

MEDIA AND THE MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNAL CONFLICTS: A STUDY OF SHARE/Tsaragi COMMUNITIES IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This research work was carried out basically to examine the perception of the people of Share and Tsaragi people on the media influence on Communal clashes Management. Although, many works have been carried out on a similar topic, but this work sought to see the media angle of the work. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with the use of structured questionnaire to elicit information from the respondents. Purposive, Stratified, and simple random sampling was used to select 200 respondents. Data for this study were analyzed using descriptive statistics; Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to analyse the hypotheses formulated for the study through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) with level of significance at 0.05. The findings revealed that There is a significant relationship between reporting accuracy in media and management of communal clashes; there is a significant relationship between promoting open debate and management of communal clashes; there is a significant relationship between representing diverse views and management of communal clashes; and there is a significant relationship between manipulation of report by media and management of communal clashes. Based on the findings in this study, it was recommended that, government should endeavour to use media to get accurate information on communal clashes in Share and Tsaragi. Also, media should ensure that they are accurate in their reportage of communal clashes to finding lasting solution to the problem. Most often, the media can sometimes bend the rule as a way of social responsibility to ensure the safety of lives and properties.

Keywords: perception, share, Tsaragi people, media influence, communal clashes and management

Introduction

It can be observed that, conflicts in general are not new to human societies; they are as old as society in all spheres of human life since the beginning of history. In fact, conflicts are necessary characteristics of every human society- a “normal process of interaction particularly in complex societies in which resources are usually scarce” (Otite, 2001). A conflict, however, becomes an abnormality when it results to violence. In the same vein, conflict is indeed a reality of social relations at any level which arise from divergences of interests, desires, goals, and values aspirations in the competition for resources to meet imposing demands on social life in a defined socio-physical environment (Otite, 2001). As a matter of fact, Man in a socio-physical environment lives in continuous process of

dependence and interdependence which often produces contradictions and conflicts. Communal conflicts constitute one of the major recurring problems bedeviling the socio-political landscape of Africa. To be sure, communal conflicts are not new, particularly in socio-cultural complex societies defined by a high number of ethnic nationalities and language groups such as Nigeria. Pre-colonial and colonial Nigeria experienced inter-kingdom dynastic feuds, and inter-community conflicts (Ogban-Iyam, 2005). It is against this backdrop that, human being lives in a world that is ridden with conflicts and crises. However, when the media is juxtaposed with conflict, some may wonder where to draw the relationship. A question begging for an answer is what the mass media have to do with conflict or what conflict has to do with the media.

Specifically, there are diverse perspectives on the issue, ranging from the view that a society gets the mass media it deserves, to the argument that the mass media is a mirror that shows what a country is, what its people are and the kind of society in place. Acceptable as this view may seem, others still explain that the media is only a tool people in power and people with money use to protect their interests, advance their cause, and control the society they live in and the people they govern. The mass media have been accused of worsening crises through biased, unfair, and irresponsible coverage and reporting. Through their information dissemination function, amidst other powers to influence and persuade, the media aggravate conflicts and worsen crises situations in the society. Subjectivity, sensationalism, and bias in the presentation of news and views are the factors undermining the contributions of the media in conflict management and resolution. According to Best and Obateru (2011), “news media are hardly impartial or totally responsible in their coverage of conflicts or crises such that they have been accused of fueling, rather than dousing crises situations.” Sobowale (1983) in Best and Obateru puts this point more succinctly stating that, the effects of the mass media appear, perhaps, to be more potent in conflicts they generate than in their real impact on people and events. Further argues that “while there is no doubt that they have great potentials to resolve crises, they equally demonstrate ability to create conflicts.”

A constant fact about conflict is that it is an ever-present phenomenon in social relations (Raphael, 2015). It is inevitable in any social gathering, organization, and society. The certainty of conflict to occur in every social arena motivated its interpretation in various forms. However, the existing definitions follow a thought pattern that clearly describes conflict as: a state of incompatibility, behaviour, an opposition, an interaction of interdependent parties, a bad omen and positive or constructive outcome. As a state of incompatibility, conflict is described as a situation in which the concerns of two or more individuals operating within the unit appear to be incompatible (Darling & Fogliasso, 1999). Wilmot and Hocker (2011) described conflict as a felt struggle between two or more independent individuals over perceived incompatible differences in beliefs, values, and goals. Various

factors have been identified by scholars as responsible for communal conflict in the country. The causes vary from one area to another. Yecho (2006) indicated that the causes of communal conflicts are not static but rather dynamic and varied in nature depending on the socio-economic and geopolitical circumstances at the time. Onwudiwe (2004) listed social conditions as population explosion, economic migration, and the anti-poor policies of the government as triggers of communal friction. Horowitz (1990) pinned down communal conflict to revolve around politics, politicians, and their pursuit of group advantage. Albert (2001) identified indigene/settler problem, religious differences, ownership of land and its resources, goals, and aspirations of people as some of the factors that can ignite communal conflict in the country.

To objectively understand the nature and the role of media in peace and conflict management, it is important to understand the various ways through which media influence conflict and conflict management. Newbold (1995) points out that majority of scholars and researchers have concentrated on the role of media in economic, social, and political issues affecting states with little attention being given to conflicts. Further, he posed that media impact on conflict management is an emerging area that has been under studied due to lack of multidisciplinary models and concepts that would view media's role from peace and conflict realm. Several scholars have insisted on the fact that globalization has led to important qualitative changes in the purposes and dynamics of violent conflict.

