



## JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY, POLICY AND STRATEGIC STUDIES

Volume 1, Number 8 (December, 2025)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3043-4211 (print)

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Received: December 05, 2025 Accepted: December 30, 2025 Published: December 31, 2025

**Citation:** Sam-Oyegunle, Oluwaremi E.; Abdulbaqi, Saudat S., Ekundayo, John K. & Olayinka, Balogun A. (2025). "The Implications of Information Proliferation for Inter-Communal Conflicts in Kwara State, Nigeria" *Journal of Philosophy, Policy and Strategic Studies*, 1 (8): 152-164.

### Article

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#### THE IMPLICATIONS OF INFORMATION PROLIFERATION FOR INTER-COMMUNAL CONFLICTS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

The rate information flows and its accuracy have influence on inter-communal conflict. Despite the growing significance of this phenomenon, there is limited knowledge on how the proliferation of information shapes inter-communal conflicts in Kwara State, and its broader social, political, and security implications. This study examined types and implications of information proliferation during inter-communal conflicts in Kwara State. This study is anchored on Moral Panic theory, and employed descriptive research design using quantitative and qualitative methods of data collections. Using purposive sampling technique, (6) communities which included Offa-Erinla in Offa, Share-Tsaragi, and Ilofa-Odo-Owa of Kwara State who had experienced inter-communal conflicts, (646) residents therein, including journalists and security operatives were selected and administered copies of questionnaire for the study. Among the selected respondents, (23) were purposively designated for Key informant interview (KII) and In-depth interview (IDI) sessions. Out of the administered copies of questionnaire, (636) copies were retrieved back and analysed using descriptive analysis, while (18) oral interview; (12) KII and (8) IDI, were successfully conducted. Result from the findings of the study demonstrated that information proliferation like false history, misinformation, propaganda, and land rumours had played strong roles in driving conflict in the State. These information surges had weakens local dispute settlement mechanisms, social identity becomes weaponized and propaganda spark panic or retaliatory attacks quickly among residents of the affected communities. This study concluded that information proliferation has a lot of implications on inter-communal conflict

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in Kwara State, thereby recommended that academic institutions, cultural experts, and community elders should produce balanced and inclusive historical records to counter distorted historical claims.

**Keywords:** Information, Inter-Communal, Conflict, Proliferation.

## **Introduction**

Across the globe, conflicts and insecurities continue to emerge, and many of them are inter and intra-communal within a country. Conflict over ethnicity, religious, or cultural fault lines are frequently found in a country with inadequate governance, identity-based divisions, rivalry for limited resources, or unresolved historical grievances and perceived distorted flow of information (Chukwudi, 2024). Although these types of conflict have been part of human society since period of immemorial, however, multi-ethnic societies and/or nation with weak political institution continue to experience unprecedented occurrences of these conflicts (Moser & McIlwaine, 2014). Many of these conflicts take place in Africa and the continent has comes second to none in armed conflicts per district with more than 35 Non-International Armed Conflicts (NIACs) taking place in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan (The Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Right, 2024). In Nigeria, conflict between between Berom, Afizere, Anaguta vs. Muslim Hausa-Fulani settlers (Plateau State), Tiv-Jukun conflict (Benue and Taraba States), Aguleri-Umuleri Conflict (Anambra State), Ife-Modakeke Crisis (Osun State), Shaare-Tsaragi and Offa-Erinle clashes (Kwara State) happens unabated and claimed many lives and properties (Odigbo, 2018). While some of these conflicts still remain unresolved permanently, the relationship between information surge before, during and after these conflicts cannot be underestimated. Religious leaders, media houses, and some other concern stakeholders spread messages of tolerance and non-violence (United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, 2016). A typical example is the case of Shasha Market crisis in Oyo where several Yoruba and Hausa leaders used radio interviews and peace jingles to call for calm and reassure their followers that peace talks were ongoing (Channels News, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

