

THE DYNAMICS OF POPULAR MEDIA IN CONFLICT CREATION AND MITIGATION AMONG YOUTHS IN BORNO STATE, NORTH EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

The insurgency in North-East Nigeria has remained a complex emergency for over a decade. Although its intensity has significantly reduced, local communities still harbour fears of a potential resurgence. These fears are fuelled among others by the radical ideologies and attitudes that initially sparked the insurgency with the potential to reignite similar conflicts. Addressing these challenges requires tackling their root causes, particularly the ideological radicalisation of youth through various means. Thus, this study focuses on the dynamics of popular media in conflict creation and mitigation among youths in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) and Jere Local Government Area (LGA) of Borno State. Its specific objectives include identifying popular media content frequently accessed by youth in the region, examining the processes of ideological and attitudinal influence through these media and analysing effective techniques for countering radicalisation, and proposing a framework for reconfiguring media content to promote peace and discourage violence. Using a qualitative research approach, the study conducted interviews and focus group discussions with purposively selected youths from ten wards—five from each LGA. Findings revealed that Facebook and TikTok are the most frequently used platforms among youths in the two LGAs. Comedy and religious content are the popular media contents

frequently used by youth. The processes of frequent exposure help them distinguish between right and wrong behaviours, reinforces ethical conduct, and provides moral guidance. Additionally, platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok were identified as effective for sharing peacebuilding and deradicalisation content due to their accessibility and ease of use for both educated and uneducated individuals. The framework for reconfiguring popular media content is the use of media content creators consistently sharing messages that promote peace, unity, and peaceful coexistence. In conclusion, the research underscores the potential of popular media, when strategically utilised, as a powerful instrument for promoting peace and addressing youth restiveness. The study recommends that stakeholders, including state and local government authorities (LGAs), prioritize the creation and dissemination of engaging and educational content on platforms frequently used by youths, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok, to foster peace and discourage violence.

Keyword: Insurgency, Popular media, Borno, Youth

Introduction

Studies have shown that restive youths have always been drawn into conflicts and acts of terrorism (UNDP, 2008; Anasi 2010; Gamawa, 2017; UNODC, 2024) and as such, action must be taken to address the causes of youth frustration and discontent as a way of ensuring sustainable peace in conflict-prone areas. In addition, it must be recognised that where there are armed conflicts, military victory alone cannot bring lasting peace. In relation to this, it has been observed that conflicts which ended in outright military victory have higher rates of re-occurrence whereas conflicts that ended in peace negotiations have lower rates of re-occurrence (Gamawa 2017). The insurgency in North-East Nigeria, specifically in Borno State, has persisted as a multifaceted emergency for over a decade now. While its intensity appears to have relatively diminished, there are still fears by local communities in affected areas in the region about the potential resurgence of or similar crises in the future. Therefore, it is essential to explore effective peace-building mechanism and identify potential triggers for conflict to ensure lasting stability in the region.

This research is necessitated by the pressing need for action on the state of the youth for peace building and sustainability, especially in the conflict devastated North East of Nigeria that had seen and is still seeing the damaging effect of violent conflict. Though other actors such as the government and NGOs are doing their own activities to mitigate the situation, research into various aspects of the society that are subtly essential in

propagating and maintaining peace and avoiding conflict and violence significantly adds to those efforts. In this context, the research focuses on examining how persuasive techniques in popular media shape youth attitudes toward peace. It also explores the most effective techniques for countering the inclination toward radicalisation among young people and evaluates the potential of cognitive-based approaches to enhance peacebuilding efforts and prevent conflict more effectively. The obvious characteristics of the insurgency in the Northeast region are the involvement of youth in executing the conflict and utilisation of popular media (Marshall Centre, 2020; Aina et al, 2023), which point to the powerful influence of popular media in the dynamics of conflicts.

Borno State has been the epicentre of the insurgency, with numerous communities severely impacted, involving significant youth participation and the influence of popular media. Consequently, it is essential to further explore the dynamics of conflict in the Northeast region, particularly the interplay between youth and popular media, which serves as the focus of this research.

