

Examining the Methods in Achieving Effective Conflict Resolution and Peace-building in North East Nigeria

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Abstract

The research examined the methods of achieving effective conflict resolution and peace-building in northeast Nigeria. The study adopted the hybrid theory as a framework. A survey method was adopted, and 400 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents; 384 questionnaires were returned as valid. The study areas were restricted to Bauchi, Yobe, and Adamawa States in northeastern Nigeria. The finding revealed different methods in achieving effective conflict resolution and peace-building in the northeast Nigeria which include: the use of military force; meeting between the parties involves in the conflict and elders in the conflict affected areas; through conducting meetings between the parties and government agents or representatives in the affected areas; and engaging consultants in resolving conflict and achieving peace-building in northeast Nigeria. The research recommends: Military forces should be engage as an instrument of resolving disputes and ensuring peace-building in the northeast Nigeria; other means of conflicts resolution and peace-building should also be integrated in resolving conflicts and ensuring peace-building in the northeast Nigeria; both stakeholders and individuals should come together in conflict resolution and peace-building in the northeast region.

Keywords: Conflict, Conflict Resolution, Peace-Building, Hybrid Theory, Conflict Resolution Consultants, Military Forces.

Review Article

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INTRODUCTION

Currently, the world requires alternative conflict resolution methods beyond traditional approaches, including negotiation, mediation, and arbitration (Sharma, 2010). Marc et al. (2015) argued that these conventional strategies have proven ineffective in achieving the desired outcome, as conflicts and crises persistently resurface shortly after being presumed resolved. In addition, it is crucial, now more than ever, to proactively address conflicts and violence due to their profound impact on individuals' well-being (Jafaru, Magaji, & Ahmad, 2024), assets, and the overall society (Ramsbotham, 2016). The field of conflict resolution is ever-evolving. The Arab Spring of 2011, although initially promising, led to a sequence of unforeseen events that had a profound impact on the Middle East, neighbouring areas, and the relationships between key powers (Wallenstein, 2018).

In recent decades, Nigeria has faced numerous intricate conflicts and socio-political issues, including inequality, corruption, kidnapping, oil pipeline vandalism, ethno-religious conflicts, and clashes between herdsmen (nomadic pastoralists) and farmers (Magaji, Gurowa, & Abubakar, 2014). Abbass (2012) states that a growing tension has developed between pastoralists and farmers, with allegations of pastoralists encroaching on farmlands (Blench, 2010). The intrusion of farmers onto grazing grounds and routes resulted in intense friction and violent clashes between them, resulting in a significant humanitarian disaster with the loss of thousands of lives and the destruction of properties valued at millions of naira (Bello, 2013), and dislocating families and breeding orphans liable not to gain modern education (Magaji, 2007). According to specific estimates, the hostilities have resulted in the deaths of more than 20,000 individuals, with approximately

2.6 million people being displaced (Muhammed & Oladimeji, 2017).

The primary objective of this study is to examine effective methods for achieving conflict resolution and peace-building strategies in Northeastern Nigeria. The motivation for this is the recognition that previous conflict resolution methods have been insufficient in effectively dealing with and resolving the enduring conflicts and crises in north-eastern Nigeria for over a decade. This research study focused exclusively on analysing Bauchi, Yobe, and Adamawa States.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

Conflict

Juneja (2019): Conflict is defined as a clash between individuals arising out of differences in thought processes, attitudes, understanding, interests, requirements, and perceptions. Accordingly, the diverse sources of conflict, including cognitive and perceptual differences, economic and social factors (Magaji, Musa & Salisu, 2022)

Frère and Wilén (2015) highlighted that conflict may not necessarily be defined in terms of violence, hostility, or the use of physical force but may include incompatibility or differences in issue positions. This broadens the understanding of conflict to include non-violent disagreements stemming from differing perspectives (Magaji, Dagachi & Jafaru, 2018). Conflict can be defined as a clash of interests, ideas, or understanding between two or more parties (Magaji & Musa, 2015) or as social and economic-induced circumstances (Yunasa et al., 2024). It may be induced by climate change due to global warming (Jafaru, Aliyu, & Sule, 2025).

