

Media Representation of Violent Crisis And Ethnic Supremacy in Wukari LGA, Taraba State

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<p><i>With over four hundred (400) ethnic groups, Nigeria since independence has remained a multi-ethnic nation state, which has been grappling and trying to cope with the problem of ethnicity on one hand and the problem of ethno-religious conflicts on the other. This is because over the years the phenomena of ethnicity and religious intolerance have led to incessant recurrence of ethnic and religious motivated conflicts, which have birthed many ethnic militias like the OPC (o'dua people congress), the Bakassi boys, Niger-delta Avengers, Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) etc with the emergence of these militias and the deep divides between the ethnic groups, religious intolerance has become more violent and bloody with more devastating results using the ethnic militias as the executors of ethno-religious agenda. The article centers on violent ethnic crisis in Wukari, the article argues strongly for the Media to fully grasp the contentious issues that fuel crisis and report accordingly without sensationalism. The article goes ahead and recommend investigative journalism and more so peace Journalism, so that facts could be separated from fictions and violent language can be mitigated with conciliatory or tolerant language.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Conflict Resolution, Crisis Management, Ethnic Supremacy, Media Representation, Mutual Tolerance.</p>
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<p>Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.</p> <p>Citation: Inaku K. Egere & Kovona, Hezekiah. (2026). Media Representation of Violent Crisis And Ethnic Supremacy in Wukari LGA, Taraba State. UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (UKRJAHS), 2(5), 114-122.</p>	

Introduction

Violent crises have increasingly become defining features of multi-ethnic societies, particularly in regions where historical grievances, identity politics, and competition over land and power intersect. Across the globe, media institutions have served as the primary conduit through which such conflicts are narrated, interpreted, and transmitted to wider audiences. Through selection, emphasis, language, and imagery, the media do not merely relay events but actively shape public understanding of violence, responsibility, and legitimacy. In deeply divided societies, this representational power becomes especially consequential, as media narratives can either attenuate tensions or contribute to their escalation (Wolfsfeld, 2004).

In Africa, violent communal conflicts are often framed within ethnic and indigene-settler dichotomies, reflecting broader struggles over belonging and supremacy. Media representations in such contexts frequently mirror existing

social hierarchies and political alignments, sometimes privileging dominant ethnic narratives while marginalising others. Studies across the continent of Africa indicate that conflict reporting tends to rely on elite sources, official communiqués, official voices and crisis-driven reportage, leaving little room for historical nuance or the voices of vulnerable communities (Okhueigbe & Dike, 2025). These representational patterns shape how ethnic superiority and victimhood are constructed in the public sphere.

Nigeria presents a particularly complex media-conflict environment due to its ethnic plurality, fragile federal structure, and recurrent communal violence. Ethnic conflicts in the Middle Belt, including parts of Taraba, Benue and Niger States, have been persistently framed through ethnic and religious lenses, often simplifying multifaceted disputes into binary narratives of aggressors

and victims. Nigerian media coverage of violent crises has been criticised for sensationalism, episodic framing, and the reproduction of inflammatory ethnic tags, which can strengthen stereotypes and deepen social dissections (Pate, 2011).

Within this national context, Taraba State has experienced recurrent episodes of violent conflict involving ethnic groups such as the Jukun, Tiv, Fulani, and others. These crises are historically rooted in disputes over land ownership, religious affiliations, political representation, and claims of indigeneity. Media reportage of such conflicts has often foregrounded casualty figures and retaliatory attacks while offering limited contextual grounding in the historical and socio-political foundations of the violence. Consequently, media narratives have played a significant role in shaping public perceptions of ethnic dominance and marginalisation within the state (Best, 2007; Alubo, 2011).

Wukari Local Government Area occupies a central place in Taraba State's conflict history, particularly regarding the protracted Jukun–Tiv crises. As the traditional homeland of the Jukun people and a contested political space, Wukari has been repeatedly portrayed in the media as a theatre of ethnic confrontation, just like the biblical Naptali and Zebulun. Media reports emanating from Wukari often adopt charged language that frames the conflict in terms of ethnic supremacy, territorial entitlement, and collective blame. Such portrayals risk obscuring the complexity of the crisis while reinforcing rigid ethnic boundaries in public consciousness.

