

ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF PLATEAU PEACEBUILDING AGENCY COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES ON THE SEARCH FOR PEACE AMONG SELECTED COMMUNITIES IN BASSA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

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Abstract

The focus of the study is on the influence of Plateau Peacebuilding Agency's (PPBA), communication strategies and the continued search for peace in Plateau State. The specific interest of the study is Bassa Local Government Area, where there have been increased conflicts between farmers and herders. The theoretical perspective that guides that study is congruity theory. The qualitative research method, with in-depth interview data collection instrument was used to get responses from 15 participants in four communities (Miango, Tahu, Rikwechongu and Zirshe), through purposive sampling technique. Findings reveal that PPBA strategies were effective in mending crisis in the affected communities. The study, therefore, recommends that there is need for more radio stations, particularly community radio to help deepen PPBA's campaigns in local languages of the people as it will bring about desired behavioural changes.

Keywords: Peace, conflicts, congruity theory, peacebuilding, communication strategies.

Introduction

The genesis of the Plateau State conflict is linked to the incident that began on the 7th of September, 2001. The incident was communal clashes between farmers and herders in Local Government like Quanpan and Shendam. Since then, the conflict has spread to nearly all the local government areas affecting lives and property worth thousands of naira. The root and immediate causes of the conflict has been attributed to political, economic and ethnic reasons, with each ethnic group claiming right. Maku (2012) posits that some factors responsible for the causes of these crises include complex configuration of the state's socio political and economic spaces in injustice and inequality coupled with wide scale corruption has led to various contestations which in some cases snowball into ethno - religious or even violent conflict. Corroborating, Ogbosor, Omale and Umar (2018) note that:

Farmers have accused the Fulani herdsmen of failing to control their cattle and of damaging crops. In turn, the Fulani accuse farmers of cattle rustling. Familiar issues relating to land and water use, obstruction of traditional migration routes, livestock theft and crop damage tend to trigger more disputes (p. 11).

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Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State has been one of the most affected by conflicts in recent times. On 24th November, 2021, two people were killed in Ancha, Miango district (AIT news). On August 2nd, 2021, herdsmen attacked several communities in Tahu ward of Bassa LGA, resulting in large scale displacement and killings; a total of 38 casualties were recorded and 1, 250 shelters were burnt down (*Premium Times*, August 2, 2021). *Vanguard* newspaper on February 16, 2021 reports that four youths were killed by suspected herdsmen that invaded Rikwechongu and Zirshe villages of Irigwe Chiefdom, Bassa LGA of Plateau State in the earlier hours of yesterday. Others are 7-year-old, three others killed in Plateau (*Premium Times*, June 29, 2021); gunmen attack Plateau community, kill 7, raze over 275 houses (*Vanguard*, August 2, 2021); three dead, houses burnt as Fulani herdsmen attack Plateau Community (*Sahara Reporters*, July 30, 2021); a total of 40 persons of Irigwe ethnic nationality in Plateau State have been reportedly killed in attacks by Fulani herdsmen in the Bassa LGA in the past four months (*The Punch*, June 2, 2021); 7, 576 houses destroyed, 548 killed in Plateau community in four years-report (*The Guardian*, 11 September, 2021). The newspaper further notes that the 7, 576 houses destroyed and 548 people killed are in Bassa LGA of Plateau State.

Peace is one of the vital factors contributing to quality life; a peaceful environment plays a significant role for the development of an individual, of the society and the country, since it affects all aspects of economic and social development in a country (Youth Peace Ambassador Network, 2020). On this basis, the Plateau Peace Building Agency, (PPBA), was set on February 2, 2016 with the mandate to promote the culture of peace and harmonious coexistence among the various ethno-religious divides on the Plateau. This means the Agency was established as a proactive response to the challenges of protracted violent conflict in the state.