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict resolution, according to Deutsch (2014), is: *"the process of resolving a dispute or conflict by meeting the needs and addressing the interests of all parties involved"*.

For Fisher and Ury (2011), Conflict resolution is: *"the process through which parties in disagreement work toward an agreement that satisfies their interests"*.

Mayer (2012) viewed conflict resolution as involving *"constructive processes that help individuals or groups end disputes through negotiation, mediation, or other peaceful methods"*.

Rahim (2011) defined conflict resolution as: *"the practice of recognising, addressing, and resolving disputes in a way that all parties find acceptable"*.

Ramsbotham et al (2016). Conflict resolution entails the *"processes that seek to resolve disputes by identifying underlying interests and promoting understanding"*

Kriesberg (2003) defined conflict resolution as: *"the structured process through which disputing parties reach an agreement that satisfies their core interests while minimising harm"*.

Conflict resolution is the mechanism used to resolve misunderstandings between parties involved in a conflict.

Burton (1990) describes peacemaking as the process of addressing the immediate causes of conflict through dialogue and negotiation. He argues that successful peacemaking efforts require empathy, trust-building, and recognition of the other party's needs and concerns.

Lederach (2018) emphasises the role of cultural context in peacemaking. He advocates for approaches that integrate traditional practices with modern diplomatic tools to craft sustainable agreements. Zartman (2019) introduces the concept of "hurting stalemates," suggesting that parties are most open to peacemaking when they reach a point where the cost of conflict exceeds potential gains.

Fisher, Ury, & Patton (2011) focus on interest-based negotiation, where the aim is to identify shared goals and develop mutually beneficial solutions. Their work highlights the importance of distinguishing between positions and underlying interests.

Kaldor (2021) critiques traditional peacemaking models, arguing that contemporary conflicts often involve non-state actors with decentralised structures. She advocates for inclusive negotiations that engage civil society and marginalised communities.

From the above definitions, peace-making can be defined as deliberate actions aimed at reconciling conflicting parties, individuals, communities, or nations, to promote a shared sense of harmony and peaceful cohabitation. The goal is to encourage the parties involved to set aside their differences and collaborate towards achieving their common life objectives.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Abeeb (2020) in his research, stated that since 2009, there has been an increasing spate of violent conflicts in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria. He also observed that the crises have challenged several efforts aimed at resolving them and now require urgent attention from all stakeholders to find a lasting solution. He said different types of crises, such as the Boko Haram insurgency and other terrorists' activities, especially the Fulani Herdsmen/farmers' conflict, have resulted in a humanitarian crisis in which over 20,000 people have been killed. Approximately 2.6 million people are displaced, with property worth millions of Naira destroyed. The crises are now extending to other parts of Nigeria, and the sub-region of West Africa needs to be addressed with utmost seriousness before the situation escalates out of control. He identified several measures adopted to bring an end to these crises, such as the use of the military, legal adjudication, the establishment of a dialogue committee, a legislative approach, and the proposed granting of amnesty to insurgents and terrorist groups.

However, none of these measures have been able to resolve the crisis. His research assessed the various strategies employed to address the crises in the North-East, to identify the loopholes and bottlenecks that have hindered the resolution of the

conflicts. A survey method was employed to collect data using a questionnaire. "Interviews were conducted in order to get first-hand information about the root causes of the conflicts from the people at the grassroots who are most affected by the crises. His findings revealed the urgent need to reappraise the current counter insurgency strategies and money laundering Acts which are the major strategies employed in resolving the ongoing conflicts, "Whilst employing alternative strategies (hybridization) with more focus on political economy approach which centers on addressing the root cause of conflicts such as poverty, unemployment, inequality and with emphases on preventive methods to conflict resolution and peace building. However, his work covers the period from 2009 to 2017 and only adopts the hybrid theory in its study, neglecting other fundamental theories.

In another study by Adewale and Adekun (2022), they emphasised the importance of achieving sustainable development in society, particularly in post-authoritarian countries like Nigeria. They identified the importance of effective peacebuilding and conflict resolution strategies in addressing the root causes of conflicts and promoting dialogue and reconciliation among conflicting parties. It can also help address issues such as economic inequality, social injustice, and political corruption, while providing access to education and promoting the participation of marginalised groups in the decision-making process (Magaji, 2002). They recommended laying the foundations for a more stable and prosperous future for all citizens. Their work is primarily concerned with achieving sustainable development in society.

