manner, promoting tolerance, and building a culture of peace. According to UNICEF (2022), peacebuilding involves working with communities to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for promoting peace and resolving conflicts in a nonviolent manner. This requires a focus on building social cohesion, promoting dialogue, and fostering a sense of community and shared humanity. By empowering communities to manage conflicts in a constructive manner, peacebuilding can help to promote sustainable peace and reduce the risk of violence and instability. This approach recognises that peacebuilding is a long-term process that requires a commitment to promoting social change and addressing the root causes of conflict. Peacebuilding is also a holistic approach that seeks to transform conflict-affected societies by promoting social justice, human rights, and economic development. It involves working with governments, civil society organisations, and local communities to develop effective strategies for promoting peace and stability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Role of Media in Peacebuilding

Over time, experiences have demonstrated that the media can incite people to violence. Rwanda was an extreme example of this; Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) radio Rwanda was used to motivate audiences towards violence. Also, Hitler employed the media to instil hatred globally in the minds of the people against the homosexuals, jews and other vulnerable populations. The effect of the media on the intensification of conflict is generally acknowledged than its impact on peacebuilding (Phillips, 2017; Idowu & Odeyemi, 2021). This implies that the media can be used negatively and positively. When the media is used in the negative light to influence people and shape their opinion towards conflict, the devastating effect can only be imagined.

Radio was employed to encourage the Hutus to pick their manchettes and sweep the Tutsis in Rwanda, the effect, is still been felt, thirty years after the gruesome genocide of 1994.

Despite the effect the media can have on conflict, it has the ability to promote conflict reconciliation, build trust and create understanding among conflicting groups. Diversity and pluralism are important constituent in capturing diverse views which can create trust and increase participation in post-conflict engagements (Anyanwu, Imiti & Anyanwu, 2024). Media, comprising both electronic and print platforms play a vital role in society, despite criticism of its performance. Moreso, digital media outlets provide new platforms for communication and interaction that is instantaneous, swift and engaging (Daherman & Taufiq, 2025). However, digital platforms must not go unregulated, disinformation and hate speech are easily spread.

Media platforms can contribute to peacebuilding by promoting a culture of respect for diversities and understanding of such differences. The ability of media outlets to give equal opportunities for those affected by conflicts to air their views encourage accountability and transparency. Also, private media outlets serve as important tool for holding government accountable, exposing human rights violations and corruption (Bau, 2023; Daherman & Taufiq, 2025). Thus, investigative journalists spark public debate when they expose corruption, abuse of power, wrongdoings and poor governance. This infers that when the media question authorities, a more sense of responsibility towards their obligations to the society can be achieved.

Gjerazi (2023) summits that the media decisively shape what we hear and see about conflicts. Media owners significantly influence the way stories are framed and reporter's experiences and beliefs also shape conflict reports. Human interests and flair for what the public want to know makes the media to project more conflicts than peace stories. However, this does not prevent the media from preaching the values of peace. Hence, the media can play a positive role in fostering peace and preventing conflicts (Idowu & Odeyemi, 2021). The media play numerous roles in the society. Some of these functions the media play is beneficial while others are unhelpful. Media could perform the function of an aggregator (Anyanwu, Imiti & Anyanwu, 2024), a watchdog, a mediator (Idowu & Odeyemi, 2021), a peacebuilder (Idowu & Odeyemi, 2021) an agent of social change (Kurgat & Jerop, 2023) or simply set agenda for public discourse (Asemah et al, 2022).

Effective Communication Approaches for Building Peace
Building peace in conflict-ridden areas requires a strategic approach to communication. Scholars agree that deliberate efforts to promote peace through communication can lead to sustainable peace and tolerance (Ndeche & Iroye, 2022). One key approach is Facilitated Dialogue, which brings conflict parties together to discuss root causes

and work towards peace. This approach has been effective in resolving disputes and promoting peace.

Community-Led Initiatives are another crucial strategy, where community members are actively engaged in peacebuilding efforts. By leveraging community knowledge and experience, relationships can be transformed, and peace can be built and sustained (Yorlay, 2024). This approach is particularly effective when community leaders, youth groups, and traditional councils are involved in communication for peace.

