

THEATRE AS A CATALYST FOR CONSCIENTIZATION: REFLECTIONS ON FORUM THEATRE IN JOS METROPOLIS

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of Applied Theatre, specifically Forum Theatre, in fostering conscientization among communities in Jos Metropolis, Nigeria, amidst persistent interreligious and inter-ethnic conflicts. Using Augusto Boal's theoretical framework, the study adapted Forum Theatre into a participatory radio drama format based on a model developed by Mary Traynor termed "Forum Theatre on the Air." This anti-model radio drama depicted conflict escalation scenarios grounded in the community's lived realities, serving as a catalyst for critical reflection and dialogue. Audience members actively intervened during the broadcast, suggesting alternative courses of action to resolve conflicts, while post-mortem focus group discussions provided deeper insights into communal perspectives. Participants critically explored key triggers of violence, such as misinformation, economic disparity, youth unemployment, and residential segregation, proposing actionable and context-sensitive solutions. The findings underscore how applied theatre empowered community members to critically appraise their socio-political environments, identify systemic inequities, and envision peaceful coexistence. Moreover, the theatrical process encouraged collaborative problem-solving and fostered empathy, trust, and inter-generational dialogue, essential for rebuilding the culture of peace eroded by decades of conflict. While highlighting the limitations of a metropolitan context and a radio-based approach, the study concludes that applied theatre is a transformative tool for conscientization and community-driven peace building. It offers practical insights for leveraging arts-based interventions in conflict-affected and culturally diverse settings.

Keywords: Conscientization, Forum Theatre, Peace building, Applied Theatre, Jos Metropolis

Introduction

The Jos Metropolis, located in Plateau State, Nigeria, once epitomized the spirit of peace and coexistence as the "Home of Peace and Tourism." However, since 2001, the city has experienced recurring inter-religious violence, undermining its socio-cultural fabric and threatening its sustainability. At the heart of this conflict lies a complex interplay of religious, ethnic, and socio-economic factors, manifesting in violence between Christian and Muslim communities. These tensions have disrupted the cultural heritage of peace for which the metropolis was renowned, replaced instead by a culture of conflict marked by mistrust, segregation, and sporadic violence. Amid these challenges, applied theatre offers a potent tool for fostering dialogue and conscientization—the process of becoming critically aware of one's social realities and mobilizing for transformative action (Freire, 2005). This study explores how Forum Theatre, a model developed by Augusto Boal (1979, 1992), can serve as a catalyst for conscientization, creating spaces for dialogue and community-driven solutions to the Jos conflict. By adapting Forum Theatre for radio, termed "Forum Theatre on the Air," the research engaged a diverse audience in participatory dialogue, allowing them to critically examine the roots of their conflict and envision peaceful alternatives.

The choice of applied theatre as a medium is informed by its proven efficacy in promoting dialogue and transformation in conflict settings worldwide. From addressing post-apartheid tensions in South Africa (Breed, 2009) to fostering reconciliation in the Israeli-Palestinian context (Cohen, 2010), applied theatre has emerged as a robust method for engaging divided communities. Recent studies underscore

its relevance in promoting cultural sustainability and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in conflict-affected regions (Duxbury & Jeannotte, 2023; Gaskins, 2024). These works highlight how participatory arts-based methods empower communities to address their challenges while fostering inclusivity and resilience.

In Jos, the need for such an approach is urgent. The recurring violence has eroded trust between communities, disrupted socio-economic activities, and hindered progress toward sustainable development. Key drivers of conflict include poverty, youth unemployment, land disputes, political manipulation, and religious intolerance. These factors underscore the necessity of a holistic intervention that addresses not only the immediate triggers of violence but also the structural inequities and historical grievances that sustain it.

This study addresses three key questions:

- (a) What are the root causes of conflict between Christian and Muslim communities in Jos Metropolis?
- (b) How can applied theatre, particularly Forum Theatre, foster conscientization and peacebuilding in this context?
- (c) What lessons can be drawn from this process for broader applications of theatre in conflict transformation?

