

ASSESSING THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF USING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR PEACEBUILDING IN TARABA STATE: A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study critically examines the application of government's communication strategies in the bid to establish peace and stability in Taraba State. To be precise, the study was conducted to assess the impact of the application of government's peacebuilding communication strategies in Taraba State and the constraints that characterized the use of communication strategies in building peace and stability in the state. The study is anchored on Peace Journalism Theory. A survey research design was adopted, and 600 respondents were selected via a random sampling technique from three Local Government Areas of Taraba State. The tool of data collection was the questionnaire. From a total of 600 respondents that responded to the questions, 578 respondents gave valid answer that were analyzed using simple percentage and tables. The analysis of the data collected shows that government's communication strategy was successful in bringing peace and stability in Taraba State. It shows that peace talks meeting and commission of inquiry have been most frequently used by the government in bringing peace in Taraba State while limitations such as poor access to communication channels, poor reception of government's messages and lack of confidence in government communication have constrained its peacebuilding effort. The recommendation based on the study indicated that there is need for a better communication strategy on the part of the Taraba State Government on how to reach respondents with poor access to communication channels and with the lack of confidence in government's communication.

Keywords: *Peacebuilding; Communication Strategies; Taraba State, Conflict Resolution; Peace Journalism*

Penilaian terhadap Cabaran dan Peluang dalam Penggunaan Strategi Komunikasi bagi Usaha Pembinaan Keamanan di Negeri Taraba: Satu Analisis Deskriptif

Abstrak

Kajian ini meneliti secara kritikal aplikasi strategi komunikasi kerajaan dalam usaha mewujudkan keamanan dan kestabilan di Negeri Taraba. Secara khususnya, kajian ini dijalankan untuk menilai impak penggunaan strategi komunikasi pembinaan keamanan oleh kerajaan di Negeri Taraba serta kekangan yang mencirikan penggunaan strategi komunikasi dalam membina keamanan dan kestabilan di negeri tersebut. Kajian ini berlandaskan Teori Kewartawanan Keamanan. Reka bentuk kajian tinjauan telah digunakan, dan seramai 600 responden dipilih melalui teknik persampelan rawak daripada tiga Kawasan Kerajaan Tempatan di Negeri Taraba. Instrumen pengumpulan data ialah soal selidik. Daripada jumlah 600 responden yang menjawab soalan, seramai 578 responden memberikan jawapan yang sah dan dianalisis menggunakan peratusan mudah dan jadual. Analisis data yang dikumpulkan menunjukkan bahawa strategi komunikasi kerajaan berjaya dalam membawa keamanan dan kestabilan di Negeri Taraba. Dapatan juga menunjukkan bahawa pertemuan rundingan damai dan penubuhan suruhanjaya siasatan merupakan pendekatan yang paling kerap digunakan oleh kerajaan dalam usaha membawa keamanan di Negeri Taraba. Walau bagaimanapun, kekangan seperti akses yang terhad kepada saluran komunikasi, penerimaan mesej kerajaan yang lemah, serta kurangnya keyakinan terhadap komunikasi kerajaan telah membataskan usaha pembinaan keamanan tersebut. Cadangan berdasarkan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa terdapat keperluan untuk strategi komunikasi yang lebih baik oleh Kerajaan Negeri Taraba bagi mencapai responden yang mempunyai akses terhad kepada saluran komunikasi serta bagi menangani kekurangan keyakinan terhadap komunikasi kerajaan.

