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Communal dialogue and peacebuilding education in volatile terrain: A study of the volatile African region

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Abstract

This article evaluates the adoption of communal dialogue as an education tool for peace building in volatile terrain in Africa, using Benue State, North-Central Nigeria, as a case in point. Benue State has, in the last eight years, been known for constant communal clashes. This article looks at ways to adopt a valid model of conflict resolution to end this struggle. The yearly uproar arising in this region as residents live in constant fear calls for concern. This inquiry collated churns of research using secondary data together with a survey to ensure a tangible solution was proffered. All the local governments in this region were selected, especially where there are consistent struggles, interferences of herdsmen, and insecurities. About 363 copies of the questionnaires were distributed among residents living in this region. The aim is to generate data bordering on peace building education initiatives, as regular conflicts have rampaged this region for over a decade. Expected findings will focus on the best model that can tackle insecurity appropriately. The study's findings show that all the respondents agreed that they see communal dialogue approaches employed as viable tools for peacebuilding education in the region. Important to note is the need to consider the peculiarities of this region. It is crucial to leverage frameworks that best suit this struggle, considering peculiarities in these regions as seen in similar areas in different parts of the world today. We therefore recommend that communal dialogue approaches be properly employed to restore lasting peace.

Keywords: Communal, Dialogue, Education, Insecurity, Peace building, Volatile terrain.

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1. Introduction

It is no news that insecurity across Africa has become the norm. Unfortunately, global leadership efforts to curb all forms of insecurity have not yielded the desired results in most parts of Africa. In Africa and other terrains with poor leadership, ethnic struggles and wars have become phenomenal, leaving citizens vulnerable as millions of lives are lost without commensurate government strategies targeted at arresting the situation. Ironically, Nigeria's diverse cultures with weak leadership are the cause of ongoing insecurity and tribal disputes. This peculiar Nigerian experience calls for more deliberate attention from global stakeholders to ensure a solution is proffered.

Although the Nigerian government's reluctance and inability to critically rationalize critical national issues is a great burden to the general public and scholars worldwide, as population growth increases annually, there is a need to consider pertinent national issues, especially with regards to resolving conflicts in communities with volatile tendencies. Important to note is the essence of education in the peaceful resolution of crises and co-existence in Nigeria resulting from the aftermath of a series of communal unrests, including the Boko Haram insurgency and the farmer-herder crisis engulfing Nigeria, particularly Benue State.

In recent times, miscreants have caused havoc without penalty, as we have experienced in Nigeria, particularly in the north-central zone of the country. Again, as insecurity looms, citizens universal freedom and rights have continued to be compromised, hence the need to restore peace. Sadly, insecurity in most African countries is becoming a nightmare. Benue State, Nigeria, has suffered more than any other geographical zone in Nigeria in the last eight years. Such disturbing national issues beset citizens and have lingered without tangible results coming from the government at the center.

In 2017, there were massacres in almost all the north-central states where Fulani herdsmen butchered thousands of locals from Tiv, Igala, and other local governments deemed to be in volatile areas, leading to ongoing underdevelopment and the destruction of lives and property. The poor pace of economic development in this region of Benue State, Nigeria, is pathetic, as many have lost their homes to insurgence and Fulani/herders constant crises [1]. The constant communal warfare in Benue State, Nigeria, calls for a better approach to resolution involving the local people's suggested model, owing to the peculiarities of the region under regular attacks from the encroachers.

Again, to ensure the underdevelopment in that region is tackled, there is a need to call for a deliberate and steady approach to bring an end to the sectoral crisis ravaging this region. Again, amongst other things that require attention is the enthronement of peace amongst communities in order to bring an end to this hostility and maintain peaceful co-existence that would restore economic activities for the growth and ease of generating revenue in that region [2].

It is, however, critical to constantly opt for better ways of resolving these conflicts in order to maintain peace and order among citizens co-habiting in different locations from their state of origin. As people are pushed to settle in locations where business thrives, it becomes imperative that the security of lives and properties be guaranteed, a responsibility every administration should put in place [3].

To achieve the above task, education becomes pertinent because education is the bedrock upon which human civilization is built. Understand themselves, the environment, and others who live within the same environment. Education, whether formal or informal, redeems man from ignorance and darkness and places him on the pedestal of civilization. Often, crises and conflicts arise from the ignorance of the parties involved. Education is the sure foundation that deals with ignorance and prevents crisis situations.

