

Assessing the Efficacy of Communication Strategies Employed by the Buhari Administration in Mitigating IPOB Agitations Among the South-East Residents

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Abstract

This study investigated the assessment the efficacy of communication strategies employed by the Buhari administration in mitigating IPOB agitations among the south-east residents. Two objectives were drawn from the study, among which was to identify the communication strategies used by the Buhari Administration to manage the IPOB agitations; investigate South-East residents assessment of the appropriateness of the communication strategies used by the Buhari administration in managing agitations by IPOB. This study was anchored on the social judgment theory. The social judgment theory makes the exercise of human judgment mandatory due to the complexities and causal ambiguity that surround issues in the human environment. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population for this research consisted of residents of the five states of the South-East geopolitical zone, namely: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. The total projected population for ages twenty years and above is 9,729,200 representing 43% of the total population of the South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria. Hence, the study population of this work stood at 9,729,200. While purposive sampling technique was used to obtain 400 respondents. The questionnaire with close ended items was used in this research work. Data were analysed using Simple percentages and the weighted mean score (WMS) were used. The weighted mean score was based on the four-point Likert-Scale. The study found out that consultation and propaganda were identified as strategies used by the Buhari administration to manage IPOB agitations. While, dialogue and engagement with IPOB leadership were not identified to be employed. The study recommended that the government should raise the level of

awareness of its engagements, dialogue, stakeholder consultation and propaganda with IPOB through the use of appropriate media radio, television, internet etc.

Keywords: *Administration, Communication Strategies, Agitations, propaganda, negotiation,*

Introduction

Nigeria has experienced numerous conflicts over the years as a result of political, religious, and ethnic divides. Using effective communication techniques has been essential to handling these disputes. Nigeria had power battles and ethnic tensions in the early years following its independence in 1960. In his speeches, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the first prime minister, emphasized national unity and took a conciliatory stance. However, as regional disparities grew more pronounced, his strategy encountered difficulties. Despite these challenges, the government used radio broadcasts and newspapers to disseminate messages of unity and nation-building (Smith, 1983). Authoritarian communication tactics were common during military takeovers.

With the return to civilian rule in 1999, communication tactics changed. Olusegun Obasanjo, the president, placed a strong emphasis on acceptance and harmony. In order to address the grievances of the Niger Delta region, which had long been a source of conflict due to oil-related issues, he established the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) (Onuoha, 2008). To foster harmony and understanding, the government also held discussions with a range of ethnic and religious groups. The Nigerian government faced a formidable challenge from the Boko Haram insurgency. Several administrations, such as Presidents Muhammadu Buhari and Goodluck Jonathan, used communication techniques to refute extremist narratives. For example, Buhari communicated the government's commitment to addressing the conflict's underlying causes by emphasizing a combination of military action and radicalization initiatives (Anugwom, 2016).

Administrations in the recent past have struggled with disputes that stem from altercations between farmers and herders. Acknowledging the necessity of all-encompassing communication plans, President Buhari promoted community involvement and regional collaboration. To resolve complaints and foster understanding between the disputing parties, the government held town hall meetings and community dialogues (Ibrahim, 2019).

The modern-day Nigeria is an amalgam of ethnic groups, chiefdoms, kingdoms, and tribes that coexisted freely before the arrival of British colonists. According to history, the Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Fulani, Igala, Ijo, Ibibio, Efik, Tiv, Jukun, Idoma, and other ethnic nations inhabited Nigeria for centuries prior to its establishment as a nation state (Orugbani, 2005). The backgrounds, religious convictions, customs, and cultures of each of these groups have historically varied. Britain, the colonial overlord, made great efforts to unite these disparate peoples.

Furthermore, Cooney (2016) lists one of the main causes of the nation's Civil War as the non-adherence to the federal structure advocated at the abandoned Lagos Conference and outlined in the Aburi Accord of 1967. It follows that some important decisions discussed about the status of Nigeria at the aforementioned conferences were disregarded. Nwamu (2017) claims that Nigeria has not yet fully recovered from the agreement that Gowon, Ojukwu, and other statesmen reached

in Aburi, Ghana. The Gowon administration's decision to create states in opposition to the Aburi agreement, which was centered on giving the regions more authority, only increased the Igbo people's demand for secession.

By employing a nonviolent approach, MASSOB seeks to achieve the separation of Biafra from Nigeria. More than ten years after MASSOB was founded in 1999, an additional group known as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) surfaced. The current study centers on IPOB, the most recent secessionist group in Nigeria to garner attention on a local, national, and international level.

