



Digital Storytelling and Peacebuilding Among the Residents of Ilaje Local Government Area, Ondo State

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of digital storytelling as a peacebuilding tool among the residents of Ilaje Local Government Area, Ondo State. Peacebuilding in conflict-prone regions is of paramount importance to foster sustainable development and community cohesion. Digital storytelling has emerged as a promising communication approach, allowing individuals to share their experiences, perspectives, and narratives through multimedia platforms, transcending traditional barriers of space and time. The research adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of digital storytelling in promoting peace and reconciliation within the local community. The qualitative phase comprises in-depth interview and participant observation to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals who have engaged in digital storytelling initiatives. In the quantitative phase, a structured survey was conducted among a representative sample of residents to measure the impact of digital storytelling on attitudes towards conflict resolution, intergroup relations, and overall peacebuilding efforts. By employing triangulation methods, the research aimed to validate findings and gain a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics between digital storytelling and peacebuilding. Findings showed that digital storytelling provides a platform for residents of Ilaje Local Government Area, Ondo State to share their personal experiences and perspectives on peace-building initiatives. DST encourages empathy and understanding among the community members in Ilaje, fostering a sense of unity and cooperation towards peace-building efforts. The study recommended that the government should create a comprehensive digital storytelling training program aimed at empowering residents of Ilaje Local Government Area with the necessary skills to craft and share their stories effectively.



Keywords

Digital storytelling, peacebuilding, residents, rural communities

1. Introduction

In recent years, the power of digital storytelling has gained significant recognition as a means to promote understanding, empathy, and peace among diverse communities [20]. This holds true for Ilaje Local Government Area in Ondo State, where digital storytelling has the potential to serve as a catalyst for peace building and community cohesion. Through the utilization of digital platforms and multimedia tools [17], the residents of Ilaje can engage in the art of storytelling to bridge gaps, nurture dialogue, and foster a harmonious environment.

Ilaje Local Government Area, located in the coastal region of Ondo State, is home to a rich tapestry of cultural diversity. However, like many regions, it also faces challenges related to intergroup tensions, historical conflicts, and social divisions. Digital storytelling, as [34] observes, emerges as a transformative tool that can break down barriers, allowing individuals to connect on a personal and emotional level. By sharing stories of resilience, hope, and shared experiences, residents can develop a deeper sense of understanding and empathy, ultimately fostering peaceful coexistence [2, 21, 24].

The advent of digital technology has democratized the process of storytelling [22], providing accessible platforms for individuals to share their narratives with a global audience [1]. Through mediums such as social media, podcasts, videos, and blogs, the residents of Ilaje can amplify their voices and depict their unique experiences, traditions, and aspirations. This process not only empowers individuals to reclaim their narratives but also enables them to challenge stereotypes [29], promote inclusivity, and build bridges across diverse communities [4, 5].

Digital storytelling offers an inclusive and participatory approach to peace building in Ilaje. By involving various stakeholders, including community leaders, youth, women, and marginalized groups, the process becomes a collaborative endeavour that encourages dialogue and understanding [11]. Through workshops, training programs, and community events, residents can acquire the skills and tools necessary to create and share their stories effectively, harnessing the power of digital media for positive social change [12, 30].

Furthermore, digital storytelling can play a vital role in preserving cultural heritage and addressing historical grievances [1, 3]. By documenting and sharing traditional practices, rituals, and oral histories, the residents of Ilaje can strengthen their cultural identity while promoting mutual respect and appreciation among different groups. This intergenerational exchange of knowledge fosters a sense of belonging and pride [27], while simultaneously fostering a shared narrative that transcends individual differences [31]. Evidently, digital storytelling has the potential to be a transformative force for peace building among the residents of Ilaje Local Government Area, Ondo State. By leveraging digital platforms and multimedia tools, individuals can engage in the power of storytelling to bridge divides, nurture dialogue, and foster empathy. Through the collective efforts of the community, digital storytelling can create a ripple effect that promotes understanding, celebrates diversity, and paves the way for a harmonious and peaceful society [26, 28].