As a matter of fact, modern civilization abhors violence, crisis, and conflict. The modern man strives to use education to wipe away crises, conflict, and war. This is seen in the introduction of Peace and Conflict Resolution as a course in some tertiary institutions and the roles international organizations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) put into developing the educational sector across Africa for peace initiatives.

According to [Ngonso, et al. \[4\]](#), the importance of education is seen in the number of books written and acquired by individuals and corporate organizations, as well as in the manner in which all humans pay attention to education. According to [Atairet and Dicks \[5\]](#), the right to education is fundamental. While [Williams and Egemba \[6\]](#) see education as "one of the avenues for cementing strong cultural relations between nation states, education enthrones good cultural relationships between individuals living together, working together, or doing business together. [United Nations Children's Fund \[7\]](#) asserts that peacebuilding education initiatives must consider education that supports transformation processes related to changes in security, political institutions, economic regeneration, and social development within post-conflict societies. They also believe that education that is not well planned may give room for further division and inequality and may not remedy conflict situations; this they called 'conflict-sensitive' education that 'does no harm'. Education exposes members of society to good values such as love, peace, unity, sincerity, honesty, respect for one another, and the dignity of human person and life [8-12]. Education also enables individuals to effectively communicate their internalized values with one another, as [Ngonso and Egielewa \[13\]](#) opine that Africans, through interpersonal communication, shared their values. It is a known fact that poor communication breeds misunderstanding, which could snowball into an irredeemable crisis.

Another important fact to note in peacebuilding and the place of education is the fact that education enables us to appreciate our boundaries in life; these boundaries could include what to say about other people's religion, which connotes religious tolerance. No doubt, some crises in Nigeria have been attributed to religious intolerance caused by careless utterances as a result of a lack of knowledge about the doctrines of the opposite religion. Africans respect their religious beliefs so much that anything that touches on their religion is bound to cause serious conflict [14]. The import of education cannot be undermined because education helps members of society define adequately their limits and boundaries, such as ethical boundaries as well as moral obligations [15, 16]. Similarly, education helps members of the society to inculcate good behaviour generally, while mass media such as television and social media impact the society, particularly the youth, with

negative behaviours [17, 18]. Good education enables members of the society to filter out those anti-social behaviours that could hinder good and peaceful relationships in society. Education also brings about a good political culture and system. Political education has been an issue of concern to Nigerians over the years as a result of several political crises, of which Benue State has had a fair share. The mass media has been charged with the responsibility of ensuring that political education is given to the Nigerian public through its agenda-setting role [19]. Education and effective communication are keys to peaceful coexistence [20].

More so, it is critical to consider the regional peculiarities of every terrain so as to design a unique communication and educational approach or model best suited to harnessing peaceful co-existence in volatile areas. Regrettably, it is not news that certain regions of society experience more insecurity than others, especially in the northern, eastern, and middle belt regions of Nigeria. Although there are plethora's of works trifling on the Benue crisis, this region has been the source of agricultural food supply in Nigeria from time immemorial; therefore, the continued crisis in the region has drawn the attention of researchers in recent times. Although, between the local people of this geo-political zone in Nigeria's North Central and the Fulani cattle dwellers who constantly have gained mastery of slaughtering the villages in ungodly hours without mercy and negligence, such acts are heartbreaking, as such acts cannot be condoned in other climes where human lives are valued. This raging battle has been more intense in the last two decades [21].

In 2016, precisely, there was a massacre in the middle belt region of Nigeria, as about 14 out of the 23 local governments in Benue State clamped down on killing over 800 people and 1,269 in Southern Kaduna. Also in February 2006, there was a Fulani attack in Agatu, causing about 7,000 people to be displaced in Benue State in ten villages. These attacks have not ceased, as sporadic attacks spread to other states in the region without any apparent solution. Each region in Nigeria has had well-known conflicts in variant forms between different regions for over four decades. In the month of May 2023, some parts of southern Nigeria, specifically Akwa Ibom State, experienced fatal communal clashes between the Ijaw-speaking people of the state who lived in the coastal areas and their Ibibio neighbors. The newly introduced Petroleum Industrial Act (PIA), which the 9th National Assembly passed into law, primarily affected the Eastern Obolo people and their Ikot Akpan Udoh in Ikot Abasi Local Government Area. The popular PIA allows the host communities to receive 3% of the oil company's proceeds. The law accounts for the socioeconomic growth of host communities and the remediation of the affected environment. This stirs up unhealthy competition among the communities, leading to unending communal clashes. It is a well-known fact that a continual fight stirs up among communities over peculiar issues of ownership of natural endowments such as land, oil wells, and rivers. These unabated struggles trigger peculiarities raging from region to region. Ironically, it has become the norm that clashes occur concurrently in some regions, especially during farming seasons, and Benue State is known to be one of those volatile regions owing to communal conflicts. Recently, with the insurgence in the north-eastern region of Nigeria, conflicts have arisen almost on a daily basis [2].