Strategic Media Engagement is also vital in peacebuilding, shaping narratives and promoting harmony in society. Peace journalism and development communication can improve living conditions and foster peace by disseminating diverse views and promoting conflict-sensitive reporting (Asak & Mbazie, 2024).

Capacity Building is another important factor in peacebuilding communication strategies. Education and training can strengthen individuals, societies, and groups to manage conflict and promote unity and harmony (Oyeshola, Lawal & Adedoyin, 2022). By developing conflict resolution skills and promoting peaceful living, education and training can play a critical role in promoting sustainable peace.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Agenda Setting Theory

The agenda setting theory is based on the idea that society trail towards the map the mass media draws. Propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972/1973, the primary assumption of the theory is that the media set agenda for the society to follow (Anaeto et al., 2008). The theory believes that our experiences and reflections emanate from media contents. The media decisively shaped what we think about through the emphasis and importance they give to such issues. Agenda setting theory argues that the media may not always be successful in telling us what to reflect on, but they influence what we deliberate on. This implies that individuals have a mind of their own and they have things they think about.

However, when the media pick a particular issue and make it prominent, these individuals will suspend what they are thinking of and focus on what the media want them to ponder on. This means that if the media in Taraba State focus on rebuilding societies and ethno-religious relationships, the residents of the state and beyond would reflect on the idea the media is presenting to them, thereby influencing what they focus on.

Anaeto et al. (2008) identified certain key assumptions of the agenda setting theory. First, the mass media do not reflect shared experiences because news is sieved, decided and influenced by news providers. Secondly, people rely on the mass media as

sources of information neglecting other sources. Thirdly, the few issues given prominence by the media are what the public regard as important. The theory stemmed from the idea that if individuals are exposed to the same topics, they will accord importance on that same subject matter. Despite the dynamic nature of the society, at any given time, the media decide what subject matter should be important to the public. In practical sense, this is achieved by virtue of the prominence given to media contents and how frequently it appears. This is a major determinant in the agenda setting process.

The media can decisively transform the opinion of the general public by making them deliberate on the issues they consider as salient. This media effect theory has significant impact on the public's behaviour towards societal issues, though they decide whether or not to accept the ideas on the media. Since the media represents the public's interest, the media's agenda and that of the public in most cases are in harmony. It is worthy to note that the issues raised by the media are the issues in the society; hence, the public presents the agenda that agenda setters pick on. The agenda setting theory represents the powerful influence of the media in shaping public opinion and guarding their focus. The theory has the ability to organise public thought raising a consensus view about an issue by the public and the amount of importance given to it. It has predictive, parsimonious and explanatory capabilities.

This theory is relevant to the study in the sense that it clarifies the manner media can shape public opinion and set agendas. In Taraba State, it can assist in examining how the communication strategies employed by the government influence public discourse and set the agenda for peacebuilding in the state by focusing on conflict resolution and other solution-oriented issues. The theory proposes that media channels are strong forces in shaping public opinion by choosing what to reflect on the news and the perspective to present the story from. Thus, Taraba State government can employ this theory to advance peaceful narratives and shape public opinion by disseminating peacebuilding messages through various communication networks. Through this, the government can set the agenda for public discourse and motivate individuals to focus on activities that bring about sustainable peace in the state.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Johnson (2023) conducted a qualitative study to analyse the rudiments, procedures and stages of peacebuilding in transitional societies in his study titled "Exploring the elements and phases of peacebuilding in post-conflict communities in Nigeria." The study employed qualitative content analysis to examine data for the study using the narrative technique to analyse and interpret the data. The study was anchored on human need theory.

The human need theory is a conflict resolution process that emphasise the important role of unattended human needs during and after conflicts. The theory is of the view that when unmet human needs are addressed, the satisfaction individuals get from that effort can greatly improve peacebuilding efforts. Hence, addressing social needs like food, shelter, education and health advance conflict resolution, intergroup dialogue and create a sense of belonging, thereby reducing tension and promoting peace. Findings of the study identified conflict resolution, security and good governance as some of the strategies for peacebuilding in transitional societies. It also recognised stakeholders involved in post conflict peacebuilding efforts as media, religions, businesses, and civil societies. Additionally, findings of the study identified conflict transformation, resolution and management among the stages of peacebuilding.