On the hand, information plays a key role in shaping perceptions, spreading emotions, organizing actors, and either fueling violence faster than how it impacted to the conflict positively (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2021). In 2001 Jos crisis, false reports that a Hausa man was appointed as a local government chairman, quickly sparked outrage among the Berom and Anaguta communities, fueling an already volatile atmosphere. Years after the incident, the communities continue to reap from the damages done by this misguided information (Hassan, 2025). Also, during the 2021 Shasha market conflict in Ibadan, a viral WhatsApp video of a murdered trader (without full context) quickly spread, prompting retaliatory violence between Yoruba and Hausa traders, while in Zangon-Kataf crisis, biased reporting and different interpretations of events created long-term distrust, despite peace agreements and compensation programs (Sahara Reporters, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021). Since its creation, Kwara State had, and still experiencing inter-communal conflicts among different communities that co-exists in the State. While some of these conflicts are between the same ethnic groups (Offa-Erinle, Illoffa-Odowa), Share-Tsaragi conflict is between two different ethnic groups (Yoruba-Nupe). As applicable in every part of Nigeria, information surge continue to play different significant roles during inter-communal conflicts in the State (Kwara State Ministry of Communications, 2024). It is against this backdrop that

this study examines the implications of information proliferation on inter-communal conflicts in some of the affected communities in the State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In Kwara State, inter-communal conflict frequently occurs between two close communities over land disagreement or historical grievances. Among the affected communities are the Illofa-Odowa, Share-Tsaragi and Offa-Erinle who over the time have clashed, and these clashes resulted to severe impact on lives and properties (Busari et al., 2020). While it is no longer new in the manner actors employ information to escalate or de-escalate the conflict; the rapid spread or overwhelming increase of information and its accuracy, raises concern over the types and implications of the information that surge during the conflict. For instance, in the Offa-Erin-Ile conflict, false reports about attacks or casualties are mostly spread, while controversial narrative about "original owner" of the land still remains a significant threat to Share and Tsaragi communities (Daily Trust, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021). These narratives among many other ones are surging quickly during inter-communal conflict with limited assessment into its implications to the outcome of the conflicts in the State. Existing researches such as Ajayi (2014); Yusuf (2021); CLEEN Foundation (2021); Ibrahim and Osaghae (2018) focused on the role played by social media to the escalations of inter-communal conflict in different locations of Kwara State. Despite the growing significance of this phenomenon, there is limited empirical research on how the proliferation of information shapes inter-communal conflicts in Kwara State, and its broader social, political, and security implications. Therefore, understanding the dynamics and consequences of information proliferation in the context of communal conflicts in Kwara State is essential for promoting stability, fostering mutual trust, and preventing violence. The objectives of this study are to examine types and implications of information proliferation on inter-communal conflicts in Kwara State.

### **Conceptual Discourse**

**Information Proliferation:** Information proliferation is the term used to describe the quick and extensive rise in the creation, sharing, and consuming of information, particularly through digital channels such as websites, mobile apps, social media, and instant messaging services. According to Castells (2009) in the book titled '*The Rise of the Network Society*', information proliferation is a core feature of the "networked age," where communication is immediate, constant, and largely uncontrolled. Castells accurately describes the "networked age" as one in which communication is immediate (real-time sharing) and largely uncontrolled (no central gatekeepers). In this case, in volatile contexts, such as inter-communal clashes, unregulated and decentralized flows of information can inflame tensions. To Wardle and Derakhshan (2017), information proliferation encompasses the rapid, network-driven spread of content, including falsehoods and propaganda that can outpace efforts to verify or counteract it

Similarly, Zuboff (2019) in '*The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*' argues that the spread of information is not only rapid but often manipulated by algorithms to amplify emotional or controversial content. This author framework sheds light on how technology companies influence what people see, not just what users post. Social media users do not always choose what they see, but also often fed emotionally from provocative posts. In Nigeria, many users consume information passively, believing trending content is more credible. However, Zuboff assumes users are manipulated entirely by algorithms, but in places like

Nigeria, users deliberately share certain messages for religious, ethnic, or political reasons, and as well rely more on peer-to-peer influence (e.g., local WhatsApp groups) than algorithmic timelines. In conflict settings, information proliferation is the uncontrolled flow of messages, rumours, and narratives often unverified which may trigger or escalate violence between groups (International Crisis Group, 2021). Critical in understanding how rumours, inflammatory narratives, or false alarms lead to real-world especially relevant in Kwara, where misinformation has preceded physical clashes in places like Offa-Erin-Ile and Share-Tsaragi.