Conflicts have become pervasive in the modern world and their effect are enormous (Weforum,2024). Of course, there is no denying the fact that besides deaths, other challenges of conflict-ridden societies include fragility of social and security fabric, absence of or weak rule of law, ineffective or absence of public services and facilities, destroyed infrastructure, displaced and traumatised populations which create dire consequences - from abject poverty to massive human suffering, crime, unemployment and numerous other social problems.

It has been pointed out that whereas international conflicts have attracted serious international attention and have been greatly studied and perhaps understood better, there appears to be still little understanding of how modern internal conflicts are triggered (Puddephatt, 2006). Fragile states resulting from conflict situations and wars have always been of concern to international community, a lot need to be studied on how conflict zones create threats to world security – from organised crime to terrorism, disease and many other vices.

Several studies on the internal conflict in Northeast Nigeria (Adela, 2021; Brechenmacher, 2019; Masleen, 2017; Comolli, 2015; Gamawa, 2017; International Crisis Group, 2014) have predominantly concentrated on examining the immediate causes and consequences of the conflict. Nevertheless, the dynamics of conflicts are influenced by a variety of factors, including the individuals involved and the mechanisms used to ignite and perpetuate as well as resolve such conflicts. A distinguishing characteristic of modern conflicts is the active participation of youth as key actors and the utilization of technology to facilitate and sustain these conflicts. For example, youth are often vulnerable or susceptible to being

drawn into conflicts and exploited by conflict instigators, they also possess the potential to serve as influential agents of peace and reconciliation, playing a significant role in both the prevention and susceptible to being recruited into conflicts of (UN, 2018). On the side technology of popular media, it is one among many which conflict actors often strategically leverage for various purposes, tailoring their use to suit specific goals (Aina et al., 2023; Marshall Centre, 2020; Mercy Corps, 2019; United Nations, 2003). This underscores the pivotal roles of youth and popular media shaping the dynamics of conflicts.

Borno State has notably been at the centre of the insurgency, a conflict that has profoundly impacted numerous communities, marked by the significant involvement of youth, the varied utilisation of popular media for multiple purposes, and the persistent spread of radical ideologies and attitudes, which hold the potential to reignite similar conflicts. However, the role of popular media in the North-East emergency situation, particularly as it pertains to youths, remains unclear—serving both as a potential tool for fostering peace and as a mechanism for curbing latent violent tendencies. The concern is that unless the underlying causes of future conflicts are effectively addressed or minimized, the risk of similar crises reemerging persists. Therefore, this study delves into the dynamics of popular media in both the creation and mitigation of conflict among youths in two local government areas of Borno State, Nigeria: Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) and Jere.

Objectives of the Study

The research is aimed at revealing the dynamics of popular media and the creation or mitigation of restiveness among youths in the two LGAs in Borno State.

The objectives are to:

- i. identify the popular media contents frequently used by youth in the study area,
- ii. identify the processes involved in ideological and attitudinal influences from the popular media contents identified,
- iii. analyse the processes in the popular media used in order to determine the techniques that can work best to address the tendency for radicalisation in youths
- iv. examine how the popular media processes can be used to establish a framework by which popular media discourses can be reconfigured to create awareness of and desire for peace as well as abhorrence of violence.

Literature Review

Popular Media

Popular media refers to the various means or forms of communication widely accessed and consumed by wide heterogeneous audiences. It includes channels and content that resonate with the public because of accessibility, relevance, and appeal. These channels in the forms of print (Magazines, and newspapers), radio (Music, talk shows, and news broadcasts), television (Sitcoms, news programs, reality shows, and dramas), film and Cinema (Blockbuster movies and documentaries), social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok, X (Twitter), and Facebook, etc) and other internet based/digital platforms (Blogs, online news outlets, podcasts, and streaming services like YouTube, Netflix, and Spotify). These popular media cover trends, entertainment, and current events that target and attract large number of people who share, interact, and consume viral content (Wasserman, 2011; McQuail, 2010; Jenkins,2006). Characterised by Mass Appeal, Ease of Access, Content Variety and Cultural Influence, Popular media has its significance cutting across Keeping audiences informed about events and developments (Information); Reflecting and amplifying the values, challenges and successes of communities (Cultural Expression); Providing leisure and relaxation through diverse content (Entertainment); serving as platforms for public debates and discussions on socio- political and economic matters (Public Discourse) and serving as a mirror of society, shaping the society by affirming attitudes and opinions, thus stimulating people to take action (Davison, 2025).