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Agitations

As stated above, IPOB is a secessionist group that emanated to reawaken the struggle for an independent country from Nigeria by the name Biafra. As at 2017, IPOB was said to be the second largest separatist movement happening currently in Africa (Sawe, 2017). The first as Sawe (2017) reports, is the Polisario Front which was founded on the 10th of May 1973 by El-Ouli Mustafa Sayed to agitate for the independence of Western Sahara from Morocco. Other large separatist movements across Africa include: the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance established in 1982 for the separation of Casamance from Senegal; the Cape Party, a political party formed in 2007 by Jack Miller to separate Western Cape from South Africa; the Somali National Movement which in conjunction with other militia groups declared Somaliland free from the Republic of Somalia. Somaliland is said to have an army (Somaliland National Armed Forces) and the president named Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud (Sawe, 2017). There are also separatists' movements in countries in Europe (e.g. the call by the Catalans in Spain for a separate country called Catalonia) and even in America (Alagbe, 2017).

According to Bello, (2017), IPOB was formed around 2000s, however, it was only in 2015 that the group made the headlines as a separatist group seeking independence for Biafra. In Sawe's (2017) article on the World Atlas website, it is stated that IPOB was created in 2012. On 19 December, 2013, IPOB sent a notice to the United Nations Committee on Human Rights Heads of State of All Countries, stating that "Nigeria ceases as a legal corporate entity which represents the Indigenous People of Biafra in any capacity from the 1st of January 2014" (Indigenous People of Biafra, 2013, p. 2). This places the date in which IPOB was founded around 2012 and 2013 while 2015 appears to be the year in which their activities became more visible and frequent. Alumona, Azom & Iloh (2017) report that IPOB's activities commenced alongside the inauguration of Muhammadu Buhari as Nigeria's President in 2015. It is for this sake that the current study focuses on the Buhari administration.

The founder of IPOB Nwannekaenyi Nnamdi Kenny Okwu Kanu, popularly known as Nnamdi Kanu is a Nigerian with British citizenship born on 23 September, 1967 and married to Uchechi Okwu Kanu. His appearance in court during trial after his arrest in Nigeria in October 2015 shows that he practices Judaism. He had his tertiary education in the University of Nsukka, Nigeria (UNN) and London Metropolitan University (Wikipedia, 2018). Kanu is also the director of Radio Biafra, an online radio, broadcasting from London.

Several studies and reports from both national and international sources, organisations and media have pictured condemnation of Buhari administration's use of the armed forces in handling the

IPOB agitations. Examples of such studies and reports are those of Bello (2017), Alumona, Azom and Iloh (2017), Julius-Adeoye (2017), Sluiter (2016), Ibeanu, Orji and Iwuamadi (2016), Adibe, Ahmadu-Suka, Ibrahim and Akinyemi (2017), and Alagbe (2017). After a search through several sources, it was discovered that little or nothing has been done on the communication strategies used by the Buhari administration in handling IPOB agitations. Hence, the need to understand how Government communication strategies influence public perception and responses to political agitation. There is also need to evaluate the effectiveness of government communication strategies in addressing regional concerns and promoting national unity. It is this observed gap that the study intends to fill. However, demographics are crucial to the study because they provide a nuanced understanding of how different segments of the population reacted to the communication strategies employed by the Buhari administration. This understanding helps in tailoring messages, identifying effective communication channels, addressing concerns, and adjusting strategies for better outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

At the dawn of the Buhari administration in 2015, agitations for a separate nation state known as Biafra were intensified and championed by IPOB. Though the Buhari administration has been criticized for employing the armed forces in handling IPOB agitations, it has also employed certain communication strategies. In 2015, the year in which IPOB agitations became an issue of public discourse, the Buhari administration employed dialogue as a communication strategy to interface with the agitators, this however was rebuffed by IPOB due to the continued detention of its leader, Nnamdi Kanu. Later in June 2017 about two months after Nnamdi Kanu was released on bail and after a quit notice had been issued to the Igbo people residing in the Northern part of Nigeria by the Arewa youths forum, the Buhari administration employed consultations and engagements with different stakeholders whom IPOB felt were not worthy of representing them and the Igbo people. After a search through several sources, it was discovered that little or nothing has been done on the communication strategies used by the Buhari administration in handling IPOB agitations. It is this observed gap that the study intends to find out what the communication strategies of the Buhari Administration in managing IPOB agitation: Assessment of South East Residents.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aims at investigating South-East residents' assessment of the Buhari administration's communication strategies used in the management of IPOB agitations. In specific terms the study seeks to:

1. identify the communication strategies used by the Buhari Administration to manage the IPOB agitations;
2. investigate South-East residents assessment of the appropriateness of the communication strategies used by the Buhari administration in managing agitations by IPOB.

Research Questions

The under listed research questions will guide the study:

1. What are the communication strategies used by the Buhari Administration to manage IPOB's Agitations?
2. What is the South-East resident's assessment of the appropriateness of the communication strategies used by the Buhari administration in managing agitations by IPOB?