The study concluded that peacebuilding is a vital instrument for national growth that efficiently reforms and restructures damaged relationships, covering economic and social areas, it emphasised the need for equity, justice, enhanced communication network and infrastructure and training. Furthermore, the study advocates for fostering peace through empathy, understanding and compassion among parties with violent tendencies. The researcher recommended that informal peacebuilding strategies through community-based efforts would greatly complement formal peacebuilding strategies. Community peacebuilding helps to advance peace and instill a common sense of humanity among the populace here the idea of we are first humans before anything else prevails. It recommends the significance of sharing cultural values among communities and suggested that peace education should be included into education curriculums at all levels.

This study is similar to assessment of peace-building communication strategies of Taraba state government in North East Nigeria in the sense that it identified strategies and various stakeholders involved in peacebuilding processes. However, the study differs in terms of scope. The reviewed study is more versatile because it covers Nigeria as a whole while the main study focused on the northeastern part of Nigeria.

A similar study is titled "Strategic administration of post conflict peace building activities in Nigeria: An analysis of post Boko Haram insurgency peacebuilding activities in north-east Nigeria." In the study, Usman, Abdullahi & Musa (2023) carried out a qualitative research to examine how numerous peacebuilding activities in post insurgency North East have impacted the peacebuilding initiative in Taraba, Adamawa, Gombe, Borno, Yobe and Bauchi states. The study underscored the effect of insurgency in the region and recognised that though the destruction perpetuated by insurgency varies, the effects are felt across all the states in the geo-political zone.

Premised on sustainable peacebuilding theory, the study was guided by four objectives. First, the study examined the post conflict peacebuilding activities in the north east. Secondly, it sought to assess diverse post conflict peacebuilding administrative

strategies and agendas in the North East. Furthermore, the study emphasised the need for post conflict peacebuilding plans to be put into practice among beneficiaries. Additionally, it highlights areas of focus of post conflict peacebuilding activities and strategies.

The study revealed that the post insurgency peacebuilding initiatives in the region are carried out by different actors who are considered as key among the peacebuilders is the Nigerian government. The federal government in collaboration with state government has put in place several integrated approaches for peacebuilding in the region, primarily by establishing the North East Development Commission (NEDC) in an effort the rebuild, reform and develop the region. Other programs include), Recovery and Peacebuilding strategy (RPBS), Humanitarian response plan (HRP), Amnesty program and diverse support from NGOs. These initiatives the study unveiled led to economic, social and political growth in the region.

The study concluded that most of the post conflict peacebuilding initiatives established, had positive impact which led to the restoration of peace and fostering social and economic development in the region. The researchers recommended local and integrative approach in the implementation of peacebuilding plans through community-based initiatives that focus on promoting economic empowerment and growth, addressing the needs of victims and the broader stakeholder groups. This study by Usman et al. (2023) as reviewed is similar to the main study in the sense that both studies examined peacebuilding strategies in north east region and differ in terms of methodology. The main study employed qualitative data analysis (interview) while the reviewed study used qualitative content analysis to gather data for the study.

Suleimuri, Agbu & Ngati (2021) conducted a study titled "An assessment of the contribution of women in conflict resolution and peace process: A case of Wukari LGA of Taraba State, 2013-2020." Through the use of interview as a research design, the qualitative study discovered that women have played significant traditional roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding within their communities, among social groups and immediate families. The study identified peaceful protest, prayers and cautioning their loved ones as some of the local strategies women employed to avoid conflicts and foster unity and harmony in their communities.