Freshly, there appears to be more uproar in Benue State, adding more fears to the local people as regards the incessant and unending squabble lingering between the farmers and herders in the state. It is pertinent to note that Nigeria's middle belt regions of Taraba, Benue, Nasarawa, Kaduna, Plateau, and Adamawa record a huge population of their locals who are internally displaced in Nigeria. Once more, ongoing farmer-herder conflict has caused sizeable portion of the population in this area to flee.

1.1. Peace Building Narrative

The peace building process requires individuals' intentional decision to engage in dialogue and talk about disagreements of the past with the aim of resolving and rebuilding broken relationships, reforming shattered institutions for positive outcomes, and integrating all individuals involved into society for better human co-existence. Peace and conflict learning is a social science field that associates and breaks down violent and nonviolent conduct together with the fabrics of attending to squabbles within the standpoint and approaches desirable to human survival. Peace learning denotes the absence of war devoid of all forms of negativity and absurdities of war with a justice system that allows for a sustainable environment of tranquility, thereby making provisions for fair and steady peace, access to food supply without restrictions, portable drinking water, education for children and protection for women, issuance of security from fleshly harm, and other inalienable human rights. The notion of peace means societal friendship and consonance in the absence of hostility and violence. In a social sense, peace is mostly used to mean a lack of disagreement (such as war) and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or groups. Holistically, peace is divided into two types: internal peace and external peace. Internal peace depicts the inmost peace, or soul. Hence, there is a need to ensure peace is maintained in the insignificant units of societies if there is to be peace in the world at large. The assurance of global peace would assuredly stem from the smaller units of society. Hence, there must be peace in the small units of the communities to ensure peace is pursued in the nations of the world. If peace in the nations is not guaranteed, then the existence of global peace ultimately becomes a mirage. If there is to be peace in the nations, there must be peace in the cities. Peace is the only religion for both man and the universe. In a peaceful environment, all good things are possible, whereas in the absence of peace, we cannot attain anything of a positive nature, either as individuals, groups, nations, or on an international level. Peace and security are essential factors in human life. A peaceful and secure environment is critical to every society since it affects all aspects of economic and social development and is a sine qua non to the actualization of human rights. More so, education is the primary pillar for curbing disagreements and all forms of violence in order to preserve social needs for human consumption. Education provides the bedrock for understanding inter-communal relationships, friendship, neighborhood, brotherhood, tolerance, arbitration, negotiation, and agreement.

1.2. Concept of Peace Building

The concept of peace was enshrined as a universal nomenclature after the great damage of World War II. Peace studies date back to 1948 at Indiana's Manchester College, where they spread the essence of human peaceful co-existence in order to rebuild the shattered societies of World War II. Different from other specializations, peace studies have surpassed the other disciplines as it cuts across all borders. The global relevance of peace is crucial, as its influence is targeted at rebuilding the harm of massive weapon destruction. The global community constantly pursues peaceful co-existence amongst humans, cutting across race and all forms of sentiment, to discourage war in all its ramifications. The importance of peaceful coexistence cannot be fathomed, as its tenets spring from a global perspective. After over seven decades of peace and conflict resolution advocacy, it is crucial to note how the international focus on peaceful causes remains valid. The concept of peacebuilding today has taken on a worldwide view, comprising all forms of human rights promotion, justice, individual rights, the well-being of all mortals, and much more.

1.3. Peace Building Context in Nigeria

The ethnic diversity in Nigeria is rooted in crisis, which is why many front-liners have taken on the burden of peacebuilding, whose competence is built upon the root cause of Nigeria's peculiarities. There are numerous Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and individuals currently making laudable impacts on peacebuilding in Nigeria. For instance, the Conflict Prevention and Peace Building Initiative (CPPBI), the Peace Education and Advocacy Program (PEAP), the Security Awareness Program (SAP), the Leadership Education Program (LEP), and the Capacity Empowerment Program (CEP) are some of the initiatives making waves through individual and support group commitment in Africa generally. From the beginning, Obuseh [22] intentions were to see that ethnic wars are prevented and strengthened through structures that promote human peaceful coexistence. The five main parts of the initiatives- the conflict tracking and reporting programme (CTRP), peace education, the advocacy program, and youth identification-address a wide range of issues in different parts of the country. Its main goals are to strengthen institutions, improve the flow of information and media, and boost security to stop the country from becoming less safe [22].

