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### Article

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## ADOPTION OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNAL CONFLICT MEDIATION IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

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### Abstract

Nigeria is not an exception to the endemic conflicts that are common throughout the African continent. The nation has been plagued by a variety of disputes, including political, ethnic, religious, and communal ones. To promote peaceful coexistence, several advocacy groups and INGOs have worked both independently and in concert. Regarding the foregoing, the primary goal of this study was to evaluate the communication tactics used by the North Central geopolitical zone's governments with regard to regional conflict resolution. The study, which was based on the conflict transformation theory, tried to systematise concepts based on conflict mediation through government crisis communication strategies. The researchers used a survey study approach, distributing questionnaires to 600 participants. The data from the survey were subjected to analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 with the main points being the use of frequencies and percentages. The results demonstrate that the administration employed a variety of communal mediation techniques. Community relations, media relations, public relations, traditional institutions approach, peacebuilding communication, and religious organisation approach are a few of the strategies highlighted. Additionally, it reveals that a high degree of communication is used in conflict mediation and that, among other things, the application of methods has resulted in lower tensions and harmonious coexistence among the various ethnic groups in the zone. The researchers came to the conclusion that communication techniques are useful for mediating disputes and advised their ongoing application in comparable circumstances.

**Keywords:** Communities, Conflicts, Government, Mediation, Strategies.

### Introduction

Due to people's interconnection and relationships, which frequently lead to arguments and confrontations, conflict is prevalent in human society. This shows that disputes typically

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include two or more parties who have come to a point of disagreement as a result of pursuing conflicting aims and objectives. Al-Rawashdeh and Al-Majali (2017) support the foregoing by characterising conflict as a competitive phenomenon in which two or more people have similar goals, making it challenging to satisfy one party's requests. Although it is currently prevalent in human culture and can be seen as natural, it has a negative connotation due to its tendency to lead to bloodshed and war (Doss et al., 2023). Essentially, destructive violence can result from conflict in human civilisation on various levels. According to Cuppen (2018), disputes can result from divergent ideals, interests, or expectations. They can also involve more general concerns about societal cohesiveness, institutional trust, local democracy, and protracted situations involving regional, national, or international actors. This suggests that conflicts arise when people who live together have opposing viewpoints, goals, and beliefs. Violent confrontations between and among the persons involved in conflict may result from these mismatches taking on complex and dynamic dimensions. If a dispute escalates into violence, the ensuing catastrophic effects could include property damage, economic and social system disruption, physical harm (such as fatalities), and long-term trauma for conflict victims. In some parts of the world, unresolved conflicts can also result in long-term instability. This has been explicitly demonstrated in some parts of the Middle East and various regions of Africa.

Armed non-state actors have proliferated across the African continent, and Boko Haram's violent extremism has extended from Nigeria to other nearby nations, particularly those along the Lake Chad region (Adeleke, 2023). Similar-impact conflicts have also been documented in the Central African Republic (Baleta, 2023; Guenard, 2024) and Burkina Faso (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, 2024; Yeboah & Aikins, 2024). There are documented instances of violent conflicts in the East and Horn of Africa, including human rights violations that have led to thousands of civilian deaths in Ethiopia and Sudan, the kidnapping and murder of dozens in Kenya, and other aspects of the conflicts in South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Eritrea (Hassan, 2024; Human Rights Watch, 2025). The background of conflicts in various regions of the African continent is established by the aforementioned. One conclusion that can be drawn from the intensity of the violence and the length of period of hostilities is that there may be several variables contributing to the wars throughout the continent. For example, Nshom (2017) notes that because of the complexity of the continent and the possibility of intertwined causes of conflict, the conflicts cannot be viewed from a social psychological perspective, such as prejudice alone, but rather must be given a holistic consideration by looking at social and economic factors that may have led to a particular conflict. Matsinhe (2022) asserts that despite the complicated and multifaceted history of extreme violence in several African nations, natural resource governance continues to be a major source of conflict. The effects are catastrophic, and according to a report, violent conflicts have caused the displacement of approximately 630 million children and their mothers worldwide (Adeyanju et al., 2025). Extremism and violent conflicts are still a problem in Africa in general, and Nigeria in particular.