The representation of violence in Wukari by national and regional media has also been shaped by the pressures of immediacy, insecurity, and limited access to conflict zones. Journalists frequently rely on second-hand accounts, official statements, and ethnically aligned sources, which can result in partial or skewed narratives. In such circumstances, media accounts may inadvertently legitimise supremacist claims by echoing dominant ethnic discourses or uncritically reproducing accusations against perceived “outsider” groups (Pate & Oso, 2014).

Furthermore, the language and framing adopted in crisis reporting can influence how audiences interpret the legitimacy of violence and the moral standing of the groups involved. Recurrent use of labels such as “indigenes,” “settlers,” or “invaders” in relation to Wukari conflicts embeds notions of ethnic entitlement and exclusion within media narratives. Over time, as Onuoha (2015) holds, these representational choices contribute to the normalisation of ethnic hierarchy and the justification of retaliatory violence in the name of communal survival or supremacy.

Beyond immediate reportage, media representations of violent crises in Wukari also shape collective memory and

post-conflict narratives. What is emphasised or omitted in media accounts influences how communities remember past violence and assign blame or innocence. In contexts where reconciliation remains fragile, persistent framing of conflicts along ethnic supremacy lines can hinder peace-building efforts by sustaining narratives of historical grievance and mutual suspicion (Lynch, 2008; Shaw, 2012).

Against this backdrop, examining media representation of violent crisis and ethnic supremacy in Wukari LGA becomes essential for understanding how conflict narratives are constructed and circulated within Nigerian public discourse. The background to this study is therefore anchored in the recognition that media portrayals are not neutral reflections of reality but socially situated narratives that interact with power, identity, and violence. Situating Wukari within broader national and regional patterns of conflict reporting provides the necessary context for interrogating how ethnic supremacy is articulated, reinforced, or contested through media representations.

Literature Review

The nature of the crisis

The violent crisis in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State is best characterised not as episodic communal violence but as a protracted, structurally embedded conflict driven by contested indigeneity, land ownership, religious and political legitimacy. Scholars consistently argue that the crisis reflects a deeper struggle over historical entitlement and territorial authority, particularly between the Jukun and Tiv communities, where ethnicity operates as a proxy for access to power and resources rather than as a mere cultural marker (Egwu, 2015; Best, 2016). The conflict is cyclical and cumulative, marked by long periods of covert tension punctuated by violent eruptions, suggesting a pattern of unresolved grievances rather than spontaneous aggression (Albert, 2017). Colonial administrative practices and post-colonial governance failures are widely identified as having institutionalised identity hierarchies that continue to shape present-day claims of dominance and exclusion in Wukari (Suberu, 2018; Mustapha, 2019). In this sense, the nature of the crisis is fundamentally political, even when expressed in ethnic or communal idioms.

Critically, contemporary analyses emphasise that Wukari crisis has evolved into a multi-layered conflict system, sustained by elite manipulation, weak state mediation, and the erosion of traditional conflict-management mechanisms. Krause (2020) and Abbass (2021) observe that local political actors and conflict entrepreneurs exploit identity narratives to mobilise violence during periods of electoral competition or resource scarcity, thereby

transforming communal grievances into instruments of political bargaining. The proliferation of small arms, youth militancy, and informal security groups has further militarised social relations, blurring the boundary between self-defence and aggression (Hazen & Horner, 2017; Onuoha, 2020). At the same time, repeated state interventions, often reactive and security-driven, have failed to dismantle the structural foundations of the crisis, reinforcing a culture of impunity and mistrust (Alemika, 2018; Obi, 2021).

