

Government Crisis Communication Strategies for Communal Conflict Mediation in Select States of North Central Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Governments have often made attempt to mediate in conflict situations in order to prevent full-blown violent clashes. Communication strategies remain some of the appropriate measures to prevent escalation of conflict situations. Despite such efforts of government in different parts of Nigeria. There are still conflicts. Against this backdrop, this study sought to examine the effectiveness of government crisis communication strategies for communal conflict mediation in select states of North Central Nigeria. The researchers relied on the survey research design with the use questionnaire as instrument of data collection. The instruments were administered to 600 statistically determined respondents in three key states of the region namely Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau. Findings of the study demonstrated that communication strategies are adopted for conflict mediation in the region and that community relations happened to be the most prominent. The study also revealed that there are several other effective strategies which include traditional institution approach, public relations, and peace building among others. The strategies were found to be effective particularly in respect of de-escalation of tensions in the area. The researchers concluded that communication is an important tool in conflict mediation and recommended that stakeholder realise the importance of communication and ensure that communicative options are explored and exhausted before activation of other conflict resolution measures

Keywords: Communal Conflict; Government; Media; Mediation; Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is one country in sub-Saharan Africa that has seen countless number of conflicts with their unique and complex nature. In most cases, these conflicts take on the form of violent clashes with socio-cultural, ethno-religious and economic tags. In other words, the conflicts are often ascribed to tensions between and among multiplicity of social and cultural groups, assume ethnic and religious colouration and may also come as economic-related whereby disputants struggle over land, water or other form of resources available to the people. Most often, these situations leave the country in bad state, struggling to find the elusive peace

among the different ethnic and religious groups. People and livestock are often displaced, aftermath of violent attacks creating serious humanitarian needs and this has lingered on for centuries. According to Orhero (2020), Nigeria's internal conflicts usually linger to the point that it could be passed from one generation to another.

The country is not the only one suffering from perennial cases of conflict in the African continent as conflagrations are also reported in places like the Sudan, Chad, Burkina Faso, Niger, Ethiopia and several other countries in Africa's Sahel region. Economic, political and social factors are also responsible for the reported conflicts across different parts of the continent. Conflicts happened to be a major cause of death and displacement in the continent. Some reports claimed that over 40 million Africans have been displaced on account of conflicts across the continent (Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 2024). This is closely related to another that revealed that more than half of the deaths resulting from armed conflicts occurred in Africa with over 2 million killed across different conflict situations in the continent (Herre, 2024). This is an indication that conflicts have had devastating and negative consequences for humans in Africa.

Intra-state conflicts are higher among the numerous conflicts that have led to human deaths in Africa (Herre, 2024). Internal aggression from elements within a country is what intra-state conflicts entail. Yemane and Borowy (2023) explained that intra-state war and violence have plagued African region for long and with different intensity of which environmental factors may have exacerbated the situations. Furthermore, the researchers stated that the clashes between farmers and pastoralists are commonplace in the African region and also present destructive times and situations for people of Africa. Quoting Bereketeab, the researchers noted that these conflicts often involve groups that fight over water, land, and livestock grazing areas which in essence is a direct struggle for scarce resources arising from the environmental degradation coupled with the challenge of the rise in the population of humans in the region.

Hunger and starvation are also associated with the different conflicts in the continent. Mhlambiso and Mbiyozo (2024) asserted that hunger is increasingly being used as a weapon of war in different parts of Africa – from Ethiopia to Sudan, Burkina Faso and then the Democratic Republic of Congo where conflicts continue to drive emergency hunger levels. Governments usually intervene in the conflicts and other times, there are cases wherein communal rivalry and disagreement escalate to situations of lethal confrontations on account of the failure of government to promptly address concerns of different groups (Yemane & Borowy, 2023). Relatedly, Mhlambiso and Mbiyozo (2024) buttressed the foregoing point that conflicts in Africa are usually exacerbated due to the lackluster response from African authorities and the international communities. Furthermore, limited humanitarian aid, underreporting and politicisation of important matters in the multilateral system are also identified as factors that fuel conflicts in the African region. These can be lumped as lack of proactive response to arrest a growing conflict situation. It is failure to act. The implication is that once there is failure of constituted authority to douse tensions and bring rivals to a mediation and negotiating table, the chances of violent clashes in form of full-blown conflicts become high.

