

Article

Beyond Rhythm: Peacebuilding Themes in Selected Hausa Music

Ibrahim Uba Yusuf ^{1,2,*}  and Abiodun Salawu ¹ 

¹ Indigineous Language Media in Africa (ILMA), North West University, Mahikeng 2735, South Africa; abiodun.salawu@nwu.ac.za

² Department of Broadcasting, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri 1069, Nigeria

* Correspondence: ibrahim.mcm@unimaid.edu.ng

Abstract

This study examines peacebuilding themes in Hausa music to highlight their contributions to the restoration of peace in northern parts of Nigeria. The study analyses two purposively selected examples of Hausa music that contain peacebuilding messages and were produced by different musicians. Adopting conflict transformation theory, the study explores how the musicians articulate peacebuilding messages and examines the use of music as an instrument for preaching peace in northern Nigeria. Findings from the content analysis and interviews with the musicians reveal that the music is largely attuned to the goal of forging peace. The results further show that various media organisations in northern parts of Nigeria and beyond are using these pieces of Hausa music in packaging programmes related to conflict and peace. The study concludes that Hausa music for peacebuilding represents one of the important perspectives through which peacebuilding messages have been articulated to audiences in northern Nigeria.

Keywords: Hausa music; messages; peacebuilding; conflict; northern parts of Nigeria

1. Introduction

The deteriorating insecurity in the northern parts of Nigeria in the past decade has left the region grappling with several challenges associated with the absence of peace. Violent conflicts have become a common occurrence in many parts of northern Nigeria, instigated by several factors including religion, sectarianism, ethnicity, and politics. Some of these violent conflicts have lasted for several years, while others are recurring in nature. Notable among them are the Boko Haram insurgency ([Mohammed 2014](#)), banditry in the Northwest ([Rufai 2021](#)), farmer–herder clashes, communal conflict between the Jukun and Tiv, and various ethno-religious conflicts ([Best 2004](#)).

Peacebuilding, which scholars often describe as a post-conflict phase, refers to the period when a sequence of activities such as societal reconstruction and reconciliation among aggrieved parties commences. It is widely applied across diverse contexts and levels of conflict because it involves deliberate efforts aimed at restoring peace, healing grievances, and preventing the escalation or recurrence of conflicts ([Bergey 2018](#); [Zelizer and Rubinstein 2009](#); [Jeong 2005](#)). Peacebuilding is also considered a supplement to preventive diplomacy, peacemaking processes, conflict resolution, and peacekeeping operations, encompassing measures adopted in emerging, ongoing, or post-conflict situations to prevent conflict and encourage sustainable peace ([OECD 2005](#)).



Academic Editors: Andrew M. Nedd and Shelton Waldrep

Received: 18 May 2026

Revised: 24 September 2026

Accepted: 29 September 2026

Published: 15 October 2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors.

Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland.

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the [Creative Commons Attribution \(CC BY\)](#) license.

There are several peacebuilding methods, activities, and initiatives commonly adopted in conflict situations. These include mediation, dialogue, reintegration, trauma healing, and reconciliation, among others, which are strategically packaged through different channels by stakeholders to reach affected populations. Music, for instance, has from time immemorial been used for peacebuilding purposes (Wu 2019). It is a strategic tool employed to foster community-building, enhance empathy, and create opportunities for dialogue, among other functions (Bergey 2018). According to Hintjens and Ubaldo (2020), music is not innocent. It often embodies many people's hopes for peace in the aftermath of war, violence, and mass atrocities. This suggests that the use of music for peacebuilding is not new, as music is a light-hearted medium that relaxes the mind and, in turn, momentarily enables affected parties to move away from the myriad events that encapsulate security concerns and focus on pathways towards peace. However, this depends on the mood, state of mind, and experiences of the individual who is listening to the music and the genre of the music. Begbie (2015) refers to music as having a mixed potential in the sense that it can help overcome aggression, hatred, and division by fostering new understanding between people, but also recognising that music can be used to foster and perpetuate these negative attitudes and behaviour.

Music is deployed in peacebuilding because of its capacity to connect people irrespective of culture, social status, and political divides to target emotional and cultural roots of systemic violence. According to Bergey (2018), music has been deployed in many conflict situations, including protests and healing gatherings across different climates. This is why international organisations like Search for Common Ground utilise peace songs in some of their projects to counter the narrative of conflict and engender peace. Wu (2019) observes that music contributes strategically to peacebuilding by creating atmospheres that encourage peaceful coexistence, issuing passionate calls to desist from direct and indirect violence, and spurring hope, integration and reconciliation among communities. These peacebuilding possibilities are embedded in musical renditions that amplify salient peace messages, which are framed differently depending on the nature of the conflict and the intended impact on the peacebuilding process.

There are several notable musical renditions whose themes have stimulated or engendered peace in different contexts. For example, the 1970s witnessed several peace-oriented songs by British and international acts protesting war. These include Cat Stevens' *Peace Train* (1971), Paul McCartney's *Give Ireland Back to the Irish* (1972), Bob Dylan's *Blowin' in the Wind* (1963), The Byrds' *Turn! Turn! Turn! (To Everything There Is a Season)* (1965), Buffalo Springfield's *For What It's Worth* (1967), John Lennon's *Imagine* (1971), Eric Clapton's *Let It Grow* (1974), Bob Marley and the Wailers' *Fussing and Fighting* (1971), The Cranberries' *Zombie* (1994), Anti-Flag's *911 for Peace* (2002), Matisyahu's *One Day* (2009), Rebelution's *Good Vibes* (2012), and 311's *Tranquillity* (2014), among others. While these songs have become influential cultural expressions for promoting the ideals of peace and criticising violence, it is important to distinguish between musical works whose lyrical content advocates peace and those that demonstrably contribute to peacebuilding or conflict transformation.

