BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PEACE THROUGH ECONOMIC INCLUSION: THE IGBO APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM AS A MODEL FOR DIPLOMACY AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

BY

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ABSTRACT

Despite growing numbers of unemployed young people and socio-economic exclusion, the apprenticeship system remains an indigenous model that allows people to gain skills, and develop entrepreneurship and peace building competencies. This study aimed to explore the Igbo apprenticeship system as a form of economic inclusion in promoting conflict resolution, and diplomacy. Quantitative research method was used where questionnaires were the primary data collection method. A sample of 150 respondents was used in the study. Results indicate that apprenticeship still survives in today's urban economy and skill transfers through mentorship/training, settlement, and market-based skill transfers. 41.3% of the respondents learned hands-on trade skills and 29.3% learned negotiating skills/customer service, illuminating how the practice allows for improving economic inclusion. Respondents also experienced positive economic empowerment effects, where 64.7% owned businesses at the market and 18.6% owned

businesses outside of the market. These results speak to the livelihood system's role in promoting upward mobility, entrepreneurialism, and lessening vulnerability and conflict among youth. The study also indicates that the Igbo apprenticeship system fosters peacebuilding. Overall, 80.7% of respondents said the apprenticeship system provided a very high or high contribution to peace/stability in the market. Results also suggest informal diplomacy, mediation, and conflict resolution occur because of the co-operations created through the system. Thus, the Igbo apprenticeship system is found to be an indigenous economy that combines economic empowerment with informal governance and conflict resolution. Its ability to create enterprises, absorb youth, and regulate internal peace suggests that it has the potential to be a viable grassroots model for sustainable peace-building in Nigeria and other similar settings.

Keywords: peace building, economic inclusion, Nigeria, apprenticeship, Igbo

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Innocent Nonso Ezeibekwe

DEDICATION

This Independent Study is dedicated to Chukwuokike Abiama (The Almighty Lord) and to my cousin brother, Ekeledirichukwu Obi, whom the Almighty Lord used to fulfill His promises to me here in Siam University, Bangkok, Thailand.

DECLARATION

I, Innocent Nonso Ezeibekwe, hereby declare that this research is entirely my own work and that it is original unless specific acknowledgements state otherwise. I have conducted this Independent Study under the close supervision of my advisor.

Signature……

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The Igbo apprenticeship system, which is also referred to as “Igba Boyi” or “Imu Ahia”, is one of the oldest indigenous economic and social structures of the Igbo people in Nigeria (Omede & Nte, 2023). The system has been used for centuries as an informal but well-structured means of mentorship, skills transfer and economic empowerment. Under these system many youths, majority of whom are usually from low-income families and those on the fringes of society, are attached to known business owners or merchants (masters) for a stipulated period of time, to learn vocational and other skills, money management, business/entrepreneurial acumen as well as the social values needed to become economically self-reliant (Obi, 2021). In contrast to conventional or modern educational systems, the Igbo apprenticeship program is not solely an economic institution. In addition to its primary function as a mechanism for economic training, it is also characterized by the incorporation of a moral component and elements of trust which makes it a sociocultural institution (Dawson et al, 2022).

Familoni (2024) indicated that the system prevented youth unemployment because it provided opportunities for youths to engage in viable economic activities outside the labor market. Obi (2021) further corroborates by noting that the apprenticeship system allows redistribution of wealth by providing access to start-up capital, business and professional networks as well as market ‘know-how” for potential economic ventures which promotes inclusive economic growth and development.

The “Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market”, Aba, Abia State is a giant market and commercial centre where the Igbo apprenticeship system is experienced fully. It is a market

with large concentrations of traders, supply chains and of course, apprentices. Apprentices experience their tutelage in a very structured way covering capital management, customer relations, inventory and price control, bargain and supply chains, among other related skills required for business. Omede & Nte (2023) indicated that the apprenticeship system provides an informal but a vocational education system that has direct effect on income generation and social stability. The market environment also allows for continuous engagement among the traders, apprentices, and other actors and has created a social ecosystem in which collaboration and interdependency are critical for long-term commercial success.

In situations where competition for customers, market space, and other resources creates tension in a market like the Asa Nnentu Market, the Igbo apprenticeship system contributes in a more subtle way to conflict avoidance. By establishing hierarchical mentorship relationships and shared economic interests, conflicts are more likely to be resolved internally by masters or other respected figures in the market, thereby avoiding long-term conflict (Abasilim et al., 2024).

According to Andrews et al (2021), economic inclusion is one of the key foundations for sustainable peace. Rufai et al (2019) states that exclusion from economic opportunities makes people more vulnerable to conflict as they become more exposed to, and are further disadvantaged by, violence and competition over limited resources, and social inequalities. In contrast, when economic systems are inclusive and enable access to skills, income, and social mobility, fewer grievances are formed and cooperative relationships become more possible. The Igbo apprenticeship system can be regarded as a platform where local economic frameworks can potentially contribute to the mitigation of structural causes of conflict at the local level. The apprenticeship system provides youth with livelihoods and social support, thereby reducing economic marginalization and increasing social cohesion (Andrews et al., 2021).

The apprenticeship system facilitates what peace researchers term community-level or grassroots diplomacy. In their daily interactions, negotiation practices, and conflict mediation within the market, apprentices and masters engage in informal diplomatic processes that prioritize dialogue, compromise, and collective stability. Chukwuemeka (2019) suggested that this form of diplomacy thrives in societies where communal norms and informal institutions have substantial authority. Incorporating indigenous mechanisms such as the Igbo apprenticeship system into wider peacebuilding and diplomatic efforts thus presents innovative and culturally rooted ways to promote conflict resolution and sustainable peace.

This study explored the Igbo apprenticeship system at the Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market in Aba as a form of economic inclusion promoting sustainable peace, conflict resolution, and community-level diplomacy. The study aimed to position itself at the nexus of indigenous economic systems, peacebuilding, and diplomacy. The research reveals how such indigenous practices can inspire and inform approaches to inclusive development, conflict mitigation, and peace promotion in Nigeria and similar settings.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is important at many levels: academic, policy, practice, and societal – since it deepens the knowledge about indigenous economic systems' role in pursuing sustainable peace, peacemaking, and peace-building at the grassroots level. By locating its analysis within the Igbo apprenticeship system in the Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market, Aba, the research offers an ethnographically and contextually grounded analysis with relevance for both the peacebuilding and development in Nigeria.

