

9.

### **The Practice of Cultural Diplomacy in *Dadin Kowa* Film for National Integration in Nigeria**

**Abdulwaheed Shuaibu**

Department of Linguistics and African Languages,  
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, Nigeria  
[princidebayo11@gmail.com](mailto:princidebayo11@gmail.com)

**Sale Maikanti**

Department of Linguistics and African Languages  
Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, Nigeria  
[maikanti86@gmail.com](mailto:maikanti86@gmail.com)

#### **Abstract**

This paper discusses *Dadin Kowa*, a popular Hausa film series on Arewa24, as an agent of national integration and peaceful co-existence in the Nigerian plural society. It presents the ethno-religious, and socio-cultural diversity in Nigeria and injects the role of narratives to change perception of unity and identity of the viewers. The research is conducted based on Krippendorff's (2018) Content Analysis and Stuart Hall's (1980) Encoding/Decoding Theory. The study is qualitative-oriented through thematic analysis of the particulate episodes, coupled with personal interviews of viewers and practitioners in the media. The results show that *Dadin Kowa* can go beyond pulling off entertainment to promoting their inclusive stories that promote inter-ethnicity and social elements. The most important narratives, e.g. the inter-religious marriage between a female and north Muslim called Alawiyya, and a female Yoruba Christian also called Bode, as well as scenes whereby the two religions celebrate togetherness and demonstrate how common values can close the cultural gap. The series also uses Hausa as a common language in portraying other cultures in a respectful ways. The paper concludes by proving that the example in *Dadin Kowa* proves that indigenous media can perform the functions of nation building and cultural diplomacy. It suggests an increased representation of the minority voices and languages in the film industry because of their integrative potential. The work adds to the debates about media, identity and unity within multilingual and multicultural societies such as Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *Dadin Kowa*, National Integration, Hausa Media, Arewa24, Cultural Representation.

**Introduction: Nigeria Ethno-linguistic Diversity and the Media in Nation Building**

With over 250 ethnic groups and more than 500 languages, Nigeria is renowned for its remarkable cultural and linguistic diversity, earning it the giant of Africa. The cultural diversity, as it noted by Adebayo (2014), has, on the one hand, defined the problems of common national identity. The multicultural patchwork of identities frequently demands intentional actions in creating new inclusive narratives that cross the ethnic lines.

In this scenario, the media has taken a prime role of mediating and containing inter-ethnic relations. The Nigerian media is not merely a source of information but also a formidable institution that shapes national consciousness, as rightly contended by Oso (2012). It can strengthen polarising ethnic stereotypes or it can contribute to the group identity building with balanced and inclusive images. This has been the case since the 1970s when the Federal Government embraced the national broadcast policies that actively tried to boost unity in diversity (see Uche, 1989).

In contrast to traditional news delivery structures, TV films present alternative story structures in which complicated social reality may be extended. According to Baran and Davis (2020), media texts, especially in genres based on film, allow forming what they call imagined communities, the symbolic spaces where various people belonging to dissimilar backgrounds can interact with the lives and reality of the others. These plays an important role in a postcolonial country such as Nigeria where vestigial colonial institutions have created a wide-scale ethnic/regional tension.

Regional language media productions have, in the past few years, gained force in establishing the identity as well as the perception of the people. In a critical analysis of the Hausa-language television film series called *Dadin Kowa*, Muhsin Ibrahim (2020) pays attention to how the film has shifted, not being focused on stereotypical representations but presenting a more restorative view and not excluding the view of the Other in Nigerian society. These indigenous stories are, on the one hand, the most

embedded with local cultures add to the national conversation about unity and mutual respect.

Instead of propagating ethnocentricity with ethnic pride, productions, such as *Dadin Kowa* show that regionality content can serve as a catalyst to cultural diplomacy. Such plays expose normal lives that are cut across ethnic background with common concerns that include family relations, social conflicts and dreams. Deliberates on co-existence and the common humanity, as Ibrahim (2020) further posits, the program is a refreshing dose to the divisive rhetoric in mainstream discourse on politics.

In this way, one can hardly overestimate the role of the media, in particular, regional television films in the process of forming a national identity. The media has an excellent chance at nation-building in an atmosphere where ethnic and religious differences are recorded to transform into political tension, which means in our case, deciding on the range and degree to which the media takes on this worthy effort to consolidate the country.