In Nigeria, musicians such as Onyeka Onwenu (*Peace Song*), Solid Star (*One Nigeria*), Epraise (*Nigeria Peace*), and Sam Ladipo and The Highlights Crew (*Peace Song for Nigeria*) have also lent their voices through musical renditions to foster peace, like their counterparts in other climes. Notably, some of these Nigerian songs reflect the country's rich cultural endowment, particularly its diversity and plural nature. In the northern parts of Nigeria, musicians such as Aminu Abubakar Ladan, Andy Bature, Ali Jita and Zaki Azaye have contributed by producing Hausa music aimed at peacebuilding. For instance, Zaki Azaye's *Wayyo Kaduna* has been widely regarded as an important musical intervention in peacebuilding efforts surrounding episodes of religious conflict in Kaduna State. Through

its appeal for peaceful coexistence, tolerance, and reconciliation, the song contributed to public discourse on peace and served as a medium for promoting non-violence during periods of heightened tension. Therefore, it is safer to infer that Zaki Azaye and his counterparts, through lyrical renditions that address peace and conflict situations in the region, have acknowledged the pivotal role of music in the peacebuilding process. This growing interest in producing Hausa music for peace by a few musicians has created a new research dimension worthy of scholarly exploration.

Therefore, the present study focuses on specific Hausa music with peacebuilding themes, the artists involved, how peacebuilding messages are articulated in the music, and how such music is used in parts of northern Nigeria. Specifically, the study examines two selected Hausa music pieces by Aminu Alan Waka and Andy Bature. This study is necessitated by the need to explore the potentialities of Hausa music in peacebuilding. This is largely attributable to the prevailing assumption that Hausa music functions solely as a medium of entertainment, thereby overlooking its potential contributions to peacebuilding and societal transformation. As noted by [Opiyo \(2020\)](#), the intersection between the arts, particularly music, and peacebuilding remains largely unexplored and untapped in both scholarship and practice. [Lederach \(2020\)](#) supports this view, asserting that empirical and theoretical developments in the fields of peacebuilding and conflict transformation have rarely considered the potency of music. While music has been extensively researched in relation to wellness and healing, surprisingly little attention has been paid to its role in the formal literature of peacebuilding in relation to Hausa music. It has been observed that studies on Hausa music are largely focused on political communication, culture, and social commentary. This is a gap in the literature that requires scholarly intervention. There is a need to systematically analyse selected Hausa music as a communicative resource for peacebuilding, examine the peacebuilding themes embedded in the music, understand the messages, and how the musicians articulate peacebuilding messages. By addressing this gap, the study will deepen our understanding of peacebuilding, Hausa music, and conflict transformation in the context of northern Nigeria.

This study therefore makes three fundamental contributions to knowledge. First, beyond the power of Hausa music for entertainment and cultural expression, this study foregrounds how Hausa musicians articulate the messages of peace, tolerance, reconciliation, and a non-violent approach in their music to promote peacebuilding in northern parts of Nigeria. Secondly, the study advances interdisciplinary scholarship in Hausa music and peace and conflict studies from African perspectives. Lastly, the study contributes to our understanding that peacebuilding messages are expressed through local cultural, religious, and communal values such as prayer, forgiveness, tolerance, moral responsibility, and cooperation between religious and traditional leaders.

Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. Analyse two Hausa peacebuilding songs produced by Aminu Ala and Andy Bature;
2. Explore how the musicians articulate peacebuilding messages in the selected music;
3. Determine the usage of the music in northern parts of Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Role of Music in Conflict and Peacebuilding Situations

Music generally provides one of the most illustrative ways in which artists display and articulate their individual and collective positions on issues affecting the individual, group, or the public. Through music, musicians often express their positions frankly. This is why [Wilson and Jibrin \(2017\)](#) note that music is a means of saying it bluntly. This may not necessarily be pleasing to the right-thinking members of the public or even certain

individuals. In this regard, music has the communicative power to address sensitive issues, criticise social practices, question authority, and expose perceived injustices. They say bluntly that Wilson and Jibrin referred to may likely raise questions about the boundaries and consequences of musical expression, even though it is valuable for society.

Yusuf (2020) argues that music, like other media content, has an essence of articulating the sentiments and propositions that may likely have an impact on the audience. Music can articulate experiences of violence, suffering, and conflict, thereby providing audiences with narratives through which violent events are remembered and interpreted. In this sense, music can function as a repository of collective memories, particularly in conflict-affected societies where songs may preserve accounts of displacement, loss, injustice and trauma. Through lyrics, rhythm, and performance, musicians can bring past experiences into the present and enable listeners to engage vicariously with experiences that they may not have personally encountered. Based on this argument, it can be deduced that music possesses dual roles in conflict situations. Firstly, music reproduces conflict narratives by glorifying violence, reinforcing antagonistic identities, assigning blame, or invoking memories of victimisation. Such messages may intensify fear, resentment, and hostility and can contribute to the normalisation of violence. Secondly, music can transform memories of violence into narratives of peace by encouraging listeners to reflect on the human costs of conflict. This way, the target listeners can reflect on the non-violent alternatives to conflict.