Conflict Creation, Mitigation and Popular media

Conflicts the world over have humanitarian consequences and when such are armed conflicts, the consequences are particularly dire with tolls on the life of people as we see in the cases of conflicts in Africa: The Democratic Republic of Congo where about 5 million people perished; Sierra Leone civil war with about two million displaced; Darfur, Sudan where about 300,000 died (Grasa and Mateos, 2010).

In the case of North East Nigeria, the insurgency that started about the year 2009 has by 2012 created a complex emergency, mainly affecting three states - Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. A United Nations report shows that about 168,000 people that included returning migrants had fled to neighbouring countries like Chad, Niger and Cameroun (United Nations 2017). The internal displacements have affected all activities in agriculture and have led to food insecurity and malnutrition in the region and across neighbouring states too with about 4.6 million people affected (USAID, 2017; George and Adelaja, 2021). At a point, it is projected that this could rise to about 5.2 million with 3, 254, 980 in Borno State alone. The humanitarian crisis in the North East region is

described as a complex, multi-faceted and monumental humanitarian crisis that has displaced more than two million people and tens of thousands killed in the last decade alone (UN Report 2018, Reuters, 2024). The UN report, particularly indicates that various community surveys on the experience of people in the region, especially those in IDP camps, show that, among others, education, health, the environment, gender, water, hygiene and sanitation have all worsened

Even though the insurgency presently can be said to be in a post conflict phase (Agency Report, 2018), it re-occurs after a period of peace. This, from one perspective, can be explained in terms of the peace building milestones (Frances, Brown and Langer, 2007) which explains that states identified as being in the post conflict phase actually lie along a continuum of each of these milestones, but with a caveat that it is still possible to move backwards into a state of conflict. The peace building milestones are: ceasing hostilities and violence; signing of peace agreements; demobilization, disarmament and reintegration; return of refugees and internally displaced persons; establishing the foundations of a functioning state; initiating reconciliation and societal integration and commencing economic recovery (Frances et al., 2007).

Although all the milestones are happening in one form or the other, there are other important factors identified as increasing the risk of conflict re-occurrence that must be given attention to in peace building and sustainability. These include low income and socio-economic horizontal inequalities that tend to cause feelings of frustration and discontent (Murshed and Gates, 2005) and these are, noticeably present in the study area for there is high unemployment, lack of education as well as literacy that aggravate discontent. Such feelings as propounded by Murshed and Gates are some of the things this research investigates vis a vis the youth and their use of popular media in the areas selected with focus on how these can possibly create and maintain peace in the area.

It has been observed that peace building fields such as conflict resolution and transformation have research focus with the ultimate aim of achieving sustainable peace in societies that have recently experienced violent conflict (Lederach 1997). Thus, as is the focus in this study, the concepts of conflict transformation and positive peace as propounded in the works of the peace researcher Galtung (1969; 1996) have been subscribed to. In such conflict-stricken areas, positive peace – which basically asserts that the mere absence of direct violence (negative peace) is not enough to prevent conflicts (Galtung 1969; 1996, Bergh 2010a) – is one of the demands for reconstruction of the societies there. The argument goes that for there to be sustainable peace and development, the social conditions of the people affected must be enhanced – these include healthcare,

economic well-being, education and others. This is especially a point relevant to the study area in this research because researches have established links between such conflicts and socio-economic issues as well as lack of education (Bergh 2010a; Bergh 2010b). Other researchers have worked on the concept of positive peace, though not always from the perspective of Galtung (Menocal et al. 2005; Ryan 2003; Barash 2000; Reimann 2005; Lederach 2005; Webel & Galtung 2000; Foresti 2004)

