

RADIO AS A TOOL OF SECURITY AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION: THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the role of radio as a strategic tool for enhancing security awareness and facilitating conflict resolution in Nigeria. Employing a systematic review methodology, the research synthesises literature retrieved from databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, and JSTOR from 2020 to the present using keywords like "radio," "conflict resolution," and "peace building." Grounded on the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study explores how active audience engagement with radio content meets the needs for security information, social integration, and non-violent dispute resolution. Findings reveal that radio remains a vital medium, particularly in rural and conflict-prone areas, due to its affordability, accessibility, and ability to disseminate real-time security updates and counter extremist narratives. However, challenges such as media politicisation, financial and technical constraints, and competition from digital media have been identified as barriers to its long-term efficacy in peacebuilding. The study concludes that while radio is indispensable for immediate crisis management and promoting public discourse, addressing these limitations through regulatory reforms, enhanced funding, and digital integration is essential for maximising its potential to sustain security and peace. Future research should further investigate the long-term behavioural impacts of radio-driven initiatives and the evolving role of private radio stations in Nigeria's national security framework.

Keywords: Radio, Conflict Resolution, Security Awareness, Peacebuilding, Nigeria

Introduction

According to Aondover et al. (2024), the media, especially radio, is key to changing public opinion, sharing information, and encouraging discourse that can raise or lower tensions. This affirms that radio is a powerful tool for enhancing security awareness and resolving conflicts due to its wide reach and ability to engage diverse groups. The extensive use of this medium in urban and rural areas makes it a crucial communication channel, particularly in regions with high illiteracy rates, ensuring the broad distribution of security-related information and peace initiatives.

Radio's ability to promote inter-group discourse and security awareness shows its effectiveness in resolving conflicts (Abubakar et al, 2025). Community radio stations are interactive platforms for airing grievances, seeking clarifications, and discussing non-violent dispute resolution. In conflict-prone areas like the Middle Belt and North East, radio content teaches people how to prevent violence, foster peace, and explain government initiatives that reduce conflict (Nyatuame, 2023). Security services deploy radio as a medium to convey warnings, offer real-time updates regarding

risks, and relay preventive steps to the public. In emergencies like the Boko Haram insurgency, radio broadcasts have been crucial in informing locals of safe zones, suspicious activities, and humanitarian aid (Pate & Jibril, 2024).

This communication's immediacy has been key to bettering crisis management and reducing anxiety in conflict situations. Also, radio is a major counter-narrative to hate speech and extreme beliefs that encourage violence. Extremist groups have used digital channels to spread propaganda, yet counter-radio projects have been created to fight radicalism and promote peace (Pandey et al, 2021). Such attempts often include accounts from rehabilitated persons and religious scholars who oppose extreme ideas. Radio has helped encourage conversation and oppose violent narratives, but its direct effects on behavioural change and sustained peacebuilding programs is still not well understood (Nyatuame, 2023). Additional analysis is required to analyse the efficacy of radio-driven efforts and to examine their influence on the design of national security policies. Also, using modern radio technology like mobile apps and satellite radio could greatly improve its reach and efficacy in conflict resolution. Radio is still vital to Nigeria's security and stability, but its shortcomings must be addressed to maximize its peacebuilding potential. Therefore, this study investigates how radio programming in Nigeria enhances security awareness and conflict resolution, while addressing systemic barriers to its effectiveness.”

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a systematic review to assess radio's role in improving security awareness and resolving conflict in Nigeria. The systematic review technique allows for a full synthesis of current literature, highlights research gaps, and examines empirical evidence regarding radio communication in conflict-affected areas. A comprehensive search was done on Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, and JSTOR. Keywords and Boolean operators are used to find studies. The search terms include "radio," "conflict resolution," "Nigeria," "peace building," "media and conflict," and "radio communication." The search focuses on peer-reviewed articles, conference proceedings, and authoritative reports published in English from 2020 to the present, trying to capture contemporary trends connected to conflict dynamics in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratifications

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) best explains this study on radio as a tool for security and conflict settlement in Nigeria. UGT, created by Katz, Blumer, and Gurevitch (1973), explains how people actively seek media content to meet demands like information, security awareness, and dispute resolution. UGT stresses listeners' active engagement in choosing and analysing media, unlike passive audience theories. In Nigeria, where radio is widely available, audiences listen to security and conflict-related broadcasts to fulfil their need for information (awareness about security threats), social integration (community discussions on peacebuilding), and personal identity (understanding their role in maintaining peace). The hypothesis shows that community radio stations are good at resolving conflicts because they meet local needs and encourage communication, also emphasizes radio's shift to digital media integration. As audience preferences

change, connecting radio with online platforms boosts accessibility and engagement, further supporting the thesis that media users actively seek out material that matches with their individual needs.