Conflicts reported in the Nigeria's North Central region are have characteristics of some other reported in the African continent as observed by Yemane and Borowy (2023) wherein the researchers talked about the struggle for resources. The region is home to various ethnic nationalities – the Ebiras, Igalas, Okuns and many more in Kogi, the Eggon, Mada, Alago, Hausa, Fulani, Gbagyi people, in Nasarawa, the Idomas, Tivs, Igedes in Benue, the Fulanis. Bariba, Nupe and Yoruba in Kwara, as well as the Irigwe, Berom, Anaguta, Kulere and many more in Plateau are the ethnic makeup of the geographical and political zone.

Religious practices by the people of North Central are mainly Christianity and Islam and the adherents are evenly distributed across the region (Pierri & Barkindo, 2016). The different states of the region have a population of adherents of the two main religions in Nigeria.

Additionally, Ojewale (2021) noted that though the zone has a predominantly Christian population, it boasts of a sizable Muslim population while farming is the main occupation of the convergence of minority ethnic groups that make up the population of the zone. This diversity has not been harnessed as strength of the region – hence the ethno-religious and socio-cultural conflicts that have ravaged the region for years. The herder-farmer crises are commonplace and so are other related to Chieftaincy matters. Such intra and interstate conflicts that border on chieftaincy and land tussle have been recorded in different parts of the zone and sometimes these conflicts have broader economic, political, social and security implications (Ukase & Abraham, 2016). Several reports and studies have shown the spread of similar conflicts across the six states of the zone (Adega, 2025; Agyo & Wake, 2024; Jooji, 2022; Labaran, 2024).

These conflicts are mostly communal and resource-based whether they are scenarios where parties struggle for the seat of the monarch of a resource-rich area or farmers and herders struggle for water and land for cattle grazing and farming. Against this backdrop, Ajodo-Adebanjoko and Nwofor (2024) noted that the conflicts between farmers and herders can also be grouped into scholars' categorisations such as environmental or resource-based conflicts that often arise due to ownership struggle, access to, use of or competition over natural resources such as land, water petroleum and mineral resources. As used here, mineral resources could mean other types of minerals such as the ones known as solid that are found in abundance in the North Central region of Nigeria. Evidence exists of the different types of solid mineral resources of different states of the region (Ahmed, 2022; Bamidele, 2018). Tussle over control of these mineral deposits, land resources and water are common causes of conflicts in the region.

Governments in the region are known to make efforts to ensure that parties are engaged towards ending the different shade of conflicts in the zone (Ojewale, 2021). One of the means through which government intervene in conflicts is through the use of communication strategies. This is in addition to other popular methods such as mediation, reconciliation, arbitration and related non-violent means of intervening in conflict resolution in the continent, and Nigeria in particular. In North centra, Nigeria conflict resolution efforts sometimes involve force through military deployment and the method has not been effective. This implies that the use of dialogue approach through communication remains a valid option and different stakeholders including government have leveraged on the powers of communication to mediate in internal conflicts in the region. Against this backdrop, the question, therefore, is how effective are these communication strategies of government in conflict mediation in the region of North Central Nigeria?

Worthy of note is that non-confrontational dispute resolution techniques are sometimes referred to as appropriate dispute resolution or alternative dispute resolution known by the ADR acronym. Mediation, conciliation, arbitration and negotiation are some of the ADR forms or techniques (Yahaya, 2021). These techniques have been identified as ways through which conflict resolution is conducted in Nigeria (Okorie, 2024; Usman et al., 2025). These methods all involve some level of communication which is the exchange of information between two or more persons in a communication encounter. At the negotiation table, disputants are allowed to freely talk about their grievances toward finding lasting solution and peace among all parties. It on this account that despite the fault lines and the fragile peace in some parts of Nigeria especially the North with minority ethnic groups living alongside the major ones, the country continues to see peaceful coexistence.