Some of the documented instances of conflict in Nigeria include the fanaticism of Boko Haram, the killing spree perpetuated by armed bandits, the conflicts between farmers and herders, and the pockets of violence resulting from chieftaincy struggles in different communities throughout the country. According to Tuki (2024), Nigeria was ranked as the eighth least peaceful country in the world in the 2024 Global Terrorism Index report, supporting the claim that the country still experiences violent conflicts. Given the persistent nature of the Niger Delta disturbances and the economic impact on the Nigerian nation,

conflicts resulting from resource allocation and control have always been obvious in the country. Accordingly, Tanko (2021) emphasises that Nigeria faces insecurity issues that can be linked to many conflicts. These issues can be summed up into five main threats: oil militants, separatist insurgency, banditry and kidnapping, farmer-herder clashes, and jihadism among others. Nigeria's North Central geopolitical zone is defined both geographically and politically. Kwara, Kogi, Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger, and the Federal Capital Territory make up its total of seven sub-nationals currently known by the nomenclature of states in the country. Conflicts have long existed in the region; according to Ojewale (2021), violent altercations have been documented in several parts of the zone. Ajodo-Adebanjoko and Nwofor (2024) reveal that there have been violent conflicts between farmers and herders in some areas of the North Central states of Benue, Nasarawa, Kogi, and Plateau. The main causes of these ongoing violent situations are competition for fresh water and land resources, the study demonstrate. Relatedly, Abimbola et al. (2023) show that the situation in Niger State is unusual since economic inequality also leads to violent conflicts in several regions, which cause multifaceted poverty and economic disruptions. At various times, violent clashes on various levels have also been documented in the FCT (Anyadike, 2023) and Kwara (Azeez et al., 2024).

The government and other stakeholders appear prepared to attempt mediation and reconciliation as part of steps to guarantee peaceful coexistence in society in light of the complex conflicts and their varied effects. The public complaints commission (PCC), the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the national industrial court, the federal ministry of justice's department of citizens' rights, and the Central Bank of Nigeria are the public organisations in Nigeria tasked with mediating and resolving conflicts and disputes (Mmeje, 2023). These governmental ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) are tasked with settling conflicts ranging from personal to communal as well as industrial. They do a variety of activities to guarantee that disputants/parties to conflicts have the opportunity to sit down and talk about reconciliation on a short-term and long-term basis. This suggests that communication is an essential part of the procedure since people are made to converge to talk. The government's utilisation of communication strategies is regarded as essential based on the aforementioned. Things can descend into anarchy if the fault lines are ignored and conversation is not used to mediate the situation. As a result, Abiodun (2021) points out that human contact is still a crucial means of resolving conflicts or possibly making already challenging circumstances worse, leading to unfavourable outcomes. The implication is that, depending on how it is used, communication in the context of a conflict can be either beneficial or detrimental. As a result, using communication techniques carefully is necessary, particularly when handling problems of a communal nature. These communication techniques can include, but are not limited to, encouraging mutual understanding and dialogue, fostering trust, guaranteeing succinct and clear communication, and utilising nonverbal clues while demonstrating empathy for victims. These tactics have been used in Nigerian conflict mediation initiatives at various points in time (Babatope & Olanipekun, 2017). On the grounds of the foregoing, this study evaluated the communication strategies used by the North Central Nigerian government to mediate disputes.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The effects of conflicts on society are catastrophic. Based on this understanding, interested parties and constituted authorities typically choose various strategies to settle disputes.