Kata Kunci: Keamanan; Komunikasi; Taraba , Penyelesaian Konflik; Kewartawanan Keamanan

Introduction

The incessant and often intractable conflicts plaguing Nigeria and many other states in sub-Saharan Africa continue to be a serious threat to the governance, development, and safety of these states and their people. These various typologies of conflict have manifested in diverse ways, such as ethno-religious conflict, political conflicts, resource conflicts and inter-communal conflict. Indeed, as IISS (2022) observes, sub-Saharan

Africa continues to be the world's worst-affected continent, with the most conflict-ridden countries being South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, DRC and CAR. According to the Global Peace Index (2022, in IISS, 2022), Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso and Somalia rank among the top countries that are adversely affected by terrorism. Scholars argue that beyond the structural underpinnings of conflict like inequalities, bad governance and socioeconomic marginalization, communication plays a vital role in the escalation, interpretation and resolution of conflicts (Egwa & Asemah, 2023; Amnesty International, 2021), thus making communication an integral aspect of peacebuilding initiatives in conflict-ridden states.

The security profile of Nigeria adequately portrays the ongoing dynamics of conflict where several types of conflict simultaneously occur-Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East, banditry and kidnapping in most of the northern regions, secessionist movements in the South, farmer-herder conflicts in the middle belt and ethnic/religious strife in many other areas, all of which pose an enduring challenge to the integrity of the state (Nnabuihe, 2024). Indeed, the scholar asserts that the increasing proliferation of insurgency, banditry and secessionist movements has now made insecurity a national predicament with attendant far-reaching consequences for people, polity, economy and space. From physical harm to death, displacement to erosion of trust among communities, only the embrace of comprehensive peacebuilding efforts, which must include communication strategies, could address this issue effectively, rather than solely relying on security-related ones.

The North-East of the country bears witness to how conflict can profoundly affect people's social and economic lives. UN (2022) reports that more than 8 million people are dependent on humanitarian aid in the North-East of the country. The persistence of insurgency leaves over hundreds of thousands hungry, and women and children, the most vulnerable in IDP camps, are subjected to violence and abuse (Ogbonna & Kagu, 2024). Since 2009, an estimated figure of over 20,000 people has been killed, 2.5 million displaced, whilst some areas like the Lake Chad Basin have suffered so much in the economic activities sector (Yacob-Haliso, 2021; Ja'afaru, 2021). These events strongly call for more durable dialogue-centered peacebuilding processes beyond the security focus.

Taraba State is an opportune case for the examination of this dynamic, as although not featured as prominently in national discourse as other states on conflict, it is equally being ravaged by sequential ethnic and farmer-herder conflicts, banditry and kidnappings in some of its LGAs such as Wukari, Takum, Bali, Donga, Lau and Sardauna (Deji & Shumo,

2021). With over eighty ethnic groups largely divided between Christianity and Islam, the state has high socio-identity stakes in the conflict process, with localized conflicts escalating to ethnic and religious violence and thus deep mistrust among groups (Deji & Shumo, 2021). Communication strategies must therefore be central to building peace here. In peace-building literature, communication for peace-building, as conceived by John (2023) and Taylor (2023) denotes the deliberate deployment of communication strategies or tools (including dialog platforms, media discourse, public interaction and communication campaigns), aimed at resolving or transforming conflicts, achieving reconciliation and understanding between warring parties. To achieve peace, Inobemhe (2025) avers that the effectiveness of these communicative strategies is determined by factors such as their impact on the attitudes of people, the level of community participation in peace initiatives and their capacity to reduce inter-group animosity, which can be conditioned by media reliability, cultural context, or how successful the organization/institution responsible for communication builds local trust.

Although the field of peace studies is awash with literature on the role of communication in peacebuilding, very few link the use of these communicative strategies to sub-national states in protracted conflict. For example Gjerazi (2023) focuses on the media in peace and conflict discourse, Johnson (2023) explores the concept of reconciliation and governance as crucial components of peacebuilding efforts whereas Usman, Abdullahi and Musa (2023) examine peacebuilding in the North East of Nigeria but hardly define the role of communication at the local level in the process, primarily dealing with government sponsored projects or internationally supported ones, and thereby falls short of a holistic exploration of communication strategies at the state level.