Statement of the Problem

In democratic societies, when there is a wide heterogeneity among the citizens this often results in conflicts and violence, sometimes leading to large scale communal violence and loss of life and properties. Nigeria has recorded bitter experiences of violent conflicts in various forms. Since the early 1980s, crises have become a re-occurring decimal. Amongst the states that constitute Nigeria, there is virtually none that has not witnessed one form of conflict or the other. The spate of violence has been on a steady increase. Some of the conflicts include: Maitatsine crises in Kano, 1980, Zuru 1980,

Maiduguri 1982, Yola 1984, Ilorin 1984, Bauchi 1984, and Kano 1984. Others are the crises in Kafanchan 1987, Gure Kahugu 1987, Birnin Kebbi 1990, Katsina 1991, and a host of others (Abimbola,2011). The prevalence of clashes in some parts of Kwara State and particularly in the Share /Tsaragi community in Ifelodun LGA has been a major source of concern to individuals, families, and the society at large. People have become apprehensive about the negative consequences of conflict; due to the way and manner it erupts in society. However, the media have also been noted for its dysfunctional roles in the society. Since the media seek to mold the opinion of users, it is logical that their negative roles would have negative effects on society. Although the media to a large extent indeed play biggest role of ensuring that conflicts or any conflict receives wide public attention.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between representing diverse views and management of communal clashes.
2. There is no significant relationship between manipulation of report by media and management of communal clashes.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design that was adopted for this study was descriptive survey method which generally involves collection of data from a defined population to describe the present condition of the population being investigated, using the variables under survey. Based on this, the researchers considered the method as being appropriate to use for the present study since the method would facilitate in making inferences from data collected.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The researchers purposively select Share /Tsaragi community in Ifelodun LGA, due to their relevance to the investigation under consideration. As such, 200 respondents who have the in depth and chronological knowledge about

the clashes that have been occurring were purposively selected for the study.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire has been known to be one of the most common and effective research instruments to elicit useful information. The questionnaire is designed personally by the researchers and tagged. The instrument is in three sections namely: sections A, B and C. Section A dealt with demographic data i.e., personal information of the respondents. Section B dealt with the assessment of media influence while the third section covered assessment and management of communal clashes.

The reliability of the instrument used for this study was established using test-retest method within an interval of four weeks. After which the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient was used in computing the data generated and co-efficient of 0.78 was obtained which mean that the instrument was reliable for usage.

Method of Data Analysis

The researcher employed inferential statistics for the data analysis. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistical tool was used to test the null hypotheses. All the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis 1: There is significant relationship between representing diverse views and management of communal clashes.

Table 4: Pearson 'r' showing relationship between representing diverse views and management of communal clashes.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	Calc. r-value	Critical r-value	Decision
Clashes	200	13.7800	2.37	198	0.030	0.116	Accepted
Diverse view	200	13.5750	2.36				

Table 4 shows the Relationship between representation of diverse views and management of communal clashes. Based on the analysis of the results, it indicated that the calculated r of 0.030 is less than the critical r of 0.116 at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the hypothesis is hereby accepted. Meaning that, there is a significant

relationship between representing diverse views and management of communal clashes.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between manipulation of report by media and management of communal clashes.

Table 5: Pearson 'r' showing relationship between manipulation of report by media and management of communal clashes.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	Calc. r-value	Critical r-value	Decision
Clashes	200	13.7800	2.37	198	0.235*	0.116	Rejected
Manipulation	200	13.7150	2.11				

Table 5 shows the Relationship between manipulation of report by media and management of communal clashes. Based on the analysis of the results, it indicated that the calculated r of 0.235 is greater than the critical r of 0.116 at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the hypothesis is hereby rejected. Meaning that, there is a significant relationship between manipulation of report by media and management of communal clashes.

encouraged to listen to the station and on several occasions joined radio phone-in talk shows and held discussions with government and civil society representatives, a good step in peace building. Thus, mass media played a role in creating peace.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1 shows the Relationship between representing diverse views and management of communal clashes. Based on the analysis of the results, it indicated that the calculated r of 0.030 is less than the critical r of 0.116 at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the hypothesis is hereby accepted. Meaning that, there is a significant relationship between representing diverse views and management of communal clashes. And this support the view of Struges (2007) that Mega FM has promoted peace in Northern Uganda with positive effects since 2002. Evidence also suggests that the station played a major part in encouraging LRA members to come out of the bush, further noted that the LRA leadership was

Table 2 shows the Relationship between manipulation of report by media and management of communal clashes. Based on the analysis of the results, it indicated that the calculated r of 0.235 is greater than the critical r of 0.116 at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the hypothesis is hereby rejected. Meaning that, there is a significant relationship between manipulation of report by media and management of communal clashes. And this support the view of Sadkovich (1998) that some editors categorically and deliberately manipulate a report to maintain peace among some weary communities especially as it involves communal clashes. This, although is against the ethics of journalism when it comes to reporting accuracy, but social responsibility required media to breakeven in a matter of life and death.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

- There is a significant relationship between representing diverse views and management of communal clashes.
- There is a significant relationship between manipulation of report by media and management of communal clashes.

Recommendations

To ensure that sustainable peace is attained in Share and Tsaragi communities, government and all stakeholders must take the following into consideration.

- It would be appropriate for the two communities to embrace peace as the best means of attaining peace and put a stop to the wanton killing and destruction of properties in the areas.
- Government should also maintain its fatherly role to both communities and ensure that those who are disturbing the peace of the two communities were arrested and brought to book to serve as deterrent to others.
- Media can play a very important role in stemming the problem of communal clashes and as such they should be used to bring about peace in both Share and Tsaragi communities.
- All other available means must also be adopted at the right time to ensure that peace return to the communities.

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