Academically, this study makes an original contribution to the multi-disciplinary literature on peacebuilding and social cohesion, inclusive development, and indigenous knowledge systems. Previous literature on the Igbo apprenticeship system has mainly focused on the economic and entrepreneurship impact, leaving the peacebuilding and diplomatic

aspects of the institution under-studied. Relating the apprenticeship system to Social Capital Theory and Human Development Theory allows this study to contribute to these fields of thought by providing a clearer picture of economic empowerment and social networks as peacebuilding and conflict transformation mechanisms.

From a peace studies perspective, the study shows peace-keeping impacts of mentorship, economic interdependence, and trust-based relationships on conflict prevention and dispute management within market community. When examined from the point of view of community-level diplomacy, the Igbo apprenticeship system reveals that diplomacy is not merely the concern of statecraft but is actually at work in the everyday economic contexts in which people and groups are negotiating their interests, resolving conflicts, and maintaining cooperative relations.

1.3.RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are the research questions for the study:

1. What are the operational structures and activities of the Igbo apprenticeship system in "Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market Aba?"
2. Does the Igbo apprenticeship system contribute to economic inclusion – skills acquisition, accessing capital, and empowerment of apprentices?
3. What roles does the Igbo apprenticeship system play in enhancing sustainable peace through job creation, social mobility and diminishing youth marginalization in market in "Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market"?
4. How efficient is the Igbo apprenticeship system as means of conflict resolution?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research are:

1. To examine the structure and operational dynamics of the Igbo apprenticeship system in “Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market Aba” .
2. To investigate the Igbo apprenticeship system contribution towards economic inclusion in skills acquisition, capital formation and empowerment of apprentices.
3. To examine how the Igbo apprenticeship system contributes to sustainable peace through job creation, social mobility and reduction of youth marginalization/lessness in the market Community.
4. To examine the impact of the Igbo apprenticeship system as a tool and platform for conflict resolution through reconciliation processes, arbitration structures and restorative measures.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study centered majorly on Igbo apprenticeship customs practiced in “Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market”. Surveyed sample included apprentices, masters and other stakeholders found within the market area. The scope of this research focused on how economic inclusion through indigenous apprenticeship systems support peace sustenance and social cohesion amongst community members. This research was contextually bound to a wider community as it was conducted in the market at Aba in Abia State Nigeria but the findings can be applicable in a larger context.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Economic Inclusion: According to Andrews et al (2021), economic inclusion indicates having the capacity and opportunity to participate in the economy. It refers to the access by all

individuals and groups, especially vulnerable and marginalized groups, to the resources and mechanisms that allow them to contribute to, participate in and benefit from growth processes of the economy in a just and equitable way.

Igbo Apprenticeship System: The Igbo apprenticeship system is a traditional economic system of the Igbo people mainly found in Southeastern Nigeria. It entails a partnership between a master and his apprentice(s), through which skills, knowledge of the trade/business as well as capital will be shared from the master to enable the learner enter the world of trade and business (Familoni, 2024).

Peacebuilding: Peacebuilding encompasses processes, mechanisms, and specific interventions designed to prevent the outbreak, recurrence, or continuation of violence and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace by addressing root causes and effects of conflict (Brigg, 2018).

Sustainable Peace: Sustainable peace is defined as the absence of direct, structural and cultural violence and institutionalization of processes and mechanisms for conflict management, justice and social cohesion.

Conflict Resolution: Conflict resolution entails methods, processes, and procedures for resolving conflict or disputes within a community. It is a way of negotiating, mediating, settling, and restoring social equilibrium.

Indigenous Economic System: An indigenous economic system is a way of organizing the economy based on the cultural values and social institutions of a community. The system does not depend on the law of contract or the modern market mechanism. However, it is based on kinship ties and the concept of reciprocity in an indigenous community.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter presents a review of literature relevant to the study and establish conceptual, empirical and theoretical bases that underpin the study. It discusses selected theme on indigenous economic model, Igbo apprenticeship model, economic inclusion and peacebuilding.

2.2 CONCEPT OF INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

Indigenous economic systems, also known as local economic systems, can be described as a localized system of production, exchange, distribution, and consumption which are conditioned by the history and culture, or the shared values, beliefs, and institutions, of a given people (Adedokun, 2024). Unlike capitalist economic systems, they are generally less formal and more traditional in nature and not based on a system of codified laws, but based solely on customs. Incorporated in these systems are values of community welfare, reciprocity, sustainability and not just economic productivity (Tenson, 2017). In many African societies, indigenous economic systems and practices have played an instrumental role as the major framework for social organization and conflict regulation or resolution.

Traditional economy in Africa has provided for ways of livelihood, through regulating access to resources, as well as modes of social organization and conflict resolution. The institutions such as councils of elders, lineage heads and village assemblies are in charge of the allocation and control of rights to resources, dispute settlement and sanctioning of customary economic norms and rules (Effendi, 2016). These have all contributed to the regulation of the common economic resources and avoidance of resource conflicts.

Indigenous economic systems are based on principles of sustainability as they focus on long-term use of the environment, production based on seasonal needs and saving and

conservation guided by indigenous knowledge. They also serve as important component of inclusive development, poverty reduction, and sustainable use of natural resources, especially in rural areas where formal economic structures are weak (Adedokun, 2024).

2.2.1 Definition and Characteristics of Indigenous Economic Systems

According to Adedokun (2024), indigenous systems are economic systems that develop naturally in society and are transmitted and maintained by tradition, shared norms and practice Olawuyi et al (2024) stated that pre-modern and indigenous economies are incorporated or embedded in social relations. This suggests economics cannot be separated from society or cultural practices. Indigenous systems differ greatly from modern market economies because they focus less on profit maximization and formal regulation (Adedokun, 2024).

Major attributes or characteristics of Indigenous economies comprise being informal, communally owned/shared resources, trust-based reciprocity, and teachings passed down through generations (Olawuyi et al., 2024). They tend to exist beyond state-governed institutions but have their ways of governing accountable relations. Another characteristic is economic activity undertaken through kinship, ethnic affiliation, or apprenticeship as a means to participate. These kinships or apprenticeship-based systems often provide social benefits also. This creates resilience and flexibility within indigenous economies especially where the dominant economic model fails or excludes participants (Lerner, 2018).

2.2.2 Indigenous Economies in African Societies

Traditional economic practices have existed throughout Africa as means of generating livelihoods and upholding stability in the society. This includes practices such as traditional agriculture, merchant guilds, artisan production, and apprenticeships predating colonial/postcolonial economies (Ayandibu, 2025). West African economies have sustained livelihoods through markets run by women, long-distance trade, and trade by apprenticeship for multiple generations (Manyaga et al., 2024).