The essence of peacebuilding is ensuring there is balanced physical reconstruction, sound and equitable economic management, equitable distribution of development benefits, gender equality, youth engagement, equitable access to services, repatriation and reintegration of displaced persons, sustainable use of natural resources, etc. Hence, the concept of peace in the Nigerian context means the absence of war, security of lives and properties, freedom to exercise individual rights within the ambience of law without fear of molestation and assassination, inclusion of girl children, and women's freedom covered by the protection of all citizens within and outside of the communities.

The evidence of peace in the Nigerian context is seen in civil society development, freedom of expression, association, and press freedom. Democratization, media development, power sharing, participatory processes, job creation, decent electoral processes, transparency and accountability, anti-corruption and good governance, human rights protection, and the rule of law Peacebuilding and conflict resolution require the ability of government machinery to tackle the incessant communal wars raging in Nigeria today. If this is phased out, the value of lives and properties would be more meaningful. The presence of a society free of anarchy is shown in enhancing non-violent dispute resolution systems across all states, enshrining dialogue mechanisms amongst conflicting groups, prejudice reduction and diversity training, peace education and advocacy, transitional justice, war trials and reparations, etc. The emergence of civil rights groups and the growing number of NGOs is a reflection of how vital peacebuilding is regarded in different societies, especially at the global pendulum. Again, the concept of peace is pursued from the standpoint of global diplomacy to discourage all forms of military interruptions with a history of coercion and war. Significantly, the phenomenal struggle in north-central Nigeria in recent times calls for the deliberate involvement of the international community. Although the herders/farmers war has become a cankerworm in the last eight years, there is a need to devise an approach to arresting the mayhem before it turns into a national war. Although there is a plethora of data on these crises, this work wants to use a survey of research to evaluate and interrogate what has been done. Sadly, the incessant killing of the local people by the herders' men has degenerated into a battlefield, making it almost impossible to tackle.

Against this backdrop, this study is carried out to provide the best alternatives that would reflect well on the minds of the local people. This phase and battle are almost becoming impossible to tackle as the launch of attacks continues unabated. Although there is a plethora of work on herdsmen and communal clashes, there seems to be little work as regards proactive measures for curbing the menace of the struggle. This study looked at the best strategies suggested by Benue Stateresidents for how they would like to see the media put an end to the ongoing conflict between the locals.

This study is limited to only Benue State, the north-central geo-political zone of Nigeria, whose communal struggle has surpassed the experiences of other regions of the nation. The choice of this terrain is because of the incessant clashes and wars rampant here, resulting in the waste of human lives, underdevelopment, and destruction of lives and properties. More so, because the Nigerian government has been adamant about the current controversies between the local people and the herders in this region, there is a need to investigate the insecurity issues in order to suggest possible positive outcomes stemming from the perspective of the residents, who are at the receiving end of the aftermath of each annual clash trigger. The nature of this study calls for careful examination of the patterns of incessant conflict between the herders in north-central Nigeria, in particular Benue State, with the following objectives: to find out the level of exposure Benue State residents have regarding media narratives on herders/farmers conflicts. Again, to ascertain the level of knowledge Benue State residents have towards communication and town hall meetings of stakeholders on herders and farmers attacks on the local people targeted at resolving the squabble. In addition, to examine the attitudes of Benue residents towards media content addressing Fulani and herder conflicts, Furthermore, to ascertain the perception of Benue residents towards

communication messages regarding herders and farmer crises Interestingly, to find out the challenges Benue residents face in the midst of Fulani/herders incessant land invasion and encroachment The researchers also believe strongly that educational attainment has an impact on peace and security; hence, the educational attainment of the respondents was also measured.