The research methodology was participatory, involving community members in the creation, performance, and reflection stages of the applied theatre process. The use of radio extended the reach of the intervention, enabling wider participation and fostering a shared sense of ownership among diverse groups. The study's findings demonstrate that applied theatre can not only illuminate the dynamics of conflict but also serve as a vehicle for collective re-imagination and action toward peace. The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in the principles of Forum Theatre and the broader discourse on cultural sustainability. It aligns with the SDGs, particularly Goal 16, which emphasizes peace, justice, and strong institutions, and Goal 11, which advocates for inclusive and sustainable communities (United Nations, 2015). The research also contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the intersection of arts, development, and conflict resolution, offering practical insights for practitioners and policymakers.

Theoretical Framework

The integration of theoretical frameworks in this study draws from the principles of Forum Theatre on the Air, Cultural Sustainability, and Participatory Peace building, forming a triadic approach to addressing socio-cultural conflicts in Jos Metropolis. The theoretical underpinnings emphasize the dynamic interplay of culture, agency, and art as tools for transformation. The integration of these theories creates an apt framework for addressing the multi-layered conflicts in Jos. Cultural sustainability provides the foundation for preserving and revitalizing shared identities, Forum Theatre offers a participatory mechanism for conflict transformation, and participatory peace building ensures that solutions are community-driven and context-specific. Together, they enable the creation of a praxis-oriented approach to peace building, grounded in both theory and local realities.

Traynor's 'Forum Theatre on the Air': An Adaptation of Boal's Forum Theatre for Radio

Mary Traynor's "Forum Theatre on the Air" is a pioneering adaptation of Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre, specifically designed for radio broadcasting. This model transforms the core principles of Forum Theatre – participation, dialogue, and critical reflection – into an accessible audio format that transcends geographic and physical boundaries. By leveraging the power of radio, Traynor's model enables communities to engage with dramatized conflict scenarios, or "anti-models," in real-time, while

providing opportunities for listeners to propose and discuss alternative solutions.

In practice, Forum Theatre on the Air begins with the creation of an anti-model, a dramatized depiction of a conflict situation, recorded and broadcast via radio. The narrative is intentionally left unresolved to invite audience participation. During the live broadcast, listeners become "spect-actors," a term borrowed from Boal, as they are encouraged to call in, critique the characters' actions, and suggest alternative ways to resolve the dramatized conflict. The Joker – a facilitator in Forum Theatre – plays a central role in this adaptation, guiding the discussion, moderating caller contributions, and ensuring a balance between critical dialogue and entertainment. Traynor (2012) emphasized that this model allows diverse community members to engage in the dialogue from the privacy and safety of their homes, fostering inclusivity even in volatile or divided regions.

One of the key advantages of Forum Theatre on the Air is its accessibility. Unlike traditional Forum Theatre, which requires physical presence, the radio format eliminates logistical barriers such as venue accessibility and transportation costs, making it feasible for marginalized communities to participate. The format also ensures safety in conflict-prone areas, as participants can engage anonymously without fear of reprisal. Additionally, the wide reach of radio allows for the involvement of a larger audience, expanding the impact of the intervention beyond a localized community to an entire region.

Another significant benefit is the opportunity for multi-stakeholder engagement. Forum Theatre on the Air enables the inclusion of voices that might otherwise be excluded due to social or cultural constraints. For instance, women in patriarchal settings or individuals from opposing ethnic groups can participate without the direct scrutiny that a physical gathering might entail. This inclusivity aligns with Boal's vision of empowering marginalized groups to challenge oppression and engage in critical problem-solving.

While Forum Theatre on the Air has notable advantages, it also has limitations. The lack of visual cues inherent in the radio format can make it challenging for audiences to fully grasp the complexity of dramatized scenarios. This limitation requires the Joker to provide vivid descriptions and clarifications to ensure effective engagement. Additionally, the model relies heavily on the availability of functional infrastructure, such as reliable radio stations and communication lines for audience participation, which may not always be present in underdeveloped areas.

Traynor's model underscores the adaptability of applied theatre practices to contemporary challenges. By merging the participatory ethos of Forum Theatre with the wide-reaching medium of radio, Forum Theatre on the Air expands the scope of arts-based interventions, providing an innovative tool for conscientization, dialogue, and social change in conflict-affected and marginalized communities. As demonstrated in the Jos Metropolis study, this model holds immense potential for fostering community resilience and cultural sustainability, aligning seamlessly with goals such as SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study integrates key ideas from applied theatre, cultural sustainability, and participatory peacebuilding. These interconnected concepts provide a theoretical basis for understanding how theatre can act as a catalyst for conscientization and transformation in conflict-affected contexts such as the Jos Metropolis.

