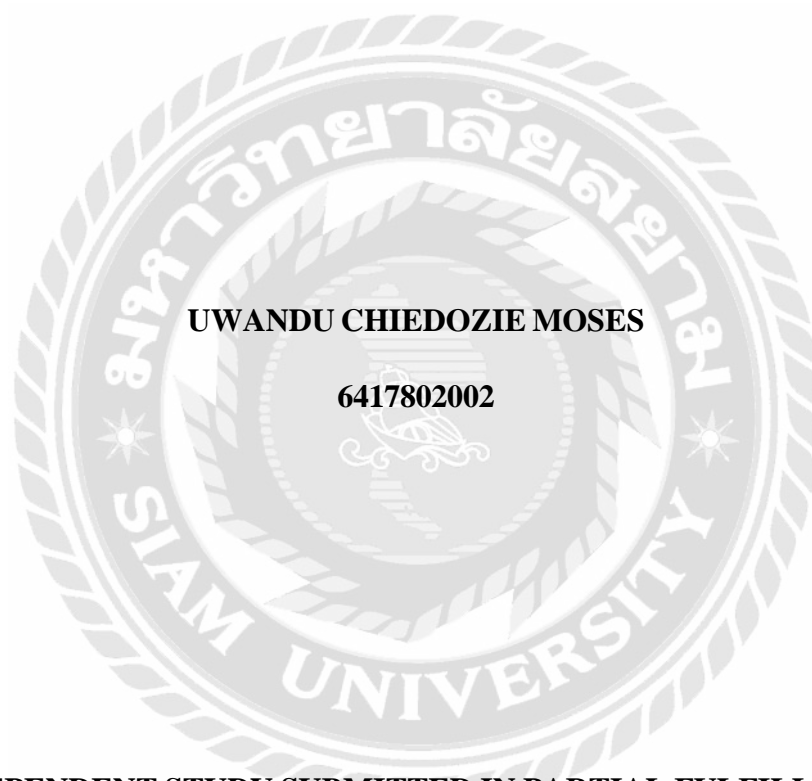




THE ROLE OF YOUTHS IN PROMOTING PEACE AND DIPLOMACY IN NIGERIA



UWANDU CHIEDOZIE MOSES

6417802002

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN PEACE STUDIES AND DIPLOMACY
SIAM UNIVERSITY**

2025



IS Title: The Role Of Youths In Promoting Peace And Diplomacy In Nigeria

Author: Uwandu Chiedozie Moses

Student ID: 6417802002

**This independent study has been approved as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts in Peace Studies and Diplomacy**

Advisor

Dr. Emmanuel Nweke Okafor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Cheol Je Cho'.

Dr. Cheol Je Cho

Director of Master of Arts Program in Peace Studies and Diplomacy

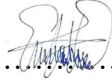
Research Title: The Role of Youths in Promoting Peace And Diplomacy In Nigeria

Researcher: Uwandu Chiedozie Moses

Degree: Master of Arts

Major: Peace Studies And Diplomacy

Advisor:



(Dr. Emmanuel Nweke Okafor)

..21../.....05...../..2026..

ABSTRACT

In a country frequently challenged by conflict, poor governance, and socio-political unrest, the active participation of youths is essential for peace building and sustainable governance. However, they face significant challenges, including limited access to education and employment, exclusion from policymaking processes, and structural barriers rooted in sociocultural norms. This research explored the critical role of Nigerian youths in promoting peace and diplomacy, driven by the urgent need to understand how this significant demographic group can influence national stability and development. This research examined the nature and scope of youth involvement in peace efforts, identified the barriers hindering their full participation, and highlighted opportunities for their empowerment. Utilizing a mixed-methods research design, the research combined qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys to gather insights from Nigerian youths across various communities. The findings reveal that Nigerian youths are actively engaged in community mediation, interfaith dialogue, advocacy for democratic reforms, and digital peace campaigns. The research opines that for Nigeria to harness the full potential of its youth population in peace and diplomacy there must be deliberate policy actions aimed at increasing youth representation in governance, promoting capacity-building programs, and leveraging technology for peace advocacy.

Keywords: youths, peace- building, diplomacy, conflict resolution

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First and foremost, I give thanks to God Almighty for the strength, wisdom, and perseverance that have guided me throughout this research journey. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Emmanuel Nweke Okafor, for his invaluable support, constructive feedback, and continuous encouragement. His dedication, expertise, and guidance have been instrumental in shaping the quality and direction of this work, and I am truly grateful for the time and effort he invested in my academic growth. I owe my deepest appreciation to my beloved parents, Mr. Uwandu Moses and Mrs. Uwandu Olivia, whose unwavering love, prayers, and sacrifices have been the foundation of my success. Their constant support and belief in me have given me the courage to pursue my goals and complete this important milestone. This achievement would not have been possible without their nurturing and encouragement. To my family, friends, and all who supported me directly or indirectly during this academic journey, I say a heartfelt thank you.

Uwandu Chiedozie Moses


DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family, whose unwavering love, encouragement, and support have been my source of strength.




DECLARATION

I, Mr. Uwandu Chiedozie Moses, with ID number 6417802002, hereby declare that this work is entirely mine and it is original, unless specific acknowledgements verify otherwise. I have done this independent study by myself under the close supervision of an advisor.

Signature..... 
(Mr. Uwandu Chiedozie Moses)

Date 21-05-2026

Advisor 
(Dr. Emmanuel Nweke Okafor)

Date 21-05-2026

Table of Contents

| | Pages |
|--|-----------|
| Abstract | i |
| Acknowledgement | ii |
| Dedication | iii |
| Declaration | iv |
| Table of Contents | v |
| List of Tables | ix |
| List of Figures | x |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1 Background of the Study | 1 |
| 1.2 Significance of the Study | 5 |
| 1.3 Statement of the Problem | 5 |
| 1.4 Research Questions | 6 |
| 1.5 Research Objectives | 6 |
| 1.6 Research Scope and Limitations | 6 |
| 1.7 Definition of Key Terms | 6 |
| 1.8 Research Outline | 8 |
| CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW | 10 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 10 |
| 2.2 Theoretical Framework | 10 |
| 2.2.1 Social Capital Theory | 10 |
| 2.2.2 Conflict Resolution Theory | 11 |
| 2.3 Conceptual Framework | 12 |
| 2.4 Role of the Youths Globally | 18 |
| 2.5 Role of the Youths in Nigeria | 20 |
| 2.6 Challenges to the Youths' Participation in Nigeria | 22 |
| 2.7 Structural Barriers in Nigeria | 23 |
| 2.7.1 Limited Access to Education in Nigeria | 24 |

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| 2.7.2 | Limited Economic Opportunities in Nigeria | 25 |
| 2.7.3 | Inefficient Infrastructures and Lack of Funds in Nigeria | 27 |
| 2.8 | Traditional Values as a Barrier in Nigeria | 28 |
| 2.9 | Media and Advocacy as Drivers of Cultural Transformation in Nigeria | 31 |
| 2.9.1 | High Unemployment Rates and Underemployment in Nigeria | 34 |
| 2.9.2 | Poverty and Limited Financial Resources in Nigeria | 35 |
| 2.9.3 | Targeted Investments and Job Creation in Nigeria | 37 |
| 2.9.4 | Gaps in the Literature | 39 |
| 2.11 | Summary of Chapter Two | 40 |
| CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY | | 41 |
| 3.1 | Research Methodology | 41 |
| 3.2 | Research Design | 41 |
| 3.3 | Population and Sample | 41 |
| 3.4 | Data Collection Methods | 42 |
| 3.5 | Data Analysis Techniques | 42 |
| 3.6 | Ethical Considerations | 42 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION | | 43 |
| 4.1 | Introduction | 43 |
| 4.2 | Quantitative Data Presentation | 43 |
| 4.3 | Quantitative Data Analysis by Research Questions | 45 |
| 4.3.1 | Research Question 1 | 45 |
| 4.3.2 | Research Question 2 | 47 |
| 4.3.3 | Research Question 3 | 48 |
| 4.4 | Qualitative Data Presentation | 48 |
| 4.4.1 | Coding Process | 49 |
| 4.4.2 | Thematic Analysis. | 49 |
| 4.5 | Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results (Triangulation) | 51 |
| 4.6 | Summary of Findings | 51 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION | | 52 |
| 5.1 | Introduction | 52 |
| 5.2 | Roles of Nigerian Youths in Peace and Diplomacy | 52 |

| | | |
|--------|--|----|
| 5.3 | Success Stories and Case Studies | 54 |
| 5.4 | Challenges Identified | 57 |
| 5.5 | Comparative Analysis | 60 |
| 5.6 | Implications for Policy and Practice | 62 |
| 5.6.1 | Improve Educational Infrastructure | 62 |
| 5.6.2 | Enhance Youth Access to Education and Employment Opportunities | 63 |
| 5.6.3 | Integrate Peace Education in School Curricula | 63 |
| 5.6.4 | Create Job Initiatives | 65 |
| 5.6.5 | Reduce Unemployment and Violence Risk | 67 |
| 5.7 | Institutionalization of Youth’s Representation in Decision-Making Processes | 67 |
| 5.7.1 | Youth Councils and Advisory Boards | 69 |
| 5.7.2 | Increasing Youth’s Involvement in Political Parties | 71 |
| 5.7.3 | Role of Youths in Nation-Building | 72 |
| 5.7.4 | Enhancing Youth Voice in Diplomacy and International Relations | 73 |
| 5.7.5 | Empowering Youths through Inclusion | 74 |
| 5.8 | Promotion of Capacity-Building Programs Tailored to Peace and Diplomacy | 75 |
| 5.8.1 | Developing Skills for Conflict Mediation | 78 |
| 5.8.2 | Leadership Development for Diplomacy | 79 |
| 5.8.3 | Mentorship Programs for Youth Leaders | 80 |
| 5.8.4 | International Organizations and NGO Partnerships | 81 |
| 5.9 | Technology and Social Media for Peace Advocacy | 81 |
| 5.9.1 | Developing Conflict Mediation Skills | 82 |
| 5.9.2 | Leadership Development for Diplomacy | 83 |
| 5.9.3 | Mentorship Programs | 84 |
| 5.9.4 | International Organizations and NGO Partnerships | 85 |
| 5.10 | Addressing Structural and Cultural Barriers to Youth Participation | 88 |
| 5.10.1 | Female and Male Norms and Constraints | 88 |
| 5.10.2 | Structural Barriers Based on Lack of Representation and Institutional Inequality | 89 |
| 5.10.3 | Fostering Intergenerational Dialogue and Collaboration | 89 |
| 5.11 | Promoting Safe Spaces for Youth Empowerment | 90 |

| | | |
|---|-------------------------|-----|
| 5.12 | Summary of Chapter Five | 90 |
| CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION | | 91 |
| 6.1 | Conclusion | 91 |
| 6.2 | Recommendation | 94 |
| REFERENCES | | 95 |
| Vocabulary List | | 106 |



List of Tables

| | Pages |
|--|-------|
| Table 1: Conceptual Framework Chart | 13 |
| Table 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents | 43 |
| Table 3: Age Distribution of Respondents | 44 |
| Table 4: Respondents' Involvement in Peace-Building Activities | 45 |
| Table 5: Youth Roles in Peace and Diplomacy | 46 |
| Table 6: Challenges Limiting Youth Engagement | 47 |
| Table 7: Proposed Strategies | 48 |
| Table 8: Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results (Triangulation) | 51 |



List of Figures

| | Pages |
|---|-------|
| Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Diagram | 12 |
| Figure 2: Classroom in Nigeria | 24 |
| Figure 3: Nigerian police officers detain a man during a political rally in Lagos | 67 |
| Figure 4: National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN) | 69 |



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, is home to over 250 ethnic groups and many languages. This diversity, while a cultural strength, has also contributed to the country's history of conflict. As Arowosegbe (2016) observed, “ethnic and religious cleavages remain potent sources of conflict in Nigeria’s democratic experience” (p. 16). Nigeria has faced challenges such as ethnic tensions, political instability, economic inequality, and unemployment, all of which have tested its ability to maintain peace. These issues are worsened by insurgent groups, community clashes, and corruption, which threaten the country's social stability and international relations.

Young people (aged 15-35) make up over 60% of Nigeria's population (NBS, 2021). This large group has the potential to drive significant social, political, and economic change. Historically, young people have played key roles in movements for change, such as Nigeria's independence and the fight for democracy (Falola & Heaton, 2008). However, Nigerian youths also face major obstacles, including limited access to quality education, high unemployment, and a lack of involvement in decision-making. Oduwole and Fadeyi (2013) noted that “youth unemployment and exclusion continue to constitute major security challenges in Nigeria” (p. 115). These challenges not only impact their own development but also limit their ability to contribute to peace-building and diplomacy.

Youths across the globe have made it clear that they can be strong voices of diplomatic and peaceful change. They have been at the forefront of championing democratic values, calling for dialogue between varying ethnic communities, and pushing for post-war reconciliation (Smith, 2019). These are examples of the transformational impact the youths

can make when they are encouraged and have access. Nigeria situation contrasts this by describing young individuals largely as instigators of violence rather than defenders of peace. According to Resnick and Casale (2011), “the political participation of Africa’s youth is frequently perceived through the lens of violence rather than agency” (p. 10). This does not account for the large numbers of young Nigerians dedicated to stopping wars and promoting social cohesion and inclusive governance. As has been previously demonstrated, attempts at peace-building try to deal with the seed of conflict and bring about sustainable peace using reconciliation, dialogue, and cooperation (UN, 2020a). Diplomacy is described by Berridge (2015) as dealing with international relations and encouraging cooperation through negotiation and dialogue. Peace-building and diplomatic actions are at the heart of seeking stability and development in conflict areas.

Carrying along Nigerian youths can help solve national issues as it strengthens a critical demographic. The contribution of youths in peace-making and diplomatically inclined action is not new; it is at the cornerstone of sustainable development. This is acknowledged by the United Nations itself, in tools such as the Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda (UNSC, 2015), where the young demographic’s contribution to peace processes is seen as critical. This aligns with the African Youth Charter (African Union, 2006), which emphasizes youth’s inclusion in governance processes, conflict resolution, and development as fundamental. These are key reference points for ensuring that Nigerian youths can and should contribute toward addressing the nation’s challenges.

Unemployment is Nigeria’s greatest challenge. The National Bureau of Statistics (2021) asserts that over 33% of Nigerian youths are unemployed which worsens poverty, social conflicts, and crime. Unemployment, argued by Salihu and Jibril (2018), “is significantly linked with youth insecurity and vulnerability” (p. 72). This is crucial in harnessing the capacity of the Nigerian youths to contribute to diplomacy and peace. Beyond

unemployment, youths are excluded from decision-making. Traditional decision-making processes in Nigeria exclude majority of the youths and regard them as inexperienced or unfit to take charge. This makes it more difficult for them to influence policies that impact their communities and their lives. Youth's exclusion from governance has "grave implications for Nigeria's democratic development" (Okeke, 2019, p. 90). Efforts towards promoting youth's inclusion, such as the "Not Too Young to Run" movement made serious strides toward removing youth's impediments to political office. According to Eze (2020), the movement "has become symbolic of youth struggles for political inclusion in Nigeria" (p. 42). Cultural and societal values are another contributing factor to the youth's engagement. Respect for elders is high within many Nigerian communities and often results in youth's voices being undervalued. Although respect for elders is very important, it should not come at the expense of suppressing the voice of the youths. Creating an atmosphere where dialogue between the elders and the youths is welcomed and can ensure mutual understanding and collaboration when addressing Nigeria's issues (Bello, 2020).

Capacity development and education are just as vital in promoting young Nigerians toward diplomacy and peace. Uzoigwe and Adesina (2018) noted that "education and vocational skills are essential for peace and youth development in Nigeria" (p. 77). Despite this, Nigeria's education system faces limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and poor access to schools in rural communities. This makes it crucial for the government and private sector to work together and invest in education reforms, with a focus on leadership development and peace education. The youths and the institutions in Nigeria have already shown what can be achieved. Checkoway and Aldana (2013) observed that "youth organizations are crucial agents of community change and democratic engagement" (p. 1895). Scaling up these can multiply the impact of the youths involvement in peace and diplomacy.

Social media and technology provide new platforms for young Nigerians' engagement in peace and diplomacy. These platforms are strong vehicles for advocacy, raising awareness of social issues, and mobilizing communities. The #EndSARS protests against police brutality are an example of youths using technology to advocate for accountability and justice (Akinyemi, 2021a). Utilizing digital platforms can further enhance youth's engagement in peace-building by providing spaces where they can air their views and work towards solutions. Despite the serious issues facing young Nigerians, their innovativeness and resilience remains very promising. Bello (2020) posited that "youth engagement provides pathways to sustainable peace and development" (p. 57). Empowering youth to actively contribute toward peace-building and diplomacy requires an integrated approach that removes structural, cultural, and economic bottlenecks. Youth's inclusiveness policy, investment in education and capacity development, and youth-centered programs can help unleash the potential for young Nigerians to be agents of change.

However promising they are, there exist bottlenecks of a structural, economic, and cultural nature preventing the effective participation of the Nigerian youths in peace-building exercises. High unemployment rates, deprivation of avenues for decision-making, and cost-barriers of a cultural nature prevent their efficiency. Global youth's programs provide the teachings that there is the potential for the youths to help promote peace and stability when managed appropriately. Investments in capacity development programs and online advocacy can help Nigeria harness the vibrancy and innovativeness of their youths and reap sustainable peace and diplomatic dividends.

Nothing is more significant than realizing and capitalizing on the efforts of the Nigerian youths toward the establishment and sustenance of peace and diplomacy within the nation and the global arena. Nigeria can be youth-led change only if the country can make the

region peaceful and stable. Investing in Nigeria's youth can unleash their potential for making the world a more equitable, fair, and peaceful world.

This research focuses on the study by situating Nigeria's turbulent sociopolitical climate in the context of the youth's participation in peace and diplomacy. It also stresses the point that ethnic diversity, political insecurity, high proportions of unemployed youth, and marginalization from the government continue to undermine national stability. It also stresses the dual character of the youths in Nigeria sometimes portrayed as bearers of violence, but just as prominently portrayed as bearers of peace and social integration.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The research is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it provides a contribution to academic discourses regarding the youth's involvement in peacemaking. Secondly, it provides practical recommendations for policy analysts and development agencies who wish to engage the Nigerian youths in diplomacy and peace-building projects. In addition, the research highlights the necessity for empowering the youths for the purpose of establishing sustainable peace within Nigeria.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Nigeria has seen its fair share of crises throughout the decades, from insurgencies and communal conflicts to political instability. Although youths are sometimes framed as perpetrators of these violent attacks, they can just as readily be great spokespeople for peace. However, roadblocks such as the denial of education avenues, employment, and lack of inclusivity within the circles of decision only hamper their ability for contributing toward peace building and diplomacy

1.4 Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What roles do Nigerian youths play in promoting peace and diplomacy?
2. What challenges hinder the youth's participation in peace-building initiatives?
3. What strategies can enhance the involvement of the youths in promoting peace and diplomacy?

1.5 Research Objectives

The main objectives of this research are:

1. To identify the roles Nigerian youths play in promoting peace and diplomacy.
2. To examine the challenges faced by the youths in contributing to peace-building efforts.
3. To propose strategies for enhancing the youth's participation in peace and diplomatic processes.

1.6 Research Scope and Limitations

This research examined the roles of young Nigerians, aged 15-35 as defined by the African Youth Charter (African Union, 2006), in promoting peace and diplomacy. It explored both formal and informal peace-building initiatives, but due to logistical limitations, data collection was limited to specific regions (South-East region) within Nigeria

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

To clear possible ambiguities that usually come with words usage, some keywords and terms as used in this research are identified for a better understanding of the subject matter.

Youth: Individuals aged 15-35, as defined by the African Youth Charter (African Union, 2006).

Peace-Building: Activities aimed at preventing conflict and sustaining peace through dialogue, reconciliation, and collaboration (United Nations, 2020b).