Indigenous economic systems are still highly visible in Nigeria today especially in the informal sector. A sizeable number of Nigerians both find employment and generate income through informal work (Mtapuri, 2022). One of Nigeria's well-known informal economic models is the Igbo apprenticeship system which has aided entrepreneurship and capital accumulation through mentoring and social connections (Mtapuri, 2022). Equivalent systems can be found among other ethnic groups in Africa such as artisanal guilds in Ghana and ubuntu/dug Dutch systems among East African communities. These systems are based on similar principles of collective responsibility and skills inheritance. (Eijdenberg et al., 2024) Indigenous methods like this exist alongside capitalism in Africa. They persist because they are used to fill structural voids where government is limited, and unemployment rate is high and very prevalent in the economy.

2.2.3 Relevance of Indigenous Economic Systems to Development and Peace

Indigenous economic systems are gaining attention as important sources of inclusive development as well as pillars for sustainable peace. Development scholars recognize unemployment and inequality as principal structural causes of violence and conflict in fragile contexts (Peachey et al., 2017). Indigenous economic systems facilitate skills acquisition, livelihood security, and connection to informal social networks, they help decrease susceptibility to poverty and social marginalization.

Analyzing indigenous economics through peacebuilding, indigenous economies act as informal peace mediators which cultivate interdependence, harmony, and cooperation within a society (Ene, 2023). Economies build networks of trust and reciprocity which are not prone to engaging in violent conflict. When pursuing economic interests, individuals and groups have incentive to negotiate and find compromise rather than destroy relationships. Okwuosa et al (2021) noted that peace is built through local organizing focused on the resolution of day to day conflict and fostering relationships. Indigenous methods such as apprenticeship hierarchies

and market women's associations allow for grassroots economic empowerment alongside informal social control.

Furthermore, indigenous economic systems practice diplomacy on a communal level through regular interaction and negotiation as well as conflict resolution. Ene (2023) pointed out, many African indigenous approaches value dialogue, consensus seeking and restorative methods rather than retributive justice.

2.3 IGBO APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM (Igba Boyi/ Imu Ahia)

The Igbo apprenticeship program, popularly referred to as “Igba Boyi” or “Imu Ahia”, is an age-long local initiative laden with economic skills acquisition, mastering entrepreneurial trade secrets, pupilage and communal belonging. It is a unique model of entrepreneurship creation fostered by the Igbo ideology and sociological practices (Anago, 2023). Aside from being an economically relevant and important, the system equally serves as platform for social control, cohesiveness and informal dispute resolution. This makes it pertinent to the discussions on development and peacebuilding.

2.3.1 Historical Background and Evolution of Igbo Apprenticeship System

Traditionally, apprenticeship was part of the pre-colonial Igbo society which economic activities which focused around farming, local craftsmanship, long distance trade and petty trading at local markets. However, the Igbo lacked centralized political structure, they created decentralized but coordinated social and economic institutions to organize production and exchange as well as skills acquisition and transfer within their society (Adeola & Ozigbo, 2021). Kinship, age grade, lineages and trade guilds were used to incorporate children into labor, leadership and skills acquisition among the Igbo (Nnonyelu & Onyeizugbe, 2020). Similarly, children were apprenticed to skilled merchants, artisans or farmers to learn a trade as well as absorb social values of discipline, honesty, respect for elders, and respect for the

group. As such, economic education was bound up with moral and social training (Mahmood et al., 2018).

The Igbo apprenticeship began to change with the colonial influence. Colonial economic policies promoted cash crops production, monetization and urban commerce thus greatly increased trade and entrepreneurial opportunities amongst the Igbos (Anago, 2023). Colonial rule significantly reduced the role of indigenous institutions and laid emphasis on Western education and wage labour. However, apprenticeship remained as adaptation to exclusion from colonial jobs and capital access. With Igbo traders moving to cities and market towns, apprenticeship became more trade-oriented, allowing youth to access jobs in retail commerce, transport and import-export trade. (Agama & Ohajionu, 2021). Apprenticeship during this time slowly transitioned from strictly kin apprenticeship programs to mentorships based on commerce.

The Igbo apprenticeship system gained importance in the post-colonial era, particularly after the Nigerian civil war (1967–1970), when many Igbo families were displaced, without property or prospects for economic development through recruitment into the government. Apprenticeship was used as a collective survival mechanism to reintegrate individuals into economic life as quickly as possible by relying on self-employment and informal ventures (Abba et al., 2023). They started their own businesses and hired younger apprentices themselves.

With Nigeria's informal sector becoming increasingly large with urbanization, unemployment and structural adjustment programs in the late twentieth century, the Igbo apprenticeship system evolved further. While apprenticeships still exist in traditional trade, they have also diversified into areas such as automobile spare parts business, electronics, manufacturing and wholesale, especially in trading hubs like Aba, Onitsha and Lagos. The

exposure to technology and globalization has led to modern ways of accounting, online trade and apprenticeship fundamentals (Kanu, 2020).

2.3.2 Structure and Operational Mechanism: Master- Apprentice Relationship

The Igbo apprenticeship system functions on a traditional master–apprentice relationship supervised under informal contracts based on trust, shared moral standards and ethical conduct instead of formal contractual documents (Abubakar, 2019). The apprentice (‘boyi’) works under the tutelage of the master trader for an agreed and specified period of usually three to seven years. At this stage, the apprentice provides service, loyalty and obedience to the master as they teach and show him or her how business is done. According to Iwara et al. (2019), trust between the two parties is reinforced by their expectations of each other and social sanctions thus acting as a good replacement for legal enforcement.

During the apprenticeship period, the master takes full responsibility for the apprentice. Masters provide food, shelter, basic education, religious teachings and mentorship, as well as practical knowledge on how to run a business such as trade, how to deal with customers and understanding financial management (Onu & Agu, 2021). The master sets an example as a mentor and a figure of authority, influencing the apprentice's attitude towards work ethic, discipline and morals.

On apprenticeship completion, customary practice requires the master craftsman to “settle” his apprentice with capital or stock or contacts to launch his own business (Keke, 2023). At this point, former apprentices no longer depend on their mentors and also become business owners. They contribute to extending this legacy to the next generation of traders by training apprentices of their own. (Oyewunmi et al., 2020).