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Conflict Management Concept

No society has ever existed without conflict. Conflicts are everywhere and can take place at any time. This makes conflict management a vital area of study for the advancement and survival of the human society. Akinwale (2011) sees efficient conflict management as essential for societal development. According to Ropers (2002), the age that the world is in, is an era where people's livelihood is highly dependent on the management of conflict within and between groups. What Ropers is saying is that it is not the conflict that would make people's lives difficult rather it is the manner in which the conflicts are managed and resolved that will determine the course of people's lives within communities, states and nations. This knowledge is what may have motivated several scholars to pay serious attention to conflict management in different settings.

Ropers (2002) sees conflict resolution as an activity which aims at advancing communication and relationship between groups that are in conflict. Conflict transformation is defined by Ropers as the long term effort that is necessary to surmount the major causes of a conflict, make stronger factors that connect the conflicting parties to each other and capacities for conflict management. From the definitions above, it can be understood that both the activities of conflict resolution and conflict transformation make more effective processes of conflict management.

Some scholars see conflict resolution the same as conflict management. Osisoma (2016), for example sees conflict management as the use of the techniques of stimulation and resolution in handling conflicts. Osabiya (2015), however, does not support the idea that conflict resolution and conflict management can be used interchangeably as one does not necessarily imply the other. He sees conflict resolution as the processes involved in decreasing, terminating or eliminating all conflicts. He agrees with Rahim (2011) that conflict management has to do with processes involved in dropping down the possible dysfunctions of conflict while improving the possible benefits through the designing of efficient macro level strategies that will trigger learning and better functioning of the society. Conflict management has also been defined as the processes involved in getting rid of cognitive barriers that fight against group synergy and the ability of the conflicting groups to reach an agreement (Osisoma, 2016). Black (cited in Akinwale, n.d.) simply sees conflict management grievance handling.

Communication Strategies in Conflict Management

Collaboration

Collaboration is a vital communication strategy in conflict management. Collaboration involves working together to find a mutually acceptable solution to the conflict. Collaboration is important in conflict resolution since it enables the parties involved to find creative solutions that meet their needs and interests. According to Pruitt and Carnevale (1993), collaboration is essential in conflict resolution since it enables the parties involved to generate multiple options and evaluate them objectively.

Negotiation

Negotiation is another crucial communication strategy in conflict management. Negotiation involves a process of give and take in which the parties involved try to reach a mutually acceptable solution. Negotiation is important in conflict resolution since it enables the parties involved to find a solution that meets their needs and interests. According to Lewicki et al. (2016), negotiation is essential in conflict resolution since it allows the parties involved to explore different options and reach a solution that is acceptable to all.

Nonviolent Communication

Nonviolent communication is a vital communication strategy in conflict management. Nonviolent communication involves expressing one's needs and feelings in a way that does not hurt or offend the other party. Nonviolent communication is important in conflict resolution since it enables the parties involved to communicate effectively without resorting to aggression or violence. According to Rosenberg (2003), nonviolent communication is crucial in conflict resolution since it helps the parties involved to identify their underlying needs and interests and communicate them effectively.

Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity is a crucial communication strategy in conflict management. Cultural sensitivity involves understanding and respecting the cultural differences between the parties involved in the conflict. Cultural sensitivity is important in conflict resolution since it helps to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations that can escalate the conflict. According to Ting-Toomey (1999), cultural sensitivity is essential in conflict resolution since it enables the parties involved to appreciate each other's cultural perspectives and values.

Communication Strategies in Conflict Management

Communication at any level is important to human existence, survival and the understanding of human relationships (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2004; Hoy and Miskel, 2005; William and Udo, 2012; Peretomode, 2012; Ozuru and Ekeanyanwu; 2013). Staunton (2004) states that “we don't communicate in vacuum; the art of communication always takes place within a situation or context” (p.3). The situation or context could be conflict. The interdependent relationship between conflict and communication, makes communication a vital strategy for conflict management. According to Hener (2010), communication can cause conflict, escalate conflict, prevent conflict

and serve as a very useful tool in activities of conflict management. This means that of all the conflict management strategies, communication is one strategy that has a role to play in other strategies.

Adejimola (2009), states that the use of communication is very much inevitable in several conflict management strategies like mediation, arbitration, negotiation, adjudication and dialogue. Hener (2010) asserts that communication plays a crucial role in dealing with any kind of conflict by serving three functions which are: allowing the conflicting parties know and understand themselves, voice their positions, influence and react to each other; letting conflicting parties build consistent relationship and become significant to each other; and creating a ground for influence, persuasion and collaboration.