### **Inter-communal Conflict**

Conflict occurs at inter and intra personal relationship in any given society. According to Mukherjee (2017), conflict is an activity that takes place when individuals or groups wish to carry out mutually inconsistent acts concerning their wants, needs or obligations. Mukherjee (2017) argued further that conflict is a fight or dispute between people with contrasting requirements, thoughts, values, ideals, or objectives. Conflict in this context is an activity which takes place when conscious beings (individuals or groups) wish to carry out opposing actions against issues that threatens their wants, needs or obligation. However, the scholar noted that conflict or dispute is inevitable occurrence. In another perspective, Folarin (2018) define conflict in the political context, as when two or more groups engage in a struggle over values and claims to status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralise, injure or eliminate the rivals. To Martin et al. (2018), conflict is the fate of life that occurs where the interactions of people are marked with differences in goals, perceptions, attitudes, views, beliefs, values or needs. It can be deduced from the several definitions stated above that conflicts are inseparable in human affairs and are inherent in social existence and social progress. Also, conflict as can be described as struggle and rivalry for objects to which individuals and groups attach importance. These objects can be material or non-material. Martin et al. (2018) saw communal conflict as participants or parties to the conflict are community-based identity groups.

Communal conflict is usually functioning of communal identity. Communal identity is defined as subjective group identification based on common history, culture or core values (Martin et al., 2018). Ethnic conflict, on the other hand, is defined as a conflict between non-state groups that are organized along with or with a shared communal identity. This definition deserves some further clarification (Brosché, 2022). Brosché (2022) contextualized his definition of communal conflict as conflicts between non-state groups organised along a shared communal identity, in Darfur Sudan for the past three decades. Corroborating this definition, Williams (2015) asserted that ethnic conflict is frequently analysed through the lens of communal identity, which is a subjective group identification based on common history, culture, or core values. However, the scholar narrows down his submission on ethnic conflict to be conflict where at least one group defines its goals exclusively in ethnic terms and in which the fault-line of confrontation is one of ethnic variation. In this study, inter-communal conflicts are characterised as disputes between distinct communities, whether within or between communities, that are predominantly motivated by land/boundary resource conflicts, as seen in Share-Saragi, Offa-Erinle, and Ilofa-Odo-wa.

### **Review of Empirical Studies**

**The Implications of Information Proliferation on Inter-communal Conflict in Nigeria:**  
Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between information and

communal conflict in Nigeria. Raji and Abdulkadir-Imam (2018) explored the use of radio as a conflict-management tool by assessing the mediating role of Radio Nigeria, Idofian, in the Share-Tsaragi communal conflict in Kwara State. Using secondary data, the study found that radio mediation programmes contributed significantly to conflict de-escalation between the communities. The study is important for highlighting the non-violent role of radio in conflict resolution. However, its reliance solely on secondary data limits its depth, as it does not capture real-time perceptions and lived experiences of key stakeholders such as community members and media practitioners. Anoke (2023) examined the application of Public Relations Strategies (PRS) in managing inter-communal conflicts in Nigeria, drawing on Frank Jefkins' PR Transfer Process and the Two-Way Symmetric Model as theoretical frameworks. The study recommended the adoption of PR strategies by traditional institutions and community stakeholders for conflict management. Its major strength lies in applying PR models traditionally used in corporate settings to communal conflict resolution, an area that remains underexplored. However, the study's broad national focus, without a specific regional or case-based analysis, limits its contextual depth and practical applicability to localized conflicts.

