

MASS MEDIA AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT:
A CASE STUDY OF NTA GOOD MORNING NIGERIA (2019-2022)

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ABSTRACT

The study seeks to examine mass media and conflict management; a study of the program NTA Good Morning Nigeria from (2019 - 2022). The study seeks to uncover the role of 'Good Morning Nigeria' in conflict management in Kaduna State between the periods under review. The research employed the use of survey and in-depth interview research methodology in order to have an understanding of the social unit to collect firsthand information. The questionnaire and interview schedule are tools for data collection for the study. Findings of the research reveals that the program 'Good Morning Nigeria' played a pivotal role in conflict management in Kaduna State by dousing tension and dispelling rumours. The study concludes that the program contributed to the peace building process through dampening conflict which resulted in conflict management. This indeed is a clear indication that the 'Good Morning Nigeria' has done well in conflict management in the state. The study recommends that there should be a repeat broadcast of the program in the evening as well as televised it in Hausa so that those who don't understand English would be carried along.

Keywords: Media, Mass Media, Conflict, Conflict Management

[Introduction](#)

Information is one of the most important tools in every field and our actions depend on it. This way, perception can be changed by access to media. Different types of media are utilized globally to share information, knowledge and ideas in a democratic setting where people have the right to be informed of public issues and how they affect them. Freedom of expression is not only the core of a healthy media but also a fundamental human right and vital for a democratic structure. It stands for freedom of speech, the right to information and the representation of different opinions in a heterogeneous society. In any culture, effective media usages are an essential part and indispensable for societies trying to make a transition towards

peace and democracy. One can never get all the facts from one newspaper, and unless he has all facts, he cannot make proper judgment about what is going on (Truman, 1998). This statement reflects the need for free access to unbiased information. Not giving people the possibility of political participation and not allowing them to express themselves freely may cause conflict. On the one hand, free, independent and pluralistic media provides a platform for debate and different opinions. On the other hand, media can be misused for propaganda purposes, to incite hatred and spread rumors and, therefore artificially create tension (Wolfsfeld, 2004).

Lack of information can at any stage of a conflict make people desperate, restless and easy to manipulate. The ability to make informed decisions strengthens the society and fosters economic growth, democratic structures and the positive outlook on the future. The United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000) stressed the need to ensure the freedom of the media to perform their essential role and the right of the public to have access to information (Pankowski, 2007). Journalism does not need justification for its existence. Its service to society is justification in itself. Journalism can not only help to distribute information but also counter hate-speech and create an environment of balanced opinions and information equilibrium (Koven, 2004). Security challenges are becoming increasingly diverse and fragmented posing more threat to world peace and stability than ever. Similarly, the understanding of the root causes of conflicts and the interrelationship between security and conflict management from a global perspective has increasingly become dynamic (Morgenthau & Thompson, 1985).

The evolution in communication technology has significantly altered the conduct of conflict, warfare, and conflict resolution. Compared to people of earlier ages, people around the world today know much more and much sooner about major developments in international relations (Gilboa, 2002). There are millions of global news networks that broadcast live from all over the world, via the internet providing immediate access to unfolding events, influencing the way those events develop and end. This has prompted a general feeling that media coverage, especially television, has had an increased influence on western conflict management since the collapse of the Soviet Union (Jakosben, 2000).

Between 1999 to date, awareness has increased with regard to the role local civilian population play in armed conflict. They are no longer considered to be a passive element, but instead their needs and perceptions have explicit influence upon the success of a mission. Triggered by rapid technological change in the media, information no longer simply describes - on-scene developments, but increasingly shapes the dynamics by influencing perceptions, opinions and loyalties (Jakosben, 2000). This has made information to be an important means of warfare used by governments, military and leaders in all ages everywhere.

Statement of the Research Problem

There is no disputing the fact that the problem of persistent conflicts casts a serious doubt on the stability order of Kaduna state. This is because without doubt, Kaduna state has recorded very bizarre experiences in the domain of persistent conflict (Eniola, 2010).