One of the strategies the Agency adopts to achieve its mandate is communication. Right from the time immemorial, man has found communication an important tool to perform his activity. No matter the cultural, religious, economic and social settings of man, he has used communication to interact with others. Through the times and tides of life, communication have developed to becoming as indispensable tool in all fields of endeavour from the home front to the business world, sports, agriculture, entertainment and in terms of conflict resolution (Olubunmi, Ofurum and Tob, 2016). The basic function of communication could be to share information with groups, individuals either within or across national frontiers. No matter the way a communication process goes, such a communication process must have an objective to achieve. Miller (1980) cited in Olubunmi, Ofurum and Tob (2016) explain that communication exerts three different effects; shaping, reinforcing and change responses. Such responses are modified by symbolic messages which are sometimes linked with cohesive elements but most often involves appealing to the reason and emotions of the target audience. It is on this note that this study aims at examining the influence of Plateau Peace Building Agency's communication strategies on the continued search for peace among select communities in Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Statement of the Problem

Peace mediators are constantly engaged in careful package of communication materials and rhetoric to calm the nerves of troubled members of communities to avert further destruction of lives and property. Through these techniques, peace mediators tend to have the ability to change people's behaviour for the better.

Scholars and organisations have conducted studies on conflict resolution strategies (McCullum-Larence, 2014; Search for Common Ground, n.d; Asemah and Edegoh, 2012; Nwankwo, Ayodiuno, Ali and Madu, 2020 & Ogbzor, Omale and Umar, 2018). McCullum-Larence study objective was on peace communication; Search for Common Ground investigation was on communication for peace building: practices, trends and challenges; that of Asemah and Edogoh focused on mass media agenda and conflict resolution in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria; Nwankwo, Ayodiuno, Ali and Madu, study dwelled on farmer-herder conflict: the politics of media discourse in Nigeria while the study by Ogbzor, Omale and Umar, focused on building bridges between herders and farmers in Plateau, Nasarawa, and Kaduna States.

With all these efforts by researchers, there is still a gap in knowledge concerning the influence of communication strategies used by Plateau Peacebuilding Agency in addressing conflict in Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State. This is, therefore, the focus of this study.

Objectives of the Study

The study was anchored on the following objectives:

- i. To examine the awareness of Plateau Peace Building Agency among the people of Bassa LGA.
- ii. To ascertain the kind of communication strategies used by PPBA in Bassa LGA.
- iii. To determine the frequency of peace communication strategies used by PPBA in Bassa LGA.
- iv. To assess the influence of such communication strategies on members of the affected communities.

Scope of the Study

Four communities were used as the study's scope. These communities were Miango, Tahu, Rikwechongu and Zirshe. Members of these communities were studied because they were among the most affected by conflict.

Review of Literature

Communication Strategies Explained

In seeking for peace, communication plays a significant role most of which are based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. These various tools and methods are determined by the location, demographics and psychographics of members of communities on which interventions are being done. Strategy can be defined as a plan of action, intended to accomplish a specific goal. To Coldevin (2003, p.45), "strategies ranged from multi-media

campaigns to support for groups conducted by extension agents, and materials to strengthen interpersonal communication". While Servaes (2002) observed that, "in decision making and strategy development, needs are prioritized, the most important development or project objective are selected to be addressed" (p. 10). A communication strategy therefore identifies the key stakeholders for whom the communication is meant, the key messages to be sent to them and specific channels which are considered appropriate to reach the target communities. Brenna and Barnett (2009, para) note that the idea of using communication for variety of issues including in terms of peace talks and media grew out of research findings, which content that audience-oriented communication strategies could play an important role in bringing about lasting peace in troubled areas.

The communication strategy also states ways and means through which its success or failure will be measured, and the desired behavioural change expected from members of the communities it is targeted at. For a communication strategy to succeed, it should have accomplished the intended goals and objectives determined for it. Littlejohn (1999) cited in Muhaamed (2020, para) points that communication strategies usually by peace strategists range from video, radio, flip-charts, illustrated pamphlets, village theatre, multimedia strategy, group meetings among others to strengthen interpersonal communication. Over time, participatory methods are usually adopted to allow the intended beneficiaries take part in designing the goals and selecting the right communication methods to achieve set objective.