In further study, Lamidi (2021) evaluated the peace-building architecture by the United Nations, using Southwestern Nigeria as a reference point. Quantitative data were generated from responses to the questionnaire. In addition, the qualitative data were gathered from two sources: interview responses and theme coding of the Focus Group Discussion. The data collected were analysed using frequency, percentage, mean value, and standard deviation, as well as content analysis methods. From the descriptive statistics, he found that quick intervention, cross-examination, negotiation, and mediation of differences were evaluated as the key building strategies adopted for enhancing peaceful coexistence in local communities within Southwestern Nigeria. Despite those good remarks, the poor nature of ethnic cooperation underlines the causal reason for incessant communal conflicts in Southwestern Nigeria. It therefore concluded that peace-building strategies in Southwestern Nigeria were operationalised with observable inconsistencies from the qualitative data. However, his research was limited to the southwestern region of Nigeria and also failed to recommend possible solutions to the identified problems.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Hybrid Theory

The theory originated from the fields of peace and conflict studies, law, and globalisation, drawing inspiration from various theoretical frameworks, including liberalism, realism,

and constructivism in the field of international relations. The term "hybrid" refers to the blending of different systems, ideologies, or practices, often observed in societies emerging from conflict or authoritarianism into more democratic systems. The concept acknowledges that political systems, governance structures, and social practices are rarely purely one model or the other; instead, they often incorporate elements from multiple sources. The theory focuses on the following:

The theory examines how different political and social systems coexist, particularly in post-conflict societies where traditional authority systems (tribal or customary) coexist with formal state systems.

The theory emphasises the importance of legitimacy in governance. It examines how hybrid systems can reconcile local customs and informal norms with the legal frameworks established by the state or international entities.

Hybrid Theory addresses how various conflict resolution mechanisms can be integrated to cater to the diverse needs of communities, reflecting both customary practices and formal legal systems.

The theory recognises the role of participatory methods in conflict resolution, promoting inclusive dialogue framing that brings together disparate stakeholders.

However, critics argued that the concept of hybridisation is often too vague, lacking a clear definition or measurable indicators for analysis.

Some scholars highlighted that hybrid systems may replicate existing power structures rather than genuinely addressing inequities or injustices.

Overemphasis on Local Practices: The theory's emphasis on indigenous or local practices can lead to essentialization or romanticisation of these systems, potentially undermining formal governance structures necessary for the rule of law.

Market Mechanisms: Others argue that incorporating market-based mechanisms in peacebuilding can lead to the commodification of conflict resolution, prioritising profits over social justice.

However, the theory can be applied to conflict resolution and peace-building strategies in democratic systems in the following ways:

Inclusive Approaches: By emphasising inclusivity and participation, Hybrid Theory fosters environments where multiple voices are heard, allowing for more responsive and effective conflict resolution strategies. This alignment is crucial for democratic processes that seek to engage diverse populations.

Legitimacy and Local buy-in: Understanding and integrating local customs and legal practices can enhance the legitimacy of peace-building initiatives, making them more acceptable to affected communities. This respect for local knowledge fosters democratic values and practices.

Transformation over Imposition: Rather than imposing a singular democratic model, Hybrid Theory advocates for transformations that adapt global norms to local contexts, leading to more sustainable and effective governance.

Building Resilience: Hybrid systems can tap into local networks and collective identities, thereby enhancing community resilience in the face of conflict and contributing to long-term peaceful coexistence. The study is anchored on the hybrid theory.

METHODOLOGY

This work employed a survey method, which involves gathering information through essential questions administered to a representative sample of the population. One method that will be adopted for this survey is a questionnaire.

The area of study in this research is northeastern Nigeria, which comprises six States (Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, Taraba, Yobe, and Borno States). However, due to economic challenges and other factors, the research will be narrowed to three States to represent the entire region. These States are Bauchi, Yobe, and Adamawa.

