

**EXPLORING PATHWAYS TO HEALING AND RECONCILIATION: A
HYPOTHETICAL STUDY OF (UN)RECONCILED RELATIONSHIPS IN
MAIADIKO, PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Plateau State in Nigeria is one of the flashpoint states that have suffered different kinds of crises leaving many communities in devastations and the people in deep-rooted trauma. The research focused on the Mai'adiko community in Jos who has experienced conflicts and silent killings that grossly affected the people: their relationships impacted the social and economic stability of the community and the state as a whole. Thus, the need for healing and reconciliation in such communities becomes paramount. The hypothetical study examined how the Mai'adiko community was helped in the context of healing and reconciliation towards addressing the devastative and traumatic state of the people. The research determined whether or not the healing and reconciliation have yielded positive results. As a practical theological field, the contextual descriptive-empirical, interpretive, normative, and pragmatic tasks were followed as the research methodology. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 60 local stakeholders. The research findings reveal the reality of the state of the devastation and deep-rooted trauma; the political and religious tensions trigger the conflicts in the community; the peace gatherings and initiatives in the names of healing and reconciliation were happening; and the people still co-exist in fear, suspicion and with trauma. The creation of institute of healing of trauma was recommended to foster and hermeneutically lead towards effective healing and reconciliation through restorative justice. Similarly, the importance of socio-economic empowerment programs was stressed in the recommendations.

Keywords: Healing, reconciliation, communal conflicts, trauma counseling, psycho-socioeconomic factors.

Introduction

Conflicts and violence have become pervasive challenges in many regions of Nigeria, including Jos Plateau State, where the community of Mai'adiko has experienced prolonged periods of tension and silent killings. Mai'adiko community in Jos city has an interesting mix of different ethnic groups as well as the prominent religious groups. The community is a mining settlement, a suburb of Jos technically between Rayfield and Bukuru. Ethnic groups in Mai'adiko includes Berom, Ngas, Mwagavwul, some from Southern Kaduna, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Fulani etc. with most of these ethnic groups having their Chiefs like the Berom Chief, Hausa Chief and the Fulani Ardo. In Mai'adiko community, both the Christians and Muslims lived side by side until 2001 when there was an eruption of religious violence that engulfed Jos and its environs. By January 2010 when ethno-religious crisis hit Jos again, there was great chaos and killings in Mai'adiko and though the crisis settled, they moved into the phase of silent killings, such that the two major religious groups dare not cross boundaries, once a Christian stray into the Muslim dominated areas, he/she does not come out alive, likewise when a Muslim strays into Christian dominated areas. The conflict in Mai'adiko resulted in devastating consequences including loss of lives and livelihoods, displacement and migration, socio-economic instability, psychological trauma, and deterioration of community relationships etc. Because these silent killings lingered despite the perceived calmness in Jos city, concerned Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) leveraging their moral authority to mediate conflicts, moved in and initiated peace talks. One of those is the Gideon Para-mallam Peace Foundation, which began with peace talks, peace rallies, and peace gatherings, all in the bid to bring reconciliation and healing in Mai'adiko and surrounding communities. This and many other inputs from other NGOs and government agencies have gone a long way in relatively restoring social cohesion in the community, highlighting the importance of dialogue and community engagement.

This hypothetical study employs a qualitative research approach to examine the factors which fostered conflicts in Mai'adiko and evaluate the effectiveness of reconciliation strategies. By conducting semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, - including community leaders, Peace Building Organizations and residents- Key findings reveal that initiatives such as peace gatherings, trauma counseling, restorative justice and economic empowerment schemes are critical to fostering healing and rebuilding trust. These interventions align with broader peace-building frameworks that emphasize the integration of social, economic, and psychological dimensions in post-conflict recovery.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the understanding of communal conflict dynamics and inform both policy and practice. By focusing on the Mai'adiko community, it offers insights into the broader implications of reconciliation efforts in similarly divided societies. This paper, therefore, serves as a resource for policymakers, religious leaders, and practitioners seeking to foster sustainable peace among diverse groups in conflict-affected regions. Existing research often rely on generalized analyses of communal conflicts, making it easy to impose externally derived solutions that may not resonate with or address the community's unique needs. This study however, is relevant because it examines the efficacy of reconciliation strategies in fostering healing by fully incorporating the voices and lived experiences of local stakeholders in Mai'adiko, and will be guided by the hypothetical statement that healing and reconciliation is more sustainable and effective where psycho-socioeconomic factors are put in place.

Survey of Literature

As a background to the conflicts in Mai'adiko, Jos, Plateau State and environs in particular has passed through a devastative experience. Tuduks and Adamu (2024), and Tuduks and Dalyop (2024) have undertaken researches in Plateau State in the contexts of strategies for Peaceful Coexistence among Religious Groups in Jos City and Environs, and the Challenge of Peace Building among Christians and Muslims in Plateau State. Their works gives good background to the argument in this study. However, conflicts within diverse communities such as Mai'adiko in Jos Plateau State have been the subject of extensive research, particularly regarding their causes, impacts, and potential solutions. Studies according to USAID (2009) on Religion, conflict and Peace Building consistently highlight the interplay of political, religious, and socio-economic factors as drivers for communal tensions in similar settings. In the Nigerian context, conflicts are often exacerbated by historical grievances and the manipulation of identity markers for political and economic gain (Canice, 2019).

