



## Strategies for Promoting and Maintaining Peace in Communities as Perceived by Guidance Counsellors

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**ABSTRACT:** This study determines the Strategies for promoting and maintaining peace in communities as perceived by Guidance Counsellors in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design method. One research question guided the study. The sample size for the study is 150 guidance counsellors selected through simple random sampling technique with replacement. Questionnaire on Counsellors perceived strategies for promoting and maintaining peace in communities is used for data collection (QOCPSFPAMPICS). The reliability co-efficient value of the instrument of 0.80 is established through the use of Split half method of estimation. On the sport method of administration of the instrument on the respondents is used by the researchers for the study to ensure a hundred percent return of the questionnaire. Arithmetic weighted mean which criterion is 2.50 for any item considered as a factor while an item that is below this value is considered not being a factor is used for the data analysis. The findings of the study revealed that use of peace building committees, having equal representations in things of collective interests, working with schools towards reducing deviant behaviours among students, setting measures for preventing gang groups within communities, launching of peace campaigns, use of peace gatherings, setting clear and measurable objectives, preaching peace through Education, having fair and just policies, listening to the voices of people. The study also revealed that use of force and strength is not an acceptable strategy for promoting and maintaining peace within communities. Among other things, the researchers recommended that there will be formation of peace committee whose members should be made to tour into other counties to learn more about peace building. Also, Government should recognize the peace committee members as peace representatives and be paying them salaries for encouragement.

**KEYWORDS:** Communities, Peace, Perceive and guidance counsellors, Strategies.

### INTRODUCTION

When one switches on the TV news, open the newspaper or click onto a popular news website, one will be hearing news about a terrorist attack, war, ongoing conflict and a general lack of peace amongst different groups of people within different communities. In an increasingly globalized world, there is need that one should understand each other better, stand ever more united and strive for peace. Sadly, there is war here and there. War is a terrible experience and anybody that is going in support of war can be taken as an enemy of human society. Peace is a most fundamental asset to community building, personal growth, and to the very survival of human planet. Advancing for peaceful co-existence is essential to ensuring productive, meaningful lives and sustainable societies. It is among the most valuable assets every society looks and seeks for in the whole world. Some even considers it as the most supreme among human needs. African people have been known for their peaceful co-existence with their neighbours despite race or colour but today such atmosphere is no longer obtainable. There are crisis and clashes of interests here and there, thereby disrupting the peaceful nature of the African people. There are wars in almost every community over one thing or the other and innocent people are being killed now and then. Nigeria as a country is witnessing such presently. Violence and killings among people in Nigeria has become a behavioural pattern which has degenerated into a typical global issue. In the history of human nature, there has never be a time violence and war has bring lasting peace among the victims rather it causes undeletable scars that awaits the arrival of children that have not yet been born to read and continue the strife. There is no gain in war. Violence and conflict has been seen as an obstacle to progress, political stability, economic prosperity and overall social development because of its destructive nature. It has left many individuals of all walks of life, children, adults, literates and illiterates, dead or maimed for life (IkechukwuIlomuanya, 2014). Violence destroys communities and innocent families and destroys economic and social development of a nation. It also brings about long-term physical and psychological harm both on adults and children thereby leading to a decrease



in human resource and material things in the land. No community can thrive in violence. Murthy & Lakshminarayana (2015) opine that in violence, women are more affected than men, followed by children, elderly and the disabled.