Boulding (2000) claims that music, art, dance, theatre, poetry, and sheer play are all expressions of peace culture when they reflect humanity's sense of beauty and reverence for life. Creativity and using one's imagination are also very important elements in music-making. Music can therefore be seen as an important lens we can look through toward conflict resolution, transformation, and peacebuilding. Music can also serve as a medium with which we can express and shape our visions of peace that we can make audible within and through a musical creation.

Music is often seen as a social activity, and its distribution mechanism of ideology is often used to foment conflicts; a summary of how music has been used for such purposes is therefore useful (Sloboda and Bergh 2010). In this perspective, Sloboda and Bergh conceptualise music as both a social activity and a channel for circulating ideologies. Communicating peace messages through music is not something new, just as castigating people through the same musical platform has been in existence. Through lyrics that promote hatred, glorify aggression, perpetuate stereotypes, or demonise perceived opponents, music can legitimise antagonistic attitudes and intensify existing ethnic, religious, or political conflicts. On the other hand, with lyrics that advocate forgiveness, non-violence, and reconciliation, musicians often challenge divisive narratives and inspire positive social change.

Because of the importance attached to peacebuilding through music, countries like Uganda have established the Music for Peace Network, with the aim of harnessing the power of music to promote peace. The study by Opiyo (2020) shows that music in northern Uganda has contributed to building compassionate, creative relationships between and among community members, many of whom were combatants during the region's outstanding conflict. Based on the study by Opiyo, it can be discerned that music has a relational dimension to peacebuilding.

Music (those genres with harmonious melodies, for peaceful purposes and without religious or political objectives) can break down the borders of nation-states and bind humanity together. Quoting J.J. Keki's words: "Peace will begin with simple people." "We should use whatever we have to create peace. If you think you have the body, use the body to bring peace; if you have music, use your music." Music contains huge potential for contribution to peacebuilding, such as the removal of direct and indirect violence, igniting hope and will to live, and helping integrate peacefully among communities (Wu 2019).

Music provides a unique approach to peacebuilding, which has the potential to help communities address the many stages of conflict in a more constructive and creative way. Of course, music does not in itself end wars, eliminate structural inequalities, or heal deep psychological wounds. What it does, though, is engage us in a thought process (Adelman 2011). While music may have extraordinary peacebuilding promise, it also has the potential to divide and alienate, provoke hostility, and foment violence. It has been deployed to consolidate racist ideology, to intimidate, and as a tool of torture—in other words, to work against all that makes for peace (Sloboda and Bergh 2010).

Amanze (2015) notes that music has been used by different cultures to help those suffering psychologically and spiritually. This means that music can be used for people with both psychological and spiritual needs. This demonstrates the invaluable nature of music as a tool for psychological integration. Observably, music has been utilised by humanitarian organisations in Borno State during the Boko Haram insurgency and other contexts to manage traumatised children.

Lederach (2020) approaches music and peacebuilding from three distinct lenses: music evokes, invokes, and provokes. In this regard, Lederach explains that music can engage individuals and communities at emotional, cognitive, relational and behavioural levels. Conflict, according to him, disrupts. . . It prompts us to inquire, relocate ourselves, relocate others, events, and relocate meanings. Music writing also evokes interpretation and response and provokes response.

Moller (2025) studies building bridges with music: A qualitative analysis exploring the use of music and music therapy in peacebuilding from different perspectives. The study, through interviews with peacebuilders, musicians, music educators, and music therapists, looks at the aims of using music in peacebuilding, musical frameworks, and music therapy. The study notes that music, especially when working in a peacebuilding setting, can teach us to look for ways towards peace from a different perspective. Moller also portrays how music can help with conceptualising our ideas and images of peace by using music's innate metaphorical nature to describe peace.

It is important to highlight that musicians in some African communities have served functions outside entertainment. They sometimes act as counsellors, community historians, storytellers, singers, and mediators in family and tribal disputes. For instance, the griot in Mali exemplifies how music and oral performance can preserve collective memory, communicate social values, and facilitate dialogue during periods of tension. Through narration, song, and public performance, the griots have often functioned as the voice and conscience of their communities. In this regard, musicians in Africa, especially in areas prone to conflict, can emulate them to raise the conscience of their people and to contribute to conflict resolution, social cohesion, and peacebuilding. This is true because their voice and artistic production can go to every nook and cranny of conflict- and non-conflict-affected areas.

2.2. Hausa Music for Peacebuilding

Before discussing Hausa music and peacebuilding, it is pertinent to provide a brief contextual background on the Hausa people, who constitute one of the largest ethnolinguistic groups in Africa. They are predominantly found in northern parts of Nigeria, the Niger Republic, and dispersed across several West African countries, including Ghana, Cameroon, Chad, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo, owing to centuries of involvement in trade, migration, and religious interactions. The term Hausa refers both to the ethnic group and to their language, which serves not only as the mother tongue of millions of native speakers but also as a major lingua franca across much of West Africa.