Dispute resolution mechanisms and related methods are championed by concerned authorities across the country. Different international stakeholders and the central government of Nigeria including the governments of the federating units; the states are often engaged in such moves to mediate in conflicts. It is important to note that this requires some level of commitment and action from all parties to the dispute including the mediator. In addition, traditional methods of resolving disputes have also been explored in the case of conflicts in the Nigeria (Aboh et al., 2023; Igwe et al., 2020; Nwoye & Nkekeaku, 2023; Ogbanga & Bukie, 2024; Usman et al., 2025). In spite of these efforts, sections of the country continue to see cases of disputes and North Central Nigeria is not an exception. Therefore, this study takes a wholistic approach to assess all government crisis communication mechanisms/strategies in communal conflict mediation in states of North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to identify the crisis communication strategies for communal conflict mediation in select states of North Central Nigeria. It was also conducted to examine the level of effectiveness of government crisis communication strategies in conflict mediation in the region.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Communal conflict mediation is an age-long concept because conflict is inevitable in society. Different scholars have theorised, posited and studied the sub-field of research. Some of these scholarly positions and empirical studies are reviewed in this section. Communal conflicts are common in the North Central region of Nigeria and assume different dimensions and colourations. In Benue, there is the conflict between the farmers and pastoralists (Nwankwo, 2024), which has assumed a dangerous dimension and the factors responsible include the struggle for land resources (Egbuta, 2018). Another significant factor of note is the reckless and uncontrolled movement of pastoralists and their cattle. The resultant conflicts have reported left over 2.1 million people displaced in the areas prone to the confrontations between the two groups (Achem, 2023).

Different other parts of the North Central region are also faced with similar conflicts. Notable is the herders-farmers conflict reported in Igalamela/Odolo and Omala LGAs of Kogi State and Achoba and Ura (2023) noted that the situation in Omala LGA can be traced to the struggle over land resources and then the resultant impact was negative on the socio-economic make-up of the area. On another level, Lokoja has also faced the challenge of a conflict that revolves around indigene and settler conflict among the different ethnic groups that live in the city (Adejo et al., 2023). There are other issues in some areas in the zone such as Kwara that border on communal conflict – the Erin-Ile/Offa clash over land, control, value and power play was prominent among such conflicts (Alao et al., 2019). In Nasarawa was the Ombatse militancy (Okoli & Ukwandu, 2021). These are the series of challenges in form of conflicts that plagued the North Central region.

In response to the multidimensional conflicts in the region, government and other stakeholders are always tasked with the need to mediate towards lasting peace and coexistence among the parties. The rural institutions and social strategies have been deployed by government to address conflicts in some parts of North Central region, particularly Kogi State (Dimelu et al., 2016). On a related note, Aleshinloye and Orolade (2020) also identified public relations as one of the strategies explored by government for conflict management purposes in Nigeria. In the same vein, Jooji (2022) also identified the use of traditional system and institution as effective conflict management channel in the state. Evidence also exists of government intervention through the deployment of formal and informal conflict management strategies in Ebiraland (Sheidu, 2016). According to Michael (2018), community-based conflict resolution committees have also been set-up in Nasarawa State at

different times in the state's long-walk in the conflicts that have plagued North Central Nigeria.

Conflict communication strategies are said to be effective in conflict management. According to Touitou (2020), communication has several roles it plays in the entire chain of activities relating to conflict management. As a conflict prevention factor, the researcher noted that communication can be effective in preventing conflict through the introduction of participatory and supportive communication. Additionally, it can also act as a conflict curative mechanism as different conflict situations can be managed through the application of different communication techniques. Communication strategies are responsible for effective strengthening of relationships, promotion of a sense of community and reduction in human conflicts (Olulowo et al., 2024). The foregoing is an indication that communication strategies when applied can be effective in conflict situations from the broader communal context to the family unit.

