MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE: THE SHORTEST DIPLOMATIC ROUTE TO PEACE AND PROGRESS IN NIGERIA

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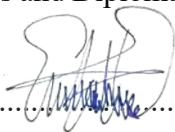**Director of Master of Peace and Diplomacy Program**

Research Title: Meaningful Dialogue: The Shortest Diplomatic Route to Peace and Progress in Nigeria

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Abstract

Meaningful dialogue is often overlooked in today's interconnected world. Meaningful Dialogue involves engaging in open and constructive conversations that are crucial for building strong relationships, fostering understanding, and promoting personal growth.

The purpose of this research is to show how a well-coordinated and meaningful dialogue can foster peace and unity in Nigeria. With the help of questionnaires, and face to face interviews, 450 respondents from different areas of Nigeria were interviewed using descriptive survey methodology. A simple percentage table of X and Y were employed to ascertain the hypotheses.

The most important finding of this research is that meaningful dialogue holds the key to unity in the country, and lack of meaningful dialogue creates room for unnecessary agitations, anger, misunderstandings, feeling of marginalization, and erosion of trust on the government. The aforementioned are a matter of fact and the causes of the major insecurities and breakdown of law and order in the country. The writer proposes a dialogue in the country to ensure peace and order in the country for everyone.

Keywords: meaningful dialogue, peace, marginalization, aforementioned

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DEDICATION

This independent study is dedicated to God Almighty for his undeserved kindness and clemency towards me, to my beloved mother, Mrs. Caroline Nnadozie, and to my amazingly exceptional father and mentor, Late Mr. Dickson Nnadozie.

DECLARATION

I, Mr. Nnadozie Felix Uchenna, with ID number 6317802007, hereby declare that this work is entirely mine and it is original, unless specific acknowledgements verify otherwise. I have done this independent study by myself under the close supervision of an advisor.
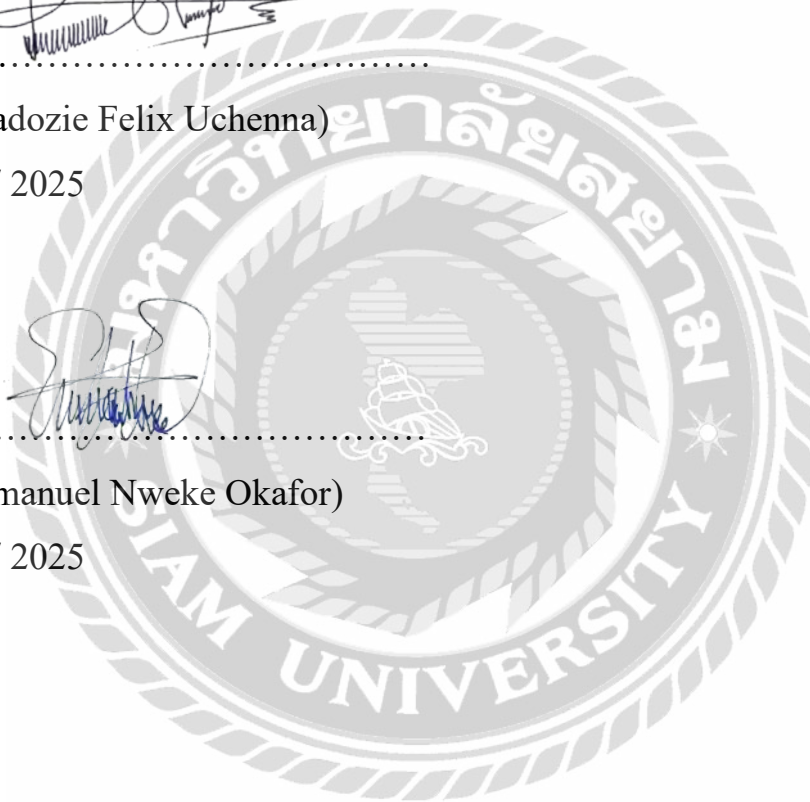
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Date 23 / May / 2025

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<h1 align="center">Introduction</h1>

1.1.   Background of the study.

Prior to the independence of Nigeria in 1960, there have been records of ethnic and religious differences in Nigeria. Because Nigeria is a conglomerate of so many ethnic groups with the three major tribes as Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba, there have been issues of land disputes and intertribal wars going on in Nigeria. In fact, Findlay (2019), opined that "there are over 500 ethnic groups, and over 500 languages spoken in Nigeria. The major issues in Nigeria revolve around land, politics, and the social dynamics of the individual ethnic groups. Egobueze (2021, p.1) believes that "Most of these Ethnic groups are chauvinistic with primordial ethnic instincts." He further explained that "The nation is divided by religion, with bigots that are sentimentally attached to their beliefs and wild interests for primitive accumulation and socioeconomic exploitation of the people." (Egobueze, 2021, p.1)

After the independence of 1960, there has been a growing sense of inequality around the country about how some were treated by others, and how the government has been revolving around a particular region of the country. However, these sentiments would lead to outbursts, which would further degenerate into the unfortunate civil war of 1967-1970. The war was merely an outburst of so many sentiments and feelings of marginalization that were at the time unresolved and in fact, unattended to.

With the passing of years, there has been a growing sense of disproportion in the way so many people are treated in the country which demands a meaningful dialogue to resolve. Part of the reasons for such feelings may include the following: Political polarization, Ethnic and religious diversity, security challenges which

includes, terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, farmer-herder clashes, to mention but a few. Another issue that needs a quick resolution is the level of diversity in economic development and economic policies in the country. By investigating various aspects of Nigeria's disunity, this research aims at showcasing the need for a meaningful dialogue, in restoring our national unity and restoring the confidence of Nigerians in their country.

1.2. Statement of Problem

Nigeria as a multi-ethnic and multi religious state with so much division and issues of lack of trust amongst her members needs a better way of resolving the disunity and constant outbreak of conflict that has deterred its growth and development since 1960 when she gained her independence. The post independence war from 1967-1970 drew the country even ten times backwards. So many other problems like kidnapping, ethnic differences, herder farmer clashes to mention but a few have created so many negative feelings of disunity and distrust around the country. The major problem is that there has been foiled or no attempts to sit down for a meaning dialogue in the country, to discuss the issues causing disunity in the country. The resultant effect is a further breakdown of whatever is remaining of the Nigerian unity which leads to agitations here and there.

Egbuchu,(2019, p.5), opined that "dialogue as a cooperative approach to social relations is about harnessing actor's potentials for mutual gains through the process of integrative bargaining leading to a 'win-win outcomes'". In-fact he recommended the acceptance and appreciation of dialogue as a way of life of humans all over the world. Leo Igwe, (2018,), writing on inter-religious dialogue on the guardian news paper accepted that "There is a need to pursue a more meaningful dialogue in the country. In fact we need to know if there actually is any form of dialogue going on in any form in Nigeria."

The specific problem is that without an urgent call for a meaningful dialogue, Nigeria is bound to disintegrate. This research therefore purposes to offer Meaningful Dialogue as a way of salvaging the country from disintegration, disunity and constant tribal bigotry that has been assailing her, and so to restore more sense of brotherhood and patriotism lacking in the country.

1.3. Research Questions

1.3.1. How does meaningful dialogue restore the unity of the country, Nigeria?

1.3.2. How do we harness the multiplicity of ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria to build a more united front?

1.3.3. How do we restore a sense of patriotism through a meaningful dialogue?

1.3.4. What is the implication of creating a new representative system that addresses the problems of each ethnic and religious group within the country, Nigeria?

1.4. Research Objectives

The intention of this research is to find the best possible solution to the most common problems saddling Nigeria which are ethnic and religious diversity. In other words, this research aims to:

1.4.1. Understand how meaningful dialogue can help in restoring the unity of Nigeria

1.4.2. To understand how we can leverage meaningful dialogue as a credible means of bringing together the whole country irrespective of tribe, tongue and religion.

1.4.3. Galvanize the unity of country and restore a deep sense of patriotism among the citizens of the country

1.4.4. To resolve already accumulated conflicts and address grievances through the use of representative government.

1.5. Significance of Study

For the last few decades, scholars have been grappling with a solution to the perennial problem of disunity in the country. This research therefore becomes necessary as an answer to the yearnings and a fulfillment of the gaps left by distinguished scholars in their quest to salvage the great country Nigeria and unite the frontiers of the nation.

This research is necessary to open our eyes on the dangers created by the wrong or insufficient methods used in the past to address the problems saddling this nation. Suffice it to say that this research hopes to educate Nigerians on the need to employ meaningful dialogue as a veritable tool to tackling these debilitating issues that is wrecking the unity and development of the country.

1.6. Scope of Study

The major focus of this research is on addressing the perennial issues of disunity that has created conflict and disorder in the country. It focuses on employing meaning dialogue as a tool to driving positive unity in the nation, something that has eluded the nation in the past decades. This can be achieved by interreligious and inter-ethnic dialogue between the major ethnic groups of the country. In doing this, we may now resolve on a table of dialogue the insecurity, education, food crises, unemployment and other issues that have been left unattended to because of lack understanding in the country.