The importance of communications in conflict management cannot be overemphasized. Communications play a huge role in managing conflict irrespective of the observation that it is a terminology that is abstract from many definitions. (Littlejohn, 1996; McQuail, 2010). Frank Dance (cited in Littlejohn, 1996) observes the inevitable power of communication in conflict management. To him, communication is central both in general and specific terms in judging the accuracy and success in conflict management. He maintains that communication must be deliberate, intentional and well thought out to discontinue conflict. On the basis of intentionality, Frank Dance suggests that conflict managers must consciously communicate messages with the intention to affecting the behaviours of the parties involved in the conflict.

The Nigerian Civil War and other Secessionist Attempts

The Nigeria-Biafra War was a full scale armed conflict that occurred between the Nigerian state and the seceding group Biafra (which IPOB stands for) (Heerten & Moses, 2014). The war was fought from 1967 to 1970. Akresh, Bhalotra, Leone and Osili (2017) describe the Nigerian Civil War as one with starvation levels worse than those reported in Holland and Stalingrad during the Second World War. That was among the greatest modern nutritional disasters, it was the 'bloodiest' and first modern civil war fought in Sub-Saharan Africa and the first of post-Second World War. It was the first African war to be shown on television (Heerten & Moses, 2014). The war recorded about three million deaths caused mainly by the weapon of starvation as promised by a one-time head of Nigerian delegation to peace talks held in Niamey in July 1968 and finally used by the Federal Military Government. The starvation level categorized the war as a colossal humanitarian disaster (Waters, 2005). The war was said to have left many people on the side of Biafra in abject poverty (Uchendu, 2007).

The Nigerian state is heterogeneous. Multiple ethnic nationalities were joined together to form Nigeria. Of these groups, only three are described as major while the rest, over 450 are described as minor ethnic groups. Susanto's (2017) definition of a heterogeneous nation clearly depicts the Nigerian State. According to Susanto, a heterogeneous state is that which is defined by cultural and social heterogeneity. In this kind of state, it is easy to find differences in socio-genetic markers like ethnicity and tribe, in cultural markers like values, habit and culture itself, in religion, locality and language. The differences in status, class and power show the social heterogeneity that exists in Nigeria.

The 1914 amalgamation by Lord Lugard, which tied these areas together, disregarded the cultural, social and political differences (Alumona, Azom & Iloh, 2017) that have existed among the multiple ethnic nationalities that used to be sovereign territories. The amalgamation which was done in the midst of social differences that existed among the different regions is said to have thrown up or made more vivid, ethnic imbalances, political tensions, and economic competition (Alumona, Azom & Iloh, 2017). According to Nwofe (2017), the amalgamation presented to the different peoples an opportunity to efficiently use ethnicity in a bid to sustain joint claims for fair treatment in the country. These had necessitated attempts to separate from the union (Nigeria). The North led by the Emirs of Katsina and Zaria, had threatened to break away in 1950 (Ibadan conference) and in 1953 (Alumona, Azom & Iloh, 2017; Kirk-Greene, 2009). The West (the Yoruba tribe) led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, also threatened to secede in 1953 and the East first threatened to secede in 1964 from Michael Okpara (then Premier of the Eastern region). The secession attempt of the East did not die down like it did in the other two regions. In the Niger Delta region, Isaac Adaka Boro and the NDVF (Niger Delta Volunteer Force) on 23rd February, 1966, came with a declaration of an independent Niger Delta Republic. This caused a 12-day violent battle between Isaac AdakaBoro's NDVF and the Federal Forces which ended with the arrest of Isaac Adaka Boro and some of his men (Alumona, Azom & Iloh, 2017).

Conflict Management Strategies of the Nigerian Government

There are several strategies that have been used by the Federal Government of Nigeria in managing internal conflicts of different nature. The strategies usually applied by the Federal government in the management of different conflicts have been condemned by some international observers. For example, USAID (2005) once reported that the Federal Government of Nigeria usually displays weak capacities in their management of conflicts emanating in the country.

Scholars have observed that some Nigerian governments use violent repression in conflict management. This strategy can also be called the force strategy (Ekumaoko, 2013). According to Osah (2016), this strategy is usually carried out through military personnel. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is also used to deploy this strategy. In most cases, the Federal Government of Nigeria is said to employ this strategy under the guise of national security. Usually, the military operations come with different code names instituted to tackle particular crises (Osah, 2016). Examples of such operations are Operation Flush, Operation Salvage, Operation Hakuri, Joint Task Force, Operation Python Dance. These operations usually come with serious abuse of human rights, brutality, different forms of assault, harassment, torture, extortions, aggression, rape, unlawful detention and arrest, and destruction of lives and property (Ekumaoko, 2013; Ibeanu, 2006). According to Akinwale (2011), the use of coercive power may have succeeded in suppressing conflicts but failed to achieve peace.