The non-existence of such an examination can only be most detrimental because, in so doing, even the most well-intended peace-building effort may be sabotaged. In situations where communicative strategies fail to consider local issues and, in so doing, resort to a top-down process of disseminating messages, the communities often see the exercise as being uninformed and far removed from their realities and thus tend not to embrace it. In states such as Taraba, which is characterized by complex ethnic inter-relations and historical identities that drive conflict dynamics, communication must be community-centered and sensitive to local realities; it is, however, these constraints and opportunities that limit the use of communication strategies that remain underexplored.

The objective of this study, therefore, is to examine and analyze communication strategies and the peacebuilding process in Taraba State by investigating how dialogue, reconciliation and community engagement are employed within the region through communication strategies. This paper, therefore, contributes to the scholarship on communication by empirically assessing how communication can be utilized to facilitate the transformation of conflict at the state level.

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Find out the level to which Taraba State government's peacebuilding communication strategies have advanced peace and stability in the state.
2. Ascertain the challenges of using communication strategies for peacebuilding in Taraba State.

Literature Review

An overview of Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding emerged as a concept and strategy of dealing with violent conflicts, specifically in societies with recurrent protracted political, ethnic and communal discord. There is an agreement among scholars that peacebuilding is not simply ending the conflict but building a sustainable mechanism for the prevention of future conflicts. As Saaïda (2023) defined peacebuilding as, a cluster of mechanisms and processes, such as dispute resolution, mediation, and reconciliation, aimed at addressing and resolving the causes of societal violent conflict. Likewise, Johnson (2023) states that peacebuilding includes various phases which range from post-conflict reconstruction and development, reconciliation, to institutional reforms with the objective of building trust in public and institutions. Furthermore, the United Nations (2022) argued that the sustainability of peacebuilding efforts is largely dependent on the coordination of political, social and humanitarian interventions in an attempt to transform and overcome the structural causes of prolonged conflicts.

The importance of peacebuilding can be seen as pressing in African societies due to the pervasive existence of violent conflict in African countries. Several reports by International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS, 2022) and Amnesty International (2021) states that a considerable number of sub-Saharan African states still experience armed conflict, and this has contributed significantly to several socio economic setback in countries, for instance ethnic rivalry, competition over scarce resources, and political exclusionism among the various groups in the

Nigerian State has resulted in huge humanitarian and security crises (Tanko, 2021; Nnabuihe, 2024), and also creates long-term repercussions on individual and society, such as displacement, loss of confidence, and socio-economic challenge (Ogbonna & Kagu, 2024; Yacob-Haliso, 2021), and for this, much attention is currently paid to sustainable peacebuilding frameworks incorporating both institutional reforms and community participation (Akanke, Kaye & Rukuni, 2021; Uwakwe, Ikemereh & Efe, 2022).

But despite this growing literature on the concept and institutions of peacebuilding, there seems to be a notable vacuum in the role and impact of communication on the success and failure of peacebuilding. It is generally recognized that communication is key to mobilizing and winning over public participation in peace-building activities, but literature on the effect of communication strategy on the actual peace-building process has been minimal. For instance, despite some literature critique about the structural approach to peacebuilding efforts in Nigeria (Nwokolo, 2020), there have not been substantial discussions on the role and influence of communication on the process. This study intends to fill this research gap by critically examining the communication strategies of the Taraba state government and their effect on peacebuilding efforts in Taraba State.

Concept of Communication Strategies

Communication strategies are organized, systematic, and deliberate efforts to communicate a message from an organization or an institution to specific target groups to attain communication objectives. Effective communication is all about delivering a message in a way that reaches its target audiences for them to understand, get involved and change their behaviors (Taylor, 2023). Communication strategy is one element in the communication field that involves selecting appropriate communication channels, framing effective messages, and reaching target audiences. Communication strategies are critical elements to organizations and institutions, as they determine what influence messages create on the public's behaviors and perceptions (Inobemhe et al., 2024).