1.7.   Limitations of the Study

In as much as the validity of outcomes of the research were unaffected by certain limitations during the research, the researcher cannot deny the limitations and difficulties he faced while collecting data for the research.

1.7.1. **Finance:**

One of the major challenges that limited this research was the financial constraint which the researcher encountered during the process of the research. It was difficult to fund certain aspects of the research without funding, especially where the researcher needed to travel to a particular destination for questions and responses regarding the research.

1.7.2. **Time:**

The biggest obstacle encountered by the researcher was time. Majority of the research was done concomitantly with the actual masters studies which created a lot of divided attention in gathering and assembling the research materials as and when due.

1.7.3. **Low response to research questions:**

Because people were more concerned about their personal lives and security, the response was not as much as the researcher wanted. Some others would defer the timing of the interviews till you got tired. This was a big limitation to the research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Understanding the impacts of Meaning Dialogue

Meaningful dialogue can significantly be impacted by numerous facets of society and interpersonal relationship. Some key impacts of meaningful dialogue;

2.1.1 **Trust Building:** Encourages more intimate relationship between people since honest and open conversation makes everyone feel safe and dependable.

2.1.2 **Fosters Conflict Resolution:** Assists in settling disputes peacefully by enabling people to communicate their emotions and work out solutions.

2.1.3 **Encourages Collaboration:** Promotes cooperation and teamwork since exchanging thoughts and worries might result in creative solution and group problem-solving.

2.1.4 **Empowerment:** It gives people the ability to convey their opinions, which boosts their self-assurance when speaking in towards an audience and advocating for matters.

2.2. The Power of Dialogue in Conflict Resolution

Conflict is an inevitable occurrence in human relationships. From personal to national levels, there are bound to be conflicts and disagreements at one point or the other. Various methods have been employed to address conflict and its resolution, from fighting to compromise. However, dialogue as a method for conflict resolution has increasingly gained popularity as an effective method of resolving disputes.

This section discusses the power of dialogue in conflict resolution, with particular emphasis on its definition, role, and examples of successful dialogue-

driven peace processes in other countries. Using Jurgen Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action, and Ejikemeuwa's "Religious Dialogue in Nigeria: The Way Forward, the review tries to understudy how dialogue and proper communication can breach the divides that has so crippled the country Nigeria. A conceptual clarification of Meaningful Dialogue will provide more insight as we try to dissect the proceeding literature.

2.2.1. Definition of Meaningful Dialogue

Etymologically, dialogue is a derivation from the Greek word "*dialogue*" which means "conversation" or discourse. The word was a coinage of two parts namely: "*dia*" meaning through or between, and "*logos*" meaning word, meaning of words, or speech. So generally, it could mean, 'through words, or things that flow through words.'

Dialogue can be defined as an open and honest conversation that involves active listening and respectful communication between two or more parties with the aim of resolving a conflict or disagreement. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2013), dialogue is a form of communication that is based on trust, and mutual respect, with participants seeking to understand and appreciate each other's views. It is a process that involves active listening, clarification, and feedback. Riecker (2015, P.14) understands dialogue as a progressive force fostering mutual understanding and resolving conflicts.

Meaningful dialogue, on the other hand, is a type of conversation that allows individuals to understand their differences without resorting to violence or anger. Meaningful dialogue is an essential aspect of conflict resolution as it provides a platform for both parties to express their grievances, concerns, and opinions without fear of retaliation or judgment.

According to Schrader, Bercovitch, and Houston (2016, pp.),

> Meaningful dialogue is characterized by an emphasis on mutual respect, inclusivity, and transparency. It promotes the creation of a safe and comfortable environment for all parties involved, which fosters open communication, free of judgment or fear of retaliation. In addition to creating a safe setting, meaningful dialogue also gives participants space to share their perspectives, needs, and expectations, thus, increasing understanding and empathy among parties.

2.3. Jurgen Harbemas' Communicative Action Theory

Jurgen Harbemas' theory of 'Communicative action' is one the major theories that clearly supports meaningful dialogue as the best method of achieving unity in the human society. This theory that was developed in the 1980s was in itself a foundational corpus in both social science and philosophy that placed so much importance on the necessity of communication in social life. He used it as the basis of his theories of morality, democracy and law. "The theory of communicative action is a critical project which reconstructs a concept of reason which is not grounded in instrumental or objectivistic terms, but rather in an emancipatory communicative act" (Marcathy, 1981, pp. 272-273). This reconstruction proposes "human action and understanding can be fruitfully analysed as having a linguistic structure", (Fultner, 2011, p.4). these construction spurs more communication that leads to freedom and peace.

Thomas Macarthy (1981, p.vi), opined that

> *The Theory of Communicative Action* has three interrelated concerns: (1) to develop a concept of rationality that is no longer tied to, and limited by, the subjectivistic and individualistic premises of modern philosophy and social theory; (2) to construct a two-level concept of society that integrates the lifeworld and systems paradigms; and, finally, (3) to sketch out, against this background, a critical theory of

modernity which analyzes and accounts for its pathologies in a way that suggests a redirection rather than an abandonment of the project of enlightenment

Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action presents a framework for grasping how effective communication can advance social unity and democratic consideration. This presents a gateway for peaceful society, by abandoning obsolete and seemingly outdated methods of societal life, for what he thinks is a more progressive and pragmatic way. Some of the major hit-points to buttress his points include:

2.3.1 Emphasis on Rational Discourse

Habermas (1984, p.) argues that for effective communication to take place, participants must employ rational discourse, where the objective is mutual understanding rather than merely winning an argument. This can facilitate reduction of conflicts by encouraging individuals to pay attention to each other and consider different perspectives.

2.3.2. Inter-subjective Understanding

Habermas presented the idea of deliberative democracy, where public conversation is vital for legitimizing political decisions. Encouraging participatory dialogue in community decision-making can help marginalized voices be heard, leading to more impartial outcomes and reducing tensions.

2.3.3. Critical Reflection

This theory maintains that critical reflection on social norms and power structures is an important part of a growing society. By questioning what we know as prevailing narratives and power dynamics, communities can tackle underlying issues that contribute to differences and work towards more just and peaceful

societies. This critical reflection was supported by the 'Rationalization Theory of Marx Weber which is the replacement of traditions, values, and emotions as motivators for behavior in society with concepts based on rationality and reason, (Papastephanou, 2001, 6 (3): 105-115).

> The bulk of this theory is to make rational communication the key to social interaction between rational humans, though there has been divergent views from this theory due to its rejection of traditional understanding of reality through ontology and revelations, it does not negate its force in raising the human consciousness and a more holistic social integration needed for peace in the human society.

2.4. The Role of Dialogue in Addressing Religious differences in Nigeria using Ejikemeuwa's Religious Dialogical principal

Religion is a major issue in Nigeria, Africa, and the world at large. In Nigeria, religion has proven to be the major cause of social unrest over the years, (Ibe, 2012). He argued that there are two major religious bodies in Nigeria that have found coexistence necessary. The event of the gruesome execution of Miss Deborah on the 13 of May, 2022, by Islamic extremists was a testament of the growing religious tension in the Nigerian state. Tribune, (14.05.2022), reported that the most heart-rending thing about the unfortunate scenario was that the killers flaunted their temerity in full view of the camera.

While that may not be completely true given to the long history of some religious groups before even the advent of colonialism, there may be some elements of truth in that assertion. To substantiate this, J.S Mbiti (1985, P.1) wrote:

> "Africans are notoriously religious, and each people have their own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that is not easy or possible always to isolate it … Religion is the strongest element in traditional background, and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned"

In other words, another name for an African person is a religious person. But the role of religion in the face of the incessant religious crises in some parts of Africa has left many right minds to ponder on its usefulness. According to Uche (2008), what this means is that every Nigerian, and by extension, African, thinks and lives religiously. The personal, communal and societal decisions are most of the times done through the lenses of religion.

Ejikemeuwa (2012) provided a big boost to this idea in his essay, "Religious Dialogue in Nigeria: The Way Forward." His idea is centered upon the fact that Nigerians still live in total denial of the fact that there is division and conflict of ideas, faith, and practices between the various factions of religions around the country. He reiterated the major basis of religious dialogues in Nigeria namely: that we are humans, that we believe in One God, that we are Nigerians and that we believe in the day of 'judgment'.

Ejikemeuwa, (2012, p.171), highlighted that religious prejudice is evil in itself and as such, must be addressed and eliminated to make room for a peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. "it is a form of biased opinions about other religions occasioned by insufficient knowledge. This often caused by lack of knowledge on truth of other religion." (Ejikemeuwa, 2012, p.171). He recommended that comparative religious studies be introduced in the academic curricula of students, that there be an interreligious dialogue or workshop, an introduction of conflict management in the tertiary institution, and that religious leaders help in promoting peace and coexistence among their members.