### **Problem Statement**

The country of Nigeria has failed over many decades to build a nation as ethnic, regional, as well as religious fault lines are widespread. Although education and political restructuring have been discussed, not much academic interest has been paid on the way elections encourage unity through the use of indigenous-language television shows. Oso and Pate (2011) note that the Nigerian media tends to manifest the ethnic biases that are already in existence which may degrade national unity.

The narratives of the locally-culture based Indigenous films like the *Dadin Kowa* are relatively untapped in understanding their effects on the national integration process. It is an open question to what extent the regional television films serve the purpose of building national consciousness- and this study attempts to answer the same.

### **Study Objectives**

This study aims at the following,

- Discuss how the Hausa television film *Dadin Kowa* can be used to further the integration of the Nigerian cultures by enhancing intercultural understanding and balanced portrayal of the different ethnic groups.
- Analyse the way the narratives used in the movie impact the change in perceptions and attitudes of the viewers towards unity and harmonious coexistence regardless of regional and ethnic considerations.

### **Theoretical Framework: The Encoding/Decoding Model**

The Encoding/Decoding Model presented by Stuart Hall (1973/1980) is accepted as a theoretical framework of the study. According to Hall (1980), the audience receives media messages with some particular meanings that are assumed by the producers, a process that is influenced by their socio-cultural settings. The theory is especially applicable in examining the nature of national integration messages being conveyed by television films such as *Dadin Kowa* and how various audience of the country with different ethnic backgrounds can receive such messages.

Applied in the scenario of *Dadin Kowa*, the themes of tolerance as well as inter-ethnic harmony and social responsibility are encoded by the producers. Minds that belong to different ethnic groups such as Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and other groups interpret these messages, filtered by their own cultural experience and realities of particular regions. Hall model, therefore, allows a critical reflection on the role which *Dadin Kowa* might play on the perceptions of unity and other in the Nigerian society. Using this theory, the research does not only assess the motives behind a narrative in the television show but also shows how such motives are taken or opposed by the various viewers of the show.

### **Methodology**

This paper uses a qualitative content analysis design to check the extent to which the *Dadin Kowa* television series propagates national integration in terms of its themes characters and plot.

Ten episodes of *Dadin Kowa* (generated in five seasons) were sampled in a purposive manner to provide the representation of the variety in themes. Episodes were chosen depending on how they depicted the relationships between the cultures, conflict resolution, observations on society and involvement of the society.

Also, insights of the semi-structured interviews conducted with five viewers (representing Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and minority ethnic groups) were used to validate the interpretative claims and audience receptivity. These thematic interviews were analysed by using Braun and Clarke six-phase model of thematic analysis (2006).

The process of media text triangulation heightened by media perception helps in giving a strong firmament in assessing the place of *Dadin Kowa* in bringing on national cohesion.

### **Dadin Kowa: Overview**

#### **The Short History and Background of the TV Series**

*Dadin Kowa* is a TV series Nigerian TV film that began in 2014 under the production of the Arewa24 television network. Initiated to entertain, educate and mirror the realities about the Northern Nigerian life, the series is named after a fictitious town representing a microcosm of the Nigerian society. Analogous to inclusiveness, collective identity, and the possibility of unity amongst diversity, as explained by Salisu and Ahmad (2021), the name of the series, *Dadin Kowa* or Everybody's Sweetness, is metaphorical.

The show started as a localised production in Hausa language and it grew into a national affair, due to high production value, easy to relate storylines, and a multi-ethnic cast reflecting the multi-ethnic setup of Nigeria. Yahaya (2020) argues that the producers of the show tend to create it not only as a presentation of the realities of the Hausa culture but also as the visualisation of how various ethnic and religious groups could live peacefully.

### **Goals and Thematic Obsessions**

The main essence of *Dadin Kowa* is to entertain and educate people about issues in the society. As Musa (2019) explains, the show is used to tell a social commentary where the producers raise issues like the child marriage, girl-child education, and their ability to stay in school, drug abuse, terrorism, corruption, and interfaith coexistence. The thematic framework of the series focuses on the values of communities, moral issues, and generational transition in which several times portrays real family interactions, civic duty, and politics.

Remarkably, *Dadin Kowa* does not follow the escapist trail of most Kannywood productions; it is rather realistic and dwelling upon day-to-day problems. Its adherence to cultural originality and language diversity is also indicated by the use of the Hausa language with sporadic epitomisation of English and other Nigerian languages (Ibrahim, 2020).