It is a well-known fact that there are certain factors that seem to bring about crisis within communities. Those factors include the following: individual differences, cultural differences, religious differences, clash of interests, unequal representation, social changes, to mention but a few. All these issues can still be addressed and become settled without taking to violence or war if everyone will embrace peace. No nation or community can experience development in the face of ethnic, communal and religious crisis (Neba & Ogegewodia 2018). Violence or war has its ugly effects on the victims and their communities. Surveyed populations rated poverty and lack of access or inequitable access to social services as amongst the top drivers of conflict (World Bank 2011) while insufficient or inequitable access to education was a factor in the decision of adolescents and youths to join armed groups (Ashby 2002). Inequitable social service access and delivery are particularly relevant where there is perceived discrimination towards a particular identity group or region, particularly in the immediate aftermath of conflict and even in later post-conflict settings (IkechukwuIomuanya, 2014). Also, a background research for the WDR argued that poor access to basic services is a defining characteristic of fragile and conflict-affected states: low-income countries disproportionately face high risks of relapse, and increasing access to basic services raises income levels (Baird 2002). Still on the ills of violence and war, McCandless (2012) opines that infrastructure and delivery systems that support social services are often severely damaged during violent conflict where they are existing in the first place. Such services can be targeted in post-conflict settings, and delivery voids can be filled by criminal factions or by radical groups in ways that reflect unaddressed conflict drivers and undermine peace consolidation efforts. After conflict, death tolls can be higher than during conflict if access to safe drinking water or sanitation is not assured. Further, activities associated with conflict often continue, for instance, kidnappings, sexual violence against women and young girls and recruitment of teenagers into war. Violence and conflict has been seen as an obstacle to progress, political stability, economic prosperity and overall social development because of its destructive nature. It has left many individuals of all walks of life, children, adults, literates and illiterates, dead or maimed for life (IkechukwuIomuanya, 2014). Solomon (2010) contends that various communities have been bedeviled by various forms of crisis and conflicts like political violence, communal conflicts, ethno religious crisis among others and these have made so many people to relocate to other places which they considered to be "safe areas". With peace, there will be absence of all these calamities.

The importance of peace to the development of the Nigeria communities cannot be overemphasized. Peace is key to the overall development of the Nigeria as a nation with respect to socio-economic growth of Africa. The epidemic violence, conflicts and crisis everywhere call to address the concerns and situations. There is need to toll the line of peace from the point of view of counsellors in settling matters of concern within African societies. Peace is an essential ingredient in maintaining economic development, social order and political stability. Farrington & Ttofi, (2009) is of the opinion that peace facilitates the growth of investments, generates more employment opportunities and attracts more tourists. Economic development generally refers to the sustained, concerted actions of policymakers and communities that promote the standard of living and economic health of a specific area. Peace refers to absence of hostility. It refers to an environment that is characterized by healthy interpersonal and international relationships, acknowledgment of equality and fairness. Peace, for Nwolise (2003) is an absence of dissension, violence, or war. However, peace, is also seen as concord, or harmony and tranquility. It is defined as a state of law or civil government, a state of justice or goodness, a balance or equilibrium of Powers (Oyeshola 2005). Also, for the present researchers, Peace is the instrument through which a country can transform from the status of underdeveloped country to that of developed one. The benefits of peace can never be overemphasized. Peace helps in addressing the root causes of every conflict that may lead to war among communities. Also with peace, instead of living in tension and fear, communities and people will have better concentration on the matters that promote development, develop efficiency in handling affairs of the community, have a sense of strength and power, become tolerance and tact, have freedom from stress, anxieties and worries that abound here and there, communities and people will not be affected by what other people/communities think or say about them from: <https://www.successconsciousness.com/blog/inner-peace/benefits-of-peace-of-mind/> Moreover, peace enriches communities and individual lives, as it directs them to embrace diversity and support for one another to the fullest extent possible through caring, generosity, and fairness. It is a cornerstone for attaining a sustainable, just, meaningful, vibrant, and fulfilling personal and community life (Farrington & Ttofi (2009). Hartsough (2014) highlights that peace cannot be sustained without fairness, justice, inclusiveness, and human rights. These must be embedded into the community in order to foster agreement and harmony. Peace is strongest when derived from social justice, which can be defined as ensuring fundamental



rights and equity to all. Strengthening civil society, the rules that bind community people and allow them to live productively together, with established means of resolving conflict is the means to those ends. There is need to determine those factors that will promote and sustain peace in the African communities and this is the concern of this study for a richer and more secured coexistence among people of different cultures and races.

