

THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT POTENCY IN PROMOTING PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AMONGST FARMERS AND HERDERS IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Theatre for Development has proven its potency as an efficient tool for resolving conflicts between farmers-herders in Plateau state, Nigeria. It is a medium of communicating and promoting peaceful co-existence in conflict situations. The study assessed the potency of Theatre for Development interventions in selected communities in Jos East, Mangu and Mikang Local Government Areas of Plateau state in resolving conflicts and promoting peaceful co-existence between the farmers and herders in rural communities in the state. It was anchored on participatory communication theory propagated by Paulo Freire in 1983. The study employed a mixed method design. It used both qualitative and quantitative research strategies. The population of the study comprises respondents from Jos East, Mangu and Mikang Local Government Areas representing the Northern, Central and Southern Senatorial Zones in Plateau state. The study employed Key Informant Interview (KII) and questionnaire as instruments of data collection. 18 key informants and 382 copies of questionnaire were administered in the three Local Government Areas in the state. Multistage sampling technique was employed. The first sampling stage was stratification; the respondents were stratified into northern, central and southern senatorial districts. The second stage involved purposive selection of one local government from each of the districts where Theatre for Development interventions were carried out. Also, random sampling was used to select three (3) communities in each local government area, which gave a total of six (9) communities for the research. Key informant interviews were conducted for those who witnessed the Theatre for Development interventions in the three senatorial districts in the state. KII and questionnaire were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The findings of the study revealed that Theatre for Development is a very effective tool for resolving conflicts and promoting peaceful co-existence between farmers and herders in Plateau state. It concluded that Theatre for Development plays significant role in resolving conflicts by providing a platform for dialogue, peace-building and opportunity for the warring groups to reconcile their differences. Finally, it recommended that government; Non-Governmental Organisations and peace and conflict experts should integrate Theatre for Development in their efforts in promoting peaceful co-existence between farmers and herders in the state and beyond.

Keywords: Theatre, Development, Potency, Promoting, Peaceful Co-existence, Farmers, Herders

Introduction

Nigerian communities, particularly rural ones, face severe security issues ranging from violent conflicts between farmers and herders to ethnic and religious conflicts. These issues have hampered the growth and development of these communities as well as the nation as a whole. The nation's social and economic progress has stalled as a result of this circumstance. If violent conflicts are not adequately resolved, the ensuing consequences may have an impact on a society's development and progress. This is due to the fact that they cause suffering and trauma from mistreatment and injuries, property loss, and, most often, death.

Since then, innocent people were killed, communities living in constant fear, and livelihoods being destroyed in many cases all contribute to a cycle of conflict that can only be broken by peace interventions and the cessation of hostilities in the communities using various mechanisms, such as Theatre for Development, to help resolve the conflicts. The recent violent clash between farmers and herders in Mangu, Bassa, Bokkos, Jos South, and Barkin Ladi Local Government Areas in Plateau State resulted in the destruction of houses and crops as well as the deaths of numerous innocent people.

Although, the exact causes of the conflicts cannot be determined, conflict experts have identified anger, land grabbing, and greed as the primary causes of the conflicts in Mangu, Bokkos, Bassa, Barkin Ladi, and Jos South L.G.As. Several studies revealed that the causes of farmers-herders' conflicts in Plateau state are hatred, greed, lust, jealousy, selfish ambition, and communication breakdowns, among other things. However, some conflict scholars argued that social injustice, insecurity of life and property, territorial ambition, national pride, religious intolerance, and ideological differences are the main causes of conflicts and other wars on a global scale. The people's social, political, and economic lives have been uprooted and destroyed as a result of these conflicts.

According to Cinjel and Matakhitwen (2024), the main cause of minor conflicts between farmers-herders in Plateau state in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, was the herders' animals damaging the farmers' crops out of carelessness or negligence. At the time, these conflicts were uncommon and easily handled by the police and traditional institutions; they were never thought to be a problem that would eventually lead to conflict. In addition to the aforementioned vices, farmers' crops continued to be destroyed.

However, the Plateau state government has taken a number of actions toward stopping these disputes in the state, including sending an executive bill to the State House of Assembly. The bill was titled, "Anti Land Grabbing" which aims to outlaw land grabbing throughout the state. According to Adinoyi (2023), Simon Lalong, the state's governor at the time, encouraged the populace to use the anti-land grabbing law to report anyone attempting to seize their land. The state government had put the law in place and was ready to deal with land grabbers in line with the law.

Adinoyi (2023) further asserts that over two decades of violent conflicts in different parts of the state caused unspeakable harm to the collective psyche and shattered centuries of peaceful intra- and inter-group coexistence, which stunted our growth and development. Social relations between members of the state's various ethno-religious groups were characterised by a deep-seated degree of distrust, suspicion, and hatred. In addition to the anti-land-grabber law, the state government created the Plateau State Peace Building Agency to promote harmonious coexistence among the people of the state, despite their differences in race and religion, since the state had experienced numerous ethno-religious crises for nearly 20 years.

In spite of these, violent conflicts continue to occur in some communities, particularly in the state's Mangu, Barkin Ladi, Jos North, Jos East, Wase, Bokkos, Riyom, Bassa, and Jos South Local Government Areas. Despite the implementation of the anti-land grabbing law and the creation of the Plateau State Peace Building Agency, some of the measures implemented have been overly elitist in their approach and design. Rural residents, who are important players in the peace building process, are thus left out. Theatre for Development has gained relevance in the peace building process as it "creates intimacy and without any pressure passes the information" (Iroh 2020). This is because its participatory approach is an effective tool for resolving conflicts in the state, hence this study.