Persuasive Communication Defined

Persuasive communication gained its historical roots and grasp from rhetoric (Brinol & Richard, 2012). According to Duffy and Thorson (2015), persuasion is a symbolic process in which communicators try to convince people to change their attitudes or behaviours through the transmission of messages in an atmosphere of free choice. According to Burgoon, Birk and Pfau (1990), persuasive communication is any message that is intended to shape, reinforce, or change the responses of another or others. Such responses are modified by symbolic transactions (messages) which are sometimes, but not always, linked with coercive force (indirectly coercive) and which appeal to the reason and emotions of the target. Generally, persuasion refers to such communicative activities that are mediated. Those that are face-to-face are called compliance-gaining (Berlo, Lemert & Mertz, 1969). Persuasive communication can be targeted at:

- Cognition. Persuasion can be used to change individuals' beliefs about an object or an issue, which includes attributes, interpretation, definition, outcome, etc.
- Attitude. Persuasion can be used to change individuals' attitude toward an object or an issue, which refers to the categorization of an object or an issue along an evaluative dimension (from negative to positive).

- Behaviour. Persuasion can be used to change individuals' behaviour, which is the overt actions regarding an object or an issue (CommGAP, n.d, communication for governance and accountability programme).

Understanding Peace Communication

Peace should be the desired outcome between any conflicting parties, intercultural or otherwise. Macharia (2007) reflects on a definition from the United Nation that terms a "culture of peace" which implies "ways of life" and thinking that "reject(s) violence and prevent(s) conflicts....among groups and nations" (p. 9). These views reflect a global perspective of avoiding war as well as dyadic relationship perspective of managing harmony. Macharia (2007) also added that peace is "not only the absence of war, violence and hostilities, but also the enjoyment of justice, equality and the entire range of human rights and fundamental freedoms within a society" (p. 9). Mediation cannot occur without conversation. When considering how people relate to each other interpersonally, conversation is usually how people communicate, and how points can be understood or misunderstood (McCullum-Lawrence, 2014).

According to Warshel (2018), peace communication (PC) practice aims to foster behavioural and structural change to manage armed political conflicts. PC, an emerging communication sub-discipline, seeks to empirically determine the efficacy of PC practice and thus, assesses and evaluates the practice (Warshel, 2018). He further noted that conflict management and/or media professionals who design PC practice create "interventions" or "communication campaigns" to mediate between peoples in conflict. PC interventions employ a range of communication channels: face-to-face interaction, theatre, radio, television, and the Internet to achieve their aims. Well-designed efforts provide prompts for individuals to change peace building, peacemaking, and/or post conflict resolution sustainment supporting behaviours. Most PC efforts focus on changing intergroup attitudes to support peace building behaviours of cross-group friendship formation.

Global Organisations and Peacebuilding Efforts

To begin with, Akinboye and Ottoh (2005) describe a global organisation as an international body that is composed of sovereign independent states, voluntarily joining in a common pursuit of certain goals. Similarly, Palmer and Perkins (1969), say an international organisation is "any cooperative arrangement instituted among states usually by a basic agreement, to perform some mutually advantageous functions implemented through periodic meetings and staff activities." An international organisation is a formal arrangement transcending national boundaries that provides for the establishment of an institutional machinery to facilitate cooperation among members in security, economic, social, or related fields (Plano and Olton, 1988). From these perspectives, one could describe international body as a formal institution established by sovereign states through a consensus, and a solid structure, with a view to pursuing the common interest of its members.

Constructivists are in support of global bodies in terms of peace building efforts. They are of the opinion that global bodies play vital role regarding regulating states behaviour as well as modifying the identity and interest of states, which, in turn, directs states action (Mitchell, 2006). According to Laurie (2010), Gugroho (2008), talking about peace building without mentioning international organisations is incomplete. Corroborating, Keohane cited in Sinclair and Byers (2006) posit that international organizations are capable of facilitating cooperation, and without them “the prospects for our species will be very poor indeed. Global bodies such as United Nations (UN), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Union (AU), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) are involved in peace building initiatives as Nathan (2012) cited in Bayeh (2014) came up with concrete evidence and states that taking into account the progress of regional organizations in the peace and security area, most importantly, through preventive diplomacy, mediation, post-war peace-building, arms control, and disarmament, Nathan argues that it will be irrational to argue that international organizations cannot bring peace. He substantiates his argument by explaining, *inter alia*, the role of AU in Kenyan civil violence and the mediation effort of IGAD in Sudan (p. 348). Supporting, Finnemore in Hobson (2003) opines that states are “normative-adaptive entities”. Meaning that, through international organizations, states adapt international norms of appropriate state behaviour to inform their policies and domestic structures. Thus, international norms push states to cooperate internationally even though states’ power as well as utility-maximizing interests is not achieved (p. 154). Besides, since organizations feed states with information in the areas of security, they can lessen uncertainty and other risks that could emerge out of anarchy (Meierhenrich, 2012; Nathan, 2012 cited in Bayeh, 2014).