The concept of conflict/crisis

Although experts always hold that conflict as a concept is impalpable, Egere and Okhueigbe (2024) give it a treasurable rooting that captures it from its etymology to its conceptual connotation and denotation. According to them:

The word conflict is derived from the Latin word “confligere” which means to strike together or to clash. The concept is as old as humanity. It can be traced to the garden of Eden where our first parents “Adam and Eve” had conflict with God which led to their being thrown out of the garden (Genesis 1:23). Conflict most times emerges from interaction among human beings who in their day to day activities interacts with one another either interpersonal or group level or even mass. Conflict is defined as any conduct of struggle, opposition in compatibility, interference, divergence of interest, tension, division, indifference among human beings in their process of interactions among themselves. However, other definitions of conflict by scholars include the following as seen in Adenyi, (2016). Conflict (Kilesberg 1973), is a relationship between two people or more parties who believe they have incompatible goals. Coser (1956) sees conflict as a struggle between opponents over values, and claim to resources. Ifesinachi (2009) defines conflict as the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups. The use of force and armed violence in pursuit of interest and goals or produce armed conflict (p. 214)

For the purpose of this article, this understanding is adequate and the word Conflict would be used interchangeably with the word Crisis.

Ethnicity

Apewen and Aboh (2024, p.31) capture ethnicity as “a social phenomenon associated with competition among members of different ethnic groups within a political system where language and culture are the most prominent attributes” rightly, they added “in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, ethnicity is more connected to communal features, geographical locality, linguistic characteristics and cultural

elements” (p.31). This is the act of belonging to a particular ethnic group, Osagbe (1995) sees ethnicity as empowerment or mobilization of ethnic identity and differences to gain advantage in situation of competition, conflict refers to when individuals or groups from different ethnic groups decides to slug it out by using open confrontation as a means of expressing their grievances against one another. For example, the ethnic fight or struggle in Nigeria between the Hausa/Fulani and other tribes, especially Igbos.

Media representation of violent crises

For According to Egere and Okhueigbe (2024, p.135) “media representation refers to the depiction of individuals, communities, and societal issues across various media forms, including news, entertainment, advertising, and popular culture.” Contemporary scholarship on media representation of violent crises stresses the complex interplay between framing practices, platform affordances, and audience effects in shaping how conflict is understood. Lilie Chouliaraki’s recent work on the *weaponisation of victimhood* highlights how media narratives can rhetorically construct victims and aggressors, influencing public empathy and moral judgment in crisis news coverage. Mohammed’s 2025 systematic review foregrounds the emotional and psychological toll on journalists reporting war and terrorism, reminding us that media production itself is shaped by trauma exposure. Scholars such as Eltantawy, Wiest, and Nasereddin (2023) explore how social media hashtags and networked communications co-construct crisis frames, while KhosraviNik and Siapera extend this to show how geopolitical biases are reproduced in digital spaces.

Research on harmful information by Ulbricht and Rizk provides a systematic typology of harms generated by conflict-related content on digital platforms, demonstrating how misinformation, disinformation, and emotionally saturated narratives heighten real-world risks by normalizing fear, inciting hostility, and distorting situational awareness (Ulbricht & Rizk, 2022). Closely aligned with this perspective, the *Humanitarian Crisis Coverage Report* documents the predominance of humanitarian and military frames in contemporary conflict reporting, noting their capacity to foreground suffering while simultaneously marginalizing structural and historical explanations of violence (Humanitarian Crisis Coverage Report, 2021). Empirical studies by Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston. (2019) and Gautier, Chew, C., and de Vries, (2023) further illustrate this ambivalence, showing that while humanitarian framing can foster empathy and moral engagement, it often simplifies complex political economies of violence and reproduces episodic rather than thematic interpretations.

At the convergence of theoretical and empirical inquiry, a growing body of scholarship interrogates the broader societal consequences of violent crisis coverage. Sunstein's (2018) analysis of informational cascades, alongside Tufekci's (2017) work on algorithmic amplification, cautions that digitally mediated communication environments tend to intensify polarization and emotional simplification rather than deliberative understanding. In a related psychological dimension, Pe'er and Slone (2016) demonstrate that sustained exposure to mediated armed conflict is significantly associated with elevated distress, anxiety, and desensitization among younger audiences. Employing computational methods, Feliciani and Corbetta (2020) reveal through lexical and sentiment analysis that fear-laden and alarmist language dominates media coverage of crowd tragedies, reinforcing a persistent drift toward sensationalism in crisis journalism. Earlier framing studies by Vladisavljević (2014) expose enduring asymmetries between Western and non-Western media systems, a critique echoed in analyses of "war on terror" reporting that highlight partisan alignment and narrative homogenization (Entman, 2004; Kellner, 2007).