It is important to note that Hausa music can be categorised into two categories. The first category of Hausa music has to do with traditional and pop music that are produced independently of the Hausa home videos. Producers of this category of music have little or no connection with the Hausa home videos. They often compose music for themselves, an issue, an individual, a king, or a prominent figure. The style and rationale for producing such music differ from filmi music. First, the music consists only of the artist's voice, and in some instances may require another voice to say the chorus. Secondly, the music is independently recorded (audio/video) and sometimes performed at events. This is in line with what [Yusuf and Yusuf \(2022\)](#) opine: Hausa music (traditional) is used during celebrations like birth (naming ceremony), marriages, gaming, storytelling, and so on. This is also like pop music. They are used during government functions, political rallies, and even weddings. Under this category, there are a few identified peacebuilding Hausa music pieces. They include: *A garin Jos yau muna cikin damuwa*, *Arewa Ina mafita*, *Zo mu zauna*, *Matasa kun jiya*, *Wahabu Sarkin Dare da Rana*, among others. The examples identified are Hausa music that represents conflict issues in parts of northern Nigeria, contains a wide spectrum of human emotions, and triggers grief, hope, and hopelessness.

The second category is Hausa music produced and used in Hausa home videos. The music featured in Hausa home video productions is rooted in pre-existing musical traditions and performance practices. Its development reflects a process of continuity and adaptation, whereby established musical styles were incorporated into the home video medium and reshaped to complement cinematic storytelling and audience expectations. This category is often referred to as filmi music or song. According to [Sarrazin \(2017\)](#), filmi music is a style in Indian films that punctuates scenes and dialogue. Due to similarities between Hausa home videos and Indian films, Hausa home videos have filmi music, which is usually added in the editing phase to spice up the entire content. Hausa filmi music, as noted by [Adamu \(2019\)](#), is usually recorded separately and contains alternating male and female voices singing each verse. In this regard, male and female artists mime the music playing in the background while performing it.

[Brindle \(2013\)](#) further categorised music videos used in films into two categories. The straight performance videos showing the artist singing live or miming a recorded track, and a form of dramatisation of the lyrics of the music. Within the context of Hausa home videos, it is noticeable that Hausa filmi music adopts the form of dramatisation of the lyrics. This gives room for the actors to mime and dance to a recorded track that has alternating voices of male and female, or a single voice. There are a few Hausa music pieces for peacebuilding that were produced to promote peacebuilding. For instance, in *Tsintsiya* (The Broom), a Hausa home video, there are different filmi music pieces that articulated peacebuilding. These include: *Tsintsiya*, *unity*, *Kano sai dan Kano*, and *soyyaya madakata*. In *Wata Ruga* (Fulani Settlement), the Hausa home video embedded two different filmi music pieces for peacebuilding. *Al-Ummar Mu* (My People) also embedded peacebuilding Hausa music in the home video. These productions, however, were created primarily to advance the narratives of Hausa home videos and therefore differ from the musical works examined in this study, which were composed specifically in response to conflict-related issues. As such, they serve distinct purposes and should not be treated as directly comparable forms of cultural intervention.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

One theory germane to this study is the conflict transformation theory. According to [Akpoveta \(2017\)](#), the major crux of the conflict transformation theory is the absolute need to investigate the character, attitude, and behaviour of individuals and groups of individuals, and the relationship between the conflicting parties. The assumption is that

investing power and energy into changing behavioural patterns of individuals towards one another lies in the possibility of halting the occurrence of conflict. The bulk of conflict theory regards the issues, actors, and interests as given and, on that basis, makes efforts to find a solution to mitigate or eliminate contradictions between them (Miall 2007). Conflict transformation theorists argue that contemporary conflicts require more than the reframing of positions and the identification of win-win outcomes.

The theory of conflict transformation is distinguished from theories of conflict management and conflict resolution by its emphasis on the need for systemic change to alter the social structures, conflict parties, and institutions within which conflicts are embedded. Since all conflicts are situated within a social context, which often shapes and may engender conflict formation, transformation of conflict often requires change in the conflict's context. This suggests that conflict transformation theory needs to extend beyond the immediate site of conflict to become a theory of conflict-in-context. The rationale for selecting conflict transformation theory is hinged on the need to change the attitude of people and assumptions towards reprisal attacks on innocent individuals, who share no responsibility for the crime committed by the perpetrators of violence in states categorised as flashpoints. In the context of Hausa music with peacebuilding messages, conflict transformation is seen as a deliberate attempt to use lyrics to change the attitude of people aggrieved from taking further reprisal attacks and making frantic efforts to find lasting solutions.

3. Methodology

Data for this study was gathered through qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviews. The researchers identified Hausa music with themes on peacebuilding in northern parts of Nigeria, such as *Zo Mu Zauna Kar Mu Saba* by Andy Bature and *Wahabu Sarkin Dare da Rana* by Aminu Abubakar Ladan aka Aminu Ala. *Zo mu zauna, zo mu saba* was produced in 2011, while *Wahabu Sarkin Dare da Rana* was produced in 2012. The researchers purposively selected these songs based on four (4) criteria: (1) their themes; (2) their lyrical content on the restoration of peace in northern parts of Nigeria; (3) the rationale for the composition of the selected music is to promote peaceful co-existence among conflict parties in northern parts of Nigeria; and (4) access to the artists and music. The research is limited to two Hausa music pieces because, within the Hausa music landscape in northern parts of Nigeria, this genre is not as common as love, religious, and political music. The researchers obtained the music from the musicians who are the copyright owners through the WhatsApp platform. The two Hausa songs were transcribed and translated into English for easy interpretation. One of the authors of this research is a native Hausa speaker, a certified translator, and a member of the Nigerian Institute of Translators and Interpreters with extensive professional experience in news translation and translation from English–Hausa and Hausa–English. Excerpts were culled to give examples where necessary in the analysis. The second method of data collection employed is in-depth interviews with the artists. In line with research ethics, the musicians granted consent for the interviews to be recorded. The interview sessions were in the Hausa language and conducted through phone calls. The interviews were conducted separately. All the interviews were recorded and lasted for about 28 min and 25 min, respectively. While the interview was ongoing, the researchers took notes of salient points. Data gathered from the Hausa music on peacebuilding and interviews were thematically analysed. The analysis followed a systematic process of familiarisation with the data, initial coding, categorisation, and theme development. First, the researchers repeatedly listened to the selected music. The researchers read the lyrics of each piece of music and interview transcripts several times to become familiar with the content and identify meaningful segments relevant to the research objectives.