Without intervention, protracted conflicts could have a number of unthinkable and unimaginable outcomes, such as hunger brought on by insecurity (Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 2024), deaths and property destruction at the social and human level (Biekpe, 2024), and general economic, social, and political regression of the nations (Nkabane, 2022). These various aspects of the effects of conflict highlight the necessity of preventing conflicts at all costs. When disputes are unavoidable, the most important course of action must be to resolve them peacefully through discourse (communication). It becomes necessary for concerned authorities to resist the temptation to overlook any circumstance that can escalate into a full-scale conflict, given the social, economic, and political instability aspects of the disastrous effects of conflicts on nations. The aforementioned shows how important dispute resolution and mediation are to preventing problems from getting worse. The necessity of communication in conflict mediation efforts has been demonstrated by earlier research (Amiara, 2018; Ogbu, 2017). Nonetheless, no much as been revealed about state, extent, and influence of conflict mediation in Nigeria's North Central. Consequently, this study empirically evaluated the government's communication tactics towards conflict mediation the region to bridge the identified gap.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What was the state of communal conflict mediation efforts of the government towards resolving conflicts in North Central Nigeria?
- ii. What was the extent of government conflict mediation efforts toward resolving conflicts in the region?
- iii. What influence has government conflict mediation on peace building in the region?

### **Review of Literature**

Due, in large part, to the nature of human society, where there is never a complete absence of conflicts, issues surrounding conflict have garnered attention and academic focus since the beginning of time. Some researchers are primarily interested in mediation strategies and initiatives. Nonetheless, this study adopts a methodology that takes into account the government's communication strategies in efforts to mediate communal conflicts in a region of Nigeria. Therefore, before getting into the main focus of this study, it is necessary to give a basis for literature on conflict in society and Nigeria, looking at the government's attitude to such disputes and whether or not they are successful. Ajodo-Adebanjoko and Nwofor (2024) state that there are numerous disputes throughout Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, with the most frequent and concerning ones being between farmers and herders. This shows that Nigeria is dealing with a conflict issue that has an impact on the people at the grassroots. Nnabuihe (2024) shows that the nation's minority groups' opposition has been a major factor in the numerous conflicts that have occurred in the county over the years. While some researchers attributed the conflict to socioeconomic factors like the competition between farmers and herders for land resources (Ajodo-Adebanjoko & Nwofor, 2024), poverty and inequality (Abimbola et al., 2024), and ethnic and religious factors (Okibe, 2022; Ngwoke & Ituman, 2020), others identified the centrist form of federalism that encourages the dominance of the majority ethnic groups over the others. According to a study by Usoro et al. (2014), one of the main causes of conflict in Nigeria is a sense of alienation. This suggests that a variety of factors, ranging from ethno-religious to socio-political, are responsible for the varying degrees of conflict observed throughout the nation.

Governments in different parts of Nigeria have undoubtedly worked hard to settle internal disputes. According to Familugba and Adedayo (2020), the Nigerian government has worked hard to settle disputes inside the nation using a variety of methods, including the application of traditional strategies. The establishment of panels is one of the various ways the Nigerian government has tried to resolve disputes between communities (Nwaogwugwu & Dabelema, 2019). The government recognised mediation through various channels as a crucial strategy for fostering connections and resolving disputes (Adom & Ugal, 2025). Dialogue has also been investigated as a communal conflict mediation technique in the West African region. Numerous commissions of inquiry or panels have been established in Nigeria to mediate disputes between parties at the local, state, or even federal levels. Communication between and among the parties involved in the conflicts at various levels was part of these efforts. Given that government conflict mediation techniques are known to be reactive rather than proactive, these academic viewpoints and stances show that the current state of government conflict mediation strategies is on track. Due to the nation's ongoing conflicts, panels and commissions of inquiry are typically established whenever there is a conflict and in most cases outlive their usefulness. Research has also demonstrated how often community disputes occur in the nation (Fadeyi & Adamu, 2023; Okoli & Ukwandu, 2021) and throughout the greater African continent (Yemane & Borowy, 2023). Given the numerous environmental effects and factors like the competition for scarce resources like land and water, conflict situations are still common (Olademo et al., 2021). Even though successive governments have worked incredibly hard to stop the trend and establish a calm environment for all citizens, this scenario is nevertheless unsettling. Among the strategies leveraged are communication and conflict resolution techniques.