Statement of the Problem

Like other art forms, theatre has not received much attention from the government or its agencies. This may be because it is viewed as a "time waster" and an "unserious business." It is hard to imagine the theatre as having the capacity to produce any kind of development, both for the individual and for society, given the unfavourable opinions about it. However, the function and manifestation of theatre, particularly theatre for development, has taken on a very radical dimension in today's society. As a result, theatre value has begun to receive serious attention from both the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) due to its effectiveness in promoting development and conflict resolution in recent years.

There have been numerous studies on the effectiveness of theatre for development in resolving conflicts both in Nigeria and internationally (Kabyemela, 2022; Tsaku, 2022 & Ifeanyi, 2020). Although the present researcher recognises the contributions of the earlier researchers, there are still insufficient studies on the effectiveness of Theatre for Development in resolving conflicts by using theatre to promote amicable coexistence and the active participation of the warring parties in Plateau State's Mangu, Jos East, and Bassa Local Government Areas.

Aim and Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to assess the efficacy of Theatre for Development in conflict resolution in Mangu and Bokkos Local Government Areas in Plateau state, Nigeria.

The specific objectives are:

- i. To assess the extent of the participation of the residents of Mangu, Jos East and Mikang Local Government Areas in peace building process using the instrumentality of Tf D in their respective communities.

- ii. To ascertain the level of Plateau state residents' knowledge of the concept of Theatre for Development.
- iii. To ascertain the efficacy of Theatre for Development in resolving farmers/herders' conflicts in Mangu, Jos East and Mikang Local Government Areas in Plateau state.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on participatory communication theory by propagated Paulo Freire in (1983). It emphasises dialogue, mutual understanding, and active involvement of community members in communication processes. The theory is deeply rooted in community dialogue and development. It shifts focus from top-down information dissemination to horizontal, inclusive, and people-centered communication. It argues that meaningful development and peaceful co-existence cannot be imposed from the outside; rather, it must emerge from within the community through participatory practices that empower individuals to be agents of change.

Paulo Freire's notion of dialogic communication and conscientisation forms the theoretical backbone of this model, which posits that marginalized groups must be encouraged to critically reflect on their realities and act upon them collaboratively. Apart from advocating access to media messages, it also promotes transformation of power through active community engagement which is in line with the aims of TfD. This theory is relevant to this study because it engages communities in dialogue in identifying solution to issues affecting them such as conflicts which several communities in Plateau State have experienced one form of conflict or the other.

Conceptual Clarifications

Conflict

Conflict is a phenomenon that can take many different forms. It may be experienced at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels. Additionally, it might manifest itself at the local, state, and national, or group levels. When a conflict arises between two nations, it can also take on an international dimension. Humans will always clash, according to Bulus (2020), particularly when two or more social entities interact with one another to achieve their objectives and their relationships become incompatible or inconsistent. It is a relationship in which each of the concerned groups of persons in a clash perceives the other's interest, goal, value or behaviour as detrimental to their own (Doki& Boh, 2019). Thus, for a conflict situation to occur there must be clash of interests or opposing views in relations to anticipated benefits between different parties.

Doki and Boh (2019), further submit that conflict originates from differences in objectives, interests, efforts, approach, timing and attitudes of people to issues. Conflict can be described as overt behaviour arising out of a process in which one unit seeks the advancements of its own interest in its relationship with others. Conflict is also a natural process of interaction, even though it is different from competition, struggle, contest, etc., especially in complex societies where resources are typically limited. Conflict between people is inevitable when they vie for the same limited resources. It is inevitable in life. It describes how people interact with each other. More than just a disagreement, conflict is a situation where people believe their safety—physical, emotional, power, status, and so forth, is in jeopardy. Participants in conflict respond to situations according to their perceptions and circumstances because they base their responses on a variety of

factors, including gender, culture, values, and beliefs. Thus, conflict arises in all human societies in a variety of ways, including verbal and physical confrontation.

According to Tsaku (2022), conflict is an unavoidable aspect of life. Families, identity groups, communities, nations, and even individuals encounter conflict in one way or another. Any conflict has the potential to turn violent if it is not handled properly. Numerous conflicts that Nigeria has faced have severely harmed the country's politics, economy, and ability for different groups to live in harmony with one another.

While providing a historical overview of Nigeria's conflicts since gaining independence in 1960, Doki (2009) accepts that Nigeria has experienced numerous conflicts since gaining its independence. The civil war in 1967, the Sharia conflict in 1977, the Maitatsine conflict in 1980, the Oil conflict in 1986, the declaration of Jihad in Kaduna state in 1996, the religious riots in Kaduna and Abia in 2000, the Tiv/Awe communal clashes in 2001, the Tiv/Udam conflict in 2002, and numerous other intermittent attacks at various times and locations are just a few examples.

Theatre for Development

Theatre for Development is a community-based theatre that uses performance as a tool to encourage, raise awareness about specific social issues in the community, and promote positive change by actively involving community members in the creative process, typically through improvisation and interactive elements, with the goal of facilitating social transformation and community development. This stands in contrast to traditional theatre.

TFD is fundamentally community sensitive and provides a participatory approach to development, (Kafewo, Iorapuu, and Dandaura 2013). Ayegba (2013) says another type of theatre practice is called Theatre for Development, or TFD. Its materials come from people's live experiences (social, cultural, political, environmental, etc.), and it has an empowering process that allows people and communities to look at their objective circumstances. It serves as a tool for fostering community cohesion as well as a sharing and learning process. The TFD process draws from and adapts to the rhythm of the community, which helps to concentrate attention on important issues and facilitate action planning.

TfD practice is unique because of its participatory approach. In contrast to traditional theatre, TfD places a strong emphasis on the community's active participation in every step of the production process, including gathering research, writing the script, practicing, acting, and tracking and assessing the results of the intervention. According to Idebe (2024), Balme and Hakib (2023), Abah (2021), and Umar, Maikano, and Tadi (2024), TFD is a bottom-up communication strategy that guarantees community members' active involvement in the development agenda.