Political and religious tensions are frequently cited as underlying causes of conflict in Northern Nigeria. The use of religion as a tool for political mobilization has deepened divisions among communities, fostering hostility and mistrust (Best, 20007). Similarly, unresolved political grievances and competition for resources often escalate into violence, creating cycles of retribution and destabilization. These dynamics relates to Mai'adiko,

where historical tensions have been compounded by contemporary struggles over land (Human Rights Watch, 2009), representation (Sha, 1998), and cultural identity (Abdu, 2012).

The psychological toll of conflict is another critical area of study. Staub et al, (2008) emphasize the need for healing and reconciliation to go together, 'especially when the groups that have engaged in violence against each other continue to coexist. Research by Galtung (1996) identifies the pervasive effects of trauma on both individuals and communities, arguing that unresolved psychological wounds can hinder reconciliation and perpetuate divisions. This highlights that addressing trauma is essential for reconciliation as unresolved psychological wounds can prolong cycles of violence. Studies exploring psychosocial interventions including community integration programs, development and training of professionals and lay people to take part in psychosocial healing have demonstrated that psychosocial healing can be an effective way to heal post-conflict societal trauma, also contributing to rebuilding society with an improved quality of life (Gutlove and Thompson, 2004). The inclusion of trauma-informed approaches, such as counseling and support groups, is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of effective post-conflict recovery (Valgiusti, 2023). These strategies altogether rebuild interpersonal trust and foster empathy, which are essential for sustainable peace.

Economic empowerment has also been shown to play a crucial role in reconciliation efforts. Research by Blattman and Annan (2016) evaluated the impact of skills training, capital inputs and counseling on the reintegration of Liberian ex-fighters who were illegally mining or occupying rubber plantations. The study found that these programs not only enhanced economic stability but also reduced the likelihood of participants returning to violent activities. This is similar to the situation in Mai'adiko, where NGOs and government agencies have empowered a number of women and youths with skills and funds for business, fostering better community cohesion by enabling them to support their families while engaging in collective economic activities.

These studies provide a rich foundation for understanding the mechanisms of healing and reconciliation, emphasizing the need for a multi-dimensional approach that covers psycho-socioeconomic factors. The integration of these strategies into interventions tailored especially in unique socio-political contexts like Mai'adiko offers insight on a sustainable pathway towards healing.

Methodology

The study employs a qualitative method to explore effective healing and reconciliation in Mai'adiko.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the strategies and factors influencing healing and reconciliation in Mai'adiko.
2. To explore the role of community leaders and spiritual leaders in facilitating healing and reconciliation.
3. To assess whether or not the practices of conflict resolutions is effective or not.

Research Participants

The participants for the study are;

1. Community members: men and women who have experienced the crisis in Mai'adiko.
2. Community leaders: individuals with traditional knowledge and authority.
3. Peace-building Organisations: Non-Governmental Organisations that have worked on peace-building and reconciliation initiatives within Mai'adiko community.

Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling was employed where participants for the study were inhabitants with relevant experiences. This helps in ensuring quality sample is located without biases so as to increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings.

Data Collection Methods

The method used for data collection was in-depth interview which provides rich, detailed qualitative data that allows for a deeper understanding of individual experiences and perspectives. For the sake of this research, it supports the assessment of trauma symptoms and reconciliation attitudes.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is used to analyze the qualitative data due to its flexibility and applicable approach for exploring underlying interpretations and perspectives beyond surface-level descriptions.

Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality and anonymity: both individuals and participating organization's identity is protected.

Informed consent: participants are guided on the research purpose and risks.

Approval from community leaders: permission was obtained from community leaders to engage their members.

Validity and Reliability

Member checking and peer debriefing: findings were shared and verified by participants and experts.

Findings And Analysis

The study addresses the multi-layered dynamics of communal conflict, silent killings and the search for effective healing and reconciliation. The following thematic analysis of key findings is drawn from the broader categories of conflict drivers, healing strategies and socio-economic factors.

- **The Root Causes**

A dominant theme that emerges from the study is the identification of political and religious tensions as the core causes of the conflicts and crisis in Mai'adiko. The study reveals that these factors create deep divides within the community, which led to crisis and silent killings in Mai'adiko.

Political Factors: Political manipulation and power struggles between different political factions were highlighted as factors adding to existing grievances. These tensions often result in the marginalization of certain groups, creating an environment ripe for conflict. Also, that political divisions heighten ethnic or religious loyalties, further fuelling violence.

Religious Differences: Responses collected describes differences particularly between different faith groups as contributory factors to crisis that was experienced in Mai'adiko. These tensions are often amplified by extremism or intolerance leading to violent outbreaks or sustained discrimination. A significant fraction of the respondents also identified ethnic differences as causative agents. The interplay between political and religious divisions further complicates the communal strife in the area.