Theory Justification

Active Audience Engagement: Listeners intentionally listen in to radio programmes for security updates, conflict resolution strategies, and peacebuilding conversations.

Security Information Needed Communities: Especially in conflict-prone areas, these rely on radio for real-time updates and direction, fulfilling their informational demands.

Socialising and Integration: Call-in shows, interviews, and conversations foster discourse, reduce tensions, and promote understanding.

Adaptation to Changing Media Landscapes: Digital platforms and radio show how user preferences affect media consumption.

So, the uses and Gratifications Theory describes how and why audiences engage with radio content in their desire for security and peace, providing a good foundation for analysing radio's role in security awareness and conflict resolution

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflict Resolution

Many authors define conflict differently. Kreiss (2023) describes conflict as a fight between individuals or groups involving values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, wherein the opposing parties try to assert their values or claims over those of others. Conflict is a process that begins when one party believes that another party has negatively affected, or is about to affect, something important to the first party. Rubbin (2022) says conflict is more about perception than fact. Koebele and Crown (2023) describe conflict as "a perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously. Conflicts arise when both parties' goals seem incompatible. Goals, aims, standards, or acceptable minimums express aspirations. Bercovitch and Jackson (2009) define conflict resolution as a spectrum of formal or informal activities conducted by conflict parties or external actors, aimed at minimising violence and fostering understanding of key issues, achieving political agreements, or establishing mutually acceptable decisions regarding future interactions and resource distribution. The authors argue that conflict resolution requires accepting conflict, recognising multiple options, and coordinating tacitly and explicitly to achieve these goals. These experts stress the active and tangible parts of conflict resolution, but they overlook other activities that could affect the settlement process, such as emphasising the disagreement, which may push the interested parties to explore resolution methods.

History of Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution has changed a lot. Pike (2021) opined that conflict resolution became a unique field of study in the 1950s and 1960s, a time when the Cold War and nuclear weapons threatened human survival. A diverse set of experts investigated conflict resolution as a generic phenomenon. The possibility of applying evolving ideas from industrial relations and community mediation to general conflict, including civil and international conflicts, was recognised. A few people in Europe and America started research organisations to create new ideas. International relations experts, using their existing frameworks for assessing global conflict, rejected these invasions. The new notions' analysis and practice integration was hard to reconcile with academic institutions or the customs of diplomats and politicians. Thus, the field grew after its initial interest.

Scholarly periodicals were founded, and organizations devoted to the discipline grew quickly. By the 1980s, conflict resolution approaches were increasingly making a difference in real conflicts. The Cold War's last year's saw a big change in conflict resolution (Pike, 2021). The ideological and military rivalry that worsened many regional crises has declined due to superpower relations (Safranchuk, 2021). Regional conflicts in Southern Africa, Central America, and East Asia were resolved. Many nations' foreign development ministries set up conflict sections and funded conflict prevention and resolution. The IMF and World Bank, among other global financial institutions, now help avert conflict. The UN secretary general said that preventing violent war is a key goal for the international community in the new millennium, and the peaceful resolution of state disputes has become a common issue in international relations and strategic studies.

Radio as a Platform for Security Awareness and Conflict Resolution

Radio is one of Nigeria's most popular media since it is cheap and can reach rural and conflict-prone communities (Pate, 2024). Unlike other media, including television and newspapers, which require electricity and literacy, radio remains accessible to a great majority of Nigerians, especially those in marginalised places. Khebbaz (2023) opined that radio is vital for security communication since it provides real-time information on violent confrontations, early warnings, and counter-narratives to extremist propaganda. In insurgency-affected areas like the Northeast, radio stations are vital for spreading government security and emergency response plans. Radio is a major source of information in many African countries. This media is a reliable public communication channel because of its accessibility and affordability. Research has shown that radio is vital to peace and security in various circumstances. Youth in marginalised communities get economic empowerment from community radio stations. These stations promote societal unity and conflict prevention through dialogue and education. Adebayo et al. (2023) studied the potential of community radio in Cape Flats, emphasising its importance in youth empowerment and its indirect effect on security by reducing socio-economic gaps. Radio has also been used to promote nonviolence during elections. Radio music and cultural broadcasts have been used to promote peaceful voting. Adebayo (2017) studied Nigeria's "Vote not Fight" campaign and how music and radio shows helped promote peaceful elections. Radio shows teach listeners about nonviolent conflict resolution approaches.