### **Popularity and Reach of the Audience by Regions**

Initially, produced to cater to the needs of Northern Nigerian audiences, *Dadin Kowa* first became quite popular outside the Northern Nigeria because of its subtitling, universal themes, and easily relatable characters. Its host channel, Arewa 24, is a satellite as well as online streaming platform, so the broadcast reaches much farther, to the South of Nigeria, and even the diaspora. In accordance with a media survey according to Adamu and Ibrahim (2021), *Dadin Kowa* is a high engagement Hausa-language film on Nigerian television, which has very good viewership and its range is between the youth and middle aged

Its cross-cultural representation has been a major factor in promoting harmony between the different people of Nigeria. As an example, inter-ethnic interactions seen in the series (including those between Igbo, Yoruba, minority ethnic characters, and so forth) provide evidence of the fact that the series makes a deliberate attempt to bridge cultural

gaps and rectify the media biases that stereotyped the Northern Muslim identity in the past (Baba, 2020).

#### **Advancing Cultural Dialogue Chance Trough Storylines**

*Dadin Kowa* series, which is aired on Arewa24, is a powerful tool of creating cultural dialogue in the pluralistic society in Nigeria. In its well-developed plots, the series deals with the issues of religious tolerance, ethnic coexistence, and common community values- cultural diversity is portrayed as a desirable addition instead of being presented as a conflict.

#### **Presentation of Various Ethnical and Religious Characters**

Another outstanding aspect about the show is its ability to show characters of different ethnic and religious background co-existing harmoniously in the fictional town of *Dadin Kowa*. As an example, Christian Yoruba teacher Mr. Olabode is accepted and esteemed by the people of dominant Hausa-Muslim town. He not only speaks the local language (Hausa), but he can also engage the community during the various gatherings and social discourses, which question the ethnic constraints constantly projected in Nigerian media (Yahaya, 2020).

Likewise, Alawiyya as a daring and well-educated Muslim woman gets to meet with other people outside religious boundaries. She comes to the rescue of the Christian nurse called Miss Grace in one of the episodes by attacking a male character who rules out her contribution with the words: “*Ke Kirista ce, ba za ki fahimci matsalar Musulmi ba*” (You are a Christian and you will never understand the issues that concern Muslims). Alawiyya answers, “*Ba addini koyar da mutunci ba? Mutumci na kowa ne*” (Is not religion the way of teaching respect? Everybody should be respected). This scene, as Salisu and Ahmad (2021) state, is the one where the show highlights human dignity over the boundaries of religion.

**Intermarriage, Interfaith Relationships and Celebration of One Another**

Interfaith relationships and celebration of common festivals are other mighty tools of encouraging dialogue in the series. This interethnic love story between a Hausa Muslim 18 year old girl, Binta, and a Christian Igbo man, Chinedu, gives a fragile yet insightful account of a type of ethnocidal marriage. Both families are opposed to the marriage at the beginning but through constant communication and by getting to appreciate each other, they come to accept the marriage at the end. At the wedding, the bride father speaks in Hausa, as saying, “*Abinda ke tsakaninmu da Chinedu ba bambancin kabila ba ne, sai ai mu koya juna alada*”, (What is between us and Chinedu is not ethnic affiliation but opportunities to learn each other cultures).

Such cultural harmony is also seen in episodes during such festive seasons. In a different example, the Christian community would be seen celebrating Eid with the Muslim neighbours of the town. One of the Muslim characters provides food with the words, “*Ku zo ku ci abinci, biki na kowa ne*” (Come and eat, the festival belongs to everyone). This correlates with the fact that according to Musa (2019), *Dadin Kowa* reinforces mutual respect through a common understanding of such values as generosity, family and the sense of neighbourliness.

**Cultural Sensitivity in the Use of Hausa as Lingua Franca**

Although the base language of *Dadin Kowa* is Hausa, it embraces diversity in language by; code-switching as well as multilingual communication. When Mr. Olabode threatens his son by using the native language (Yoruba), “*Şé o fẹ́ jẹ́ kí n fì ọwọ́ gbé e?!* ” (Do you want me to lay hands on you?!) The Yoruba conversation continues normally and is usually sub-titled so that the situation can be understood. The author states that these moments justify the ethnicity of the characters even though they help to promote the language as a unifying language (Ibrahim, 2020).