According to Ekwunife and Nwadike (2020), TfD is effective in the process of dialogue and interaction which are essential in resolving conflicts among warring factors. It helps increasing awareness, understanding, and engages as well as bring views of those who are generally oppressed, marginalised and pushed to taking the point of resorting to violent conflict and then preach the need for dialogue rather than conflict. TfD encourages active engagement of community members through the use of their local resources, communication channels, and life experiences

to start a process through theatre and drama for the community's personal and collective benefit. Iorapuu and Bamidele (2004) noted that TfD's foundations lie in the philosophy of empowerment. It aims to liberate, demand innovation, and potentially change people's lives. This allows communities to use the tools it offers to alter their realities and gives them a way to examine and address dynamic relationships between individuals. The ways in which communities can use the arts to bring about social change on their own terms are explored both theoretically and practically in TfD. Sustainability, democracy, and participation are the cornerstones of all TfD work.

Overview of Conflicts in Plateau State

Like all other states in Nigeria, Plateau State has seen numerous violent conflicts for more than 20 years, ranging from religious and communal to ethnic. One cannot quickly forget the significant ethno-religious events of September 11, 2001. Numerous innocent people were killed in the crisis, many were left homeless, and property valued at billions of Naira was destroyed by fire. Later, the crisis of September 11th extended to the state's Southern Senatorial. The state was in the news every day because of the crisis, the loss of innocent lives and the destruction of property, the state was in the news every day. The state's safe havens for internally displaced people during the September 11th crisis were Mangu, Barkin Ladi, Panskhin, Bassa, and Bokkos Local Government Areas.

Apparently alarmed by the heinous murders and property damage in Plateau State's southern region, former President Olusegun Obasanjo proclaimed a "State of Emergency" over the state, suspended Chief Joshua C. Dariye, the governor at the time, and all other democratic institutions and named Major General Chris Alli as the state administrator. For six months, Alli oversaw state affairs. Though, they were thought to be safe havens for herders during the state's major crises, Mangu, Jos East, Bokkos, Bassa, and other LGAs are currently facing a situation of holistic alleged by the herders they provided shelter and protection during the state's September 11th crisis. In the majority of the communities in Mangu, L.G., houses, crops and other valuables have been burned down and destroyed, according to Cinjel and Matakhitwen (2024).

While tracing the history of conflict in Plateau state, Cinjel and Matakhitwen (2024) hinted that the Mwaghavul-Ron conflict of 1994 and the Mwaghavul-Pyem conflict of 1998 were among the conflicts that involved the Mwaghavul people in Mangu and part of Bokkos L.G.A's. Since then, Mangu has not recorded any conflict, not even the 2001 crisis that affected most of the L.G. A's in the state, yet Mangu was one of the few that were not impacted. There was a change in the state's conflict pattern when the Mangu, Barkin Ladi, and Bassa Local Government Areas which were previously thought to be safe havens whenever a crisis arose in any part of the state became battlefields for farmers and herders in recent years.

For over twenty years, the state has seen intermittent conflicts between farmers and herders. Land grabbing has been implicated as one of the main causes of the conflicts; the locals have consistently accused the herders of taking their lands by force, erecting houses on them, and staring at them without any kind of understanding or agreement. Cinjel and Matakhitwen (2024) state that in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, the main cause of minor conflicts between the two ethnic groups was the herders' animals damaging the farmers' crops out of carelessness or negligence. At the time, these conflicts were uncommon and easily handled by the police and traditional institutions; they were

never thought to be a problem that would eventually lead to conflict. However, farmers' crops continued to be destroyed.

Cinjel and Matakhitwen (2024), further observed the majority of the destructions occurred on Sundays and at night, when the arable farmer is not present on the farm (Stephenson, 2024). The local government area's various police stations received multiple reports from the impacted farmers, but no arrest records were found. Crop destruction persisted; in practically every district that made up the Mwaghavul chieftdom in the local government area, the indigenous people's cattle were rustled. Despite the efforts of the Nigerian police force and traditional institutions from both sides, the damage to crops and cow rustling continued to occur. An irritated Mwaghavul arable farmer shut down a Fulani herder who he saw herding his crops on August 20, 2022.

After being driven from the southern region of the local government, many Fulani herders relocated to the northern region and made their homes with the Pyem and Kwangka ethnic groups. A few Fulani without cows moved in with the Hausa communities in the areas of Sabon Kasuwa, Sohon Kasuwa, and Angwan Pyemawa, among others. In addition to farm products like maize, irrigated Irish potatoes, tomatoes, and peppers, the Fulani herders also seized and occupied other dislodged and abandoned Mwaghavul communities, including Tyop, Alogom, Changal, Washna, Kombili, and Nandang Dai (Human Right Watch, 2024).

The Role of Theatre in Conflict Resolution

Similar to other art forms, theatre has never gotten much attention from the government or its agencies, possibly because it is viewed as a "time waster" and an "unserious business." It is hard to imagine the theatre as having the capacity to produce any kind of development, both for the individual and for society, given the unfavourable opinions about it. However, the role and expression of theatre in our modern society have taken on such radical dimensions that the entertainment value has been somewhat de-emphasised. It now has a more positive function, one that will help bring about revolutionary and social change in the community.

Drama/theatre is one of the agents of socio-political change, according to Ifeanyi (2002), which means that it is effective as a tool for change. Through theatre, complex issues are dramatized, facilitating experiential learning and active engagement (Ilukwe and Ume 2026). The most economical form of experience that presents a concept that can be believed to be true is drama. Compared to other forms of expression, drama has a more immediate and direct effect. Since so many people have realised the theatre's potential for growth, there is no longer any question about its functionality. It can be a popular and successful tool for spreading culture, empowering the economy, and influencing thought and opinion. Indeed, it is a "medium through which the soul of man reaches out beyond itself to transform."