According to Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (2017), the Federal Government of Nigeria's strategy of sending security operatives to agitating areas damages relations between the operatives and the agitators as well as the community. This is because the Agitators mistrust of the government is transferred to the security operatives. As a result, rather than cooperating with the operatives, the agitators and their community mobilize themselves against the operatives. This

usually leads to negative consequences such as destruction of lives and property, abuse of human rights, etc. The Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (2017) sees the strategy of deploying government security operatives as one that cannot be avoided. But the Institute is of the opinion that the security operatives should only be deployed after the State has taken a first step towards reconciling the community and the state. This is necessary so that when the security operatives are finally deployed to the community, the operatives will be perceived by the community as concerned state agents.

Theoretical framework

This sub-section deals with the theories which the study is hinged on the theory of social judgment theory

Social Judgment Theory

Psychophysical researchers tested people's ability to judge physical stimuli like a light's brightness or an object's weight. Getting hints from these studies, Muzafer Sheriff, the proponent of the social judgment theory with his colleagues, Carolyn Sheriff (his wife) and Carl Hovland, sought ways in which people made judgements about messages/communication (Littlejohn, 1996; Granberg, 2016). They came up with the idea that what determines the effect that a persuasive message would have is the manner in which the receivers judge the position which the message shows (Sheriff & Hovland cited in Atkin & Smith, 2008; Smith, Atkin, Martell, Allen & Hembroff, 2006; Asemah & Nwammuo, 2017).

The social judgement theory makes the exercise of human judgement mandatory due to the complexities and causal ambiguity that surround issues in the human environment. This judgement exercise enables humans to grasp better knowledge of their environment (Hammond, Stewart, Brehmer & Steinmann, 2018). The proponents posit that judgements people make are usually based on certain points of reference or anchors and their ego involvement in the issue of discourse. Reference points or anchors could be previously or presently held beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, etc. that can influence people's perception (Littlejohn, 1996; Cooksey, 2010). According to the proponents of the theory, the anchors in social perception are usually based on past experience and are internal. Because such anchors are internal, they are always present and wielding influence. However, the degree to which the anchor influences one's interpretation of the communication depends on the importance of the issue to one's ego. The theory defines ego involvement as the degree to which an issue is of personal relevance to a person. Or the extent to which a person's attitude to an issue has an effect on the relevance assigned the issue.

The final point buttressed by social judgment theory is that where a person has greater ego involvement in an issue, the latitude of rejection becomes larger with smaller latitude of non-commitment hence, lesser expected attitude change. The reason for this is the difficulty experienced in attempting to persuade people that are highly ego involved in an issue. According to Cooksey (2010), the social judgement theory has proved to be useful for the analysis of people's judgement concerning certain circumstances. The theory has been grouped by authors like Littlejohn (1996) under broad group tagged message reception and processing theories and a sub-group called judgment processes. Ideas that formed the foundations of the social judgment theory

which was developed in the 1960s (Chau, Wong, Chow & Fung, 2014; Asemah & Nwammuo, 2017), came from early research in psychophysics (Littlejohn, 1996).

The social judgment theory is however, criticized due to the idea that the difference between people that are highly ego involved and those that are less involved, may not be the degree of their involvement alone. Other reasons may be present but these are not taken into cognizance by the theory. Again, the assumption that judgement precedes attitude change was not proved according to the theory's critics (Littlejohn, 1996).

But the level of ego involvement may vary depending on the demographics of the audience and how the handling of the issue through certain communication strategies has affected them. In other words, those who have been affected personally, may have higher ego involvement than those that have not for example incurred any loss or gain following the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the strategies employed by the Buhari administration. Again, it is expected that people who are ego involved in the IPOB issue may not necessarily attain extreme position.

Review of Empirical Studies

Idegwu's (2015) study entitled, "Pre-war and War-time Conflict Management Strategies of the Nigeria Civil War", aimed at assessing the weaknesses and strengths of the strategies used by the conflicting parties in managing the pre-war and war-time phases of the Civil War. The objectives were to find out: the reasons behind the intensification of the war; strategies used to manage the conflict before and during the war; and strengths and weaknesses of the strategies. It was a qualitative study and the research designs utilized were the descriptive and case study designs. According to the researcher, these designs were used because the secondary data on the conflict management strategies needed to be described and interpreted. Again, some phenomena needed to be described and interpreted through the observation and words of certain respondents. The population of the study was composed of the surviving Civil War veterans living in Kaduna (in Northern Nigeria) and Enugu (in Eastern Nigeria); Nigerians and non-Nigerians actively involved in the conflict management process during the period of the Civil War; other informed citizens and; international organisations like the African Union, United Nations and Common Wealth.