Conflict mediation has also been the focus of empirical studies conducted by different researchers. In a study conducted by Adewuyi et al (2023), the focus was to examine the strategies for conflict mediation in Nigeria with focus on their effectiveness in respect of promotion of good government and conflict resolution. Anchored on the structural conflict theory and relying on content analysis, the findings of the study showed that conflict resolution strategies deployed in Nigeria were largely ineffective with ethno-religious tensions, bad leadership, poor security system and corruption identified as some of the issues. The conclusion of the study is that these impediments may have contributed to the stagnation in the development and growth of Nigeria with recommendation that there should be adherence to the principles of democracy and improvement in governance structures to ensure good conflict management. The study under review and this current one are similar due to the consideration of conflict resolution but different in specific focus. Whereas the study under review is general about mediation, this study is about conflict mediation through communication strategies in select states of North Central Nigeria.

Abdulkadir and Alabi (2022) studied government's intervention initiative in communal conflict comparing Zngo-Kataf and Share-Tsaragi conflicts in parts of North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The descriptive analytical technique was used in the study relying on 30 interviews conducted, secondary data and personal observation. Findings showed that government has seen negative effect in respect of its intervention in the affected areas. It further revealed that in order to resolve the conflicts, government paid a price and that the price could cover the cost required to solve the numerous economic, health, and social needs of the rest of the citizens of the country. The emphasis, therefore, was that government must not fold its arm and wait till conflict escalates before activating management mechanisms. The researchers recommended that government mobilise its resources to prevent conflicts through building synergy with major stakeholders such as traditional institutions and the media. The study under review is similar to this current one based on the focus on conflict but differs in the specific population in focus.

Managing conflict within the family unit with focus on the foursquare gospel church in Lagos Nigeria was the focus of a study conducted by Olulowo et al (2024) where the researchers sought to find out the roles communication play and the relationship between effective conflict management strategies and the peace in society. The researchers relied on survey and sampled 114 ministers of the gospel using questionnaire as survey instrument of data collection for the study. Findings of the study showed that communication is pivotal to family conflict management and could foster peace in the homes. The study also found a positive relationship between the effective application of family conflict management and societal peace. The researchers concluded that through various strategies, conflicts can be

effectively managed in the family and the larger community and recommended that family members see themselves as peace advocates and be always prepared to manage conflict situations. This study is similar with the one under review in terms of the variables as both focused on conflict mediation but differ in geographic scope.

THEORETIC FRAMEWORK

INTERACTIONAL VIEW THEORY

The interactional view theory is also popularly known as the interactionist view and is based on the explanations as to ways individuals react with each other and the environment in which they cohabit in order to construct their reality through the creation of meaning. It has been credited to Watzlawick, Bevin and Jackson in 1967 (Asemah et al., 2022). The theory assumes that individuals interact with each other and the environment in which they live for the purpose of meaning creation. It further stressed that symbols like language and related communication means are used to communicate toward meaning creation. Furthermore, the theory assumes that through interactions, individuals are actively involved in creating meaning, and finally, that through shared meanings and interactions, people create their own reality.

In another understanding, the theory also assumes that a transactional process that involves the sender and receiver best captures the essence of communication and in the process, both parties exert considerable influence and are therefore considered as both influential elements in the communication. The assumption also is about the creation of meaning through interaction. Therefore, interaction between humans is considered to be meaning-centric. This implies that it is all about meaning – at least based on the assumption of the interactional view theory. Based on the conception of the theorists of the interactional view, various physical factors including culture and environment are important in determining communication. Feedback is an important element in communication on the grounds that it creates opportunity for the process to be adjusted and refined. Interactional view theory provides the theoretical framework for this study to systematise knowledge of feedback and dialogue as important aspects of communication that culminate in successful mediation.