Findings of the study showed that during and after the conflicts in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State, Women were actively involved in the conflict resolution processes. Equally, findings revealed that the strategies employed by the women were effective and their efforts resulted in the initiation of peace process especially during the 2013-2015 conflicts that ravaged the area. Their efforts draw attention of government and other humanitarian bodies as well as public sympathy. The researchers concluded that sustainable peace can only be achieved through tolerance, dialogue and continued peace efforts. They recommended that women are active players in conflict

resolution and peacebuilding efforts as such, should not be relegated to the background. They should be identified as crucial stakeholders and be involved in all peacebuilding processes. This study is similar to the research because it focuses on Taraba State and Wukari precisely. Wukari is among the Local Government areas purposely selected for the study. Additionally, the both studies employed the use of interview to gather qualitative data. However, the reviewed study is limited in scope as it only focuses on women and one LGA while the study has a broad scope because it covers Taraba State in general.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach, utilising in-depth interview as the primary method of data collection. The study focused on assessing stakeholders' perception of peacebuilding communication strategies of the Taraba State government in North East Nigeria. Twenty-one (21) stakeholders including information officers, traditional rulers, youth leaders, women groups and representatives of civil society organisations were interviewed. Seven interviewees from each of the selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Jalingo, Sardauna, and Wukari, were selected for the in-depth interviews. These interviewees were chosen for their expertise, experience, and relevance, possessing insight into the government's policies and peacebuilding efforts over the years. The interview guide consisted of essential questions that were directly derived from the research questions on the subject matter of peacebuilding efforts by the government of Taraba State in respect of perennial conflicts in the state. Through interviewing these key informants, the researcher gathered rich, qualitative data that provides depth and insight into the research question.

The study adopted a judgemental sampling technique to select twenty-one informants for the in-depth interviews. The sampling method was used because it helped the researchers, select, participants that possessed adequate knowledge and exposure to government peacebuilding communication strategies in Taraba State. It therefore facilitated the selection of respondents with relevant knowledge and experiences in the current discourse which increases the validity and reliability of the findings. The subjects for the interview were coded as informants one – informants 21. The sample size of 21 was established on the principles of qualitative research which gives credence to depth over statistical generalisation. The sample size was adequate in achieving data saturation, a point where no new theme emerged during the interview. Also, participants time were respected. The interviews were conducted between December 2024 and April 2025. Out of twenty-one interviews, seven each were conducted in Jalingo LGA, Sardauna LGA and Wukari LGA using a face-to-face method of data collection. The qualitative data collected from the interviews was analysed to identify themes, patterns, and meanings that shed light on the research question. The explanation building method propounded by Yin (1984) was relied upon to analyse the qualitative

data from the field trip. Yin (2009) explained that explanation building method can be used to analyse data or evidence, especially in case study.

The interview was designed to enhance credibility with the use of open-ended questions, followed by probes that solicited more elaboration, and the implementation of member checking, where interview participants were asked to verify or modify condensed summaries of the key points discussed during the interview. Interviewers also maintained reflexivity by keeping a reflexive journal, where interviewers wrote their assumptions, choices, and emotions about each interview to guard against biases in the analysis of the participants' narratives. To achieve triangulation, interview data were corroborated with other data, such as public documents, news articles, and, when possible, field notes, so that the themes that emerged were corroborated by more than one source of data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The interview responses from various stakeholders across different local government areas in Taraba State provide a thorough overview of the peacebuilding communication strategies employed by the state government.

1. Various Peacebuilding Communication Strategies of Taraba State Government

The Taraba State government employs a multifaceted approach to peacebuilding communication, utilising various strategies tailored to the diverse needs of its communities. Informant 1, the Information Officer from Sardauna, emphasised the crucial role of local leadership in this process. He noted that village heads, including first-class chiefs and lower-tier leaders such as Hakimis and Jauros, are instrumental in disseminating peace messages throughout their communities. These leaders are vital in reaching remote areas, especially where direct government communication may falter. Through leveraging the existing social structure, the government ensures that peace messages resonate with the people, thereby reinforcing community bonds.

Informant 2, the Information Officer from Wukari, highlighted the formation of peace committees that comprise representatives from various ethnic and religious groups. This strategy aims to rebuild relationships among communities that have faced historical crises, such as conflicts between the Fulani, Tiv, and Jukun groups. The government has initiated various measures, including peace jingles broadcast on radio and television, to promote messages of unity and reconciliation. Informant 2 emphasised the importance of these jingles as they reach a wide audience, reinforcing the call for peaceful coexistence in a region marked by ethnic diversity and past conflicts.