The study gathered data through primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included past Nigerian heads of state, Gowon and Obasanjo and other important figures who were present at peace talks that mapped out the conflict management strategies that were used. The primary data from the past Nigerian leaders were got through telephone interviews. Secondary sources used included archival materials, tapes, memoirs, Aburi accord minutes and proceedings, treaties, the bunka of Ojukwu in Umuahia, newspapers and edicts. The methods of data collection included semi-structured interview and focus group discussions (FGDs). Data analysis was done through narrative method.

Idegwu's (2015) study found out that during the pre-war and war-time phases, the conflict management strategies used were intervention by third parties, joint problem solving, strategic withdrawal and violent confrontation. The study also found out that during the pre-war phase, the conflict management strategies used included negotiation and mediation (involving third parties),

conciliation and joint problem solving. Other pre-war strategies were General Aguiyi Ironsi's implementation of the unitary system of government; General Yakubu Gowon's adoption of the federal system of government; negotiation through the convening of an ad hoc constitutional conference; mediation through third party in Aburi in Ghana (the Aburi accord) and currency change/economic obstruction.

Idegwu (2015) did an examination of the conflict management strategies and found out the reasons behind their failure. The negotiation strategy used in the ad hoc conference in Lagos before war-time was considered to have failed because only one recommendation made at the end of the negotiation was found to be implemented poorly. The recommendation that was poorly implemented was that which called for the assigning of military officers to barracks within the regions that they come from. Mediation strategy which was used in the Aburi meeting that produced the Aburi accord was also found to have failed because the agreement reached was not implemented. The failure to implement this accord was found to have contributed significantly to the Civil War.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The choice of a descriptive survey research design for this study, as elucidated by Ihejirika and Omego (2013), is fundamental in shaping the methodology to provide comprehensive insights into the knowledge levels of the people in the South East geopolitical zone regarding the communication strategies employed by the Buhari administration in handling the IPOB agitations. The population for this research consisted of residents of the five states of the South-East geopolitical zone, namely: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. The population was made up of male and female residents who are aged twenty years and above. The total projected population for ages twenty years and above is 9,729,200 representing 43% of the total population of the South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria. Hence, the study population of this work stood at 9,729,200. The purposive sampling technique was used to obtain 400 respondents. The Study adopted the multi-stage cluster sampling technique to reach the respondents. The questionnaire with close ended items was used in this research work. A pilot test and retest was conducted using thirty (30) respondents from Oyiabo Local Government Area. For the test of reliability in this study, the Pearson co-efficient formula was used to determine the reliability co-efficient at 0.99. Data were analysed using. Simple percentages and the weighted mean score (WMS) were used. The weighted mean score was based on the four-point Likert-Scale.

Results and Discussion

This chapter handles the presentation and analysis of data generated from the field. The data collected were presented, analyzed and discussed based on the research questions. Tables were used to present the data collected in simple percentages and in weighted mean scores based on four-point Likert Scale of strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). Four hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents, out of which, 396 copies were filled and returned while four copies were not returned. Hence, 396 copies of the questionnaire were analyzed, representing a return rate of 99% which is ideal for analysis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 4.1: Respondents Identification of the Communication Strategies used by the Buhari Administration to Manage IPOB's Agitations

s/n	Questionnaire item	Sa 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	WMS	Remarks
1.	The Buhari administration used conversation with the people of the South East to manage the IPOB agitations	157	122	315	156	750	1.9	Rejected
2.	Community meetings to discuss with the people of South East was not used by the Buhari administration to handle the IPOB agitations	115	80	236	220	651	1.6	Rejected
3.	False statements were employed by the Buhari administration to gain support for the management of the IPOB agitations	770	435	26	48	1,279	3.2	Accepted
4.	The Buhari administration involved the leadership of the IPOB in an attempt to understand and manage the IPOB agitations	132	300	260	137	829	2.1	Rejected
Cumulative						877	2.2	Rejected

Table 4.1 sought to test the respondent's ability to identify communication strategies used by the Buhari administration to manage the IPOB agitations. Four items were posed to the respondents to address research question one. Item 5 sought to find out the ability of the respondents to identify dialogue as a communication strategy used by the Buhari administration to manage the IPOB agitation, out of 396 respondents, 157 strongly agreed that dialogue was deployed by the Buhari administration as a strategy to manage the IPOB agitations. A total of 122 respondents agreed that Buhari administration used dialogue while 315 respondents disagreed with the use of dialogue. In the same way, 156 respondents stood strongly that dialogue was not used at all. This item had a total score of 750 with average weighted mean score of 1.9 showing rejection on the premise that dialogue was not used to manage the IPOB agitations.