The initial codes were generated primarily through an inductive approach. This gave room for concepts and meanings to emerge from the data rather than imposing predetermined categories. Relevant words, phrases, statements, and lyrical expressions relating to peacebuilding were assigned to descriptive codes. These included, for example, messages concerning tolerance, peaceful coexistence, forgiveness, dialogue, reconciliation, respect for others, unity, and rejection of violence. After the initial coding, related codes were compared, merged where appropriate, and grouped into broader categories based on their conceptual similarities. The analysis also involved the integration of lyrics and interview data. The lyrics were treated as the primary textual expression of peacebuilding messages, while the interview data helped in the interpretation and explanation of those messages embedded in the music.

4. Results and Discussion

The subsection presents the data and analysis.

4.1. The Artist: Aminu Abubakar Ladan

Aminu Abubakar Ladan (Aminu Ala or Alan Waka) is a household name in the music industry in Nigeria and Niger Republic. The researchers are interested in one of the artist's several songs titled *Wahabu Sarkin Dare da Rana*. The music, as analysed, is a social commentary on insecurity affecting northern parts of Nigeria. Ala's style of music composition (starting with praising Almighty Allah and salutations to the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, peace be upon him) is thus appealing and capable of retaining the attention of the listeners. His voice has become famous and rare, which serves as his greatest forte. This music can play a role in conflict situations. It has significant potential to contribute to peacebuilding in northern parts of Nigeria. It highlights human and social consequences of insecurity, raises public awareness, and encourages reflection on the need for peaceful coexistence. Through its moral and religious framing, the music promotes values such as justice, compassion, unity, and collective responsibility, which are essential for conflict prevention and resolution. Given Ala's credibility and popularity among Hausa-speaking audiences, his message is likely to resonate with diverse segments of society, fostering dialogue and encouraging communities to reject violence.

The Music: Excerpt

Oh Wahabu, the King of Day and Night! Bring peace to Arewa—our father's land.

We are consistently praying to Wahabu Allah, the King of Day and Night, to bring lasting peace to Arewa—our father's land.

Bring peace to Arewa, our father's land.

Oh, the knower of fortunes, ghaib (hidden),

Oh! the knower of Heaven and Earth,

Fear and uncertainty have taken over our minds,

We no longer have control over the abundant natural resources you blessed us with,

We observe religious rites in fear

They want to kill us by all means,

Assist us, oh Lord because of your beloved Prophet Muhammad,

Oh, the most forgiving, we have repented and seek your forgiveness,

Restore peace to our dear Arewa, our father's land.

Oh Allah, answer, the prayer of the people of Kano.
Before dawn, I was in a city called Jigawa,
I met the people of Jigawa, showering praises and blessings on the Prophet Muhammad,
I left agile men and women praying fervently for the return of peace to our dear land.

Chorus.

I went to Kaduna at midnight,
I met religious leaders and visitors engaging in recitation of the text of Holy Qur'an,
They were in tears, crying to Allah to restore peace to our Arewa.

Chorus

I then placed a call to Sokoto, the seat of Caliphate,
I was informed that a significant number of people have raised their hands in prayers,
Praying day and night for the restoration of peace to the troubled north

Chorus

I got visitors from Katsina,
I asked them about peace in north,
They told me that day and night, religious leaders are fasting and praying for Allah to bring back peace.

Chorus

They said people from Zamfara, Niger and Nasarawa are praying for peace,
People from Yobe are performing a special lesser Hajj and praying for peace.

Chorus

The people of Bauchi and Gombe don't sleep,
The people of Yola (Adamawa), Taraba too,
In Maiduguri, people are meditating day and night specifically for peace to reign,

Chorus

Maiduguri is renowned in Qur'anic education and prayers,
The city has now turned into a no-go-area.
Many lives that bow in prostration for your worship were lost,
Oh Allah! Stop the blood spillage in Maiduguri.

Chorus

We are soliciting your help oh Lord!
Assist us oh Lord!
We have prostrated before you oh Lord!
We pray with your carefully designed names and qualities,
You have promised to answer our prayers when we pray,
We sincerely pray for peace,
We have repented oh Lord!

The Message

The music, with a duration of seven minutes forty-eight seconds (7 min 48 s), starts by portraying the true picture of violence and conspiracies behind the conflict in northern parts of Nigeria. The introductory lyrics portray the realities of violence and expose the perceived motives and conspiracies that underpin conflict in northern Nigeria. Ala draws attention to human suffering, insecurity, and social divisions caused by persistent unrest, while encouraging listeners to reflect on the factors that sustain these conflicts. This is captured in the lines below:

Fear and uncertainty have taken over our minds,
We no longer have control over the abundant natural resources you blessed us with,
We observe religious rites in fear
They want to kill us by all means

Ala narrates the difficulties in residing in northern parts of Nigeria because of the myriad conflicts and the efforts by residents of the 19 states. For instance, the artist's style of mentioning the states one after the other, highlighting the state of insecurity, justifies his call for the restoration of peace in northern parts of Nigeria.