Radio can ease tensions and teach communities to resolve disputes by airing information that promotes understanding and acceptance. The immediacy of radio promotes the quick broadcast of information, which is vital during crises (Liu, 2023). Additionally, radio's capacity to access isolated and rural places renders it a critical weapon for security awareness programs. Public Service Announcements (PSA) and instructional programs teach the public about safety, emergency procedures, and how to report suspicious activity. The broad reach allows for the quick spread of vital information, improving community safety. Radio's performance in these functions is linked to its capacity to connect with local cultures and languages. Radio programs can boost their impact and foster community ownership of security measures by tailoring programming to target groups. This cultural alignment boosts message relatability and audience engagement in security and peacebuilding.

Aondover et al (2024) show that community radio stations help resolve conflicts by allowing opposing sides to talk. These stations have peace messages, cultural education, and talks with security professionals, religious leaders, and community reps. Radio promotes open communication, easing tensions and reconciling rival groups. Community radio stations have been effective in conflict-prone areas like the Middle Belt, where farmer-herder clashes emerge from land disputes and resource scarcity (Okeke, 2020).

Radio's Role in Security Communication

Many studies have examined radio's influence in improving Nigerian security awareness. Pate (2018) notes that security organisations routinely use radio to warn of risks, impose curfews, and teach crime prevention. Radio's ability to reach large audiences quickly makes it vital for emergency communication. Radio was a key medium for spreading safety protocols and fighting misinformation during the COVID-19 epidemic, proving its reliability (Manyonge, 2019). Research reveals that radio is notably successful in enabling inter-agency coordination about security challenges. Aondover (2024) states that radio stations, law enforcement, and NGOs working together boost security communication credibility and community confidence. They also stress how government intervention in radio content might limit broadcasters' ability to report accurately on security matters.

Factors Hindering the Media from Contributing to Conflict Resolution

Several factors hinder the media from making a meaningful contribution to conflict resolution as analysed hereunder;

Commercial Interests Over Peacebuilding: The media, whether government-owned or privately owned, operate as businesses with a primary focus on profitability. Media owners are unlikely to cover conflicts in ways that could negatively impact their market opportunities. At the same time, media rely on conflict-driven news to increase circulation and attract audiences (Carruthers, 2024).

Journalistic Bias and Conflicting Loyalties: Journalists often face pressure from cultural, religious, and ethnic groups seeking representation, which can compromise impartiality in conflict reporting. Nyamnjoh (2024) highlights that journalists sometimes serve competing interests rather

than acting as neutral mediators, leading to contradictions, hypocrisy, and even the escalation of conflicts instead of resolution.

Use of Media for Propaganda and Misinformation: In many cases, the media have been exploited as propaganda tools, taking sides in conflicts, spreading misinformation, and fuelling hostility. Some independent tabloids engage in "vendetta journalism," publishing sensationalised or libellous content that exacerbates conflicts rather than promoting resolution (Ngangum, 2024).

Lack of Media Unity and Fragmented Narratives: The effectiveness of media in influencing political decisions and conflict resolution depends on consistency across different outlets. Rasmussen et al. (2021) argue that unless media outlets focus on the same conflict, frame it similarly, and persistently cover it, their impact remains weak. However, many media organizations take opposing positions, which further polarises audiences and complicates conflict resolution efforts.

Economic and Structural Challenges: African radio, particularly, struggles with financial sustainability, even in commercial entertainment-oriented stations. Public service and developmental content, which could aid conflict resolution, often receive little funding (Komodromos, 2021). Poor salaries, job insecurity, and weak professional structures have also led to corruption and declining journalistic standards.

Limited Training and Professional Capacity: Many African media professionals, especially radio journalists, lack adequate training in peace journalism and conflict-sensitive reporting. High staff turnover, coupled with a lack of skilled media experts, weakens the media's role in constructive conflict resolution (Myers, 2018).

Technical and Infrastructural Constraints: Weak and outdated broadcasting infrastructure, particularly in radio, limits the media's ability to reach a broad audience with conflict-sensitive programming. Satellite broadcasting remains underutilised, and while internet-based solutions offer potential, high costs and inadequate infrastructure continue to hinder their adoption (Myers, 2008).

Challenges Associated with the Utilisation of Radio for Conflict Resolution and Security in Nigeria

Empirical evidence from academic studies and online literature highlights several challenges associated with utilising radio for conflict resolution and security in Nigeria. The significant ones are;

Politicisation of radio content: particularly in government-owned stations, which are often accused of promoting biased narratives that Favor political elites. This bias undermines the credibility of radio programs and fosters public distrust. For example, Nwodu (2021) discusses how such politicization can erode public trust in media institutions.