However, due to the plural nature of religious belief in Nigeria, there seems to be a clash of ideas and beliefs in Nigeria. This clash may be from the way they pray, or marry, greet and so on, which if not peacefully resolved and a circuit of

interaction created, would mean a constant and almost a never-ending unrest between the components religions in the country, as we always see in Nigeria.

The question now is what type of solution would suffice for already corroded relationships between all religious groups in Nigeria? The answer is simple, dialogue and understanding. The idea of religious dialogue presupposes that there is conflict. That conflict exists is one thing, and proffering solution to the conflict is another thing. Religious dialogue has to do with discussions concerning the views of different religious parties for the sole purpose of understanding each other better (Borrmans, 1990, p.48). The fact of dialogue is also concerned with the exchange of ideas and opinions being an encounter that takes place on equal grounds with mutual confidence, frankness and without ulterior motives (Tanko, 1991, P.26).

According to Ogara (2019, p.1), Religious dialogue is an activity that is carried out in an atmosphere of openness, thirst for truth and mutual respect. It has to do with "give and take" which presupposes that openness to accept other's opinion and find a middle ground of understanding between the different religious groups in this context. Simply put, religious dialogue welcomes the limitations and strengths in other religions and tries to bring a nexus of understanding for proper coexistence amidst differences.

Religious dialogue has to be appreciated by all Nigerians young and old, literate and illiterate, the poor and the rich, Christians and Moslems alike. It should be a daily activity based on our commonalities and respect for our differences (Ejikemeuwa, 2012, p.171). His reasons are based on four cardinal points that, they believe in 'One God', they are humans, they are Nigerians and they all believe in the afterlife, therefore judgment.

2.5. Ethnic Differences and Need for Dialogue in Nigeria

Ethnic conflicts in Nigeria have been in existence even before the advent of the colonial masters. We already mentioned that Nigeria is made up of multiple ethnic groups numbering above 300 and a number of language differences too. Historically, what we now know as Nigeria were factions of ethnic communities existing independently. Though there are three major ethnicities, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, there are other smaller tribes like the Nupe, Itshekiri, Kanuri and so on.

According to AnswersAfrica (2013, p.1) Nigeria largest tribe is the Hausa, which makes up to 31.5 % of the country population. The Hausas occupied

the northern part of Nigeria, Niger Republic southern part and Chad Republic west end are also being occupied by the Hausas. The rural and urban areas in northern part of Nigeria consist of Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Abuja, Sokoto, Bauchi, Birnin Kebbi, Damaturu, Gombe and Jos. Most often these two tribes in Nigeria, Hausa and Fulani, have the same identity in their tradition and lifestyle which makes them to be called Hausa-Fulani.

On the other side are the Igbo who dwell east of the Niger. They are renowned for their productivity. The south-eastern part of Nigeria and some of the main cities such as; Enugu, Onitsha, Owerri, Asaba, Awka, Abakiliki, Abia, Orlu are habitable by the Igbo tribes (AnswersAfrica, 2013).

Nigeria population of 21% is the Yoruba tribe and this amount to 55 million people. They are historically the children of Ife with ancestry from Ile Ife. According to Britannica (2024) Yoruba, one of the three largest ethnic groups of Nigeria concentrated in the southwestern part of that country. Much smaller, scattered groups live in Benin and northern Togo. The Yoruba numbered more than 20 million at the turn of the 21st century. They speak a language of the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo language family. Their towns became densely populated and eventually grew into the present-day cities of Oyo, Ile-Ife, Ilesha, Ibadan, Ilorin, Ijebu-Ode, Ikere-Ekiti, and others. Oyo developed in the 17th century into the largest of the Yoruba

kingdoms (see Oyo empire), while Ile-Ife remained a town of potent religious significance as the site of the earth's creation according to Yoruba mythology (Britannica, 2024).

There are various other Ethnic Groups round the country with their respective histories, cultures, traditions and wonderful languages too. The map below describes the different ethnic groups in the country:
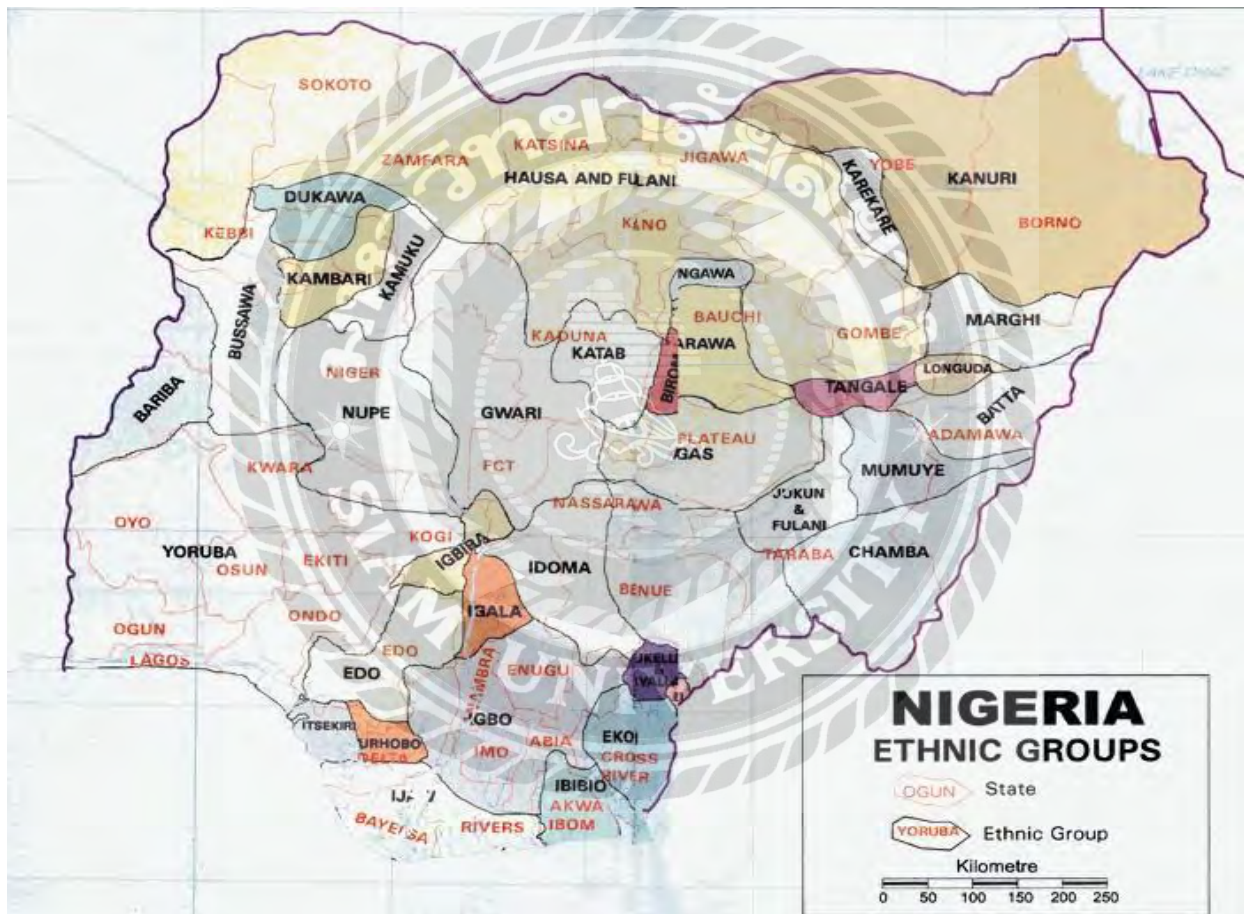
Picture 1: Map of Ethnic Groups in Nigeria

Source: http://www.onlineNigeria.com/mapethnic.asp

According to Banton (2000, P.485), ethnic conflict is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing political and social disputes centered on the identities of

different ethnic groups. This is only possible when communities or people of similar ethnicities emphasize their ethnic identities as a major definition of who they are. According to Abasili et al (2023), the nature and intensities of ethnic conflict can greatly differ depending on historical contexts, geographical locations, and specific circumstances. Factors such as historical grievances, economic disparities, political powers struggles, and cultural differences can all contribute to the outbreak of ethnic conflicts (Abasili et al, 2023).

To put this in context, Nigeria as a country has her major problem of ethnic diversity which has led to countless disagreements that sometimes snowballed into full blown violence as was experienced back in the 60s and 70s. From the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 by Lord Luggard an act described by Achebe as a forceful amalgamation of different cultures for the aggrandizement of Britain, Nigeria has always been back and forth with incessant ethnic crises (Achebe 1983, P.5).

Abasili et al (2023), traces one of the key factors fuelling ethnic conflict in Nigeria to the arbitrary drawing of borders by British colonial authorities, an action that will continue to create fracas until a proper dialogue is held. They went on to opine that these boundaries were merely created for administrative convenience and economic interests, without due considerations for the existing ethic and cultural divisions within the region.