In Jalingo, Informant 3 outlined the comprehensive peacebuilding communication strategies that include participatory dialogue sessions. The government actively invites conflicting groups, politicians, religious leaders, and influential community members to engage in discussions aimed at resolving disputes. He noted that town hall meetings

serve as a platform for open dialogue, allowing community members to voice their concerns and work collaboratively towards solutions. Additionally, the government conducts peace advocacy campaigns, employing posters, public campaigns, and collaborations with international organisations like UNDP to raise awareness about the importance of peaceful coexistence.

These strategies collectively demonstrate the Taraba State government's commitment to fostering an inclusive and participatory approach to peacebuilding. Through engaging local leaders and utilising various communication channels, the government aims to address not only immediate conflicts but also the underlying issues that contribute to tensions within communities.

2. Extent of Taraba State Government's Adoption of Communication Strategies for Peacebuilding

The extent of the adoption of communication strategies for peacebuilding varies across the local government areas, reflecting both commitment and challenges. Informant 8 from Sardauna noted that the government conducts regular town hall meetings, typically on a monthly basis, to preemptively address potential conflicts within the community. He described this structured approach as essential for fostering dialogue and ensuring that community members feel heard and involved in the peacebuilding process. Informant 4 estimated that the extent of adoption in his area is substantial, indicating a proactive stance on the part of the government.

In Wukari, Informant 10 expressed a slightly more critical perspective, acknowledging that while the government has made efforts to engage with the community, he feels that more could be done. He pointed out that although initiatives are in place, the overall effectiveness could be enhanced with a more robust commitment to grassroots engagement. This sentiment reflects a common theme across the interviews, where stakeholders recognise the importance of involving local populations in peace discussions but also highlight areas for improvement. Informants 16 and 18 in Jalingo provided a more optimistic view, stating that the state government has adopted communication strategies for peacebuilding to a considerable extent. They praised the government's efforts to engage communities directly, especially in areas that have historically experienced conflict. By extending their outreach beyond the state capital, the government demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity and participation, ensuring that the voices of those most affected by conflict are included in the dialogue.

3. The Extent Taraba State Government's Peacebuilding Strategies have Advanced Peace and Stability in the State

The peacebuilding strategies implemented by the Taraba State government have notably advanced peace and stability across various local government areas. Informant 7 from Sardauna articulated that the government's initiatives have fostered a sense of

community ownership in the peacebuilding process. He highlighted that active participation from local leaders and citizens has led to significant milestones in promoting harmony. This engagement not only aids in conflict resolution but also builds trust among community members, thereby enhancing overall stability.

Informant 11 from Wukari reinforced this perspective by stating that the government's efforts have successfully united diverse groups, including both Muslims and Christians, to collaborate on peace initiatives. The establishment of peace committees that include representatives from all backgrounds has been pivotal in addressing long-standing grievances and misunderstandings within the community. Informant 12 observed that these collaborative efforts encourage a shared responsibility for maintaining peace, which is essential for the stability of the region.

Informant 15 in Jalingo further emphasised the effectiveness of the government's strategies in promoting peace and stability. She noted that the integration of various stakeholders, including religious and traditional leaders, has reinforced the legitimacy of peacebuilding initiatives. Their involvement has been crucial in fostering acceptance and adherence to peace agreements among community members. Informant 17 pointed out that Jalingo stands out as one of the local government areas with a low conflict rate, which they attribute to the successful implementation of these strategies. Informant 20 stressed that the region is experiencing sustainable peace, largely due to the collaborative efforts spearheaded by the government and its partners.

4. Challenges of Using Communication Strategies for Peacebuilding in Taraba State

Despite the positive outcomes associated with the peacebuilding communication strategies, several challenges persist, as highlighted by the Stakeholders. Informant 5 from Sardauna identified political interference as a significant obstacle. He explained that certain politicians often attempt to politicise peace initiatives, undermining genuine efforts to foster dialogue among conflicting parties. This interference can create divisions within the community, hindering the establishment of a cohesive peace process. Informant 5 stressed the importance of keeping peacebuilding efforts apolitical to ensure their effectiveness.

Informant 13 in Wukari echoed this concern by pointing out logistical challenges that impede the effectiveness of communication strategies. He highlighted the need for improved transportation and resources to facilitate the participation of community members from remote areas in peacebuilding meetings. When individuals from these communities are unable to attend due to logistical constraints, their perspectives are excluded from important discussions, potentially leading to disenfranchisement and resentment. Informant 13 suggested that the government should provide transportation allowances and other supports to encourage broader participation in peace initiatives.