More to the point, Hausa is used in the show not to eliminate other languages, but to establish a communicative bridge. As an illustration, the character of a Kanuri trader in

a town meeting speaks in accented Hausa, in a speech that goes like; *Mu ma muna son zaman lafiya* (We also desire peace), which is applauded by others in the meeting. This confirms the perception that Ibrahim holds about *Dadin Kowa* priming the idea of inclusive communication beyond ethnic exclusivism.

To conclude, cultural discourse is not just an ornament in *Dadin Kowa*: it is incorporated in the very centre of the story. By means of the plots people can identify with, natural use of different languages, and multicultural values, the series actually promotes cross-cultural understanding and community Nigeria.

#### **Narrative Strategies to Create Unity**

The TV series *Dadin Kowa* applies subtle story-telling techniques that are very much set to foster national unity and mutual understanding. The show exploits conflict-resolution story lines, sympathetic depictions of culturally different characters and selective contrast of local values so that diversity is not pictured as divisive but instead an asset.

#### **Day to day conflicts and inter-ethnic solutions**

Among the stable elements of the narrative used in the series is the actualisation of everyday, familiar disputes that cut across ethnic and religious lines. In another episode, a spat between Auwalu, a Hausa shop owner, and Chuka, an Igbo trader, ensues because of the issues of pricing and the stealing of customers. At first, they get tensed as Auwalu announces in Hausa, “*Ba haka kuke yi kullum ba, ku yan kudu kuna son cinye mu!*” (But this is what the southerners always do, you want to control us!).

Nevertheless, the influence of a common friend, Mr. Olabode, who comes to resolve the matter with the help of both the Hausa and the English language, redefines the situation as a simple business conflict but not an ethnic rivalry. When they discuss it, he simply replies, “*It is not a matter of tribe, it is an issue of trust and competition, do not allow it to divide you.*” According to Yahaya (2020), this type of the conflict-resolution would humanise the communal disputes and exemplify peaceful coexistence.

**Making the Other Human by Way of Mutual Struggle**

One more tactic practiced by *Dadin Kowa* with a great degree of success is the ability to infuse emotional complexity in different people of various backgrounds to enable viewers to relate to the other. The character of Miss Grace, who is a nice Christian nurse hail from the South, can be an example to illustrate that the character is extremely concerned with taking care of the local children as the outbreak of cholera. After a suspicious patient declines her assistance, since at first she expresses, “*Ina so likita musulmi ne ya duba ni*” (I want a Muslim doctor to examine me), Grace replies calmly: “*Ina duba lafiya ne, ba addininka ba*” (I care about your health, not your religion). This is followed by the daughter of the same patient who is so happy with the help of the nurse and takes Grace to celebrate Eid with her family. This development shows how we can be trustful and connect even at the first impression of the other person about what Ibrahim (2020) calls the emotional diplomacy of empathy in Northern storytelling.

**The Contrast between the Southern and Northern Values without any Hatred**

One of the major unifying styles in *Dadin Kowa* is its tactful combination of the Southern area of aggressiveness and the Northern region of conventionality that, though not opposite, exist as complementary features of the culture. As an example, in one of the episodes, when Bola, a Yoruba female, newly posted as a principal of a school tries to implement sex education in the school program, she is opposed by conservative parents.

Malam Haruna, renowned Islamic scholar begins to query if such topic is appropriate, stating: “*Ba al’adar mu ba ce a koyar da yara irin wannan darasi*” (It is not our culture letting children learn such things). Regretfully Bola speaks back to him in Yoruba-laced Hausa language: “*Ba na son mu bar yaranmu cikin duhu ne; mu hada ilimi da tarbiyya*” (I am just keen that we avert ignorance; let us combine education with training).

In the finale of the arc, they compromise, namely, to permit the redacted version of the lesson that can comply with the education as well as cultural norms. As Salisu and Ahmad (2021) note, such representation does not demonise one of the sides but demonstrates that dialogue creates a possibility to find the solution to seemingly insurmountable ideological differences.

In a nutshell, *Dadin Kowa* is not a preaching unity; it is an act. The series produces a media model of national unification through ethnic caricature beyond characters, cultures living together without erasing one another, and resolution by means of understanding the conflicts.