Theatre as a communicative art has a very high correlation with development. It can act as a stimulant or tranquilizer for a people's understanding of their individual and collective development. In the third world countries, development is measured by the elimination of social problems, which have been identified to impede growth and improved condition of life. Such problems may include: poverty, disease, war and crime. As a tranquilizer, the theatre can function to bring about peace and calm in conflict situation. An example of the functionality of the theatre

in this present concern is the “Rwandan Ballet Isonga”, where songs and dance were employed to mediate in the conflict between the major ethnic groups, the Hutus and Tutsis, in the Rwandan crisis (Ifeanyi, 2002).

By assisting people in understanding issues through metaphorical communication and offering a communal experience that connects the individual to groups and the groups to the forces governing society, it is evident that the potential of theatre for development, if properly explored to its fullest extent, can raise awareness that conflict is counter to societal progress and development. Through a process of Tfd intervention practice, the theatre in this sense considers the masses in every aspect. Tfd is the process of encouraging and maintaining engagement with the target communities along developmental lines, utilising the theatre industry to provide tangible answers to real-world issues that people face. It aims to shift people from being the object of change to the subject of it. Tfd, according to Okwori (2018), is instructive in fostering conflict resolution by aiming to give the general public a critical consciousness that is essential to the fight against the forces causing their problems. The democratic method of conflict mediation and remediation is used by the theatre as an alternative conflict resolution mechanism.



Plate 1: Dramatising a herder dancing while his cows grazing on a farmland

Since it gives people a platform to have productive conversations and devise solutions for the socioeconomic and political issues that impact them, Tfd is crucial to the resolution of conflicts worldwide. It is a platform run by and for the people that encourages the creation of workable action plans to address issues in the community or group. Theatre has the power to unite a community, promote unity, raise significant issues, provide a platform for discussion between the opposing sides, and inspire constructive actions that promote harmonious coexistence in a community. Often referred to as Theatre for Development, this type of theatre thrives on the common goals of "the people" rather than those that are imposed upon them by the social elites.

TfD is a process of stimulating and sustaining participation with the target communities along developmental lines, using the world of the theatre to achieve real solutions to practical life problems affecting the people. It seeks to transform or change people from being the object to the subject in the change process. Okwori (2018) sees TfD as instructive in promoting conflict resolution by seeking to empower the common people with a critical consciousness which is crucial to the struggle against forces responsible for their predicaments. The theatre as an alternative conflict resolution mechanism employs the democratic method in conflict mediation and remediation.



Plate 2: Dramatising farmers' lamenting destruction of their farmland by herders

TfD plays significant role in resolving conflicts across the globe as it provides an avenue for the people to hold effective discussions and work out strategies for dealing with the socio-economic and political conditions that affect them. It is a platform by the people, and for the people, which helps in stimulating solving community or group problems through developing practical action plans. The influence of Paulo Freire also impacted African theatre traditions through the work of his student, Augusto Boal, who developed the "Theatre of the Oppressed", a popular theatre which is the theatre of the people, for the people and by the people. The people through 'Theatre of the Oppressed' are engaged in the struggle for their liberation. It is designed to help the people learn ways of resisting oppression in their daily lives. It was also used as a tool for promoting self-expression, consciousness-raising, personal development, and collective empowerment. Theatre can bring the community together, building community cohesiveness, raising important issues and creating a forum for dialogue among the warring parties and stimulating positive actions aimed at fostering peaceful co-existence in a society. Such theatre is commonly known as Theatre for

Development which thrives on the popular aspirations of “the people” and not the one imposed on the people by the elites in society (Doki& Boh, 2019).

According to Kabyemela (2022), Tfd creates interpersonal relationships, non-formal education to conscientise the people and make them aware of their potentials of harnessing their individual energies, collectively towards addressing the myriads of problems they are face with, and not pick-up arms that will cause further destruction to lives and properties. Specifically, the performances will be used to stimulate the awareness among the contending forces to an understanding that lasting solutions to their problems can be achieved through constructive dialogue, understanding and trust in their ethnic struggle.



Plate3: Dramatising farmers reporting herders' inversion of their farmlands to their village chief

On the efficacy of Tfd in facilitating conflict resolution in the society, theatre as an interventionist tool in conflict resolution employs the inside–out method in the practice of theatre for development. This method will involve the facilitators becoming part of the community by living in it for a period of time. This enables one to identify existing problems (first, hand as part of the people), and construct scenarios or play skits with the active participation of members of the community. This is why theatre for development is referred to as theatre for the people, by the people, about the people and from the people.

The Tfd practice of interventionists living among the people and involving the people in the theatre intervention is known as the Theatre for Development. Theatre as a communicative and performative art has the potential to stimulate transformation and social change in Plateau state and if properly harnessed, can help improve the people’s creative abilities to develop the physical environment in which they live peacefully irrespective of their ethnic, political and religious differences.

Besides, the function of the theatre as a veritable tool for conflict resolution, there is also an absolute advantage, which the TfD practice has over other forms of communication arts in resolving conflict especially in Mangu, Mikang, Jos East and other parts of Plateau state. This is because the method has a clear-cut and well-defined system of involving and engaging the warring parties in dramatising their issues and implementing long-lasting solutions that would facilitate peaceful co-existence among the farmers/herders in the affected parts of Plateau state. The thrust of this paper is to examine the potency of TfD in conflict resolution as it regards the farmers/herders' conflicts in some parts of Plateau state.



Plate 4: Dramatising farmers expressing shock over herders' inversion of their farmland

Empirical Review

Alidu and Ojonugbe (2022) conducted a study on the role of Theatre for Development in promoting peace between farmers and herders in selected Nigerian communities. They adopted quantitative research method using questionnaire as an instrument of data collection. The study found out that participants who engaged in TfD activities demonstrated significantly improved peace-oriented attitudes, increased willingness to embrace dialogue, and reduced support for violent conflict resolution. It concluded that TfD is a potent tool for reducing community-based conflicts. The relationship between previous study and current study is that they both endorsed TfD as a peace building tool among farmers and herders. Though, the previous focused on multiple communities in the country whereas, the current study differs by focusing specifically on selected communities in Plateau state.