In a related study, Raji and Abdulkadir-Imam (2018) investigated the causes of the Share-Tsaragi and Zango-Kataf communal crises, the role of the media, and government intervention efforts in managing the conflicts. The study adopted both primary data (interviews) and secondary sources, including official reports and academic materials. Findings revealed that offensive media content, hate speech, and poor communication contributed to the conflicts, while the media played both constructive and destructive roles. The mixed-methods approach strengthens the study's empirical foundation and allows for comparative insights across different conflict contexts. Nevertheless, the absence of quantitative data, such as surveys measuring public perceptions of media influence, limits the generalizability of the findings. Olateju and Bamidele (2023) focused on small arms proliferation and ethno-communal conflict in Nigeria, highlighting its consequences for human security and socio-economic development. Using both primary and secondary data, the study sampled 1,152 respondents across three local government areas and found a significant relationship between arms proliferation, ethno-communal conflict, and underdevelopment. While the large sample size strengthens the study, it does not examine the role of information flow such as rumors, media narratives, or communication networks in facilitating conflict escalation or mobilization. Similarly, Okoro (2022) examined arms proliferation and Nigeria's internal security challenges since the return to civil rule in 1999, relying on qualitative analysis of secondary sources. The study linked the ease of accessing arms to insurgency, terrorism, banditry, electoral violence, and other security threats. Although the study implicitly opens space for examining the interaction between information systems and security threats, it does not consider how information-based interventions such as media literacy, counter-narratives, or civic communication—could help mitigate arms-driven violence.

### **Theoretical Frame work**

**Theory of Moral Panic:** This study is anchored on Moral Panic Theory to explain the implications of information proliferation in inter-communal conflicts in Kwara State. The theory originated from Stanley Cohen's seminal work *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1972), which examined public reactions to the rivalry between the "Mods" and "Rockers" youth subcultures in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s (Cohen, 2011). Cohen conceptualized

moral panic as a situation in which “a condition, episode, person or group of persons is defined as a threat to societal values and interests” (Cohen, 1972, pp. 1–2). The central argument of the theory is that moral panics often emerge through exaggerated and distorted media representations that amplify fear, reinforce stereotypes, and intensify existing social divisions based on ethnicity, race, or class (Mia Belle, 2023). In this sense, unchecked media reporting and information circulation can heighten public anxiety and provoke civil unrest. Cohen (2011) further explains that moral panic becomes intensified when media portray certain behaviours as deviant, prompting moral entrepreneurs, political leaders, and the media itself to frame such situations as signs of a breakdown in societal values.

Ashley (2019) extends the theory by arguing that moral panic can be strategically used by political actors as a “divide-and-rule” mechanism, enabling greater control over populations and reinforcing existing power structures. Despite its relevance, Moral Panic Theory has faced criticism. Best (2016) argues that contemporary societies are better understood as “risk societies,” where modern threats do not necessarily fit the traditional criteria of moral panic, thereby questioning the continued applicability of the concept. Additionally, fear and panic are not generated solely through mass media; traditional communication channels and informal information networks can also contribute to panic escalation. Notwithstanding these criticisms, Moral Panic Theory remains relevant to this study, as information proliferation whether through mass media, social media, or traditional communication systems can escalate tensions and generate panic during inter-communal conflicts. Therefore, understanding how different forms of information flow shape public perception are crucial for effective conflict mitigation. Consequently, stakeholders must pay closer attention to information management if meaningful and sustainable conflict resolution is to be achieved.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a descriptive research design and employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments. The study population comprised an estimated 971,300 residents of Oke-Ero, Offa, Oyun, Edu, and Ifelodun Local Government Areas of Kwara State, where conflict-affected communities are located (NBC, 2023). The population also included security operatives working within these communities and journalists with knowledge and experience in reporting inter-communal conflicts in Kwara State. A purposive sampling technique was used to select conflict-prone communities, namely Offa–Erinla (Offa and Oyun LGAs), Share–Tsaragi (Ifelodun and Edu LGAs), and Ilofa/Odo-Owa (Oke-Ero LGA). From these locations and selected media organisations, a total of 646 respondents were purposively selected based on their experiences, knowledge, and perceptions of inter-communal conflict and information flow. In addition, a cluster sampling technique was employed to administer 106 questionnaires per community, targeting a cross-section of stakeholders. The questionnaire respondents included 100 adult residents (male and female), comprising community members and traditional council representatives, as well as six security personnel drawn from the Department of State Services (DSS), Nigeria Police Force (NPF), and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC). Furthermore, 10 journalists from the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Kwara State Chapter, were purposively selected to provide media-related insights.