1.4. Uniqueness of Benue State, Nigeria

Ironically, Benue State in north-central Nigeria is endowed with food production, which is why it is addressed as the "Food Basket of the Nation." This is seen in the land mass surrounding the terrain and the level of farming activities constantly going on in that region. The broad and yielding landform positions it strategically to fast-track economic development stemming from the food produce harvested from the landmass in this region. Such an added advantage makes it possible to attract people from all sectors to do business with ease. Again, the type of agricultural practices in this terrain is sufficient to transform the state; however, the reverse is the case. Sadly, the surge of insecurity beclouding this region is mind-blowing. For over a decade in recent times, the insecurity has become the most troubling experience of the citizens in this area, causing many to flee their homes in search of survival in different regions, causing an increase in the number of internally displaced persons recorded so far. As the global community concentrates on security challenges overwhelming different nations, Nigeria is faced with an intramural security quagmire, particularly in the north-central region of Nigeria. The safety complex in Benue State, Nigeria's north-central region, is characterized by constant killings by Fulani herdsmen against the peasant farmers, according to [SB Morgen Intelligence \[2\]](#). Regrettably, the media narrative given to Fulani/herdsmen destruction activities in the local people's farm in the middle belt of Benue is laughable when weighed against the unique global coverage of similar insurgence challenges. Sadly, the underreporting of such a heinous crime is heartbreaking in all its ramifications. Unfortunately, the constant movement of the nomads southward However, it is common among both farmers and Fulani to retaliate against each other [\[23\]](#).

2. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This article adopted the [Galtung \[24\]](#) approach to peace, violence, and conflict. The author's submission can be seen as a combination of three different ideas: evidence and an obvious behavioral make-up (B) interwoven with two latent and invisible attitude or assumption (A) and contradiction (C) components. Hence, we can only talk about having a violent conflict when all components are present. This disagreement suggests a hidden rift case involving actual or perceived 'incompatibility of targets' (and ways of actualizing the set tasks) within the conflicting individuals generated by what Galtung (in [Ogo-Oluwa \[25\]](#)) called a "mismatch represented by social principles and social structure". Attitudes or assumptions include perceptions and misperceptions, fear, and prejudice held by rival groups.

This attitude is frequently negative, develops derogatory stereotypes against each opposing cabal, and is frequently under the control of strong emotions like hatred, bitterness, fear, anger, etc. For [Demmers \[26\]](#) the manifest, empirical, and observed side, behaviour, is the more spectacular and visible of the three and the one that attracts the most attention owing to its characteristic nature. It involves all-out threats, force, onslaughts, violence, discrimination, and mayhem perpetrated by contending groups. According to [Ogo-Oluwa \[25\]](#) Galtung saw 'conflict' as a dialectical and dynamic process in which structures, attitudes, and behaviours are constantly changing and influencing one another. As changes develop, it reveals the root of conflict emergence as groups' concerns hit the rock or the union built becomes imposed. Individuals then harness events tactically to properly represent their core concerns. [Demmers \[26\]](#) capture this dialectical nature of violence: A conflict spiral may begin in D, for instance, assuming someone's access to a gate is barred by another E. This may be experienced as frustration (D), and this frustration may lead to aggression (E).

In return, aggressive behaviour may bring a new contradiction into the relationship (for instance, the aggressive behaviour of the frustrated party may be incompatible with the other party's concept of happiness). Hence, we have a new D, which may give rise to a new round of attitudes and behaviours, which may lead to new contradictions, and so on. Violence breeds violence, and we may see an escalation dynamic that runs its course like a fire, only stopping when the house is burned down. Galtung describes how the parties may burn out in the D corner from emotional exhaustion or in the E corner from physical fatigue. However, D and E may also be restrained, and the contradiction may be superseded.

Table 1.
Distribution of respondents by age.

SN	Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	23-27	62	17.1
2	28-32	203	55.9
3	33-37	60	16.5
4	38 and above	38	10.5
Total		363	100.0

Note: SN: Serial number.

This paper adopted a survey research design. The method is a descriptive survey that uses a questionnaire as a data collection instrument. About 363 respondents were selected as the sample size for the study; hence, 363 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the residents of Benue State. The snowballing non-probability sampling technique was used in the target population. The accidental approach was used to administer the instrument to the residents of Benue

State. The residents were accidentally selected to cover virtually all of the local government area. The population of Benue State stood at 4,253,641 according to the 2006 population census. There are about 23 local governments in Benue State, Nigeria.

3. Presentation of Results, Discussion and Findings

The result of the study, as presented in [Table 1](#), shows the distribution of respondents by age. Results show that 17.1% of the respondents are within the age range of 23–27 years, 55.9% are within the age range of 28–32 years, 16.5% are within the age range of 33–37 years, and those 38 years and older are 10.5%. The results of the study show that the majority of the respondents were youths aged 28 to 32. Though the age of respondents was not considered a significant factor in determining the perception of residence towards approaches to communal dialogue as a tool for peacebuilding education in Benue State. The essence of this table is to show how important it is to secure the future of the upcoming generation, especially the youths in Benue State, Nigeria.

Table 2.
Distribution of respondents by gender.