As we know, ethnic conflict has not brought anything positive as such, but a lot of destruction and erosion of trust. Its impact ranges from loss of lives and human sufferings, to displacements and humanitarian crisis. Another danger is the impact it has in the economy and development of areas most affected. Take an instance, the Biafra war took, the Southeastern part of Nigeria almost 3 decades back in

infrastructural development and economy. Save for their economic ingenuity and doggedness, who knows how they would have been now.

2.6. Borrowing a leaf from Successful Dialogue-driven Peace Processes in other Countries

There are many examples of successful dialogue-driven peace processes in other countries. Some of these examples include:

2.6.1 South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of South Africa is a prime example of a successful dialogue-driven peace process. The TRC was established in 1996, following the end of apartheid, to promote national unity and reconciliation. The TRC conducted extensive public hearings across the country, where victims of apartheid gave testimony about their experiences. Perpetrators of human rights violations were also given the opportunity to come forward and confess to their crimes.

The TRC was successful in promoting reconciliation and preventing future conflict in South Africa. After the apartheid-based violence and human rights violations, South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established. The committee, led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, sought to promote dialogue and build trust among communities affected by the violence and discrimination during apartheid. The committee achieved this by creating public hearings where victims and perpetrators came together to share their experiences. The hearings empowered victims to share their stories without fear of retaliation and provided an opportunity for perpetrators to repent and seek forgiveness. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission helped create a more inclusive and equitable society in South Africa.

2.6.2 Colombia's Peace Negotiations

Colombia has successfully used dialogue as a conflict resolution method demonstrated by the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The peace negotiations, mediated by Cuban and Norwegian governments, focused on finding solutions that addressed the root causes of the conflict. The agreement has been successful in promoting reconciliation, demobilizing combatants, and reducing violence. Another example of successful dialogue-driven peace building is the Colombian peace process, which ended a 50-year internal conflict resulting in over 220,000 deaths. The peace agreement was the result of four years of negotiations, with dialogue playing a key role in the initial stages. One significant achievement of the Colombian peace process was the creation of a truth commission to investigate human rights violations and abuses during the conflict.

2.6.3. Northern Ireland's Good Friday Agreement

The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 marked a significant milestone in resolving the decades-long conflict in Northern Ireland through a dialogue-driven approach. The agreement, a model for conflict resolution in other parts of the world, involved the British and Irish governments, political parties, and armed groups. After decades of sectarian violence, the parties engaged in face-to-face discussions to find a path towards peace. Through active listening and honest discussion, the parties ultimately signed the agreement in 1998, marking a significant milestone in the peace process in Northern Ireland. The Good Friday Agreement has been cited as a model for conflict resolution in other parts of the world.

2.7. Case Studies: Successful Dialogue Initiatives in Nigeria

Nigeria has been plagued by various conflicts and social ills since the colonial era. In response to these challenges, various dialogue initiatives have been launched to bring the affected parties to the negotiating table. This section examines three case studies of successful dialogue initiatives in Nigeria, discussing their objectives, strategies, and outcomes. The Niger Delta Dialogue Process, The National Conference of 2014 and the role of traditional leaders in fostering dialogue represent a diverse range of dialogue initiatives, offering a unique perspective on the strategies that can foster success in Nigeria.

We aim to develop a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes a successful dialogue initiative and how it can be replicated in other conflict-ridden regions of the country.

2.7.1. The Niger Delta Dialogue Process

The Niger Delta Dialogue Process represented an attempt to resolve a long-standing conflict between the Nigerian state and the inhabitants of the oil-rich Niger Delta region. The conflict arose due to the environmental damage caused by oil exploitation and the neglect of local communities. The process took place over a 22-month period between 2009 and 2011 and involved the Niger Delta communities, civil society groups, oil companies, and the Nigerian state. The objective of the dialogue was to find a lasting solution to the crisis and address the underlying factors that led to its emergence.

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has been plagued by conflict and violence for decades. The region, which is rich in oil resources, has been a source of economic and political power for the country. However, the local communities have not been direct beneficiaries of the oil wealth, and this has led to feelings of marginalization

and frustration. The Niger Delta Dialogue Process was initiated in 2005 to address the root causes of the conflict in the region. The process was facilitated by the Nigerian government and international organizations such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). The dialogue process involved representatives from the government, civil society, and local communities in the Niger Delta region. The dialogue process was successful in promoting peace and stability in the Niger Delta region. The outcome of the dialogue process led to the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the amnesty program for ex-militants in the region. According to Moghalu (2012, pp.416-429) "The Niger Delta Dialogue Process was instrumental in promoting peace in the Niger Delta region, which has been critical for the economic development of the region, and the country as a whole".

According to Bariagaber and Pathan (2013, pp.87-96), the success of the Niger Delta Dialogue Process can be attributed to four key factors. First, the process was inclusive, involving all relevant stakeholders. This helped to identify and address a broader range of issues that were critical to the ultimate success of the initiative. Second, the dialogue was conducted in a neutral space, thus reducing the potential for the participants to engage in conflict outside the negotiation table.

Third, the dialogue process was structured, with specific objectives and clear timelines that ensured it was productive and efficient. Finally, the dialogue process was backed by sufficient resources, thus providing the necessary support to the participants to ensure its success.

2.7.2. The National Conference of 2014

Another successful dialogue initiative in Nigeria was the National Conference of 2014. The objective of the conference was to find a consensus on the critical issues

that were affecting the Nigerian society. This included political restructuring, security, the economy, and the environment. The conference was made up of 492 delegates from various segments of the society, comprising political leaders, traditional rulers, civil society groups, and religious leaders. Some scholars have argued that the success of the conference was due to its proactive approach towards negotiations. According to Adetoye (2015, pp. 25-52), the conference employed a process of broad-based consultation and consensus-building that allowed all stakeholders to have input on the issues discussed. This created an atmosphere of trust and understanding, which made it possible to find common ground on contentious issues. This approach was supported by Gani and Kafayat (2020, pp. 70-84), who argued that the success of the conference was due to its capacity to foster a sense of ownership and participatory democracy among stakeholders. This helped to create a shared sense of responsibility for the resolution of the issues discussed at the conference.

The National Conference of 2014 was a dialogue initiative aimed at addressing the challenges facing the country and promoting national unity. The conference was convened by former President Good-luck Jonathan and was attended by delegates from different regions, ethnic groups, and religious affiliations in the country. The conference addressed a wide range of issues, including federalism, revenue allocation, resource control, security, and the electoral process. The conference was able to provide a platform for robust debate and dialogue on these critical issues, leading to recommendations to address the challenges facing the country. The National Conference of 2014 was successful in promoting dialogue and cooperation among different ethnic and religious groups in the country. According to Folarin (2016, pp.395-412), "The National Conference of 2014 was a significant achievement in the history of Nigeria's democracy. The conference provided a

platform for dialogue and consensus-building, which is necessary for sustainable peace and development in the country".

2.7.3 The Role of Traditional Leaders in Fostering Dialogue

Traditional rulers have played an essential role in fostering dialogue in Nigeria. Many scholars have recognized the critical role played by traditional rulers in promoting dialogue and conflict resolution. According to Ojo (2014, pp.60-70), traditional rulers have a unique advantage in this regard, as they are seen as impartial arbiters in disputes that arise in their communities. This reputation is due to their deep understanding of the customs and traditions of their people, making them ideal candidates for mediation and conflict resolution. Traditional rulers have been actively involved in various dialogue initiatives in Nigeria. For instance, Sowunmi (2014, pp.123-137) highlights the role played by traditional rulers in the pre-independence era in promoting dialogue among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, thereby leading to the creation of a unified country. Similarly, Olaniyan and Olawoye (2014, pp.204-328) recognize the contribution of traditional rulers to the peace process during the civil war of the 1960s. They acted as mediators between the warring factions to ensure that the conflict did not escalate.

Furthermore, the cooperation between traditional rulers and the government is vital in promoting dialogue and peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. According to Adigwe et al. (2020, pp.273-283), traditional rulers provide critical links between their people and the government, thus promoting dialogue between the two. In addition, they are seen as advocates for the conservation and preservation of the country's cultural heritage, which is essential to foster social stability and unity. Traditional leaders have played a crucial role in fostering dialogue and promoting peace in Nigeria.

Traditional leaders are influential in their communities and are respected by the people. In many instances, traditional leaders have been able to resolve conflicts and prevent violence from escalating. The traditional leaders have been able to promote dialogue and reconciliation among the different ethnic and religious groups in the country. According to Okoli (2015, pp.202-223), "Traditional leaders are essential in promoting dialogue and reconciliation in Nigeria. They are influential in their communities and can act as mediators between conflicting parties". The successful dialogue initiatives in Nigeria demonstrate the importance of dialogue in conflict resolution and peace-building. The Niger Delta Dialogue Process, The National Conference of 2014, and the role of traditional leaders in fostering dialogue have all contributed significantly to promoting peace and stability in the country. These initiatives have provided a platform for dialogue and consensus-building, which is essential for sustainable peace and development in Nigeria.