Communication strategies are important tools in contexts such as conflicts and peacebuilding. This is because messages associated with conflict and peace processes will directly contribute to the public narratives about conflict, peace and reconciliation. Ja'afaru, Ekhareafu and Asemah (2025) note that communication strategies are the vehicles through which peace-building efforts take place. They further observed

that the tools help in the facilitation of communication processes, management of conflict narratives, and the promotion of unity among various groups. Gjerazi (2023) observes that for communication strategies used in conflict prevention and resolution to effectively help achieve objectives, the content and messages must be transparent, inclusive and accessible so that messages related to peace can be well conveyed to all segments of the population. Crisis and mobilization contexts similarly highlight the importance of strategic communication; according to Inobemhe et al. (2024), messages for the #EndSARS movement gained enormous popularity and attention due to the role of social media in mobilizing communication, which indicates the utility of communication channels in facilitating participation and mobilizing the public to partake in socio-political affairs.

Despite the recognition of the importance of communication strategies in conflict management and mobilization, some authors believe governments do not employ a systematic communication strategy toward peacebuilding projects. Dare and Aremu (2023) argue that security interventions are the most recurrent government approaches to escalating communal conflicts in Nigeria, with no regard for communication strategies to encourage participation and create mutual understanding. Likewise, Uzuegbunam and Omenugha (2018) noted that communication strategies were not used to the optimum extent by the old and new media in Nigeria, thereby not helping in building a functional peace-building communication framework. Such inadequacies may mean that communication strategies can affect the outcome of the peace-building programs negatively. Thus, this study examined the extent to which the Taraba State government uses its communication strategies in informing Taraba citizens of peacebuilding messages.

Relevance of Peacebuilding in Areas Prone to Chronic Violent Conflict

The relevance of peacebuilding in societies experiencing frequent violent conflicts is enormous. These conflicts not only destabilize the political institutions and the structures of governance, but they often trigger humanitarian crises, which result in severe consequences on the general well-being of every member of the society. It has been established that chronic conflict results in widespread displacement, severe poverty and eventually the destruction of social structures and relationships (Ogbonna & Kagu, 2024; Yacob-Haliso, 2021). Nigeria has been affected by various conflicts ranging from insurgencies and resource-based conflicts to ethnic and communal conflicts that have threatened its integrity and stability (Tanko, 2021; Nnabuihe, 2024).

In light of this phenomenon, it becomes expedient to engage in various peace building initiatives that would assist in restoring socio-political stability and social harmony among people. According to Uwakwe, Ikemereh and Efe (2022), most social intervention projects or programs by the Nigerian government in relation to peacebuilding are put in place to solve socioeconomic differences, which could breed conflict. To some extent, Usman, Abdullahi and Musa (2023) affirmed the importance of strategic peace building in conflict resolution and mitigation as shown in their analysis of post conflict recovery strategies, which were used in the North East region of Nigeria following the Boko Haram insurgency. On a local level, Akande, Kaye and Rukuni (2021) stressed the importance of grassroots peacebuilding initiatives as a way to foster social cohesion and reconciliation efforts within communities.

However, these programs may not achieve their objectives if there is no general awareness of them or public participation. Scholarly findings suggest that communities have the capacity to champion peacebuilding programs, but their lack of knowledge concerning such efforts causes distrust of those advocating for peace (Dyikuk & Obateru, 2021). This has been observed to be more prevalent in regions with extreme ethnic and communal animosities. Thus, while most studies have underlined the importance of peace building, few researchers have analyzed the role of the communication process toward community participation in peace building initiatives; therefore, this study endeavors to throw more light on how the communication strategies of the Taraba State government affect the propagation of messages related to peace building in the state.