Diplomacy: The practice of managing international relations through negotiation and dialogue (Berridge, 2015). In this study, it extends to both formal and informal efforts by young Nigerians to foster cooperation, address conflict, and influence governance both locally and globally.

Youth Demographic Dividend: The potential for economic and social development due to a large youth population. With over 60% of Nigerians aged 15-35, this group represents a vital assets if empowered.

Ethnic Diversity: The presence of multiple ethnic groups within a society. In Nigeria's case, over 250 ethnic groups contribute to both cultural richness and historical conflicts. By clarifying these key concepts, the study frames its inquiry into how Nigerian youths can contribute meaningfully to national and international peace and diplomatic efforts.

Political Instability: Frequent changes in government, unrest, or lack of constant leadership. Nigeria has experienced coups, corruption, and governance breakdowns, undermining peace efforts.

Youth Unemployment: The condition where individuals aged 15-35 are unable to find sustainable jobs. Over 33% unemployment among Nigerian youths fuels social unrest and crime.

Social Cohesion: The willingness of members of a society to cooperate for mutual benefit. Youth-led initiatives help promote this through dialogue and inclusion.

Insurgent Group: Armed groups that rebel against government authority. In Nigeria, groups like Boko Haram contribute to insecurity and conflict.

Inclusive Governance: Decision-making processes that involve diverse population groups. Inclusion of youth enhances legitimacy and social trust in institutions.

Peace Education: Teaching about nonviolence, conflict resolution, and civic responsibility. Important for empowering youth to become peace advocates.

Reconciliation: Restoring trust and recovery after conflict. Often initiated by communities and youths after conflict.

Digital Mobilization: Using the internet and social media tools to mobilize campaigns. At the core of youth activism today, seen from the use of Twitter and Instagram by Nigerian youths.

Marginalization: The practice of excluding a group at the margins of society, limiting its access to resources and decision-making. Nigerian youths are often marginalized within political and economic institutions.

Inter-Generational Dialogue: Effective interaction and collaboration between young and elderly individuals. Encourages mutual understanding and co-operative conflict-resolution.

Social Justice Advocacy: Efforts that promote equality and protection of rights in society. Young Nigerians achieve this by organizing at the community level and using the internet.

End SARS Protest: The #EndSARS protest is a social movement or protest in Nigeria against police brutality particularly by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).

1.8 Research Outline

This research establishes the background, significance, and rationale for exploring roles of the youths in peace and diplomacy in Nigeria. It emphasizes that although youths constitute over 60% of the population, structural, cultural, and economic barriers limit their engagement in governance and conflict resolution. The chapter identifies challenges such as high unemployment, marginalization in decision-making, and lack of access to quality education as major obstacles to the youth's empowerment. It also highlights movements like

“Not Too Young to Run” and the use of digital platforms, such as during the #EndSARS protests, as illustrations of youth agency. The research problem is framed around these contradictions, leading to clearly defined objectives and research questions. Additionally, the scope and limitations are outlined, and key terms such as peace-building, diplomacy, and youth demographic dividend are clarified. Collectively, the chapter positions youth as a critical demographic whose inclusion is essential for sustainable peace and diplomatic progress in Nigeria.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a review of relevant literature that informs the research. The chapter commences with the theoretical framework that discusses the relationship between youth, peace-building, and diplomacy. Alongside discussing the theories behind the youth engagement in diplomacy and peace-building, the review also looks at examples of the youth's engagement from around the world and Nigeria, as well as the structural and cultural barriers to the youth engagement. The comprehensive review establishes the study's foundation, identifies gaps, and frames the investigation against existing knowledge.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Two of the fundamental theories for the explanation of the youth's involvement in diplomacy and peace-building are applied: "Social Capital by Putnam 2000" and "Conflict Resolution by Burton's 1990." They are the basis for the existing knowledge on the possibility of mobilizing Nigerian youths as peace-builders and the conceptualization of their activity within society.

2.2.1 Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory is at work when explaining the use of social networks, trustworthiness, and social norms toward aggregate action and mutual objectives.

Thus, Putnam argued:

"Social capital refers to connections among individuals, social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. It involves features of social life such as trust, norms, and networks, which enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives. A society rich in social capital is one where civic engagement is high, where people trust one another, and where formal and informal associations flourish. These networks do more than bind people; they serve as conduits for collective action, mutual support, and resource mobilization across divisions." (Putnam, 2000, p. 19-21).

The foundation of peace and cooperation lies in the emphasis on relationships and interdependence within societies. Social capital in youth-led peacebuilding enhances the capacity of young people to mobilize resources, advocate for cooperation, and bring together diverse stakeholders. Through social networks, youths are uniquely positioned to bridge divisions, strengthen community resilience, and promote peace through mutual support and trust-building. As argued by Putnam (2000), such societies “rich in social capital are better able to confront challenges collectively” (p.22). This is a theory where the transformative possibility of aggregate action is witnessed; where groups and individuals meet on the basis of principle and trust. In essence, this theory shows that when the young Nigerians build trust and strong social networks, they can work together more effectively to promote peace, resolve conflicts, and engage in diplomatic efforts that strengthen national unity.

2.2.2 Conflict Resolution Theory

Burton’s (1990) conceptual framework of conflict resolution focuses on the understanding of conflicts and conflict resolution skills through communication, compromising, and the aid of neutral third-parties. He aims for the identification of the conflict points and the solutions where there is agreement among all the affected parties. Burton (1990) described conflict resolution as the process which “tries to identify and address the unexpressed needs of all the parties involved in a dispute, going beyond negotiation to lasting settlement” (p.360). The Nigerian youths can be very good at it, because they are adaptive, creative, and could empathize with individuals. Burton (1990) further stated that “young actors, when properly empowered, can be agents of positive transformation in profoundly divided societies” (p.44). Through the practice of dispute resolution, they can help alleviate tension, restore confidence, and achieve lasting peace within their societies. To this effect, Burton opined:

“These workshops brought together techniques from controlled-communication sessions with the theory of basic human needs. The central goal was to encourage conflicting parties to discuss how their needs for identity, recognition, security, welfare, and participation were being denied, and how such deprivation generated incompatibilities at the root of violence. Participants were guided to acknowledge both their own and others’ needs, moving away from positional bargaining toward mutual understanding. The process emphasized discovering ‘needs satisfiers’ rather than defending interests, so that dialogue could lead to collaborative, non-zero-sum outcomes. When individuals recognize each other’s human needs, they are far more likely to build trust, restore relationships, and design settlements that endure beyond mere agreements.” (Burton, 1990,p.44).

Through the usage of the theories mentioned above, this research study focuses on the way Nigerian youths can be mobilized for sustainable peace actions and through which their social position, adaptability, and innovativeness make them powerful players for transforming conflict and advancing governance through diplomatic action.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework Diagram

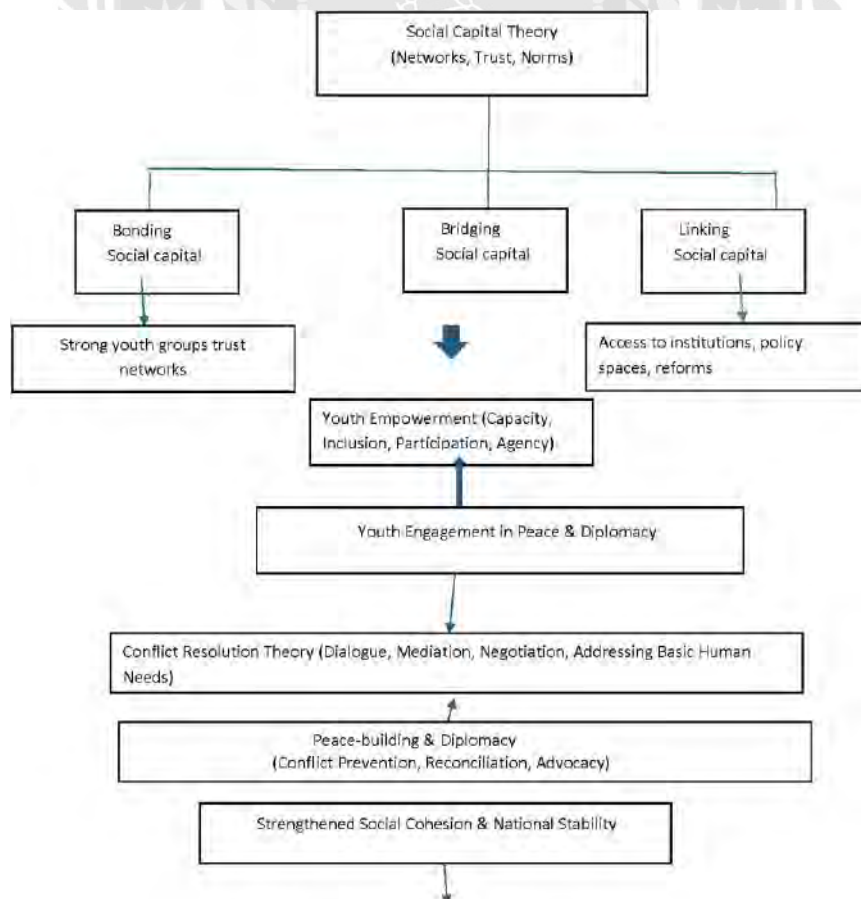


Table 1: Conceptual Framework Chart

| Component | Theoretical Basis | Youth Role in Conceptual Framework | Outcome |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Youth Demographic (15-35yrs) | African Youth Charter | Form the central actor of the framework | Youth as peace/diplomacy agents |
| Social Capital Theory | Putnam (2000) | Explain how youth mobilize networks, trust, cooperation | Enables collective action for peace |
| Bonding Social Capital | Social Capital Subtype | Build strong internal youth alliance | Local level peace initiative |
| Bridging Social Capital | Social Capital Subtype | Link youths across ethnic/religious divides | National unity & dialogue |
| Linking Social Capital | Social Capital Subtype | Connect youths to institutions & governance | Involvement in diplomacy & Policy |
| Conflict Resolution Theory | Burton (1990) | Explain how youth resolve disputes through dialogue needs analysis | Sustainable conflict resolution |
| Conflict Resolution Tools | Mediation, dialogue, negotiation | Youth use them to reduce tensions & restore trust | Community peace building |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Peace Building | UNSC(2015) | Intentional efforts to prevent violence & reconcile group | Social cohesion |
| Diplomacy | Berridge (2015) | Youth engagement in negotiation advocacy, representation | Increased global/local influence |
| Outcome | Integrated theories | Youth driven peace & diplomacy strengthens society | Stability, cooperation, development |

Social Capital Theory and Conflict Resolution Theory offer distinct yet complementary lenses for understanding human interaction. Social Capital Theory conceptualizes the very fabric of social life as a form of currency, arguing that the networks of relationships, along with the shared norms, trust, and reciprocity they foster, constitute a valuable asset. This "capital" is not held by individuals in isolation but exists within the spaces between them, functioning as both the glue that binds communities together and the lubricant that facilitates collective action. It is categorized into bonding capital (strong ties within a homogeneous group), bridging capital (weaker, more diverse ties across groups), and linking capital (connections to institutions of power). The presence of robust social capital enables societies to function more efficiently, from finding employment to fostering civic engagement, by reducing transaction costs and encouraging cooperative behavior.

In stark contrast, Conflict Resolution Theory does not focus on the cooperative norm but on the inevitable breakdown of it. It posits that conflict is a natural and potentially productive aspect of human systems, arising from clashing interests, values, or needs. The theory is fundamentally procedural, concerned with diagnosing the sources of dispute often

distinguishing between rigid positions and underlying interests and developing systematic methods for de-escalation and problem-solving. Its core principles, such as identifying one's "Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement" (BATNA) or employing a neutral mediator, are designed to transform destructive confrontations into opportunities for dialogue, mutual gain, and strengthened relationships. Where Social Capital Theory describes a state of being, Conflict Resolution Theory provides a toolkit for doing when that state is disrupted.

The interplay between these two theories is profound. A rich reservoir of social capital, particularly bridging and linking forms, provides the essential preconditions for effective conflict resolution. High levels of trust and established networks of communication make it more likely that parties in a dispute will engage in good faith, share information openly, and believe in promises of reciprocity. Conversely, the repeated failure to resolve conflicts constructively can rapidly deplete social capital, eroding trust, breaking down networks, and reinforcing negative stereotypes. A community that cannot manage its disputes will see its social fabric fray, making future cooperation even more difficult. In this sense, effective conflict resolution is a primary mechanism for maintaining and regenerating social capital. The conceptual framework of this research is anchored on understanding how Nigerian youths engage in peace-building and diplomacy within the broader political, social, and economic environment. It seeks to clarify the interrelationship among the core concepts of the youth, peace-building, and diplomacy, illustrating how these elements converge to foster a peaceful and progressive society.

According to the African Youth Charter (African Union, 2006), youths are individuals between the ages of 15 and 35. This demographic group represents a vital segment of Nigeria's population and embodies dynamism, creativity, and innovation. Youths are often at the forefront of social transformation and serve as critical agents in addressing the pressing challenges of the modern era, including instability, inequality, and conflict. However, their

transformative potential is frequently undermined by persistent structural barriers such as unemployment, limited access to quality education, and social exclusion. These constraints not only hinder individual advancement but also curtail their collective capacity to contribute meaningfully to national peace and diplomatic engagement. Recognizing and addressing these barriers are essential to harnessing the full potential of Nigerian youth as catalysts for sustainable peace and development. This framework links to Social Capital Theory because it highlights how Nigerian youths' ability to contribute to peace and development is shaped by their access to social resources such as education, employment opportunities, and inclusion in societal structures. The barriers described unemployment, limited educational access, and social exclusion directly reflects deficits in social capital that restrict youths' participation in national peacebuilding and diplomatic engagement.

Peace-building, as conceptualized by the United Nation (UN, 2020b), encompasses deliberate efforts to prevent conflict and sustain harmony through dialogue, reconciliation, and cooperation. It seeks to “reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development” (p. 3). In this sense, peace-building is not merely the absence of violence but the active construction of social cohesion, justice, and equality. It involves addressing the root causes of conflict, fostering inclusive institutions, and promoting relationships that reinforce trust and collaboration across diverse communities. This connects directly to Conflict Resolution Theory as it highlights peace-building as a process centered on dialogue, reconciliation, conflict prevention, and the strengthening of mechanisms for managing disputes. The emphasis on addressing root causes of conflict, fostering inclusive institutions, and building trust reflects the core principles of Conflict Resolution Theory, which focuses on creating structures and relationships that support peaceful interaction and long-term stability.

Diplomacy, on the other hand, involves the management of relations and negotiations among actors to promote mutual understanding and resolve disputes peacefully. Berridge (2015) defines diplomacy as “the conduct of relations between sovereign states through the medium of officials based at home or abroad” (p. 1) and emphasized its role in “preventing and resolving conflicts by promoting communication and understanding and facilitating collaboration on common problems” (p. 3). Beyond its traditional interstate functions, diplomacy also operates at informal and local levels, where individuals and groups—especially youth act as mediators, advocates, and bridge-builders in fostering peace within and beyond their communities. In Nigeria, where ethnic tensions, political instability, and economic disparities persist, such forms of people-centered diplomacy are vital to national stability and inclusive governance. This aligns with Conflict Resolution Theory because it emphasizes diplomacy as a mechanism for managing relationships, promoting communication, and resolving disputes peacefully. The description of the youth’s acting as mediators, advocates, and bridge-builders reflects core principles of Conflict Resolution Theory, which focuses on dialogue, negotiation, understanding, and collaborative problem-solving as pathways to reducing tension and fostering stability.

Integrating the principles of peace-building and diplomacy within the agency of the youths highlights the potential of young people as both beneficiaries and architects of peace. As the United Nations (UN, 2020b) asserts, “inclusive and sustainable peace requires the active involvement of the entire population, including youth” (p. 9). When empowered, Nigerian youths bring to peace processes distinctive attribute, creativity, adaptability, innovation, and a deep sense of community identity. Their participation strengthens social trust, enhances intergroup dialogue, and stimulates collective action toward reconciliation and nation-building.

This conceptual framework situates Nigerian youth at the heart of peace-building and diplomatic transformation. By mobilizing their energy, creativity, and sense of purpose, young people can drive the processes that restore trust, rebuild fractured relationships, and shape a more peaceful and equitable Nigeria. Through this lens, youth are not merely recipients of peace initiatives but active partners and co-creators of sustainable development and social cohesion.

2.4 Role of the Youths Globally

Around the globe, youths have been central figures in the establishment of peace and projecting their ability for the resolution of conflicts and the maintenance of social cohesion. Colombian organizations led by the youth leaders have brought forth superior initiatives for reconciliation amidst decades of civil war. Social dialogue has been launched through organizations, education campaigns, and culture dialogues whose objective is the arousal of understanding and redress among alienated populations (UN, 2020a). “Young people in Colombia contributed to processes of reconciliation through community-level dialogues, education, and culture events for the fostering of peace and understanding” (p.15). In similar context, the youth’s in the case of Afghan leaders have been on the ground for the establishment of peace, with the majority risking life for the facilitation of conflicts and negotiation of solutions through peaceful means.

International institutions, just like the context of the United Nations agenda on Youth, Peace, and Security, honor the youth’s contribution toward the establishment of peace. The agenda credits the presence of young people at the decision-making table, enrolling them into opportunities and resources and their potential for playing influential roles for the prevention and resolution of conflicts. “The inclusion of youth in peace processes is fundamental to sustaining peace, as their unique perspectives, resilience, and

strong sense of justice enable them to challenge structural inequalities and contribute innovative solutions to conflict resolution (UN, 2020d, p. 9).”

Other research describes the essential role played by the youths in peacemaking and diplomacy. Following the end of its civil war, the Sri Lankan youth leaders played a part towards dialogue and coexistence among various ethnic groups. Initiatives among the youths such as peace camps and exchange programs for inter-cultures played a significant role in “bridging gaps between Tamil and Sinhalese communities” (UNDP, 2018, p.7). These initiatives not only lowered tension but also created the path toward sustained coexistence and respect for each other.

On another note, Tunisian youth activism was the principal driving force behind the Arab Spring, advocating for democratic government and peace. The youths utilized social media for mobilizing protests, advocating for human rights awareness, and unison within the movement for system-wide reform. They were the prime agents for Tunisia’s democratic revolution and exemplified the instrumental capacity which youth’s activism can possess for leading societal and political transformation. Hamdy and Gomaa (2018) summarized that “young activists effectively used digital media to organize protests, advocate for rights, and exert pressure on political authorities” (p. 58).

The youths of Rwanda have been central to nation-building and reconciliation since the genocide of 1994. Programs such as the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission engaged the youth in forums on the causes and outcomes of the genocide and called for mutual commitment toward peaceful coexistence. UNDP (2018) depicted it thus: "youths have participated in dialogues on the causes of the genocide, taken part in community service, and made commitments toward reconciliation and healing" (p. 10). The Youths have also been at the forefront of campaigns for community action focused on repairing relations sabotaged by genocide and rebuilding social cohesion. These worldwide Role Models

highlight the capacity of the youths for acting as change-agents for conflicted and post-conflict territories. Through such exemplars, The Nigerian youths can adopt similar models for correcting their nation-specific issues and contributing toward the achievement of a more peaceful society.

This conceptual framework links to Conflict Resolution Theory because it focuses on how youth across different countries actively engage in processes that prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts. The examples from Colombia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, and Rwanda highlight youth involvement in dialogue, mediation, reconciliation, negotiation, and peace campaigns, all of which are core elements of Conflict Resolution Theory. The emphasis on youth as mediators, bridge-builders, and advocates for peaceful coexistence directly reflects the theory's central ideas: using dialogue and communication to reduce tensions; addressing root causes of conflict; fostering reconciliation and social cohesion, and; promoting sustainable peace through collaborative problem-solving.

2.5 Role of the Youths in Nigeria

Nigerian's historical and contemporary youth engagement can be critically interpreted through Social Capital Theory, which emphasizes how networks, trust-based relationships, and collective civic engagement enable groups to access resources and influence political and social outcomes. Across Nigeria's political evolution, youths have built and utilized various forms of social capital bonding, bridging, and linking to challenge oppression, negotiate reform, and drive peace-building (Eze, 2018).