On the strategies that will help to maintain and sustain peace in the African communities, Idliby, Oliver & Warner (2006) and Hartsough (2014) suggested that valuing and considering both oneself and others, discovering and assessing issues and assets that affect all in the community can help in sustaining and maintaining peace. In the same way children become enriched when they learn to take more responsibilities, the meaning in community live will grow when the community people are made to learn to recognize and take more responsibility for one another and the world at large. Also, in organizing community for promoting peace, discussions for identifying issues of concern such as crime areas, community assets to protect (such as parks, schools and organizations), and factors that impact community violence (such as vacant lots and abandoned buildings) will be made in such a way that the residents of the communities will participate in. on the other hand, Shetgiri (2013) is of the opinion that setting clear and measurable objectives and ensuring that policies and procedures benefit the entire community by leaders can give way for peace in the communities. In setting clear and measurable objectives, using inclusiveness and listening to the voices of the entire community as it concerns development, implementation, and evaluation as well as celebrating the success of these actions can pave way for peace and progress that will be transparently monitored thereby avoiding exclusion. Also, in a call for peaceful co-existence within the communities, the policies and procedures need to follow a clear, fair, and just rule of law. This will be possible through having full participation of diverse residents and stakeholders in its development and maintenance so that everyone's needs and contributions will be incorporated.

Furthermore, Harris & Morison (2015) suggest that these strategies like justice, transformation, politics, sustainability and education can enhance maintenance of peace within the society. According to them, justice ensures that human basic needs are met, ensure that institutions that are not responsive to human needs are removed and that human rights are preserved. When these are in place, peace will reign and people will leave peacefully with one another. On transformation, they posit that human beings are capable of love that can overcome feelings of hatred, therefore, their behaviours and beliefs that are negative to peace can be transformed, and also, withdraw allegiance to violent institutions. On using politics, it is very clear that humans are rational and conflicts should be managed without violence by appealing to common interest. This can be achieved through creating institutions, laws, treaties and so on to negotiate conflicts since what seems to be blocking solutions is private agendas and disagreements. On using sustainability for maintaining peace, human beings are both spiritually and materially connected to all others and to the natural world. There should be enough material and emotional-spiritual security for all. In order to achieve this, that working towards nonviolence in all relationships with human and natural world and education should also be both holistic and bio centric. Then, on using education, they contend that violent behaviours and beliefs of people that are anti-peace should be changed through teaching of alternatives to violence and also explain consequences of violence.

However, Mohammed (2014) carried out a study on factors influencing peaceful co-existence among the pastoral communities in Wajir west sub-county, Kenya. The study sought to investigate Factors Influencing Peaceful Co-Existence among the Pastoral Communities. The study population was 420 residents comprising the Provincial administration officers (DC's, DO's, and Chiefs), Civic leaders, senior security personnel (OCS, OCPD), representatives of Civil Society Organization and Faith-based groups and local residents. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study employed both probability and nonprobability sampling procedures. The researcher utilized available sampling procedure to get a sample totaling to 165 respondents comprising of 120 local residents, 23 provincial administration officers, 3 senior security officers, 9 civic leaders and 10 representatives of the civil society and Faith-based organizations. Quantitative data from questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Measures of distribution, percentages and frequencies are applied in analyzing the data with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The study concluded that poor government policies and programs was the main cause of conflict and among other things having enough peace building programs, launching peace campaigns and creating peace building committees that will be paying salaries will help in enhancing peace.