Ethnic supremacy in Wukari LGA, Taraba State

Ethnic supremacy in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State is widely conceptualised in Nigerian scholarship as a structurally produced hierarchy rooted in historical privilege, land control, and political recognition rather than as episodic communal hostility. Studies on Tiv–Jukun relations consistently trace the persistence of conflict to colonial and post-colonial arrangements that institutionalised unequal access to land, chieftaincy systems, and local governance structures (Joshua, 2017; Attah, 2018; Odigbo, 2018). The indigene–settler dichotomy, repeatedly identified as a central axis of exclusion, has functioned as a legitimising framework through which dominant groups assert cultural authenticity and political entitlement, while marginalising others from full civic participation (Abuh, Amayll, & Ogwuche, 2017; Isaac & Gamisa, 2024). Nigerian conflict scholars argue that traditional authority structures, rather than acting as neutral mediators, often reproduce these hierarchies by embedding ethnic privilege within customary land tenure and dispute-resolution mechanisms (Ikong & Zhema, 2021; Suleiman et al., 2025). Consequently, ethnicity in Wukari becomes not merely an identity marker but a political instrument of domination, sustaining claims of supremacy through historically sedimented norms and institutional practices.

Empirical literature further demonstrates that ethnic supremacy in Wukari has deep developmental and human security implications, reinforcing cycles of violence, economic stagnation, and social fragmentation. Recurrent

conflicts have disrupted agricultural productivity, weakened local markets, and entrenched livelihood insecurity, particularly among groups excluded from land ownership and decision-making processes (Gani, 2025; Umar & Gali, 2025). Beyond economic losses, scholars highlight the differentiated social costs of ethnic domination, noting its disproportionate impact on women, children, and displaced populations whose vulnerabilities are intensified by prolonged instability (Okeke & Bello, 2025). Critically, state and security-led interventions have been shown to offer only temporary relief, as they prioritise cessation of violence without dismantling the underlying structures of exclusion that sustain ethnic hierarchy (Sarki, Kwanneri, & Benjamin, 2025; Suleimuri, Skanmueben, & Okapni, 2025). Reflectively, the literature converges on the position that sustainable peace in Wukari requires a reconfiguration of citizenship, land governance, and traditional authority relations, without which ethnic supremacy will continue to undermine democratic legitimacy and social cohesion in the area.

Effects of violent crisis on Wukari LGA, Taraba State

The violent crises that have intermittently engulfed Wukari Local Government Area have generated severe humanitarian and social disruptions, deeply affecting community life and cohesion. Recurrent clashes and insecurity have led to significant loss of life and human suffering, with many residents killed or injured during conflicts over land, identity, and political power (Okeke & Bello, 2025). The crises have also triggered extensive internal displacement, forcing families to flee their homes and creating populations vulnerable to poverty, homelessness, and breakdowns in family structures (Ikong & Zhema, 2021). The resultant disruption of schooling and communal life has impaired children's education and socialisation, leading to long-term human capital deficits that future generations will struggle to overcome (Okeke & Bello, 2025). Furthermore, the proliferation of fear and mistrust across ethnic and religious lines has deepened social fragmentation, undermining traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution and communal coexistence. This erosion of trust compounds the difficulty of peace-building, making coexistence a fragile and contested achievement rather than a stable reality.

