



International Journal Advanced Research Publications

PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION AS A TOOL FOR ERADICATING CULTISM AND INTER-TRIBAL WARS IN TOMBIA COMMUNITY

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Article Received: 20 November 2025, Article Revised: 10 December 2025, Published on: 30 December 2025

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DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijarp.1795>

ABSTRACT

This study investigated how participatory communication serves as an inclusive and dialogic approach to eradicating cultism and inter-tribal wars in Tombia community in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. The study was anchored on Modernisation and Participatory Communication theories. The descriptive research design was employed, and using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 384 respondents was drawn from a population of 105,000 indigenes of Degema that make up the population of the study. The purposive and cluster sampling techniques was adopted for the study. The data for the study was gathered through the administration of the questionnaire to the target population. The data was presented on Tables to help analyse the research objectives. Findings of the study lead to the conclusion and recommendations.

KEYWORDS: Participatory communication, Tool, Eradicate, cultism, inter-tribal wars, community.

INTRODUCTION

The people of Tombia in Rivers State, Nigeria whose ancestral home can be traced to Ekpetiama are Ijaw by tribe. The inhabitants who speak a variant of the Ijaw/Izon language are culturally homogeneous and form an independent ethnic nation with unique culture. The people of this area have always remained as one indivisible, indissoluble and insurmountable entity until the 19th Century when there was a Monarchical crisis that gave birth to different

kinds of confraternities that brought about set-back in development of the community. From this period, this culturally rich and historically significant region in Nigeria has increasingly been plagued by cultism and inter-tribal conflicts, which consequently disrupts the social cohesion, community development and peaceful coexistence. This researcher is motivated by the urgent need to address the rising tensions in Tombia and to provide a lasting solution and roadmap for conflict resolution and sustainable peace building.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the efforts of government and non-governmental organisations to curb cultism and inter-tribal wars, they still persist in Tombia, a community in Degema Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. The reliance on a number of enforcement measures has not yielded effective intervention, hence much remain to be done by way of research on issues related to cultism and inter-tribal wars in Tombia. There is little or no research on how participatory communication strategies can be used in fostering peace and unity in Tombia. This gap in literature, which this study seeks to fill forms the problem of this research

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine how participatory communication can be utilised as a tool for eradicating cultism and inter-tribal wars in Tombia community. The specific objectives will be to:

1. find out the factors that lead to cultism and inter-tribal wars in Tombia community;
2. identify the participatory communication strategies of conflict resolution that can be adopted in eradicating cultism and inter-tribal wars in Tombia, and
3. propose a participatory communication model that will resolve inter-tribal crises and cultism in Tombia.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions derived from the specific objectives are as follows:

1. What factors lead to cultism and inter-tribal wars in Tombia community?
2. What are the participatory communication strategies of conflict resolution that can be adopted in eradicating cultism and inter-tribal wars in Tombia community? And
3. Which participatory communication model will be proposed to resolve inter-tribal crises and cultism in Tombia community?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review are in three parts: Conceptual, theoretical, and empirical reviews.

Conceptual Review: The following concepts will be reviewed in relation to the study:

- Development
- Development Communication
- Participatory Communication
- Cultism
- Inter-tribal Wars, etc.

Theoretical Review

There exists a pool of theories which are congruent with development communication, but for the purpose of this research, the following two theories which are relevant to this study are adopted. These theories include Modernisation and Participatory Theories.

Modernisation Theory

This theory is also known as the Dominant approach or Dominant paradigm by some scholars. The theory, which was propounded by a political scientist, Daniel Lerner, in 1958 emphasised the role of communication in modernising societies. The Modernisation theory is simply the process of westernising developing countries by encouraging them to follow the footsteps of the developed western countries. The theory proposes that “contact with the media would help transform a traditional society to a modern state”.