Addressing the root causes of conflicts by focusing on social conditions of people affected by conflicts is now seen as a practical approach to establishing positive peace such that even the United Nations has adopted it by using terms like ‘human security’ which is people-centred, focusing the attention of institutions on human beings and communities everywhere (Commission on Human Security 2003). The importance given to this approach is evidenced in the fact that UNESCO has even dedicated a decade (2001 – 2010) to the culture of peace; the goals of that are to “reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations” (UN Resolutions A/RES/52/13: Culture of Peace and A/RES/53/243, Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace).

The study of conflict and media over the years have taken different dimensions but are all unified in their attempt to create a scenario for what comes to be called ‘conflict transformation’ rather than conflict resolution. It is a field of research concerned mainly with post-conflict issues. The role of the media plays in instigating and consequently creating conflicts is not really new. It has been reported that in both the Rwandan genocide and the Yugoslavia war, the media, especially radio and music, was directly responsible for inciting genocide (Puddephatt 2006). These happened because the media can be organised to spread – intentionally or unintentionally – propaganda that can drive dangerous sentiments, be it fuelled by nationalism or ethnicism. Some literature (Betz, 2018; Kuusik, 2010; Puddephatt, 2006) have affirmed the crucial role of media in conflict creation as well as in resolution. Thus, the two issues of creation and resolution of conflict are more or less tied together.

In the African context, media has to be studied both in terms of global political events and their local implications. As Straubhaar (2007), Kraidy (2005) and Thussu (2006, 2009) point out, global media are shaped by global happenings. It is therefore suggested that when studying popular media in Africa, such global events must be approached in such a way that will help understand how it can contribute to the urgent problems such as armed conflicts, which are bedevilling the continent (Wasserman, 2009)

For instance, popular music as a key form of popular media has been said to ask questions and create conditions for change in society (Fabian 1978: 19) and is as well regarded as an alternative mode of communication (Atton 2002) which functions to galvanize less privileged or vulnerable individuals to recognize and do something about their unfavourable conditions of life. For example, popular music in Africa has been described as not only entertaining but also providing news (Mano 2007) as well as mobilizing citizens on many important social issues such as literacy, health, politics as well as other critical issues of social significance.

There is no doubt that popular media plays a critical role in both triggering and mitigating conflicts. It is a factor in amplifying tensions through misinformation, propaganda, and sensationalism. On the other hand, it can also facilitate peace building by promoting dialogue, awareness, and reconciliation. As conflict trigger, popular media is often filled with misinformation, fake News, propaganda, hate speech, sensationalism and polarisation that deepen divisive narratives that incite violence. For example, during the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, misinformation on Facebook contributed to ethnic tensions. X (formerly Twitter) served as a source for spreading the good, the bad and the ugly among protesters which led to massive destruction across Nigeria (Ajisebiyawo, 2022; Proctor, 2021).

Nevertheless, popular media conflict mitigation role can never be overemphasised. It can focus on solutions rather than conflict escalation. For examples organisations like *Search for Common Ground* use media to promote peacebuilding, promotion of dialogue among users of platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook etc, fact checking to counter misinformation (Proctor, 2021, 2016 Gilboa et al, 2016).

Methodology

The study area encompasses Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) and Jere Local Government Area (LGA). MMC comprises 15 wards: Bolori 1, Bolori 2, Bulablin, Fezzan, Gamboro Liberty, Gwange 1, Gwange 2, Gwange 3, Hausari Zango, Lamisula, Lmanti, Mafoni, Maisandari, Shehuri North, and Shehuri South. Jere LGA, with its headquarters in Khaddamari, consists of 12 wards: Mashamari, Balle Galtimari, Alau, Ngomari, Khaddamari, Dusuman, Gongulan, Maimusari, Tuba, Old Maiduguri, and Zabbamari. Like other LGAs, both MMC and Jere have been significantly affected by the insurgency (ACRC, 2024).