Historically, during the anti-colonial struggle, youths mobilized dense networks of solidarity that represent bonding social capital. Led by figures such as Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo, they organized protests, produced nationalist newspapers, and galvanized mass support for independence. As Falola and Heaton (2008) observed, "youths were among the first agitators for self-rule, staging protests, printing newspapers, and mobilizing support

for the cause of nationalists” (p. 212). This youth-driven civic mobilization demonstrates how tightly knit, trust-based networks can serve as a resource for political transformation.

Likewise, in the pro-democracy struggles of the 1990s, Nigerian youths expanded their networks across social and ethnic boundaries, forming alliances that illustrate bridging social capital. These networks enabled them to advocate for the end of military rule despite repression. Ibrahim (2021) affirmed that “youths in Nigeria have traditionally been the vanguard of social and political reform, mobilizing for democracy and accountability even as they confront systematic repression” (p. 54). Such bridging networks strengthened collective action by linking diverse social groups around shared democratic goals.

In contemporary Nigeria, youths continue to deploy social capital in peace-building, democratic engagement, and governance reforms. The "Not Too Young to Run" campaign exemplifies linking social capital, where youth networks influence formal institutions and legislative processes. By advocating for reduced age barriers in political candidacy, they expanded democratic inclusion. As Eze (2020) noted, “this campaign constituted a watershed of youth political engagement in Nigeria, enabling a more inclusive democratic process” (p. 45). Through institutional linkages, youth transformed collective advocacy into tangible policy outcomes.

The #EndSARS movement further reveals how Nigerian youths use digital platforms to generate expansive online social capital. Social media networks functioned as hubs of coordination, trust-building, information dissemination, and civic solidarity. As Tella (2022) emphasized, “the #EndSARS protests highlighted how the youths of Nigeria used the social media platforms to plan, coordinate relief efforts, and spread the message abroad” (p. 73). These digital networks enhanced both domestic mobilization and international visibility, reflecting a modern form of social capital that empowers collective action in technologically mediated spaces.

Nonetheless, Social Capital Theory also draws attention to how structural inequalities can disrupt the development and deployment of youth social capital. High unemployment, limited educational access, and institutional exclusion weaken young people's ability to cultivate the networks and civic capacities needed for sustained peace-building. According to UNDP (2021a), "youth unemployment in Nigeria is a main catalyst for social instability and disenfranchisement, subverting the dividend potential of a demographic" (p. 17). Such barriers reduce the effectiveness of youth-led networks and hinder their contribution to national stability.

To fully harness the transformative potential of Nigerian youths, it is essential to strengthen the enabling environment in which social capital is formed. This includes expanding educational opportunities, reducing unemployment, and institutionalizing youth participation in governance. By enhancing these conditions, Nigeria can enable its youths to sustain strong networks, foster trust across communities, and continue to act as agents of peace, diplomacy, and social development, despite all the challenges.

2.6 Challenges to the Youths' Participation in Nigeria

The limitations facing Nigerian youths in peace-building and diplomacy can be critically examined through Social Capital Theory, which emphasizes the importance of networks, trust, and institutional connections in enabling individuals and groups to access resources and influence societal outcomes. The passage identifies structural, cultural, and economic barriers that collectively erode the social capital of youth, restricting their ability to contribute meaningfully to governance and peace initiatives.

Structurally, limited access to quality education, insufficient institutional support, and a scarcity of employment opportunities weaken youths' ability to form networks that connect them to influential actors and decision-making platforms. As Arowosegbe (2016, p. 89) observed, "The marginalization of Nigerian youth is partly institutionalized, with systemic

neglect in policy implementation and political inclusion.” These highlights a deficit in linking social capital, where youths’ connections to formal institutions and policy processes are weak, undermining their capacity to influence national peace and governance agendas.

Cultural barriers, including hierarchical traditions, generational power dynamics, and gender biases, further restrict youths’ capacity to leverage social capital. Ukeje (2020) noted that “youths are systematically marginalized from governance structures due to entrenched gerontocracy norms,” (p.12) illustrating how societal norms impede youth participation and constrain the development of both bonding and bridging social capital. These cultural constraints limit intergenerational trust and collaboration, weakening youths’ collective efficacy in peace-building.

Economic exclusion also plays a critical role. Unemployment, underemployment, and poverty reduce opportunities for youths to invest time and resources into civic engagement or community mediation. UNDP (2021b) emphasized that “the economic exclusion of youth in Nigeria weakens their roles as change agents and threatens long-term peace prospects (p.17).” Without sufficient economic stability, youth networks cannot fully function as reservoirs of social capital to drive sustainable peace and diplomacy initiatives.

In conclusion, Social Capital Theory provides a compelling lens to understand these challenges. Nigerian youths’ potential as agents of peace and diplomacy is intrinsically linked to the strength of their social networks and their access to institutional, cultural, and economic resources. Addressing these structural, cultural, and economic barriers would enhance youths’ social capital, enabling them to participate more effectively in governance, peace-building, and nation-building processes.

2.7 Structural Barriers in Nigeria

Structural barriers, which are institutional and systematic obstacles, significantly limit young people's access to resources, education, and political representation. Akinyemi (2021)

noted that due to "institutional exclusion and underinvestment in youth development infrastructure... many young Nigerians [are] invisible in national policy frameworks" (p. 52). These barriers result in fewer educational opportunities, inadequate job training, poor infrastructure, and weak systems for integrating youth into governance or peace-building. According to Akinwale (2019), "the persistent failure of successive governments to invest in youth-focused education and employment initiatives has deepened vulnerabilities and limited young people's participation in governance and economic life" (p. 92). Neglecting youth-focused education and employment has produced an underprepared and underrepresented generation. Reforming these structures is crucial to prevent youth marginalization and enable their meaningful participation in peace and diplomacy, thereby building an inclusive society where youth are central to creating peace. Limited access to education and economic opportunities stands out as one of the most significant obstacles to youth participation in peace-building and diplomacy in Nigeria. As Putnam (2000) noted, "civic engagement is more likely to flourish in contexts where educational attainment and social capital are high" (p. 138). Thus, the application of Putnam's social capital theory can be a good approach to the problem.

2.7.1 Limited Access to Education in Nigeria



Figure 2: Classroom in Nigeria

<https://medium.com/@bisiogunwale/nigeria-education-system-fixing-the-learning-crisis-9db87c89f68f>

The Nigerian education system, though large and diverse, often fails to prioritize the kind of education that could equip the youths with the necessary skills for peace-building and diplomacy. Peace education through which young individuals are taught conflict resolution, human rights, and tolerance is, in most cases, never integrated into the curriculum at all levels of education. Hence, most youths never acquire the primary knowledge that can make them influential actors in peace-building processes. Because many young individuals lack effective knowledge of conflict resolution, dialogue, and social justice, they are hardly in a position to catalyze positive peace-building processes. The education system in Nigeria itself is marred by a myriad of issues ranging from overcrowded classrooms, sparsely equipped schools, and poorly trained teachers, all of which can affect the quality of education the youths acquire. Due to such concerns, it is rendered increasingly unachievable for most rural areas to access quality education, where schools are either far from the students' locations or inadequately equipped with basic facilities.

Consequently, numerous Nigerian youths never graduate from primary school, thus reinforcing their incapability to engage in peace-building and diplomacy exercises. Neglect of leadership development within school curricula also discourages the participation of Nigerian youth. In the kind of setting where more focus is placed upon the memorization of facts over critical thinking, examination of issues, and leadership development, Nigerian youths are disabled from emerging as future leaders within peace-building exercises. In turn, it is difficult for most Nigerian youths to become key players within the resolution of conflicts or diplomacy, even when the will for positive transformation is present.

2.7.2 Limited Economic Opportunities in Nigeria

The economic barriers facing Nigerian youths, as described in the passage, can be critically analyzed through Social Capital Theory, which emphasizes that individuals and groups require networks, resources, and institutional support to participate meaningfully in

collective action—including peace-building. When youths lack economic opportunities, their social capital becomes severely weakened, restricting their ability to engage in conflict mitigation, civic dialogue, and community peace initiatives.

A central assumption of Social Capital Theory is that economic stability enables individuals to invest in relationships, build networks of trust, participate in civic institutions, and mobilize resources for collective action. However, the persistent unemployment and underemployment among Nigerian youths deprive them of the foundational resources needed to cultivate these networks. As the passage notes, many young people are compelled to prioritize daily survival over community activism or peace-building. UNDP (2021b) affirmed that “The economic exclusion of youths in Nigeria weakens their roles as change agents and threatens long-term peace prospects” (p. 17). This directly illustrates how economic deprivation undermines the formation of social capital by restricting youths’ time, mobility, and ability to sustain organized activities.

Moreover, youth organizations which serve as essential hubs for the creation of both bonding and bridging social capital struggle to operate effectively due to insufficient funding and infrastructural deficits. Without adequate financial support, these groups are unable to organize community events, facilitate dialogue sessions, or train young people in peace-building techniques. The absence of these activities limits opportunities for youths to strengthen communal ties, build intergroup trust, and maintain sustained peace-building networks. As Oduwole and Fadeyi (2013) emphasized, “Youth unemployment and exclusion continue to constitute major security challenges in Nigeria” (p. 115). This further demonstrates how economic deprivation disrupts the capacity of youth networks to function as vehicles for stability and peace.

Additionally, economic marginalization contributes to social alienation and frustration, eroding trust within communities and weakening social cohesion key components

of social capital. When youths feel excluded from economic life, they become more vulnerable to recruitment by actors who offer a sense of belonging, even if such actors promote violence or extremism. This dynamic illustrates how deficits in social capital can create pathways to social instability, thereby undermining peace and the very efforts that youth peace-builders seek to sustain. Economic exclusion thus not only limits youths' ability to contribute positively but also increases the likelihood of destructive engagement, exacerbating conflict.

The economic barriers faced by Nigerian youths severely erode the social capital required for meaningful participation in peace-building and diplomacy. Strengthening economic opportunities would enhance youths' capacity to build networks, mobilize resources, and foster trust ultimately enabling them to play more effective roles in sustaining peace and preventing conflict across Nigeria.

2.7.3 Inefficient Infrastructures and Lack of Funds in Nigeria

The structural and infrastructural barriers described—poor transport networks, weak communication systems, inadequate information access, and insufficient funding—can be effectively explained through Conflict Theory. Conflict theorists argue that social structures are intentionally or unintentionally arranged to maintain the dominance of elite groups while marginalizing less powerful populations. In the Nigerian context, the persistent underinvestment in youth development infrastructure is not merely accidental; it reflects broader inequalities embedded within national power relations.

The observation that “many young Nigerians remain invisible in national policy frameworks” (Akinyemi, 2021a, p. 52) aligns with the conflict perspective, which posits that marginalized groups are routinely excluded from institutional processes that would allow them to challenge existing hierarchies. By failing to provide adequate infrastructure and communication access, the system perpetuates youth dependence and disempowerment,

ensuring that young people remain unable to mobilize effectively or demand structural change.

Moreover, the limited funding available to youth-led initiatives reinforces the unequal distribution of resources that conflict theorists highlight. The fact that “limited institutional capacity and inadequate funding mechanisms hinder the scalability and sustainability of youth-led peace initiatives” (UNDP, 2021b, p. 18) reflects a structural arrangement where those in power control resource flows. This creates a cycle in which youth organizations—with little access to capital—lack the capacity to challenge state power or influence policy.

Conflict Theory also helps explain the state’s reluctance to integrate youth voices into formal peace negotiations. This exclusion is a hallmark of power preservation: dominant actors restrict political participation to prevent subaltern groups from shaping decisions or redistributing power. The resulting disillusionment among youths is therefore a predictable outcome of structural marginalization, as the framework suggests that social frustration emerges when groups perceive systematic inequities that limit their agency.

In essence, the infrastructural inadequacies and exclusionary institutional practices facing Nigerian youth in peace-building processes are best understood through the lens of Conflict Theory, which illuminates how unequal power relations produce and sustain these obstacles.

2.8 Traditional Values as a Barrier in Nigeria

In the majority of Nigerian cultures, customary values make veteran leaders and elders the center of decision-making processes. The voice of the youths and role are often overlooked because of the Age-related seniority which happens to be a universal practice in both the rural and urban settings. The elders are considered the keepers of knowledge and wisdom, and their leadership never stands in question. As Onuoha (2014) detailed, “the cultural reverence for elders in many African societies often comes at the cost of youths

participation in governance and community affairs” (p. 78). As a result, young individuals are usually excluded from essential debates on governance, conflict resolution, and peace-building, which are often considered matters within the purview of the older generation. This age dimension leads to a dissonance between the aspirations and requirements of the young and the policies or solutions being put in place by older leaders. Although older leaders usually have knowledge rooted in tradition, the absence of young individuals in the discussion could lead to solutions that are less sensitive to the dynamic changes in society or the specific challenges faced by young people.

As observed by Uzoigwe and Adesima (2018), “youths are not merely leaders of tomorrow; they are significant stakeholders today whose voices need to be heard if sustainable peace is to be achieved” (p. 112). The perspective of the youths is typically more innovative and forward-thinking, as they are generally more open to new ideas, technology, and conflict resolution. Exclusion of the youths from peace-building initiatives denies society the creative potential and innovative ideas that they have to offer.

The perception of young people as "future leaders," but not as agents in the present, entrenches their exclusion. This type of thinking undermines the capability of young people to contribute substantively to the peace process, despite the reality that they are the most immediately affected by conflicts. In regions, for example, where there are conflicts rooted in ethnicity, the youths are characteristically the initiators and problem-solvers, yet their voices are hardly ever part of peace processes or policy-making, and implementation is directly affected. As Adefuye (2020) asserted, “Excluding youth from peace negotiations is akin to treating the symptoms of a disease without addressing its root causes” (p. 94).

Gendered expectations, shaped by patriarchal structures, are an added challenge among young female diplomats and peace builders in Nigeria. Young females are usually expected, in the traditional context, to make family and home the center of their activities.

Gendered expectations have a tendency to restrict their ability and freedom in public, political, and peace-building engagement. According to Okafor (2017), “the relegation of women to the private sphere continues to hinder their full participation in national development and peace initiatives” (p. 104). Beliefs within cultures that esteem male leadership and authority over female participation make it difficult for young women to access discussion forums on political action and peace activism. The public and political activity gap by gender is most pronounced in official peace processes and negotiating foreign missions, in which men predominately occupy leadership positions. Paffenholz et al. (2016) contended that “despite their demonstrated value as mediators and community peacebuilders, women are still significantly absent from formal peace processes and decision-making processes” (p. 8). Women, particularly young women, find it difficult to access these spaces. They are faced with discrimination, undervaluation, and in certain instances, exclusion. This inequality on the basis of gender restricts the reach and impact of young women and deprives the peace-building process of their insights, which are needed in tackling issues ranging from gender-based violence and child marriage to the empowerment of women—issues mainly faced by both girls and women in conflict zones.

Furthermore, societal perceptions of the role played by women in conflict resolution and peace-building tend to be centered on their role as caregivers, instead of as actors who effect positive changes. According to Eze (2018), “the contribution of women in peace-building is often romanticized as emotional support or moral guidance, rather than recognized as strategic leadership” (p. 89). Although there are essential roles played by women in reconciliation, rebuilding, and healing in a community, yet in classical peace-building paradigms, their role is often ignored or diminished. Therefore, majority of young women are deterred from aspiring to lead in these fields, despite having the abilities, knowledge, and desire to contribute positively.

In some societies, the intergenerational divide between the youths and older people induces a feeling of mistrust and hostility, thereby hindering effective communication and cooperation. The youths might be viewed by the older age bracket as inexperienced or naive, while young individuals might perceive the elderly as outdated with regard to the challenges they are facing. Such a breakdown in mutual recognition could make it difficult for young individuals to gain the trust and acknowledgment needed to make meaningful contributions in peace-building and foreign missions. According to Akinyemi (2016), “youths are often stereotyped as impatient or disruptive, while elders are seen as rigid and resistant to innovation” (p. 61).

In post-conflict areas, intergenerational conflicts are potentially heightened, as young people may have been directly involved or affected by the conflict, while older citizens are trying to preserve the status quo. The opinion of young individuals is usually ignored in those environments, as conflicts faced by younger individuals are considered less legitimate than those faced by older generations. This hinders intergenerational cooperation, which is integral to establishing lasting peace. According to Kurtenbach (2020), “peacebuilding processes that exclude youth and intergenerational dialogue risk reinforcing mistrust and weakening the sustainability of post-conflict recovery” (p. 14). In the absence of effective communication between generations, chances for reconciliation and joint solutions are significantly limited.

2.9 Media and Advocacy as Drivers of Cultural Transformation in Nigeria

Media can also assist in breaking and reframing social perceptions concerning the youths and gender. Through the framing of the youths, and the young women in particular, as transformation drivers and leaders in peace-building, media can help shift societal attitudes. The depiction of successful examples of female and youth-led peace-building initiatives can provide role models, inspire others, and demonstrate the ability of these groups to drive positive transformation. As Ihejirika (2016) asserted, “the media is a powerful tool for

recalibrating social assumptions, above all, when it demonstrates non-conformist leadership in action” (p. 108). Advocacy campaigns aimed at valuing the youths and promoting gender-inclusivity in peace processes can contribute significantly to transforming social norms. By bringing into focus the experiences faced by young individuals and females in participating in peace processes, advocacy campaigns can raise societal awareness and promote inclusion in peace-building. According to UNFPA in 2018, “strategic advocacy that targets both policy and public mindsets is the key to shifting harmful social norms and achieving sustainable peace” (p. 58).

Unemployment and widespread poverty are among the most pressing economic challenges facing Nigerian youth, and they both significantly detract from young people’s potential contribution to peace-building and diplomatic processes. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS 2021), a significant proportion of Nigerian youth are unemployed or under-employed, and as a consequence, many young people are predisposed to exploitation and potentially lured into violent or radical activities. According to Ojo and Hassan (2020), “economic desperation creates fertile ground for youth recruitment into violent movements, undermining peace efforts” (p. 74).

The lack of economic security limits the participation of young individuals in peace-building processes since they must focus on survival as much as engaging in the community. To unlock the potential of the youths as diplomats and peace-builders, economic barriers need to be eliminated through job access, youth entrepreneurship support, and direct investments in the youth development. The African Union confirms, “Investing in youth employment is not just an economic imperative; it is a peace-building strategy” (African Union, 2017, p. 41).

Overcoming Nigerian cultural barriers requires a basic shift in societal attitudes towards the youths and gender. Such a shift requires valuing the worth and potential of the

youths, both as potential leaders in the future and productive actors within the contemporaneous peace-building process. It also requires breaking down long-standing conventions on the role of females in the public and political domains. As Nnamani (2019) testified, “transforming peace-building processes requires dismantling longstanding cultural assumptions that exclude youth and women from decision-making roles” (p. 143).

One important step is the creation of inclusive forums that value and allow the voice of the youths, particularly in peace-building and diplomatic initiatives, to be heard. Youth councils or peace committees engaging young people in decision-making processes could be replicated on larger scales. These forums need to be created in a manner in which the voices of the youths are heard and integrated into policy and action plans in peace-building. As noted by Musa and Ibrahim (2020), “institutionalizing the youths participation at every level of peace-building makes their involvement more than symbolic—it becomes transformative” (p. 67). Such forums would also narrow the intergenerational gap, enhancing dialogue and consensus-building among the youths and elderly groups.

Another important area in breaking down barriers set by culture is advocating for gender equality in public spaces. Initiatives targeting the empowerment of young women, ensuring access to education and leadership training, and advancing inclusion in decision-making processes are essential to breaking down patriarchal systems constraining their inclusion. Such initiatives need to emphasize building self-confidence, removing stereotypes, and fostering a sense of security in which women are empowered, contribute voices, and take part in creating peace. According to Uche (2017), “building young women’s confidence is just as important as providing them with opportunities; both are essential for changing patriarchal narratives” (p. 90).