Applied Theatre and Conscientization

Applied theatre, as conceptualized by Augusto Boal (1979, 1992), emphasizes participatory and transformative processes. Boal's Forum Theatre, in particular, is designed to empower communities to critically analyze their social realities and explore alternative actions through performance. It positions participants as "spect-actors," active agents in the creation and re-creation of their stories. The process of intervention begins with an "anti-model," a performance that depicts a problematic situation with no

resolution, prompting the audience to engage, critique, and propose solutions (Boal, 1992).

Conscientization, a concept rooted in the pedagogical philosophy of Paulo Freire (2005), aligns with Boal's methodology by promoting critical awareness of systemic oppression and encouraging transformative action. The intersection of Freire's and Boal's theories is particularly relevant in conflict settings, where systemic inequities often underlie violence. Recent scholarship highlights how applied theatre fosters conscientization in diverse contexts, enabling communities to navigate complexities of identity, power, and agency (Haseman & O'Toole, 2023; Pendergast, 2024). In the Jos context; Forum Theatre offers an avenue to address entrenched stereotypes, mutual distrust, and the cyclical nature of violence. By dramatizing real-life scenarios and enabling collaborative problem-solving, it nurtures empathy, dialogue, and a shared commitment to peace. Boal's emphasis on creating "spaces of doubt" rather than certainty (Boal, 1992) resonates with the study's goal of fostering dialogue among divided communities in Jos. Recent analyses have expanded on Boal's framework, particularly in conflict settings. Traynor (2022) explores the potential of Forum Theatre to amplify marginalized voices in post-conflict societies, while Mackey (2023) highlights its effectiveness in creating empathetic connections between opposing groups. These insights guided the adaptation of Forum Theatre into a radio format, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity in Jos Metropolis.

Cultural Sustainability

The concept of cultural sustainability provides a lens for examining the relationship between peace building and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Cultural sustainability emphasizes the importance of maintaining and revitalizing cultural practices, values, and knowledge systems to ensure inter-generational equity and community resilience (Dessein et al., 2015). It recognizes peace as both a cultural practice and an enabler of other cultural aspirations.

Cultural sustainability particularly refers to the practices and policies that ensure the continuity of cultural expressions, values, and practices over time (Duxbury et al., 2017). This concept aligns with the need to protect the intangible cultural heritage of communities facing conflict, as articulated in the UNESCO 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage. In the context of Jos Metropolis, the erosion of a shared culture of peace necessitates a theoretical focus on revitalizing these cultural assets as a foundation for reconciliation. Recent scholarship underscores that cultural sustainability intersects with socio-economic and environmental dimensions of development (Hawkes, 2022; Tonn & Evers, 2023). For instance, Tonn and Evers (2023) argue that cultural practices, when integrated into peacebuilding, create "adaptive cultural frameworks" that respond to evolving social needs. This perspective was operationalized in the study through the collaborative creation of an anti-model that reflected community-specific cultural narratives.

In Jos, where the culture of peace has been eroded by decades of conflict, efforts to restore sustainable peace are inherently tied to cultural sustainability. Peace is not merely the absence of violence but a cultural ethos that requires nurturing through inclusive practices, dialogue, and education. Recent studies underscore the critical role of cultural sustainability in conflict transformation, highlighting how participatory arts-based interventions can bridge divides and promote social cohesion (Duxbury et al., 2023; Kangas & Jeannotte, 2024).

Participatory Peace building

Participatory peace building emphasizes the involvement of local actors in designing and implementing conflict-resolution strategies (Lederach, 1997). It challenges top-down approaches to conflict resolution, advocating instead for grassroots-driven processes that prioritize local ownership, inclusivity, and dialogue (Lederach, 2020). Theatre, particularly Forum Theatre, aligns with this paradigm by involving communities in the co-creation of narratives and solutions. It enables participants to interrogate systemic drivers of conflict, such as poverty, land disputes, and political

manipulation, and envision pathways to reconciliation.