Borno State has a projected population of 6,111,500, with MMC accounting for 791,200 and Jere for 306,400 (City Population, 2022). The study purposively selected youths aged 16 to 28 from the two LGAs based on their experience and knowledge of the subject matter, ensuring valuable insights relevant to the research.

A qualitative approach was employed, utilizing Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interviews for data collection. FGDs were particularly suitable for the study area, considering the low literacy levels, and their interactive nature provided an opportunity to gather deeper insights on the subject matter. These sessions were supplemented by individual in-depth interviews. The FGD participants and interviewees were purposively selected based on the criteria of those who are knowledgeable about the subject under study. The research activities (FGD and Interview) were conducted in five wards from MMC and five wards from Jere, totalling ten focus group discussion sessions—one for each ward selected. The Purposive sampling technique was employed to select the wards identified as being among the most affected by the Boko Haram conflict in addition, semi-structured interviews with 50 selected youths—five from each of the ten wards studied. All discussions and interviews were recorded using digital voice recorders.

The data collected from the sampled population was cleaned, categorised, and analysed in alignment with the study's objectives. Thematic analysis was applied to the data from FGDs and interviews, allowing themes to emerge inductively, directly related to the study's goals.

Results and Analysis

This section presents the findings from interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted with youth in the selected wards in the two LGAs: MMC and Jere. While the interviews provided in-depth insights into individual experiences, FGDs captured collective perspectives and group dynamics.

Popular media content frequently used by youth in the study area

The findings revealed that, in terms of popular media content, genres/themes, and time spent, a significant number of respondents favoured social media over traditional media platforms such as radio, television, and newspapers. Interviewees and FGD participants indicated that social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok dominated youth popular media usage in the selected communities. Some respondents also mentioned X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and Snapchat; however, these platforms were less commonly used.

While the majority of respondents preferred WhatsApp, a smaller group of radio listeners expressed a liking for stations such as Al'ansar, BRTV, and Dadal Kura. WhatsApp's popularity in the selected communities can be attributed to its user-friendly features, including group messaging and accessibility, which make it suitable for both literate and illiterate users, as highlighted in Old Maiduguri (*...messages can be shared through voice notes by both the educated and uneducated... we have a WhatsApp group where media content is shared daily...*).

The study, addressing objective one, revealed that comedy, sermons, and news and current affairs were the most popular media content frequently consumed by youth in the study area. Comedy emerged as the dominant content type, while preaching and religious messages also held widespread appeal, with several respondents emphasizing their significance (Gwange 3 respondents: *...we make fun of everything, we have to be happy even if you don't have a job, ... we have learnt a lot from social media sermons especially during this Ramadan – how to do a lot of things right*). Youths in the selected wards predominantly engaged with media themes that were accessible and captivating, such as short videos on TikTok and Facebook, direct communication via WhatsApp, and viral videos alongside news content.

Although the respondents did not mention specific hours spent on these popular media, most of them indicated daily engagement with social media. Some respondents said that WhatsApp and Facebook are regularly checked due to their accessibility and group interactions. For instance, not only is a user able to sign up and join groups that are relevant to them, irrespective of the level of education, the user also has the opportunity to either hide or show these groups (WhatsApp) to the public. TikTok and Facebook were highlighted for their role in entertainment and personal development, receiving substantial daily usage. A small number of respondents mentioned listening to the radio, primarily on their phones, while intermittently using social media.

Ideological and attitudinal influences of popular media content

The study found that the process of ideological and attitudinal influence through popular media occurs primarily through continuous exposure to its content and the media figures (personalities) and influencers they follow on various platforms. In this context, social media emerged as a significant force in shaping attitudes and beliefs, both positively and negatively. The interviewees and FGD participants indicated that popular media content significantly influences youth in the selected communities, shaping their attitudes, beliefs, and opinions on various issues, including personal development, as well as religious and political matters.