2.3.3 Contemporary Relevance and Adaptations of Igbo Apprenticeship System

Today the Igbo apprentice system survives and thrives in cities with large markets and commercial centers in Nigeria. Urban centers include Aba, Onitsha, and Lagos. The system has maintained resilience in the face of Nigeria's fast-paced modernization and national economy shifts. There has been a gradual increase in apprenticeship uptake amongst the youth. This is mainly because of rising unemployment levels among the youth and the reduced chances of landing white-collar jobs (Peace & Anekperechi, 2023). Apprenticeship was created as an alternative means of economic freedom and self-employment.

Historically, apprenticeship has centered around long-term training and financial capital following settlement. In practice this has been amended, with apprentices sometimes settling for a shorter duration. Capital support can also come in form of start-up support in addition to financial loans (Keke, 2023). In addition, there has been an expansion in skills transferred by the system, which have moved beyond traditional trading skills and now encompass new areas such as electricity services, auto spare parts, and digital businesses. This reflects the adaptability and ability of the system to adapt to changes in the market and technological changes, all within the preservation of the system’s cultural and economic roles (Ezeajughu, 2021).

Even with globalization and contemporary changes, fundamentals like mentorship, financial assistance, and social responsibility remain prevalent. However, these systems can also be affected by exploitation, informality and global pressure such as modernization. Rufai et al (2019) also suggested solutions such as policy and documentation to help support the system while keeping its original cultural intent intact. Its persistence also speaks to its sustainability not only as an economic sense but one of social pressures and informal peacebuilding at the grassroots level. Igbo apprenticeship as an evolving indigenous institution blends economic empowerment, livelihood creation, and conflict resolution. The rich history

of its practice, structure and Igbo values that inform its practice makes it a relevant model for inclusive economy and peacebuilding (Ezeajughu, 2021).

2.4 CONCEPT OF ECONOMIC INCLUSION

According to Van Nierkerk (2024), economic inclusion is a framework that is being employed more frequently for economic development, peacebuilding and conflict prevention in settings where there are high levels of inequality and unemployment as well as fragile or exclusionary formal economies. Also, economic inclusion refers to how people and social groups can participate in economic activities. It refers to access to productive opportunities as well as the distribution of growth dividend. It encompasses not just the ability to earn an income but also job and entrepreneurship opportunities, access to financial services and social mobility. In economic inclusion there is high level emphasis on youth, women and informal sector workers (Meagher et al., 2016).

On the other hand, uneven economic opportunities lead to economic exclusion that can cause the continuous cycle of poverty and social marginalization of people. Ebirim and Odonkor (2024) indicated that economic exclusion constrains limits the process of human development and lack of access to productive resources makes the excluded individuals vulnerable to economic shocks.

Andrews et al (2021) argued that when people are restricted from having economic capabilities, they are denied freedom and dignity by being unable to achieve the life they want and value which can lead to anti-social behaviour. In terms of peacebuilding, economic exclusion could be argued as becoming one of the leading structural causes of conflict. According to Hauss (2019), societies that experience high unemployment levels and low

economic opportunity, growth potential, and economic inequality were more prone to violent conflict and political instability.

Conversely, inclusive economic systems mitigate conflicts and maintain peace by addressing economic and social factors that drive conflict. Connectedness through economic inclusion such as interdependence, cooperation, and shared interests prevents and mitigates violence (Cortright et al., 2017). Inclusive economic systems connect people to livelihoods and productive assets which help people build towards self-sufficiency and can have positive impacts on social cohesion and peacebuilding.

2.4.1 Economic Inclusion as a Foundation for Sustainable Peace

One of the main solutions to achieving sustainable peacebuilding is through economic inclusion. Cahill-Riley (2016) noted that peacebuilding involves addressing structural conditions that exist within society that can lead to conflict as well as social tensions. Peaceful societies are characterized by inclusive economic systems that allow for interdependence and cooperation. Through inclusive economies, people are linked with each other through markets, jobs, and entrepreneurship the opportunity costs of violence are higher and incentives for peaceful relations are built (Krampe et al., 2021). This interconnectedness facilitates communication, negotiation and holding each other accountable which make situations of violence less likely to occur.

Economic inclusion facilitates connections with social and economic networks that are productive. These networks serve to increase social capital and promote informal institutions like those which mediate conflict. Loyle and Appel (2017) indicated that through networks of economic cooperation and exchange, trust, and other social norms are created that allow groups to work together. Social networks help to create informal systems of conflict resolution.

2.5 PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Peacebuilding and conflict resolution are very important aspects of peace studies particularly in societies with structural problems such as inequalities between groups weak institutions and structural problems that lead to recurring conflict. Rukuni et al (2015) indicated that lasting peace does not only mean eradication of violence or conflict but also transforming the root causes of conflicts. Hauss (2019) indicated that the difference between negative peace and positive peace emphasizes the need to address structural violence, like poverty, exclusion, and inequality, which are often hidden but have a destabilizing impact. Therefore, peacebuilding is understood as an active and long-term process that seeks to create conditions conducive to justice, inclusion, and stability, rather than just conflict resolution.

Autesserre (2017) defined peacebuilding as a set of approaches working to eliminate structural, relational, and cultural causes of violence and conflict. Also, peacebuilding includes activities that focus on resolving problems, rebuilding relationships, healing communities and reinforcing unity across social groups. Peacebuilding thus does not only consist of mitigating the effects of conflict after tensions have already escalated; preventive mechanisms that discourage violence and encourage dialogue, economic inclusivity and power sharing decrease the chances for conflict to arise in the first place (Rukuni et al., 2015). Incorporating peacebuilding measures into daily social and economic relations allows communities to solve tensions peacefully and develop sustainable networks for peace.

2.5.1 Concept and Levels of Peace Building

According to Kubota (2022), peacebuilding encompasses processes and structures that work to prevent the outbreak, recurrence, or continuation of violence and to build sustainable peace by tackling root structural causes and the manifestation of conflict. Within this definition lies Johan Galtung's differentiation between negative peace and positive peace where negative peace is the absence of direct or physical violence, whereas positive peace is when social

justice/equity and political/economic institutions are inclusive (Richmond, 2023). Negative peace might represent an absence of direct violence, whereas positive peace denotes a state where structural violence is being addressed. This means that issues like poverty, marginalization, and inequality are prevented and mitigated. As such, peacebuilding entails processes that aim to change conflict dynamics beyond just preventing them (Mac Ginty. 2024).