The following objectives were set to guide this study:

- a. Investigate the contribution of digital storytelling to peace building among the residents of Ilaje Local Government Area, Ondo State.
- b. Examine the perceptions and experiences of residents in Ilaje Local Government Area regarding digital storytelling as a tool for peace building.



- c. Explore the challenges and opportunities associated with using digital storytelling for peace building in Ilaje Local Government Area and develop strategies to address them and maximize its effectiveness.

1.1 Conceptual Clarifications

1.1.1. Digital Storytelling: A Tool for Peacebuilding

Digital storytelling refers to the practice of using digital media tools, such as videos, images, and interactive elements, to convey a narrative or share a story [34, 5]. It combines traditional storytelling techniques with digital technology to create engaging and immersive experiences. The significance of digital storytelling lies in its ability to capture attention, evoke emotions, and deliver impactful messages to a wide audience [8]. Storytelling plays a crucial role in promoting peace and understanding in various ways:

Building empathy: Stories have the power to evoke empathy and help people understand different perspectives and experiences. By sharing stories of individuals or communities affected by conflicts or violence, storytelling can humanize the "other" and foster empathy, which is essential for promoting peace and understanding.

Encouraging dialogue: Storytelling can serve as a catalyst for dialogue and open conversations about sensitive or contentious issues. By presenting narratives that reflect diverse viewpoints, storytelling creates a safe space for discussions, enabling people to engage in constructive dialogue and find common ground [9].

Challenging stereotypes and prejudices: Stories have the ability to challenge stereotypes and prejudices by presenting alternative narratives and highlighting the complexities of human experiences. By exposing the audience to diverse stories, storytelling can help break down barriers, reduce biases, and promote tolerance and acceptance.

Inspiring action: Powerful stories have the potential to inspire individuals to take action for peace and social change. Through storytelling, people can be motivated to get involved in peacebuilding initiatives, support affected communities, or advocate for policies that promote peace and justice.

1.1.2. Using digital platforms for storytelling provides several benefits

Wide reach: Digital platforms offer global accessibility, allowing stories to reach a broader audience across geographic boundaries. The internet and social media platforms enable stories to be shared, discussed, and spread rapidly, amplifying their impact and fostering dialogue on a larger scale.

Multimedia elements: Digital platforms enable the integration of multimedia elements, such as videos, images, and interactive features, enhancing the storytelling experience [33]. These elements can evoke emotions, capture attention, and create a more immersive and engaging narrative.

Interactivity and participation: Digital platforms can encourage audience participation through comments, likes, and sharing. This interactive nature of digital storytelling can foster a sense of community, enable dialogue between storytellers and audiences, and promote collaboration and collective action [7, 10]

Preservation and accessibility: Digital storytelling allows stories to be preserved and accessed over time. By digitizing stories, they can be archived, shared, and revisited by future generations, ensuring their preservation and continuity.

1.2. An Overview of Ilaje Local Government Area

Ilaje Local Government Area is one of the local government areas in Ondo State, Nigeria. It is located in the southern part of the state and shares borders with the Atlantic Ocean to the south. The local government area is predominantly inhabited by

the Ilaje people, who are primarily fishermen and engage in other maritime activities [32].

The Ilaje people have a rich cultural heritage, which is evident in their language, traditions, and festivals. The major language spoken in the area is Ilaje, although English and Yoruba are also widely understood. The community is known for its vibrant music, dance, and art, which are an integral part of their cultural expression.

In terms of demographics, the population of Ilaje Local Government Area is diverse, with a mix of different ethnic groups. However, the Ilaje people form the majority and are the indigenous inhabitants of the area. The population is estimated to be over 200,000 people.