This approach aligns with calls for "localization" in peace efforts, where communities co-create solutions tailored to their unique contexts (Richmond & Mac Ginty, 2023). In Jos Metropolis, the participatory process enabled community members to co-create an anti-model that mirrored their lived realities and aspirations for peace. The study also draws from the concept of "everyday peace," which focuses on micro-level practices that sustain peace in divided societies (Mac Ginty, 2021). By involving diverse participants across religious and ethnic lines, the research aligns with Lederach's (2023) vision of "social imaginaries" where communities envision and enact peaceful coexistence. Participatory peace building is essential given the deep-seated mistrust and segregation between Christian and Muslim communities. Theatre provides a neutral and creative platform for engaging diverse stakeholders, fostering dialogue, and exploring shared values. As Gaskins (2024) notes, participatory arts-based methods are uniquely suited to addressing complex social issues by combining aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual engagement.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design centered on Forum Theatre as a participatory and arts-based approach. Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre model, which emphasizes creating spaces for dialogue and action, was adapted to address the religious and socio-cultural tensions in Jos Metropolis. The research incorporated both practice-based and ethnographic methods to engage community members in exploring the root causes of conflict and potential pathways to peace building. The research followed an applied theatre framework, emphasizing the co-creation of narratives, active audience participation, and the use of theatre as a tool for conscientization and transformation. The iterative and reflective process aligned with the principles of cultural sustainability and participatory peace building.

Study Area and Participants

The study was conducted in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State, Nigeria—a city with a history of religious and ethnic conflicts. The participants were drawn from diverse demographic and socio-religious backgrounds, including Christians and Muslims, youth leaders, women's groups, and community elders. A total of 20 participants were engaged in the creation of the anti-model and post-performance discussions, while the radio broadcast allowed wider participation from the general public. Participants were purposively selected to ensure representation from different ethnic and religious groups and to reflect the metropolitan diversity of Jos. The purposive sampling technique was guided by the principles of inclusivity and equity, ensuring that marginalized voices were prominently featured.

Data Collection Methods

1. **Forum Theatre Workshops:** A series of workshops were conducted to co-create the anti-model, a dramatized scenario depicting conflict escalation in a relatable context. The *Joker* played a pivotal role in these workshops by guiding discussions, facilitating the development of themes, and mediating conflicts that arose during the co-creation process. Acting as a neutral provocateur, the *Joker* encouraged participants to critically examine their experiences and perspectives, ensuring that the narratives captured the complexities of the Jos conflict. The *Joker* also used probing questions to challenge assumptions and promote dialogue among participants, ensuring a collective and inclusive creation process.
2. **Radio Drama Production and Broadcast:** The anti-model was recorded as a radio drama and broadcast on a local radio station. This adaptation aimed to overcome geographic and logistic limitations while ensuring accessibility for the larger Jos community. During the interactive broadcast, the *Joker* served as the intermediary between the audience and the performance, explaining the purpose of the anti-model and inviting listeners to engage with the narrative. By

moderating audience interventions and encouraging alternative solutions to the dramatized conflict, the *Joker* ensured that the participatory ethos of Forum Theatre was preserved, even in the format of a radio drama.

3. **Audience Interventions:** Following the principles of Forum Theatre, audience members actively interrupted the anti-model during its second run, proposing and enacting alternative resolutions to the conflicts depicted. This intervention was crucial in generating participatory dialogue and fostering community-led solutions.
4. **Post-Broadcast Focus Group Discussion:** A focus group discussion (FGD) was held the day after the broadcast in Wholshe community to gather in-depth insights from community members about the performance and its impact. The FGD included ten participants from different neighborhoods, with balanced representation across ethnicity, gender, religion, and age.
5. **Field Notes and Observations:** Observations: during workshops, rehearsals, and the broadcast were documented in detailed field notes. These notes captured participants' non-verbal cues, group dynamics, and reflective moments, enriching the qualitative data.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was iterative and thematic, guided by the principles of critical discourse analysis and thematic coding. The following steps were followed:

1. **Transcription and Initial Coding** Recorded workshop discussions, audience interventions, and FGDs were transcribed verbatim. Initial codes were assigned to highlight recurring themes, such as inter-religious tensions, youth idleness, misinformation, and the role of parenting.
2. **Thematic Analysis** Codes were grouped into broader themes aligned with the study's objectives, including cultural sustainability, conscientization, and participatory peace building. NVivo software was employed to organize and refine thematic categories.
3. **Interpretative Analysis** Drawing from Augusto Boal's theory of oppression and participatory peace building literature, the data were interpreted to identify patterns of conflict escalation and community-led resolutions. This analysis linked participants' narratives to the broader socio-political context of Jos Metropolis.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical standards for community-based research. Participants provided informed consent, and anonymity was assured through the use of pseudonyms. The content of the anti-model was pre-screened by respected community leaders to ensure cultural sensitivity and to avoid exacerbating existing tensions. The research was approved by the institutional ethics review board.

Limitations

The study faced challenges related to time constraints for audience participation during the live radio broadcast. Additionally, the absence of a community radio station in Jos limited the use of grassroots broadcasting channels, necessitating reliance on a commercial station. Finally, while the study included diverse participants, logistical constraints limited engagement with certain outlying communities, especially as Jos Metropolis now sprawls all the way out into parts of Bassa, Barkin Ladi, Jos East, Jos South and Jos East LGAs.

The Anti-Model and Conscientization in Action

The anti-model served as the centerpiece of this study, embodying the essence of Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre in a localized and accessible form. Developed to reflect the socio-religious tensions in Jos

Metropolis, the anti-model provided a dramatized scenario that resonated deeply with the lived experiences of its audience. This section examines the development process, the key themes explored, the audience's engagement during the radio broadcast, and the broader implications for conscientization as seen through doubt, reflection, and empowerment.

The Anti-Model and Inter-Religious Tensions in Jos Metropolis

The anti-model was crafted through participatory workshops involving individuals from various religious and ethnic backgrounds in Jos. These workshops were guided by the *Joker*, under the leadership of the researcher, who facilitated critical discussions and improvisations to uncover the underlying tensions and dynamics fueling conflict in the metropolis. The resulting narrative was deliberately structured to highlight moments of misunderstanding and escalation, where individual and communal actions could either mitigate or exacerbate the conflict. By focusing on universally relatable scenarios, such as familial disagreements and community rumors, the anti-model provided a compelling platform for reflection and dialogue.

Key Themes Explored in the Anti-Model

Rumor-Mongering and Misinformation

A central theme of the anti-model was the destructive power of rumors in exacerbating inter-religious tensions. One character's unfounded suspicion of violence in a neighboring community sparked a chain reaction of fear and hostility. This narrative element underscored the urgent need for critical evaluation of information before acting upon it, a message reinforced by audience interventions during the broadcast.

1. The Role of Parents and Elders in Mitigating Violence

The anti-model also explored the responsibilities of parents and elders in shaping communal responses to potential conflict. A pivotal scene depicted a mother attempting to dissuade her son from retaliating against perceived aggression. This dynamic highlighted the influence of familial and communal guidance in either perpetuating or preventing cycles of violence.

2. The Interplay of Individual Actions and Communal Repercussions

The dramatization illustrated how individual decisions can have far-reaching consequences for the broader community. Whether through spreading rumors or wielding weapons, personal choices were shown to ripple outward, influencing collective behavior and outcomes. This theme encouraged audiences to reflect on their roles in sustaining peace or conflict.

Audience Engagement during the Broadcast

The radio broadcast of the anti-model engaged listeners as active participants. Callers were invited to interrupt the narrative, replacing characters to propose alternative actions. For example, one caller reimaged a pivotal scene by portraying a café owner who provided accurate context for an injured man's condition, thereby averting a potential mob attack. Such interventions demonstrated the audience's ability to critically assess and reimaging conflict dynamics.

The broadcast also allowed listeners to transition from passive observers to "spect-actors," as envisioned by Boal. Another caller replaced a character's mother, adopting a more assertive approach in dissuading her son from seeking violent retaliation. These contributions reflected the audience's capacity for creative problem-solving and their shared desire for peaceful resolutions.