The first level of peacebuilding is structural peacebuilding. Structural peacebuilding concentrates on changing the systems responsible for creating inequalities and exclusions in societies around the world. Structural peacebuilding targets unemployment, access to resources, weak governance and economic marginalization since those have been identified as causes of conflict globally (Lauritzen, 2016). Creating inclusive economic opportunities, equitable policies, and institutional reforms through structural peacebuilding decreases the underlying systemic tensions and lays the groundwork for lasting peace. Peacebuilding operations stay unstable and limited when comprehensive structural changes are not implemented (Meagher et al., 2016).

In addition to structural peacebuilding, there's also relational and cultural peacebuilding. Relational peacebuilding focuses on changing how individuals, groups, and communities interact with one another when working towards peace. It focuses less on institutions or laws and more on processes that occur between people like developing trust, having dialogue, reconciliation, and cooperation (Joseph, 2018). Relational peacebuilding is essentially founded on the notion that conflict is maintained by fractured or hostile relationships as well as inequalities. Brigg (2018) indicated that sustainable peace is created through the creation of social relationships 'that rebuild fractured relationships or previously non-existent relations in ways that restore dignity and respect, enable mutual understanding and promote interdependence in deeply divided or post-conflict situations.

Cultural peacebuilding expands peacebuilding into the norms, beliefs, values, and symbolic practices that inform how groups make sense of conflict and peace. Inspired by Galtung, cultural violence, cultural peacebuilding involves addressing the cultural assumptions, narratives, and frameworks that reduce exclusion, aggression, or violence (Kulnazarova, 2020). It includes encouraging cultural activities that foster tolerance, mutual respect, non-violent expression, and common identity creation. Cultural peacebuilding becomes vital in societies where discord runs deep through collective history or traditional belief systems (Swanson et al, 2019).

According to Kennedy & Hallowell (2021), sustainable peace can only be achieved through healthy relationships built on mutual respect, interdependence, and open communication. The objective of cultural peacebuilding activities includes transforming the norms and belief systems that justify violence or exclusion. Randazzo (2016) suggested that cultures of violence can evolve into cultures of peace by way of education, socialization and communal inclusivity that embraces tolerance, cooperation and peaceful methods of conflict transformation.

2.5.2 Local and Community-Based Conflict Resolution Mechanism

Local and community-driven systems exist to help resolve disputes locally before they escalate into large-scale violence. These systems are especially important where state capacity is limited or where formal justice institutions are physically or socially inaccessible/legitimate. In some African contexts, communities may resolve their disputes through elders/community leaders/heads of lineages/clans/trade associations/traditional institutions or through non-adversarial means such as dialogue, mediation, negotiation, and consensus. (Osei-Kyen et al., 2018). As they are rooted in indigenous social systems and cultural understandings, these processes are able to respond to conflicts in culturally appropriate ways. Community-based methods seek socially acceptable solutions to disputes. Focusing on reconciliation and

compensation as well as restoration of community relationships, these mechanisms value restorative rather than retributive justice which decreases the chances of future conflict.

Muluken (2020) stated that community-based conflict resolution institutions have superiority over litigation in dealing with daily problems since they emanate from the local community which make it to be accepted as legitimate by the people using it. Formal courts can be expensive to access or simply time-consuming and technical. Informal justice mechanisms on the other hand, are fast, responsive and flexible in solving disputes. Markets, families, and work groups often provide platforms for conflict resolution across many societies. Debates over resources and indebtedness, or requests of repayment, work expectations and friendship may be resolved through casual negotiation and discussion, guided by elders or respected individuals within the group.

Osei-Kyen et al (2018) argued that through our daily routines we help create informal institutions that provide localized peace structures because our habits of cooperation and accountability are reinforced through continual social and market interactions. These informal peacebuilding processes help maintain community level peace in addition to building trust/social cohesion needed for long-term peace and economic cooperation.

2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Relevant theories indicate how economic inclusion can affect indigenous institutions and peacebuilding. It consists of multidisciplinary theories from peace/conflict studies, development economics, and sociology literature that explains why economic inclusion, social capital, and informal institutions support conflict prevention and peacebuilding (Bingham et al., 2024). Relevant frameworks such as Positive Peace Theory, Social Capital Theory and Human Development Theory demonstrate how peace is attained not only through political accords, but systems which promote inclusive economic participation, trust-based relationships, and expansion of capabilities.

2.6.1 Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory mainly focuses on social relationships, networks, and norms that exist within a society that allows its members to work together in a cooperative or coordinated manner and motivate collective action. According to Cvetanovic et al (2015), social capital theory builds the ground for enabling people have access to opportunity and avoid uncertainty through repetitive exchanges and expectations of behaviour.

On aspects of peace building, social capital theory can assist in easing tensions through establishing trust between parties. Increased levels of social capital allow less opportunity for violence to occur as there is a greater amount of informal accountability (Hasan et al., 2020). Meng et al (2018) distinguished between *bonding* social capital, which reinforces solidarity within groups, and *bridging* social capital, which connects different groups and promotes broader social integration. Both forms are essential for peace, as bonding capital strengthens internal cohesion while bridging capital reduces intergroup tensions and promotes mutual understanding (Bingham et al., 2024).

Social Capital Theory is especially relevant to the Igbo apprenticeship model. Apprenticeship models thrive on trust-based relations, informal networks, and reciprocity among the master and apprentice. Contracts rarely exist in the indigenous Igbo apprenticeship model, but there is compliance and accountability through reputation, community surveillance, and reciprocity- which are all aspects of social capital theory (Hasan et al., 2020). Masters contribute time, effort, and money to apprentices with some assurance that apprentices will be loyal and conform to community standards. Masters, in turn, depend on apprentices to respect their position and rely on their reputation for future gains (most importantly economic).