SN	Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Female	206	56.7
2	Male	157	43.3
3	Total	363	100.0

The result in [Table 2](#) shows the distribution of respondents by gender. The result shows that the majority of the respondents were female, representing 56.7%, while their male counterparts were represented by 43.3%. Ironically, women bear the burden of insecurity in this region because they are vulnerable. Sadly, the herdsmen frequently rape women and young girls. The implication of this is that women generally need to be considered whenever national issues concerning communal clashes are discussed. This may also be an indication of the low level of female education in Benue State, since agricultural activities in Nigeria are usually left in the hands of poorly educated people.

Table 3.
Distribution of respondents by qualification.

SN	Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	SSCE	53	14.6
2	B.Sc.	190	52.3
3	M.Sc	107	29.5
4	Ph.D.	13	3.6
Total		363	100.0

The result of the study, as presented in [Table 3](#), shows the distribution of respondents by highest educational qualification. The result shows that the majority of the respondents are first degree holders (B.Sc.), representing 52.3%, followed by master’s degree holders (M.Sc.). The highest educational qualification of respondents was not considered during questionnaire administration; however, literate level is considered a significant factor in determining the perception of residence towards approaches to communal dialogue as a tool for peacebuilding education in Benue State. This result showed that Benue residents are fairly educated since a small proportion of the sampled have (Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE) qualifications. The qualifications of respondents can also be presented in a bar chart, as shown in [Figure 1](#).

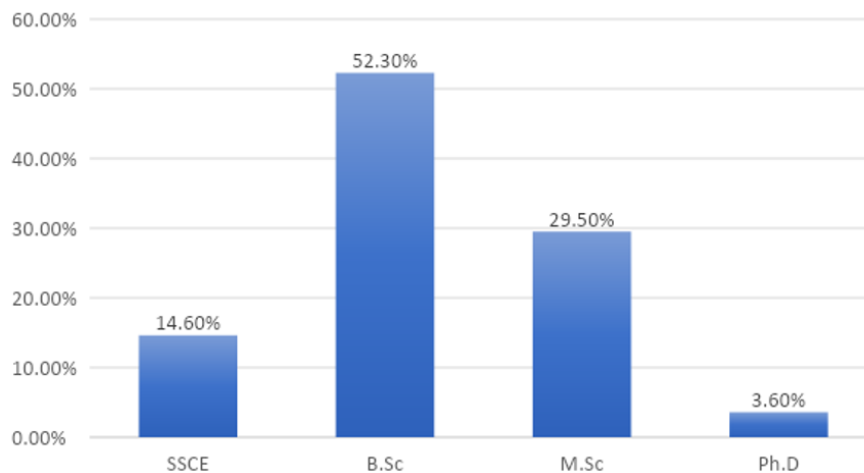


Figure 1.
The bar chart of the qualifications of respondents.

Table 4.
Distribution of respondents by occupation.

SN	Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Students	145	39.9
2	Traders	06	1.7
3	Civil servants	146	40.2
4	Public servants	66	18.2
Total		363	100.0

The result of the study in Table 4 shows the distribution of respondents by occupation. The result shows that 39.9% of the respondents were students, 1.7% were traders, 40.2% were civil servants, and 18.2% were public servants. The result shows that the majority of the respondents were students and civil servants.

Research question one: Are you aware of any form of communal dialogue approach employed as a tool for peacebuilding education in your area?

Table 5.
Frequency and percentage of respondents' awareness of the form of communal dialogue approach employed as a tool for peacebuilding education in Benue State.

SN	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Yes	363	100.0
2	No	--	--
Total		363	100.0

The result of the study in Table 5 shows that all the respondents agreed that they were aware of the forms of communal dialogue employed as a tool for peacebuilding education in their area. This implies that the respondents were not ignorant of the communal clashes and the approaches employed as a tool for peacebuilding education in their area.

Research question two: Which of the approaches to communal dialogue are you aware of that exist in your area?

Table 6.
Frequencies and percentages of respondents on the types of approaches to communal dialogue that exist in Benue State.

SN	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Town hall meeting approach	208	57.3
2	Youth mobilization approach	51	14.0
3	Religious group mobilization approach	104	28.7
Total		363	100.0

The result of the study, as presented in Table 6, shows the approaches to communal dialogues that exist in Benue State and are employed as a tool for peacebuilding education. The result shows that the town hall meeting approach (57.3%) was more frequently employed as one of the approaches for communal dialogue than youth mobilization (14.0%) and religious group mobilization (28.7%). This implies that the majority of the communities employed the town hall meeting approach for communal dialogue and peacebuilding education. The result can also be presented in a pie chart, as shown in Figure 2.