Doki and Boh (2019) examined the role of Theatre for Development in managing of land conflict amongst the Tiv people in Benue state. The study employed qualitative research method using Focus Group Discussions (FGD) as the instrument of data collection. It found out that Theatre for Development is effective in managing conflicts amongst Tiv people of Benue state. The study concluded that TfD is an important communicative medium of preaching tolerance and peaceful

co-existence among different ethnic groups. The relationship between the previous and present study is that they focused on the efficacy of TfD in promoting peaceful co-existence amongst ethnic groups and farmers and herders in Benue and Plateau states respectively. However, the previous study is focused specifically on using TfD in land conflicts amongst Tiv people in Benue, whereas the current study focuses on using TfD in encouraging harmonious and cordial relationship among the farmers and herders in Plateau state.

The crux of Abdulkadir's (2025) study was on the use of Forum Theatre which is one of the key techniques of Theatre for Development, as a peace building mechanism in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State. The study employed qualitative research method for data collection. It revealed that Forum Theatre created inclusive spaces for dialogue, collective reflection, and collaborative problem-solving among conflict-affected groups. The study concluded that Forum Theatre enhances community ownership of peace processes. The relationship between the previous study and the current one is that they both used theatre as instrument of peacebuilding in Plateau state. Though, the previous study broadly addressed ethno-religious conflict in the state whereas the current study focused on farmer–herder conflicts and evaluated the potency of TfD's intervention in promoting peaceful co-existence between factions in the state.

Similarly, Nyam and Hediger's (2023) study investigated the role of docudrama and re-enactment in rebuilding trust and fostering healing in conflict affected communities in Benue and Plateau States. It employed qualitative research method using interviews, focus group discussions (FGD) and observation as instruments of data collection. The study found out that Theatre for Development performances enabled community members to articulate lived experiences of violence, recognise shared suffering, and develop empathy across conflicting groups. It concluded that performance-based participatory methods contribute to social healing and lay foundations for peaceful coexistence. The relationship between the previous and current study is that they both demonstrated relevance of TfD in promoting building trust in conflict communities. Nevertheless, the previous study focused largely on narrative healing and memory reconstruction, whereas the current one emphasises the practical potency of TfD in promoting peaceful co-existence and behavioural change among farmers and herders in Plateau State.

Nwabueze's (2021) study investigated the crucial role of the community theatre in conflict resolution in selected communities in Nigeria. It employed mixed research involving questionnaires and focus group discussions (FGD).it found out that TfD enhanced mutual understanding among conflicting groups and reduced hostility by providing a neutral platform for collective storytelling and reflection. The study concluded that TfD is a viable grassroots conflict resolution mechanism capable of complementing formal peace building efforts. The relationship between the previous and current study is that they both empirically confirmed that TfD is an important tool for peace building. Though, the previous study examined rural conflict situations in general, the current study examines farmer–herder conflicts in Plateau state and goes further to assess the potent of TfD in promoting peaceful co-existence between two livelihood groups in the state.

In the same vein, Salami and Jega's (2023) study examined the role of Theatre for Development in mitigating conflicts between pastoralists and farming communities in some parts of Northern

Nigeria. It adopted observation and in-depth interviews as instruments of data collection. The study found out that TfD performances helped demystify stereotypes, humanise opposing groups, and facilitate community-led negotiation processes. It concluded that TfD is an effective grassroots peace building tool that is capable of addressing the socio-cultural dimensions of farmer–herder conflicts. The relationship between the previous and current study is that they both emphasized the efficiency of TfD in addressing herder-farmer conflicts. Nonetheless, the previous study emphasised dialogue outcomes during performances, whereas the current study focuses on gauging the efficacy of TfD interventions in promoting peaceful co-existence among farmers and herders in Plateau state.

Research Method

The study employed a mixed method design. It uses both qualitative and quantitative research strategy. The mixed research approach was to complement the lapses of one approach by the other. The population of the study comprises of community members in Jos East Local Government Area to represent the Northern Senatorial district, Mangu Local Government Area to represent Central Senatorial district and Mikang Local Government Area to represent Southern Senatorial District in Plateau state. The total population of study for the quantitative aspect is 27.

The sample derived through non-probability sampling for Key Informant Interview (KII) was 18. Three (3) per community. The sample derived from probability sampling for the questionnaire administration was 382. These were thought to be representative of the total population for the study and adequate for reasonable deductions. For the study, the multistage sampling technique was employed. The first sampling stage was stratification; the respondents were stratified into northern, central and southern senatorial districts. The second stage involved purposive selection of one L.G.A's from each district where Theatre for Development interventions were carried out in the Local Government Area.

Also, random sampling was used to select two (2) communities in each LGA, which gave a total of six (6) communities for the research. Key informant interviews were conducted for those who witnessed the TfD interventions in the three senatorial districts in the state. Key Informant Interview (KII) and questionnaire were used to collect data. The questionnaire which is a quantitative survey instrument was used to collect quantitative data. The data utilised in this research were obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through the administration and retrieval of structured questionnaire copies to 382 respondents and conduct of key informant interviews for 30 persons using semi-structured interview schedule. Secondary data were collected from reports, books, journals, policy documents, institutional publications and the internet.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Results were presented through the use of tables, figures, frequencies, and percentages. Mean deviation of five-point likert scale, which the criterion mean was put at 3. 0 and above is accepted result, while 2.0 and below is rejected result were also used for the analysis and presentation of quantitative data. The qualitative data obtained through interviews conducted were analysed using deductive analysis.