Thus, both female and male community leaders ought to be at the forefront in shattering the culture of excluding the youths and the females. Older leaders and elders can

start by recognizing the contributions made by the youths and females in peace processes and by establishing platforms where their voices are valued. This would require commitment to cross-generational conversations in which both the youths and the elderly exchange experiences, learn from each other, and work on solutions towards peace.

2.9.1 High Unemployment Rates and Underemployment in Nigeria

The issue of unemployment is a powerful driver working against participation in peace-building processes among young people. When opportunities are low, numerous young people are unable to support themselves or dependents, and desperation and despair are the results. Oduwole and Fadeyi (2013), citing numerous examples, asserted that “youth unemployment is not merely an economic problem; it is a social and security problem, as idled youths are easiest prey for recruitment into violence and crime” (p. 114). This sense of disillusion leads them into a position of radicalization, as young people without work increasingly seek radical groups, the promises of which directly address material deprivation, a sense of identity, or a sense of belonging to something greater than themselves. This situation exacerbates the security challenges in the country, as vulnerable youths may become pawns in larger violent conflicts.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), the youth’s unemployment in Nigeria is alarmingly high, with millions of young people actively seeking work but unable to find stable employment. This statistic reflects the gap between the demand for jobs and the availability of work, and it has significant implications for peace-building efforts. When young people are not economically active, they have less opportunity to participate in peace-building programs. As Salihu and Jibril (2018) put it, “economic marginalization breeds resentment and weakens social cohesion, reducing the chances for peaceful engagement” (p. 88). Instead of engaging in constructive dialogues or contributing to positive community

change, they may resort to disruptive behaviors or be drawn into conflicts that further destabilize their communities.

In addition to high unemployment rates, a large proportion of Nigerian youths are underemployed, meaning they are employed in jobs that do not fully utilize their skills or offer adequate compensation. Underemployment often leads to a sense of dissatisfaction and low morale, as young people work long hours for minimal pay without the opportunity for career advancement. Economic insecurity therefore renders it impossible for the youths to participate in peace-building activities or assume leadership roles, as they are occupied with ensuring their livelihoods.

Underemployment is most acute in sectors such as agriculture, retail, and the informal economy, in which young individuals are typically in low-paying, precarious work with limited or no benefits. Such work does not have much space for skill upgrading, and as a result, it is difficult for young individuals to access higher-paying, more fulfilling professions. As Honwana (2019) explained, “Many African youths are trapped in the informal economy, where fragile livelihoods restrict their chances of civic engagement and long-term peacebuilding” (p. 27). The lack of a large, effective middle class or formal labor market exacerbates the issue, as most young individuals are stuck in low-paying cycles without access to upward social mobility.

2.9.2 Poverty and Limited Financial Resources in Nigeria

Widespread poverty is another significant economic constrain limiting the youths engagement in peace-building and diplomacy in Nigeria. The majority of youth come from impoverished households, and their economic precariousness often results in failure to invest in education, leadership, or peace-building programs within their communities. Even if there exists a youth interested in engaging in peace processes, they are most often bereft of financial resources to make a meaningful contribution. In the opinion of Akinyemi (2018),

“economic hardship prevents many Nigerian youths from participating in civic duties, not due to a lack of interest, but due to a lack of means” (p. 91). The inability to afford transportation, materials essential for advocacy, or the time to participate in trainings or activities within the community further disempowers their contribution in peace-building processes. Poverty often results in deprivation of opportunities to obtain skills and connections necessary for leadership positions in conflict management and foreign missions. This economic disadvantage anchors the inequality and exclusion experienced by most Nigerian youths, incapacitating their ability to contribute significantly to peace-building processes (Eze & Ubah, 2019).

When unemployment of the youths is high, wages are low, and poverty exists, Nigerian youth are vulnerable to violent extremists and gangs. Since there are no good opportunities, money, security, and power could attract young individuals to become part of violent groups. As cited by Nwankwo (2020), “poverty and unemployment provide fertile ground for radicalization, where militant groups offer both income and a sense of identity” (p. 65). Boko Haram, banditry in northern Nigeria, and violent extremism are examples of how economic frustration leads to participation in violent acts. The youths, especially in vulnerable areas, might be lured into violent groups as a means of survival, since they may feel that the rewards of violence outweigh the punishments. Where there are no economic opportunities, the lack becomes fertile ground for violence rather than peace-building. This underscores the need for the vulnerability of the youth’s strategies through the provision of peaceful alternatives and engagement.

Entrepreneurship is a beam of light in addressing the issue of unemployment, as, through it, young people are capable of creating opportunities and becoming job providers, As Duru (2019) affirmed, “youth entrepreneurship transforms passive job seekers into active job creators, driving innovation and community development” (p. 109). Entrepreneurial

personality, if developed, makes the youth, beyond being responsible for themselves, the builders of jobs themselves, and therefore responsible for the overall development of the economy and social system.

Government initiatives and civil society efforts that support the youth's entrepreneurship, access to microcredit, entrepreneurial education, and mentorship can help considerably the capacity of the youths to make a living and obtain sustainable livelihoods. These initiatives can be industry-specific on peace-building sectors, such as citizen activism, media, and conflict resolution, and can assist the youths channel their entrepreneurial vigor into peace and social inclusiveness ventures. Initiatives for skill development and vocational studies can assist the youths obtain practical, marketable, and, in short supply skills that provide them access into jobs. The initiatives need to be inclined towards industries more sought after, like information technology, agronomy, healthcare, and renewable energy industries (Paffenholz, 2014). Empowering the youths in emerging industries will help Nigeria achieve a more efficient workplace and provide young individuals with the tools needed to move ahead in their individual lives as well as contribute toward overall social development.

2.9.3 Targeted Investments and Job Creation in Nigeria

Special investments for the development of the youths are critical in overcoming economic barriers that prevent young individuals from participating in peace-building. This requires investments in education, healthcare, and social welfare programs that are sensitive to the concerns of vulnerable youth, particularly in conflict-prone or rural areas. According to UNDP (2021c), "youths development must be prioritized as a pillar of peace-building, with investments in education, mental health, and employment opportunities" (p. 27). Drawing from Social Capital Theory, strengthening youth participation in peace-building requires deliberate investments in the structures that enhance young people's access to networks,

resources, and opportunities. Social capital theory posits that individuals and groups are better able to cooperate, solve collective problems, and achieve shared goals when they possess strong social networks, institutional trust, and access to supportive resources.

In the Nigerian context, economic marginalization undermines the formation of such social capital among youth, thereby weakening their ability to participate effectively in peace and diplomatic processes. When young people lack employment, education, or stable living conditions, they are deprived not only of material resources but also of the relational and institutional linkages that enable meaningful civic engagement. In this light, collaborative efforts by government, multilateral organizations, and businesses to address youth economic challenges become essential for building the social capital necessary for sustainable peace-building. Investments in education—especially peace education and leadership development—create bridging and linking social capital by connecting youth to institutions, decision-making platforms, and knowledge networks. Similarly, ensuring access to healthcare, shelter, and nutrition strengthens bonding social capital within youth communities by reducing stressors that hinder collective action. When these foundational needs are met, young people are more capable of engaging in dialogue, participating in community mediation, and contributing to national diplomacy.

As Sommers (2015) emphasized, “youth employment is more than an economic necessity—it is central to stability and peace, reducing the risk of violence and political unrest” (p. 42). This insight aligns with the theoretical expectation that when young people have stable livelihoods, they are better positioned to build positive social ties, participate in community life, and engage constructively with state institutions. Employment therefore enhances bridging social capital (connections across communities) and linking social capital (relationships between youth and governance structures), both of which are vital for sustained peace-building.

Moreover, a lack of meaningful economic opportunities weakens youth social capital, pushes them toward social isolation, and increases susceptibility to recruitment by violent groups or engagement in criminal activities. Financial precarity limits their ability to participate in civic or peace-related activities, as survival concerns take priority over community engagement. Conversely, the creation of decent work opportunities and a supportive business environment provides youth with financial security, which is a prerequisite for deeper involvement in peace processes. With stable employment, young people gain the time, resources, and confidence needed to engage in dialogue platforms, community mediation, or diplomatic initiatives.

Thus, when viewed through Social Capital Theory, youth employment policies are not merely economic interventions—they are peace-building strategies that expand the social networks, trust, and cooperative capacities essential for reducing conflict. By enabling young people to contribute meaningfully to society, employment strengthens the relational bonds that underpin stability, while simultaneously reducing the economic frustrations that often escalate into violence. In this regard, consistent employment opportunities empower Nigerian youth to become active agents of peace, diplomacy, and national development.

2.9.4 Gaps in the Literature

Despite numerous works on the peace-building potential of the youths, few focus on their engagement in processes of diplomacy, particularly in the Nigerian case. Most of the literature favors overarching themes of the youth's empowerment and conflict resolution without giving adequate focus to how young people contribute to both formal and informal processes of diplomacy. The nexus connecting youth-led initiatives and government or institutional processes is scarcely explored. Another gap is the paucity of empirical evidence on the specific challenges and opportunities available to Nigerian youth in engaging in peace-building and diplomacy. For instance, if education and economic empowerment are

considered crucial, little evidence exists on how they directly impact the youth's engagement in diplomacy. Comparative work on examining effective youth engagement mechanisms in foreign contexts and how applicable they are to the Nigerian case is scanty. These gaps are central in designing all-inclusive strategies aimed at ensuring greater youth's engagement in both peace-building and diplomacy. Future work would be valuable in capturing case study documentation, policy impact analysis, and innovative mechanisms for assimilating the Nigerian youths into diplomacy.

2.10 Summary of Chapter Two

Applicable youth's diplomacy and peace-building literature has also been closely analyzed in the chapter. Theoretical and conceptual foundations act as the pillars towards the understanding of the youth's engagement in diplomatic and peace-building processes. Through an analysis of the global and the Nigerian cases, the study highlights the challenges of the youths while also pointing out their potential as transformative agents. The structural and cultural challenge analysis stresses the imperativeness of inclusive cultural orientations, all-inclusive policies, and enabling infrastructures. The analysis also stresses the imperativeness of advocacy and media towards reframing gender and youth constructs. Overall, the chapter proves that empowering the youth of Nigeria towards diplomacy and peace-building is imperative and an opportunity for long-term peace and national development.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Methodology

This research methodology outlines the design used to obtain and examine data for the study. The researcher used a mixed-method research design by incorporating qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys to ensure a thorough understanding of the topic. The study population involved Nigerian youths from different locations and backgrounds. Respondents were selected using the purposive sampling method. Data collection tool included structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides to obtain the quantifiable trends and in-depth perceptions. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics for the quantitative data and thematic analysis for the qualitative responses. The chapter also outlines ethical considerations including informed consent, confidentiality and voluntariness of responses to ensure the integrity and credibility of the research process.

3.2 Research Design

The researcher adopted a mixed-methods research design and incorporated both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative method involved surveys to examine trends and patterns among a larger population sample. The qualitative method involved focus groups and interviews to draw rich insights from youths who actively practice peace and diplomacy.

3.3 Population and Sample

The target population was Nigerian youths aged 15-35 who are most active in peace-building and diplomacy activities. Respondent were purposively selected from various regions of Nigeria to provide diversity in age, gender, and socioeconomic status. The sample included representatives of youth organizations, community leaders, and students.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Data collection involved multiple methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of youth engagement in peace and diplomacy. Selected youths were interviewed using a semi-structured approach to capture their experiences, challenges, and contributions. Focus groups were also conducted, allowing participants to interact, share perspectives, and collaboratively identify solutions to barriers hindering youth involvement. In addition, standardized questionnaires were administered to a larger group to collect numerical data on youth participation in peace initiatives.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Interview and focus group data were qualitatively analyzed thematically to establish the pattern and themes for youth participation in peace-building. Quantitative data from surveys were analyzed using statistical tools to generate descriptive and inferential statistics, offering insights into broader trends and correlations.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from relevant institutional review boards. Informed consent is secured from all participants, ensuring they understand the study's purpose and their rights. Confidentiality and anonymity are maintained to protect participants' identities. In addition, all data is stored in encrypted form and used only for research purposes.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The presentation of data analysis is one of the most important components of any research. Accordingly, this chapter presents the results of the quantitative and qualitative data collected for the study. The findings are organized according to the research objectives:

1. To identify the roles Nigerian youths play in promoting peace and diplomacy.
2. To examine the challenges faced by youths in contributing to peace-building efforts.
3. To propose strategies for enhancing youth participation in peace and diplomatic processes.

Data presentation includes:

- Raw quantitative data from 50 questionnaire respondents
- Statistical tables and charts
- Qualitative coding and thematic analysis from 8 interview participants
- Integrated interpretation combining both data sources

4.2 Quantitative Data Presentation

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents (N = 50)

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------|-----------|----------------|
| Male | 28 | 56% |
| Female | 22 | 44% |

Table 2 presents the gender composition of the 50 respondents. The data show that 56% were male while 44% were female. This indicates that both genders were well represented, with a slightly higher participation from males. The balanced representation ensures that the findings reflect diverse youth perspectives and are not biased toward one gender.

Table 3: Age Distribution of Respondents

| Age Range | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| 15-20 | 10 | 20% |
| 21-25 | 18 | 36% |
| 26-30 | 14 | 28% |
| 31-35 | 8 | 16% |

Table 3 shows the age ranges of respondents. The highest proportion (36%) fell within the 21–25 age group, followed by 26–30 years (28%). Younger youths aged 15–20 years constituted 20%, while the smallest group was 31–35 years (16%). This distribution reveals that the majority of participants are in their early to mid-twenties — the most active demographic in peace activism, digital advocacy, and community organizing.

Table 4: Respondents' Involvement in Peace-Building Activities

| Level of Involvement | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| High involvement | 12 | 24 |
| Moderate involvement | 21 | 42 |
| Low involvement | 17 | 34 |

Table 4 examined how frequently respondents are involved in peace-building efforts. 42% reported moderate involvement, 24% indicated high involvement, while 34% described their participation as low. This shows that while many youths are engaged in peace-related activities, only a minority participate at a high level. This moderate rate of involvement aligns with the challenges identified later, such as unemployment, lack of funding, and limited political inclusion.

4.3 Quantitative Data Analysis by Research Questions

4.3.1 Research Question 1:

What roles do Nigerian youths play in promoting peace and diplomacy?

Respondents rated their involvement in different peace-building and diplomatic activities.

Table 5: Youth Roles in Peace and Diplomacy (N = 50)

| Youth Role | Agree (%) | Neutral (%) | Disagree (%) |
|--|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| Mediating community conflicts | 64 | 20 | 16 |
| Promoting inter-faith harmony | 58 | 24 | 18 |
| Participating in digital advocacy | 72 | 14 | 14 |
| Engaging in political reforms (NotTooYoungToRun) | 68 | 18 | 14 |
| Representing Nigeria in global youth forums | 54 | 22 | 24 |

Table 5 presents youths' roles in different dimensions of peace-building and diplomacy. A majority (72%) agreed that youths actively engage in digital peace advocacy, making it the most prominent role. Mediation of community conflicts (64%), engagement in political reforms (68%), and promotion of interfaith harmony (58%) were also strongly acknowledged. Participation in global youth forums had the lowest agreement (54%). The table demonstrates that youths are particularly influential in digital diplomacy and grassroots peace mediation.

This suggests that youths are actively contributing to peace-building, especially at the community and digital levels.

4.3.2 Research Question 2:

What challenges hinder youth participation in peace initiatives?

Table 6: Challenges Limiting Youth Engagement

| Challenge | Agree (%) | Neutral (%) | Disagree (%) |
|---|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| High unemployment | 82 | 6 | 12 |
| Lack of political inclusion | 76 | 16 | 8 |
| Insufficient training on peace-building | 70 | 14 | 16 |
| Cultural barriers (elder dominance) | 66 | 22 | 12 |
| Limited funding for youth initiatives | 74 | 10 | 16 |

Table 6 highlights the main barriers youths face. The most severe challenge was high unemployment (82%), followed by lack of political inclusion (76%), and inadequate funding (74%). Others include insufficient training (70%) and cultural barriers (66%). These findings indicated that both economic and structural constraints hinder youths from fully participating in peace and diplomatic activities. The high percentages show that these challenges are widespread and deeply felt among Nigerian youths.

This aligns with literature identifying structural and economic barriers to youth engagement.

4.3.3 Research Question 3:

What strategies can enhance youth involvement in peace and diplomacy?

Table 7: Proposed Strategies

| Strategy | Agree (%) | Neutral (%) | Disagree (%) |
|---|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| Capacity building and leadership training | 80 | 10 | 10 |
| Government inclusion policies | 75 | 14 | 14 |
| Youth peace committees | 64 | 22 | 14 |
| Funding/Grants for youth groups | 78 | 12 | 10 |
| Digital tools for peace campaigns | 70 | 18 | 12 |

Table 7 presents strategies proposed by the respondents. Capacity-building and leadership training (80%) is seen as the most effective strategy. Funding support (78%) and government inclusion policies (72%) also received strong support. Youth Peace Committees (64%) and digital tools for peace campaigns (70%) were also considered important. This shows that youths desire empowerment through training, institutional support, and financial resources to improve their contributions to peace-building and diplomacy.

4.4 Qualitative Data Presentation

Eight (8) interviews were conducted. Thematic analysis follows Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-step method.

4.4.1 Coding Process

Initial Codes Identified

- We are not included in politics”
- No funding for youth projects”
- Social media helps us push our message”
- Elders don’t allow us speak”
- There are no jobs”
- We mediate community fights”

Categories Formed

- Structural barriers
- Digital engagement
- Economic hardship
- Youth leadership roles
- Cultural limitations

4.4.2 Thematic Analysis

Theme 1: Youths as Peace Mediators and Digital Advocates

Supporting Quotes:

- “Most times when communities fight, we the youth settle it before elders even come.”
- “We use social media to expose injustice.”

Interpretation

Youth play both physical and digital peacebuilding roles, confirming survey results.

Theme 2: Economic and Structural Barriers Limit Youth Participation

Supporting Quotes:

- “No job, no income... how do we do peace work when we are struggling?”
- “The government does not invite youth to real decision meetings.”

Interpretation

Unemployment and exclusion from decision-making weaken youth engagement.

Theme 3: Cultural and Gender Norms Restrict Youth Voices

Supporting Quotes:

- “Elders don’t allow us to speak in meetings.”
- “As a young woman, they think I’m not supposed to lead.”

Interpretation

Traditional beliefs undermine effective youth participation.

Theme 4: Youths Desire Training, Funding, and Government Support

Supporting Quotes:

- “If we get training on peacebuilding, we can do more.”
- “Funding is a big issue; our ideas die because there is no money.”

Interpretation

This aligns with quantitative results showing strong support for training and funding.

4.5 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results (Triangulation)

| Objective | Quantitative Finding | Qualitative Finding | Integrated Interpretation |
|-------------|---|--|--|
| Youth roles | Youths mediate conflicts (64%) and drive digital advocacy (72%) | Youths report settling disputes and using social media for peace | Both datasets confirm youths are active peace agents |
| Challenges | Unemployment (82%), exclusion (76%) | Participants cite poverty, lack of inclusion | Strong convergence on economic and structural barriers |
| Strategies | Training (80%) and funding (78%) top solution | Interviews emphasize need for capacity building | Convergence showing youths want empowerment tools |

4.6 Summary of Findings

The study revealed that:

1. Youths in Nigeria perform key roles including conflict mediation, political advocacy, and digital diplomacy.
2. Major challenges include unemployment, political exclusion, cultural barriers, and insufficient training.
3. Effective strategies include capacity-building, government inclusion policies, funding opportunities, and digital peace tools

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the importance of the youth's inclusion in governance, peace-building, and national development focusing on the multi-faceted responses required to unlock their potential. It portrays the correlation between youth's inclusion and the minimization of social threats like unemployment, violence, and political marginalization. It also emphasizes institutionalized representation of the youth in decision-making arenas through legislation like quotas, advisory boards, and participatory engagement with political parties. The chapter further discusses ways of empowering the youth through capacity-building programs with an eye to advocacy, diplomacy, conflict resolution, leadership development, and mentorship. In addition, the chapter touches on the interface of information technology and social media with enhancing youth inclusion, while also conceding structural and cultural constraints holding back their incorporation. Overall, these expositions highlight the value of inclusive structures recognizing youth as actors of transformation capable of participating in sustainable development, peace, and social coherence.