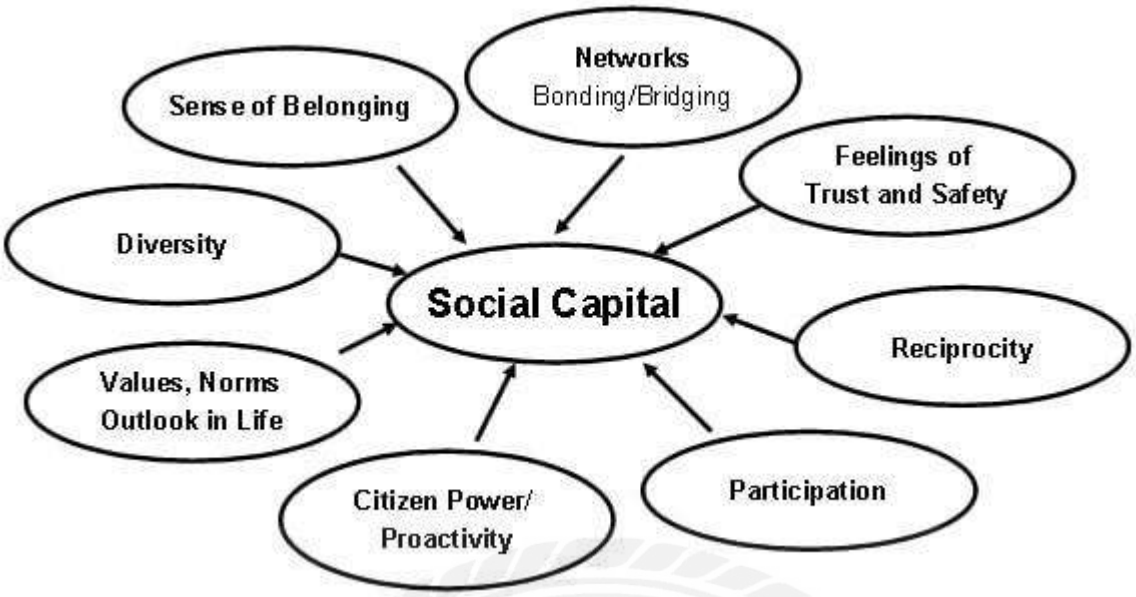


Figure 1. Social Capital Theory

Source: Hasan et al., 2020

2.6.2 Positive Peace Theory

Positive Peace Theory developed from Johan Galtung's seminal work (1969, 1996) defining "negative peace" as the absence of direct or physical violence. "Positive peace" is characterized by social justice and equity as well as institutional features that mitigate the threat of re-occurring violence (Shield, 2017). Positive peace diverts the focus from the temporary mechanisms and agreements made to end violence and conflict by prioritizing attitudes and structures that allow peace to continue, such as inclusive politics, involvement in the economy, social integration, and addressing the root inequalities that drive conflicts (Kulkova, 2019).

Instead of focusing on conflict management approaches, Positive Peace Theory focuses on societies creating systems capable of dealing with issues that cause violence such as socio-economic marginalization, exclusion, and unequal distribution of resources. Relationship theorists like Rissler and Shields (2018) added relational and cultural lenses into the understanding further suggesting trust-building, reconciliation and networks of social

interdependence. Under this approach, peace can be understood as an outcome of cultural embeddedness and multi actor processes at community, institutional, and structural levels.

Frameworks around positive peace have gained more prominence in development and policy conversations, in how peacebuilding connects with concepts of economic inclusion, human development, and social capital. Van Hoelf and Oeslner (2018) noted that resilience, poverty reduction, and inclusive economic structures are vital in positive peace efforts, especially when looking at fragile/post-conflict environments. Kulkova (2019) posited that unemployment, exclusion, or poverty does not allow peace to thrive as they further entrench grievances among communities at risk, increasing the risk of conflict. Therefore, Positive Peace Theory offers a platform to examine indigenous economic principles like Igbo apprenticeship model and their role in supporting peace through empowerment, cooperation and conflict prevention at the local level.

Figure 2: Pillars of Peace

(Source: Kulkova, 2019)



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research methods used for analyzing the Igbo apprenticeship scheme as a tool for economic inclusion, diplomacy and peace building in Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market Aba, Abia State Nigeria. The study designs, data sources, sampling technique, data collection and analysis methods and ethical issues are addressed in this chapter.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Quantitative research design was used to allow for a better understanding of meanings, processes and social relations surrounding the Igbo apprenticeship system. This method allows for proper investigation of phenomena like culture, informal institutions and peacebuilding mechanisms (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The study utilized a questionnaire to collect data on the apprenticeship system operates both structurally and operationally at Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market.

Structured questionnaires were administered to 150 participants. These were used to elicit information from apprentices, settled traders and master traders. This method allowed the researcher to solicit uniform responses on topics including skill acquisition, settlement experiences, capital accumulation, retention, entrepreneurial success, and experiences with conflict. Questionnaires allowed for triangulation of empirical data, cross-comparisons between participants, and helped validate conclusions by allowing us to quantify some of the economic and social factors that make up the apprenticeship experience.

Secondary sources (academic publications, books, policy reports, local newspapers) were used to provide background to primary information, support theme interpretation, and for triangulation. Use of multiple sources and tools helped provide an in-depth perspective of the

apprenticeship program as a means of economic empowerment and community-led peace building from within the marketplace.

3.3 STUDY AREA

The site of the study was Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market is located in Aba, Abia State of Nigeria. Aba is a commercial and industrial city in Southeastern Nigeria known for being entrepreneurial, informal manufacturing clusters, and market networks. Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market is one of the biggest markets for automotive spare parts in Aba that attracts traders, distributors and mechanics from different parts of Nigeria and other West African countries.

Markets represent such congested trading hubs where traders, apprentices, market unions, settlements and other structures allow for and aid the flow of business understanding/knowledge and liquidity via indigenous channels like the Igbo apprenticeship scheme. The markets dynamics make it an important environment for observing informal economic institutions at work. Beyond its economic importance, it is also characterized by self-regulation, communal arbitration, and 'micro diplomacy' within the market that aid communal bonding, social orderliness and peace in what is otherwise a fiercely competitive entrepreneurial arena.

3.4 POPULATION

The study population was all persons and stakeholders involved in the Igbo apprenticeship system and socioeconomic system of Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market. This include the master traders (Oga), as they are key players responsible for mentoring, gathering business experience, building capitals and monitoring settlement practices. Apprentices (Boyi) also constitute a significant segment of the population, as they are directly impacted by the transfer of skills, commercial mentorship, and the subsequent economic empowerment derived from the apprenticeship arrangement.

The research also included settled apprentices who have finished their training and currently work as independent traders. They can provide information on the economic and social impacts of apprenticeship in the long run. Market union leaders and informal conflict mediators comprise another portion of the population, as they provide informal security by assisting in conflict resolution and maintaining peace building structures within the market Community.

3.5 SAMPLING STRATEGY

Non-probability purposive sampling method was employed in this research. This sampling technique provides an opportunity for the researcher to choose participants who have information and experience in the study. It is one of the sampling methods used when the aim of the study is not to generalize results statistically (Bhardwaj, 2019). It was used to make sure relevant individuals in the apprenticeship system from the master traders, apprentices, settled traders to the market leaders participated in this study. Considering social organization of the market, superior/subordinate relations and informal networks, purposive sampling was combined with snowball sampling. Snowball sampling utilised referrals from those initially sampled to recruit others that may have otherwise been difficult to reach (apprentices, former apprentices and conflict mediators in particular, whose positions/status are not formally/officially recognized or visibly recognized throughout the market).