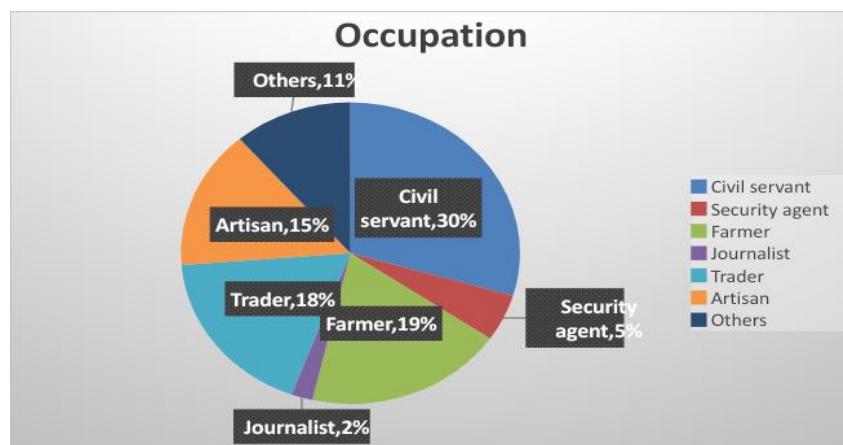
For the qualitative component, selected respondents were purposively designated for Key Informant Interviews (KII) and In-Depth Interviews (IDI). These included security

personnel, traditional and religious leaders, women and youth leaders, and journalists. Out of the 646 questionnaires distributed, 636 copies were retrieved and analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. In addition, 18 oral interviews were conducted, comprising 12 KIIs (security personnel, traditional leaders, and journalists) and 6 IDIs (religious leaders, women leaders, and youth leaders). The interview data were transcribed, interpreted, and analysed using content analysis. To complement the primary data, secondary data were sourced from journals, government reports, news publications, and other relevant academic materials. These sources helped to strengthen and triangulate the findings from the primary data.

### **Result and Discussion of the Findings**

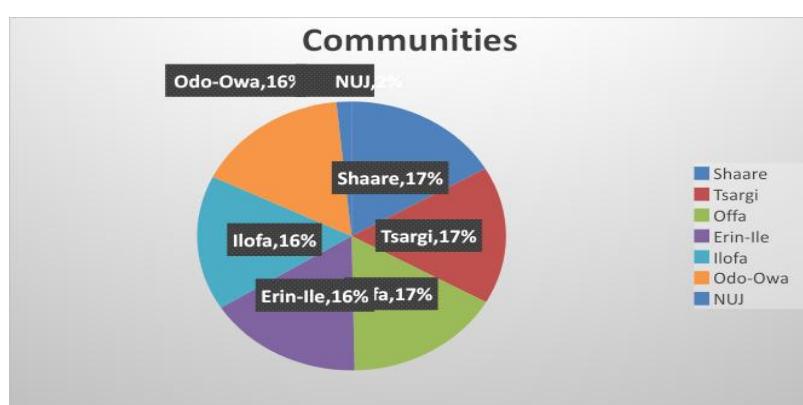
**Demographic Information:** This section covers demographic data using frequency counts and percentages.

**Table 1: The distributions of demographic variables:**



**Source:** Researcher's field study 2025.

Civil servants constituted the largest group with 188 respondents (30%), followed by farmers at 121 (19%). Traders accounted for 115 (18%), while artisans made up 95 (15%). Security agents represented 32 (5%), and journalists had the least representation with 13 (2%). The remaining 75 respondents (11%) fell under "Others." Overall, the distribution reflects participation from both formal and informal sectors. The higher proportion of civil servants and farmers may be due to their population size or accessibility, while the low number of journalists suggests limited media presence in the study area.