Economically, the impact of violent crises in Wukari has been profound and multidimensional. The recurring unrest has forced the abandonment of farmlands, markets and disrupted agricultural production, which is central to the livelihoods of the majority of Wukari's populace, thereby generating heightened food insecurity and loss of income (Ikong & Zhema, 2021). Markets and local enterprises have been destabilised by insecurity, leading to business closures, loss of commerce, and capital flight, as traders

avoid conflict hot spots and customers curtail economic activities (Umar & Gali, 2025). Infrastructure, communal, public and private, has suffered extensive damage as roads, buildings, water systems, and housing deteriorate under conditions of neglect and destruction from violent encounters (Abuh, Amayll, & Ogwuche, 2017). These disruptions have reduced investment confidence in the area, perpetuating a cycle of underdevelopment as potential investors and entrepreneurs are deterred by insecurity (Umar & Gali, 2025). Additionally, the conflicts have triggered sharp increases in poverty and unemployment, as agricultural, commercial, and informal employment opportunities shrink in the face of persistent instability (turn0search0).

At the institutional and governance level, violent crisis in Wukari has significantly weakened local administrative capacity and public service delivery, a pattern consistent with findings on protracted communal violence in Nigeria's Middle Belt (Higazi, 2018; International Crisis Group [ICG], 2022). Recurrent episodes of violence have redirected limited state and local resources toward reactive security measures rather than long-term developmental planning, resulting in the deterioration of essential public services such as healthcare, education, and social welfare provision (Adesoji & Alao, 2009; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2021). Furthermore, the persistent failure of conflict management mechanisms has eroded the legitimacy of both traditional institutions and formal state authorities, deepening perceptions of political exclusion and governance abandonment among marginalized communities (Mustapha, 2017; Ukiwo, 2011). This erosion of institutional trust not only undermines local governance effectiveness but also perpetuates cycles of grievance and instability within Wukari and its surrounding communities.

Health outcomes have declined as displacement and insecurity reduce access to care, resulting in heightened vulnerability to disease and reduced maternal and child health services (Okeke & Bello, 2025). Psychological trauma, particularly among women, children, and survivors of violent attacks, has also emerged as a pervasive effect, with long-term implications for mental health and community resilience (Okeke & Bello, 2025). These institutional breakdowns not only deepen immediate suffering but also weaken the foundations of sustainable peace, development, and democratic participation in Wukari LGA.

Peace communication strategies for Wukari LGA, Taraba State

Effective peace communication in a context like Wukari must move beyond simple information dissemination to deep engagement, inclusive dialogue, and culturally rooted

messaging that builds trust, counters misinformation, and empowers local actors. Experts emphasise that quality, community-rooted information production plays a foundational role in peacebuilding: UNESCO's work on peace information initiatives stresses the importance of equipping local communicators and youth with the skills to produce narratives of coexistence and reconciliation that resonate at the grassroots level, thereby fostering trust and mutual understanding among conflicting parties (UNESCO, 2023). This includes training community radio presenters, local storytellers, and religious leaders in peace journalism principles that prioritise solution-oriented reporting and reduces sensationalised conflict narratives that can inflame tensions (UNESCO, 2023). UNESCO's intercultural competencies framework further highlights that fostering socio-emotional skills and tolerance across ethnic divides strengthens the social fabric needed for sustained peace, making shared values an active part of communication efforts (UNESCO, 2025).

A second cornerstone is inclusive, two-way dialogue mechanisms that centre local voices in peace processes. Research on crisis communication in Nigerian communal conflicts shows that strategies like community dialogue meetings, public consultation forums, and participatory outreach campaigns are effective in de-escalating tensions when they allow all stakeholders: women, youth, elders, and minority groups, to express grievances, propose solutions, and jointly shape peace agreements (Modeyin, Oisamoje, & Asemah, 2025). Community engagement must be structured not merely as one-off events but as continuous platforms for sustained interaction, conflict discussion, and joint problem-solving, with neutral facilitators trained in restorative and non-violent communication approaches (Modeyin et al., 2025; Egere & Okhueigbe, 2024). This aligns with UN peacebuilding guidelines recommending mechanisms that strengthen trust between citizens and institutions through transparent, accountable communication channels, including feedback loops that show how community inputs influence policy and peace decisions (UN Peacebuilding, 2020). Early warning and preventive communication—monitoring emerging tensions through local networks and sharing alerts widely can also mitigate escalation by prompting timely mediation before violence erupts.