A key peacebuilding message in the music that Ala highlights is the consistency in prayers as a practical guide to achieving peace in northern parts of Nigeria. The lyrical message is therefore an appeal for peace through prayer, repentance, and collective moral responsibility. The music reminded people in northern parts of Nigeria to take the path of prayer and sincerely pray for the restoration of peace and tranquillity in the conflict-affected states.

Importantly, the music has religious connotations and considers prayer as a panacea for peacebuilding in parts of the north. According to Aminu Ala, musician, personal communication, 20 January 2025, prayer is a useful but neglected approach that can play a vital role in achieving peace in the North. Both the government and individuals have relegated prayer. That is why I repeatedly mention in parts of the lyrics, "*Muna addu'a dare da rana domin zaman lumana...*" (we should be praying for Peace Day and night)...

The music also demonstrated the importance of prayers, where the musician dedicated special lyrics for prayers with the hope that Almighty Allah will restore peace in northern parts of Nigeria. This can be seen in the following lyrics:

We are soliciting your help oh Lord!
Assist us oh Lord!
We have prostrated before you oh Lord!
We pray with your carefully designed names and qualities,
You have promised to answer our prayers when we pray,
We sincerely pray for peace,
We have repented oh Lord!

4.2. The Artist: Andy Bature

Andy Bature is a Christian who grew up in a Muslim-dominated Bauchi Emirate. According to his accounts, he was never scuffled or forced to abandon his religion or receive any form of bad treatment based on his religion from the Muslims in Bauchi Emirate. However, the change, mistrust, religious polarisation, or what could best be described as a 'hidden agenda to promote individual denomination and group' is worrisome. These developments motivated the musician to compose this music on peacebuilding. Andy Bature is not as popular as Aminu Ala. Through concerts and public performances in states such as Plateau, Bauchi, and Kaduna that have experienced episodic ethno-religious

tensions, Andy Bature engages audiences with messages of tolerance, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence. The music, which is four minutes and eleven seconds long, draws on his personal experiences of harmonious Christian-Muslim relations to challenge narratives of division and hostility. The messages embedded in the music provide space for the audience to reflect on shared values and common humanity, thereby contributing to reconciliation and social cohesion.

The Music: Excerpt

Ye! Come let's live together and not fight,
 Let's leave in Peace, Oh people of Arewa!
 Here is a clarion call, let's live together in peace.
 We were created by the Lord Almighty and dispersed differently—some black,
 some white,
 Some children, some elderly,
 He goes to church, you go to mosque to pray,
 Let's live together and stop the malice
 I am making announcements, oh you listen!

Chorus

We belong to same country and region,
 Let's unite, progress, do away with bigotry and love one another,
 Let's forgive one another.
 The key to our progress is in our hands.

Chorus

It is duty-bound on us to change our nation,
 Let's exercise patience and hold on to our businesses for survival.
 Let's embrace farming because it is mandatory to feed the nation.
 My brother, let's live together and avoid fighting,

Chorus

It had happened, however, please for the sake of God, let it not repeat itself,
 Let us fear our Lord, whatever we do, He sees us.
 Let us pray for unity, mercy and progress in life.
 The Lord is an Expert, the Knower of everything.
 He knows our travails. Let us intensify prayers for peace.
 Our development lies in our peaceful co-existence.
 Let us develop our rural and urban communities.
 It is our nation, let us build it.

Let us obey the laid down rules and regulations, and our leaders,
 Oh, people of Arewa (North), let us live together in peace.

Chorus

Oh! Bature is calling on all to live in peace and stop malice.
 Emirs, Imams and Pastors, let us obey!
 Oh, people of Arewa (north), let us live in peace.

Chorus

The Message

The music highlights some of the issues and underlying attitudes that contribute to conflict in parts of the north. In the music *Zo Mu Zauna Kar Mu Saba* by Andy Bature, the musician specifically repeated the lyrics '*Mu Kankare daudaru zuciya*' (let us cleanse our heart from all forms of dirt). Dirt in this context, according to Andy Bature, musician, personal communication, 10 November 2025, signifies any behaviour, act, and attitude that right-thinking members of the public may consider injurious to the well-being and truncate the peaceful co-existence of society. These include prejudice, hatred, intolerance, suspicion, and other forms of conduct that fuel division among communities and result in reprisal attacks and mob action. In the context of northern Nigeria, these behaviours have fueled communal clashes due to the complexity in ethnic, religious, and political composition of the region.

Andy Bature repeatedly invokes the need to cleanse the heart and for listeners to engage in self-reflection and moral transformation as prerequisites for sustainable peace. The music in this sense suggests that unresolved resentment and negative perceptions of others can escalate tensions and contribute to cycles of violence, including reprisal attacks and mob actions. Consequently, the musician frames peacebuilding not only as a political or security issue but also as a personal and communal responsibility that begins with changing attitudes and fostering mutual understanding.

Another peacebuilding message in the music draws attention to specific appeals aimed at addressing the widespread desire for peace in northern parts of Nigeria. In this regard, Bature articulates concrete calls for behavioural change, mutual understanding, and restraint among individuals and communities affected by conflict. For instance, the musician states that:

We belong to same country and region,
Let's unite, progress, do away with bigotry and love one another,
Let's forgive one another.
The key to our progress is in our hands.
It is duty-bound on us to change our nation,
Let's exercise patience and hold on to our businesses for survival.
Let's embrace farming because it is mandatory to feed the nation.
My brother, let's live together and avoid fighting,

The lyrics above highlight that every citizen has a duty to champion peace, be patient in dealing with one another, and avoid fighting. This message underscores the importance of restraint, tolerance, and mutual respect as a panacea for peaceful co-existence in conflict-affected communities. The lyrics also highlight the need for individuals to hold on to their businesses, such as farming for survival.