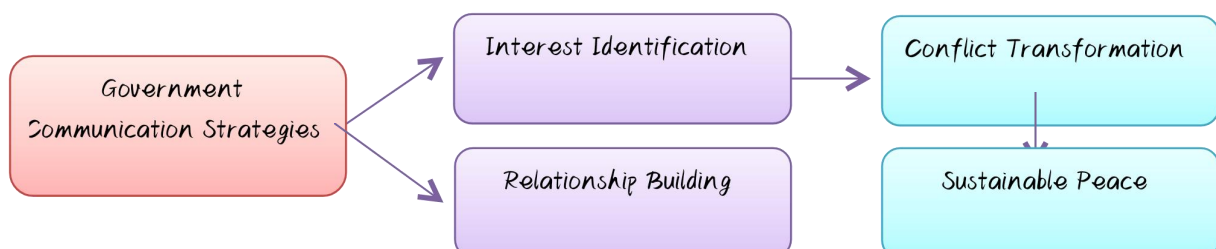
The nation's methods for resolving conflicts have been greatly impacted by these government initiatives. Through the amnesty programme, the establishment of the Niger Delta Ministry, and other similar interventions, the Yar'Adua administration purportedly used alternative dispute settlement mechanisms to confront the insurgency in the Niger Delta (Orhero, 2020). These initiatives, which are today regarded as effective tactics, reduced tensions in the region. On the other hand, a study's results also show that, despite government initiatives, disputes continue to arise due to inadequate implementation of conflict resolution outcomes (Olademo et al., 2021). Abacha's participation in the Ife-Modakeke conflicts and Obasanjo's administration's resolution of the Arogbolajaw-Ugbollaji crises present another issue with Nigeria's consecutive administrations' coercive and unproductive conflict management style (Orhero, 2020). These may have had an immediate effect on the wave of violence that accompanied the conflicts, but they have a detrimental effect because of the precarious peace and the recurrent character of these conflicts in the impacted areas. Additionally, an empirical research on conflict mediation in Nigeria was carried out by Abimbola et al. (2023) based on a survey of people living in North Central Nigerian states (Benue, Nasarawa, and Plateau), highlighting that there is a correlation between higher levels of deprivations such as poverty and inequality and more conflicts. The researchers came to the conclusion that in order to reduce inter-communal strife and foster peaceful coexistence in the geopolitical zone, it is necessary to address a number of socioeconomic gaps, including equitable resource allocation, inclusive economic growth, and improved access to social services. Due to their shared geographic focus on Nigeria's North Central region, the study under evaluation and this one are comparable. The particular variables examined are what cause the variations between the studies. Poverty and

inequality are important factors for the study under consideration, which primarily focusses on government communication strategies.

In an effort to pinpoint the causes of the conflict between the Share and Tsaragi groups in the North Central state of Kwara, Olademo et al. (2021) undertook a mixed-method study. The study looked at interventions used to address the issues. Conflicts in the territories are influenced by a number of important reasons, including religious prejudice, communal conflicts resulting from land and border disputes, the failure to implement government white papers, and disputants' unwillingness to accept peace. This is also connected to the contradiction between indigenous people and settlers on the one side, and the betrayer and enemy tag on the other, which were found to be important contributing reasons to the conflict. The study's conclusions demonstrate that government interventions to settle disputes are flawed in terms of enforcement, and that failure is a major contributing reason to the nation's ongoing conflicts. The government's inability to invoke the fire brigade strategy and white paper into practice are significant obstacles. The researchers came to the conclusion that multiple layers were ineffectual because they provided diverse solutions that were unfamiliar to African culture. The specific focus is where the present study differs from the one under review. The latter focusses on a few states in North Central, whilst the former is based on Kwara communities. Another study by Abdulsalam et al. (2020) focused on the maintenance of democracy and examined the functions of traditional rules in conflict mediation in Kwara State. The results demonstrate that traditional institutions, through the rulers, play important roles in resolving conflicts in a way that promotes democratic stability through peace initiatives. The study's conclusion is that traditional leaders who are well-versed in local problems that impact people and social groupings may be able to help resolve conflicts in an efficient manner. The researchers suggest that in order to resolve community members' issues, leaders should be involved. The study under review and this one are similar in that they both concentrate on communal conflict resolution mechanisms. However, the research's particular geographic scope varies according to the populations they are focused on.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The conflict transformation theory serves as the foundation for this study. One of the main proponents of this idea has been identified as theorist J. P. Lederach (Botes, 2001). The theory is based on Lederach's belief that resolving a conflict requires more than just rhetoric that verges on resolution and that the conflict's underlying causes must be addressed in a way that transforms it (Lederach, 1995). Additionally, the theory clarified that because conflict transformation is a multidimensional term, it might have four dimensions. Rule transformation, structural transformation, actor transformation, and issue transformation are the four dimensions that the researcher identified. These four are essential to the process of resolving conflicts. Based on its analysis, the conflict transformation theory serves as the foundation for this study, which is on the use of communication techniques to promote mediation and create cohesiveness in Nigeria.