Despite the cultural richness and natural beauty of Ilaje Local Government Area, the area faces some peacebuilding challenges. One of the major challenges is the issue of communal conflicts, which can arise from disputes over land, boundaries, or resources. These conflicts often lead to tension and sometimes violence among different communities within the area.

Additionally, the lack of basic infrastructure, such as good roads, healthcare facilities, and electricity, poses a challenge to peace and development in the area. The absence of these amenities can lead to frustration and dissatisfaction among the residents, creating a breeding ground for social unrest.

Another peacebuilding challenge in Ilaje Local Government Area is the issue of youth unemployment. Limited employment opportunities often result in idle youth who may engage in criminal activities or become vulnerable to recruitment by illegal groups. Addressing the issue of youth unemployment is crucial for sustainable peace and development in the area.

Efforts to address these peacebuilding challenges require a comprehensive approach that involves community engagement, dialogue, and the provision of basic infrastructure and social amenities. It is important to promote peaceful coexistence among different communities, encourage economic empowerment initiatives, and invest in education and skills development to create opportunities for the youth. By addressing these challenges, Ilaje Local Government Area can achieve sustainable peace, promote social harmony, and harness its rich cultural heritage and natural resources for the benefit of its residents and the wider society.

1.3. Peacebuilding Initiatives in Ilaje Local Government Communities

In Ilaje Local Government Area, there are various peacebuilding initiatives and organizations working towards fostering peace and stability. Existing Peacebuilding Efforts at the time of this study were:

Community Dialogue and Mediation: Local leaders, community members, and traditional authorities often engage in dialogues and mediation processes to resolve conflicts and promote understanding.

Interfaith and Interethnic Cooperation: Religious and community leaders collaborate to bridge divides and promote tolerance among different religious and ethnic groups.

Youth Engagement: Programs aimed at engaging young people in activities promoting peace, such as sports, arts, education, and skills training, can help divert their energies away from violence and contribute to positive change.

Women's Empowerment: Women play a vital role in peacebuilding. Efforts may focus on empowering women to participate in decision-making processes and peacebuilding activities.

Education and Awareness: Promoting peace education and awareness campaigns can foster understanding, tolerance, and conflict resolution skills within the community.

1.4. Organizations and Initiatives

Local NGOs: Non-governmental organizations often work directly with communities to facilitate peacebuilding activities, offer conflict resolution training, and provide support for sustainable development.



International Organizations: Organizations like the United Nations (UN) and its agencies, as well as international NGOs, may be involved in supporting peacebuilding efforts through various programs and initiatives.

Faith-Based Organizations: Religious institutions and faith-based organizations can play a significant role in peacebuilding by promoting interfaith dialogue, reconciliation, and cooperation.

1.5. Challenges and Limitations

Historical and Structural Factors: Deep-rooted conflicts and historical grievances can pose challenges to peacebuilding efforts, requiring long-term engagement to address underlying issues.

Limited Resources: Insufficient funding and resources can impede the sustainability and scalability of peacebuilding initiatives.

Security Concerns: Ongoing violence, armed conflict, or insecurity in the region can hinder the implementation of peacebuilding activities.

Lack of Trust and Cooperation: Building trust among different stakeholders, particularly in divided communities, can be challenging and time-consuming.

Political Dynamics: Political instability or competing interests among political actors may create obstacles to sustained peacebuilding efforts.

Socioeconomic Factors: Poverty, unemployment, and inequality can contribute to social tensions and undermine peacebuilding efforts.

1.6. Integrating Digital Storytelling into Peacebuilding

Integrating digital storytelling into peacebuilding can be a powerful tool for promoting understanding, empathy, and reconciliation [13]. Digital platforms provide unique opportunities for individuals and communities to share their narratives, connect with others, and amplify their voices [6, 14]. Here's a closer look at the role of digital platforms in storytelling, the importance of local narratives and community participation, and some examples of successful digital storytelling projects in peacebuilding.