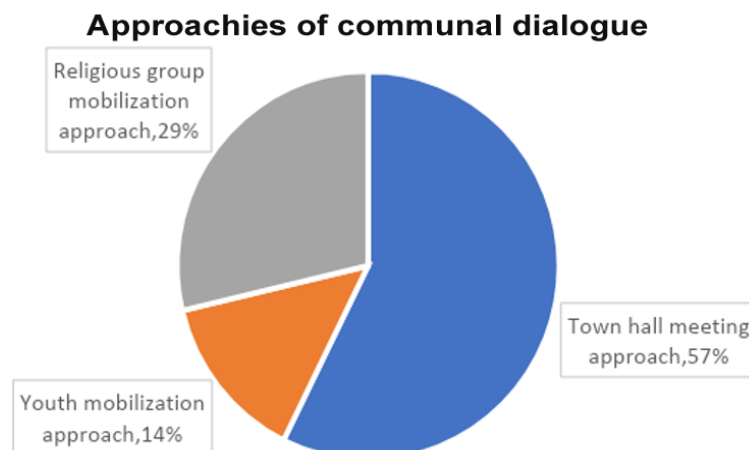


Figure 2.
Pie chart showing approaches of communal dialogue.

Research question three: Do you see these communal dialogue approaches as viable tools for peacebuilding education in your area?

Table 7.

Frequency and percentage of respondents on communal dialogue approaches as viable tools for peacebuilding education in Benue State.

SN	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Yes	363	100.0
2	No	--	--
Total		363	100.0

The result in Table 7 shows that all the respondents agreed that they see communal dialogue approaches employed as viable tools for peacebuilding education in Benue State. This implies that if the communal dialogue approaches are properly employed, no doubt lasting peace will be restored. This is a clarion call to all stakeholders, including the government and civil society associations, to ensure proactive measures of constantly engaging the local people in resolving issues in Benue State, Nigeria.

Research question four: To what extent do you think the adoption of these communal dialogue approaches can lead to peacebuilding education in your area?

Table 8.

Frequencies and percentages of respondents on the extent to which adoption of communal dialogue approaches can lead to peacebuilding education in Benue State.

SN	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	To a very large extent	102	28.1
2	To a large extent	208	57.3
3	To some extent	53	14.6
Total		363	100.0

The result in Table 8 shows the responses of the respondents on the extent to which adoption of communal dialogue approaches can lead to peacebuilding education in Benue State. The result shows that ‘to a large extent’ (57%), the adoption of communal dialogue approaches can lead to peacebuilding education in Benue State. This result is also presented in a pie chart, as shown in Figure 3.

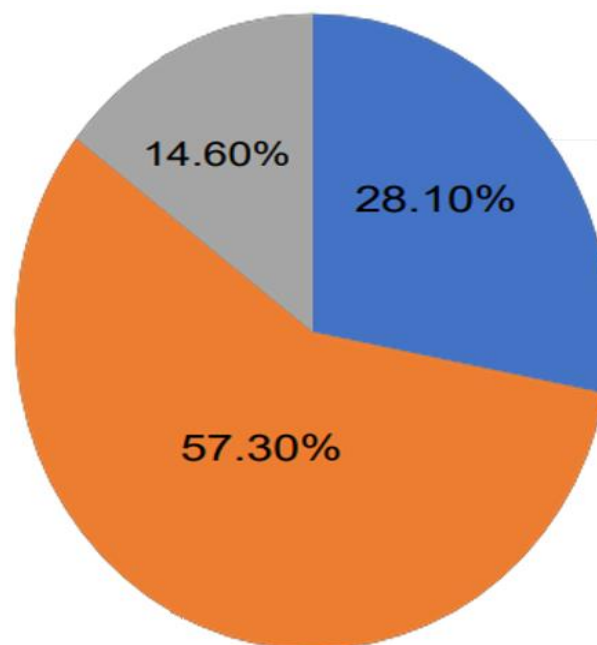


Figure 3.

A pie chart showing the extent to which communal dialogue approaches can lead to peacebuilding education in Benue State.

Research question five: What are the perceptions of respondents on the adoption of communal dialogue as a tool for peacebuilding education?

Table 9.

Mean and standard deviation on the perception of respondents on the adoption of community dialogue as a tool for peace building education.