Informant 19 in Jalingo raised additional challenges regarding the lack of proactive security responses during conflicts. He explained that delays in security interventions can exacerbate tensions, allowing minor disputes to escalate into more significant conflicts. The reliability of security agencies in quickly addressing emerging issues is crucial for the success of peacebuilding communication strategies. Furthermore, Informants 20, 21, 9 and 6 mentioned that adherence to peace agreements is another challenge; when parties fail to honour their commitments, it erodes trust and can lead to a resurgence of conflict.

The findings of this study reveal that the Taraba State government has implemented various peacebuilding communication strategies to promote peace and stability in the state. According to the stakeholders interviewed, these strategies include leveraging local leadership, forming peace committees, conducting town hall meetings, and using peace jingles to promote messages of unity and reconciliation.

The study also found that the extent of adoption of communication strategies for peacebuilding varies across local government areas, with some areas experiencing more success than others. This variation may be attributed to factors such as political interference, logistical challenges, and lack of proactive security responses during conflicts.

The study's findings also suggest that the peacebuilding strategies implemented by the Taraba State government have advanced peace and stability in the state. The stakeholders reported that the government's initiatives have fostered a sense of community ownership in the peacebuilding process, promoted harmony among diverse groups, and encouraged collaborative efforts to maintain peace.

The findings of this study align with existing literature on peacebuilding in several key ways. Firstly, the emphasis on engaging local communities and stakeholders in the peacebuilding process is a common thread throughout the study and existing literature. For instance, John (2023) highlights the importance of involving local communities in peacebuilding efforts, which is reflected in the study's finding that the Taraba State government's peacebuilding strategies have been effective in promoting peace and stability through community engagement.

Secondly, the study's finding that peacebuilding efforts can be hindered by challenges such as political interference, logistical constraints, and lack of proactive security responses during conflicts is also echoed in existing literature. Nnabuihe (2024) and Tanko (2021) note that these challenges can undermine peacebuilding efforts, which is consistent with the study's finding that these challenges have hindered the effectiveness of peacebuilding communication strategies in Taraba State.

Furthermore, the study's emphasis on the importance of promoting social cohesion and community engagement in peacebuilding efforts is also reflected in existing literature. Yorlay (2024) highlight the importance of building social cohesion and promoting community engagement in peacebuilding efforts, which is consistent with the study's finding that the Taraba State government's peacebuilding strategies have promoted harmony among diverse groups and encouraged collaborative efforts to maintain peace.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study on Stakeholders' Perceptions of Government Peacebuilding Communication Strategies in Taraba State reveals that the Taraba State government has implemented various peacebuilding communication strategies to promote peace and stability in the state. These strategies include leveraging local leadership, forming peace committees, conducting town hall meetings, and using peace jingles to promote messages of unity and reconciliation. While the study highlights the effectiveness of these strategies in promoting peace and stability, it also identifies challenges such as political interference, logistical constraints, and lack of proactive security responses during conflicts that hinder their effectiveness. The study concludes that a comprehensive and inclusive approach to peacebuilding that addresses the root causes of conflict and promotes social cohesion and community engagement is essential for promoting sustainable peace in Taraba State. In terms of limitations, methodologically, the focus on a single state and the small sample used in the research means that generalisations of findings are limited. In addition, even with triangulation, the reliance on a respondents' self-reported data means that there is the potential for social desirability bias. Future researches should therefore be carried out with respect to research design in other states to determine the potential for causal relationships in this peacebuilding research. More deeply, the findings should compel research in peace communication of governmental messages, but more deeply in communication theories that focus on the credibility of the source.

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that the Taraba state government should ensure that peacebuilding efforts are apolitical and free from political interference. This can be achieved by establishing clear guidelines and protocols for peacebuilding initiatives and ensuring that all stakeholders are held accountable for their actions. Furthermore, local leaders and community members should be actively engaged in peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, security agencies should be proactive in responding to conflicts and providing security support to peacebuilding initiatives.

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