### **Restrictions and Objections**

Although *Dadin Kowa* has received a lot of commendations due to its actions on promoting unity and displaying cultural diversity, it is not completely free of shortfalls and criticism. Critics and scholars have indicated a few narrative discrepancies and ideological dangers that feature in the series. They are the lopsided reification of the idea of family responsibility along ethnic grounds, the danger of the reinforcement of stereotypes in the name of reality, and the simplification of structural divides deep-rooted in Nigeria as it tries to emphasise culturally harmonious existence.

### **Disparity in Representation of Family responsibility between the Northerners and Southerners**

The unequal depictions of the family values and responsibilities of Northern characters in comparison with the Southern characters is one of the complaints being mentioned over and over about *Dadin Kowa*. Hausa-Muslim families are also illustrated as stronger and with higher moral standard and are more focused on the community in many episodes. Examples of this are given in how Malam Nura is always referred as a man of principled family man who brings conflicts to peaceful resolutions and also teaches his children such things as: “*Duk wanda baya jin magana ba zai kai ko ina ba*” (If you do not listen to advice you will not get far in life).

On the contrary, Southerners like Mr. Okonkwo, an Igbo businessman are at times portrayed as harsh, self centred or forgetful when it comes to family matters. In an episode Okonkwo declines to foot the education of his nephew by telling him in English that “*Let him go out and hustle. Nobody ever trained me, I made myself.*” This dualism, according to Musa (2019), threatens to make it become merely a stereotype that Northerners are more communally-minded and the Southerners are excessively individualistic.

These representations even though they might have been based on selective realism, could tend to unconsciously support regional bias and further intensify the preconceptions of cultural superiority.

**Potential Enforcement of Stereotypes in the Names of Realism**

Although *Dadin Kowa* tends to echo real life problems, it has also moved into the realms where stereotypes are considered normal and should not be broken. As an example, the character of a Hausa woman Binta is displayed as quiet, submissive and humble, which supports the premise of the respectable Northern girl. Southern female characters on the contrary are often described as aggressive or over westernised, e.g. Ngozi or Bola.

On one occasion, Bola refuses the advice of an older person about the way she dresses and says in English, This is 21<sup>st</sup> century and I dress comfortably and not because of culture. Although this depicts a valid cultural conflict, its context micro-level is narrow-minded and puts modern women of the South in the view of being culturally insensitive.

When repeated, as Ibrahim (2020) notes, these depictions have the potential to prove the correctness of the great generalisations about ethnicity, behaviour, and values, therefore, not debunking but supporting the existing stereotypes within nations.

**The Menace of the Excessive Interest in Cultural Harmony without Paying Attention to Deep Structural Divisions**

One of the focal thematic intentions of *Dadin Kowa* is the ideology to foster interethnic and interreligious cooperation. Nonetheless, a steadfast demonstration of peaceful coexistence tends to ignore or under present the structural facts of ethnic marginalisation and religious friction together with systemic disequilibrium in Nigeria. To take an example: though episodes may make reference to any issue such as poverty, corruption, or political exclusion, all these issues are usually swept away through individual or neighbourhood reconciliation instead of a structural criticism.

In one episode, Chinedu laments amongst other things that he is not promoted within a government office controlled by Northern elites. Even when he is working, he says to his wife, frustrated, that they tell him that he is not one of them. Nevertheless, such a pivotal structural problem is hastily avoided when his superior apologises later on and promotes him after a confidential chat.

Although this accord focuses on interpersonal reconciliation, it forgoes photographing the essences of institutional truths of regional imbalance and nepotism. Salisu and Ahmad (2021) state that this kind of plot, however, can be misleading as it can detract attention away from dissolved structural boundaries behind the pretext of harmony.

Lastly, there is the last but not the least issue; although *Dadin Kowa* has gained considerable success in the field of cultural dialogue, it should walk on the thin line and balance between encouragement and glamorisation of uniting. The judgment of its narrative strategies is also crucial so that the message that the film conveys on national integration will be convincing and presents no exclusion.

**The Implication to the National Development**

The role that *Dadin Kowa* played in the nation-building process of Nigeria can never be overemphasised. Being a media product based on the indigenous storytelling and created in Hausa, the most popular language of Northern Nigeria, the series illustrates

the revolutionary role of the local content in the development of inter-social toleration and national values. The series contains practical insights to guide the media stakeholders on the importance of indigenous television in national developments as a significant contributor to peace building in realistic story scenarios and culturally-sensitive representations.