3.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

180 questionnaires were distributed via purposive sampling and snowballing, from which 150 were properly filled and returned by apprentices/traders. This was done to solicit uniform information regarding years in apprenticeship, difficulties encountered when starting one's own business, business success as an entrepreneur, etc. and experience with market-level dispute resolution. Questionnaires allowed for some quantitative categorization and

comparison of answers, strengthening triangulation and therefore contributing to the empirical rigor of this research.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Questionnaire responses were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences program (SPSS). Frequencies, percentages, and crosstabulations were calculated to summarize data for questions related to length of apprenticeship training, learning skill/know-how and making capital, settling down, and mechanisms for resolving conflict experienced in the market. Quantitative results were displayed in tables, graphs, and visual representations for clarity and ease of interpretation.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Since this research was based on primary data, all ethical issues were considered. Before collecting data, respondents were informed about the study and their consent was obtained. Respondents were informed that their responses would be kept confidential and anonymous, and no identifiers were reported in the paper. Respondents participated voluntarily and were informed they could leave the study at any time without penalty. The data were reported objectively without manipulation of responses. Answers were reported as they were provided, and there was no fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of information reported. Adhering to academic ethical guidelines kept the study up to moral standards. By following ethical practices when conducting research, one can help to protect the participants' rights and improve the credibility, reliability, and integrity of one's study (Arifin, 2018).

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter displays and interprets data collected from the field survey undertaken in Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market of Aba, Abia State. This chapter ascertains the objectives of the study by presenting the quantitative data collected from the questionnaire in tables and figures. The study analysed the data obtained from 150 respondents on how Igbo apprenticeship system is structured and operates, how it ensures economic inclusion, sustainable peacebuilding, informal diplomacy and conflict resolution.

4.2 STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONAL DYNAMICS OF THE IGBO APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM IN ASA NNENTU (Objective 1)

This section involves the organization and daily activities that guide the Igbo Apprenticeship System. It involves processes of entering apprenticeship in Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market, Aba, how long they serve, roles of both masters and apprentices as well as settlement agreement. The section also describes informal rules and institutions that govern apprenticeship relationships in the market place. It empirically demonstrates how the system operates as an indigenous economic and social institution.

4.2.1 Entry Structure into the Igbo Apprenticeship System

Table 4.1 Mode of Entry into Apprenticeship

Mode of Entry	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Family/Kinship referral	78	52.0
Recommendation by trusted trader	42	28.0
Personal request to master	21	14.0
Others	9	6.0
Total	**150**	**100.0**

Table 4.1 reveals that the entry into Igbo Apprenticeship System (IAS) operating in Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market is highly network entry based. A total of 52.0% of respondents got into apprenticeship through referrals from family or kindreds; while another 28.0 % were able to join through referrals from trusted traders. Thus relationship/trust seem to be major factors that influence entry into apprenticeship program. Only 14.0% gained entry through personal requests while 6.0% from other means, showing little or none involvement in open form of recruitment system.

4.2.2 Nature of Apprenticeship Agreement

Table 4.2 Nature of Apprenticeship Agreement

Type of Agreement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Oral agreement	132	88.0
Written agreement	18	12.0
Total	**150**	**100.0**

From Table 4.2, it can be deduced that apprenticeship contracts in Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market are mostly informal. 88.0% of respondents stated that apprenticeship agreements were purely oral while only 12.0% utilized written agreements. This evidence reveals a very low documentation rate and points out how customary norms of reciprocity, trust and moral obligation are important in regulating apprenticeship relationships under the Igbo Apprenticeship System.

4.2.3 Duration and Phases of Apprenticeship

Table 4.3 Duration of Apprenticeship

Duration (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
3–4 years	19	12.7
5–6 years	96	64.0
7 years and above	35	23.3
Total	**150**	**100.0**

From Table 4.3, it can be inferred that the number of years spent on apprenticeship in Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market tend to be uniform as most of the respondents (64.0%) spent 5–6 years in apprenticeship. Also, it can be said that it takes a medium-range number of years in apprenticeship before one can conclude if the apprentice has mastered the skills required to be successful in business. Few respondents (23.3%) took 7 years and above of apprenticeship while the fewest (12.7%) had their apprenticeship of 3-4 years, which means that very few were able to complete apprenticeship at the early stage.

4.2.4 Settlement and Post- Apprenticeship Structure

Table 4.4 Forms of Settlement Provided to Apprentices

Settlement Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Start-up capital	61	40.7
Shop space/inventory	54	36.0
Combination of both	27	18.0
No settlement	8	5.3
Total	**150**	**100.0**

The survey results represented in Table 4.4 show that settlement is prominent in the Igbo Apprenticeship System. Settlement can take various forms, and 94.7% of respondents reported that they were provided some sort of settlement. The most common form of settlement is when entrepreneurs provide their apprentices with start-up capital (40.7%). The next closest response was being settled with shop space/inventory (36.0%). Combination of the two was selected by 18.0% of respondents and 5.3% reported that they did not receive any settlement upon completion of apprenticeship. These findings show that there is a major emphasis on settlement within the Igbo Apprenticeship System in Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market.

4.3 ECONOMIC INCLUSION THROUGH THE IGBO APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM (Objective 2)

This section explores how Igbo Apprenticeship System aids economic inclusion at Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market, Aba. This encompasses skills acquisition accessibility, apprentices' access to start-up funds and their journey towards independent entrepreneurship. It also indicates information based on primary data collected from apprentices and traders about how the apprenticeship system contributes to economic empowerment, income generation, and improved livelihoods (social mobility).

4.3.1 Skills Acquisition through Apprenticeship

Table 4.5 Types of Skills Acquired by Apprenticeship

Skill Area	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Spare parts identification and sales	62	41.3
Customer relations and negotiation	44	29.3
Inventory and shop management	31	20.7
Basic bookkeeping and pricing	13	8.7
Total	**150**	**100.0**

As seen in Table 4.5, the skills learnt in Igbo Apprenticeship majorly revolve around trading skills. 41.3% of respondents learnt skills in identification and sales of spare parts. Skills in customer relations and negotiation was selected by 29.3% of the respondents. Skills peculiar to inventory and shop management accounted for 20.7% of the respondents. Least respondents (8.7%) indicated that they learnt basic book keeping and pricing skills. This shows that Igbo Apprenticeship focuses on vocational skills needed in trade.