Also, in a study carried out by Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) (2020) on analyzing the factors that sustain peace reported that measures of inclusiveness, fair representation, justice and transformation can help in retaining peace. Freeman,



(2020) adds that making use of interfaith events, peace gatherings, working with schools and prevention of gang groups can go a long way in sustaining the ties among the people from different cultures thereby maintain peace within the communities.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Wherever people live together and own many things in common, conflicts must arise and warring cannot bring a lasting solution to the problem. War is a terrible experience and any person that is going on the way of war can be taken to be an enemy of humanity that is in love with blood shedding and inflicting injuries and hardship on human society. When there is war and violence in the society, women, children, elders and the disabled suffer most while the youths, especially the male ones will be killed and maimed and also properties worth billions of money will be destroyed. There is no situation that cannot be approached or solved peacefully. It is true that some part of the community may not succumb or agree to the terms stipulated but at last, a peaceful concord will be reached. Guidance counsellors are of the opinion that embracing peace strategies by leaders for peaceful coexistence is better than warring that brings unforgettable effects on humans. This study therefore sought to determine strategies for promoting and sustaining peace among communities as perceived by Guidance Counsellors.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

One research question guides the study and it is as follows:

What are the Counsellors perceived strategies for promoting and maintaining peace in African communities?

## METHODS

Descriptive survey design is adopted by the researchers for the study. The population of the study consists of 264 Guidance Counsellors in Anambra state of Nigeria while the sample size for the study is 150 Counsellors drawn through random sampling technique with replacement. Questionnaire on Counsellors perceived strategies for promoting and maintaining peace in African society is used for data collection (QOCPSPAMPICS). The reliability co-efficient value of the instrument of 0.80 is established through the use of Split half method of estimation. On the sport method of administration of the instrument on the respondents is used by the researchers for the study to ensure a hundred percent return of the questionnaire. Arithmetic weighted mean which criterion is 2.50 for any item considered as a factor while an item that is below this value is considered not being a factor is used for the data analysis.

## RESULT

### RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the counsellors perceived strategies for promoting and maintaining peace in communities?

The data obtained in respect of the above Research Question are analyzed in the table below and result presented accordingly.

### Counsellors perceived strategies for promoting and maintaining peace in communities

S/NO	Items	Mean score	Ranking	Remark
1	use of peace building committees	3.25	8 <sup>th</sup>	Accepted
2	Having equal representations in things of Collective interests	3.45	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Accepted
3	working with schools towards reducing Deviant behaviours among students	3.39	6 <sup>th</sup>	Accepted
4	Setting Measures for preventing gang Groups within communities	3.39	6 <sup>th</sup>	Accepted
5	Launching peace campaigns	3.41	5 <sup>th</sup>	Accepted
6	Use of peace gatherings	3.47	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Accepted
7	Setting clear and measurable objectives	3.42	4 <sup>th</sup>	Accepted
8	Preaching Peace through Education	3.31	7 <sup>th</sup>	Accepted
9	Having fair and just policies	3.49	1 <sup>st</sup>	Accepted





10	Listening to the voices of people	3.39	6 <sup>th</sup>	Accepted
11	Use of force and strength	2.15	9 <sup>th</sup>	Not Accepted

The analysis of data presented on the above table indicated the counsellors' perceptions on the strategies for promoting and maintaining peace within African societies. The strategies as agreed by the counsellors, their means and rankings are as follows: use of peace building committees 3.25 which ranked 8<sup>th</sup>, having equal representations in things of collective interests scored 3.45 and ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>, working with schools towards reducing deviant behaviours among students and Setting measures for preventing gang Groups within communities have values of 3.39 with 6<sup>th</sup> position in ranking respectively, Launching of peace campaigns has a mean value of 3.41 and ranked 5<sup>th</sup>, Use of peace gatherings 3.47 ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>, Setting clear and measurable objectives 3.42 with 4<sup>th</sup>, Preaching Peace through Education 3.31 ranked 7<sup>th</sup>, Having fair and just policies 3.49 ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, Listening to the voices of people 3.39 which ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in position. All the respondents are of the opinion that Use of force and strength with the mean value of 2.15 and 9<sup>th</sup> in ranking is not an acceptable strategy for promoting and maintaining peace within communities.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study are discussed based on the research question. The counselling strategies for promoting and maintaining peace within African societies revealed by the study are as follows: use of peace building committees, having equal representations in things of collective interests, working with schools towards reducing deviant behaviours among students, Setting measures for preventing gang Groups within communities, Launching of peace campaigns, Use of peace gatherings, Setting clear and measurable objectives, Preaching Peace through Education, Having fair and just policies, Listening to the voices of people. The study also revealed that Use of force and strength is not an acceptable strategy for promoting and maintaining peace within communities.