2.8. Theoretical Framework

The sociolinguists, Brown and Levinson (1987, pp.343-403), proposed as a way to explore how politeness strategies shape human interactions and relationships. This theory makes distinction between positive and negative politeness as a way of managing face-saving and social harmony. Politeness theory is an acknowledgement that individuals, groups and societies care about how others perceive them and thus creates a yearning to make things better when they are not.

Politeness theory has since the dawn of 1970s drawn serious concerns in the academic world leading to its in-depth study across disciplines particularly in sociolinguistics, pragmatics, communication studies and anthropology, to mention but a few. The basic concept of this theory was drawn from what the Salvory academy (2019) meant in their lecture notes when they said that "We all work to

maintain a public image, and when we fail to keep up that appearance, we may experience "losing face" and embarrassment".

In other words, politeness theory is about how we want others to view us, or how we expect others to perceive our image to be. By so doing, we build an image that would be respected and acceptable by the society around us. This however, is not limited to the individual person, a community, state, region or country can decide to create such an image of themselves in the context of culture and tradition. Protecting that image becomes necessary for the society in question. When this image built overtime is not respected, and then there is bound to be misunderstanding, otherwise known as Face-threatening Act (FTA).

2.9. Key Concept of Politeness Theory

2.9.1. Face

Each individual or group always has a public identity or a sense of the 'self' that they expect others to respect. This is known as 'image' or 'face' and he/they would prefer that he/they be respected as such. For instance, there is the Yoruba, Igbo, African or even personal identity or image I carry around and would expect that others to respect that image while I respect theirs.

2.9.2. Face-threatening acts (FTAs)

There are certain speech-acts that have the potency of threatening someone's 'Face', such as requests, criticisms, disagreements or commands depending on the speaker. These are referred to as speech face-threatening acts.

2.9.3. Politeness Strategies

When there is an issue of face-threatening act, certain mechanisms such as hedging, politeness markers, and indirectness are employed to maintain positive social relationships. These steps are referred to as politeness strategies.

2.9.4. Positive Politeness

To ensure that positivity, solidarity, and closeness are emphasized between people in interaction, positive politeness is emphasized.

2.9.5. Negative Politeness

Negative Politeness is strategies used to avoid stepping into other people's boundaries or autonomies as the case may be, thereby offending them.

This question now remains, how does the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987, pp. 343-403) help in meaningful dialogue? Well to answer that, one needs to look at certain variables that make the theory worth looking. The theory provides valuable insight into how people manage interpersonal and group relationship through the use of language in certain social settings. The basic emphasis of the politeness theory is the importance of maintaining both positive and negative face (the desire to be autonomous and free from imposition) in communication. Whence, Nigeria needs some meaningful dialogue, politeness theory becomes paramount, respecting the component ethnicities and finding a common ground for a more peaceful and progressive society.

Moreover, being a polite speaker only enhances the quality of dialogue by showing through every means possible, the respect for others. What this does is that it creates an environment for meaningful interaction and further dialogue. When Nigeria recognizes the 'face' of the Hausa and the Igbo as autonomous entities that

deserve respect as a polity, meaningful dialogue becomes possible leading to peace and progress.

Furthermore, politeness theory reads out various strategies people utilize to mitigate potential face threats such as face markers, hedging and indirectness as we explained above. Politeness theory therefore tries to understand and apply these strategies appropriately so as to prevent misunderstanding and conflicts in dialogue, and ensuring that communication remains constructive, meaningful and respectful.

Eleen (2001) opined that politeness can provide insights into the very structure of social reality and the process by which it is established and maintained. And through its focus is on ethical aspects of social interaction, it can expose the fundamental nature and the inner working of morality in our everyday lives. While this criticism tried to interweave what politeness theory actually portrays with the concept of morality, it still accepts that the theory touches beyond the confines and borders of our personal experiences, and stretches into the common society, therefore making a veritable tool for a proper societal dialogue and crises control.

No one captures it better than the American Sociologist Erving Goffmann (1972, pp.1-5) who chose politeness theory as the basis of his theory. To him, "it reflects two opposite needs of humans: on the one hand, a desire be approved of and appreciated by interlocutors (positive face); on the other hand to have his or her independent point of view and relative freedom of speech (negative face)". In other words, politeness is understood as ability of people to use interactive strategies depending on communication situation (Salmani, 2006, pp.903-912).

Goorabi (2019, p.3) concluded by saying that despite the shortcoming of the politeness theory, it cannot be argued that the politeness theory is certainly unique area of study within communication field; it is applicable and helpful in guiding

individuals in ways to improve their speech and actions (Salmani, 2012, pp.119-140). Be-that-as-may, when we conduct our speeches and actions in a manner that respects others, we expect same from people. When the mutual respect of each other's 'face' becomes normal, we can have a peaceful society.

This research borrowed the idea of this theory to argue that we can achieve a peaceful society when we as a society adopt the idea of respecting people's views and image of themselves, while we conduct our own images to be respectable by others too. The reason for so much violence in Nigeria stems from the fact of misunderstandings and aggravations that were accumulated over by the years due to neglect and abuse of the images, rights, opinions and sometimes culture/tradition of people within the polity, Nigeria. In order to correct this, we as a country have to have a meaningful dialogue while applying the politeness theory in handling issues of mistrust, cultural misappropriations and so on that has created the chasm of unity in Nigeria.
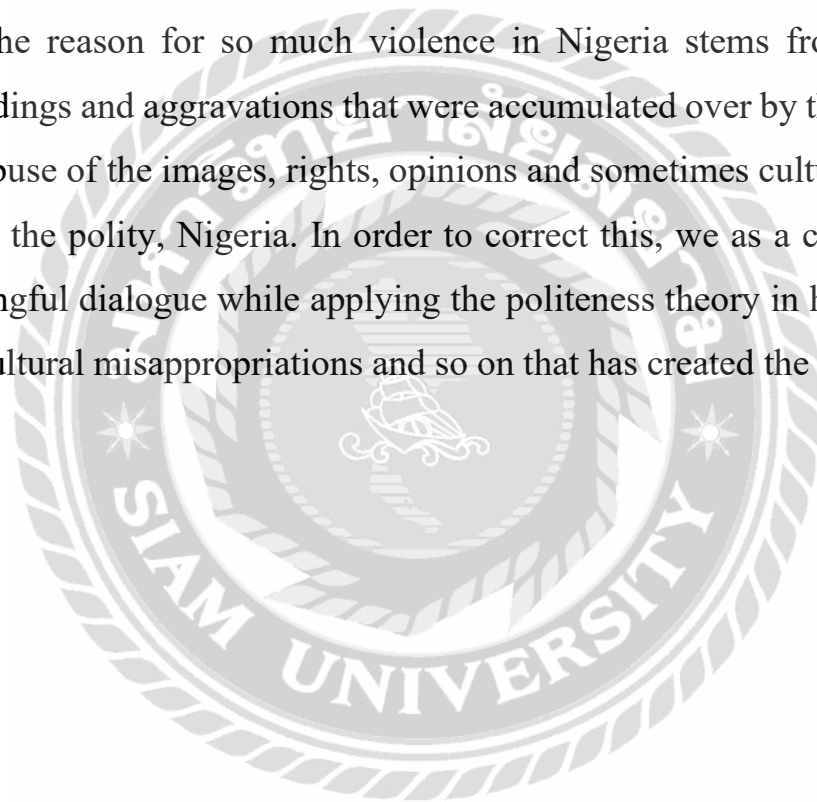
Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This research utilized as research design, the qualitative survey approach. A questionnaire instrument was used to collect data, which was augmented with an in-depth interview for qualitative data.

3.2. Area of Study

This research was centered on the three major regions of the Nigerian federation. The research examined within the context of Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba, the impact of meaningful dialogue and how it will help restore peace, and encourage sustainable development in Nigeria.

3.3. Population of Studies

The research focused on the three major ethnic groups namely: Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba. According to Macro trends' analysis (2024), the general population of Nigerians is 229,152,217 with a growth of 3.7% from 2021, where majority are from age 15-64. There are 41.7% under the age of 15, and 55% with the age of 15-65. There are only 3% above the age of 65. The Igbo population as at was 23,555,414, while Hausa tribe has a total population of 67,000,000 people, covering o total of 31.5% of the country' population (Wikipedia, 2024). The Yoruba tribe has a total of 55,000,000 people covering 17.2% of the population (Wikipedia, 2024).

3.4. Sample Size and Sampling techniques

The sample size for this study is 450 people out of a population of people. The formula used to determine the sample size for this study was proposed by Taro Yamane (1964).

The purpose sampling strategy used in this study was based on the criterion of individuals who are literate and willing and able to complete the questionnaire. This became necessary because of the study's objective or goal. Recall that our basic interest was focused on the three major tribes in the country, and not the whole country.

3.5. Validity of the Instruments

In order to ensure both face and content validity, my supervisor and other research professionals from the Faculty of Peace Studies and Diplomacy were given the research equipment for constructive critique and modification. Their revisions, on the other hand, were all incorporated into the research.

3.6. Reliability of the Instruments

The reliability assessment was conducted using a test-retest method. This was accomplished by administering the questionnaire instruments to the respondents at two-week intervals, allowing their replies to be linked using Crobach's alpha test.