Data Presentation

Section A: Quantitative Data

A total of 382 copies of questionnaire were administered out of which 366 were retrieved, representing 97 per cent of the sample size, and found valid for the analysis. Graphical representation of the response rate is shown in Figure 1.

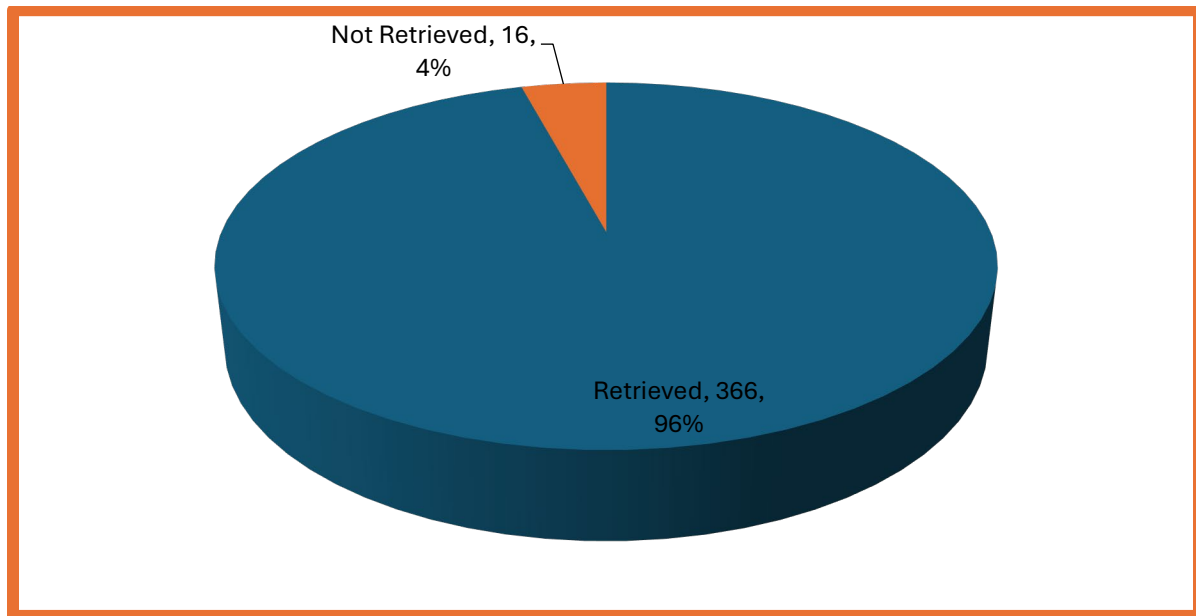


Figure 1: Analysis of Response Rate

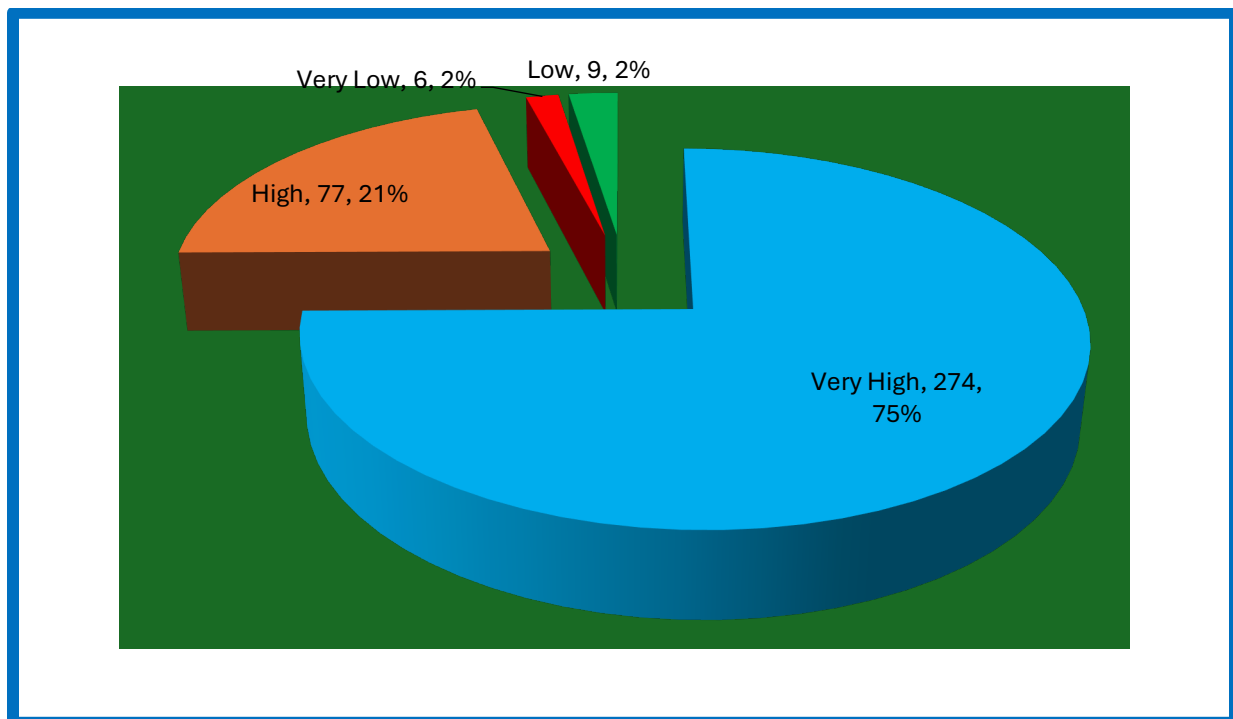


Figure 2: Respondents' Knowledge Level of the Concept of Theatre for Development

It could be deduced from the data in Figure 2 that Theatre for Development has become an in-build concept in the development narratives, especially peace-coexistence in many communities in Plateau State, Nigeria.