**Source:** Researcher's field study 2025.

**Figure 2: Pie Chart Distribution of Communities involve in the Study**

Figure 2 presents the community distribution of respondents. Shaare recorded the highest participation with 106 respondents (17%), closely followed by Offa with 105 (17%). Erin-Ile, Ilofa, Odo-Owa, and Tsaragi each accounted for 105 respondents (16%), indicating fairly balanced representation across these communities. The NUJ recorded the lowest participation with 10 respondents (2%). Overall, the distribution shows a relatively even spread of respondents across the study communities, ensuring broad geographic representation. The slightly higher participation in Shaare and Offa may be attributed to population size or accessibility.

**Types of Information Proliferation during Inter-Communal Conflict in Kwara State**

**Table 1:** Presents respondents' opinion on the types of information proliferation during inter-communal conflict in Kwara State;

| Types of information                       | Strongly Disagree | Disagree     | Neutral     | Agree        | Strongly Agree | Mean | Total         |
|--|-------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|------|---------------|
| Spreading of propaganda                    | 38<br>(6%)        | 115<br>(18%) | 38<br>(6%)  | 180<br>(28%) | 265<br>(42%)   | 3.82 | 636<br>(100%) |
| Expansion tendency misinformation          | 32<br>(5%)        | 6<br>(1%)    | 70<br>(11%) | 45<br>(7%)   | 483<br>(76%)   | 4.51 | 636<br>(100%) |
| Perceived eroded historical narratives     | 6<br>(1%)         | 1<br>(0.2%)  | 89<br>(14%) | 485<br>(76%) | 55<br>(9%)     | 3.92 | 636<br>(100%) |
| Face-to-face rumour about land acquisition | 102<br>(16%)      | 32<br>(5%)   | 51<br>(8%)  | 240<br>(38%) | 211<br>(33%)   | 3.67 | 636<br>(100%) |

**Source:** Researcher's field study 2025.

Table 1 shows key types of information that often fuel inter-communal conflict in Kwara State based on respondents' views. The most serious issue identified Expansion tendency misinformation, with 76% agreement and the highest mean score of 4.51. This means that many believed that twisting or misusing historical stories increases division among communities. Oral evidence collected is not different from this finding as majority of the informants asserted that at different occasions, misguided individuals employed the use of untrue historical facts particularly, as regarded argument about first to settle at the disputed location, to reawaken residents of conflict-affected communities to challenge opposition. A security operative (Police) who had spent 25 years working in Share town has this to say:

Both communities fight over land ownership, but since the fight started, their elders use to counter each other patterning history of both communities. That alone had resulted to cold war whereby both engaged in media war (KII/M/Police/51yrs old/2025).

According to a traditional leader in Offa community:

One of the problem we having since the beginning of this conflict is the way members both communities unfold history. Somebody can just wake up and cook provocative historical background and begin to spread to the people. Of course, youths who hear that will conceive the information and perceive it to be genuine. Even member of traditional council are guilty of this (KII/Offa/Male/69yrs/2025).

Supporting this finding is the work Raji and Abdulkadir-Imam (2018) that the media made both positive and negative contributions to the communal crises in Share-Tsaragi and Zango-

Kataf. However, beyond the contribution of media, this new finding shows that some few individuals employed historical narrative to reawaken residents' emotion to the need for them to fight for their rights. This suggests that this type of information fueled inter-communal conflicts in Kwara State. Expansion tendency misinformation showed 83% agreeing and a mean score of 4.42. This suggests that exaggerated or false claims, especially during conflict, are widely seen as harmful and quick to spread. Oral interview result equally affirmed similar submission. A youth leader in Ilofa said something related to misinformation about expansion tendency:

This is a type of information where we both alleged each other of trespassing into farmland, whereas that may not be true. But before we realize that it is a fake news, a lot of damages might have been done (IDI/Male/youth leader/34yrs old/2025).

According to a traditional leader in Erinle community:

Our major problem with Offa community is the level of expansion. So, at any time information regarding acquisition of land is out, both us are always in suspicious of each other. This type of information had caused unnecessary clashes in past (KII/traditional leader/Male/69yrs/2024).