Causes of Farmers-Herders Conflicts in Nigeria

Global Heating: The issue of change in climatic conditions witnessed across the globe is one of the factors responsible for conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria. It is seen as one of the major causes of the conflict. According to Okeke (2014), northern part of Nigeria is one of the most affected in terms of global heating and the region is known for its dessert-like problem. This affects the livelihoods of many people. The amount of rain decreases every year. In the last 30 years, the raining season decreased from 150 days per year to 120 days. Similarly, United Nations cited in Shehu (2018) posits that the northern part of Nigeria which in the past six decades has witnessed desert or semi-desert nature is around 350.000 square kilometer in Nigeria. The desertification continues towards southern parts of the country with the speed of 600 meters each year.

Genyi (2017) cited in Gürsoy (2019) notes:

The effects of drought and desertification are vital for the people who earn their lives from the soil itself. Water resources and grazing lands decreased in northern parts of the country, which drifted the grazing routes of herders

into more southern areas. Similarly, the farmers look for new lands to cultivate as they lost some of their lands because of climate change. Expanding the farming lands in the areas that used to be suitable for grazing means less space for herders' animals (p.8).

Rapid Increase and Circulation of Light Weapons and Small Arms: The rapid increase and circulation of light weapons and small arms is also said to be responsible for farmers-herders conflicts as Ladi (2017) notes that, an important dimension to contemporary conflicts between Fulani pastoralists and farmers in Nigeria, and particularly in central Nigeria, is the fact that the Fulani involved in the conflicts have been fully armed upon arrival either in anticipation of a crisis, or with the intention to ignite one. Abbas (2009) has observed a similar development among the nomadic Borori people of Adamawa State. He says: The Borori people have gone from protecting their herds with spears to outfitting their young men with cheap, reliable and deadly automatic rifles (obtained) from the war zones of Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan. In this situation, their herds are often deliberately driven onto farms, and they will attack any farmer who attempts to push them out. In another report by *RipplesNigeria* (2021) claims that not only herdsmen carry guns, farmers also carry AK-47-says Gov. Lalong. "At a time there were farmers-herders clashes in Plateau, we arrested people; farmers also had AK-47 and the herdsmen were also holding AK-47 too" (*RippleNigeria*, 2021). "I am not justifying anybody to carry AK-47 but don't forget that in the course of our investigations and deliberations, it was not only Fulani herdsmen that were carrying AK-47, even farmers were carrying AK-47, *RippleNigeria* quoting the Governor of Plateau State, Simon Bako Lalong"

Cattle Rustling: Another cause of the farmers-herders crisis is stealing of cattle. According to Shehu (2018), recent developments show that there has been a rapid increase in the numbers of cattle theft. Shehu further notes that Boko Haram main source of finance is stealing of cattle. Corroborating, Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016) say cattle stealing is making herders to lose economically, and this makes them to look for another way of increasing their animals.

Ineffective or Weak Governance: According to Amnesty International (2021), the Nigerian authorities' failure to investigate communal clashes and bring perpetrators to justice has fuelled a bloody escalation in the conflict between farmers and herders across the country, resulting in at least 3, 641 deaths in the past three years and the displacement of thousands more. The body further notes that "The Nigerian government has displaced as gross incompetence and has failed in its duty to protect the lives of its population and end the intensifying conflict between herders and farmers. The authorities' lethargy has allowed impunity to flourish and the killings to spread to many parts of the country, inflicting greater suffering on communities who already live in constant fear of the next attack". Similarly, International Crisis Group (2018) notes that the failure of the federal government to prosecute past perpetrators or heed early warnings of impending attacks is responsible for continued clashes between farmers and herders.