5.2 Roles of Nigerian Youths in Peace and Diplomacy

Nigerian youths have made remarkable contributions to the promotion of peace and diplomacy through a range of initiatives that underscores their potential as agents of change. Their actions span multiple sectors, including community conflicts resolution, inter-religious dialogues, and advocacy for democratic reforms and inclusion within international diplomatic processes. These efforts reflect their capacity to address the root causes of conflicts, foster social cohesion, and promote principles of good governance.

A notable area of youth engagement is community mediation. In situations of communal or ethnic conflicts at the grassroots level, young people have demonstrated leadership by facilitating dialogue forums aimed at resolving disputes and restoring harmony among conflicting groups(UNDP, 2018). By assuming the role of mediators, youth leverage their social network and goodwill within local communities to build relationships and reduce tensions. This bottom-up approach has proven highly effective in rural context, where traditional administrative structures may be unable to adequately manage escalating conflicts.

Youth-led interfaith initiatives also play a significant role in peace-building. Given Nigeria’s deeply pluralistic religious landscape—which often becomes a flashpoint for hostility—younger leaders have developed programs that encourage mutual understanding and respect among different faith communities. Through workshops, seminars, and cross-cultural exchange programs, these initiatives seek to eliminate stereotypes and create safe spaces for constructive engagement. Beyond reducing religious tensions, such programs help build a stronger sense of national unity (UNDP, 2018).

Advocacy for democratic reforms constitutes another key arena in which Nigerian youths have made an indelible impact. Groups such as the “Not Too Young to Run” movement, have been instrumental in promoting political inclusivity and reducing age-based barriers to leadership participation. The movement successfully championed legislative reforms lowering the minimum age for political candidacy, thereby enabling greater youth’s involvement in governance. Through such policy advocacy, young people contribute actively to peace-building and the strengthening of democratic institutions (Eze, 2020).

The Youth’s participation in international diplomatic processes further highlights their contributions to global peace efforts. Nigerian youths frequently represent national interests at global forums, adding their perspectives to discussions on issues such as climate change, human rights, and sustainable development. Such engagement not only enhances Nigeria’s

international image but also exposes youths to global best practices, which they can adapt and implement within their home communities.

Additionally, the youth's innovation and social advocacy—particularly through social media—have emerged as powerful drivers of peace and policy reform. Twitter activism, exemplified by the #EndSARS movement, demonstrates how Nigerian youths have mobilized public opinion, demanded accountability, and pushed for justice. Social media provides a platform that amplifies youth voices, bridging the gap between citizens and policymakers.

Despite these successes, several challenges continue to hinder the full realization of the youth potential. Barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and persistent social stereotypes constrain the scope of youth contributions. Addressing these obstacles requires deliberate interventions, including capacity-building programs, mentorship opportunities, and policies that promote youth inclusion. With such an enabling environment, Nigeria can fully harness the energy, creativity, and aspirations of its youth to advance sustainable development, peace, and diplomacy.

5.3 Success Stories and Case Studies

The findings of this study reveal a powerful truth: The Nigerian youths are not standing on the sidelines of conflict they are stepping forward, using their voices, skills, and energy to shape peace and diplomacy in their communities. Across the country, young people are proving every day that they are not just a demographic statistic but a driving force for transformation. Their actions show how personal commitment, when matched with the right opportunities and support, can lead to real change.

Social Capital Theory and Conflict Resolution Theory together provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the contributions of Nigerian youths to peace and diplomacy. Social Capital Theory emphasizes the power of networks, trust, and shared

norms in enabling collective action, while Conflict Resolution Theory focuses on dialogue, negotiation, and structural transformation as essential tools for resolving disputes. The findings of this study show that Nigerian youths draw heavily on both theoretical foundations: they leverage their social networks to foster cooperation and also apply mediation and negotiation strategies to address conflicts. Their commitment to peace demonstrates that when young people have access to supportive structures, training, and leadership opportunities, they can transform conflict-prone environments into spaces of dialogue and trust.

The Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) demonstrates how the two theories intersect in practice. Through leadership and civic engagement programs, YALI provides youths with conflict resolution skills—such as facilitation, communication, and problem-solving—while also expanding their social capital by strengthening their networks and relationships. Participants return to their communities with the tools to organize peace dialogues, rebuild trust, and train their peers. These actions reflect Conflict Resolution Theory’s emphasis on addressing underlying grievances and Social Capital Theory’s view that trust-based relationships enable collective problem-solving. By fostering both relational ties and practical mediation skills, YALI-trained youths become effective agents of peace, aligning with the study’s broader argument that empowering youth with knowledge transforms them into catalysts for stability.

Grassroots initiatives further highlight the dual application of the theories. The Kaduna Peace Committee—operating in one of Nigeria’s most diverse and conflict-prone regions—empowers youths to serve as mediators by leveraging their community trust and relational networks, key components of Social Capital Theory. Their facilitation of community dialogues, negotiation of peace processes, and oversight of resolution implementation reflects the core principles of Conflict Resolution Theory. Smith (2019)

underscores that such youth-led interventions have significantly reduced tensions and fostered trust in the region. Similarly, the New Generation Girls and Women Development Initiative (NIGAWD) integrates gender-sensitive peace-building approaches that include young women—often marginalized in conflict contexts—thereby expanding inclusive social capital networks while applying conflict resolution methods focused on dialogue and participation.

Digital activism, particularly the #NotTooYoungToRun campaign, also demonstrates the combined influence of social capital and conflict resolution strategies. Through social media networks, youths mobilized nationwide support, articulated political grievances, and demanded accountability without resorting to violence. This reflects Social Capital Theory's emphasis on the power of networking and collective identity, while the peaceful advocacy and push for inclusive governance align with Conflict Resolution Theory's principles of nonviolent engagement. The campaign's achievements, including the reduction of the minimum political candidacy age, affirm that youth-led digital movements can drive democratic reforms and increase political inclusivity (Eze, 2020).

On the international stage, The Nigerian youths have participated in United Nations programs and global peace forums, gaining exposure to international best practices and forming cross-border networks. These engagements enhance their social capital by expanding their global connections while deepening their understanding of structured conflict resolution approaches. Such youth involvement strengthens Nigeria's reputation as a country committed to peace and demonstrates their potential as diplomatic actors. To sustain these contributions, Nigeria must invest in mentorship, leadership development, and policies that strengthen both the relational networks and conflict resolution capacities of young people. With such support, Nigerian youths can continue to drive sustainable peace, social harmony, and diplomatic progress at the local, national, and global levels.

5.4 Challenges Identified

The active participation by the youths in peace processes and diplomacy is hindered by the some challenges such as Economic, Structural, and Cultural challengers. Such challenges, deeply imbricated within the political and social system in Nigeria, rob the youths of the chance to be meaningfully active in the promotion of peace and diplomatic process. The following key barriers were found to be the main inhibitions to the active participation of the youths in such realm

The findings of this research reveal that economic hardship is one of the most persistent and powerful barriers preventing Nigerian youths from playing an active role in peace-building and diplomacy. High unemployment and widespread poverty remain significant economic challenges that deprive many young people of opportunities to participate meaningfully in peace-oriented initiatives. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2021), a large proportion of Nigerian youths are unemployed or underemployed and therefore lack the financial resources necessary to engage in peace-building and diplomatic activities. Economic instability forces many to prioritize immediate survival over long-term community engagement, including participation in peace-building programs.

As Aghedo and Eke (2013) believed, “widespread economic deprivation among Nigerian youths creates fertile ground for their recruitment into violent groups and extremist movements” (p. 431). Limited access to economic opportunities and the ongoing struggle for basic livelihood make youths particularly vulnerable to exploitation by extremist groups, gangs, and other violent actors. These groups often promise financial reward, a sense of belonging, or avenues for power and influence—offers that may appeal to marginalized youths. Consequently, many young people become involved in violent conflicts either directly or indirectly, as perpetrators or victims. This perpetuates a cycle in which economic

instability drives youth participation in conflict and simultaneously weakens the effectiveness of peace-building initiatives.

Furthermore, the lack of economic opportunities restricts the ability of the youths to fund or participate in peace-building processes. Even when young people are motivated or equipped with relevant skills, insufficient financial resources prevent them from accessing leadership training, workshops, conferences, or implementing reconciliation and social integration projects. As Duru (2019) emphasized, “for peace to be sustainable, youth must be economically empowered to become stakeholders in stability” (p. 109).

The findings of this research highlight structural exclusion as a major obstacle preventing Nigerian youths from playing active roles in peace-building and diplomacy. While young people make up the largest demographic segment of the population, their voices are often absent where critical decisions are made. Structural barriers manifest in the form of institutionalized political hierarchies, limited representation, and weak inclusion mechanisms that collectively marginalize youth in governance and conflict-resolution spaces.

In most Nigerian societies, political power is concentrated in the hands of older elites, and this gerontocracy political culture systematically sidelines young people. As Okechukwu and Adeyemi (2021) observed, “the gerontocracy nature of Nigerian politics systematically sidelines the youth, despite their demographic strength” (p. 44). This reality was strongly reflected in the interviews and focus group discussions conducted during this research, where many young participants expressed feelings of political invisibility. They noted that while they are often mobilized as campaign tools, they are rarely trusted with real decision-making authority (UNESCO, 2014).

This lack of representation in political and decision-making processes creates a disconnection between the government and the youth population such that the unique needs and ambitions of youths are not addressed by policies and strategies. Nigerian youths also

face difficulties accessing formal means of influence and representation. Sometimes political parties and systems take long to incorporate the involvement of youths at the leadership level—either because the youths lack experience or authority to lead or because political dynasties reinforce the status quo. Lack of inclusion in decision-making processes hampers the ability of the youths to advocate for peace-building policies and measures taken diplomatically to resolve conflicts. As UNDP (2020) opined, “youth are often viewed as future leaders but are rarely empowered as leaders of the present” (p. 33).

Peace-building efforts that exclude youths from key political and peace negotiation meetings leave the opinions and practices particularly those of conflict-affected youths outside the mainstream. As a result, peace policies produced may not be responsive to the genuine experiences of youths and may push them further outside the process. Institutional reforms that ensure youths gain better representation and political inclusivity are central to enabling them to engage more effectively in peace-building and diplomacy.

The findings of this research reveal that cultural norms and traditional attitudes remain deeply entrenched barriers to meaningful youth participation in peace-building and diplomacy in Nigeria. While young people often demonstrate creativity, adaptability, and leadership potential, prevailing cultural beliefs continue to limit their ability to be heard and included in decision-making processes. These cultural patterns, which privilege age and seniority over innovation, reinforce hierarchical structures that marginalize youth voices in governance and conflict resolution. According to Udeh (2020), “Nigerian society remains steeped in gerontocratic ideals, where age is equated with wisdom, and youth is seen as a phase of obedience, not leadership” (p. 89). Most traditional leaders in Nigeria continue to view youths as lacking experience or as troublemakers rather than prospective change agents. This view persists since the culture mainly emphasizes respect for the elderly, who are regarded as the decision-makers. As suggested by Adebajo and Musa (2019), “the social

expectation that young people must defer to elders in all public matters has become a structural limitation to youth engagement in peace-building” (p. 63). Consequently, youths may not receive the respect and recognition needed to allow them to play a part in peace-building and diplomatic processes. In many cases, cultural resistance is reinforced by the assumption that young people, especially those below the age of 30, are not mature or wise enough to be included in complex areas such as governance and conflict resolution.

Nigerian gender norms further complicate youth participation in peace-building, particularly for adolescent females. Patriarchal values are prevalent in most areas and restrict the participation of females in political and public life, limiting their opportunities in peace-building processes. As Nwosu (2021) said, “young women face a double marginalization initially as youths and then again as females making their involvement in peace-building doubly constrained” (p. 51). Discrimination on the basis of gender generally excludes adolescent females from leadership positions or peace negotiations, even though they can bring new dimensions and insights when negotiating conflict and diplomacy.

The traditional leaders' objections and the dominant cultural values that uphold the elderly leave youths feeling powerless and isolated. These cultural barriers not only suppress youth involvement in peace-building processes but also limit their inclusion in broader social processes. To overcome this challenge, there is a need to change cultural attitudes and create inclusive spaces where the contributions of both men and women are valued and respected. As UNFPA (2020) asserted, “transforming social norms requires both institutional reform and community-based engagement that recognizes the rights and capabilities of youth” (p. 37).

5.5 Comparative Analysis

Sri Lanka and Tunisia's experience provides lessons for the youth peace-building and related diplomatic roles. The two nations indicated investing in leadership among the youth,

advocacy for inclusive policies, and forums for dialogue bolster the positive contribution the youth make toward stability and development within the social arena.

Tunisia's situation during the 2011 Jasmine Revolution is an example of the youth's potential for propagating political and social changes. The fact that they were prominent leaders within protests and utilized social media for spreading support and propagating democratic change was among the driving forces for the nation's drift toward the democratic change. Tunisia since the revolution has tried at engaging the youth through seeking their support for the development of leadership and the establishment of youth people's councils whose mandate is the provision of input into the policymaking process. The intervention has been pivotal for the integration of the youth within the peace architecture and national decision-making process. Nigeria can learn from Tunisia through the establishment of similar forums through which the youths can engage within the national and regional decision-making process (UNESCO, 2014).

Sri Lanka is another perfect example of the way the youth's participation in reconciliation created peace in the society. Following a sustained period of civil war, Sri Lankan youth groups were at the core of bridging the gap amongst different ethnic groups. Culture exchange programs and interethnic youth camps that ensued created the space for mutual cooperation and coexistence amongst the youth who are members of different ethnic groups. Such actions, besides lowered tension, created the way leading into sustainable peace. Emulating the same activities within Nigeria, mainly the places which are affected by religious and ethnic conflicts, shall be of help, as it shall improve social cohesion and provide space for mutual respect amongst different sections.

Tunisia and Sri Lanka both prioritize investment in projects among the youth. Additional project funding for equipping the youth for leading peace-building processes is required. It involves the infusion of finance for the purposes of training, capacity-building,

and community projects development. It involves expanding the collaboration through international organizations for the purposes of expanding the horizon and the outcome-effectiveness of the projects through world-class expertise and utilization of resources. Among the lessons from such nations is the necessity for institutional reinforcement for purposes of amplifying youthful involvement. The establishment of mechanisms incorporating the youths within the architecture of governance ensures the sustained implication of the youths within peace-building initiatives. Inclusion of the youths within Sri Lanka's national committees of reconciliation, for example, has assisted in the elimination of grievances and the establishment of trust. Nigeria can equally do the same through institutionalization of youth incorporation within the institutions of peace-building and policy formulation (Youth Empowerment Nigeria, 2018).

5.6 Implications for Policy and Practice

The research reveals that Nigerian youths actually are the core of peace-building and of diplomacy, but their potential is not properly harnessed. To transform this situation, policy and programme support should be prioritized, with a focus on education, employment, political involvement, and youth leadership—core sectors that can equip young Nigerians with the capacity to lead and contribute meaningfully to peace efforts.

. 5.6.1 Improve Educational Infrastructure

One of the pillars to youth empowerment is education. However, the findings of this study show that the educational system in most parts of Nigeria remains poor, and many schools do not receive essential resources such as textbooks and ICT equipment. Poor infrastructural development and overcrowded classrooms contribute to low-quality education, which cannot adequately prepare the youths for the demand of the global labor market or equip them to participate effectively in peace-making and diplomatic processes. The policies of the state should, therefore, be directed towards intensive investment in educational

infrastructure. This should include constructing new schools in the least-developed and rural areas, renovating and expanding existing facilities, and ensuring that schools are properly furnished to deliver quality education. Provisions should be made to supply schools adequately with clean water, electricity, and ICT equipment to support a learning environment that is conducive. Specifically, investments should focus on expanding access to education in conflict-affected and marginalized areas, where educational opportunities remain limited. Such efforts would help provide equal opportunities for all youths

5.6.2 Enhance Youth Access to Education and Employment Opportunities

Access to quality education and job opportunities are among the most efficient means through which the youths could be empowered and the socioeconomic drivers of instability reduced, most particularly in a country like Nigeria whose demography is constituted most by the youths. By providing the basic needs that empower the youths to thrive through education, skills development, and employment opportunities, societies are able to bring stability, peace, and social order. Educated and employed youths are less likely to fall victim to exploitation by terror groups and less likely to engage in crime or activities to induce instability. Thus, there should be other initiatives, to employ and made the priority in order to improve accessibility to education and job opportunities for the youths in Nigeria. in the region.

5.6.3 Integrate Peace Education in School Curricula

In addition to improving general education, peace education should be incorporated at all levels of the school curriculum. Beyond teaching children how to resolve conflicts, practice diplomacy, and embrace tolerance, peace education equips them with knowledge and skills, transforming them into peace-builders at both the national and local levels. As UNESCO (2014) demonstrated, “peace education facilitates the development of knowledge,

skills, values, and attitudes that allow individuals to prevent conflict and foster conditions propitious to peace” (p. 7).

In a country like Nigeria, which harbors numerous religious and ethnic groups, teaching young people how to live respectfully and peacefully with one another is essential for maintaining social order and curbing potential sources of conflict. Curricula should be reformulated so that peace education becomes central to the formal education system, beginning at the primary and continuing through tertiary education. This can be achieved through the development of specialized conflict studies and human rights modules, lectures on inter-religious dialogue, and training on peace processes and the roles of youths within them. It may also be supplemented by extracurricular activities such as peace clubs, school debates on peace-building, and simulation exercises on peace negotiations. As UNICEF (2017) noted, “peace education must be both theoretical and practical to be truly transformative in conflict-prone societies” (p. 39). Integrating peace education into the school system would make Nigerian children more able to participate in the process of diplomacy and peace-building within their communities and the global community.

Education for most Nigerian children can be expensive since both the school and the textbooks must be paid for upfront. The cost of tuition, books, and other expenses typically forces many students, particularly those who are members of the lower classes, to leave college. As Okoro and Okwudishu (2018) observed, “persistent educational disparities in Nigeria exacerbate social tensions and fuel conflict, making equitable access to education a cornerstone of peacebuilding” (p. 64). Scholarships and economic assistance projects play a critical role in ensuring that gifted and ambitious children may secure education opportunities regardless of the family they were born into.

Government and private partnerships must seek to establish scholarship initiatives aimed at students living in deprived areas or conflict-affected regions. These scholarships

may help reduce the economic burden and allow the youths to continue with education. The focus must be on the fields of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), social sciences, and diplomacy to provide the youths with a broad range of skills that will be useful in the context of peace building and diplomacy. Beyond conventional field scholarships, vocational training must be scaled up to allow the youths to acquire functional and income-generating skills. As argued by Uzoigwe and Adesina (2018), skills acquisition has proven effective in the context of economic empowerment and as a preventive measure against involvement in violence by the youths (p. 57). These initiatives are particularly vital in areas facing high unemployment among youths, where entry into mainstream employment may not be available. Vocational training may allow youths to engage in multiple fields such as agriculture, information technology, hospitality, or renewable energy. It reduces dependency on casual and lower-paying occupations that do not offer upward mobility opportunities.

Training programs must be aimed at both technical and soft skills leadership, communication, and problem-solving, without which people cannot prosper in jobs or peace-building projects. Job training must also be job-specific and attuned to the needs and resource realities of local communities as well of the regional economy. By equipping youths with job-related skills, Nigeria can better position its youthful population to drive economic development and social stability.

5.6.4 Create Job Initiatives

Job creation is one of the most pressing needs among Nigerian youths. High unemployment rates contribute to frustration, economic instability, and a greater likelihood of youths engaging in acts of violence or crime. As the International Labor Organization (ILO) (2020) identified, “youth unemployment is both a driver and consequence of social instability in many developing nations, including Nigeria” (p. 14). This also hinders the move by the

youths towards peace, as they cannot afford basic requirements. Government and private sectors ought to invest in creating employment opportunities for youths within conflict- or instability-affected areas. As Okonjo-Iweala (2018) asserted, “investing in infrastructure can create thousands of jobs while simultaneously laying the foundation for sustained economic growth” (p. 86).