Bauchi State: Bauchi State is situated in the northeastern region of Nigeria. The area is situated at a latitude of 10.8°N and a longitude of 9.8°E. It covers a land area of 45,893 km² and is positioned on the northern boundary of the Jos Plateau. Kano and Jigawa states are in the northwest of Bauchi State. The state also has contiguous borders with Yobe State to the east, Kaduna to the west, and Taraba and Gombe to the south. Bauchi State is in the northern region of Nigeria and encompasses two separate vegetation zones: the Sudan savannah and the Sahel savannah. The Sudan savannah vegetation type characterises the southern region of the state. In this region, the flora gradually becomes more abundant as one moves towards the south, particularly around water sources or rivers. The population of Bauchi State was approximated to 7,540,663 in (statedirector.bauchi@ntionalpopulation.gov.ng, 2023)

Yobe State: Yobe State is also located in the northeastern region of Nigeria and was created in 1991 when it was carved out of Borno State. Borno State borders Yobe State to the northeast, Gombe State to the southeast, Bauchi State to the southwest, and Jigawa State to the northwest. Plains, with a semi-arid climate, predominantly characterise it. The capital city of Yobe State is Damaturu. The state features a mix of flat and hilly terrain, with several rivers, including the Yobe River, which flows through part of the state (Dan Azumi, 2011).

Yobe State is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups, primarily the Kanuri, who constitute one of the largest ethnic groups in the state, with a significant presence in northern Yobe. Another dominant tribe in the state is the Fulani, who are predominantly found in the state's pastoral regions. Yobe State also have a tribe called Shuwa Arab, mainly located in the northeastern part of the State. Other ethnic groups include the

Ngizim, Bade, and others, reflecting a rich cultural tapestry (Abeeb, 2020)

The population of Yobe State was estimated to be approximately 2.5 million as of the last census, although figures may vary due to factors such as displacement from conflict and migration. The population density is relatively low compared to other regions in Nigeria due to the vast land area and arid conditions (NBS, 2020).

Adamawa State is situated in the northeastern region of Nigeria and is renowned for its diverse culture and rich history. Borno State borders Adamawa State to the northeast, Gombe State to the southeast, Taraba State to the south, and the Republic of Cameroon to the east. The state features a diverse landscape comprising hills, valleys, and plains. The capital city of Adamawa State is Yola. The state features mountain ranges, notably the Mandara Mountains in the northeastern part, and has several rivers, including the Benue River, which contributes to its agricultural viability (Abdul, 2015). Nnaji (2011) identified the major ethnic groups in the State, including the following tribes:

Fulani, who are predominantly found in pastoralist communities; Gwari (Gbagyi), an indigenous ethnic group primarily involved in agriculture; Mbul, also found in the State; Ngw, another local ethnic group contributing to the state's diversity; and many smaller tribes are also found in the State.

Adamawa State's economy is based on several key sectors. The population of the study will include all individuals in the study areas (Bauchi, Yobe, and Adamawa States) who are eighteen years of age and above at the time of conducting this research.

The research will consist of 400 participants, and the sample size will be determined using the Taro Yamane formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n= Sample Size

N= Population Size

1= is constant

E Margin of error

Sample size: 400 participants

The study will adopt both purposive and stratified sampling techniques. The purposive sampling technique was employed due to the research's purpose. In contrast, the stratified sampling technique was employed because the research participants are spread across different States and local government areas in Bauchi, Yobe, and Adamawa States in northeastern Nigeria.

A questionnaire is the instrument to be used for data collection in this research. It will contain two parts: the first section will contain information and personal data of the respondents.

The work will adopt both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. The quantitative method will involve a narrative analysis of the interview without any statistical analysis. At the same time, the qualitative method will include using statistical techniques, such as descriptive statistics, straightforward percentages, and frequency tables to analyse the quantitative data.

DATA ANALYSES

Table 4.1: Sex Distribution of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Female	178	46.35
Male	206	53.65
Total	384	100.0

Source: Field work (2025)

The data shown in Table 4.1 indicates that 53.65% of the respondents in the research area are male, while the remaining

46.35% are female. The data indicate a higher proportion of males in the studied area.