Doubt, Reflection, and Empowerment Arising from Audience Interactions

The anti-model's structure intentionally created moments of doubt, compelling participants to question their assumptions and beliefs. By presenting a scenario of escalating conflict, the narrative prompted reflection on how rumors, fear, and impulsive actions can disrupt communal harmony. Audience

interactions during the broadcast further amplified this reflection, as callers and spect-actors articulated nuanced perspectives and alternative strategies. Empowerment emerged as a critical outcome of the anti-model's participatory approach. By giving the audience a platform to influence the narrative, the project fostered a sense of agency and ownership over conflict resolution processes. This aligns with recent findings on the transformative potential of participatory arts in conflict settings (Aguiar, 2023; Davis, 2022).

Findings and Analysis: Evidence of Conscientization among Participants and Audience

Critical Appraisal of Conflict Triggers and Escalation

The Forum Theatre process revealed a strong potential for conscientization among participants and the listening audience. Participants and spect-actors critically appraised the socio-political and economic triggers of inter-religious violence in Jos Metropolis. Rumor-mongering, residential segregation, and socio-economic inequalities emerged as recurring themes during the workshops and audience call-ins. For instance, in the dramatized scenario where a character spreads misinformation about an attack, audience members called in to challenge the decision-making processes depicted. This critique underscores Freire's (2005) notion of conscientization as an awakening to systemic forces shaping personal and communal experiences.

Callers demonstrated their critical thinking by suggesting alternative pathways to avoid conflict escalation. One caller replaced a character spreading rumors with one who seeks facts from community leaders before acting, highlighting the importance of verification in volatile situations. These interactions reinforced Boal's (1992) assertion that Forum Theatre is not merely performative but transformative, providing a platform for collective problem-solving.

Suggestions for Alternative Responses to Potential Violence

The second-run interruptions of the anti-model broadcast further demonstrated conscientization. One spect-actor proposed that conflict triggers could be managed through proactive community dialogue involving religious leaders and traditional rulers. Another emphasized the role of family upbringing in equipping youths with critical thinking skills to navigate misinformation. These contributions reflect the interplay of individual responsibility and systemic solutions, aligning with recent findings on the use of participatory theatre for peace building in conflict-affected regions (Aguiar, 2023).

Insights from the Post-Mortem Focus Group

Reflection on the Community's Role in Conflict Prevention

The post-mortem focus group illuminated the community's evolving understanding of its role in preventing violence. Participants noted that the dramatized scenarios mirrored real-life situations, fostering a sense of urgency to address systemic issues such as youth unemployment and lack of trust in law enforcement. One participant remarked, "We have a choice to act in ways that either escalate or de-escalate tensions. This play reminds us of that responsibility." The focus group also revealed a growing recognition of interdependence between communities of differing faiths. Participants highlighted the need for collaborative efforts in rebuilding trust and addressing structural inequalities, echoing findings from Kangas, Duxbury, and De Beukelaer (2017) on culture as a tool for fostering social cohesion.

Recognition of Applied Theatre as a Tool for Fostering Empathy and Mutual Understanding

Applied Theatre was unanimously acknowledged as a powerful medium for empathy-building. Participants reflected on how embodying the roles of individuals from opposing religious groups

deepened their understanding of “the other.” One participant noted that the process “humanizes the person you consider an enemy, making it harder to dehumanize them in real life.” This aligns with findings by Davis (2022), who argues that participatory arts practices create “safe spaces” for participants to confront biases and challenge entrenched narratives. The Forum Theatre process in Jos demonstrated this by enabling participants to imagine alternative futures and confront the cultural and social drivers of conflict.

Discussion of the Limitations and Challenges of Forum Theatre on the Air in a Metropolitan Setting

The study identified several limitations in implementing Forum Theatre on the Air in Jos Metropolis. First, the constraints of radio as a medium, including limited airtime and interruptions during call-ins, restricted the depth of engagement with the audience. Unlike live theatre, the absence of physical co-presence may reduce the immediacy of audience-actor interactions (Traynor, 2012). Additionally, the metropolitan setting posed logistical challenges. The diversity of listeners in terms of literacy levels and access to radio devices affected the inclusivity of the broadcast. Moreover, cultural sensitivities required careful navigation to avoid perceptions of bias, particularly in a context marked by religious and ethnic tensions.

Despite these challenges, the study demonstrated that adaptations like pre-recorded interludes and community focus groups can mitigate some limitations. The integration of local voices in the anti-model creation and post-mortem discussions helped bridge the gap between theoretical ideals and practical realities.