3.7. Method of Collection

Questionnaires are a written list of questions which are answered by a number of people in order to provide information for a report or survey (Collins, 2024). The questionnaire included a concise preamble that explained how to answer various questions provided by the researcher to the responder who was filling it out.

The survey featured closed-ended questions that probed the demographic and thematic concerns addressed. It was easy to hand deliver the questionnaires and gather them at a mutually agreed-upon time with the responders who were considered qualified to answer the questions. Because the study is only for intellectual purposes, the respondents were assured that all of the information they provided would be kept private.

Oral Interviews

The study employed a verbal interview conducted by the researcher to acquire information from the respondent in order to corroborate their position expressed in the questionnaires.

3.8. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The first thing to do is to ensure that the data collected are significant and relevant. Such data must therefore be critically analyzed developed as the research requires.

Decision Rule

The null hypothesis' acceptance or rejection will depend on the computed and tabulated values. The null hypothesis will be rejected (at a set level of significance and degree of freedom) if the computed value is greater than the tabular value; otherwise, it will be accepted.
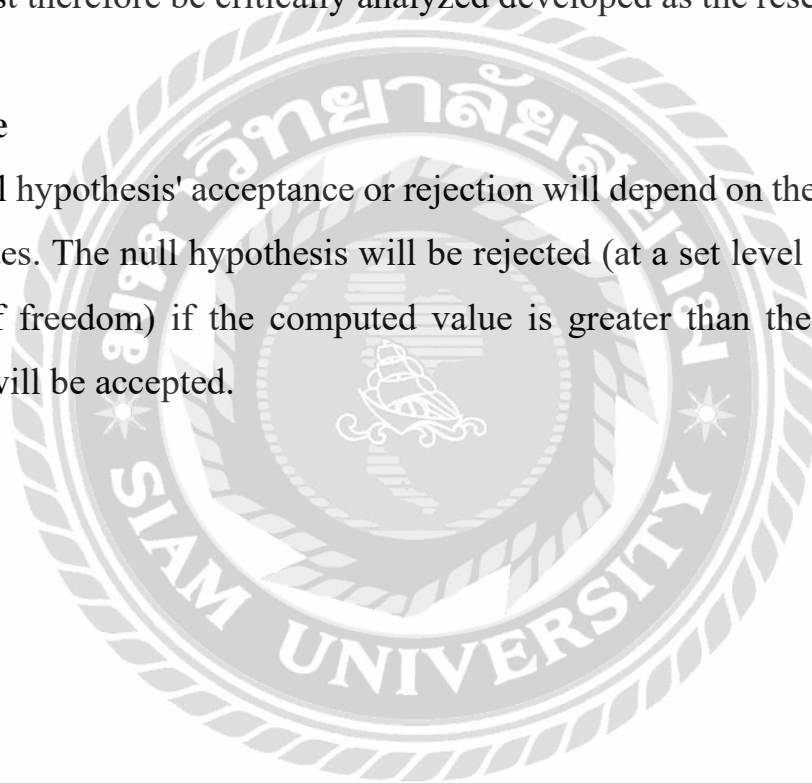
Chapter 4

Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1. The Nigerian Context: Challenges and Opportunities

Nigeria is one of the most populous countries in the world, with a population of over 200 million people. The country is known for its diverse cultural and ethnic groups, with over 250 languages spoken. Nigeria is also known for its vast natural resources, including oil, gas, and minerals. Despite these strengths, Nigeria faces significant challenges in several areas, including ethnic and religious tensions, political polarization, and economic disparities.

However, navigating these challenges presents opportunities for growth and development. Nigeria is home to over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own language, culture, and historical background. Such diversity has the potential to be a source of strength, but it also presents challenges, particularly when ethnic and religious tensions arise. According to Horsfall (2015, pp.343-345), ethnic tensions in Nigeria are fueled by struggles for political power and control of resources. These tensions can lead to violence, displacement, and a sense of fragmented national identity.

Religious tensions are also prevalent, with conflicts arising between Christians and Muslims in the country. As Oshewolo (2017, pp.351-365) argues, religious conflicts in Nigeria are often intertwined with political and economic factors, creating a complex web of issues that need to be addressed. This section examines these challenges and opportunities in the Nigerian context, with a focus on the potential of dialogue to address these challenges. It also answers that perennial question, how do we restore a sense of patriotism in the country through meaningful dialogue?

4.2. Ethnic and Religious Tensions

Ethnic and religious tensions have been a defining feature of Nigeria's history, stemming from the country's diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. The country is divided into several regions and ethnic groups, with the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo being the most dominant. These ethnic groups have a long and complex history of coexistence, including periodic conflicts and violence (Tukur, 2016, 56-65). Similarly, Nigeria is home to various religious groups, including Islam and Christianity. These groups have often been at odds, leading to religious conflicts and violence.

One of the challenges arising from these tensions is social and political exclusion. Ethnic and religious minorities often face marginalization, discrimination, and under-representation in key sectors, leading to a sense of alienation and resentment (Olorunnisola, 2015, pp.305-328). This sense of marginalization has often fueled ethnic and religious conflicts, including the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast region of the country, Niger Delta Militants in the South-South, Oduduwa People Congress (OPC) in the South-West, and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South-East.

However, despite these challenges, Nigeria presents significant opportunities for strengthening social cohesion and promoting dialogue. For instance, increasing inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue can foster understanding and promote tolerance among groups. The government can also promote policies and programs that support inclusivity and representation across all sectors.

4.3. Political Polarization

Political Polarization is another significant challenge in the Nigerian context. The country is divided into several political parties, with the All Progressive Congress (APC), Labor Party (LP) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) being the most dominant. However, political polarization extends beyond political parties, with divisions along regional and ethnic lines (Adeola, 2019, pp.339-352). These deep divisions have led to electoral violence, intimidation, vote rigging, and other undemocratic practices. One of the challenges of political polarization in the Nigerian context is the lack of consensus building and compromise among political actors. This lack of consensus often leads to political gridlock, a lack of accountability, and an erosion of democratic institutions. Furthermore, the absence of a credible election process undermines the legitimacy of the government and further amplifies political polarization (Olaniyan, 2018, 1-19).

However, despite these challenges, Nigeria presents an opportunity for strengthening democratic institutions and promoting political stability. For instance, electoral reforms, including credible and transparent electoral processes, can support consensus building and promote democratic governance. Additionally, increasing the representation of women and other marginalized groups in the political process can foster inclusivity and broaden political participation. Nigeria's political landscape is marked by deep divisions and polarization. The country has experienced periods of military rule, which have negatively impacted its democratic institutions and processes.

Oluwadare (2020, p.13) Political polarization in Nigeria is influenced by factors such as corruption, tribalism, and the pursuit of individual interests over the collective good. This polarization hinders effective governance, compromises the rule of law, and exacerbates social and economic inequalities. Addressing political

division requires a commitment to comprehensive and accountable governance, as well as a national conversation that fosters trust and understanding among different political actors.

4.4. Economic Disparities

Nigeria's economy is the largest in Africa, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of over $442 billion. However, despite this economic strength, Nigeria faces significant disparities in income distribution and poverty. The country ranks among the poorest in the world, with over 40% of the population living below the poverty line (Agbese et al., 2020, pp.61-72). Additionally, access to economic opportunities is often tied to regional and ethnic affiliations, leading to a further sense of exclusion and marginalization.

One of the challenges of economic disparities in the Nigerian context is the lack of economic diversification. The country's economic growth is largely tied to natural resources, including oil and gas, leading to a vulnerability to shocks in global commodity prices. Additionally, the absence of a robust private sector often limits opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation (Aremu & Adeyeye, 2018, pp.237-253). However, despite these challenges, Nigeria presents opportunities for economic growth and development. For instance, diversifying the economy through investment in non-oil sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, and technology, can support inclusive growth and reduce dependence on natural resources.

Additionally, policies and programs that promote access to education, healthcare, and other basic needs can support a more equitable distribution of economic opportunities. Nigeria is a country rich in natural resources, including oil, yet it continues to face significant economic disparities. The majority of Nigerians live in poverty, lacking access to basic amenities such as education, healthcare, and

clean water. Economic disparities in Nigeria are driven by factors such as corruption, inefficient governance, and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. These disparities contribute to social tensions, undermine social cohesion, and limit the country's potential for sustainable development. There is need for inclusive economic policies that prioritize job creation, poverty reduction, and equitable distribution of resources as a means to address these disparities.

4.5. The Potential of Dialogue to Address these Challenges

As outlined in the preceding sections, Nigeria faces significant challenges, including ethnic and religious tensions, political polarization, and economic disparities. Addressing these challenges effectively requires a holistic approach that emphasizes dialogue, inclusivity, and participatory governance. In particular, increasing the dialogue between different ethnic and religious groups can promote a sense of understanding, trust, and mutual respect. This dialogue can take various forms, including community forums, town hall meetings, and interfaith dialogues.