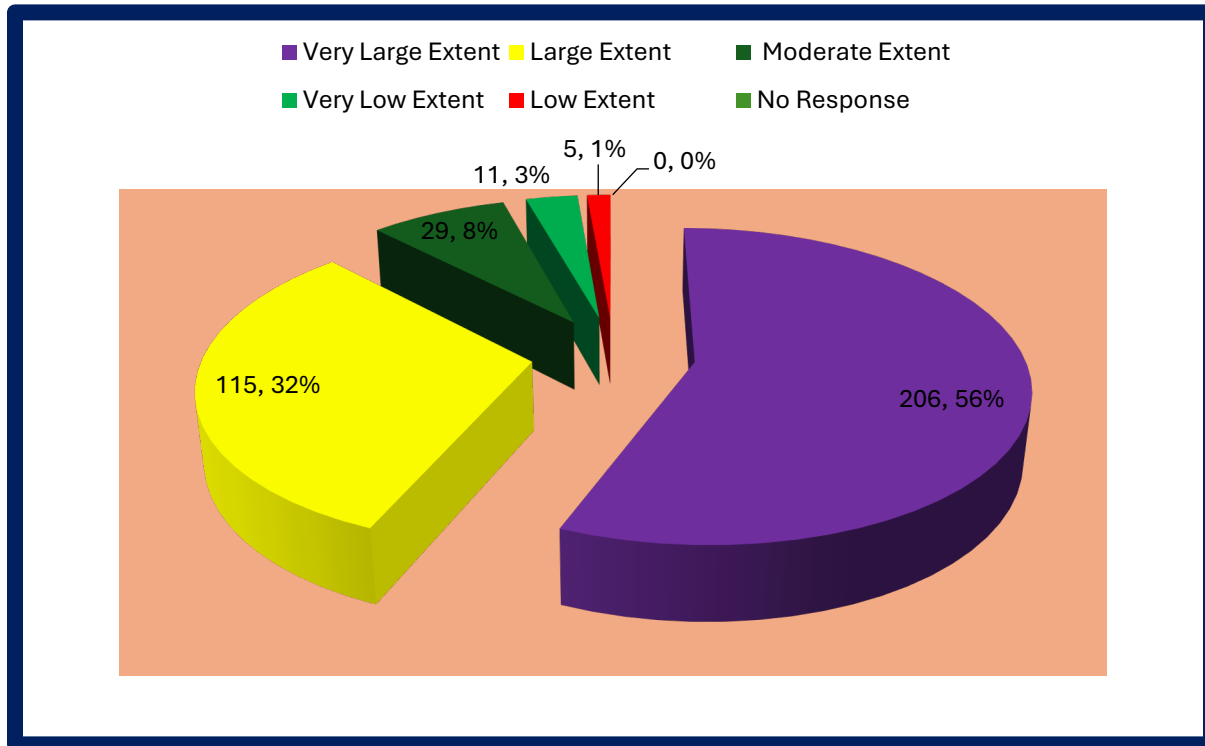


Figure 3: Respondents' Extent of Participation in Peace-Building Process through Theatre for Development

The high extent of involvement in Theatre for Development by the respondents as reflected in Figure 3 resonates the positive impact of TfD in conflict resolution.

Table 1: Responses on the Effectiveness of Theatre for Development in Resolving Farmers/Herders' Conflicts

Option	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	Mean Rating	Decision
TfD performances in my community address farmer–herder conflicts	323	43	0	0	0	366	4.8	Accepted
TfD performances reflect real issues affecting farmers and herders	199	167	0	0	0	366	4.5	Accepted
Community members are encouraged to participate actively in TfD activities due to its impact on peace-building	227	139	0	0	0	366	4.6	Accepted

TfD promotes dialogue between farmers and Fulani herders	353	13	0	0	0	366	4.9	Accepted
TfD helps in reducing misunderstandings between farmers and herders	319	47	0	0	0	366	4.8	Accepted
TfD encourages tolerance and mutual respect among conflicting groups	214	152	0	0	0	366	4.5	Accepted
Messages from TfD performances promote non-violent conflict resolution	139	227	0	0	0	366	4.3	Accepted

It is inferred by the data in Table 1 that TfD has vast possible in mediating and resolving pastoralist-farmers crisis. This is further deduced that TfD has the power to equip members of communities to think more on their differences and tackle them collectively.

Table 2: Responses on the Influence of TfD on Attitudes and Behaviour

Option	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	Mean Rating	Decision
TfD has changed my perception of the farmer–herder conflict	144	222	0	0	0	366	4.3	Accepted
TfD performances reflect real issues affecting farmers and herders	149	217	0	0	0	366	4.4	Accepted
TfD motivates community members to embrace peaceful co-existence	210	156	0	0	0	366	4.5	Accepted
TfD helps people understand the causes of farmer–herder conflicts	278	88	0	0	0	366	4.7	Accepted
TfD helps in reducing misunderstandings between farmers and herders	291	75	0	0	0	366	4.7	Accepted

It is implied by the data in Table 2 that TfD is a veritable tool for community education and engagement on peaceful living.

Table 3: Responses on Community Participation and Sustainability of Peace Due to Theatre for Development

Option	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	Mean Rating	Decision
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TfD encourages collective responsibility for peace in the community	209	157	0	0	0	366	4.5	Accepted
Community leaders support TfD initiatives for peacebuilding	224	142	0	0	0	366	4.6	Accepted
TfD strengthens trust between farmers and herders	89	277	0	0	0	366	4.2	Accepted
TfD provides a platform for expressing grievances peacefully	165	201	0	0	0	366	4.4	Accepted
Continuous TfD interventions will sustain peace in Plateau State	299	67	0	0	0	366	4.8	Accepted

The data suggest that for peace to be achieved in communities such as the ones studied here, involvement of members of these communities is important. This is the platform that Theatre for Development provides.