**Indigenous Media as the means of Advancing Tolerance and Unity**

These episodes demonstrate the ability of the indigenous-language programming to produce narratives that are rich to a wide range of audiences. As an instance, Fear, prejudices, and its later acceptance by both families are covered in an episode of a Muslim woman, Zainab, of Kano marrying a Christian man, Obinna, of Enugu. In the beginning, Zainab mother objects telling her in Hausa,

*“Yaya za ki auri Kirista daga Kudu? Wannan zai kawo matsala.”*

How will you marry a Christian from the South? This will bring problems.

The families, however, get to know each other after exchanging visits, earring out dialogue at each other and taking part in festivities of each other like when Zainab goes to accept Christmas and Obinna takes part in the eid celebrations. Such a change supports the theory that local narratives are a strong force that can destroy prejudices and promote inter-communal respect. It is very important as Salisu and Ahmad (2021) contend regarding such portrayals in a multi-ethnic country such as Nigeria where religious and cultural fault lines have in the past been a source of violence.

**Film as an Instrument of Peace Building and Education**

*Dadin Kowa* teaches its audience and informs in a unique way by making people have fun, teaching them how to coexist and be responsible citizens. In a very interesting episode there is a fight coming out in the village when a political rally turns out to be violent and the youngsters of various ethnic background lay the blame on each other. Malam Musa, a wise elder of the community says,

*“Mu tuna, ba siyasa ba addini, ba kabila ba – Najeriya tamu ce gaba daya.”*

Let's remember: not politics, not religion, not ethnicity—Nigeria belongs to all of us.

The implication is quite evident: national identity must overcome parochial interests. The current lesson concurs with the argument presented by Ibrahim (2020) that indigenous media such as *Dadin Kowa* could serve as avenues of informal civic education when addressing those populations that do not have many opportunities to get an education through formal schooling. Communicating democratic values and moral ideas, the series focuses on providing social and moral education and inserts its lessons into the story told in the everyday life.

### **Lessons the Nigerian Media Stakeholders Can Learn**

The popularity and the spread of *Dadin Kowa*, not only in Northern Nigeria but also the entire country, illustrates that there is a lot more that can be done in terms of local-language television to facilitate national growth. Its approach has a number of lessons that can be learnt by media stakeholders:

- **Narrative inclusivity:** Narrative inclusivity means that the show includes a wide range of characters (e.g., Mr. Olabode is the character who represents the West, Chinedu is a character representing the East) without making them the outsiders or villains. This is quite different to most mainstream Nollywood productions where Northern characters are stereotyped or not present at all.
- **Hausa as a unifying language:** The series is mainly in Hausa except when there is a need to use English or other Nigerian languages to clarify and make it very acceptable and understandable. A case in point is the exploitation of code-switching at times when there is interethnic conversation and this is an indicator of humility and co-existence.
- **Communal storytelling:** *Dadin Kowa* addresses instead the communal existence, collective survival and rejoicing and it helps to bring an understanding that the national development starts at the ground level- through unity, communication and co-operative problem solving.

It is time that local media houses and content creators identify that they are not just entertainment producers, but also nation-builders as Yahaya (2020) observes. Interethnic harmony, the combating of stereotypes, and the embrace of inclusion narratives are not even optional in Nigeria: this is a matter of national necessity.

## **The Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Findings in Summary**

This paper investigated the effect of the movie *Dadin Kowa* as an effective tool of cultural exchange and national unification in Nigeria. The series goes to illustrate how the indigenous media can be bamboosled strategically in order to develop peaceful co-existence, shared identity, and understanding by displaying the various characters of different ethnic backgrounds, and religious beliefs that not only relate and associate with one another, but also intermarry.

By depicting them in an authentic manner, e.g., the friendship between Chinedu, Igbo apprentice mechanic and Nasiru Hausa youth with more conservative background, the show illustrates that the harmony that they experience is not a theory, but a way of life. In one episode, Chinedu was unjustly accused of stealing and Nasiru defends him to his father saying:

*“Babu bambanci tsakaninmu. Dukkanmu ’yan Najeriya ne.”*

There’s no difference between us. We are all Nigerians.

These modest yet potent scenes strengthen the message of the program which says that it is possible, it is needed and that peaceful coexistence is inevitable.

### **The Role of the Media as Cultural Diplomacy Reaffirmed**

Although this story has some weaknesses in the narrative level: this story also includes, at times, excessive moral teaching or under-development of characters which are not Hausa, in the end, *Dadin Kowa* stands out as an excellent illustration of a media project that operates as a cultural diplomacy tool. It is a soft power instrument which changes the way people look at each other in the society and builds respect among groups and

normalises the relationships among different cultures in a divided society such as Nigeria.