Role of Communication in Social Change

Communication causes change by framing reality and motivating the actions of an audience, thereby changing how an individual perceives and views society. In relation to conflict-affected societies, communication processes and strategies create the public perceptions and frames concerning conflict, reconstruction and responsibility among the affected people. Ja'afaru (2021) asserts that the frames generated by the media affect people's perception of conflict and can instigate or fuel a conflict or facilitate its resolution. Peterson et al., (2023) think that media reforms and conflict-sensitive reporting could be beneficial in enabling peaceful society creation. Similarly, according to Inobemhe, Ja'afaru and Santas (2024), the role of mass media in fostering national unity by creating frames that bridge divides and promote harmony is inevitable. Communication strategies and the use of media affect what the populace believes is significant. According to Asemah and Edegoh

(2012), the mass media can promote agenda setting and conflict resolution through Public Discourse of contentious issues. Salaudeen et al. (2020) reiterated the importance of mass media credibility when stating the impact on how the public receives messages delivered.

However, studies show that mass media are not always used for promoting communication and messages in such a way as to create peace between and among conflicting societies. For example, Bakenne and Fadipe (2024) stated that the media can be accused of encouraging the conflicts if the reportage does not consider context-sensitive issues involved. Therefore, the media cannot guarantee efficient communication, but rather can stimulate conflict. The extent to which the Nigerian media uses its medium to promote conflict resolution and peacebuilding strategies remains undefined. The study by Uzuegbunam and Omenugha (2018) revealed that while there is immense potential of the new media to disseminate peacebuilding messages to the public, its full capacity hasn't been exploited yet. Thus, the study aims to provide information on the influence of communication strategies and mechanisms employed by the Taraba State government in molding public perception toward peaceful social change via the mediation of peace-building messages.

Communication in Post-Conflict Societies

The reconstruction phase in the post-conflict world is marked by several socio, psychophysical and institutional challenges which may demand a targeted and pre-planned communication process. Most societies after extensive conflict are always susceptible to the formation of mistrust and trauma, which may hinder reconstruction efforts (Ogbonna & Kagu, 2024; Yacob-Haliso, 2021). This means communication is crucial toward the rebuilding of societal ties, re-creation of mutual trust and facilitation of discourse to achieve the desired goal. Saaida (2023) admits that skillful communication channels are crucial in negotiation and conflict resolution in order to build cooperation amongst the disputing parties.

Studies show that communication in post-conflict societies is highly relevant in Nigeria. Dyikuk and Obateru (2021) argue that media organizations provide a conducive environment for the peace-building communication process and create frames for ethnicities in Taraba State. Bossey, Obaje and Asemah (2024) examine how mass media such as radio programs have a strong influence on people towards peacebuilding processes in communities such as those in Niger Delta through mobilization efforts targeted at women's participation. This indicates the capability of the media to foster societal relationships.

While communication is known to be highly relevant to the peacebuilding process in post-conflict societies, research about the role of government communication strategies on peacebuilding programs has remained empirical, with little attention given to how it affects individual participants. With that gap in place, this study sought to explore how communication strategies in the hands of the Taraba State government affect the public's perception of clarity and credibility of messages relating to peacebuilding programs and processes.

Theoretical Framework

Peace Journalism Theory

The peace journalism theory is a groundbreaking approach to news reporting that prioritizes nonviolent communication, constructive conflict coverage, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. Introduced by Johan Galtung in 1985, this theory posits that journalism can shape public opinion and influence policy by focusing on peace efforts and highlighting nonviolent alternatives. Unlike traditional conflict journalism, which often spreads hostilities and harm, peace journalism emphasizes the importance of promoting peace and understanding.

Peace journalism theory encourages journalists to place emphasis on peace initiatives, peacebuilding, and reconciliation by capturing diverse views in their reportage. People-oriented and solution-focused reporting should be prioritized to shift the narrative from conflict to peace. This approach seeks to reassess media coverage of conflicts, emphasizing peace and knowledgeable public interaction.