Job creation programs should focus on both the public and private sectors. Both national and city governments can invest in monumental projects such as the construction of bridges, highways, schools, and health facilities that provide youth populations with employment opportunities. The programs can also encourage national development through the establishment of public amenities and services. Entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized industries (SMEs) incentives can encourage the creation of employment on an individual basis. Central and city governments can grant concessions such as tax exemptions and grants for businesses to engage young populations in employment. Governments can also increase financing accessibility through the provision of microfinance or venture capital to encourage youth start-ups to innovate, expand entrepreneurship, and create employment. According to Ojo and Salami (2021), “youth entrepreneurship must be supported with more than rhetoric; it requires a deliberate ecosystem of capital, mentorship, and market access” (p. 102). Special attention should also be paid to creating job opportunities in conflict-prone areas. Conflict often disrupts local economies and destroys livelihoods, making it difficult for young people to access employment. Through targeted job creation initiatives, such as rebuilding infrastructure, promoting local businesses, and providing micro grants for youth entrepreneurs, young people in these regions can find economic stability and contribute to the rebuilding and peace building processes. As UNDP (2021c) highlights, “economic recovery is central to sustainable peace in post-conflict settings, particularly when it engages local youth in meaningful employment” (p. 59).

5.6.5 Reduce Unemployment and Violence Risk



Figure 3: Nigerian police officers detain a man during a political rally in Lagos

<https://theconversation.com/lagos-drugs-firearms-and-youth-unemployment-are-creating-a-lethal-cocktail-in-nigerias-commercial-capital-221504>

High unemployment rates are not only a barrier to youth development but also a key factor in driving youth involvement in violence and crime. The frustration and hopelessness that come from being unable to find work can lead to a sense of disillusionment, making youths more vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremist groups, criminal organizations, or political movements that use violence as a means to achieve their goals. Job creation initiatives, therefore, not only help youths achieve economic stability but also reduce the risk of violent conflict by offering alternative pathways to success. By addressing the root causes of unemployment and underemployment, policies can help reduce the socioeconomic conditions that fuel instability and violence. Programs that support youth employment and entrepreneurship, particularly in areas affected by conflict or high levels of poverty, will contribute to long-term peace and social cohesion.

5.7 Institutionalization of Youth's Representation in Decision-Making Processes

Political process and decision-making among and by the young remains an overriding and undervalued variable within the vast majority of the democratic world, including Nigeria. Even though they make up a considerable share of the population, young citizens are shut out of dominant decision-making mechanisms. The UNDP (2020) recorded that “young people

continue to be systematically excluded from political institutions and processes, with their representation in parliaments remaining disproportionately low worldwide” (p. 6). Such underrepresentation breeds policies that fail to adapt to or genuinely reflect to the needs and hopes of youth populations.

In the Nigerian context, the exclusion of the youths from governance processes is sustained by institutionalized gerontocratic regimes that value experience and age over innovation and representation. As Omotola (2010) documented, “the entrenched control of political power by older elites in Nigeria limits opportunities for meaningful youth participation in governance and decision-making” (p. 156). This institutional exclusion denies the youths the opportunity to make active inputs into public policy and governance outcomes that directly impact them. National, regional, and subnational governance institutions typically do not allow for the incorporation of youths into policy making on a routine basis. As the Commonwealth Secretariat (2016) outlined, “while youth councils and consultative forums exist, their influence on policy is limited due to their largely advisory status and the absence of binding decision-making power” (p. 18). This illustrates the structural gap between the incorporation of the youths and the actual political mandate. In other regimes, incorporation of the youths happens only nominally or tokenistically. Youths can be incorporated into consultations or into public discourses, but their inputs rarely translate into the final decisions or institutional policies. As Checkoway and Aldana (2013) made the argument, “without institutional mechanisms that support meaningful participation, youth involvement risks becoming ceremonial rather than transformative” (p. 1919). Institutional lack of binding mandates for youth incorporation enables this pattern.

Also, where the youths are integrated as members of the decision-making forum, they can find it hard to exert influence or legitimacy among their elders. As Nwosu (2021) provided, “even when youth gain entry into formal spaces, they are routinely challenged by

stereotypes that depict them as inexperienced or incapable of contributing meaningfully to governance” (p. 53). Such assumptions undermine the legitimacy of the youth voice and make it even more difficult for effective policy influence. The interests of the youths like education access, employment, insecurity, and social services are often diluted within the governance institutions without their actual membership. As the African Union Commission (2017) confirms, “exclusion of youth from decision-making processes results in the development of policies that are very remote from the day-to-day reality of most young people” (p. 9). Such exclusion engenders political disillusionment and detachment among the youths, therefore delegitimizing democratic participation and civic engagement.

5.7.1 Youth Councils and Advisory Boards

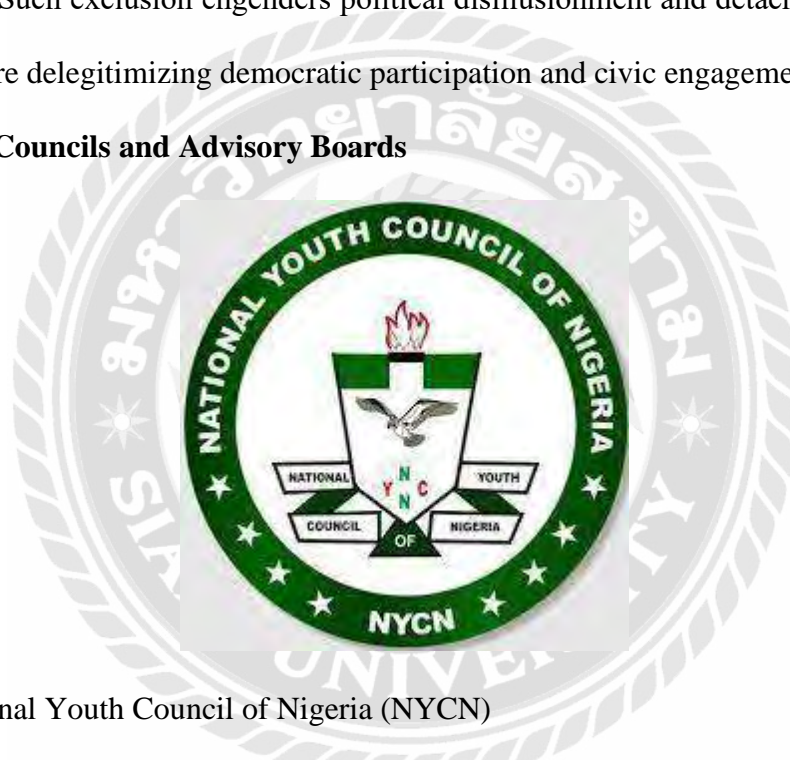


Figure 4: National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN)

In addition to legislative quotas, an array of institutional arrangements throughout the globe have been utilized as a tool for magnifying the participation of the youth in the process of governance. Included among them is the formation of youth advisory councils and boards that offer institutional channels for the participation of youth within the arena of policy and politics. As suggested by the World Bank (2018), “youth councils provide structured avenues for young people to engage in governance, contribute ideas to policy-making, and advocate for their interests” (p. 14). These forums exist at different state levels- federal, regional, and municipal (local) - and provide a platform through which youth leaders can be involved

in consultation regarding education, employment, security, and social development. As the Commonwealth Secretariat elaborates youth advisory forums “facilitate regular consultation between young people and decision-makers, enabling the formulation of more inclusive and responsive policies” (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2016, p. 14). The configuration of the boards normally achieves demographic diversity and regional representation, gender balance, and the inclusion of marginalized groups.

Moreover, advisory boards situated within government ministries create opportunities for stronger integration and direct youth participation in the development and execution of policymaking. The African Union Youth Charter places such systems highly and provides that “State Parties shall ensure the provision of opportunities for youth to actively participate in decision-making processes at all levels in society” (African Union, 2006, Article 11). Such boards not only fulfill the advisory function but also serve as connectors or bridges between the state and youth citizens, fostering understanding and trust. Where institutional processes exist and function properly, they embed the voices of youths into governance processes. 2006, Checkoway and Gutierrez (2006) opined that, “youth participation in governance structures transforms power relations by positioning young people as stakeholders rather than passive recipients of policy outcomes” (p. 25). This change is crucial in guaranteeing democratic participation and sustainable development.

The establishment of youth councils and advisory boards directly aligns with Objective 3 of this research, which seeks to propose strategies for enhancing youth participation in peace and diplomatic processes. By institutionalizing youth engagement through structured advisory platforms, young people gain legitimate avenues to influence policy, contribute to governance, and participate meaningfully in peacebuilding initiatives. This strategy addresses the structural exclusion identified in the findings and provides a practical pathway to amplify youth voices in decision-making. Moreover, these councils also

reinforce Objective 1, as they formalize and expand the roles that Nigerian youths play in promoting peace and diplomacy transitioning them from informal activists to recognized stakeholders and partners in governance. Such institutional arrangements strengthen youth representation, foster trust between the state and young citizens, and contribute to sustainable democratic development.

5.7.2 Increasing Youth's Involvement in Political Parties

Parties play central roles in policy development and leadership cultivation. The participation of the youths in political parties provides a genuine avenue for involvement in national governance and decision-making. As observed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), “young people are often excluded or underrepresented in formal political institutions, especially in decision-making positions,” despite composing a substantial share of the population (IPU, 2016, p. 5). The creation of youth wings within political parties has historically served as a training ground for emerging leaders, enabling them to take part in policy debates, electoral processes, and party leadership structures.

In many democratic systems, the youth wings form the backbone of political activism and policy influence. According to Resnick and Casale (2011), “youth wings offer institutional platforms where political socialization occurs, enabling young people to rise through the ranks and assume future leadership roles” (p. 16). These structures are not merely symbolic; they integrate youth perspectives into political agendas. Through active participation in party institutions, young people gain insight into governance and acquire the experience required to assume leadership positions. As noted by UNDP (2013), “youth participation in politics promotes accountability, inclusiveness, and the democratic legitimacy of political institutions” (p. 22).

Increasing youths involvement in political parties directly addresses Research Question 1 by illustrating concrete role Nigerian youths can play in promoting peace and

diplomacy through participation in policy debates, leadership processes, and governance structures. It also aligns with Research Question 2 by acknowledging the structural barriers and underrepresentation that hinder youth inclusion in formal political institutions, as highlighted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016). Furthermore, this discussion provides a strategic response to Research Question 3 by proposing the establishment and strengthening of youth wings within political parties as mechanisms for political socialization, leadership development, and diplomatic engagement. Through these structures, youths can evolve from passive observers into influential stakeholders who contribute to accountable, inclusive, and peace-oriented governance.

5.7.3 Role of Youths in Nation-Building

The Youths participation in governance extends beyond political necessity; it is central to nation-building when youth are engaged, they are more likely to contribute to peace, stability, and development. The engagement of the youth gives a sense of ownership along with a sense of responsibility and makes them more invested in the social and economic development of their nation. The youth actions in Nigeria and other nations have been source advocacy for campaign fights for fairness and justice. Their contributions have been utilized in framing policymaking more inclusively and more representative of the will of the broader masses. The result is an inclusive system of governance that yields legitimate and effective outcomes and more responsible and attentive to the population needs and experience, and the youth, specifically, as argued by McGee and Greenhalf (2011) (p. 13). Active youth inclusion offers innovative solutions for ordinary social problems such as unemployment and poverty and offers responsible and sustainable policies.

The absence of the youth representation, however, causes alienation and suspicion. Kazeem (2019) observed that “disenfranchisement and marginalization of youth from governance processes may fuel unrest and political instability” (p. 4). Institutionalization of

youthful involvement thus acts as a safeguarding measure by opening spaces for nonviolent political action. This connects to Research Objective 2 and Research Question 2, which examine the challenges young people face in peacebuilding. When their voices aren't heard, frustration grows and this weakens the very peace and stability the nation needs to thrive.

That's why creating real avenues for youth participation is so important. When governments and institutions make room for young people at the decision-making table not as tokens, but as partners they open the door to new ideas, peaceful engagement, and shared responsibility for nation-building. This reflects Research Objective 3 and Research Question 3, which focus on strategies to enhance youth participation in promoting peace and diplomacy.

5.7.4 Enhancing Youth Voice in Diplomacy and International Relations

The case of international relations has witnessed increased globalization of youth involvement. The world has seen active participation of young people in climate change discussions, conflict management, and human rights at the international level. As Hughes and Truelove (2019) remarked, “young people are critical actors in peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery, contributing to reconciliation, justice, and the sustainability of peace” (p. 7). The youth representatives are increasingly integrated into multilateral negotiations by institutions such as the United Nations and the African Union. These roles grant them a voice in addressing global challenges that most directly affect them. Scholte (2020) noted that “The youths involvement in global governance contributes the necessary generational perspective that far too frequently is absent in world diplomacy” (p. 119). Participation in global decision-making ensures that the long-term impacts of policies on future populations are considered. Institutions such as the United Nations and the African Union are increasingly including youth delegates and representatives in multilateral negotiations, giving them an opportunity to help shape global policies. This responds directly to Research Objective 1 and

Research Question 1, which highlight the roles Nigerian youth can play in promoting peace and diplomacy. By taking part in international forums, young Nigerians not only amplify their voices globally but also build diplomatic skills that can strengthen peace efforts at home.

However, this growing participation also exposes persistent gaps and challenges, particularly for youth from developing countries who often face limited access, inadequate resources, and insufficient representation in global governance spaces. This connects to Research Objective 2 and Research Question 2, which focus on the barriers hindering youth participation. If these inequalities remain unaddressed, the voices that most need to be heard will continue to be underrepresented in shaping the world's future.

Enhancing the voice of the youths in diplomacy, therefore, is not just about inviting them to international conferences—it's about creating pathways for meaningful participation. This includes leadership training, funding support, mentorship programs, and formal roles in diplomatic delegations. These strategies speak directly to Research Objective 3 and Research Question 3, which aim to identify ways to increase youth involvement in peace and diplomatic processes. As Scholte (2020) reminded us, youth involvement adds a generational perspective that is too often missing in world diplomacy. Giving young people a seat at the table ensures that long-term impacts are considered—not just the short-term interests of those currently in power.

5.7.5 Empowering Youths through Inclusion

Inclusion in governance enables the empowerment of the youth's by validating the contribution they can bring to social change. According to Checkoway and Gutierrez (2006), “youth empowerment is a process of gaining influence over decisions and institutions that affect their lives and communities” (p. 25). This enables the development of civic responsibility and stimulates involvement in community development, peace-building, and

policymaking. The visibility of youth leadership also has a demonstrative effect and stimulates further inclusion of the wider youth population in civil society. As UNESCO (2014) asserted, “seeing peers in positions of influence motivates other youth to become engaged in democratic processes and leadership” (p. 30). Such representation helps build a culture of peaceful activism, constructive dialogue, and democratic resilience.

This addresses Research Objective 3 and Research Question 3, which emphasize strategies for enhancing youth participation. Peer visibility and representation create a cycle of empowerment, encouraging even more young people to contribute to peace and governance processes.

At the same time, the lack of inclusion can undermine these opportunities. When youths are shut out of decision-making spaces, their potential to contribute is often overlooked a reality tied to Research Objective 2 and Research Question 2, which identify the challenges hindering youth participation. Exclusion doesn't just silence young voices; it can also weaken trust in institutions and limit the reach of peacebuilding initiatives.

The empowerment of the youths through inclusion is both a role and a strategy. It recognizes the power of young people to lead, to inspire, and to transform. It shows that giving youth meaningful space in governance is not an act of generosity it's an investment in a more peaceful, just, and democratic society.

5.8 Promotion of Capacity-Building Programs Tailored to Peace and Diplomacy

Capacity building initiatives focused on advocacy and diplomacy have emerged as indispensable tools for empowering Nigerian youth to engage meaningfully in governance, peace-building, and international affairs. These programs go beyond mere skill acquisition; they cultivate critical awareness and strategic thinking that enable young people to challenge injustice and shape public policy through nonviolent means. According to Akinyemi (2021b), the #EndSARS protests demonstrated “how organized youth-led movements can demand

accountability from state actors through peaceful means” (p. 45). This movement not only highlighted the organizational and communicative power of Nigerian youths but also underscored the urgent need for structured programs that can harness and sustain this energy toward institutional engagement.

Training in advocacy equips the youths with an understanding of constitutional rights, international human rights frameworks, and mechanisms for legal redress. This is crucial in a socio-political context where marginalization, police brutality, and systemic corruption are prevalent. Advocacy, when strategically implemented, becomes a powerful form of resistance. Gene Sharp’s (2011) assertion that “nonviolent resistance is not passive; it is a strategic means of waging conflict” (p. 89) underscores the active and intentional nature of youth-led activism. Nonviolent strategies such as protests, petitions, policy lobbying, and media campaigns are not just moral alternatives to violence but effective mechanisms for political transformation. From a theoretical perspective, capacity-building in advocacy aligns with empowerment theory, which posits that individuals become agents of change when they gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence to challenge oppressive structures (Zimmerman, 2000). Empowered youths are not merely recipients of top-down development initiatives but become co-creators of peace and progress. This dynamic shifts the development paradigm from a paternalistic model to one rooted in participation, agency, and equity.

The global impact of youth-led advocacy is evident in initiatives for girls’ education, with scholars noting that “youth activists around the world, including figures advocating for female education, have mobilized international support and created transnational networks for social change” (Kirk & Winthrop, 2013, p. 4). Back home in Nigeria, where girls’ education remains most endangered in the North by virtue of cultural and security-related obstacles, advocacy by the Malala Fund has inspired local activism for inclusive education (Yousafzai, 2013, p. 102). This cross-national example parallels the cross-border nature of

youth opposition and the hopes for global advocacy networks for the reinforcement of grassroots activism. Nigerian activists, drawing on universal survival and opposition histories, can lead more influential, more public campaigns both nationally and internationally. Moreover, investment in capacity development pays dividends over the longer-term for peace and democracy consolidation.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2016) emphasized that “building youth capacity in peace and security is fundamental to fostering inclusive, peaceful and resilient societies” (p. 19). This is less inspirational sloganeering than a practical imperative: if youths are trained in the art and craft of bargaining, policy dialogue, and diplomacy, they are less prone to recruitment by violent or extremist ideology. Instead, they are better positioned to interact productively with institutions and speak on behalf of marginalized people.

The long-term impact of such efforts is the institutionalization of youth participation. Youth trained in advocacy and diplomacy are more likely to join policymaking bodies, run for office, lead civil society organizations, and influence international agendas. This creates a pipeline of informed, ethical, and effective leaders whose legitimacy stems from grassroots credibility and strategic expertise. As the African Union Youth Charter emphasizes, youth participation is not a privilege but a right, and institutional mechanisms must be built to sustain their inclusion in governance structures (African Union, 2006a, Article 11). Capacity-building initiatives in advocacy and diplomacy are not only timely but transformational. They equip Nigerian youth with the tools to engage powerfully and peacefully with structures of power, thereby advancing justice, peace, and participatory democracy. The empirical evidence from youth-led movements like #EndSARS, and the theoretical grounding in empowerment and peace-building literature, affirms that these initiatives are essential for cultivating a resilient generation of change-makers.

5.8.1 Developing Skills for Conflict Mediation

In a country as diverse and complex as Nigeria, where communal violence and political instability have deep roots, young people have the potential to become powerful mediators for peace. Their unique position within communities often gives them the trust, access, and credibility needed to address tensions before they escalate. As UNESCO (2017) explained, “empowering young people with conflict resolution skills enhances community resilience and prevents the escalation of violence” (p. 32).

Equipping young people with mediation and peacebuilding skills directly supports Research Objective 1 and Research Question 1, which highlight the roles Nigerian youth play in promoting peace and diplomacy. Through structured training programs in dialogue facilitation, nonviolent communication, and negotiation, youth can intervene constructively in disputes, help reconcile rival groups, and foster mutual understanding. Their neutrality, local knowledge, and energy make them credible and effective peace actors, particularly in Nigeria’s volatile regions.