**Figure 1:** Theoretical Framework: Interest-Based Relational and Conflict Transformation Theory Information in the framework in Figure 1 shows that effective government communication strategies in the North Central region of Nigeria will prioritise interest identification (based on an interest-based relational approach) and relationship building. Additionally, the framework is based on the idea that in the setting of communal conflict resolution, communication tactics that target fundamental wants and interests would have a higher impact. Furthermore, greater long-lasting peace in Nigeria's North Central region would result from conflict transformation strategies that encourage inclusive decision-making and resolve power disparities.

### Methods

This study used a cross-sectional survey as its research design. The North Central zone's inhabitants make up the study's population. Agatu (Benue State), Eggon (Nasarawa), and Jos North (Plateau State) were chosen as the study's specific emphasis based on the researchers' understanding of the region. There are 1,039,200 people living in the three towns, according to data from the National Population Commission. Using the Australian Sample Size calculator, a sample of 600 people was selected from the population for the study. Confidence level (95%), population size (1, 039, 200), confidence interval (0.04), upper (0.54000), lower (0.46000), standard error (0.02041), and relative standard error (4.08) were among the calculation factors that were keyed to achieve this figure. The final sample units, which comprise respondents in the study area, were obtained using a multistage sampling procedure. In order to choose Benue, Nasarawa, and Plateau from the list of six states in the zone and Agatu, Eggon, and Jos North from the selected states, purposive sampling was used in both the first and second stages. The third involved simple random selection of households in the towns as everyone was given a chance to be selected. The questionnaire serves as the study's data collection tool. A Likert scale was used in its design. Experts from the Department of Mass Communication at Glorious University Ogwa, Edo State, Nigeria, relied on face validity to assess the instrument's applicability. The results of a Cronbach's alpha reliability test show a coefficient (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.975$ ), which indicates that it is excellent and dependable. Informed consent was upheld in accordance with research ethics since the participants were made aware of their rights, which included the ability to withdraw from the study at any time and their voluntary participation statuses. The SPSS Version 26 was relied upon for analysis of the data upon appropriate coding using descriptive statistical techniques like percentages and frequencies.

### Results

Data from the survey are presented in tables using frequencies and percentages.

**Table 1:** Government's Crisis Communication in North Central Nigeria

Variable/Parameter	Frequency	Valid Percent
Community relations	100	17.8
Public relations	80	10.7
Advocacy	11	2.0
Peacebuilding communication	27	4.8
Participatory communication	16	2.8
Traditional institution approach	97	17.3
Civil societies and NGOs approach	12	2.1
Dialogue approach	16	2.8
Religious organisation approach	23	4.1
Aids and donor agencies approach	4	.7
Media relations	24	4.3

<b>Total</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>100.0</b>
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Source: Field Survey, 2025

The information in Table 1 illustrates the current state of conflict mediation, demonstrating the active application of many strategies to achieve enduring peace in the region. The data show a variety of tactics, including media relations, religious and traditional institution approaches, and community engagement. However, according to 17.8% of respondents who adopted the position, community relations was the most frequently used strategy. It follows that stakeholders are aware of the community's role in all efforts to mediate conflicts within the community.