Participatory Communication

This approach insists that through participatory communication, community members can actively be involved in decision-making processes, thus, modernising their views on peace building and fostering collective action to address underlying tensions. The reaction against Modernisation gave birth to various participatory approaches to development borne out of the struggle by various Latin scholars who insisted that for development to be participatory, an all-inclusive venture where the poor and the rich, the well placed and the marginalised will be given equal opportunity should be encouraged. These two theories which will form the theoretical base of this study underscore the importance of communication in fostering social change. By engaging Modernisation theory and Participatory communication, the people of Tombia can collectively address cultism and inter-tribal wars.

Empirical Review

This section deals with reviews of related researches in the area of intra-ethnic conflict, war and social tensions as well as denial of basic human rights, which constrain the efforts to promote sustainable development.

The following select works among others were reviewed.

Amenaghawon (2016). *Framing of the Niger Delta conflicts in selected Nigeria newspapers*. A PhD. Thesis submitted to the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan. Nigeria.

Appah, S. K., A. J. Udoudo & C.I. Ochonogor. (2019). *Framing of cult-related killings in South-South, Nigeria by select Nigerian Newspapers*. A PhD. Thesis submitted to the Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Egwu (2001). *Ethnic and religious violence in Nigeria*. Abuja: African Centre for Democratic Governance

Ekeanyanwu, N. T., and A. Igbinoba. (2007). The media and cultism in Nigerian higher institutions of learning: A study of coverage, treatment and relevance. *International Journal of Communication: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication Studies*, Published by the Communication Studies Forum, Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, pp. 370 – 380

Appah, S. K., A. J. Udoudo & C.I. Ochonogor. (2019). *Framing of cult-related killings in South-South, Nigeria by select Nigerian Newspapers*. A PhD. Thesis submitted to the Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW/GAP IN LITERATURE

A review of previous works by various authors will reveal whether existing studies primarily focus on Newspaper reports or framing of cult activities, violence and ethnic and religious conflicts with little application to Tombia in Degema in the South-South region of Nigeria. Specifically, these reviews will reveal the gap in literature in applying these theories to the region's unique socio-cultural and political dynamics, particularly in the context of cultism and inter-tribal wars. Practically, the following gaps will be identified in the study:

1. Gap in time of study
2. Gap in locale, and

3. Gap in methodology

Addressing these gaps is crucial for developing effective, context-specific interventions to combat cultism and inter-tribal wars in South-South, Nigeria. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no studies have specifically explored how participatory communication strategies can be used in fostering peace and unity in Tombia. This study aims to address this gap in the literature.

METHODOLOGY

This section is about the research methodology adopted for the study. A descriptive survey research design is used. The instrument for data collection is questionnaire, interview, and focus group discussion. For the descriptive Survey, I designed and administered surveys across diverse demographics to assess public attitudes toward cultism and inter-tribal wars in Tombia community, investigated the extent to which participatory communication influences these perceptions. I also facilitated focus groups with Tombia indigenes and conducted interviews with journalists, policymakers, and advocates working on Negotiation, Identity and Justice. These discussions provided rich, qualitative insights into the practical challenges and opportunities within advocacy efforts.

The research instruments was validated by experts in the field of conflict management, while reliability tested using Cronbach alpha coefficient. This study generated its data from two main sources, which were both primary and secondary. The primary sources of data was through questionnaire, interviews and Focus Group Discussions, while the secondary sources of data includes textbooks, journals, newspapers, newsmagazines, the Internet and other relevant literatures. Quantitative data was analysed using frequency and percentage, while for qualitative data, the analysis was handled thematically.

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

This study have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the result of the findings of this study will aid and enrich the understanding and evaluation of the Participatory Approach used in this study as well as show the effectiveness Participatory Approach in negotiation or resolving conflict and inter-tribal wars, while demonstrating how Participatory communication balances competing systemic identities, while addressing injustices. Practically, the study, will offer communication strategies for resolving cultism and inter-tribal wars in Tombia community. The study will also have practical implication to

government and Non-governmental Organisations, policy makers, the youth by providing a practical model which will also be useful to other conflict-prone communities to replicate in order to curb violence or conflict and foster peace in the community.

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