This study reveals that having equal representations in the things of collective interests, working with schools towards reducing deviant behaviours among students, setting measures for preventing gang groups within communities and use of peace gatherings are among the strategies for promoting and maintaining peace within African communities. These strategies gave a support to a study carried out by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) (2020) on analyzing the factors that sustain peace which reported that measures of inclusiveness, fair representation, justice and transformation help in retaining peace. Also, the findings support that of Freeman, (2020) that adds that making use of interfaith events, peace gatherings, working with schools and prevention of gang groups can go a long way in sustaining the ties among the people from different cultures thereby maintain peace within the communities.

Also, the findings of this study reveals that use of peace building committees and launching peace campaigns are among the strategies for promoting and maintaining peace within African communities. These findings are also in line with that of Mohammed (2014) who carried out a study on factors influencing peaceful co-existence among the pastoral communities in Wajir west sub-county, Kenya and the study revealed that poor government policies and programs was the main cause of conflict and violence while having enough peace building programs, launching peace campaigns and creating peace building committees that will be paying salaries will help in enhancing peace in the society.

Moreover, the present study reveals that having fair and just policies, listening to the voices of people and preaching peace through Education are strategies for promoting and maintaining peace within the communities. These finding agreed with that of Shetgiri (2013) who concluded that setting clear and measurable objectives and ensuring that policies and procedures benefit the entire community by leaders are ways for enhancing peace in the communities. The findings are also in concordance with that of Hartsough (2014) who highlights that peace cannot be sustained without policies that operate with fairness, justice, inclusiveness, and human rights. Furthermore, the findings are also in line with that of Harris & orison (2015) indicates that strategies like justice, transformation, politics, sustainability and peace education can enhance maintenance of peace within the society.

Finally, the study reveals that use of force and strength is not an acceptable strategy for promoting and maintaining peace within communities which is in line with that of Nwolise (2003) who adduce that absence of dissension, violence, or war promotes peace.

## CONCLUSION

The present study determines the strategies for promoting and maintaining peace within African communities as perceived by counsellors. The findings of the study revealed that use of peace building committees, having equal representations in things of



collective interests, working with schools towards reducing deviant behaviours among students, setting measures for preventing gang groups within communities, launching of peace campaigns, use of peace gatherings, Setting clear and measurable objectives, preaching peace through Education, having fair and just policies, listening to the voices of people. The study also revealed that Use of force and strength is not an acceptable strategy for promoting and maintaining peace within communities. The counsellors are of the opinion that if leaders in different positions within African communities can operate with these strategies that peaceful co-existence of which Africans are known for before will return.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend the following:

1. There will be formation of peace committee. The members should be made to tour in other counties to learn more about peace building.
2. Government should recognize them as peace representatives and be paying them salaries.
3. The peace representatives should initiate meeting people in churches and launching peace campaigns as processes for promoting peace.
4. Leaders at different levels of position should maintain having equal representations in things of collective interests, working with schools towards reducing deviant behaviours among students and setting measures for preventing gang groups within communities.

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*Cite this Article: Uzoekwe, Helen Efeyadu, Nnadi, Grace Chinyere, Edna Nkechi Ofojebe, Nwobi Ngozika Lovina, Taiwo Abiodun Ojo (2023). Strategies for Promoting and Maintaining Peace in Communities as Perceived by Guidance Counsellors. International Journal of Current Science Research and Review, 6(1), 395-401*