The statement in item 6 was intended to establish if consultation with stakeholders was not used by the Buhari administration to manage IPOB agitations. To answer this, a total of 115 respondents are strongly with the view that Buhari administration does not employed consultation as a strategy, 80 respondents agreed though not strongly that consultation was not used. Similarly, 236

respondents disagreed with the statement that consultation was not used by the Buhari administration to handle the IPOB agitation while, 220 respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. The item had a total score of 651 with average weighted mean score of 1.6 depicting rejection of the statement that Buhari administration does not use consultation as a strategy to manage IPOB agitation.

Item 7 sought to establish if propaganda was used by the Buhari administration to gain support for the management of the IPOB agitations. In response to this item, 770 respondents strongly admitted that Buhari administration made use of propaganda to manage IPOB agitations. In the same vein, 435 respondents agreed with the statement while 26 and 48 respondents respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed that the Buhari administration used propaganda to gain support for the management of the IPOB agitations. The item had 1,279 as its total score with 3.2 weighted mean score, showing or meaning that Buhari administration applied propaganda to manage the IPOB agitations.

For item 8, the respondents were tested to identify if Buhari administration involved (engaged) the leadership of the IPOB in an attempt to understand and manage the IPOB agitations. Responding to this, 132 respondents strongly yield to the statement, 300 respondents agreed that the leadership of the IPOB was involved in the management of their agitations while 260 respondents and 137 respondents respectively disagreed and strongly disagreed that Buhari administration does not involve (engaged) the leadership of the IPOB in managing the agitations. This item had a total of 829 with an average weighted mean score of 2.1, meaning that Buhari administration does not involve the leadership of the IPBO in managing the IPOB agitations.

The overall result from Table 4.1 showed that out of the four strategies, propaganda was identified to have been used by the Buhari administration to manage the IPOB agitations while dialogue consultation and engagement were not identified to have been used by the Buhari administration. Cumulatively, the total score and the average weighted mean score stood at 877 and 2.2 meaning that no strategy was identified by the respondents to have been used by the Buhari administration to manage the IPOB agitations.

Table 4.4: Respondents assessment of the appropriateness of the communication strategies used by the Buhari administration in managing agitations by IPOB.

S/N	Questionnaire Items	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	WMS	Remark
5	Dialogue was not appropriately used by the Buhari Administration to manage the IPOB agitations.	852	393	70	17	1,332	3.4	Accepted
6	Consultation strategy was not used appropriately by the Buhari Administration in	708	483	70	23	1,214	3.1	Accepted

	managing the IPOB agitations.							
7	Propaganda was highly used by the Buhari Administration to manage the IPOB agitations.	668	468	106	20	1,262	3.2	Accepted
8	Engagement was appropriately used by the Buhari Administration to manage the IPOB agitations.	108	87	232	224	651	1.6	Rejected
Average Weighted Mean Score						1,115	2.8	Accepted

Item 5 sought to know if dialogue was not appropriately used by the Buhari administration to manage the IPOB agitations. In their responses, 852 respondents strongly agreed that dialogue was not appropriately used by the Buhari administration in managing the IPOB agitation, 393 respondents agreed with the statement. A total of 70 and 17 respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the appropriate use of dialogue as an option to manage IPOB agitations by the Buhari administration. A weighted mean score of 3.4 with a total score of 1,332 were recorded in this item, showing that the item was accepted by the respondents on the ground that dialogue was not appropriately used by the Buhari Administration to manage the IPOB agitations.

The statement in item 6 was intended to establish if consultation with stakeholders was adopted by the Buhari administration in managing IPOB agitations. In response to this item, a total of 708 respondents strongly agreed with the statement while 483 respondents lend their supportive voices to the statement. 70 respondents disagreed with the use of consultation as a strategy. In the same way, 23 respondents strongly disagreed with the appropriate use of consultation in the management of the IPOB agitations by the Buhari administration. This particular item had a weighted mean score of 3.1 at a total score of 1,214, depicting acceptance by the respondents that consultation with the stakeholders was not appropriately used by the Buhari administration to manage IPOB agitations.

For item 7, the respondents were expected to respond to the statement that sought to find out if propaganda was highly used by the Buhari administration to manage the IPOB agitations. Out of 396 respondents for the study, 668 respondents strongly agreed that the Buhari administration used propaganda very high as a strategy to manage the IPOB agitations, 468 respondents agreed with the statement that propaganda was highly deployed by the administration of Buhari to manage the IPOB agitations while 106 respondents disagreed that the Buhari administration does not use propaganda in managing the IPOB agitations. Similarly, a total of 20 respondents strongly disagreed to the statement that Buhari administration does not used propaganda highly in managing IPOB agitations. This item recorded a total score of 1,262 with a weighted mean score of 3.2 which

simply translates acceptance, meaning that the respondents in their knowledge agreed that propaganda was highly (appropriately) used by the Buhari administration in the management of the IPOB agitations.