Implications for Cultural Sustainability

Applied theatre, as demonstrated in this study, plays a significant role in preserving peace as an element of intangible cultural heritage. Peace, like other intangible cultural values, is deeply rooted in collective memory and social practices. By employing dramatized scenarios that resonate with real-life tensions, the study revived narratives of pre-2001 harmony in Jos Metropolis, fostering a renewed appreciation of coexistence. This aligns with Hawkes' (2001) assertion that cultural practices are central to sustaining communities and their social fabrics. The interactive nature of Forum Theatre allowed participants to reflect on their shared history and envision a collective future. The anti-model acted as a mirror, challenging communities to re-engage with their lost heritage of peace while redefining it in contemporary terms.

In Jos, theatre served as a bridge to reconnect fragmented communities. The anti-model dramatized the effects of violence while showcasing alternatives rooted in dialogue and empathy. This revived the culture of peace by emphasizing mutual interdependence and trust. The focus on collective problem-solving in the Forum Theatre workshops and broadcasts fostered a participatory spirit, reinforcing the idea that peace is both a shared responsibility and a cultural norm. The integration of interfaith dialogues into the anti-model amplified this revival, emphasizing the importance of collaboration across religious divides. The inclusion of diverse age groups in the Forum Theatre process ensured inter-generational dialogue, bridging gaps in understanding and fostering mutual respect. Elder participants provided historical context, while younger participants voiced contemporary challenges and aspirations, creating a balanced narrative. This process enhanced community resilience by fostering a deeper understanding of how past conflicts can inform present actions. As noted by a participant, “Theatre reminds us that our choices affect not just us but the generations to come.” This sentiment reflects the transformative potential of applied theatre to build resilient communities capable of navigating future challenges.

Applied Theatre and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The anti-model addressed key aspects of SDG 16 by promoting dialogue, challenging misinformation, and encouraging justice through non-violent means. Participants' suggestions for conflict resolution underscored the importance of transparent governance and community accountability. The study also highlighted how applied theatre contributes to SDG 11 by addressing segregation and promoting inclusivity. Dramatized scenarios encouraged participants to rethink urban divides and foster sustainable community relationships through shared spaces and trust. Furthermore, the Forum Theatre process drew attention to systemic inequalities fueling inter-religious tensions. Discussions during the workshops and post-mortem emphasized equitable access to resources, education, and opportunities as foundational to lasting peace.

Recommendations for Practice

Strategies for Integrating Applied Theatre into Broader Peace building Frameworks in Jos

1. **Embed Theatre in Educational Curricula:** Incorporate applied theatre practices in schools to promote critical thinking and empathy among youth.
2. **Strengthen Collaborations:** Partner with religious and traditional leaders to co-create narratives that address communal tensions.
3. **Establish Theatre Hubs:** Create dedicated community theatre spaces for continuous engagement and conflict resolution.

The Importance of Sustaining Participatory and Community-Driven Approaches

Sustainability requires the active involvement of local communities in designing and implementing theatre projects. Ensuring inclusivity and equity in participation will enhance ownership and long-term impact.

Recommendations for Policymakers, Practitioners, and Community Leaders

- **Policymakers:** Invest in arts-based initiatives as part of conflict prevention and resolution strategies.
- **Practitioners:** Tailor theatre interventions to address specific community dynamics and ensure cultural sensitivity.
- **Community Leaders:** Advocate for and facilitate dialogue-driven projects to strengthen communal bonds.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated how applied theatre fosters conscientization by enabling communities to critically appraise conflict triggers and explore alternative pathways to peace. The Forum Theatre process served as a catalyst for dialogue, reflection, and collective action in Jos Metropolis. The transformative impact of theatre lies in its ability to humanize, empower, and inspire. In conflict-prone regions like Jos, applied theatre provides a platform for communities to reconnect with shared values, reimagine possibilities, and rebuild trust. Arts-based interventions hold immense promise for sustainable peacebuilding. By integrating local voices and global frameworks, they can address complex challenges in nuanced ways. Future projects should expand on this foundation, exploring innovative approaches to amplify the reach and impact of theatre as a tool for social change.

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