Further, Ingawa, Ega, and Erhabor (1999) reported that the key underlying causes of farmer-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria include decline in internal discipline and social cohesion, as the adherence to the traditional rules regarding grazing periods, and the authority of the traditional rulers is breaking down. This is exacerbated by increased rent seeking of the formal and traditional authorities in managing resource access; particularly severe on the traditional trek routes, which become favourite cropping sites because of their better soil fertility resulting from the concentration of animal manure from the trekking herds in these areas. Within the fadama areas, this is exacerbated by the fragmented nature of the crop plots, which makes prevention of animals straying in the crop plots difficult; inadequacy of grazing resources, as increasing crop cultivation (and increasing commercialization of the crop-residues) and poor management of the existing grazing reserves have resulted in a significant reduction in available livestock feed resources, in particular in the Northern States.

In a study, Bello (2013) found that the root causes of farmers-herders conflicts are: Destruction of crops by cattle and other property (reservoirs, irrigational facilities and infrastructure) by the herdsmen themselves are the main direct causes for conflicts cited by the farmers; burning of rangelands, fadama and blockage of stock routes and water points by crop encroachment are important direct reasons cited by the herdsmen; increasing rate of cattle theft which, is often accompanied by violence; antagonistic perceptions and beliefs among farmers and herdsmen could compound conflict situation, especially due to failing institutions and fierce competition for resources.

Communication Strategies Employed by Plateau Peacebuilding Agency

Peace-building is the development of constructive personal, group, and political relationship across ethnic, religious, class, national, and racial boundaries. It aims to resolve injustice in nonviolent ways and to transform the structural conditions that generate deadly conflict (KROC Institute for International Peace Studies, 2021). Peace-building is fundamentally about dealing with the reasons people fight in the first place, while also supporting societies to manage their differences and conflict without resorting to violence (international alert, 2021). According to Search for Common Ground, (n.d), peace-building is:

Process intended to address the root causes of conflict, to reconcile differences, to normalize relations, and to build institutions that can manage conflicts without resorting to violence. The process involves a diverse set of actors in government and civil society and can involve short-term actions to prevent violence or can take place over many years. Peace-building can encompass a range of tasks that include identifying and addressing the underlying political, economic, social and structural imbalances that have contributed to a conflict, reconciling the competing objectives/interests of opponents, preventing the re-emergence of past conflicts and ensuring broad citizen participation in the peace process and transitions to peace, and building the capacity of those institutions that support a secure civil society (p.9).

Plateau Peacebuilding Agency employs different communication methods to reach the affected communities and these include: town hall meetings, market square meetings, community engagements, broadcast media jingles, pages of newspapers, talk shows, flyers, posters, handbills, traditional rulers, churches, mosques, schools, age groups, women associations, family heads, field visits, drama, face-to-face meetings, social media like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and others. The Agency has had several media engagements both on the social and conventional media platforms (radio, television) as part of its strategic communication in promoting the ideals of sustainable peace across the length and breadth of the state. To this end, staff of the Agency have featured severally on TV and Radio platforms across the state and beyond such as Good Morning Plateau, PTV Express, The Baroness, Unity Train, Light House Chat, News Commentaries, press releases, interview and interactive sessions with the media, etc'' (Source: PPBA, Research Unit, 2021).

In addition, the Agency uses local and international Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working around the thematic areas of peace and conflict are strategic partners of PPBA to persuade members of conflict areas to see the need for peaceful co-existence. The NGOs and CSOs are encouraged to further deepen the goals of the Plateau Peace Building Agency by assisting in carrying out the Agency's action plans in affected communities. The Agency also makes use of multi-media techniques communicate to members of conflict communities (Source: PPBA, Research Unit, 2021).

Photographs of PPBA with members of affected communities



(Source: PPBA, 2021).

Review of Empirical Studies

In a study carried out on the relevance of the agenda setting role of the mass media in resolving the lingering crisis in Plateau State, Asemah and Edegoh (2012), which examined the way and manner the media have been used to manage the crises in Plateau State. The researchers made use of focus group discussion as research method. What the study found out was that media have a crucial role to play in conflict resolution as well as the media have not been giving objective reports of the Jos crises and this tends to escalate the crises. The paper, therefore, concluded that the extent to which the mass media are used to resolve crisis in Plateau State is minimal and recommended, among others that, the media should be constantly used to preach peace in Plateau State, so as to bring about lasting peace in Plateau State. Additional research on bridging peace through communication techniques is still relevant, especially in Bassa LGA of Plateau State, which is the focus of the current study.