The spread of false and misleading information usually undermines public trust and makes it difficult to discern credible sources. Media outlets often face serious pressure from political entities, which sometimes influence editorial judgments and impartial reporting which may

consequently fuel crises. This is partly because many traditional media outlets like NTA struggle with declining revenue from advertising and subscriptions among others. Apart from that, the issue of logistics, the use of obsolete equipment, and getting key players and resource persons to shade lights on conflict related topics are some of the challenges usually encountered during the program. Moreover, NTA is the mouthpiece of the government that propagates the activities of the government of the day; because it tries to protect the image of the government from ridicule, public trust in NTA to some extent has been eroded due to perceived biases, sensationalism, and reporting errors. These are some of the inadequacies in conflict management NTA Good Morning Nigeria is contending with. The focus of this study therefore centers on highlighting the NTA programme ‘Good Morning Nigeria’ and the challenges it faced as a tool of conflict management.

Research Questions

The following are research questions of the study.

- i. What has the NTA programme in Kaduna ‘Good Morning Nigeria’ played in managing the conflict in Kaduna State between 2019-2022?
- ii. What are the challenges faced by ‘Good Morning Nigeria’ (NTA) in conflict management in Kaduna State between 2019 - 2022?
- iii. What are the perceptions of the citizens about the role of Good Morning Nigeria in conflict management?

Review of Literature

Brian (2005) defines the mass media as a medium of technology that carries messages to a large number of people through radio, TV, newspaper, magazine, books, movies, computer network, each being the basis of a giant industry but served by other related and supporting industries.

Thus, the word media or mass media refers to the communication industry themselves. In other words, they are the channels for mass communication or transmission of information from the source to the audience. That is, the mechanical devices that transmit and sometimes store the messages e.g. TV, radio, camera, printing press, etc. and the instruments that use them to transmit messages. Dominick (2007) opines that society is made up of individuals and organizations that interact with government by means of mass media while government in turn communicates with them through the same. The mass media on their part interact with the people and government. This social interaction which occurs in the society between individuals and groups, groups and groups, the society and government involves mass communication which enables a man to expand his knowledge and horizon, especially, by reading and listening to the media. On the social level, the media enable us to share common experiences, socialize new members of the public for example on civic responsibility and thus enable them to play specialized roles in the society (Aje, 1990).

Beyond the reportage of the crisis, the mass media have been seen to be very valuable in crisis management. They have been judged by conflict resolution experts as indispensable tools for the management of crises (Nwosu, 2004:15). Furthermore, (Obot, 2020:107) assert that; “in the village square where there is always an arbitrator, persons who are neutral to the conflict,

but who are held in high esteem by aggrieved parties and whose opinions are generally respected should be selected to comment on or participate in news and other programs which feature the conflict. Through this agenda setting approach, the aggrieved parties would be slowly driven to a point of reconciliation”. In a democratic society, the mass media are indispensable in conflict management and resolution.

Writing also on the power of the media to manage crises, (Anyanwu, 2004:113) asserts that “there is no conflict so great that it dominates the freedom of a nation and its people which cannot be settled by the media”. McBride et. al. 1981:188 opines that “the media has the power to promote awareness of the culture, the social habits and traditions, the attitudes and hope and also the grievances of each diverse group in the population”

More so, Nwosu, (2004:15) affirms that “the overwhelming influence of the mass media is felt most in those conflicts that get to the level of wars, ethnic, sectional or communal and religious conflict or crisis that result in blood-letting”. The numerous conflicts and or crises to which our nation (Nigeria) is prone to have to a very large and admirable extent have been solved through media attentiveness and alertness.

Olu, (2011) in his study of broadcast media reportage of the Jos crisis is of the view that Channels Television did well in setting agenda for discussion during the crisis. Olu, 2011 asserts that through adequate, balanced and objective reportage and the adoption of peace journalism, the media can be said to be contributing in conflict resolution. Much as the media is said to wheel the power of managing/resolving conflicts, conflict resolution experts have, however, contended that the mass media can as well trigger or escalate conflicts (Demarest, 2020).