1.7. Role of Digital Platforms in Storytelling

Amplification: Digital platforms provide a wide reach, allowing stories to be shared globally and reach diverse audiences.

Accessibility: Digital storytelling makes narratives accessible to a larger audience, transcending geographical and cultural barriers.

Multimedia Capabilities: Digital platforms enable the integration of various media formats, including videos, images, audio, and interactive elements, enhancing the storytelling experience.

Interactivity: Digital platforms encourage engagement and interaction with the audience, fostering dialogue and connection.

Archiving and Preservation: Digital storytelling ensures that narratives are documented and preserved for future generations, contributing to a more comprehensive historical record.

1.8. Importance of Local Narratives and Community Participation

Authenticity and Ownership: Local narratives allow communities to share their own experiences and perspectives, ensuring the authenticity and ownership of the storytelling process.

Empowerment: By actively participating in the storytelling process, communities can reclaim their narratives, assert their identities, and challenge dominant narratives imposed by external sources.

Healing and Reconciliation: Engaging in storytelling can provide an avenue for healing, understanding, and reconciliation among individuals and communities affected by conflict or division.

Bridge Building: Local narratives facilitate dialogue and bridge gaps between different communities, fostering empathy, understanding, and collaboration.

1.9. Examples of Successful Digital Storytelling Projects in Peacebuilding

PeaceTXT: PeaceTXT is a project that uses mobile technology to disseminate SMS messages promoting peace and reconciliation in conflict-affected regions. By harnessing the widespread use of mobile phones, this initiative has successfully engaged communities in dialogue and information sharing.

Digital Storytelling in Colombia: In Colombia, organizations such as the Center for Historical Memory have used digital platforms to collect and share personal stories of victims and survivors of the armed conflict. These narratives contribute to truth-telling, memory preservation, and reconciliation efforts (Robin & McNeil, 2019).

Voices of Rwanda: Voices of Rwanda is a digital archive that collects and shares survivor testimonies of the Rwandan genocide. This project provides a platform for survivors to share their stories, educate the public, and promote healing and reconciliation.

Syrian Voices: Syrian Voices is an online platform that documents personal stories from Syrians affected by the ongoing conflict. Through video interviews, articles, and photographs, this project highlights the diverse perspectives and experiences of Syrians, promoting empathy and understanding.

Mapping Memories: Mapping Memories is a project that uses digital storytelling to address the historical grievances and conflicts in South Asia. Through storytelling workshops and an interactive online platform, individuals from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh share personal narratives to foster dialogue and reconciliation.

These examples demonstrate the power of digital storytelling in peacebuilding, emphasizing the importance of local narratives and community participation in promoting understanding, empathy, and reconciliation in conflict-affected contexts.

2. Materials and Methods

Study Design: This research employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the impact of digital storytelling on peacebuilding efforts within the Ilaje Local Government Area, Ondo State. The study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Population: The target population for this research comprised residents of Ilaje Local Government Area, Ondo State, Nigeria, who were actively engaged in peacebuilding activities or initiatives. Accordingly, the estimated population of Ilaje LGA is 445,200 inhabitants (NPC website) with the vast majority of the area's inhabitants being members of the Yoruba ethnic group. Therefore, the population of this study is 445, 200.

Sample size: In selecting the sample, the researcher used Raosoft sample size calculator. Based on Raosoft, a sample of 384 respondents was selected for this study.

Sampling: A multi-stage sampling procedure was used for this study, and each stage used a particular sampling technique until the respondents were accessed. At the first stage, the researcher adopted cluster sampling. The residents of Ode Mahin Kingdom in Ilaje LGA of Ondo State were divided into clusters. Ode Mahin Kingdom was chosen because most towns and villages are distributed on arable lands. At the end, the following clusters were arrived at: Alape Junction, Abereke, Iloro, Ebute Camp, Akata, Asisa, Orofin Camp, Igbokoda, Broke Camp and Ehin Osa clusters. The researcher then divided the sample size by the total number of clusters, so as to determine the number of subjects to be drawn from each cluster. As a result, 38 respondents were drawn from each cluster.