Item 8 sought to find out if engagement strategy was adopted by the Buhari administration in managing IPOB agitations. This item had 108 respondents who strongly agreed with it, 87 respondents supported the statement agreeing that engagement was not adopted by the Buhari administration to manage IPOB agitations. But 232 respondents were in opposition disagreeing that engagement was not used appropriately. In the same vein, 224 respondents strongly disagreed saying that engagement was not used by the Buhari administration as a strategy to manage the IPOB agitations. This item had a mean score of 1.6 and a total score of 651 meaning that engagement was not used appropriately by the Buhari administration to manage the IPOB agitations.

Judging from the various views of the respondents, the overall cumulative average weighted mean score is 2.8 while the total cumulative average score is 1,115. From the result got, the respondents accepted that in terms of appropriateness, dialogue consultation and engagement were not appropriately used while propaganda was made use of by the administration of Buhari to manage the agitation by the IPOB appropriately. However, the respondents' vehemently rejected the use of engagement perhaps they did not know what kind of engagement the researcher was presenting to them. But the respondents accepted and decried the high use of propaganda by the Buhari administration in managing the IPOB agitations. Hence, judging by the cumulative average weighted mean score of 2.8, it therefore mean that the respondents assessed the four strategies of dialogue, consultation, propaganda and engagement as appropriate for use in handling the IPOB agitations by the Buhari administration.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What communication strategy does Buhari administration used in managing IPOB agitations?

Genuine relationship focuses on successful human interaction and supportive communication with the target population. Hence, interactivity is achieved through engagements in dialogue and the search for common solutions to identified problems. A major identification of communication strategies come through the cooperation of indigenous and scientific knowledge generating solutions and applying them to social problems. This however agrees with Nwagbara and Brown (2014), that the first variable to look out in conflict resolution is communication perception which has to do with the receivers (South-East residents) understanding of the issue(s). For Nwagbara and Brown (2014), for the receivers to be able to receive the message, the communication has to be within their perception range. Perhaps, the communication strategy of dialogue does not meet the perception range and the expectations of the South East region, hence the lack of interest to actually pay attention to know if such ever existed.

Research Question Two: What is the South-East resident's assessment of the appropriateness of the communication strategies used by the Buhari administration in managing agitations by IPOB?

The dialogue strategy was found to have topped the list of the communication strategies that the South-East residents assessed as appropriate, thus, making dialogue their most preferred strategy followed closely by the stakeholders consultation and the propaganda strategies. The above outcome is in tandem with Osabiya (2015), who postulated that dialogue is the most effective in resolving conflict. However, for it to be effective in resolving conflicts, structures must be set in place, and there must be a level of honesty displayed by both parties to genuinely resolve the conflict. According to Hener (2010), one of the factors that can stand against the success of dialogue as a communication strategy, is lack of trust which the receiver has for the source, his/her intention and the message content.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concludes that: the demographic characteristics of occupation, sex, age and education aversely influence the assessment of the communication strategies used by the Buhari administration to address or manage the indigenous people of Biafra (POB) agitations. This negative influence perhaps may have been caused by a number of factors. These includes marginalization, lopsidedness in appointment and employment among others.

The study showed that the people of the South East region had awareness of the communication strategies used by the Buhari administration to manage the IPOB agitations though, the awareness was very low. This is not unconnected to the inability of the Buhari administration to intensify the proper use of dialogue, consultation, engagement and propaganda strategies. Hence, government should reuse the level of awareness of any strategies used through the use of appropriate media: face-to-face, radio, television, internet etc. The study concluded further that the non-functional of the communication strategies are predicated on the fact that there was lack of trust by the South East people on the Buhari's administrations reason being that they sensed acts of marginalization and insensitivity to their wellbeing among others.

Summary of Findings

1. The study found out that consultation and propaganda were identified as strategies used by the Buhari administration to manage IPOB agitations. While, dialogue and engagement with IPOB leadership were not identified to be employed.
2. IPOB agitations were appropriate though not appropriately used. Some residents may perceive the government's efforts positively, acknowledging genuine attempts at engaging with the issues and promoting dialogue.

Recommendations

In view of the above summary and conclusions, the following recommendations are proffered.

1. The Federal government of Nigeria should intensify its use of dialogue to address the IPOB agitation by setting-up an Adhoc committee to plan and organize same.

2. The government should raise the level of awareness of its engagements, dialogue, stakeholder consultation and propaganda with IPOB through the use of appropriate media radio, television, internet etc.

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