Additionally, including diverse groups in decision-making processes can foster inclusivity and promote participatory governance. Furthermore, promoting dialogue can also support a more effective response to economic challenges. For instance, dialogue between government and business leaders can support policy reforms and provide insights into opportunities for economic growth and development.

Furthermore, engaging civil society organizations and grassroots communities can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of various groups, catalyzing the development of more responsive and effective policies. Dialogue has the potential to address the challenges of ethnic and religious tensions, political polarization, and economic disparities in Nigeria.

Dialogue provides an opportunity for individuals and groups to convey their concerns, share their perspectives, and seek out common ground. In the context of ethnic and religious tensions, dialogue can promote understanding, empathy, and reconciliation among different groups. e highlight the role of interfaith dialogue in fostering religious tolerance and harmony in Nigeria. Similarly, in the context of political polarization, dialogue can bridge divides, build trust, and promote consensus-building. Ajaegbu (2017, pp.319-333) emphasizes the importance of dialogue as a means to address the root causes of political polarization and foster inclusive governance.

Finally, dialogue can contribute to addressing economic disparities by providing a platform for inclusive decision-making, as well as promoting transparency and accountability in economic governance. Akper (2019) underscores the potential of dialogue to promote economic justice and equitable resource distribution in Nigeria.

4.6.   Obstacles to Meaningful Dialogue in Nigeria

Adebayo (2010, PP.354-363), defined dialogue as a conversation among people who differ in the hope that something fruitful will emerge. Dialogue is an essential element in any democracy. It helps to create understanding between diverse groups and to build consensus on important issues. However, Nigeria has been facing challenges in achieving meaningful dialogue due to some obstacles. We therefore examine the obstacles to meaningful dialogue in Nigeria, such as deep-rooted mistrust, political interests and power struggles, and lack of effective communication channels. At the end of the section, suggestions will be made on how to overcome these obstacles through dialogue.

4.6.1 Deep-Rooted Mistrust

One of Nigeria's significant obstacles to meaningful dialogue is deep-rooted mistrust between ethnic groups. Ebere (2017, pp.393-420) explained that mistrust has been created by the country's history of ethnic conflict, political instability, corruption, and economic inequality. This mistrust is fuelled by the belief that other groups want to dominate and oppress them. Egwu (2015, pp.41-54) observed that this attitude has created a situation where groups are suspicious of each other, and their leaders engage in divisive rhetoric. For instance, the tension between the Hausa-Fulani and Igbo during the 1960s culminated in the Nigerian Civil War, which resulted in the deaths of millions of Nigerians. This event created deep wounds and mistrust that still persists today.

Moreover, mistrust is not only among different ethnic groups but also within the same ethnic group. (Oladiran, 2014, pp.39-56) noted that Nigerian leaders have often manipulated and exploited ethnic identity for political gains. This is because there are no clear-cut ideological boundaries between parties. Instead, political parties are often formed based on ethnic identity, which strengthens the belief that parties only represent the interest of their ethnic group. This scenario creates a situation where individuals from the same ethnic group but different political parties are viewed as a traitor. Deep-rooted mistrust is one of the major obstacles to meaningful dialogue in Nigeria. The country's numerous ethno-linguistic groups have been involved in deep-seated conflicts, leading to mistrust and suspicion among them. According to Achebe (2012, p.5), the main problem is the "monster of tribalism," which has led to a sense of alienation among different groups. This has created an "us vs. them" mentality, which fuels mistrust and prevents meaningful dialogue. Yusuf and Kabara (2020, pp.12) argue that mistrust has been exacerbated by the socio-economic and political disparities that exist in the country. This has led

to the belief that meaningful dialogue may not yield any benefit, leading to reluctance to engage in it.

4.6.2 Political Interests and Power Struggles

Nigeria's political system has been poorly constructed, which has resulted in an absence of meaningful dialogue between leaders and citizens. Afeikhena (2018, pp.100-114) argued that the Nigerian state is characterized by a weak institutional framework that deprives citizens of adequate governance. The weak institution has produced a system where political leaders obsessively safeguard their power instead of serving the people. Consequently, citizens' interests are disregarded, and dialogue is avoided by political leaders. Furthermore, the winner-takes-all power structure also encourages political leaders to block dialogue. In Nigeria, when one political party wins an election, they often ignore the opposition's views and implement their policies regardless of the opposition's objections.

Additionally, there has been a disconnection in governance, where leadership has become an avenue to enrich oneself and their allies. Instead of public service, it becomes a means to acquire wealth and power. The political establishment has been largely responsible for the country's divisive tendencies, thereby obstructing meaningful dialogue. According to Bolarinwa (2017, pp.31-49), political competition has become the defining feature of Nigerian party politics, leading to power struggles. Political interests tend to override national interests, making it challenging to reach a consensus on contentious issues. The result is that dialogue is seen as a futile activity, which would not yield any benefit. This view has been supported by Majekodunmi (2017), who believes that politics in Nigeria is shaped by the selfish interests of a few elites, further complicating the prospects for meaningful dialogue.

4.6.3   Lack of Effective Communication Channels

Effective communication is the foundation of any dialogue. However, Nigeria's communication infrastructure has been poorly developed, creating an obstacle to meaningful dialogue. Ikeanyibe (2013, p.33-46) observed that there has been a significant challenge in providing affordable and accessible communication channels, especially in rural areas, which account for the majority of the Nigerian population. This lack of communication infrastructure has resulted in many communities being cut off from the rest of the country, which deprives them of critical information, such as government policies and initiatives. Moreover, the media, which is another source of communication, is often censored by the government. The government often passes laws that restrict press freedom and punishes journalists who report negatively. Journalists who report on sensitive topics, such as corruption, political or ethnic tensions, and social issues, can face harassment and arrest, which discourages honest reporting.

A significant obstacle to meaningful dialogue in Nigeria is the lack of effective communication channels. Adeyanju et al. (2020, pp.105-118) argue that Nigeria's communication infrastructure is weak, and this makes it harder to create the conditions necessary for successful dialogue. Lack of adequate communication channels can be attributed to several factors, including poor road infrastructure, insufficient power supply, and poor internet connectivity. These factors limit the ability of individuals and groups to engage in constructive dialogue, resulting in conflict and misunderstanding. Communication breakdowns have been cited as a significant impediment to meaningful dialogue in several studies (Achebe, 2012, p.3; Bolarinwa, 2017, pp.31-49).

4.7.   Overcoming these Obstacles through Dialogue

To overcome the obstacles to meaningful dialogue in Nigeria, there is a need to address the causes of mistrust, political interests, power struggles, and limited communication channels. Despite the obstacles to meaningful dialogue listed above, Nigeria can overcome them by embracing dialogue as the primary means of conflict resolution. This approach requires a clear understanding of the obstacles as well as an effective strategy to navigate them. The following are suggestions:

4.7.1 Addressing Deep-rooted Mistrust in the Country

To address deep-rooted mistrust between ethnic groups, there needs to be a concerted effort to promote mutual understanding. Ogaba (2019, pp.11-23) suggested that Nigerians need to engage in constructive dialogue that emphasizes commonalities and not differences. This approach can be achieved by promoting cultural exchange and inter-ethnic marriages. Moreover, the government needs to implement policies that address economic inequality and corruption, which are areas that generate grievances and mistrust. According to Bello (2018, pp.78-98), Nigeria can employ the following strategies to overcome obstacles to dialogue: Dismantle the ethnic and cultural barriers that fuel mistrust and suspicion among groups. This can be achieved through the promotion of cultural exchange programs that will help people to learn about their differences. Promote economic and social development strategies that recognize the contribution of marginalized groups and promote-inclusivity.

4.7.2. Addressing Political Interests and Power Struggles

To address political interests and power struggles, there needs to be a push for a decentralized political structure that involves more citizens in decision-making. Opejobi (2020, pp.508-521) recommended that Nigeria practice fiscal federalism,

where the resources are controlled by the regions, rather than by the central government. This approach could minimize tensions and incentivize state governments to work for their citizens rather than pursuing their interests. Additionally, Nigeria needs to adopt a policy that supports transparency and accountability from public officials. According to Bello (2018, pp.78-98), Nigeria can employ the following strategies to overcome obstacles to dialogue. Restructure the political system, delimit power center to avoid political power struggle and competition for power, especially within the political establishment

4.7.3. Addressing Lack of Effective Communication Channels

To address the issue of limited communication channels, Nigeria needs to invest in and improve its communication infrastructure. Ogunleye (2015, pp.1-7) suggested that the government should provide affordable communication services to rural areas, which will allow a more significant segment of the population to participate in dialogue and access information. Additionally, the government's censorship of the media should be addressed, and press freedom should be guaranteed. According to Bello (2018), Nigeria can employ the following strategies to overcome obstacles to dialogue: Create effective channels of communication to overcome communication breakdowns. This involves promoting the use of advanced communication technologies such as high-speed internet and mobile-phones.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Summary

The most important objective of this research was to find a lasting problem to the perennial problem of disunity in the country. The research proffered meaningful dialogue as the most effective method to tackle the issues that has divided the country and thus restore a lasting peace and sustainable progress in the country, Nigeria. The study goal was matched upon the theoretical framework of the Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson. Questionnaires were used to gather relevant data for the study, which was then, analyzed using essential percentage tables and the hypotheses tested using Chi-square (X2), and it was observed that:

5.1.1. Religious and Ethnic conflict in Nigeria can only be solved when meaning dialogue between the major stakeholders are held so that grievances can be addressed and a way forward are agreed upon by everyone.