Potential for incitement to violence: While radio is a useful instrument for security and conflict settlement, some stations have been accused of airing programming that worsens ethnic and religious divisions. Okeke (2020) highlights cases where inflammatory broadcasts have contributed to tensions. Although the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) has established regulations against hate speech, enforcement remains inconsistent and weak, reducing its effectiveness in curbing divisive content.

Financial and technical limitations: This hinders radio's role in conflict resolution. Many community radio stations operate with minimal funding, restricting their capacity to produce quality programming tailored to peacebuilding. Infrastructural deficits, particularly in rural areas, further limit the reach and effectiveness of radio broadcasts (Aliyu, 2022).

The rise of digital media has shifted audience preferences: This has been challenging radio's historical dominance as the primary source of information. With the increasing penetration of social media, younger audiences are turning to online platforms for news and discussions, reducing radio's impact in shaping public opinion and conflict resolution efforts. However, research suggests that integrating radio with digital technologies could enhance its reach and effectiveness in modern conflict-resolution strategies (Albert, 2020). These challenges highlight the need for improved regulations, better funding, and the integration of digital tools to enhance radio's role in promoting peace and security in Nigeria.

Identified Gaps in Literature and Future Research Paths

The literature shows radio's importance in conflict resolution and security; however, some gaps need more research. There is little empirical information on the long-term effects of radio programming on conduct in conflict-affected people. While research often studies radio broadcasts' short-term effects, it neglects their long-term impact on peacebuilding. Also, little research exists on private radio stations' function in security communication. Private radio stations greatly affect public opinion; however, many studies focus on government and community stations. Examining commercial radio's engagement in security reporting provides a better understanding of its function in Nigeria's media. The link between radio and digital media in conflict settlement remains underexplored. Social media's rise has pushed many radio stations to use internet channels to reach more listeners. However, research on how this convergence affects radio's credibility and effectiveness in fostering peace and security is lacking. Future studies should study how multilingual radio programming can reduce security issues among ethnic groupings. Radio stations in Nigeria operate in many languages, but the effect of language on audience engagement in conflict resolution is largely unresearched.

Findings of the study

The following findings were revealed from the study:

- Empirical evidence revealed that radio remains a vital medium for security communication in Nigeria due to its affordability and accessibility, particularly in rural and conflict-prone areas (Pate, 2024). Studies by Khebbaz (2023) and Pate (2018) confirm that radio is an

effective tool for providing real-time information on security threats, emergency response plans, and counter-narratives against extremist propaganda. This is particularly evident in insurgency-affected areas such as Northeast Nigeria, where radio stations help disseminate security updates and government intervention measures.

- Empirical studies demonstrate that radio contributes significantly to conflict resolution by facilitating dialogue, promoting peaceful coexistence, and educating communities on non-violent dispute resolution methods (Andover et al., 2024). Community radio stations, especially in conflict-prone areas like the Middle Belt, provide platforms for discussions between conflicting groups, reducing tensions through cultural education and peace messages (Okeke, 2020). Additionally, research by Adebayo et al. (2023) highlights the role of community radio in youth empowerment, indirectly improving security by reducing socio-economic inequalities.
- Radio programming has been instrumental in promoting peaceful elections and mitigating electoral violence. Adebayo (2017) studied Nigeria's "Vote Not Fight" campaign, revealing that radio music and culture broadcasts were effective in encouraging peaceful voting and civic participation. Liu (2023) further emphasises that radio stations play a crucial role in real-time electoral monitoring, reducing misinformation and fostering electoral transparency.
- The literature highlights gaps in understanding the long-term effectiveness of radio programming in conflict resolution. While short-term impacts of radio broadcasts on security awareness are well-documented, empirical evidence on their sustained influence on peacebuilding remains scarce. Additionally, there is a lack of research on the role of private radio stations in security communication and the impact of multilingual radio programming on audience engagement (Myers, 2018; Komodromos, 2021).

Conclusion

The current literature shows that radio is vital to security awareness and conflict settlement in Nigeria. Radio is vital for spreading security information, fighting extremism, and fostering discussion between opposing groups. Misinformation, government intervention, and financial limits hinder its full potential. Radio may promote peace and security in Nigeria by implementing regulatory reforms, increasing financing, and merging with digital media. Additional research is required to investigate the role of private radio, evaluate its long-term behavioural consequences, and analyse the changing dynamics between radio and digital platforms.

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