These mediation initiatives often use experiential learning techniques—such as role-playing, simulations, and community dialogues—to build both technical capacity and emotional intelligence. This reflects the belief of Johan Galtung (2000) that emotional intelligence is essential for lasting reconciliation. By developing these skills, young people move beyond being bystanders to becoming frontline peacemakers, shaping the social fabric of their communities in practical and meaningful ways.

However, conflict mediation is only part of the picture. Youth empowerment also involves training in advocacy for justice and human rights. In a country facing systemic inequalities, corruption, and uneven access to resources, young advocates can become a voice for accountability and reform. Gene Sharp (2011) reminded us that nonviolent resistance is not passive; it is a strategic means of challenging injustice.

The power of youth-led advocacy is clearly illustrated by the #EndSARS movement, which, according to Akinyemi (2021a), “demonstrated the potential of youth-led advocacy to influence national governance and demand accountability” (p. 45). This aligns with Research Objective 3 and Research Question 3, which focus on strategies for increasing youth involvement in diplomacy and peacebuilding. Youth training in advocacy equips them to mobilize communities, shape public opinion, and hold leaders accountable, all of which are essential elements of democratic and peaceful societies.

Inspiration from global youth figures, such as Malala Yousafzai, shows how strategic advocacy can spark change at both local and international levels. Her initiatives in Nigeria have advanced girls’ education and female empowerment, proving that youth-led movements can tackle systemic issues with vision and courage.

This also ties into Research Objective 2 and Research Question 2, which address the challenges young people face. Many lack access to training, resources, or formal platforms to practice these skills, a gap that, if closed, could greatly enhance their peacebuilding impact. Ultimately, developing skills for conflict mediation and advocacy is both a role and a strategy: A role, because it allows young people to act as mediators, advocates, and peacemakers. A strategy, because these skills give them the tools to challenge injustice peacefully and shape diplomatic outcomes from the ground up.

5.8.2 Leadership Development for Diplomacy

The development of leadership capacities is vital for youths interested in diplomacy and international relations. Training programs that emphasize strategic thinking, negotiation, public diplomacy, and policy formulation prepare young people for roles in both domestic and global governance. According to Nye (2008), “soft power in diplomacy increasingly depends on the ability to communicate, collaborate, and build trust across borders” (p. 29). Youths trained in these competencies are better positioned to contribute to multilateral

discussions and peace negotiations. Such programs often include exposure to global governance structures, mock diplomatic engagements, and sessions on international legal instruments. They aim to demystify diplomacy and foster a generation capable of representing national interests in forums such as the United Nations, ECOWAS, or the African Union. These initiatives align with UNSCR Resolution 2250, which calls on member states to increase youth representation in decision-making at all levels (UNSC, 2015, p. 3).

This directly addresses the research objective of identifying and enhancing the roles Nigerian youths play in promoting peace and diplomacy, and it responds to the research question on the strategies that can enhance youth involvement in diplomatic processes. Leadership training strengthens the capacity of youths to participate meaningfully in peace-building and diplomatic efforts, thereby bridging the existing gap in youth representation and inclusion.

5.8.3 Mentorship Programs for Youth Leaders

Mentorship plays an instrumental role in developing leadership skills among youth. By connecting emerging leaders with experienced practitioners, mentorship facilitates the transfer of knowledge, skills, and professional insights. As Fletcher and Mullen (2012) noted, “mentorship plays a critical role in youth development, providing guidance, support, and opportunities that enhance personal and professional growth” (p. 45). Diplomacy, peace-building, and social justice mentorships allow for intergenerational learning and the broadening of avenues to influential networks. These mentorships also serve the personal and professional growth needs of individuals and empower them to navigate institutional spaces to influence public policy. Models ranging from one-on-one mentoring to online group mentoring permit inclusiveness, especially for youths who are part of marginalized or remote communities. This links to the research objective of proposing strategies to enhance youth participation in peace and diplomacy, highlighting mentorship as a pathway to overcome

institutional exclusion. It also supports the research question on identifying challenges and strategies for strengthening youth engagement in diplomatic spaces.

5.8.4 International Organizations and NGO Partnerships

International and NGOs partnerships widen the coverage and scope of activities aimed at youth empowerment. International organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the African Union Commission (AUC), and international NGOs offer technical support, training, and exposure to best global practices. Such partnerships have helped attract the participation of youths in peace-building activities in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa (Curtain et al., 2016, p. 23). These collaborations enable Nigerian youths to participate in worldwide exchange programs, internships, and peace missions. According to Del Felice and Wisler (2007), “transnational cooperation enhances youth competencies and introduces cross-cultural approaches to conflict resolution” (p. 15). These relationships not only strengthen local peace activities but also empower Nigerian youths to be assets at the international level. This aligns with the objective of examining the roles of youths in promoting peace and diplomacy by showing how international collaboration can amplify their impact. It further answers the research question concerning strategies for enhancing youth participation in peace-building initiatives.

5.9 Technology and Social Media for Peace Advocacy

The ICT era presents a unique opportunity for education and mobilization in support of peace and diplomacy. Online platforms offer educational courses, webinars, and digital spaces that eliminate geographic barriers and expand access to education through a democratized process. According to UNESCO (2018), “digital engagement enhances the involvement of youth in the life of the community and allows them to participate in decision-making processes through digital tools” (p. 44). Social media and online campaigns are central to contemporary youth advocacy, enabling mass mobilization and fostering global

solidarity. Examples include the use of Twitter and Instagram for the #EndSARS campaign and online petitions for the #ClimateStrike. These digital tools empower youth to shape public opinion and engage in cyber-diplomacy, enhancing their participation in both local and international peace and diplomatic processes. This demonstrates how technology expands the influence of Nigerian youth and supports their active engagement in governance, peace-building, and diplomacy.

5.9.1 Developing Conflict Mediation Skills

Among the critical capacity-building areas among youths is the acquisition of skills for resolving and mediating conflicts. Nigeria hosts a number of places ravaged by communal conflicts, political instability, and ethnic and religious conflicts. When youths are trained in the art of conflict mediation, they can be significant actors in diffusing tension and promoting peace and stability in society. Courses on conflict mediation can make the youth possess the skills of facilitating dialogue among affected groups by conflicts, analyzing the roots of the conflicts, and designing mechanisms for resolving conflicts through reconciliation. Such courses should also emphasize the development of the ability for emotional intelligence, empathies, and negotiation skills, which are the ingredients for the resolution of conflicts peacefully. By learning the skills of peaceful resolution of conflicts, the youth can be significant forces and beacons of peace and stability within the conflicted places back home in Nigeria. Conflict mediation seminars could include interactive and practical dialogue sessions, role-play, and simulation that reflect the real conflicts, thus furnishing the youth with practical experience. Through such an experience, they can become serious and competent practitioner capable of tackling the real conflicts when faced with them.

Another focus of capacity-building programs is the acquisition of advocacy skills through which the youths become social justice and human rights activists. Social injustices like discrimination, inequality, and deprivation of basic facilities are the reality for the vast

number of Nigerian youths. Empowering them for the defense of their own and other Nigerians' rights is the essence of inclusion, which enables people to co-exist and flourish together. Advocacy capacity-building programs can instruct the youths regarding the value of human rights, the judiciary, and the process of showing protest and advocacy peacefully through petitions and other campaigns. The programs can also endow the youths with the skills of lobbying the policymakers, running campaigns, and mobilizing other individuals for education, health care, gender equity, and poverty eradication causes. Advocacy campaigns can also be directly geared toward educating children the importance of nonviolent protest and the advantage of seeking social change through nonviolent dialogue. When children are equipped to advocate for social change through wholesome and nonviolent means, they are less inclined to employ violence or radicalism for communicating concerns over social or political formations. Children instead become forces for good, bringing forth positive change for the attainment of a more just society. This section responds to the research questions regarding the roles Nigerian youths can play in promoting peace and diplomacy, and the strategies to enhance their participation. It emphasizes conflict mediation and advocacy skills as essential tools to strengthen youth contributions in line with the objectives of this study.

5.9.2 Leadership Development for Diplomacy

Another fundamental capacity-building dimension for Nigerian youth, particularly those aspiring to careers in diplomacy and international relations, is leadership development. Through structured leadership programs, youth can acquire the skills necessary to assume leadership roles in diverse contexts, including political organizations, civil society groups, and international institutions. Such skills include strategic thinking, decision-making, public speaking, effective communication, and the ability to motivate and inspire others. In the context of diplomacy, leadership training exposes youths to international relations, negotiation techniques, and strategies for representing Nigeria's interests on the global stage.

These programs can be designed to provide the youths with a thorough understanding of the dynamics of international diplomacy, peace treaties, global governance mechanisms, and the processes for becoming active stakeholders in addressing international challenges such as climate change, security issues, and human rights violations. By participating in leadership development initiatives, The Nigerian youths can emerge as legitimate representatives and figureheads of the nation in international forums, contributing meaningfully to peace missions, development programs, and diplomatic negotiations. Strengthening leadership capacity ensures that young Nigerians' perspectives and interests are represented in international decision-making processes and that their voices are consulted in matters that affect both national and global outcomes.

5.9.3 Mentorship Programs

One of the mechanisms for transforming leaders into peace-builders, diplomats, and social justice leaders is mentorship. By linking potential youth with professionals, mentorship programs provide more than knowledge transfer; they offer sustained assistance, strategic insight, and access to policy-oriented networks that the youth cannot obtain on their own. According to Allen et al. (2017), “mentoring fosters leadership skills in youth by offering guidance, feedback, and support through sustained relationships with experienced mentors” (p. 112). The youths are afforded practical mentoring on how to navigate institutional barriers through individualized mentorship, build influential lobbies, and form coalitions within institutional arenas. Mentorship also immerses young people in the art and science of governance and diplomacy in all its aspects, including bargaining, consultation and inclusive decision-making procedures necessary for building peace in post-conflict regions such as Nigeria.

The value of counseling is especially evident in contexts where vertical political cultures make it difficult for youth to access institutional leadership offices. Mentorship thus

provides a critical entry point into inclusion and empowerment among youth. It also fosters relationship development between youth and key actors in government, the UN, and civil society organizations. Such connections enable young people, across different times and spaces, to better position themselves to drive policy reform agendas. The United Nations (2018) affirmed that “mentorship enhances youth agency and ensures the intergenerational transmission of knowledge critical for sustaining peace” (p. 29). In post-conflict recovery and weak democratic settings, intergenerational learning builds trust and linkages between past and future leaders, enhancing institutional persistence and social solidarity.

This focus on mentorship directly supports the research objective of proposing strategies for enhancing youth participation in peace and diplomatic processes. By equipping young Nigerians with the skills, networks, and access needed to engage in governance and diplomacy, mentorship programs offer a sustainable and practical pathway to strengthen their role in national and international peace-building efforts.

Successful mentorship must be flexible to accommodate the varying backgrounds and interests of Nigerian youth. Programs should be intentionally structured to develop capacity in areas such as conflict resolution, international diplomacy, and inclusive governance. They may take different formats, including one-on-one mentorships, peer mentorship circles, group workshops, and online mentorship platforms, thereby ensuring maximum accessibility regardless of geographical or socioeconomic limitations. As explained by Crisp and Cruz (2009), “mentoring programs that adopt flexible and inclusive approaches enable marginalized youth to gain leadership skills, civic engagement experience, and access to social capital” (p. 195).

5.9.4 International Organizations and NGO Partnerships

Efforts to strengthen the scope and effectiveness of youth capacity-building initiatives in Nigeria can be significantly enhanced through long-term partnerships with

international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Such partnerships provide critical technical assistance, funding opportunities, exposure to proven methodologies, and knowledge sharing. International frameworks and programs offered by the United Nations, African Union, UNESCO, and NGOs such as Search for Common Ground, Mercy Corps, and International Alert can be adapted to local Nigerian contexts to build youth capacity in peace and diplomacy.

These international collaborations are not merely supplementary; they play a strategic role in ensuring that local youth development initiatives align with global norms. As the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) emphasizes, “building youth capacity in peace and security is central to creating inclusive, peaceful, and resilient societies” (UNDP, 2016, p. 19). Through global opportunities such as exchange programs, international fellowships, and internships, Nigerian youth can become globally connected and integrated into international peace networks. The African Union Ambassadors for Peace (AYAP), for instance, provides avenues for youth engagement at both grassroots and high-level diplomatic platforms.

International partnerships also confer legitimacy to local initiatives. As Faustino and Booth (2014) noted, “strategic partnerships among local and international actors reinforce institutional capacity, enhance legitimacy, and support better governance outcomes” (p. 22). The success of peacebuilding initiatives in post-conflict countries such as Rwanda and Sierra Leone, often achieved through international collaboration, illustrates the effectiveness of such approaches. Adopting comparable strategies could enable Nigeria to establish youth empowerment programs grounded in evidence-based practices with proven outcomes.

Furthermore, collaborative efforts challenge the perception of youth as mere recipients of aid. Instead, they are recognized as active development actors and strategic stakeholders. The United Nations’ Youth, Peace, and Security agenda explicitly calls for “the

participation of youth in decision-making at all levels” (UNSC, 2015), underscoring their role as co-creators of sustainable peace.

Technology has emerged as a crucial enabler of peacebuilding, advocacy, and youth engagement in the 21st century. Digital innovations—including mobile applications, online learning platforms, and social media—have transformed the ways youth interact with governance systems and global policy forums. In Nigeria, where infrastructural and accessibility challenges persist, technology provides a scalable and inclusive framework that can overcome socio-economic and geographic disparities. Online platforms such as Coursera, UNITAR, and EdX offer courses on diplomacy, conflict prevention and management, international human rights, and international law at minimal or no cost, broadening educational access and equipping Nigerian youth with skills aligned with international standards. Additionally, webinars and online meetings hosted by global organizations such as UNOY Peace builders and Global Youth Mobilization enable Nigerian youth to engage with international peers, share best practices, and participate in cross-country peace initiatives.

Digital diplomacy, or “e-diplomacy,” has also proven an effective tool for mobilization and advocacy. The #EndSARS protests, for example, demonstrated how platforms like Instagram and Twitter were leveraged for organizing protests, garnering international support, and exerting global pressure. As Tufekci (2017) asserted, “digital networks allow social movements to organize, communicate, and exert influence beyond traditional power channels” (p. 45, emphasis added). In this context, Nigerian youth are not mere consumers of information but active shapers of narratives, influencing both policy and global discourse through digital activism.

However, the integration of technology must be accompanied by initiatives promoting digital literacy and online ethics. Without proper safeguards, risks such as misinformation, online harassment, and surveillance could undermine youth participation.

Therefore, capacity-building programs should include training in cybersecurity, fact-checking, and responsible digital engagement. Integrating technology into youth development initiatives is not merely innovative but essential. It ensures that Nigerian youth are not left behind in a rapidly digitalizing world and equips them to participate actively in national and international diplomatic processes.

Partnerships with international organizations and NGOs, combined with digital engagement strategies, represent practical and actionable approaches to enhance youth participation in peace and diplomacy. These strategies address the research objective of identifying methods to strengthen youth involvement in peace building while responding to the research question on effective ways to empower Nigerian youth as active agents of peace.

5.10 Addressing Structural and Cultural Barriers to Youth Participation

Structural and cultural obstacles in all societies, including Nigerian ones, often deter the engagement of youth in governance, peace-building, and decision-making processes. These barriers are rooted in social and institutional processes that suppress the voice and participation of youth in the making of their societies and nation. Transcending these barriers entails mobilizing policies that eradicate them and encourage inclusive governance that grants recognition and agency to youth. Fostering gender equity, combating all discrimination, and ensuring intergenerational dialogue are key strategies for addressing such barriers and opening spaces for youth participation in peace-building and governance. This directly responds to the research objective of examining challenges faced by youths in contributing to peace-building and the research question: What challenges hinder youth participation in peace-building initiatives.

5.10.1 Female and Male Norms and Constraints

Most traditional norms regard the youths as too inexperienced for leadership and governance. Sexism also widens these exclusions. Tripp et al. (2009) articulated the world

where “gendered power relations restrict the public lives of girls and women and weaken the political power of both” (p. 74). Male leadership dominance over Nigeria continues the same trajectory by disincentivizing feminine participation within the arena of politics. The imbalance is more severe across the north, where gender discrimination and culture conservatism intersect. This must change through the culture shift and policies that promote gender and leadership inclusiveness.

5.10.2 Structural Barriers Based on Lack of Representation and Institutional Inequality

Institutional exclusion remains one of the most prevalent obstacles to the participation of the youths. Youths are underrepresented in formal political institutions, peace negotiations, and decision-making platforms. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) reports that “only 2.2% of the world’s parliamentarians are under the age of 30” (IPU, 2016, p. 7). In Nigeria, political structures are dominated by older elites, with few opportunities for youth to access formal power. The absence of youth quotas, combined with the prohibitive economic costs of political participation, reinforces this exclusion. Resnick and Casale (2011) noted that “institutional reforms, including youth representation mechanisms, are essential for integrating young people into governance systems” (p. 19).

5.10.3 Fostering Intergenerational Dialogue and Collaboration

Bridging the generational gap is crucial for inclusive governance. Intergenerational dialogue platforms foster mutual respect and shared decision-making. According to Freire (1970), “dialogue is the essence of education as the practice of freedom” (p. 67). Forums that bring together elders and youth for joint problem-solving promote trust and the co-creation of peace strategies. Community dialogues, town halls, and shared leadership models can facilitate collaborative governance. These efforts recognize the unique contributions of both generations and challenge hierarchical norms that limit youth engagement.

5.11 Promoting Safe Spaces for Youth Empowerment

The creation of safe, inclusive environments for youth expression and participation is a foundational strategy for empowerment. These spaces whether physical, institutional, or digital enable young people to engage with peers, policymakers, and mentors without fear of marginalization or reprisal. As UNHSP (2014) pointed out, “safe spaces for youth promote participation, innovation, and community development” (p. 14). Equipped with training in conflict resolution, public speaking, and policy advocacy, youths in these environments become more confident and capable contributors to peace and development. By cultivating inclusive spaces, Nigeria can nurture a generation of leaders prepared to influence both local and global governance.

5.12 Summary of Chapter Five

This chapter of research shows that an integrated approach across various spheres (social, political, economic and technological) is essential for meaningful youth engagement. Addressing the issues of unemployment as well as alternative routes to success can reduce youth engagement in violence. A number of institutional frameworks can help amplify the voices of youth in government; these frameworks include youth councils, advisory committees, and political party membership. Youths are prepared as agent of change through capacity-building programs in diplomacy, conflict mediation, leadership, change management, and advocacy. The efficacy of these frameworks are reinforced by mentorship schemes and partnerships with external organizations. Technology and social media are also effective instruments of advocacy, mobilization, and digital diplomacy. Addressing structural and institutional barriers, including gender norms and institutional bias, and enabling intergenerational dialogue and safe spaces is critical to enabling inclusive arenas to empower youth. Finally, the chapter places youth participation as a strategic imperative to peace, social justice, and sustainable national development.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Conclusion

The study identifies the key roles that Nigerian youths assume in peace-building and diplomacy through community mediation, religious dialogue, and political activism. However, their active involvement is hampered by structural, cultural, and economic obstacles. The comparative survey demonstrates that conclusions obtained from successful global cases may be applied in developing policies that stimulate youth involvement in Nigeria.

Nigerian youths have also maintained the capacity for effective participation in peace-building and diplomacy at the grassroots level. In community mediation, they typically adopt the sort of neutral third-party position that enables discordant groups to engage in dialogue. This position is precisely effective within Nigeria's multi-ethnic and multi-religion environment where conflicts easily become violent. Programs initiated by the student unions and town associations founded by youths bring together rival groups and provide spaces for reconciliations and understanding. Programs such as these customarily fill the void left by the inadequacy of government intervention and highlight the central role played by young individuals in the attainment of social cohesion. Another very significant vehicle through which Nigerian youths engage in peace-building is through inter-faith dialogue. In a religiously divided society, youths have taken it upon themselves to close the divide among Christians and Muslims and individuals who believe in traditional religions. Programs such as inter-faith youth forums and co-operative projects eliminate barriers and instill mutual understanding. These programs not only address the available conflicts along religious fault lines but also lay the groundwork for the sustenance of peace. Through the infusion of

toleration and understanding, Nigerian youths make immense progress toward the achievement of a society founded on peace.