Peace communication in Wukari must embrace multi-platform, culturally relevant media ecosystems to reach diverse audiences and challenge polarising narratives. Beyond formal government messaging, strategic use of community radio, local theatre, traditional songs, and social media campaigns can amplify stories of shared identity, historical coexistence, and collaboration between Jukun, Tiv, and other groups, counteracting divisive rhetoric and

misinformation. Studies on inclusive communication strategies in Nigeria emphasise that messaging which acknowledges local languages, symbols, and shared heritage is more likely to be internalised by communities and to build resilient peace cultures (Mbisike, 2024).

Additionally, collaboration with civil society organisations to support peace storytelling and peace education programs in schools can embed non-violent communication habits among youth a demographic critical to long-term stability, consistent with the United Nations Security Council's call for youth inclusion in peace processes (UNSC Res. 2419, 2018). By combining quality information production, inclusive dialogue processes, and culturally adapted media campaigns, Wukari can develop a comprehensive peace communication architecture that not only addresses immediate conflict triggers but also transforms the deeper narratives and relationships that sustain violent crises.

Conclusion

Ethnicity is evident throughout the world whether it is seen at national or international levels, minority or majority ethnic groups, as long as there are diverse Cultures throughout the world, ethnicity will continue to exist in society. In Nigeria, ethnic variations have been the cause of discrimination, prejudice and conflicts among the people and the divisions are more pronounced in politics and in allocation of resources. In finding lasting peace among the warring ethnic groups in Wukari, there must be synergy among the stakeholders and deliberate use of the language of inclusion. Inclusive language is crucial in promoting unity and peaceful co-existence which can create a more tolerant society. The media must take the lead in this regard, when balanced and factual reportage take place, justice, good reasoning and human emotions would be secured, thereby bringing an end to the ugly reality of ethnic violent crisis in Wukari, and even Taraba at large. Peace is an essential component of any community and its importance can not be overstated. It is, in fact, the greatest need of humanity. As the saying goes, "when peace is lost, everything becomes nothing". Therefore, it is the responsibility of the media to work towards promoting and sustaining peaceful co-existence. The work towards achieving a peaceful Wukari is possible through a collaborative media.

Recommendations

Public relations strategies that is, participatory or people driven approach should be adopted. The participatory approach to conflict resolution is no doubt an invaluable tool which would enable a wide cross section of people share information and opinion about their lives and environment. People (the youth, the church, women and elders) who in normal circumstances are voiceless and

powerless in the community are empowered to gain confidence to speak out. The face-to-face which it provides, creates the opportunity for policy makers to gain understanding of the issue at stake and to develop community trust and confidence for government interventions.

Those who lost lives and properties in the conflict should be compensated. Though no amount of money or other resources can equate human life but it should serve as commitment to building lasting peace in the areas. Public properties such as primary and secondary schools, medical centers, markets should be rebuilt and employment be provided especially for the youths. The Media should carry out informed and balanced reportage of crisis. Most of the news comes from Citizen Journalism, while they're commended, most times they're so biased that the news becomes cause(s) for future conflicts.

State and local authorities must restructure governance frameworks to ensure equitable access to land, political participation, and public resources for all ethnic groups. Traditional leadership institutions should be strengthened and reoriented as neutral mediators, upholding impartiality and legitimacy in conflict resolution (Suberu, 2018; Mustapha, 2019). Leveraging UNESCO and UN Peacebuilding guidelines, local radio, community theatre, and social media campaigns should be used to disseminate narratives of coexistence, tolerance, and shared history. Peace journalism principles must guide media reporting to prevent sensationalism and inflammatory framing

Sustainable peace in Wukari LGA is achievable not through reactive security measures alone, but through holistic, inclusive, and communicative approaches that address historical grievances, reinforce equitable governance, empower communities, and transform narratives of supremacy into shared identities. Implementing these recommendations consistently will provide a timeless framework for conflict resolution, social cohesion, and resilient development, with lessons extendable to other conflict-prone regions in Nigeria and the broader Middle Belt.

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