



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

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### ABSTRACT

Meaningful dialogue is the shortest diplomatic route to peace and progress in Nigeria. Meaningful dialogue is often overlooked in today's interconnected world. Meaningful Dialogue means engaging in open and constructive conversations that is crucial for building strong relationships, fostering understanding, and promoting personal growth (Duncan, 2024).

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, face to face interviews, 200 hundred respondents from the different parts 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, feelings of marginalization, and erosion of trust in the government. The aforementioned are as a matter of fact the causes of the major insecurities, 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.



## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Background of the study**

Prior to Nigeria's independence in 1960, there were records of ethnic and religious differences in the country. Nigeria, being a conglomerate of many ethnic groups with the three major tribes as Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba, faced issues of land disputes and intertribal wars. 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) 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 sentimentally attached to their beliefs and wild interests for primitive accumulation and socioeconomic exploitation of the people."

After the independence of 1960, there has been a growing sense of inequality across the country regarding how some were treated by others and how the government has been revolving around a particular region. These sentiments led to coups, which eventually resulted in the civil war of 1967-1970. The war was an outburst of many unresolved and unattended sentiments and feelings of marginalization.

Over the years, there has been a growing sense of disproportion in the way many people are treated in the country, necessitating meaningful dialogue to resolve these issues. Reasons for such feelings may include Political polarization, ethnic and religious diversity and security challenges such as terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and farmer-herder clashes, to mention a few. Another issue requiring quick resolution is the disparity in economic development and policies across the country. By investigating various aspects of Nigeria's disunity, this research aims at showcasing the need for a meaningful dialogue to restore national unity and the confidence of Nigerians in their country.

### **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 past 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 meaningful 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, 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 in 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 proposes 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.

### **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. Understand the implications of being a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country
2. To leverage meaningful dialogue as a credible means of bringing together the whole country irrespective of tribe, tongue and religion.
3. Galvanize the unity of the country and hence address the economic and security issues crippling the country.
4. To resolve already accumulated conflicts and address grievances through meaningful dialogue

### **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 of Nigeria and unite the frontiers of the nation.

This research is essential to highlight the dangers created by the wrong or insufficient methods used in the past to address the problems burdening this nation. Suffice it to say that this research aims to educate Nigerians on the need to employ meaningful dialogue as a veritable tool to tackle these debilitating issues that are undermining the unity and development of the country.

### **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 emphasizes employing meaningful dialogue as a tool to drive positive unity in the nation, something that has eluded the nation in the past decades. By doing so, we can resolve issues such as insecurity, education, food crises, unemployment and other problems that have been left unattended due to lack of understanding in the country.

### **Research Questions**

1. How does meaningful dialogue restore the unity of the country, Nigeria?
2. How do we harness the multiplicity of ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria to build a more united front?



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Conflict is a natural part of human interaction, arising at personal, communal, and national levels. Over time, various methods have been employed to resolve conflicts, from warfare to diplomacy. One method that has gained traction in recent years is dialogue. This review explores the role of dialogue in conflict resolution, focusing on its definition, power, and examples of success in various contexts.

### **The Power of Dialogue in Conflict Resolution**

Dialogue has increasingly been recognized as an effective method of resolving disputes. Unlike confrontational approaches, dialogue emphasizes open communication, mutual understanding, and cooperation. In conflict resolution, dialogue serves as a means to bridge differences and facilitate peaceful outcomes.

### **Definition of Meaningful Dialogue**

Dialogue, derived from the Greek words "dia" (through) and "logos" (word or reason), refers to a conversation aimed at understanding between two or more parties. Delgado and Stefancic (2013) define dialogue as a respectful form of communication that fosters trust and mutual respect, while Schrader, Bercovitch, and Houston (2016) highlight the importance of inclusivity and transparency in meaningful dialogue. Through active listening and mutual respect, meaningful dialogue offers a platform where individuals can express their views without fear of judgment or retaliation.

### **The Role of Dialogue in Conflict Resolution**

The role of dialogue in resolving conflicts is significant, as it allows parties to communicate openly and honestly, fostering a deeper understanding of the root causes of the conflict (Kriesberg, 2003). Okuthe (2022) further argues that dialogue serves as a grassroots peace-building tool, helping to address interpersonal conflicts and promote reconciliation.