Similarly Nwankwo, Ayodiuno, Ali and Madu (2020) study was on analysis and the politics of newspapers' discourse of the conflict in Nigeria. The study focused mainly on the causes, victims, consequences, government's responses and resolution strategies to the conflict. The discourse of the dispute is constructed as a security issue which embodies other forms of security viz national security, food security, the security of statehood and unity of the nations that make up the Nigerian state. Findings revealed that the construction of the conflict draws on the political and ideological dispositions of the papers as well as that the link between the newspapers' representation of the conflict and the strategies they proposed for curbing the dispute is weak. The study thereafter recommended that media representations of the conflict can reveal the various contestations in the framing of the conflict in Nigeria, it might be insufficient to establish the link between discourse, identity and policy, in addition to developing a sustainable strategy for the resolution of the crisis requires among other things, a national dialogue.

For the fact that the study was on farmers-herders conflicts framing in newspapers, further research is still needed, particularly on the aspect of using communication strategies by peace building agencies such as PPBA.

Ogbozor, Omale and Umar (2018) conducted a research on "building bridges between herders and farmers in Plateau, Nasarawa, and Kaduna States". A mixed participatory and developmental methodology was employed for the final evaluation. A participatory approach was used to elicit information and feedback from a broad spectrum of stakeholders. The developmental aspect entails documenting specific learning and experiences from the project that are useful for a future project engagement. A total sample of 383 community household surveys, 19 online surveys of Lead Agency and Partners, 18 KII and 10 FGD were conducted in five LGAs (Barkin Ladi, Riyom, Keana, Kachia and Zangon Kataf) by three evaluation team members and seven local enumerators. The data collection techniques include desk review, FGD, KII, online and community/HH end-line surveys. The data collected were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative techniques. The study found out that improving cultural understanding and building effective community coalition

and linkages is relevant in preventing conflict between pastoralist herders and sedentary farming communities. It therefore, recommended among others that increase engagement of high-level political actors to address political drivers of farmers and herders' conflict is important as well as adhering early-warning and early-response mechanisms are imperative to preventing conflicts. It is also evident from the above study that much needed to be done on peace initiatives. That is why the present study examines PPBA communication strategies and its influence in finding lasting peace in Bassa LGA of Plateau State.

Theoretical Framework

The Congruity Theory is significant to this study. The brains behind this theory are Osgood & Tannenbaun in 1955. The congruity theory assumes that if there are two contradictory people, sets of information or concepts on which judgment must be made by a single observer, the observer will experience pressure to change his/her judgment on one of the sides. However, if the two sets of information are similar, then, there will be no problem and the observer will not experience pressure of any kind.

The base of the congruity theory is the quality in terms of using communication to persuade people. Hence the theory is considered relevant for this study as PPBA communication strategists used communication to persuade troubled members of Bassa LGA to change their behaviour towards embracing peace.

Methodology

The study adopted qualitative research method with unstructured interview as the instrument of data collection. According to McLeod (2014, para), unstructured interview also called in-depth interview is usually described as conversations held with a purpose in mind to gather data about the research study. McLeod further notes that, the main objective of using unstructured interview is to build a bond with the respondents due to which there are high chances that the respondents will be 100% truthful with their answers (McLeod, 2014 para). Hence, this research instrument was considered relevant for the study.

- **Population of the Study:** According to City Population, the population projection of Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State from 2006 to 2016 is 248, 700. According to Displacement Tracking Matrix (2021) the estimated population affected by conflict in Bassa LGA of Plateau State between the month of August and November, 2021 is more than 15, 000 people.
- **Sampling Technique:** The sampling size used in qualitative research methods is often smaller than that used in quantitative methods. This is because qualitative research methods often concerned with garnering an in-depth understanding of phenomenon, which are often centred on the how and why of a particular issue, process and situation (Dworkin, 2012). From his,

selecting a sample size for qualitative studies, scholars argue that the concept of saturation is the most important factor to think about when nulling over sample size decisions (Mason, 2010). By saturation, it means the point at which the data collection process no longer offers any new or relevant data, and they recommend between 10-30 people.