Political activism is also another arena where the Nigerian youths stand out. They employ the classical and the modern tools, particularly social media, to voice up their concerns for issues of governance and peace. Advocacy for free and fair elections, transparency, and accountability often uses the leadership roles for the youths as an argument. The 'NotTooYoungToRun' campaign, for example, managed to advocate for the reduction of the age group for candidacy for Nigerian public office. Such campaigns illustrate the desire by the Nigerian youths for an establishment of an orderly political system that maintains peace. Although they contributed, Nigerian youth are confronted with many barriers that prevent holistic participation in peace-building and diplomacy. Hindrances like the lack of adequate education and marginalization from the decision-making forums rob them of meaningful participation. Few receive the proper education needed for dealing with the intricacies of complex diplomacy and conflict resolution. Also, ageist cultural priorities that emphasize the older generation often disregard the youth as inexperienced or naive, devaluing their thinking outside the box.

Financial constraints restrict youth engagement further. High unemployment and widespread poverty cause many youths to consider survival over politics or peace-building initiatives. In the absence of grants and funding resources, many viable youth initiatives wither or collapse. In Rwanda, for example, the youth were part of the reconciliation process following the genocide, collaborating with government and the international community to rebuild unity. In Colombia, youth participation in peace negotiations between the government and rebel organizations contributed to the building of sustainable agreements. Those cases revalidate that, where youths are offered opportunity and platform, they can be agents of reform. In Nigeria, such strategies advocate for the inclusiveness of processes. Inclusion of

topics of conflict-resolution and peace-building within school curricula would also endow youths with the capacity for effective participation in governance.

Economic empowerment is equally critical. Programs addressing youth unemployment via skills development and startup incentives would provide increased leeway for peace-building interaction. Resource accessibility for innovative projects and funding for youth organizations should also receive special emphasis. Multilateral cooperation and grants from donors can also strengthen such programs.

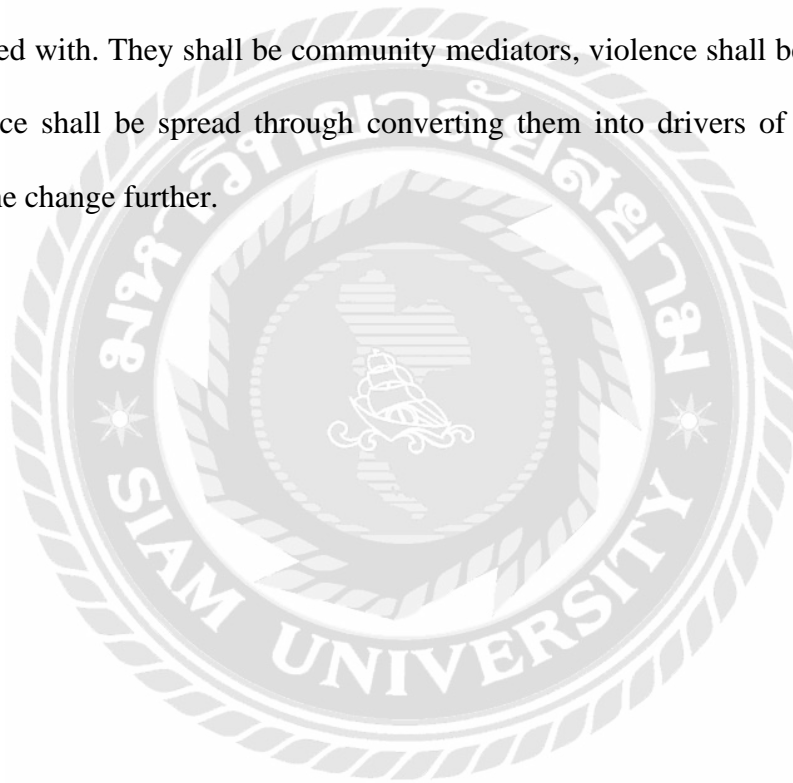
Changes in culture are among the most difficult and desirable reforms. Advocacy campaigns that overcome barriers and promote dialogue among generations can prevent youth isolation. Media campaigns that highlight the youth peace-builders' achievement can also shift the mindset of society. Technology provides another platform for the enhancement of youth engagement in peace-building. Social media platforms offer affordable avenues for reaching the masses, mobilizing support, and setting up forums for interaction. Online platforms can connect Nigerian youths into the global net, facilitating cross-frontier collaboration without borders and setting up global unity among youth peace activists.

Nigerian youth participation in peace-building and diplomacy is fundamental and essential. Their input through community mediation, religious dialogue, and political activism form the pillars of a more stable and peaceful society. Overcoming the barriers they face, however, remains the paramount focus.

6.2 Recommendation

Creation of the national, state, and local youth councils will provide the youth with institutional platforms for involvement in decision-making for peace and security. The councils will enable the incorporation of the youth into decision- platforms where the youth can articulate themselves, inject innovative thinking, and share in consultative governance.

Embracing special training courses on leadership, conflict resolution, and dialogue will render the Nigerian youths able to handle tension constructively through the skills they shall be equipped with. They shall be community mediators, violence shall be decreased, and sustainable peace shall be spread through converting them into drivers of positive change who promote the change further.



REFERENCES

- Adebanjo, S. T. & Musa, A. Y. (2019). *Culture, tradition, and the politics of youth exclusion in Nigeria*. Fountain Publishers.
- Adefuye, S. O. (2020). *Youth involvement in peace-building: Bridging the generational gap*. Peacefront Publications.
- Aghedo, I. & Eke, S. (2013). From alms to arms: The almajiri phenomenon and internal security in northern Nigeria. *African Security*, 6(4), 316–338.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2013.850949>
- Akinwale, J. (2021). *Gender and political exclusion in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects*. Emerald Press.
- Akinyemi, A. (2021a). *Youth movements and democratic accountability in Nigeria*. Civic Impact Press.
- Akinyemi, A. (2021b). Youth activism and digital resistance in Nigeria: The #EndSARS movement. *Journal of African Youth Studies*, 4(1), 45–63.
- Akinyemi, T. A. (2018). *Poverty and civic exclusion among Nigerian youth*. Civic Pulse Press.
- Akinyemi, F. T. (2016). *Bridging the gap: Intergenerational dialogue and youth inclusion in governance*. Unity & Peace Press.

Akinwale, A. A. (2019). Youth unemployment and democratic development in Nigeria. *African Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(2), 85–100.

Allen, T. D., Eby, L. T., & Lentz, E. (2017). Mentorship behaviors and leadership development in youth: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 52, 110–121.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2017.02.003>

African Union (2006). *African Youth Charter*. Banjul: African Union Commission.
<https://au.int/en/treaties/african-youth-charter>

African Union Commission (2017). *African youth charter: Youth and governance*. AUC.

Arowosegbe, J. O. (2016). Youth, protest movements and political change in Nigeria. *Review of African Political Economy*, 43(149), 84–102.

Bello, M. (2020). *Youth engagement in peace-building: A pathway to sustainable development*. Unity Publishers.

Berridge, G. R. (2015). *Diplomacy: Theory and practice* (5th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Braun, v., & Clark, v. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Burton, J. (1990). *Conflict: Resolution and prevention*. Macmillan Press.

Checkoway, B. & Aldana, A. (2013). Four forms of youth civic engagement for diverse democracy. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(11), 1894–1899.

Checkoway, B. & Gutierrez, L. M. (2006). Youth participation and community change. *Journal of Community Practice*, 14(1–2), 1–9.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2016). *Global youth development index and report 2016*. Commonwealth Secretariat.

Crisp, G. & Cruz, I. (2009). Mentoring college students: A critical review of the literature between 1990 and 2007. *Research in Higher Education*, 50(6), 525–545.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-009-9130-2>

Curtain, R. et al. (2016). *Youth and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. UNDP.

Del Felice, C. & Wisler, A. (2007). The unexplored power and potential of youth as peace-builders. *Journal of Peace Conflict & Development*, 11, 1–29.

Duru, U. S. (2019). *Entrepreneurship for peace and development in Africa*. Centre for Youth and Policy Studies.

- Duru, J. (2019). Youth unemployment and national security in Nigeria: Exploring the impact on socio-economic stability and development. *Global Scientific Journal*, 12(9), 1014–1025. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16792510> ResearchGate+1
- Eze, C. (2020). Youth political participation in Nigeria: The Not Too Young to Run campaign and democratic renewal. *Journal of African Elections*, 19(2), 40–55.
- Eze, C. E. (2020). Youth engagement in peace-building: A case study of Nigeria. *Journal of Conflict Resolution and Development*, 12(3), 45–62.
- Eze, N. O. (2018). *Gender and peace-building in Nigeria: The role of young women in conflict transformation*. Wisdom Publications.
- Eze, T. C. & Ubah, G. C. (2019). *Youth employment and informal sector dynamics in Nigeria*. Horizon Research Press.
- Falola, T. & Heaton, M. M. (2008). *A history of Nigeria*. Cambridge University Press.
- Faustino, J. & Booth, D. (2014). *Development entrepreneurship: How donors and leaders can foster institutional change*. Oxford University Press.
- Fletcher, J. & Mullen, C. A. (2012). *Handbook of mentoring: A multiple perspectives approach* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Herder and Herder.

Galtung, J. (2000). *Conflict transformation by peaceful means: The Transcend method*. United Nations.

Gene Sharp (2011). *Sharp's dictionary of power and struggle*. Oxford University Press.

Hamdy, N. & Gomaa, R. (2018). Youth activism and digital media in the Arab Spring: Lessons from Tunisia and Egypt. *Journal of North African Studies*, 23(1), 45–65.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2017.1362189>

Honwana, A. (2019). Youth struggles: From the informal economy to radical political engagement. *African Dynamics*, 14(2), 21–35.

Hughes, C. & Truelove, C. (2019). Youth and peacebuilding: Participation, policies, and practice. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 14(1), 3–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1542316619835590>

Ibrahim, J. (2021). Youth movements and democratic struggles in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science*, 15(2), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ajp.2021.0025>

Ihejirika, W. (2016). *Media, youth, and social change in Nigeria*. Communication Impact Press.

International Labour Organization (ILO) (2020). *Global employment trends for youth 2020*:

Technology and the future of jobs. ILO.

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2016). *Youth participation in national parliaments.*

Kazeem, Y. (2019). *The crisis of youth disenfranchisement in Africa.* Quartz Africa.

Kirk, J. & Winthrop, R. (2013). *Home-grown: Youth-led movements and the global struggle for girls' education.* Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/home-grown-youth-led-movements-and-the-global-struggle-for-girls-education/>

Kurtenbach, S. (2020). Youth in peace and conflict: Between peacebuilders and troublemakers.

Peacebuilding, 8(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2019.1674794>

McGee, R. & Greenhalf, J. (2011). *Seeing like a young citizen: Youth and political participation in Sub-Saharan Africa.* IDS.

Musa, S. & Ibrahim, M. A. (2020). *Youth inclusion and conflict transformation in West Africa.* Harmony Research Publications.

National Bureau of Statistics (2021). *Labour force statistics: Unemployment and underemployment report (Q4 2020).* <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1238>

National Bureau of Statistics (2023). *Nigeria Labour force statistics report (Q3 2023).*

<https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241455>

Nnamani, C. (2019). *Culture, tradition, and the exclusion of youth in African peace-building*.

African Renaissance Publications.

Nwankwo, J. C. (2020). *Radicalization and youth discontent in northern Nigeria*. Security Watch

Publications.

Nwosu, C. I. (2021). *Patriarchy and peace: Gendered barriers to youth participation in Nigeria*.

Centre for Gender Policy and Peace Studies.

Nye, J. (2008). *The powers to lead*. Oxford University Press.

Oduwole, T. A. & Fadeyi, A. O. (2013). Youth unemployment and security challenges in Nigeria.

International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 3(7), 113–121.

Okafor, C. A. (2017). *Patriarchy and female exclusion in Nigeria's political space*. Sunray

Academic Press.

Okeke, T. (2019). *Traditional authority and youth exclusion in governance*. Heritage Books.

Okechukwu, F. & Adeyemi, B. (2021). *Youth exclusion and political gerontocracy in Nigeria*.

Civic Horizon Press.

Ojo, A. A. & Salami, T. K. (2021). *Youth entrepreneurship and employment in Nigeria:*

Challenges and policy responses. Anchor Academic Publishing.

Ojo, F. & Hassan, K. (2020). *Poverty, unemployment, and insecurity in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects.* Stability Press.

Okonjo-Iweala, N. (2018). *Fighting corruption is dangerous: The story behind the headlines.* MIT Press.

Okoro, C. N. & Okwudishu, C. H. (2018). Education, inequality and conflict in Nigeria: Implications for sustainable peace. *African Research Review*, 12(2), 58–72.
<https://doi.org/10.4314/afrev.v12i2.6>

Omotola, J. S. (2010). Youth participation and political marginalization in Nigeria. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 4(5), 150–160.
<https://doi.org/10.5897/AJPSIR.9000021>

Onuoha, J. (2014). *Cultural dynamics and youth marginalization in Nigeria.* Heritage Press.

Paffenholz, T. (2014). Civil society and peacebuilding: A critical assessment. In P. Aall, C. Crocker, & F. O. Hampson (Eds.), *Managing conflict in a world adrift* (pp. 357–368). United States Institute of Peace.

Paffenholz, T., Ross, N., Dixon, S., Schluchter, A. L., & True, J. (2016). *Making women count—*

Not just counting women: Assessing women's inclusion and influence in peace negotiations.
Inclusive Peace & Transition Initiative (The Graduate Institute of International and
Development Studies).

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community.* Simon
& Schuster.

Resnick, D. & Casale, D. (2011). *The political participation of Africa's youth.* African
Development Bank Working Paper Series, 136.

Salihu, H. & Jibril, M. (2018). *Economic exclusion and youth vulnerability in Nigeria.* Centre for
Peace and Conflict Studies.

Scholte, J. A. (2020). *Global democracy: A critical introduction.* Polity Press.

Smith, J. (2019). *Youth movements and democratic change in the Middle East and North Africa.*
Oxford University Press.

Sommers, M. (2015). *The outcast majority: War, development, and youth in Africa.* University
of Georgia Press.

Spatari M. (2023). *Nigerian police officers detain a man during a political rally in Lagos*

[Photograph]. AFP via Getty Images. <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/members-of-the-nigerian-police-detain-a-man-during-a-rally-news-photo/1247349127>

Tella, O. (2022). Digital activism and youth movements in Africa: The case of #EndSARS in Nigeria. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 14(1), 65–80.
https://doi.org/10.1386/jams_00058_1

Tripp, A. M. et al. (2009). *African women's movements: Changing political landscapes*. Cambridge University Press.

Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest*. Yale University Press.

Uche, P. (2017). *Gender empowerment and leadership among Nigerian youth*. Beacon Academic Publishing.

Udeh, A. O. (2020). *Gerontocracy and youth marginalization in Nigerian governance structures*. Sunrise Academic Press.

Ukeje, C. (2020). Youth, exclusion, and governance in Africa: Rethinking generational politics. *African Affairs*, 119(475), 105–125. <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adaa004>

United Nations Development Programme. (2013). *Enhancing youth political participation*

throughout the electoral cycle.

United Nations Development Programme. (2016). *Preventing violent extremism through inclusive development and the promotion of tolerance and respect for diversity.*
<https://www.undp.org/publications/preventing-violent-extremism-through-inclusive-development-and-promotion-tolerance-and-respect-diversity>

United Nations Development Programme (2018). *The missing peace: Independent progress study on youth, peace and security.* <https://www.youth4peace.info/ProgressStudy>

United Nations Development Programme. (2018). *Youth as peacebuilders: Operational guidelines on working with youth in peacebuilding.*
<https://www.undp.org/publications/youth-peacebuilders>

United Nations Development Programme. (2020). *Youth participation in peace processes: A strategic review.*

United Nations Development Programme. (2021a). *Youth strategy 2022–2025: Empowered youth, inclusive societies.* <https://www.undp.org/publications/youth-strategy-2022-2025>

United Nations Development Programme. (2021b). *Pathways for peace: Inclusive approaches to preventing violent conflict.*

United Nations Development Programme. (2021c). *Annual Report 2021.*

<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-05/undp-annual-report-2021-v1.pdf>

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. (2012). *Youth and skills: Putting education to work*. EFA Global Monitoring Report.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. (2017). *Youth and peacebuilding: UNESCO's contribution to the implementation of UNSCR 2250*.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. (2018). *Digital inclusion and youth empowerment*.

United Nations Population Fund (2018). *Gender and youth advocacy toolkit for peacebuilding*.

United Nations Population Fund (2020). *Youth and social norm transformation: Building inclusive communities*.

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (2014). *Youth and the city: Risks and resilience*.

United Nations Children's Fund (2017). *Learning for peace: Education and conflict prevention*.

United Nations (2020a). *Youth, peace, and security: Progress study on youth's positive contribution to peace processes*. United Nations Publications.

United Nations (2020b). *Peacebuilding and sustaining peace: Report of the Secretary-General*

(A/74/976–S/2020/773). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3879706>

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (2015). *Resolution 2250 on youth, peace, and security*.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2014). *Global citizenship education: Preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century*.

Uzoigwe, G. O. & Adesina, O. T. (2018). *Vocational education, peace and youth development in Nigeria*. Heritage Publications.

World Bank (2018). *Youth engagement in governance: A global review*. World Bank.
<https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1234-5>

Youth Empowerment Nigeria (2018). *Engaging Nigerian youth in conflict prevention and peacebuilding: A policy brief*.

Yousafzai, M. (2013). *I am Malala: The girl who stood up for education and was shot by the Taliban*. Little, Brown and Company.

Zimmerman, M. A. (2000). Empowerment theory: Psychological, organizational, and community levels of analysis. In Rappaport, J. & Seidman, E. (Eds.), *Handbook of community psychology*. Springer.

Vocabulary List

Youth: Individuals aged 15-35, as defined by the African Youth Charter (African Union, 2006).

Peace-Building: The process of preventing conflicts and upholding peace through dialogue, reconciliation, and cooperation (United Nations, 2020).

Diplomacy: The practice of managing foreign relations through negotiation and communication (Berridge, 2015).

Conflict Resolution: Managing conflicts and diffusing tension through negotiation, mediation, and the method of communicating.

Social Capital: Value created through social connections, trust, and common norms, allowing for co-operation and group action (Putnam, 2000).

Stringent Moral Codes: Strict moral codes that govern persons who wish to conduct their lives through the highest ethical standards.

Political Advocacy: Art of influencing policies and decision-making for the achievement of social or political transformation

Cultural Barriers: Social norms, customs, and belief systems that might inhibit participation or integration into certain activities.

Structural Barriers: Institutional barriers, such as the absence of legislative or institutional representation, which deter participation in peace-building and governance.

Economic Barriers: Financial constraints, like unemployment and the lack of available resources that hamper youth involvement in peace projects.

Social Cohesion: The extent of social integration, trust, and unity within a society or community.

Grassroots Movements: Local community movements that aim to address social or political concerns at the grassroots level.

Capacity-Building: Acquiring skills, knowledge, and resources for supporting effective leadership and participation.

Sustainable Development: Economic and social development that meets the needs of today without sacrificing the ability of the future generations to achieve their own.

Entrepreneurship: The process of founding, setting up, and managing a company or enterprise, often as a means of economically empowering oneself.

Marginalization: The exclusion of certain groups from social, political, or economic participation.

Reconciliation: The process of restoring relationships and resolving disagreements to achieve lasting peace.

Good Governance: Transparent, accountable, and effective management of public affairs and resources.

Advocacy Campaigns: Organized efforts to influence public opinion or policy agendas in favor of a cause.

Youth-Led Initiatives: Groups or movements organized and led by young people to promote social or political reform.