SN	Item statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1	They have politicized these communal dialogue approaches	3.71	0.69	A
2	The communal dialogue approaches are used as an emergency tool; it is not a constant practice	4.28	0.70	A
3	The communal dialogue approaches are good but I don't think that is what can bring peace	2.87	0.83	D
4	The communal dialogue approaches are common practice which cannot bring lasting peace	2.86	0.83	D
5	The communal dialogue approaches can only work if justice is upheld after the dialogue	4.56	0.49	A
6	The communal dialogue approaches cannot work for rural areas	2.43	0.49	D
7	The communal dialogue approaches cannot work for urban areas	2.22	0.37	D
-	Cluster mean	3.28	0.36	A

The result of the study, as presented in Table 9, shows the perceptions of respondents on the adoption of communal dialogue as a tool for peacebuilding education in Benue State, Nigeria. The result shows that communal dialogue approaches have been politicized ($x = 3.71$, $SD = 0.69$), are used as an emergency tool ($x = 4.28$, $SD = 0.70$), are good and can bring peace ($x = 2.87$, $SD = 0.83$), are common practice that can bring lasting peace ($x = 2.86$, $SD = 0.83$), and can only work if justice is upheld after the dialogue ($x = 4.56$, $SD = 0.49$). The overall cluster mean of 3.28 with a standard deviation of 0.36 shows that the respondents have a positive perception of the adoption of communal dialogue as a tool for peacebuilding education in Benue State, Nigeria.

Research Question 6: What are the factors that influence the adoption of communal dialogue as a tool for peacebuilding education?

Table 10.

Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the factors that influence the adoption of community dialogue as a tool for peace building education.

SN	Item statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Communal dialogue can work when traditional rulers are involved	4.29	1.37	A
2	Communal dialogue can work when religious leaders are involved	4.71	0.45	A
3	Communal dialogue can work when politicians are involved	3.99	1.06	A
4	Youths usually disrupt attempts to communal dialogue if not in their interest	4.14	0.34	A
5	Politicians use communal dialogue as campaign tools	3.99	0.93	A
6	Communal dialogue can work when community leaders are involved	3.86	1.23	A
7	Communal dialogue can work if justice is really upheld after such dialogue	4.57	0.49	A
8	Favoritism affects communal dialogue negatively	4.43	0.49	A
9	Tribal sentiments affect communal dialogue negatively	4.01	1.30	A
-	Cluster mean	4.22	0.61	A

The result of the study, as presented in Table 10, shows the mean and standard deviation of respondents on the factors that influence the adoption of communal dialogue as a tool for peacebuilding education in Benue State, Nigeria. The respondents agreed that communal dialogue can work when traditional rulers are involved ($x = 4.29$, $SD = 1.37$), when religious leaders are involved ($x = 4.71$, $SD = 0.45$), when politicians are involved ($x = 3.99$, $SD = 1.06$), when youths usually disrupt attempts at communal dialogue if it is not in their interest ($x = 4.14$, $SD = 0.34$), when politicians use communal dialogue as campaign tools ($x = 3.99$, $SD = 0.93$), and when community leaders are involved ($x = 3.86$, $SD = 1.23$), among others. The overall cluster mean of 4.22 with a standard deviation of 0.61 means items in Table 10 are factors that influence the adoption of communal dialogue as a tool for peacebuilding education in Benue State, Nigeria.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study used the survey method to examine communal dialogue in peacebuilding education in Africa, using Benue State as a case in point. The researchers administered a questionnaire to 363 respondents, who filled it out and returned it. The researchers, amongst others, raised a few objectives to ascertain respondents understanding of communal dialogue, approaches to communal dialogue, and factors that influence communal dialogue.

The result shows that the majority of the respondents are first degree holders (B.Sc.), representing 52.3%, followed by Master's degree holders (M.Sc.). The highest educational qualification of respondents was considered during questionnaire administration, and as such, literacy level (education) was also considered a significant factor in determining the perception of residence towards approaches to communal dialogue as a tool for peace building education in Benue State. These results showed that Benue residents are fairly educated since a small proportion of the sampled have SSCE qualifications and a greater proportion of the respondents are first degree holders and above. This accounts for the high level of understanding of communal dialogue for peace building education, approaches to communal dialogue, and factors that influence communal dialogue. The result in Table 7 shows that all the respondents agreed that they see communal dialogue

approaches employed as viable tools for peace building education in Benue State. We therefore conclude that communal approaches such as town hall meetings, youth mobilization, and meetings with religious groups, if not politicized, are effective means of enthrone peace in a volatile area.

We therefore recommend that communal dialogue approaches be properly employed to restore lasting peace. This is a clarion call to all stakeholders, including the government and civil society associations, to ensure proactive measures of constantly engaging the local people in resolving issues in Benue State, Nigeria.

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