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION THEORY

The conflict transformation theory is another that provides the base for this study. The theory's main concern is to understand conflicts and work towards addressing them through keen focus on underlying relationships and dynamics that may be responsible for the conflict. J. P Lederach has been identified as a major proponent of the conflict transformation theory (Botes, 2001). It is based on the argument that conflict resolution must not be restricted to just merely reconciling the parties but to address the underlying factors that may have led to the conflicts in the first place (Lederach, 1995). This is known as conflict transformation because the idea is to transform the conflict itself rather than just a focus on the surface issues that are visible and glaring.

Lederach (1995) argued that conflict resolution is better appreciated when conceptualised from the perspective of the multidimensional approach that involves rule transformation, actor transformation, structural transformation, and issue transformation. On a related note, the theory is also about the relationships between the parties to a conflict as they seek to improve empathy, communication and understanding among themselves. Another principle of the theory is about the importance of considering the interests and needs as well as the values that drive conflicts. Power dynamics relate to the need to recognise the impact that the power imbalances may have on the dynamics of the conflict. Finally, there is

the contextual understanding which is an emphasis on considering the broader historical, cultural, and social context of the conflict. This study is anchored on the conflict transformation theory because of its explanation on how mediation ensure long-term cohesion if the various principles are considered.

METHOD

This study is quantitative and is based on the survey research design. The study examined the effectiveness of government crisis communication strategies for communal conflict mediation in select states of North Central Nigeria. Survey research design is appropriate to gauge the perceptions of members of the public on the effectiveness of the strategies. Population of the study comprised of select states in the geopolitical zone. A sample size of 600 was determined with the use of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Sample Size Calculator from the population of 1,039,200 persons in select towns in the states namely Agatu in Benue, Eggon in Nasarawa and Jos North in Plateau.

The questionnaire was utilised as instrument of data collection and it was designed with the aid of a 5-point Likert Scale and subjected to face validation by experts in communication at Glorious Vision University Ogwa Edo State, Nigeria. The Cronbach's alpha result showed a value of 0.923 which as indication of a very reliable instrument based on its internal consistency. In consideration of research ethics, respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time of their choosing. Instruments were administered personally to the respondents through research assistants. A total of 562 valid instruments were retrieved indicating a 93.6% response to the survey. The SPSS version 26 was used to analyse data from the survey to determine frequencies and percentages.

RESULTS

TABLE 1: Demographic data of respondents

Parameter	Frequency	Percent [%]	Valid Percent [%]	Cumulative Percent [%]
Gender				
Male	252	44.8	44.8	100.0
Female	310	55.2	55.2	55.2
Age				
51 & Above	28	5.0	5.0	100.0
36-50	169	30.1	30.1	95.0
26-35	246	43.8	43.8	64.9
18-25	119	21.2	21.2	21.2
State				
Plateau	172	30.6	30.6	100.0
Nasarawa	256	45.6	45.6	69.4
Benue	134	23.8	23.8	23.8
Education				
PhD	15	2.7	2.7	100.0
MSc	125	22.2	22.2	97.3
BSc/HND	340	60.5	60.5	60.5

FSLC	82	14.6	14.6	75.1
Total	562	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 above contains demographic data of the respondents who are residents in select states of North Central Nigeria. As seen the table, more female than their male counterparts participated in the survey. Data on age distribution showed that they are adults and can take the survey. Data also show that the select states had respondents who took the survey. The educational attainment of the respondents demonstrates that they are of sound mind to take the survey.

TABLE 2: Government uses communication for communal conflict mediation in your town/community

Parameter	Frequency	Percent [%]	Valid Percent [%]	Cumulative Percent [%]
Strongly disagree	12	2.1	2.1	100.0
Disagree	34	6.0	6.0	76.3
Can't tell	72	12.8	12.8	70.3
Strongly agree	121	21.5	21.5	97.9
Agree	323	57.5	57.5	57.5
Total	562	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Data in table 2 show that in a bid to mediate in conflict, government utilised communication. This is based on the notion of 57.5 who agreed and 21.5% who strongly agreed. The implication is that they were greatly utilised.