5.1.2. Nigeria can harness the plural nature of its ethnic and religious institution to improve the economic and cultural image of the country.

5.1.3. Meaningful Dialogue can be hindered by so many issues like political polarization, and mistrust. Coincidentally, dialogue is the solution to those obstacles.

The major concern now is whether the Nigerian Government is ready for such dialogue as we saw in 2014? This leaves me agitated because various occasions have shown where people called for dialogue and were not listened to in Nigeria. Since the incessant farmer-herder clashes going on for a while in the country, the government seemed almost tone-deaf to the cry for a dialogue between the various

stakeholders in the country and the government, leading to more and more death in the country.

Furthermore, the various agitation around the country like Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), the Oduduwa community and the Niger-Delta people have presented the nation with a constant reminder for a meaning dialogue that would put to bed the constant conflicts and desire for secession. Unfortunately, the Nigerian government has always applied the same forceful and counterproductive measure which is the military action. No one controls a fire with more fire, which is why meaningful dialogue is the best solution to the perennial conflicts that have kept the country almost in the shadows of its potentials.

What dialogue does is that it douses the anger, and animosity that enables disunity and violence around the country and creates an atmosphere of trust. When grievances are duly addressed, and the causes of agitations looked into, the nation can then enjoy peace and harness her human and natural resources for proper growth and development.

5.2. Conclusion

Meaningful dialogue stands as the most effective diplomatic route to achieving peace and progress in Nigeria. By engaging in open and constructive conversations, stakeholders can address the root causes of conflicts, bridge divides, and foster unity. The Nigerian context presents numerous challenges, but also opportunities for dialogue-driven solutions. Through fostering understanding, inclusivity, and trust, meaningful dialogue can pave the way for sustainable development and a prosperous future for all Nigerians. It is imperative for the government, civil society organizations, and international actors to actively promote and support dialogue initiatives in order to build a peaceful and progressive Nigeria. Meaningful dialogue is an effective diplomatic route to achieving peace and progress

in Nigeria. The country needs to embrace dialogue as a tool for conflict resolution, and the government needs to play a critical role in facilitating dialogue between different groups in the country. Dialogue will promote understanding, tolerance, and cooperation, leading to lasting peace and development in the country.

Nigeria is a diverse country and this diversity has often led to conflicts, and the country has had its fair share of conflicts, wars, and tensions. In recent times, the country has been facing multiple challenges, including insecurity, terrorism, ethnic conflicts, and economic struggles. To address these challenges, there is a need for meaningful dialogue among the different groups in the country. This section will examine recommendations for promoting meaningful dialogue in Nigeria, focusing on government initiatives and policies, involvement of civil society organizations, education and awareness campaigns, and international support and mediation.

5.3. Recommendations for Promoting Meaningful Dialogue in Nigeria
5.3.1 Government Initiatives and Policies

The government plays a crucial role in promoting meaningful dialogue in Nigeria. The government can initiate policies that promote peace, unity, and understanding among the different ethnic and religious groups in the country. It should prioritize the development and implementation of policies that foster inclusivity, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence.

Some government initiatives and policies that can promote meaningful dialogue in Nigeria include:

i.   **Promoting Inclusiveness**: The government should ensure that all ethnic and religious groups in the country are included in governance and decision-making processes. This will give a sense of belonging to all groups and can reduce tensions and conflicts.

ii. **Addressing Injustice**: The government should address issues of injustice and inequality in the country. This includes issues of marginalization, discrimination, and exclusion. In doing so, the government will remove the underlying causes of conflict and promote dialogue.

iii. **Establishing a National Dialogue Framework**: The government should establish a national dialogue framework that brings together representatives of different ethnic and religious groups in the country. This dialogue framework should be used to address issues of national importance, such as national unity, security, and economic development.

iv. **National Reconciliation Commission**: The government should establish a national reconciliation commission that will investigate past conflicts and promote reconciliation among the different groups in the country. The commission should have representation from all ethnic and religious groups and should be given the power to make recommendations for promoting unity and reconciliation. (v) One such initiative could be the establishment of a national dialogue commission, tasked with facilitating discussions and mediating conflicts. This commission should comprise representatives from various ethnic, religious, and political groups, ensuring that all voices are heard and considered.

5.3.2 Involvement of Civil Society Organizations

Civil society organizations play a crucial role in promoting meaningful dialogue in Nigeria. These organizations can bring together different groups in the community and promote understanding and acceptance among them. Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a crucial role in promoting dialogue and fostering social cohesion. These organizations should be actively involved in facilitating

discussions, organizing peace-building initiatives, and advocating for policies that promote inclusivity and dialogue. CSOs can create platforms for dialogue, bringing together individuals from different backgrounds to engage in constructive conversations. Furthermore, CSOs should collaborate with the government to develop and implement programs that address the root causes of conflicts. These programs could focus on promoting inter-ethnic and inter-religious understanding, fostering economic opportunities, and addressing social inequalities. By working together, the government and CSOs can create a conducive environment for meaningful dialogue and peaceful coexistence.

5.3.3 Education and Awareness Campaigns

Education and awareness campaigns can promote understanding and tolerance among different groups in Nigeria. Education plays a vital role in promoting dialogue and understanding among individuals. The Nigerian government should prioritize the inclusion of peace education in the national curriculum. This would equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to engage in dialogue, resolve conflicts peacefully, and appreciate diversity. Peace education should emphasize empathy, tolerance, and respect for others, fostering a culture of dialogue and understanding from an early age. Furthermore, awareness campaigns should be conducted to promote dialogue and challenge stereotypes and prejudices. These campaigns can utilize various mediums, such as television, radio, social media, and community outreach programs. By disseminating accurate information and promoting positive narratives, these campaigns can counter divisive rhetoric and encourage dialogue among Nigerians.

5.3.4 International Support and Mediation

International support and mediation can play a significant role in promoting meaningful dialogue in Nigeria. The international community should provide

financial and technical assistance to the Nigerian government and civil society organizations engaged in peace-building efforts. This support can help strengthen existing initiatives and facilitate the implementation of new programs. Additionally, international organizations and mediators can play a crucial role in facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties. They can provide a neutral platform for discussions, ensuring that all parties are represented and their concerns are addressed. International mediators can also offer expertise in conflict resolution and provide guidance on best practices for promoting dialogue and reconciliation. International support and mediation can promote meaningful dialogue in Nigeria.
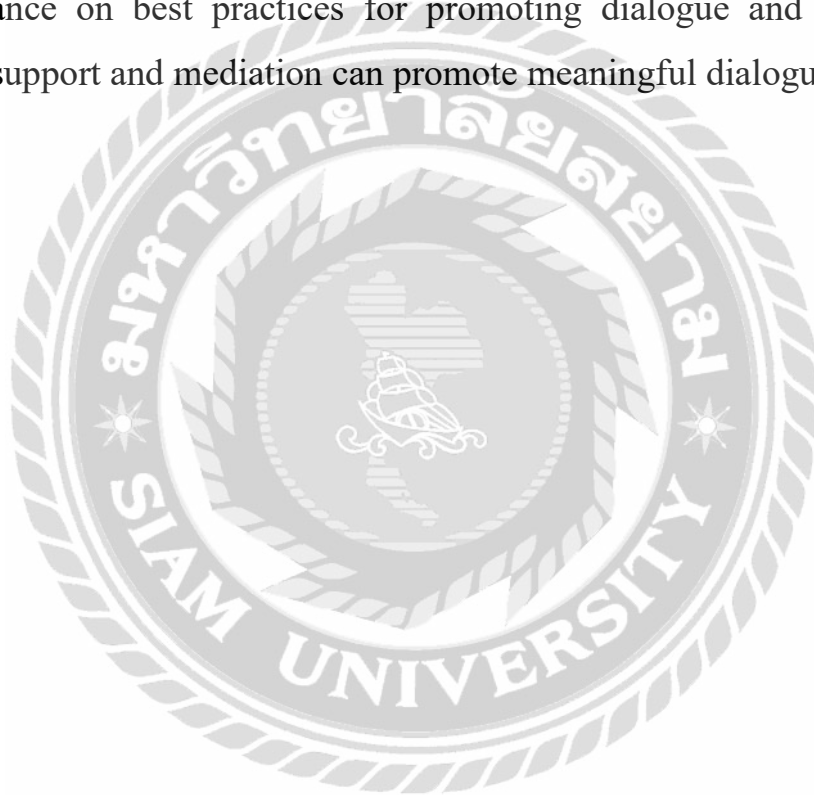
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