Table 4.2: Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age (years)	Frequency	Percentages (%)
10-20	9	2.34
21-30	54	14.06
31-40	63	16.40
41-50	72	18.75
51-60	67	17.45
61-70	68	17.71
Above 70	51	13.29
Total	384	100.0

Source: Field work (2025)

Table 4.2 presents the distribution of respondents in the research area by age group. The findings indicate that the majority of individuals belong to the working-age cohorts of the economy, with an average age of 50.21 years. Specifically, 18.75%, 17.45%, and 16.40% of the participants fall into the

age groups of 41–50 years, 51–60 years, and 31–40 years, respectively. Similarly, approximately 31.00% of the surveyed individuals fall within the age range of 61–70 years and those over 70 years. This suggests that most of the respondents are actively engaged in the workforce.

Table 4.3: Methods in Achieving Effective Conflict Resolution and Peace-building in North East Nigeria

Conflict resolution & Peace-building strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Through meetings between the parties and elders	42	10.94
Through meetings between the parties and government agents/representatives	65	16.93
Intervention of military force	231	60.17
Through conflict and peace-building consultants	46	11.96
Total	384	100.0

Source: Field work (2025)

Table 4.3 discloses methods for achieving effective conflict resolution and peace-building strategies in northeast Nigeria. A certain percentage of the respondents, with 10.94% proposing that an effective method in achieving conflict resolution and

peace- building in the northeast is through meetings between the parties involved in the conflict and elders in the conflict-affected areas.

Another category of respondents, comprising 16.93%, opined that the most effective method for resolving conflicts and building peace in northeast Nigeria is through conducting meetings between the parties and government agents or representatives in the affected areas.

Again, a category of respondents comprising more than half of the entire population, with 60.17% proposing the use of military force to resolve conflicts and achieve peace-building in conflict-affected areas.

Lastly, another category of respondents, at 11.96%, prefers engaging consultants to resolve conflicts and achieve peace-building in northeast Nigeria.

The research proposed different methods for achieving effective conflict resolution and peace-building in northeast Nigeria, with the use of military force as the primary method, as revealed by the research. Other methods identified by the researchers included meetings between the parties involved in the conflict and elders in the conflict-affected areas, as well as meetings between the parties and government agents or representatives in the affected areas. Additionally, the researchers engaged consultants to resolve the conflict and achieve peace-building in northeast Nigeria.

As mentioned earlier in this work, the research is grounded in the Hybrid Theory, which explores how various conflict resolution mechanisms can be integrated to cater to the diverse needs of communities, encompassing both customary practices and formal legal systems. Also, the theory recognises the role of participatory methods in conflict resolution, promoting inclusive dialogue framing that brings together disparate stakeholders.

The results presented in Table 4.3 illustrated how respondents in the research area proposed using different dispute resolution tactics such as military force participation; negotiations between the opposing factions and government representatives; Similarly, employment of conflict and peace building specialists in addressing the issue; and organizing meetings between the conflicting parties and elders as a means of settling the conflict. The findings revealed several methods that can be employed to address conflict, resolve conflict, and promote peace-building in the northeast region. Thus, the findings have justified our theory (hybrid theory).

CONCLUSION

The research examined effective methods for resolving conflicts and promoting peace-building in Northeastern Nigeria. Hybrid Theory was adopted as a framework in the work. The research findings strongly resonate with the theory. The work provides a theoretical analysis of six primary ways of resolving conflict in the northeast region (Bauchi, Yobe, and Adamawa states) based on the total demography of 384 respondents. The finding revealed several methods to be adopted in addressing conflict, resolving conflicts, and ensuring peace-building in the northeast region such as military force participation; negotiations between the opposing factions and

government representatives; Similarly, employment of conflict and peace building experts in addressing the issue; and organizing meetings between the conflicting parties and elders as a means of settling the conflict were also identified by the research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations were made:

Military forces should be engaged as an instrument of resolving conflicts and ensuring peace-building in northeast Nigeria.

Other means of conflict resolution and peacebuilding should also be integrated into resolving conflicts and ensuring peacebuilding in northeast Nigeria.

Both stakeholders and individuals should come together to resolve conflicts and promote peace-building in the northeast region.

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