This finding aligned with the study of Ogbette (2020) unverified reports of killings, land grabbing, and cultural desecration often go viral, igniting reprisal attacks between the Tiv and Jukun/Fulani and Berom communities of middle belt of Nigeria. While this type of information was found between two different ethnic groups in other States, surprisingly, finding of this study show that communities with the same ethnic and cultural affiliations in Kwara State are experiencing similar misinformation over expansion tendency. This further implies spreading of unverified community expansion is potential information issue causing inter-communal conflict in Kwara State. Spreading of propaganda was also noted, with 70% agreement and a mean of 3.90, showing that everyone sees it as equally harmful. Qualitative data obtained showed that social media propaganda, most especially, concerning weapon accumulation quickly spread in different platforms. A security operative (NSCDC) working in Tsaragi community shared his experience during interview session:

Social media propaganda has not been helping. Residents of both communities are found of spreading propaganda patterning accumulation of weapons of war. This alone has not help peacebuilding and mutual trust between them (KII/M/Police/51yrs old/2024).

Similar statement was asserted by a woman in Share, who briefly narrated a story:

During the tenure of formal governor who happened to be the so indigene of this town, a lot of unfounded stories were orchestrated against him that he has acquired and stockpiled a lot guns and weapons for his kinsmen (IDI/Share/Female/61yrs/2025).

This finding is closely related to the argument of Okoro (2022) who established connection between arms proliferation with diverse security threats. However, away from Okoro (2022)'s argument, this finding demonstrated that proliferation of propaganda, particularly, on social media has a significant connection with the security threats among communities involved in communal conflict in Kwara State. Based on the "Face-to-face rumours about

land acquisition", 71% respondents agreed and scored a mean of 3.88, meaning that personal rumours about land ownership are seen as serious. The oral interview obtained is not from this result as informants claimed that house to house or social gathering gossip information spreading contributed to the inter-conflict in Kwara State. A security operative (DSS) asserted:

You see many of the residents gossiped and spread baseless rumour either at social gathering or house to house visits not because of peace to reign but escalate already tensed situation. This type of information is the most dangerous because nobody cares to verify how true is the information (KII/Female/39yrs old/2025).

According to a traditional leader in Erinle community:

At times face to face information flows indiscriminately. And as you know, this is rural community with many uneducated residents, such information in most case appear to be really to them particularly when it comes to the land acquisition (KII/Offa/Male/69yrs/2024).

This finding is corroborated with moral panic theory as explained by Cohen (1972) that episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests. This implies that face to face information carrier enhances information proliferation in the context of inter-communal conflicts in Kwara State. Such type of information flows, particularly, when it bothers on distorted fact about land acquisition, is capable generating security threats in the conflict affected-communities.

### **The Implications of Information Proliferation during Inter-communal Conflicts in Kwara State**

**Table 2: Presents Respondents' Opinion on the Implications of Information Proliferation during Inter-communal Conflicts in Kwara State**

| Implications of information proliferation                                       | Disagree     | Strongly Disagree | Neutral     | Agree        | Strongly Agree | Mean | Total         |
|---|--------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|------|---------------|
| Propaganda spark panic or retaliatory attacks quickly                           | 115<br>(18%) | 38<br>(6%)        | 38<br>(6%)  | 180<br>(28%) | 265<br>(42%)   | 3.81 | 636<br>(100%) |
| Actors continue to exploit information channels to incite historical grievances | 230<br>(36%) | 64<br>(10%)       | 57<br>(9%)  | 140<br>(22%) | 145<br>(23%)   | 3.06 | 636<br>(100%) |
| Easily weakens local dispute settlement mechanisms                              | 32<br>(5%)   | 6<br>(1%)         | 32<br>(5%)  | 45<br>(7%)   | 483<br>(76%)   | 4.42 | 636<br>(100%) |
| Social identity becomes weaponized to increase mutual suspicion.                | 6<br>(1%)    | 1<br>(0.2%)       | 89<br>(14%) | 485<br>(76%) | 55<br>(9%)     | 4.44 | 636<br>(100%) |

**Source:** Researcher's field study 2025.

Table 2 gives clear insight into the implications of information proliferation on inter-communal conflicts in Kwara State. The strongest agreement (85%) came from the item "Social identity becomes weaponized to increase mutual suspicion," with a high mean of

4.44. This shows most people believed that identity is often misused to deepen distrust between groups. Oral data revealed similar result. A security operative working in Odo-owa for more than a decade confirmed this statement:

Even though both communities are the same ethnic nationality, anytime conflict broke out between them, information proliferation easily created division between them and both residents begins to take side just because of misconceived information (KII/M/Police/51yrs old/2024).