According to Sakai (2022), peacebuilding involves bridging basic human needs and power to create a sustainable peace. In the context of Taraba State, where conflict is a frequent occurrence, peace journalism theory can facilitate conflict resolution and create a substantial understanding among the various ethno-religious and social institutions in the state. The theory can support constructive conflict reporting, post-conflict reforms, international and national peacekeeping efforts.

Peace journalism theory is critical to studies on peacebuilding and conflict resolution. However, it has been criticized for selective reporting, focusing solely on peace accords, conflict resolution, and building sustainable peace while ignoring other vital aspects of an event or a story (Salaudeen et al., 2020). Despite this limitation, the theory provides a foundation upon which the peacebuilding communication of Taraba State government can be assessed.

The relationship between peace journalism theory and peacebuilding communication strategies of Taraba State Government is significant. By emphasizing peace initiatives and reconciliation, peace journalism can support the government's peacebuilding efforts. The theory can also help in gaining a good grasp of the Taraba State government peacebuilding communication strategies in terms of its effectiveness in promoting peaceful narrative in the state and the manner public opinion is being shaped.

In the context of Taraba State, peace journalism theory can be applied to promote peacebuilding communication strategies that are people-oriented and solution-focused. By prioritizing peace initiatives and reconciliation, journalists can help to create a substantial understanding among the various ethno-religious and social institutions in the state (Uwakwe, Ikemereh & Efe, 2022). This approach can support constructive conflict reporting and post-conflict reforms, ultimately contributing to the growth and development of the state.

Applied to this study, the theory helps us understand whether Taraba State Government communications focus more on peacebuilding discourses such as dialogue, negotiation and reconciliation, than on the escalation of the conflict and if its communication efforts build on or erode the existing peace mechanisms. Thus, the variables are conceptualized and operationalized according to peace journalism theory, which focus on the clear message that would inform understanding and encourage Participation in peace building activities. On this basis, communication from the state government is understood according to the perceptions of respondents, to determine whether it has succeeded in inculcating peace narratives.

Methodology

This research design was a survey research design using a structured questionnaire to administer and gather information from the respondents from three LGAs in Taraba State of Nigeria, namely: Jalingo, Sardauna and Wukari, representing the three senatorial zones. These LGAs, according to NPC, have populations of 220,700; 352,900 and 374,800 respectively, which adds up to 948,400 people. The sample size was determined using Australian Calculator with 95% confident level, 0.5 proportion, and 0.04 margin of error to yield 600 respondents. Random sampling was used to give each person in the population an equal chance of being selected. Nevertheless, this research could not carry out

the research as a fully stratified and cluster research design; there was no structured approach to sampling from clusters but a limited use of easily reachable clusters in the community for obtaining sample in each LGA.

A pilot study of 30 respondents was carried out in Adamawa State (neighboring state and shares socio-cultural context with Taraba). The pilot was to check if the questions in the questionnaire were clearly formulated and whether the questionnaire items were reliable. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha yielded 0.82, meaning the items are internally consistent. In the main study, the questionnaire was administered in person by a research assistant and the response rate was 96.3%; 578 of the questionnaires distributed were filled and returned. Data collected was analyzed using simple percentages and frequency tables. No inferential statistics (Chi-square, Correlation, Regression, etc.) were used for analysis.

This study measured such concept as "peace advancement" using Likert-type scale which respondents interpreted in a subjective manner. The responses obtained provide only on the extent to which government communication is considered helpful and effective by respondents; they do not establish media framing of events or actions taken by government. Additionally, peace journalism theory is traditionally centered on media and processes, but here the concept measured was perceived as government communication by the public and not media framing.

Although no other operationalization of concepts beyond items in a questionnaire was undertaken, the use of a pilot study, Likert-scale items and random sampling allow the researcher to get some understanding on public's perception of government's communication on peacebuilding in Taraba State.