Another key message in the music is the message that articulates the need for collaboration between traditional and religious leaders, irrespective of denomination, as a solution to achieving peacebuilding. For instance, he captures in the lyrics:

Oh! Bature is calling on all to live in peace and stop malice.
Emirs, Imams and Pastors, let us obey!
Oh, people of Arewa (north), let us live in peace.

The lyrics here emphasised collaboration between certain people the musician identified. These are traditional title holders, religious leaders, and, of course, inhabitants of northern parts of Nigeria. Collaboration implies one of the approaches to achieving peace.

The lyrics invite individuals to replace suspicion with tolerance, hostility with forgiveness, and retaliation with restraint. In this sense, the music does not simply call for the

absence of fighting. It presents a different model of social relations based on coexistence, shared responsibility, and mutual respect.

The peace messages articulated in the lyrics of Hausa music can be situated within the central assumptions of conflict transformation theory, which emphasises the transformation of attitudes, behaviours, and relationships that sustain conflict. Rather than focusing solely on the termination of violence, the theory advocates an inward transformation among individuals and communities as the foundation for sustainable peace. The overarching message conveyed in the music is the need for members of conflict-affected communities to undergo attitudinal and behavioural change by rejecting hatred, revenge, and reprisal attacks in favour of forgiveness, dialogue, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. In this respect, music functions as a cultural intervention that seek to reshape perceptions of conflict and encourage non-violent responses.

Usage of the selected Hausa Music on Peacebuilding in Broadcast Media

The study finds that the music *Zo Mu Zauna Kar Mu Saba* has been adopted by the defunct Voice of America (VOA) Hausa Service as background music for reports relating to conflict in Nigeria. It has been observed that the radio station consistently uses the song in special reports related to peace and World Peace Day. Additionally, other media organisations in parts of the north, especially the conflict-prone areas of Kaduna, Bauchi, Jos, and Borno, like DITV, NTA Maiduguri, Peace FM, and Hadin Kai Radio, formerly Lafiya Dole, have consistently been using the music as a filler.

Bature, musician, personal communication, 10 November 2025, reports that he has granted permission to the media houses to use the music as his contribution to peace in northern parts of Nigeria. Apart from this, non-governmental organisations whose mandate is tilted towards peacebuilding, such as Search for Common Ground, use the song during advocacy and community outreach across northern parts of Nigeria.

Also, *Wahabu Sarkin Dare da Rana* has been adopted as the signature tune and background music of a popular morning delight programme, '*Yaya aka Wayi Gari*', translated as 'How did you wake up' on Hadin Kai FM. Hadin Kai FM is a military-based radio station in Maiduguri, established solely to consolidate the media aspect of the war against *Boko Haram* Insurgency and to assist in peacebuilding processes. As noted by Yusuf (2019), the radio station came on board basically to serve as a radio station used in the counterinsurgency and counter terrorism media campaign in the Northeast. The programme aims to provide updates to security operatives on the security situation of people in Maiduguri and environs. This is in line with the submissions by Weingartner (2006), who notes that music during wartime has tended to be thought of as a morale booster or a diversion for the non-fighting population, as seen in the UK during the Second World War. In a nutshell, the two types of music have become the delight of producers of peacebuilding programmes. This can be attributed to the messages on peacebuilding embedded in the music. It is logical to infer that the use of the music in peacebuilding programmes by producers is in tandem with their suitability.

5. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that Hausa music constitutes a significant communicative resource for peacebuilding in northern Nigeria. The analysis of the two selected Hausa peacebuilding music shows that music can articulate peacebuilding messages in culturally familiar and emotionally engaging forms. The Hausa music addresses the realities of conflict in northern Nigeria. Through different lyrical and stylistic approaches, the artists transformed complex experiences of conflict into accessible messages that encourage social cohesion and peaceful relationships. The continued use of the music by media organisations

and in peace-oriented programmes further suggests that their communicative value extends beyond their original production context.

The study also contributes theoretically by demonstrating the usefulness of understanding music not merely as entertainment but as a communicative and socially embedded resource in peacebuilding. The findings reinforce the proposition that music can evoke emotions, invoke shared identities and values, and provoke reflection and dialogue around conflict and reconciliation. In this respect, Hausa music provides an important cultural medium through which peacebuilding ideas can be communicated, remembered and reproduced within communities. Its capacity to combine artistic expression with culturally recognisable narratives makes it particularly relevant to peacebuilding communication in contexts where local languages and cultural forms remain central to everyday communication.

Importantly, the study was limited to two Hausa peacebuilding music pieces and interviews with two artists. The study did not establish how the audience interprets and responds to or acts upon the peacebuilding messages contained in the music. The study therefore makes no claim that exposure to music necessarily produces changes in attitudes or behaviour among listeners. Future studies can therefore examine audience reception of the selected Hausa music for peacebuilding and can include listeners from different demographic or geographical backgrounds.

Author Contributions: Conceptualisation, I.U.Y.; Methodology, I.U.Y.; Validation, A.S.; Investigation, I.U.Y.; Writing—original draft, I.U.Y.; Supervision, A.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Quality Assurance Committee, Department of Broadcasting, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, University of Maiduguri on 5 March 2026.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all the subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The original contributions presented in this study are included in the article. Further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no interest.