- From these perspectives, the sample size of 15 people was purposively selected among members of the affected communities (Miango, Tahu, Rikwechogu and Zirshe) in Bassa Local Government Area of Plateau State. The choice of purposive sampling was because the researchers wanted only those who can speak English language and those who have been attending peace talks by PPBA as well as those who have read other peace communication strategies in English language by PPBA.
- **Data Analysis and Presentation Techniques:** Narrative format of data presentation and analysis was adopted because it allows for the researchers to listen to the respondents as they give their perspectives in a story format on the communication strategies used by Plateau Peace Building Agency. Eastoe, Haire and Alan (n.d) note that, narrative data analysis allows the researchers to see how respondents impose their order on experience and environment by commenting upon their relationships between events and actions through stories. This necessitates the use of this technique.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Objective One: To examine the awareness of Plateau State Peace Building Agency among the people of Bassa LGA

Participant 1: "It was a delight seeing members of Plateau Peace Building Agency as they came to our community to talk to us about peaceful coexistence. They came and met us in Tahu after one of the incidents in our community. When they came, they called everybody, our elders, chiefs, religious leaders all came. They came with a lot of messages and told us to always live in peace with one another. The aim is for us to be better people when we live in peace".

Participant 2: "I always hear about them on the radio, television and on Facebook. I see their messages on social media trying to preach peace. But there was a time I learnt that they came to our community and assembled people, and when I try to find out their aim of coming, I was told they came with message of peace. They wanted us to live together. They came with flyers and distributed it to our people. They told us everything about dangers of crisis I was very happy when I was told".

Participant 3: "Most times I get to know about Plateau Peace Building Agency on the media, particularly radio. You know we don't usually have light, and the only means of information is radio. I have heard a lot, they most times try to preach peace. I heard them on PRTVC, Unity FM, Rhythm and Highland FM. There was a time a saw their members giving people flyers about peaceful living and I collected some. They are trying, but you know not everybody will like what they are doing. Me I like it. Peace is the only way out. Nothing replaces it".

Participant 4: "They have been telling us about Plateau Peace Building Agency in the church. And sometimes our people who stay in Jos, when they come home, they use to tell us about PPBA. Also, our leaders, the chiefs, religious leaders, Mai angwas use to tell us about PPBA. I know them to be government officials who talk to us about maintaining peace in our community. There was a time that they asked all youth to wait after church service and they talked to us".

Participant 5: "I am aware of PPBA and I know what they do. PPBA is a state government body that tries to make us embrace peace. They go from church to church, mosque to mosque, schools, markets, viewing centres among others to talking to us about peace and also distribute peace-related materials like posters, flyers to us".

Participant 6: "Yes, I know what PPBA is all about. I have heard about them on radio, read about them on social media, and saw their posts on social media. They are state government agency saddled with the responsibility of bridging peace, and this is what we want. I also learnt that they organise seminars, workshops on peace building".

Participant 7: "PPBA is an organisation set up by the Plateau State government. I am also aware that they organise peace talks among members of troubled communities, and advice the government on what to do. They have mended troubled nerves. They have performed excellently. They should continue".

Research Objective Two: To ascertain the kind of communication strategies used by PPBA in Bassa LGA

Participant 8: "PPBA officials have been talking to us in churches, markets, they share posters on peace that we should paste in strategic places, and they give us flyers on their activities. I also use to hear them on radio, they organise seminars and call us to attend".

Participant 9: "They use flyers, pamphlets, stickers. I hear their officials talking on radio and television stations in the state. They also use the Internet. I had seen their initiative pictures on Facebook".

Participant 10: "They carry out sensitisation programmes on the media. I use to hear them on Good Morning Plateau programme on Peace FM; I also watch news about them on NTA, JOS, PRTVC, and *Zaman Tare* programme on Unity FM, Jos".

Research Objective Three: To determine the frequency of peace communication strategies used by PPBA in Bassa LGA

Participant 11: "I can't really say the number of times that I have heard something about PPBA. What I know is that they have been trying to talk about peace".