According to a traditional leader in Tsaragi:

Not until this conflict started, you can hardly differentiate both communities from each other. Series of unfound stories about how communities came to being have actually activated social identity faultline between us (KII/M/55yrs old/2024).

Information proliferation is the uncontrolled flow of messages, rumours, and narratives often unverified which may trigger or escalate violence between groups (International Crisis Group, 2021). Invariably, Information proliferation among communities in Kwara State triggered social identity faultline. Easily weakens of local dispute settlement mechanisms also had a high agreement of 83% and a mean of 4.42. This suggests many feel that too much uncontrolled information makes it hard for traditional ways of resolving conflict to work. This is another interesting implication as demonstrated in the qualitative data collected. A security operative (Police) who had spent 25 years working in Share has this to say:

We are still experiencing a fragile peace, not because of anything, but there is trust in the peace accord signed. Just last week a group of individual raised false alarm over the death of person inside in the farm. Surprisingly, people begins to insinuating to be an attack from Share community whereas, it was a herder-farmer clash (KII/Male/69yrs/2024).

According to a youth leader in Offa communit:

At several occasions when we gathered for peace meeting, we are always remind ourselves on the need to verify information before disseminating (KII/Offa/Male/49yrs/2024).

No wonder, Zuboff (2019) argued that contemporary information is making it more difficult for grassroots conflict resolution methods to thrive in an environment flooded with polarizing or misleading content. It is therefore safe to submit that information proliferation has made it difficult to achieve meaningful resolution of inter-communal conflict in Kwara State. Propaganda spark panic or retaliatory attacks quickly was recognized by 70% of respondents as a real issue, backed by a mean of 3.90. Lastly, Actors continue to exploit information channels to incite historical grievances received a 45% agreement, with the lowest mean of 3.06. This shows people are split on how serious this issue is, and some may not see it as a major conflict driver compared to others. It confirms that fast-spreading false information can directly lead to conflict. A security operative (DSS) working in Oke-Ero has this to say:

The last violent conflict that took place here was as result of propaganda over kingship superiority. This clash wouldn't have escalated to the violent if

not propaganda that a king has been attacked in the market (KII/M/42yrs old/2025).

A woman leader who is conversant with communal clashes with Offa-Erinle lends credence.

I can say that grievance over historical back ground of the two communities is serious issues making the peace in this environment remain fragile. Offa continue to spread unfound stories of being the oldest community, while to Erinle, it is an understatement (KII/Offa/Male/69yrs/2024)

### **Conclusion**

Overall, this study concluded that there are a lot of implications to the information proliferation on inter-communal conflict in Kwara State. These conflicts in different locations in the State though has its root cause on land related matters, however, several types of information proliferation has contributed to its escalation at different times. These types of information included false history, misinformation, propaganda, and land rumors that had played strong roles in driving conflict in the State through various channels like online, spoken, and historical. The major implications are it easily activated identity-based fault line, while misinformation-driven issues are remain most powerful conflict implications of information proliferation, followed by propaganda and historical grievances.

### **Recommendations**

In line with findings and conclusion of this study, the following are hereby suggested.

- i. Stakeholders should establish local information verification committees comprising community leaders, religious figures, and youth representatives to fact-check and counter false narratives in the conflict affected-communities.
- ii. Academic institutions, cultural experts, and community elders should produce balanced, inclusive historical records to counter distorted historical claims.
- iii. inter-communal cultural and historical exchange programs should be organized to foster mutual understanding and dismantle false identity narratives.
- iv. Implement fair and timely land dispute resolutions, and document outcomes publicly to reduce speculation and rumors

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