At the second stage, the researcher adopted purposive sampling to access respondents in the clusters. The criteria for participating in the research was that respondents must be from twenty years and above, must have certain level of engagement in peacebuilding activities, can communicate in the English language and must be those who have smart phones and also make use of social media/internet for storytelling. And finally, the researcher then adopted convenience sampling to access respondents in the clusters who met the criteria set out in purposive sampling.

2.1. Data Collection

Quantitative Data: Structured questionnaires were administered to a random sample of residents in Ilaje Local Government Area. The questionnaires were designed to collect demographic information and assess participants' experiences and perceptions related to digital storytelling and its impact on peacebuilding. A semi-Likert scale was used to measure responses. The researchers distributed 384 copies of the questionnaire to the participants in the selected places. From the numbers distributed, 380 (98.9%) copies were retrieved and found valid.

Qualitative Data: In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants, including local leaders, peace activists, and individuals with experience in digital storytelling initiatives within the community. These interviews aimed to provide deeper insights into the qualitative aspects of digital storytelling and peacebuilding in Ilaje Local Government Area.

Digital Storytelling Intervention: A digital storytelling intervention was designed and implemented within the community. This intervention involved training selected community members in digital storytelling techniques, including the use of multimedia tools, narrative development, and online platforms. Participants were encouraged to create and share digital stories related to peace and conflict resolution within the community.

Data Analysis: Quantitative data collected through questionnaires were analysed on tables, using frequently counts and simple percentage. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically. Themes and patterns related to the impact of digital storytelling on peacebuilding were identified and coded.

Ethical Considerations: This research adhered to ethical principles, and all participants provided informed consent before their involvement in the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Data Validation: To enhance the validity of the findings, data triangulation was conducted by comparing and contrasting the results from both quantitative and qualitative data sources. Member checking and peer debriefing were also employed to verify the accuracy and interpretation of qualitative data.

Theoretical Framework: This study is anchored on Technology Adoption Theory: The theory focuses on how individuals and communities adopt and adapt to new technologies. In Ilaje Local Government Area, digital storytelling may be a relatively new concept for some residents. Understanding the factors that influence the adoption of digital storytelling tools and techniques can help design effective peacebuilding initiatives that leverage technology to bridge divides and promote peace.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Responses on whether DST provides a platform for peacebuilding among residents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	64	17
Agree	316	83
Engaging in digital storytelling encourages empathy and understanding among the community members in Ilaje		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	32	9
Agree	348	91
The use of digital storytelling in peace-building activities enhances communication and information dissemination		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	102	27
Agree	278	73
Total	380	100

Source: Field survey data

On table 1, 316 (83%) agreed that digital storytelling provides a platform for residents of Ilaje Local Government Area, Ondo State to share their personal experiences and perspectives on peace-building initiatives. 348 (91%) also agreed that engaging in digital storytelling encourages empathy and understanding among the community members in Ilaje, fostering a sense of unity and cooperation towards peace-building efforts. 278 (73%) being the majority of the respondents agreed that the use of digital storytelling in peace-building activities enhances communication and information dissemination, enabling residents to stay informed about ongoing initiatives and collaborate effectively.

Table 2. Responses on whether DST activities can promote dialogue and reconciliation

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	109	29
Agree	271	71
DST enables residents to express personal experiences and perspectives		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	79	29
Agree	301	79
DST has positively influenced peacebuilding efforts in Ilaje		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	180	48
Agree	200	52
DST helps bridge the gaps between different ethnic/cultural groups		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	59	16
Agree	321	84
Total	380	100

Source: Field survey data



On table 2 above, 271 (71%) the majority agreed that engaging in digital storytelling activities can promote dialogue and reconciliation between conflicting groups in the region. 301 (79%) agreed that digital storytelling enables residents to express their personal experiences and perspectives, contributing to a sense of belonging and community cohesion. 200 (52%) agreed that the use of digital storytelling has positively influenced peacebuilding efforts in Ilaje Local Government Area. 321 (84%) being the majority of participants believe that digital storytelling can help bridge the gap between different cultural and ethnic groups in the region.