Section B: Qualitative Data

Key Informant Interviews were also conducted to strengthen the quantitative data. For instance, one of the respondents opined that “Theatre for Development is one of the effective mechanisms for problem-solving, because it gives space for interactions among two opposing sides; it’s better than some of the conflict resolution approaches used by government”.

Another respondent asserted how seeing a character perform on stage through the instrumentality of TfD by challenging men can empower community members to tackle their conflict. One of them further responded that “I was not aware that we were also the cause of the troubles in our community because we don’t like one another, we do not care when we use our cattle to graze on people’s crops. But now I know through what was presented in one of Theatre for Development programmes I participated. We need to be patriotic and show concern to each other. This was exactly what I saw in TfD”.

Another participant corroborated that “If we love one another, and if there are misunderstandings, like the destruction of someone’s farms by cattle should be settled without causing any damage or disturbing the peace of the community.” This points to the importance of TfD as an effective tool in promoting peaceful Coexistence in Plateau state and beyond.

Furthermore, another respondent concurred that “we have been empowered through TfD to have the zeal and courage to challenge old assumptions and conflict causing narratives in our communities. We have been using the lessons we learnt in TfD to advocate for peace. This is due to the fact that TfD promotes the participation of members of the communities directly in the entire process of conflict resolution and peace-building. TfD enables our people to air their views freely on the shortcomings of leaders. This was very difficult in the past due to fear and not giving the avenue to talk what affect them freely”. Another participant alluded that “I sometimes find it difficult to comprehend the methods of government in resolving our conflict. But the TfD performances that I have witnessed, taught me how to live together. They are very good processes

for conflict resolution. Tfd is effective in conscientising people some of the dangers of conflicts and promoting peaceful co-existence”.

The assertions by the participants demonstrate that Tfd is a bottom-up mechanism to achieving peace in communities. Aside that, Tfd provides members of communities the latitude to break old communication barriers. This is due to the fact that Tfd draws its lessons from the life, wisdom, and the experiences of a people within a given circumstance. It is in this sense that the data show the potency of Tfd in community-led peace-building efforts.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective of the study was to ascertain the level of Plateau state residents’ knowledge of the concept of Theatre for Development as used in promoting peace in the state. Data revealed that the residents of the state are knowledgeable of the concept of Theatre for Development and practice in various communities where the facilitators carried out Tfd interventions.(see **Figure 2 above**). This highlights the knowledge level of the respondents of Theatre for Development, especially as it regards its efficiency in promoting peaceful co-existence in many communities in state. This finding agrees with the position of Doki and Boh (2019), Theatre for Development is a theatre of the people, by the people and for the people, and it is participatory and interactive which encourages people to actively participate in all the stages of the Tfd’s interventions in communities. This finding was corroborated by the KII informants who disclosed that they have participated and learnt a lot about Theatre for Development. It provides us the latitude to break old communication barriers and conscientised about some of the issues affecting us as a people.

The second objective assessed the extent the residents of Mangu, Jos East and Mikang Local Government Areas participate in peace building process using the instrumentality of Tfd in their respective communities. The study found that the respondents participated in Tfd peace building process to a very large extent. (see **Figure 3 above**). The extent of community members participation in peace-building process through Tfd intervention carried out in selected communities highlights its significant role in conflict resolution between farmer-herders in the state. The finding is in line with that of Okwori (2018) who found out that Tfd is effective in fostering conflict resolution because its democratic method of conflict mediation and remediation which is used as an alternative conflict resolution mechanism. The key informants explained that Tfd is an effective mechanism for problem-solving, because it gives space for interactions among two opposing sides; it’s better than some of the tools of conflict resolution approaches used by government.

The third objective of the study examined the efficacy of Theatre for Development in resolving farmers/herders’ conflicts in Mangu, Jos East and Mikang Local Government Areas in Plateau state. It established that the respondents got adequate knowledge about Tfd and its efficacy in resolving farmers/herders’ conflicts in the state. (see **table 1 above**). Theatre for Development has vast possibility in mediating and resolving pastoralist-farmers conflicts and fostering peaceful co-existence amongst warring factions. This is further deduced that it has the power to equip members of communities to think more on their differences and tackle them collectively. Corroborating this finding, the KII participants disclosed that Tfd has taught us to care for one another and to always embrace dialogue in situation of uncertainties rather than resorting to violent-conflicts.

An earlier finding by Ifeanti (2002) hinted that Theatre for Development as a tranquilizer, can function to bring about peace and calm in conflict situation. An example of the functionality of the theatre in this present concern is the “Rwandan Ballet Isonga”, where songs and dance were employed to mediate in the conflict between the major ethnic groups, the Hutus and Tutsis, in the Rwandan crisis.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Plateau state government should adopt the use of Theatre for Development as a tool for resolving conflicts and promoting peaceful co-existence in the state.
- ii. The state government should constitute a state-own TfD acting troupe comprises of farmers and herders in the state to visit and perform in communities every week.
- iii. Government should fund the TfD and conflict resolution experts to train the troupe members on minimum acting techniques and skills.
- iv. The troupe should comprise both the farmers and herders to promote peaceful co-existence in the state.

Conclusion

The thrust of the study has been on evaluating the potency of Theatre for Development in promoting peaceful co-existence amongst native farmers and Fulani herders in Plateau State, Nigeria. From the findings of the study, it is concluded that Theatre for Development plays a unique role in resolving conflicts. This is because TfD provides a platform for dialogue, peace-building, as well as gives communities avenue to mend their own fences. Also, TfD as conspicuously utilised in Jos East, Mangu and Mikang Local Government Areas, helped to address emotions such as anger and revenge, which most times lead to more conflict, promoting understanding and moving the communities towards peaceful coexistence.

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