The interviewees and FGD participants in the selected communities mentioned that media content they are exposed to often offered them valuable life lessons, helped them distinguish between right and wrong, and reinforced ethical behaviour. Some respondents also noted that popular media has enhanced their understanding of religious tenets, including Islamic teachings, preaching, and moral values. For example, one of the interviewed respondents from Mairi Ward in Jere LGA remarked *...through these contents, I have learnt not to look down on anybody and tolerance, I have learnt a lot about my religion*). A respondent from Gwange 3 mentioned that “Dandalin Matasa”, (Youth Forum) a programme in Hausa Language produced by Al’ansar Radio, has impacted the way he sees drug abuse, idleness and the negative impacts on him and society.

Political content on social media impacted the knowledge of youth on governance, and the conduct of politicians. For instance, one respondent from Galtimari Ward mentioned the loss of interest in the National Assembly after closely following the suspension of Senator Natasha Akpoti’s sexual harassment claim. Several interviewees and FGD participants mentioned that the viral video of the man beating two schoolgirls after plucking some mangoes from his compound has made many more conscious of their behaviours in the public (respondent from Old Maiduguri: *as a class room teacher, I love beating students, but after watching that video and I saw what happened to the man, I don’t think I will ever beat any student again*).

In terms of influencing the attitudes of youth, popular media, through frequent exposure, played several key roles, as highlighted by the interviewees and FGD participants. It served as a powerful tool for educating youth, providing religious guidance, sharing business ideas, and offering vocational training. For example, a significant number of youths mentioned that comedy, sermons, music, and drama contributed to shaping their opinions on various issues. They emphasized that the media’s influence on youth is largely attributed to the media figures and influencers they follow on various platforms. Respondents reported, for instance, that many youths follow Islamic preachers such as Mufti, Sheikh Jaafar, Isa Ali Pantami, and Pastor Paul Enenche for religious and moral guidance. Similarly, some youths follow figures like Dan Bello, Dino Melaye, Jaafar Jaafar, among others for political discussions. Additionally, youths noted following actors like Ali Nuhu and entertainers such as musicians and comedians like Brain Jotter and Kenny Black, who blend entertainment with educational messages. Others follow business influencers who provide entrepreneurship and financial literacy insights, as well as local influencers (Mohammed Amina Ali, TJ Jabir Kaura, Aliyu Boro) and programmes like Dandalin Matasa, “Teburin Maishayi”, and “Dereban Kan Hanya”, which play a key role in shaping their perspectives on social issues. For instance, one of the interviewed respondents from Old Maiduguri remarked on his views on religious tolerance:

.... As a Muslim, I used to believe that Christians are haters of Muslims; they never say good things about Muslims until when I read some social media comments and saw the way Christians were praising and saying good things about Muslims... these positive comments about my religion changed my religious orientation about other religions...

Effective strategies for preventing youth radicalization

Regarding effective techniques to address radicalization and promote positive values, the study found that religious preachers, educational programmes on conflict resolution, youth empowerment, skills development, and programmes highlighting the negative impacts of radicalisation on individuals and community development serve as effective popular media content techniques for achieving this. The interviewees and FGD participants emphasised that entertainment programmes such as comedy, drama, and sport as effective avenues for disseminating messages on deradicalization and peacebuilding deradicalisation ideologies and peace. A Respondent in Galtimari mentioned that; *Programmes should stress the negative impact of violence, Programmes on peaceful values should be woven into comedy videos....* While news and media programmes such as Berekete Family, Table Mai Shayi, Dandali Matasa, etc. were highlighted for educating the public on conflict-related issues, popular media influencers were identified as pivotal contributors to the creation of content promoting peace and addressing radicalisation. Furthermore, a respondent from Mairi Ward stressed that media could either support or hinder peaceful values, depending on the intentions of the user and the expertise of the content creator.