TABLE 3: The crisis communication strategies used by governments in North Central Nigeria for communal conflict mediation

Parameter	Frequency	Percent [%]	Valid Percent [%]	Cumulative Percent [%]
Aids and donor agencies approach	4	.7	.7	4.8
Advocacy	11	2.0	2.0	2.0
Civil societies and NGOs approach	12	2.1	2.1	6.9
Dialogue approach	16	2.8	2.8	46.1
Participatory communication	16	2.8	2.8	53.7
Religious organisation approach	23	4.1	4.1	80.6
Media relations	24	4.3	4.3	50.9
Peacebuilding communication	27	4.8	4.8	58.5
Public relations	80	10.7	10.7	71.0
Traditional institution approach	97	17.3	17.3	98.8
Community relations	100	17.8	17.8	27.2
Total	562	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Presented in table 3 above is data that depicts community relations as the most utilised communication strategy for communal conflict mediation. Prominent strategies also deployed include traditional institution approach, public relations, peace building communication, and media relations among others.

TABLE 4: Level of effectiveness of the communication strategy used for communal conflict mediation

Parameter	Frequency	Percent [%]	Valid Percent [%]	Cumulative Percent [%]
Highly effective	103	18.3	18.3	81.9
Effective	288	51.2	51.2	63.5
Can't tell	69	12.3	12.3	12.3
Not effective	28	5.0	5.0	100.0
Less effective	74	13.2	13.2	95.0
Total	562	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Data in table 4 demonstrates the effectiveness of the communication strategy adopted for communal conflict mediation in Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau as 288 (51.2%) took the position.

TABLE 5: Level of satisfaction with the communication strategy for communal conflict mediation

Parameter	Frequency	Percent [%]	Valid Percent [%]	Cumulative Percent [%]
Highly satisfied	100	17.8	17.8	28.5
Satisfied	230	40.9	40.9	100.0
Can't tell	60	10.7	10.7	10.7
Not satisfied	65	11.6	11.6	59.1
Less satisfied	107	19.0	19.0	47.5
Total	562	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

In table 5 above, data show that respondents are satisfied with the adoption and deployment of strategies for communication in conflict mediation in the region. This is an indication that results are seen based on the mediation efforts of government.

Table 6: Crisis communication efforts of the government have resulted in the de-escalation of conflicts in my community

Parameter	Frequency	Percent [%]	Valid Percent [%]	Cumulative Percent [%]
Strongly disagree	35	6.2	6.2	100.0
Disagree	74	13.2	13.2	81.0
Can't tell	87	15.5	15.5	67.8
Strongly agree	72	12.8	12.8	93.8
Agree	294	52.3	52.3	52.3
Total	562	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Data in table 5 depicts that the crisis communication may have led to de-escalation of conflicts in communities in the region.

Table 7: Extent government crises communication strategies resulted in the de-escalation of conflicts in your community

Parameter	Frequency	Percent [%]	Valid Percent [%]	Cumulative Percent [%]
Very low	43	7.7	7.7	100.0
Low	90	16.0	16.0	75.4
Can't tell	110	19.6	19.6	19.6
Very high	95	16.9	16.9	92.3
High	224	39.9	39.9	59.4
Total	562	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

As seen in table 7 above, data from the survey indicate that to a high extent, the communication strategies deployed by government yielded results leading to de-escalation of conflicts in the areas under study.

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the communication strategies adopted by government to address conflicts in North Central states of Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau. Accordingly, the researchers guided the study using two objectives which were to identify the crisis communication strategies utilised and also ascertain their effectiveness in de-escalating tensions arising from the series of crises that plagued the zone. Consequently, the field survey yielded significant insights as findings show that government utilised different communication strategies to ensure peace among the disputants. In table 2, data show that 121 (21.5%) respondents strongly agreed to the notion while 323 (57.5%) agreed to the notion that government uses communication for communal conflict mediation in communities of the region. This resonates with the study conducted by Abdulkadir and Alabi (2022) where findings showed that government made efforts to react to conflict situation through management. This also resonates with conflict transformation theory's assumption of working to resolve conflict situation.