Participant 12: "Many times. I have heard about them severally. In fact, sometimes in two to three days. I hear or read about them, read about them frequently".

Research Objective Four: To ascertain the influence of such communication strategies on members of the affected communities

Participant 13: "Peace is what we want in Bassa. Crisis has affected us badly. All the things that Plateau Peace Building Agency told us, we try to do them. We do not want to continue losing our people and property. See how we live now, things have become so hard for us. Some of us have been helping to preach the messages of PPBA. We will continue to deepen PPBA's messages".

Participant 14: "We do not live our normal lives again. These crises should end, and that is why we have been doing everything that officials of Plateau Peace Building Agency tell us to do. To go to our farms is big problem. Our lives have been affected. We do what they tell us to do. I really like their messages".

Participant 15: "I appreciate Plateau Peacebuilding Agency, and to be frank I so much like what they are doing. What we hear their officials saying and doing is good for peaceful living. So, when they give us flyers posters and other of their items on peaceful coexistence, we help to distribute them. We do all these because it is the best thing to do in order for our community to live again. They want us to stop killing ourselves, so we will do it. Their messages have been of help to us".

Discussion of Findings

Data collected from the interviews showed the communication techniques used by Plateau State Peace Building Agency. PPBA communication strategies, which include use of media such as radio, television, flyers, social media, town hall, market places among others were adopted to mediate and curb the crisis. The findings of Coldevin (2003) supported the above findings when he notes that "strategies ranged from multi-media campaigns to support for groups conducted by extension agents, and materials to strengthen interpersonal communication" (p. 45). Respondents were in support of this from their comments on activities carried out by PPBA in their communities. Similarly, "mass and community media, small/alternative media, cultural/traditional media and other community communication contexts are best integrated to achieve the goals of mediation in terms of crisis" (Al-Aawah and Boukhair (2010), citing (Servaes, 2004; Singhal, et al) (p. 12). The combination of traditional media, such as radio, television, newspapers, magazines coupled with other channels of information sharing that may include one-on-one communication, community level of information sharing, are good means of getting knowledge and understanding of issues in the society and how to resolve them (Akinwande & Okiyi, 2018, para.).

The fourth objective of the study is to find out the influence of PPBA communication strategies on members of the affected communities. Findings showed that the communication strategies used by PPBA have a lot of influence on resolving conflicts between farmers and herders in Bassa LGA. Phrases such as these confirm the findings: *To be frank I so much like what they are doing. When they give us flyers posters and other of their items on peaceful coexistence, we help to distribute them. We do all these because it is the best thing to do in order for our*

community to live again. We do what they tell us to do. I really like their messages. No wonder Onobajo (2001, para.) and Onwemehili (2018, para.), said that communication strategies do not only persuade people to accept certain behavioural changes, but they can also help in resolving differences, especially in conflict situation. This also underscores what Ogbozor, Omale, & Umar, (2018) found out in terms of using communication strategies (dance, radio episodes, community dialogues and community forums) to building effective community coalition and linkages as it showed relevant in preventing conflict between pastoralist herders and sedentary farming communities. This is also in line with what Dekavalla (2018, para.) posits that people easily accept/believe what is said to them through good communication.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The thrust of this study has been on the influence of Plateau Peacebuilding Agency communication strategies and the continued search for peace among select communities in Bassa Local Government Area. The appraisal of the study using qualitative research design (interview as instrument of data collection), showed the communication strategies used by PPBA to finding lasting solutions in conflict hit Local Government Area. This is why experts advocate the use of communication to mending frail nerves. Communication should be carefully and systematically packaged as Akinwande & Okiyi, (2018, para.) note that the combination of traditional media, such as radio, television, newspapers, magazines coupled with other channels of information sharing that may include one-on-one communication, community level of information sharing, are good means of getting knowledge and understanding of issues in the society and how to resolve them. Therefore, the paper concludes that communication strategies are good means of resolving conflicts as showed in the findings.

It is recommended that PPBA should increase use of its communication strategies campaigns, especially in affected communities, while using indigenous interpersonal settings consistently to achieve behavioural changes in target members of these communities. Further, since the PPBA communication strategies are effective in crisis management in Bassa LGA, the peace agency should extend same to other trouble communities within Plateau State.

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