Burke, (2010) asserts that the latter is all that is required for the triumph of conflict. Obot, 2020:103) confirms the above views by stating that “the mass media are by themselves social structures and can either serve as a tool for conflict exacerbation or a vehicle for conflict resolution”. Thus, the mass media could be perceived as an institution of society that contributes to peaceful resolution of crisis. In reality, we find that the mass media often either consciously or unconsciously contribute to the escalation of conflict (Nwosu,2004:15).

The news media thrive on conflict. The lead story for most news programs is typically the most recent and extreme crime or disaster. Conflict attracts viewers, listeners, and readers to the media; the greater the conflict the greater the audience, and large audiences are imperative to the financial success of media outlets. Therefore, it is often in the media’s interest to not only report conflict, but to play it up, making it seem more intense than it really is. Long-term, on-going conflict- resolution processes such as mediation are not dramatic and are often difficult to understand and report, especially since the proceedings are almost always closed to the media (Dominick, 2007).

Thus, conflict resolution stories are easily pushed aside in favor of the most recent, the most colorful, and the most shocking aspects of a conflict. Groups that understand this dynamic can cater to it in order to gain media attention. Common criteria for terrorist attacks include timing them to coincide with significant dates, targeting elites, choosing sites with easy media access, and aiming for large numbers of casualties. Protesters will hoist their placards and start chanting when the television cameras come into view. It is not unusual for camera crews or reporters to encourage demonstrators into these actions so they can return to their studios with exciting footage. The resulting media coverage can bestow status and even legitimacy on

marginal opposition groups, so television coverage naturally becomes one of their planned strategies and top priorities (United Nations University for Peace, 2002).

Omu, 2001 asserts that to aid resolution of conflict in Nigeria and Africa in general, the media should have a fair knowledge of the history, culture and institution of the people, an appreciation of human behavior and some insight into the extent to which various African societies have responded to the challenges of development that faced them. This is because issues at stake often provoke deep emotions and partisan sentiments which pose difficulties to rational thought.

Hence, knowledge of psychology, economics, sociology and anthropology is required in presentation and analysis of conflict. Transmission of values also known as the socialization function of the media is the way by which people adopt the behavior and values of a group. Here, the media portrays society and people learn how they are supposed to act and what values are important when they watch, listen and read e.g. anti-racism in sport campaigns. Value transmission via the media, transmits social norms and helps stabilize society. This can be achieved in African states by creating or promoting a culture or tradition of the use of language such as preaching tolerance, culture of moderation, compromise, accommodation, restraint and cooperation. It can also highlight norms and values of society in resolving crises by digging into its archives and showcase efforts made by past leaders in resolving conflicts thereby instilling the culture of conflict resolution that can be passed on to posterity. That is, play up the desirability of conflict resolution and play down on arms conflict. The mass media should therefore emphasize human similarities and gloss over individual differences and promote the common good. Since there is not much difference in the needs and appetite of individuals,

efforts must be concentrated on the common factors in human society e.g., desire for peace and security. Hence the mass media in Africa should neglect ideas and opinions which divide the society and concentrate more on universal attributes of human nature in pictures and news (Omu, 2001).

Aje, (1990) points out that the media should serve as an agent of consensus building, by bringing issues to focus for discussion and making it possible for consensus to be reached. The channels that are provided for open discussions and feedback are relevant for political and socio- economic stability of the society. He argues further that the media can play the role of education and opinion molding through educating citizens on issues in conflict, what to expect from the government thereby assisting in building public opinion in support of action to be taken and calm tension. Media exposure is the act of bringing into limelight, an unknown and obscure thing. An object which today is relatively unknown can become very well-known tomorrow because of media exposure. Thus, an issue, person, and institution that is of little interest today, may tomorrow hit the news head line and become the talk of the town.