This theme indicates the complexity of the conflict, showing that it is not merely a result of interpersonal or isolated issues but is deeply embedded in the political and religious fabric of the community. Understanding these root causes is vital for designing effective interventions and peacebuilding strategies.

- **Healing Strategies**

Another key theme to the study emphasizes the importance of healing strategies such as peace talks/gatherings, economic development, educational initiatives on cultural understanding, and trauma counselling geared towards addressing the wounds inflicted by the crisis. These methods focus on both individual and collective healing, aiming to restore relationships and foster long-term reconciliation.

Peace Gatherings: These gatherings serve as a platform for dialogue, allowing community members to voice their grievances, listen to opposing perspectives, and engage in mutual understanding. Peace gatherings facilitate direct communication between conflicting groups and can be crucial in de-escalating tensions and promoting unity. The interview revealed that a lack of such an avenue serves as a major barrier to reconciliation, thereby accentuating the significance of peace dialogues in social cohesion and collective peace-building efforts.

Trauma Counselling: this was identified as a critical component of healing. The trauma experienced by individuals due to violence, loss, and injustice requires professional psychological care. Trauma counselling helps community members process their grief, develop coping mechanisms, and rebuild their sense of agency and resilience. This theme highlights the need for integrated mental health care as part of a holistic reconciliation approach.

Restorative Justice: Respondents mentioned restorative justice as a strategy for addressing past wrongs in a way that emphasizes healing over punishment. By focusing on repairing harm, this approach encourages perpetrators to take responsibility for their actions while making room for victims to feel heard and validated.

These healing strategies collectively highlight the necessity of addressing both the psychological and social aspects of the community's recovery process. The research findings suggest that reconciliation can only be effective when both individual trauma and collective conflict are addressed simultaneously.

- **Socio-Economic Empowerment as a Pillar of Stability**

Another critical theme identified in the study is socio-economic empowerment as a pathway to long-term healing and stability in Mai'adiko. The findings reveal that economic hardship is both a consequence and a catalyst for conflict in the region.

Empowerment Programs: respondents emphasize that socio-economic empowerment programs, such as job creation, vocational training, and access to financial resources, are vital to addressing the root causes of conflict. Economic hardship and lack of opportunities can lead to frustration and resentment, which may manifest as aggression or violence while economic empowerment can alleviate these pressures, creating a more stable and peaceful environment and enhancing livelihoods. Hence, empowerment programs can help reduce the social and economic grievances that contribute to crisis, many members of the community may feel marginalized due to limited access to resources, education, or

employment opportunities. Economic inequality, when coupled with political and religious tensions, creates a fertile ground for social unrest. Addressing socio-economic gaps therefore proves to be a central theme for creating a more equitable and peaceful community, especially in Mai'adiko where organisations and government agencies have given much attention to empowering the people with relevant knowledge and skill.

This theme reveals that addressing socio-economic issues is not only a matter of financial stability but also a way to reduce the factors that sustain conflict and empower the community to move beyond violence.

- **The Role of Community and Religious Leaders**

Community and religious leaders play vital roles in mediating, advocating and facilitating reconciliation. Their authority, moral standing, and deep connection to the local population position them uniquely to guide the community through recovery. In Mai'adiko, effectiveness comes from the synergy between these two categories of leaders: **Joint Peace Initiatives:** Community and religious leaders have worked hand-in-hand, issuing joint calls for peace, participating in joint mediation efforts, and leading combined peace gatherings.

Trauma-Informed Support: While not therapists, they identify with survivors, providing communal and spiritual support that aids in trauma recovery.

Education for Peace: They jointly educate community members on civic responsibility, human rights, and the importance of peaceful coexistence, using both traditional wisdom and religious teachings.

To sustain the peace and reconciliation currently enjoyed in Mai'adiko community, the active, wise, and collaborative engagement of its community and religious leaders is paramount.

Conclusion

Healing and reconciliation are indispensable to the restoration of any community torn by crisis or any form of conflict. The root causes of conflict in many communities such as Mai'adiko, as revealed in this study are complex, involving political, religious, and socio-economic factors. Thus, effective healing and reconciliation also require a complex approach that includes peace-building initiatives, restorative justice processes, trauma counselling, and socio-economic empowerment. By focusing on both the immediate needs for psychological and social healing, as well as long-term structural reforms, the study offers valuable insights for both researchers and policy makers seeking to understand the

complex dynamics of communal conflict and provide a pathway toward sustainable peace as observed in Mai'adiko.

Recommendations

From the findings of this research, the following are recommended:

1. The creation of institute for healing of trauma to foster and hermeneutically lead towards effective healing and reconciliation through restorative justice.

2. Socio-economic empowerment programs to curb not just poverty but also resentment and frustration.

3. Capacity building and ongoing engagement with religious and community leaders to better equip them with skills to provide guidance and support to the community.

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