References

- Adamu, Uba Abdalla. 2019. Hausa popular music. In *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*. Edited by C. Heidi Feldman, David Horn, John Shepherd and Gabrielle Kielich. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., pp. 168–78.
- Adelman, Ellie. 2011. The Processes of Music and Peacebuilding. In *Beyond Intractability*. Edited by Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Boulder: Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado.
- Akpoveta, Emmanuel. 2017. *Introduction to Conflict Reporting: Styles and Approaches*. Sapele: Eke Graphics Publishers.
- Amanze, James M. 2015. The role of music and dance in peace making and reconciliation: The case of Rwanda after the 1994 Genocide. In *Mediating Peace: Reconciliation Through Visual Arts, Music and Film*. Edited by Sebastian Kim, Pauline Kollontai and Sue Yore. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishers, pp. 230–44.
- Begbie, Jeremy. 2015. Modelling harmony: Music in peace-building. In *Mediating Peace: Reconciliation Through Visual Arts, Music and Film*. Edited by Sebastian Kim, Pauline Kollontai and Sue Yore. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishers, pp. 194–209.
- Bergey, Benjamin. 2018. Building Peace Through Music. *The Yale ISM Review* 4: 11. Available online: <http://ismreview.yale.edu> (accessed on 24 September 2026).
- Best, Shedrack Gaya. 2004. *Protracted Communal Conflict and Conflict Management: The Bassa Egbura Conflict in Toto LGA, Nasarawa State, Nigeria*. Ibadan: John Archers Publishers.
- Boulding, Elise. 2000. A new chance for human peaceableness? *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 6: 193–216. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
- Brindle, Mark. 2013. *The Digital Filmmaking Handbook*. New York: Quercus.

- Hintjens, Helen, and Rafiki Ubaldo. 2020. Music, violence and Peacebuilding. *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* 31: 279–88. [CrossRef]
- Jeong, Ho-Won. 2005. *Peacebuilding in Post Conflict Societies: Strategy and Process*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Lederach, John Paul. 2020. Music Writ Large: The Potential of Music in Peacebuilding. In *Peacebuilding and the Arts, Rethinking Peace and Conflict Studies*. Edited by Jolyon Mitchell, Giselle Vincett, Theodora Hawksley and Hal Culbertson. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 139–56.
- Miall, Hugh. 2007. Conflict Transformation Theory and European Practice. Available online: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/b531/dc5d6ed7daceaa9fccbacc36fb36406907d.pdf> (accessed on 24 September 2026).
- Mohammed, Kyari. 2014. The Message and methods of Boko Haram. In *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*. Edited by Marc Antoine Montclos de Perouse. Ibadan: IFRA Nigeria African Studies Centre, pp. 9–32.
- Moller, Johanna. 2025. Building bridges with music: A qualitative analysis exploring the use of music and music therapy in peacebuilding from different perspectives. *Voices* 25: 1–31.
- Opiyo, Lindsay McClain. 2020. Engaging the “Other”: Contemporary music as perspective-shifting in post conflict northern Uganda. In *Peacebuilding and the Arts, Rethinking Peace and Conflict Studies*. Edited by Jolyon Mitchell, Giselle Vincett, Theodora Hawksley and Hal Culbertson. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 157–75.
- Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). 2005. Peacebuilding Overview. Available online: https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2005/04/oecd-annual-report-2005_g1gh4cc3/annrep-2005-en.pdf (accessed on 24 September 2026).
- Rufai, Murtala Ahmed. 2021. *I am a Bandit: A decade of research in Zamfara State Bandit's Den*. Sokoto: Graphic Concept Academy.
- Sarrazin, Natalie. 2017. Magic, destruction and redemption in the soundtracks of *Aashiqui 2*, *RockStar*, and *Rock On!!*. In *Music in Contemporary Indian Film: Memory, Voice, Identity*. Edited by Jayson Beaster-Jones and Natalie Sarrazin. New York: Routledge, pp. 91–104.
- Sloboda, John A., and Arild Bergh. 2010. Music and art in conflict transformation: A review. *Music and Arts in Action* 2: 1–17.
- Weingartner, Jorn. 2006. *The Arts as Weapon of War, Britain and the Shaping of the National Morale in the Second World War*. London: Tauris Academic Studies.
- Wilson, Joseph, and Rahila Jibrin. 2017. Music and the freedom of expression in Nigeria: Singing the maladies of a Nation. *Maiduguri Journal of Arts and Social Science* 14: 86–102.
- Wu, Haishang. 2019. Music's role in peacebuilding. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research* 11: 138–43. [CrossRef]
- Yusuf, Ibrahim Uba. 2019. Countering Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism: Assessment of media campaigns. *Global Media Journal* 17: 1–11.
- Yusuf, Ibrahim Uba. 2020. Hate speech and national interest issues in selected Hausa musicals. *Liwuram Journal of the Humanities* 21: 12–25.
- Yusuf, Umar Lawal, and Ibrahim Uba Yusuf. 2022. The role of politicians in democratising musical production in northern Nigeria. In *Indigenous African Popular Music: Social Crusades and the Future*. Edited by Abiodun Salawu and Israel A. Fadipe. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, vol. 2, pp. 31–42.
- Zelizer, Craig, and Robert A. Rubinstein, eds. 2009. *Building Peace: Practical Reflections from the Field*. Colorado: Kumarian Press.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.