Findings of this study also show the different communication strategies adopted by government for conflict mediation in North Central zone of Nigeria. Data in table 3 show that community relations is the prominent based on the notion of 100 respondents representing 17.8 percent. Additionally, respondents show that traditional institution approach (17.3%), public relations (10.7%), peacebuilding communication (4.8%), religious organisation approach (4.1%), participatory approach (2.8%), dialogue approach (2.8%), civil societies and NGO approach (2.1%), advocacy (2.0%), and aids and donor agencies approach (.7%) are some of the significant communication strategies explored by government to mediate in conflicts. Previous studies also showed that use of various communication strategies in similar situations. For example, Aleshinloye and Orolade (2020) found government to been keen on the use of public relations to resolve conflict in Nigeria. Additionally, a study conducted by Igben and Timiyan (2023) showed that community relations could be used as effective strategy for conflict resolution as seen in the case of conflicts between communities in Delta and MNCs operating in the region.

On the effectiveness of government crisis communication strategies deployed for conflict mediation in North Central Nigeria, data from the field survey presented in table 4 show that the strategies are highly effective (18.3%) and effective (51.2%). Furthermore, the study as seen in table 5 showed that the people are satisfied with the communication

strategies deployed by government. Based on the estimation of the respondents, the strategies are effective for conflict mediation among the parties to different conflicts in the region. This has been corroborated by earlier studies that demonstrated that strategies utilised for mediation were found to be effective (Igben & Timiyan, 2023; Ojika, 2024; Usman et al., 2025). As seen in the case of Olulowo et al (2020), communication strategy was seen to be effective in conflict management efforts in Lagos Nigeria. On a similar note, Adejimola (2020) also revealed the effectiveness of communication and language in conflict resolution efforts.

De-escalation of tensions in conflict situations has been identified as one of the ways that demonstrate the effectiveness of the communication strategies deployed by government to arrest chaotic situations in parts of North Central Nigeria. Data in table 6 show agreement with the notion as the 12.8 percent respondents strongly agreed and 52.3 percent simply agreed. Data in table 7 validated that of table 6 showing that the extent of de-escalation of tension is very high (16.9%) and high (39.9%). The implication of the data is that communication yielded result through de-escalation of tensions heightened by the conflict situations in the zone. Previous studies also showed that mediation efforts can help in de-escalating conflicts (Nnaemeka, 2019; Saaida, 2023). Particularly, the study conducted by Muller and Swanepoel (2023) showed how de-escalation of conflict can be actualised through mediation. This study's finding on the use of communication strategies to de-escalate conflict resonates with the interactional view theory's assumption about the creation of meaning using communication and how that can influence humans.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provided insights in relations to the use of communication strategies to mediate in conflict situations in the North Central region of Nigeria. Being that the region is plagued by a myriad of conflicts that range from herders-farmers clashes to ethno-religious tensions and even chieftaincy tussle coupled with militancy in the Nasarawa axis, it then imply that serious communication efforts are required to douse tensions and ameliorate the sufferings of the people through peaceful resolution to conflicts. This study showed that a number of conflict mediation-related communication strategies were deployed by government to resolve mediate and resolve conflicts in the zone. The conclusion, therefore, is that communication is crucial for all types of conflict resolution mechanisms including negotiation, mediation, conciliation and even arbitration. As seen in the case of the North Central zone, communication strategies are effective. Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the recommendations are that:

1. Stakeholders must realise the power of communication and ensure that all communication options are explored and exhausted before attempting alternative approach such as the application of force.
2. Community relations between the government and the various communities in Nigeria should be emphasised and strengthened. In essence, the concerned agencies and institutions of government must be empowered to lead moves to ensure that community relations is built and made strong especially at the local government level.
3. Various communication strategies should be studied to understand their impact on a case-by-case basis to understand the effectiveness in unique conflict situations. For instance, public relations should be studied in relations to specific conflicts in Nasarawa or Benue or even Kogi and Plateau. This will yield insights as to the way out of future similar conflict situation.

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