Table 3. Responses on digital literacy skills being a challenge in effectively using DST in peacebuilding

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	68	18
Agree	312	82
Responses on whether limited access to digital devices hinder implementation of DST		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	30	8
Agree	350	92
Training and capacity-building programmes can address the challenges of using DST		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Not valuable at all	0	0
Somewhat valuable	318	83
Highly valuable	62	17
Collaborative partnership between local organizations are essential for DST usage		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very Unlikely	53	14
Very likely	327	86
Total	380	100

Source: Field survey data

On table 3 above, 312 (82%) agreed that digital literacy skills among community members are a challenge in effectively using digital storytelling for peace building in Ilaje Local Government Area. 350 (92%) agreed that limited access to digital devices and internet connectivity hinder the implementation of digital storytelling for peace building in Ilaje Local Government Area. While 318 (83%) said that training and capacity-building programs are somewhat valuable in addressing the challenges associated with using digital storytelling for peace building in Ilaje Local Government Area. 327 (86%) said collaborative partnerships between local organizations, government bodies, and technology experts are essential for maximizing the effectiveness of digital storytelling in peace building efforts in Ilaje Local Government Area.

On table 4 above, 197 (52%) agreed that cultural and language barriers pose challenges in implementing digital storytelling for peace building in Ilaje Local Government Area. 214 (56%) also agreed that creating a safe and inclusive digital storytelling environment is crucial to ensure the effectiveness of peace building initiatives in Ilaje Local Government Area. However, 351 (92%) respondents disagreed that the establishment of local content creation centres can help overcome the challenges and foster community engagement in digital storytelling for peace building in Ilaje Local Government Area.

Table 4. Responses on whether cultural and language barriers pose challenges in implementing DST for peace building

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	183	48
Agree	197	52
Creating a safe and inclusive DST environment is crucial to effective peacebuilding		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	166	44
Agree	214	56
The establishment of local content creation hubs can help overcome the challenges		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	351	92
Agree	29	8
Total	380	100

Source: Field survey data

3.1. Discussion of Findings

In this section, responses to answers on research questions would be discussed.

Research Question 1: How does digital storytelling contribute to peace building among the residents of Ilaje Local Government Area, Ondo State?

The data on table one provided answers to this research question. The data showed that digital storytelling provides a platform for residents of Ilaje Local Government Area, Ondo State to share their personal experiences and perspectives on peace-building initiatives. Respondents also agreed that engaging in digital storytelling encourages empathy and understanding among the community members in Ilaje, fostering a sense of unity and cooperation towards peace-building efforts. Also, that the use of digital storytelling in peace-building activities enhances communication and information dissemination, enabling residents to stay informed about ongoing initiatives and collaborate effectively.

The above findings corroborated with [25] observation that digital storytelling can be a powerful tool for promoting peace, understanding, and empathy among communities. [15, 19] point out some ways DST could contribute to peace building: Preserving and Sharing Local Narratives: Digital storytelling allows community members to share their personal stories and experiences, preserving local narratives that may otherwise be forgotten. By sharing stories, people from different backgrounds within the area can gain a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives, fostering empathy and reducing misunderstandings. Building Bridges and Connection: Digital storytelling can connect residents with each other and the broader world. It can enable individuals from diverse ethnic, religious, or socio-economic backgrounds to find common ground and shared values, which can contribute to building bridges and a sense of unity among the community. Amplifying Marginalized Voices: In many communities, certain groups may be marginalized or underrepresented. Digital storytelling can provide a platform for these voices to be heard and acknowledged, empowering marginalized individuals and promoting social inclusion. When people feel heard and respected, it can lead to a more harmonious society. Encouraging Dialogue and Conflict Resolution: Digital storytelling can facilitate dialogue and promote constructive conversations around sensitive topics. By