According to Aje (1990), feature articles and documentaries can be employed to facilitate attempts at resolving conflict situations. Writings in newspapers and magazines and radio and television features of documentary can play up emotional and human-interest angles of events or issues in conflict, especially television that combine picture and sound. This involves going beyond the news facts and dwelling on a subject to draw a particular response from readers and viewers/listeners.

Theoretical Framework

The study opts for the social responsibility theory based on the fact that it is the social responsibility of the media to communicate the right information to the public that will not incite them to panic. Social responsibility theory of mass media is relatively a new concept which started in the mid - 20th century and is used mostly by developing countries. The theory started from

Europe and took shape with the commission on the freedom of press that happened in the United States in 1949. The model was designed formally by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm in 1956 in their book “Four Theories of the Press”. It encourages total freedom to press and no censorship, but it should be regulated according to social responsibilities and external controls.

Social responsibility theory takes the position that the media needs to assume both moral and legal responsibilities for all that they publish for the general good of society (Siebert et. al, 1972). This theory creates a platform to make media reporting truthful, accurate and objective at all times. Credibility is the foundation of this theory, and to be credible, media practitioners try as much as possible to be socially responsible, transparent, fair and balanced in reporting while respecting the dignity, privacy and rights of all (Schudson,2011). The social responsibility theory obligates the media to highlight injustices within the community and enlighten people on their rights and privileges.

Schudson, (2011) opines that social responsibility theory is the best of the normative theories because it holds journalists responsible for all publications made. It is not enough for the journalist to be absolutely free. Certain responsibilities must be attached to such freedom. As such, he must be socially responsible to the environment within which he or she operates.

Social responsibility is ethics that guide any action, be it in media or other organizations that put an obligation towards environment, society, culture and economy. The media, like any other sector, should not harm, but should promote the environment and socio-cultural aspects in relation to the economy of the place. Content is also filtered through public obligation and interference.

The study opts for the social responsibility theory based on the fact that the research centers around the theory which best corroborates activities and the role of the media in conflict management. Many scholars have written about media and conflicts management but none has written about using the program ‘Good Morning Nigeria’. Thus, that is the gap the study intends to fill.

Research Methodology

The study employed mix methods using in-depth interviews and questionnaires as instruments of data collection. The multi-stage sampling technique which enables the researcher to select respondents based on certain qualities or characteristics was used (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). The sample frames purposely selected four (4) wards out of the twelve (12) wards of Chikun

Local Government Area. From these twelve (12) wards, four wards (4) represent the whole Local Government in this research using the simple random sampling technique to select two (2) Streets each with regard to slum settlement from the four (4) purposively selected wards.

129 questionnaires were administered to the respondents to fill but only 125 were filled and returned. Questionnaire according to Sabowale, (2003) in his book “*Scientific Journalism*” is

defined as a set of questions on various aspects of a subject to which members of population are requested to react. He explains that a questionnaire in a research is indispensable.

The interview schedule is another instrument used in data collection in this study. It is a structured plan or set of questions designed for conducting an interview. Interview schedule serves as a guide for the interviewer, outlining the sequence and content of questions to ask the interviewee during the interview segment (Sabowale, (2003). Data collected are tabulated using frequency distribution and percentages which are employed in data presentation and analysis.

Results and Findings

The study employed mix methods using in-depth interviews and questionnaires as instruments of data collection. The quantitative data were presented first in a table followed by the qualitative data which were presented using a thematic analysis.

Table 1.1 Respondents perception on the role of the program in managing conflict in Kaduna state

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Educates viewers	13	10.4%
Informs its viewers	8	6.4%
Douse tension and dispel rumour	8	6.4%
All of the above	94	75.2%
None of the above	2	1.6%
TOTAL	125	100%

Data on the above table indicate that 94 respondents which constitute the majority (75.2%) are of the view that the program Good morning Nigeria educates viewers, informs viewers, douses tension and dispels rumour in Kaduna state, followed by 13 respondents representing (10.4%) who say it educates viewers. Moreover, 8 respondents representing (6.4%) opined that the program informs its viewers and also douses tension and dispels rumour during conflict. The least respondents 2 representing 1.6% are those with the view that the program does not play any role in conflict management.