After the administration of questionnaire in the field, the gathered copies of questionnaire were examined for completeness and internal consistency. A total of 578 copies of questionnaire were valid and suitable for analysis among the questionnaires distributed. Responses in each questionnaire were coded and entered into statistical spreadsheet for analysis. For the likert type items in the questionnaire, response options were assigned numerical value. Strong Agree (SA)=5, Agree (A)=4, Neutral (N)=3, Disagree (D)=2, Strong Disagree (SD)=1. This coding process served to convert opinions into quantitative figures that could be subjected to descriptive statistical analysis.

The responses were then compiled under relevant categories based on the main variables of the study (communication strategies, the effectivity of communication strategies, the result of the communication intervention and the difficulties experienced) according to the questionnaire layout and the aim of the research to capture different dimensions on government's communication strategies for peace building in Taraba State. Frequencies of responses in each category were obtained and percentages were calculated using:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Frequency of response}}{578} \times 100$$

The interpretation was based on combining strongly agree with agree as representing approval and strongly disagree with disagree as representing disapproval, with neutral responses presented separately. The frequencies and percentages obtained were presented in statistical tables in the result section. This is in line with practices in the analysis of likert scale data in communication studies as a means of arriving at the results of survey (Asemah & Nwaoboli, 2024, Nwaoboli & Asemah, 2023).

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Forms of Peacebuilding Communication Strategies Adopted by the government

Categories	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Peacebuilding consultants	94	16.3	16.3	16.3
Commission of inquiry	188	32.5	32.5	48.8
Ceasefire agreement	18	3.1	3.1	51.9
Peace dialogue meeting	212	36.7	36.7	88.6
Meditation workshops	48	8.3	8.3	96.9
Peace and conflict resolution	18	3.1	3.1	100.0
Total	578	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

As Table 1 illustrates, the government utilized different strategies of peacebuilding communication, the ones which were most frequently applied were peace dialogue meetings (36.7%) and commissions of inquiry (32.5%). This means the government would not leave any aspect unattended in relation to conflict and the promotion of peace, and would consult.

*Table 2: The Government's Communication Strategies have
Advanced Peace and Stability in Taraba State*

Categories	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	322	55.7	55.7	55.7
Agree	174	30.1	30.1	30.1
Undecided	50	8.7	8.7	8.7
Disagree	21	3.6	3.6	3.6
Strongly Disagree	11	1.9	1.9	1.9
Total	578	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

As reflected in Table 2, the large percentage of the respondents who 'strongly agree' (55.7%) and 'agree' (30.1%) to the statement that the government has been promoting peace and stability in Taraba State implies that the people in the community feel that the communication strategies adopted by the government is effective in bringing peace and stability in the State.

*Table 3: Ways Government's Communication Strategies have been Effective in
Advancing Peace and Stability*

Categories	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Sense of inclusivity instilled in all	95	16.4	16.4	16.4
Restoration of inter-ethnic mutual trust	167	28.9	28.9	28.9
Complex interest is vanquished	16	2.8	2.8	2.8
Traditional leader better equipped with peace resolution skills	167	28.9	28.9	28.9
Political leader better equipped with peace	133	23.0	23.0	23.0

resolution skills			
Total	578	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

According to the results in Table 3, people think government communication efforts have successfully restored inter-ethnic mutual trust (28.9%) and have strengthened the skills of traditional leaders in peacebuilding (28.9%). It appears the communication strategies used by the government are successfully capacitating traditional leaders. Re-instating trust between ethnic groups is essential to building peace, and government strategies seem to have been influential in this respect.