**Table 2:** The Use of Communication and its Extent

<b>Variable/Parameter</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Very high	140	24.9
High	137	24.4
Can't tell	76	13.5
Very low	62	11.0
Low	147	26.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Respondents believe that communication is widely used for dispute resolution in their community, as seen in Table 2 above. The perceptions of 24.9% of respondents and another 24.4% of them are used to illustrate this. The data demonstrate that significant attempts to mediate and find a long-term settlement between parties have been made as a result of the realisation of the value of communication.

**Table 3:** The Extent of Active Participation in Communal Conflict Mediation

<b>Variable/Parameter</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Very high	90	16.0
High	145	25.8
Can't tell	116	20.6
Very low	76	13.5
Low	135	24.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

According to Table 3 statistics, a notably high percentage of respondents participated in government-created communal dispute mediation forums. To put it simply, they actively participated in the channels for peace that the government established. The idea that they heavily participated in mediation is based on the majority's 25.5% opinion, which is further supported by 16.0% of respondents who think that engagement was extremely high.

**Table 4:** Crisis Communication of Government and Influence on Cohabitation Decision

<b>Variable/Parameter</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Strongly agree	114	20.3
Agree	286	50.9
Can't tell	33	5.9
Strongly disagree	44	7.8
Disagree	85	15.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Based on their exposure to the crisis communication undertaken by the government towards conflict mediation, residents of the impacted groups agreed to cohabit, according to the data in Table 4. Accordingly, while 50.9% of respondents agreed with the idea, 20.3% strongly agreed, highlighting the role that communication plays in the government's efforts to promote peaceful cohabitation in areas devastated by conflict.

**Table 5:** Reduction of Tensions on Account of Crisis Communication

Variable/Parameter	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	99	17.6
Agree	231	41.1
Undecided	113	20.1
Strongly disagree	47	8.4
Disagree	72	12.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

According to the majority of respondents, government communication in the geopolitical zone reduced tensions resulting from conflicts, as Table 5 illustrates. In an effort to reduce tensions in the impacted areas in North Central Nigeria, crisis communication became crucial, according to 41.1% of respondents who agreed with the idea and 17.6% who strongly agreed.

**Table 6:** Extent Crisis Communication Reduced Conflicts

Variable/Parameter	Frequency	Valid Percent
Very high	96	17.1
High	170	30.2
Undecided	149	26.5
Very low	41	7.3
Low	106	18.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

According to data in Table 6, 30.2% of respondents believe that communication reduced conflict to a high degree, while 17.1% believe it was extremely high. Accordingly, the findings suggest that conflict may have decreased as a result of the government's communication strategies adopted for conflict resolution in the communities in North Central Nigerian states.

**Table 7:** Crisis Communication Enhancing Inter-ethnic Cooperation in North Central

Variable/Parameter	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly Agree	111	19.8
Agree	227	40.4
Undecided	106	18.9
Strongly disagree	44	7.8
Disagree	74	13.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Data in Table 7 demonstrate that 40.4% of respondents agreed, while 19.8% tended to strongly agree with the idea that crisis communication initiated by government enhanced inter-ethnic cooperation among the different groups in the study areas. The consequence is that government-adopted communication tactics for conflict mediation improve interethnic cooperation among the ethnic groups in the North Central states of Benue, Nasarawa, and Plateau.

**Table 8:** Extent Crises Communication Enhanced Inter-ethnic Cooperation in North Central

Variable/Parameter	Frequency	Valid Percent
Very high	120	21.4
High	206	36.7
Undecided	80	14.2
Very low	48	8.5
Low	108	19.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Interethnic cooperation among the various ethnic groups in the region was greatly strengthened by government communication efforts targeted at conflict mediation, as shown in Table 8 above based on the position of 36.7% who believe the extent is high and 21.4% who believe it is extremely. The implication is that communication has some level of influence.