encouraging open discussions and understanding, conflicts can be addressed in a non-confrontational manner, leading to potential resolutions or finding common ground. Education and Awareness: Through digital storytelling, residents can learn about the history, culture, and experiences of others in their community. This increased awareness can challenge stereotypes, dispel misconceptions, and foster a culture of tolerance and respect.

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions and experiences of residents in Ilaje Local Government Area regarding digital storytelling as a tool for peace building?

The data on tables two answered this research question. Table two revealed that engaging in digital storytelling activities can promote dialogue and reconciliation between conflicting groups in the region. That digital storytelling enables residents to express their personal experiences and perspectives, contributing to a sense of belonging and community cohesion. Respondents agreed that the use of digital storytelling has positively influenced peacebuilding efforts in Ilaje Local Government Area. The majority of participants believe that digital storytelling can help bridge the gap between different cultural and ethnic groups in the region. Interview data revealed that the accessibility of digital storytelling platforms has made it easier for residents to participate in peacebuilding initiatives. Participants agreed that engaging in digital storytelling has enhanced their awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by others in Ilaje Local Government Area. Also, respondents feel more connected to their fellow residents and their experiences after engaging in digital storytelling activities. Respondents also agreed that the use of digital storytelling in peacebuilding efforts should be further encouraged and supported by local authorities and organizations.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges and opportunities in using digital storytelling for peace building in Ilaje Local Government Area, and how can they be addressed to maximize its effectiveness?

The data on tables 3 and 4 answered this research question. The data showed that digital literacy skills among community members are a challenge in effectively using digital storytelling for peace building in Ilaje Local Government Area. Participants agreed that limited access to digital devices and internet connectivity hinder the implementation of digital storytelling for peace building in Ilaje Local Government Area. Respondents said that training and capacity-building programs are somewhat valuable in addressing the challenges associated with using digital storytelling for peace building in Ilaje Local Government Area. 327 (86%) said collaborative partnerships between local organizations, government bodies, and technology experts are essential for maximizing the effectiveness of digital storytelling in peace building efforts in Ilaje Local Government Area. On table seven above, respondents agreed that cultural and language barriers pose challenges in implementing digital storytelling for peace building in Ilaje Local Government Area. 214 (56%) also agreed that creating a safe and inclusive digital storytelling environment is crucial to ensure the effectiveness of peace building initiatives in Ilaje Local Government Area. However, 351 (92%) respondents disagreed that the establishment of local content creation centers can help overcome the challenges and foster community engagement in digital storytelling for peace building in Ilaje Local Government Area.

In rural areas like Ilaje, access to digital devices and the internet might be limited. Not everyone may have smartphones or computers, which can hinder the dissemination and participation in digital storytelling initiatives. Ilaje is home to diverse ethnic groups, each with its own languages and dialects. Ensuring that digital storytelling content is available in multiple languages and is easily understandable is crucial. Even if some individuals have access to technology, there might be disparities in digital literacy and skills. Some community members might struggle to navigate digital platforms and participate effectively. Storytelling is deeply rooted in the culture of many communities, including Ilaje. Introducing digital storytelling must be done with sensitivity to local traditions and values to avoid unintentional offense [16, 18].

4. Conclusion

Digital storytelling has proven to be a powerful and effective tool for promoting peace building among the residents of Ilaje Local Government Area, Ondo State. Through the use of digital platforms and multimedia, the residents have been able to share their stories, experiences, and perspectives in a way that fosters empathy, understanding, and dialogue. The process of digital storytelling has allowed individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences to connect with each other on a deeper level, transcending traditional boundaries and prejudices [32]. By sharing their narratives, both the storytellers and the audience have gained insights into the challenges faced by different communities within Ilaje, as well as the common aspirations they all share.