The most filmic example is the scene of Alawiyya, a religious Muslim woman assisting Mrs. Olabode, a Yoruba Christian when Mrs. Olabode is giving birth. She quotes some verse of the Quran to comfort her and Mrs. Olabode appreciatively responds in English to her.

*"Thank you, sister. God bless you."*

This is an instance of inter religious sisterhood and the point it conveys is that compassion has no religious border. According to Yahaya (2020), such media representations have a diplomatic purpose: they destroy negative stereotypes and provide the audience with a positive, prospective story. Different than introducing fear of the other, Dadin Kowa promotes celebrating the culture riches of the country.

### **Recommendations**

- Promote the Inclusion of the Non-Core Hausa Context: The future episodes or spin-offs must provide a larger part of the Southern Nigeria characters to correct the ethnic imbalance. To give an example, such characters as Obinna and Mr. Olabode only appear, but their development is tertiary. The intercultural understanding can be enhanced by widening their functions.
- Improve Linguistic Variety: Although Hausa is still the main language, the increased conscious choice of Nigerian Pidgin, Yoruba and Igbo with subtitles can counter and necessitate wider audience reception, in line with Nigeria party of multi-linguality. This possibility is foreshadowed by such episodes as the one in which Chinedu is teaching Hausa to his younger siblings but should be more elaborated
- Develop Youth-Related Plotlines: Since Nigeria is a young country, it is important to have more youth-related storylines about the student politics, interethnic campus life and youth entrepreneurship, that could extend

educational and unifying role of Dadin Kowa. According to Ibrahim (2020), on seeing themselves positively portrayed, young people take an increased interest in the ideals of nation-building.

- Training and Collaboration: The stakeholders are encouraged to sponsor training of scriptwriters, producers and actors across regions to ensure there is synergy in terms of cultural sensitivity and joint storytelling. As a wrap-up, it is accurate to say that *Dadin Kowa*, a deliberately designed indigenous television film can create bridges in a patriotically diverse and complex country like Nigeria. It serves to remind the audience that diversity does not represent the enemy, but a powerful force, and that it can help to unite us, although it is not easy and can be achieved through empathy, conversation, and mutual narratives.

## **References**

- Adebayo, R. I. (2014). Ethno-religious conflicts and the travails of national integration in Nigeria. In S. O. Asein & J. O. Adesina (Eds), *National integration and the survival of Nigeria in the 21st century* (Pp. 92–106). University of Ilorin Press.
- Adamu, M., & Ibrahim, M. (2021). Arewa24 and the reshaping of Northern Nigerian identity through television. *Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 13(2), 65–78.
- Baba, A. I. (2020, July 25). *Re: New Horizon: Dadin Kowa and the restorative representation of the “Other” in Nigerian films.*  
<https://www.muhsin.in/2020/07/126-re-new-horizon- dadin-kowa-and.html>
- Baran, S. J., & Davis, D. K. (2020). *Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, and future* (8th Ed). Cengage Learning.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

- Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis (Eds), Culture, media, language: Working papers in cultural studies, 1972–79 (pp. 128–138). Routledge.
- Ibrahim, M. (2020). New horizons: Dadin Kowa and the restorative representation of the “Other” in Nigerian films. *KAKAKI: Journal of English and Literary Studies*, 11, 81–98.
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (4th Ed). Sage Publications.
- Musa, A. (2019). Hausa-language television films and social change in Northern Nigeria. *African Communication Review*, 12(1), 34–51.
- Nwosu, I. E. (2016). Media and national integration in multicultural societies: Refocusing Nigeria’s experience. *International Journal of Communication*, 23(3), 113–126.
- Oso, L. (2012). Press and politics in Nigeria: On whose side? Lagos State University Inaugural Lecture Series.
- Salisu, A., & Ahmad, S. (2021). Cultural integration and media narratives: The role of television film in Nigeria’s multicultural setting. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 13(1), 93–109.
- Uche, L. U. (1989). *Mass media, people, and politics in Nigeria*. Lagos: Concept Publications.
- Yahaya, A. (2020). Television as a tool for national unity: A study of Dadin Kowa on Arewa24. *Nigerian Journal of Broadcasting and Media Studies*, 9(3), 114–128.