### Discussion

The study's findings show that communication is actively used in attempts to resolve disputes in the zone. As a result, the study reveals that a number of techniques were used, including media relations, community relations, public relations, conventional institution approach, and religious organisation approach. Previous research, like that of Aleshinloye and Orolade (2020), Igben and Timiyan (2023), and Ngwu et al. (2020), also demonstrated the application of comparable communication techniques in disparate but comparable conflicts in different regions of Nigeria. Additionally, data depicted as 24.4% (high) and 24.9% (very high) show that there was a significant degree of communication in the zone. In their study, Igbashangev and Ogunyemi (2022) also shown how the government has focused on using communication to resolve the numerous disputes that have long afflicted Nigeria's north. On the other hand, studies demonstrate that, in many regions of Nigeria, the use of public relations as a conflict mediation tool was negligible. This suggests that the government may not respond to conflicts consistently and equally. The reaction may work well in some circumstances but not in others. Furthermore, the results of this study demonstrate the significant impact of communication strategies. In order to anticipate sincere comments regarding the impact of such measures on them, respondents actively participated in government dispute mediation activities. Additionally, they show how the communication techniques affected their determination to live in harmony with neighbours. This is predicated on the idea that 50.9% of respondents agreed with it, and 20.3% strongly agreed. In a related study, Chimaroke (2002) also affirms that the use of a participatory approach to conflict resolution has previously led disputing groups to agree to a truce. In a study, Abiodun and Salama (2023) discovered that communities can choose to put aside their disagreements in order to live together on account of communication and dispute resolution.

Based on the opinions of 41.1% and 8.4% of respondents who strongly agreed with the idea, the results highlight that the adoption and use of communication strategies reduces conflicts in communities. Conflicts have generally decreased as a result of such actions. According to the study, the extent to which the aforementioned is attained is high. This suggests that the government used communication to address problems, such as the root causes of disputes, in order to lower tensions and find solutions. This was consistent with the conflict transformation theory's concept of closely examining the underlying causes of disputes. The results of this study further demonstrate that the use of communication

techniques for conflict resolution in Nigeria's North Central region improves interethnic cooperation. The study's results show that there is a substantial likelihood of such cooperation being improved through communication. The results of a study by Saleh (2022) support the idea that different religious organisations in Nigeria employed mediation techniques to promote harmonious cohabitation. Researchers like Dyikuk and Edeh (2022) and Ntem (2022) further demonstrate how diverse communication techniques are used to promote interethnic cooperation in various regions of Nigeria and Africa. As stated in the interest-based relational approach model's premise of making sure that priority is given to ensuring healthy connections between and among disputants, this shows that communication builds good relationships.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, there is ample evidence in both research and practice supporting the use of communication techniques as a way to settle disputes. The various governments in North Central Nigeria have leveraged a variety of strategies, from community interactions to the adoption and utilisation of traditional institutions and religious groups, all of which are thought to be successful in mediating disputes across the country. The different ethnic groups in the central region of Nigeria are able to coexist peacefully, despite the fragile peace, because of the use of communication in certain conflicts. The practical implication of this study is for government and stakeholders to continue to explore ways to improve communication through sound research. This provides the enabling environment to address various communal conflicts plaguing the North Central region in particular, and the Nigerian federation in general. Future studies should focus on the use of communication strategies in different conflicts in Nigeria's various regions.

### **Recommendations**

In line with the findings and conclusion, the recommendations are:

- i. The need to understand and appreciate even in situations that appear challenging, such as those involving terrorism and other violent interactions, stakeholders should investigate more efficient ways to use communication to settle disputes. This will involve communication, media, and behavioural change studies to unravel the appropriate strategies to address conflicts.
- ii. In order to negotiate and find long-term solutions to problems arising from communal and other types of conflicts common in the African continent, and Nigeria in particular, community members and interested organisations must continue to utilise the power of communication, particularly the dialogue and community relations aspects.

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