Through the in-depth interview, majority of the respondents are of the view that the difficulties faced with the program in conflict management are lack of feedback in communication, time of the program is inadequate and discussants sometimes over react. For instance, the producer of the programme said “Getting key players and resource person to give inside to these issues is a serious challenge. Sometimes guests usually decline invitation to speak on certain issues for reasons best known to them. Again, he said he might wake up in the morning and receive an SMS from a guest that he or she can't make it due health challenge, vehicle challenge or trapped at the traffic. This sometimes happen at the nick of time. Apparently one begin to think of whom to get at that short notice. Since it is a live program an alternative must be provided to save the station from embarrassment”.

Moreover, some respondents praised the rich qualities of the program, especially its ability to douse tension by educating and informing viewers the negative consequences of the crisis by bringing to therefore a peaceful resolution mechanism. To them, through the flagship program, solutions have been proffered that has led to the relative peace the people of Kaduna are currently enjoying.

The study reveals that the program Good morning Nigeria plays a pivotal role in conflict management by educating, informing, dousing tension and dispelling rumour in Kaduna state. This is in conformity with the views of Aje, (1990) which points out that the media play the role of education and opinion molding through educating citizens on issues in conflict, what to expect from government thereby assisting in building public opinion in support of action to be taken and calm tension. This also conforms to the role of the social responsibility theory which says the mass media are vital weapons whose roles are paramount in providing understanding of different political, social, economic and cultural systems of the society.

From the assumptions on which the study is hinged on; ‘Good Morning Nigeria’ plays vital roles in conflict management in Kaduna State between 2019 – 2022; the program is not faced with inadequate access to important information for effective conflict management and the program

‘Good Morning Nigeria’ dampens conflict which brought about conflict management in Kaduna state.

Summary

This study is centered on mass media and conflict management: a case study of Good Morning Nigeria. The media plays a pivotal role and it is a true reflection of the society or social system in which it operates as it cannot operate in isolation of the social system in which it survives. The relationship between media and society is one of influence. That is, the media can influence society in terms of values, beliefs, attitudes towards issues and entertainment interests. On the other hand, those who use media for influence and advertisement will assess the interests of society in making decisions. Therefore, society influences media as well (Koss,

2014). There is no gaining saying that the NTA has contributed immensely in spreading information and culture in Kaduna state and Nigeria as a whole.

The programme ‘Good Morning Nigeria’ is playing a key role in raising awareness of trending and emerging development issues which has provided support to civil society in the peace building process. It is worthy to note that the program remains one of the best programmes for reaching people (irrespective of their status or location) across the globe, despite increasing global internet penetration.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Information was collected directly from respondents who watched ‘Good Morning Nigeria’ and some were even victims of one form of conflict or the other. It can then be concluded that the programme plays a pivotal role in conflict management in Kaduna state between 2019 and 2022 because it educates and informs viewers, douses tension and dispel rumours. Thus, the program helps in the peace building process during crises.

However, the difficulties faced with the program in conflict management are lack of feedback in communication, time of the program is inadequate and discussants sometimes over react. Some policy recommendations for the program is to always agree on facts, choose a good time for the program, look for the root cause of conflict and if possible invite victims to the studio to air their experiences when the need arises.

It is worthwhile to say that the program ‘Good Morning Nigeria’ has positively curtailed conflict; builds trust and confidence among residents of Kaduna state. This is because, before the program was introduced, the state had witnessed ten crises and after the airing of the

program, the state experienced only one crisis so far. Therefore, the program ‘Good Morning Nigeria’ has done well in conflict management in the state.

Based on this study, the following recommendations are necessary:

- i. The producer of the program should once in a while invite to the studio those directly affected by conflict.
- ii. The program should be televised in Hausa too so that those who do not understand English would be carried along.
- iii. There should be a repeat broadcast in the evening when people are back from work so that those who missed it in the morning can also watch.
- iv. NTA should be provided with modern equipment to enhance the quality of her content, production and the programmes.

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