Table 4: Challenges of Using Communication Strategies for Peacebuilding in Taraba State

Categories	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lack of trust in government communication	120	20.8	20.8	20.8
Language barriers among ethnic groups	95	16.4	16.4	37.2
Limited access to communication channels	140	24.3	24.3	61.5
Misinterpretation of messages	100	17.3	17.3	78.8
Political manipulation of peace messages	90	15.6	15.6	94.4
Resistance to change from entrenched interests	33	5.7	5.7	100.0
Total	578	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

From the results obtained in Table 4 the major issues hindering the use of communication strategies for peacebuilding in Taraba State are inability to access the channels of communication (24.3%), lack of confidence in government's communication (20.8%) and the inability to understand the messages (17.3%). It is, however, envisaged that with a greater sense of urgency, the government will set in motion plans for restoration of confidence on its communication strategies through the use of effective communication networks.

The present research reports significant outcomes concerning the use of communication strategies for peacebuilding in Taraba State Nigeria.

From the present research, it can be established that several forms of using communication strategies for peacebuilding were employed by the government, such as dialogue meetings, commission of enquiry, cease-fire agreements, mediation workshops and several others. Peace dialogue meetings and commissions of enquiry were found to be most frequently used strategies. This implies that the government considered consultative methods as paramount to conflict resolutions and fostering of peace.

According to Inobemhe, Ja'afaru and Asemah (2024), the role of community media in the peacebuilding process is significant because of its ability to enhance community communication and participation. This reflects directly what the government in Taraba State Nigeria employed in peacebuilding with the use of communication strategies such as; dialogue meetings, commission of enquiry, etc.

The report shows a greater number of respondents who believed that, using communication strategies, progress and peace were restored in Taraba State, Nigeria. The result clearly reveals people's beliefs, attitudes, and opinions towards communication strategies, which are more positive. As noted by Galtung and Fischer (2013), goals of peacebuilding should be, in addition, the promotion of positive peace where the absence of structural violence, social justice, respect for human rights, etc., is established. It has been observed that the government's communication strategies are already providing peace in Taraba State.

The study also indicates that using communication strategies, inter-ethnic mutual trust was rebuilt, while traditional rulers have been trained in conflict resolution skills. It means that more than the elimination of war through communication strategies was achieved, and that the state government has also succeeded in building a capacity for conflict resolution among the traditional rulers. Sakai (2022) affirmed that effective customized peacebuilding strategies should cater to people's needs and context. These are properly addressed in the use of communication strategies for peacebuilding in Taraba State Nigeria.

The study, however, identifies some shortcomings in the use of communication strategies for peace building in Taraba State, Nigeria, such as: inability to access the communication channels (24.3%), lack of confidence in the government's communication (20.8%), and inability to understand the message (17.3%). It is the belief of Uzuegbunam and Omenugha (2018) that, in Nigeria, the role of mainstream media and social media, if well utilized, can build a very significant path to

peacebuilding strategies, while these shortcomings can obstruct them from performing their roles to an optimum. Therefore, the government has to ensure and make it a priority to build trust and develop an effective communication network to combat the problems stated above. The result of the study about empowering traditional rulers with peacebuilding skills and restoring inter-ethnic mutual trust has revealed the importance of communication strategies in peacebuilding in Taraba State, Nigeria. The importance of communication strategies in peace building should focus more on establishing mutual relationship among groups and rebuilding social cohesion. This has been observed to be true in Taraba State Nigeria as it can serve as a guide for peace-building strategies in other regions.

Conclusion and Implications

The study concluded that communication strategies have indeed helped in fostering peace and stability in the state and the most common approaches used were peace talks and commissions of inquiries. The study, however, recognizes some challenges in government communication that include access to communication channels, trust in government communication and misinterpretation of government communication messages. The recommendations put forward by the study are:

1. The Taraba State Government should embark on a communication strategy to tackle challenges of limited access to communication channels and lack of trust in government communication, using various platforms like the mass and social media to cover a wider audience and to enhance transparency and accountability of government processes.
2. Community leaders and Media practitioners should strive to improve responsible communication to help promote peace and stability in Taraba State, and this should be done through the provision of adequate and impartial information, the avoidance of provocative rhetoric and encouraging inter-ethnic/religious dialogue.

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