Dialogue encourages parties to listen to one another, identify mutual interests, and seek consensus-based solutions. It empowers individuals to think creatively and collaboratively, often leading to the discovery of new solutions that might have otherwise been overlooked. Studies by Avruch and Black (2005) reveal that dialogue reduces the likelihood of future conflicts by promoting understanding and cooperation.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

This section outlines the research methods, tools, and processes employed in the study: *Meaningful Dialogue: The Shortest Diplomatic Route to Peace and Progress in Nigeria*. The methodology is designed to address the research questions and objectives, leveraging a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. The following components were key in this research: population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and data analysis methods.



## **Research Design**

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design to understand how meaningful dialogue can foster peace and unity in Nigeria. The design is chosen to explore the perceptions, experiences, and opinions of participants regarding the potential of dialogue as a diplomatic tool in conflict resolution and national progress.

## **Population of the Study**

The population targeted for this study consists of 200 respondents drawn from different parts of Nigeria, representing diverse ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds. These respondents include individuals from all six geopolitical zones, thereby ensuring an inclusive representation of opinions.

## **Sampling Technique**

A simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents. This method ensures that every individual from the target population has an equal chance of being selected, thereby avoiding selection bias. The 200 respondents were chosen based on availability, accessibility, and willingness to participate in the survey and interviews.

## **Data Collection Methods**

To collect data, the study employed two primary data collection tools:

**Questionnaires:** The researcher developed structured questionnaires with closed-ended questions. These questions aimed to gather demographic information and specific opinions on dialogue, its role in conflict resolution, and its importance in promoting national unity. The questionnaires were distributed manually and electronically to respondents across different regions of Nigeria.

Content of the Questionnaire: The questionnaire had a preamble explaining the objectives of the study, how to fill out the questions, and an assurance of confidentiality. Key thematic areas in the questionnaire include:

- Perceptions of dialogue in conflict resolution.
- Experiences of disunity and marginalization.
- Opinions on how meaningful dialogue can help restore peace in Nigeria.

**Oral Interviews:** In addition to the questionnaire, face-to-face interviews were conducted with selected participants to provide deeper insights into the responses provided in the survey. The interviews allowed the researcher to explore the interviewees' experiences, sentiments, and expectations regarding Nigeria's ongoing conflicts and the potential for dialogue as a solution.

## **Data Analysis**

The data collected from both questionnaires and interviews were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Responses from the questionnaire were tabulated, and simple percentage tables (X and Y) were employed to evaluate the hypotheses and compare responses. This helped to ascertain how meaningful dialogue is perceived across different demographics.

**Coding and Categorization:** Responses from the interviews were transcribed and coded based on recurring themes such as:

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- Causes of national disunity.
- The role of dialogue in conflict resolution.
- Suggested ways of implementing meaningful dialogue in Nigeria.

This thematic analysis enabled the identification of trends, patterns, and correlations within the data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The research strictly adhered to ethical standards by ensuring:

**Informed Consent:** All respondents were informed about the purpose of the research, their rights to confidentiality, and their ability to withdraw from the study at any point without consequences.

**Confidentiality:** Personal data collected from participants were kept private and used solely for academic purposes. Participants were assured that no identifying information would be shared or disclosed without their consent.

### **Limitations of the Study**

While the research made valuable findings, certain limitations were encountered:

**Financial Constraints:** Limited funds hindered the researcher's ability to travel extensively for data collection, especially to remote areas. This restriction limited the diversity of respondents in some regions.

**Time Constraints:** The research was carried out within a six-month timeframe, limiting the researcher's ability to conduct a more extensive follow-up and longitudinal analysis. Despite these limitations, the research was able to provide a comprehensive overview of the role of meaningful dialogue in promoting peace in Nigeria.

### **The revised timeline is as follows:**

1. Months 1-2: Literature review, proposal development, and ethical approval.
2. Months 3-4: Data collection (interviews, focus groups, surveys).
3. Months 5-6: Data analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of findings through reports, presentations, and publications.

### **Chapter 4: 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.

## Chapter 5: 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. While Nigeria faces numerous challenges, it also presents opportunities for dialogue-driven solutions. By 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 to build a peaceful and progressive Nigeria. Meaningful dialogue is an essential tool for conflict resolution, and the government must play a critical role in facilitating discussions between different groups across the country. Dialogue will promote understanding, tolerance, and cooperation, leading to lasting peace and development.

Nigeria's diversity has often led to conflicts, and the country has had its fair share of wars and tensions. Recently, Nigeria has faced multiple challenges, including insecurity, terrorism, ethnic conflicts, and economic struggles. To address these challenges, meaningful dialogue between the different groups in the country is essential. This section will explore 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.

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