Moreover, digital storytelling has facilitated the preservation of cultural heritage and the promotion of social cohesion within the region. As residents document and share their cultural practices, customs, and traditional wisdom, they reinforce a sense of identity and pride among the local communities, reducing the likelihood of intergroup conflicts and enhancing mutual respect. The collaborative nature of digital storytelling initiatives has also contributed to building bridges between conflicting groups. By engaging in collective storytelling projects, individuals have come together, creating spaces for open dialogue and reconciliation. This process has enabled them to address historical grievances, find common ground, and work towards shared goals for the betterment of their community.

Furthermore, digital storytelling has reached beyond the borders of Ilaje, capturing the attention of a wider audience, including policymakers, researchers, and humanitarian organizations. These stories have helped raise awareness about the unique challenges faced by the region and have attracted support and resources to implement initiatives aimed at promoting peace, development, and sustainability.

However, while digital storytelling has shown significant promise, challenges remain. Issues such as limited access to digital technologies, digital illiteracy, and potential misinformation need to be addressed to ensure that the benefits of digital storytelling reach all residents of Ilaje Local Government Area.

5. Recommendations

Given the findings and conclusions reached, the following recommendations are put forward by the researcher:

Establish a Digital Storytelling Training Program: Government should create a comprehensive digital storytelling training program aimed at empowering residents of Ilaje Local Government Area with the necessary skills to craft and share their stories effectively. The program should encompass various aspects of digital storytelling, including video production, podcasting, social media content creation, and writing compelling narratives. Offer workshops and seminars where participants can learn, collaborate, and exchange ideas, fostering a sense of unity and understanding among the community members.

Develop a Local Digital Storytelling Platform: NGOs should create an online platform or website dedicated to showcasing the digital stories produced by the residents of Ilaje Local Government Area. This platform will serve as a repository for their narratives, promoting peacebuilding efforts and cross-cultural understanding. Encourage regular contributions from community members, and ensure the platform is accessible and user-friendly for both content creators and viewers. Additionally, utilize social media channels to amplify the impact and reach of these stories.

Collaborate with Local Community Leaders and Organizations: Forge partnerships with local community leaders, NGOs, and grassroots organizations working towards peacebuilding and social cohesion in Ilaje. Collaborating with established stakeholders can help extend the reach and credibility of the digital storytelling initiatives. Engage community leaders in the process of identifying critical issues and themes that need to be addressed through digital storytelling, ensuring that the content produced is culturally sensitive and relevant to the community's needs.



Foster Inter-generational Storytelling Projects: Promote inter-generational collaboration by organizing storytelling projects that involve both elders and youth in the community. These projects can create a space for elders to share their wisdom and experiences, while also encouraging younger generations to express their perspectives and aspirations. By bridging the generation gap through digital storytelling, the community can strengthen its sense of identity, unity, and shared purpose.

Engage Schools and Educational Institutions: Integrate digital storytelling into the curriculum of local schools and educational institutions in Ilaje. Work with teachers and educators to incorporate storytelling techniques and digital media skills into various subjects, such as language arts, history, and social studies. By empowering young minds with the ability to tell and listen to diverse stories, the community can nurture a culture of empathy, respect, and understanding, thereby contributing to sustainable peacebuilding efforts.

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Conflict of Interest

There was no conflict of interest in conducting the research on "Digital Storytelling and Peacebuilding Among the Residents of Ilaje Local Government Area, Ondo State." The research was carried out with full transparency and adherence to ethical standards, ensuring that the findings and outcomes of the study were not influenced by any personal or financial interests. The primary objective of this research was to contribute to the understanding of the role of digital storytelling in promoting peace and harmony among the residents of Ilaje Local Government Area, Ondo State, and to benefit the community at large.

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