For instance, interviewees from Gwange 2, Gwange 3, and Old Maiduguri highlighted specific cases, such as the incident involving the man in Maiduguri who flogged schoolgirls for plucking mangoes from his compound, and how social media exposure brought public awareness and prompted government intervention. Another example of media content addressing radicalisation, as mentioned by one of the FGD respondents from Galtimari Ward, recognised the efforts of former President Jonathan and Peter Obi for their notable advocacy in peacebuilding and adherence to legal procedures, particularly regarding the suspension of Senator Natasha Akpoti. Several respondents also pointed out that live updates on security issues, such as Boko Haram attacks, have helped inform communities and guide government actions. Consequently, respondents suggested producing more dramatic and engaging content, alongside increased awareness campaigns promoting peace, coexistence, and moral values to counter radicalisation.

Furthermore, interviewees and FGD participants identified another effective technique to address tendencies of radicalisation, emphasising that deradicalisation and peace messages should be dramatised in comedic formats and films to deeply resonate with the youth.

Content creators should reflect diversity by incorporating various voices, including individuals from different religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. They should share peace-related content and utilise hashtags to promote peace and collaboration:

...It should create opportunity for different voices; Muslims, Christians, Kanuri, Hausa, Yoruba or Igbo in my content and always read and share diverse narrative of issues (FGD respondent, Galtimari Ward)

Framework for reshaping media narratives to promote peace & discourage violence.

Regarding a framework by which popular media discourses can be reconfigured to create awareness of and desire for peace as well as abhorrence of violence, the study found that stakeholders' collaboration is critical. The responses of participants highlighted the crucial role of collaboration among stakeholders, including the media, content creators, and community leaders, in disseminating peace-oriented content. Responses focused on popular media's ability to foster peaceful messages/content, leveraging key media influencers and ensure media inclusivity. Popular media content creators should focus on sharing content that promotes peaceful coexistence and unity. Collaboration between traditional, religious, the government and content creators should be encouraged *...these stakeholders have unique roles, sometimes, these traditional leaders will encourage us to bring out our phones, cover and share online for people to see... building trust and understanding... (FGD in Gwange 3)* to take advantage of the popular media platform to discourse on peace related issues.

In creating awareness about peace and non-violence as a framework, popular media content creators should ensure they share accurate and balanced information and avoid biased messages. An interviewee from Mairi Galtimari noted that *I need to constantly read to have a better idea, especially on issues that has to do with tolerance and coexistence....* Since youth have prioritised social media as their primary platform, respondents noted that content addressing peace and violence should be diverse and inclusive. It should reflect both cultural and religious diversity while promoting peace through engaging formats such as comedy, drama, storytelling, and entertainment.

Furthermore, one of the challenges highlighted by the youth is the increase in the price of mobile internet data imposed by service providers. The youth explained that this would not only reduce the quantity and quality of content produced and shared online but also diminish the number of content creators and users engaging with online platforms. For instance, one interviewee from Gwange 3 mentioned that:

...I don't just view, download and share any content. I have to calculate the amount of data to be used before clicking that button, the increment in the price of data is affecting what I use my data for... sometimes one may not have the data to view or share relevant content...

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study underscores the critical role of popular media in shaping attitudes and behaviours among youths in MMC and Jere local governments in Borno State. The research highlights that popular media, when strategically leveraged, can serve as a powerful tool for peace promotion and the mitigation of youth restiveness. Collaborative efforts between Mass and Social media content creators, community leaders, and government entities are vital to ensure that peace-oriented messages are impactful, relatable, and widely accessible. However, addressing barriers such as the rising cost of internet data is essential to maximize the potential reach and effectiveness of these popular media efforts. By overcoming these challenges and fostering stronger partnerships, popular media can be reconfigured to not only discourage violence but also cultivate a culture of peace and positive engagement among youths in the region.

Recommendations

The State and LGAs should partner with influencers and content creators should develop and disseminate educational and entertaining content on peace and non-violence using platforms frequently accessed by youths, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok to promote relatable and impactful messages that resonate with young audiences.

The LGAs should advocate for affordable internet data plans to improve access to online peace-oriented content, especially for youths in underserved areas.

The LGAs should partner content creators to use popular media to integrate peacebuilding themes into comedy, drama, music, and sport-related content to subtly promote non-violence while keeping content engaging.

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