4.3.2 Transition to Independent Entrepreneurship

Table 4.6 Post-apprenticeship Economic Status

Economic Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Own business in the market	97	64.7
Operate business elsewhere	28	18.6
Employed by another trader	17	11.3
Unemployed	8	5.4
Total	**150**	**100.0**

As seen from Table 4.6, the majority of respondents have entrepreneurship transition after apprenticeship. Most of them were business owners within Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market (64.7%), while others operated business in different locations from where they served their apprenticeship (18.6%). This implies that their businesses survived or grew beyond buying and selling from where they learnt their trade. Just 11.3% became employees to other traders, few were unemployed, 5.4%. It can be concluded that Igbo apprenticeship system guarantees self-employment thereby curtailing social vices that are associated with idleness/marginalization.

4.3.3 Economic Inclusion and Social Mobility

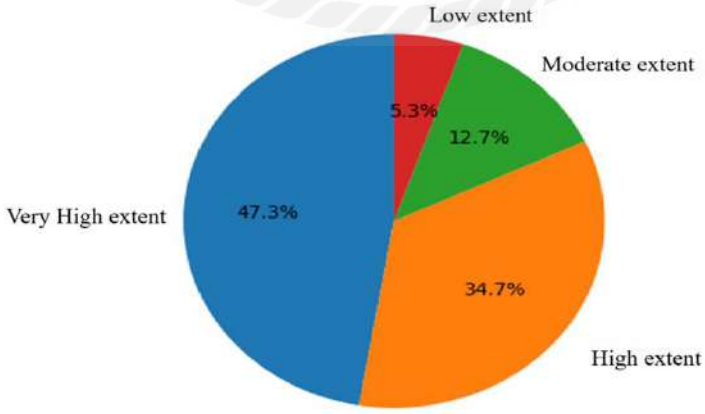


Figure 3. Impact of the Igbo Apprenticeship System on Economic Inclusion

The pie chart in Figure 3 represents the degree to which respondents felt the Igbo Apprenticeship System fosters inclusion in the market economy. Most respondents indicated that inclusion had a very high extent (47.3%), then a high extent (34.7%) followed by a moderate extent (12.7%). Also, a small portion of respondents selected low extent (5.3%). The chart shows that respondents thought that the Igbo Apprenticeship System had a Positive Impact on fostering inclusion.

4.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE IGBO APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM TO SUSTAINABLE PEACE (Objective 3)

This section indicates how the Igbo Apprenticeship System enhances sustainable peace in Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market (ASUM). It contributed to sustainable peace in Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market through the provision of employment, channeling social mobility and inclusion of the youth into the larger society thus reduced economic frustration leading to sustainable peace.

4.4.1 Employment Creation through Apprenticeship System

Table 4.7. Employment Opportunities Created through Apprenticeship

Employment Outcome	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Create own business and employ others	68	45.3
Self-employed only	57	38.0
Employed by another trader	17	11.3
Unemployed	8	5.4
Total	**150**	**100.0**

Table 4.7 indicates that the Igbo Apprenticeship system also serves as employment effect within ASUM. This is because the majority (45.3%) owned businesses and employed others while others (38.0%) were self-employed meaning that they have achieved a level of economic self-sufficiency. Only 11.3% were employed by other traders at the Asa Nnentu Auto

Spare Parts Market and another 5.4% were unemployed. This means the system reduces unemployment level thus creating sustainable means or source of livelihoods.

4.4.2 Contribution to Peace and Stability in the Market

Table 4.8 Contribution of the Apprenticeship System to Peace

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very high contribution	76	50.7
High contribution	45	30.0
Moderate contribution	21	14.0
Low contribution	8	5.3
Total	**150**	**100.0**

As seen in Table 4.8, the majority of respondents had the belief that the Igbo apprenticeship promoted peace and tranquility in the Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market. 80.7% of respondents believed the contribution was either "very high" (50.7%) or "high" (30.0%), showing a majority opinion that the system provided functions that are important for peacebuilding. Just 14.0% believed the contribution was "moderate," and very few respondents felt that it was "low" (5.3%), indicating that sentiments that view the system's role in peacebuilding negatively are very limited.

4.5 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE IGBO APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM AS A CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISM (Objective 4)

This section shows the Igbo apprenticeship system as mechanism for conflict management and resolution amongst members of Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market in Aba through reconciliation, arbitration and restoration. The research examined apprenticeship mediation/arbitration and reconciliation methods of solving the problems of conflict that might arise between master-apprenticeship and traders among themselves in the market.

4.5.1 Common Types of Conflict Experienced Within the Apprenticeship System

Table 5.1 Common Types of Conflict in the Apprenticeship System

Type of Conflict	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Master–apprentice disputes	59	39.3
Business competition disputes	41	27.3
Contractual/settlement disagreements	33	22.0
Interpersonal misunderstandings	17	11.4
Total	**150**	**100.0**

As seen in Table 5.1, master–apprentice disputes were the most frequently occurring form of conflict, comprising 39.3 % of all cases. They were followed by business competition disputes (27.3%) and disagreements arising from contractual issues or settlement disputes (22.0%). Cases involving interpersonal misunderstandings were the least likely to occur (11.4%), suggesting that business interests and monetary gain took precedence over individual relationships within the Igbo Apprenticeship System.

4.5.2 Conflict Resolution Mechanism Employed

Table 5.2 Conflict Resolution Methods

Resolution Mechanism	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Mediation by elders or market leaders	64	42.7
Arbitration by market union	46	30.7
Direct reconciliation between parties	28	18.6
Formal legal institutions	12	8.0
Total	**150**	**100.0**

Table 5.2 reveals that informal mechanisms mediated settlement of disputes in Igbo apprenticeship. The majority used mediation by elders/customary leaders/market leaders (42.7%), followed by arbitration from markets unions/custom courts (30.7%), while amicable

settlement by both parties accounted for 18.6%. Only 8.0 percent reported they sought settlement through formal mechanisms like the state judiciary.

4.5.3 Effectiveness of Restorative Practices

Table 5.3 Effectiveness of Restorative Practices

Effectiveness Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very effective	72	48.0
Effective	51	34.0
Moderately effective	19	12.7
Not effective	8	5.3
Total	**150**	**100.0**

The Igbo Apprenticeship System enjoys a high level of confidence amongst respondents with regards to conflict resolution. The majority of respondents 82.0%, answered either very effective or effective when asked how successful reconciliation and arbitration mechanisms were within the system. 12.7% answered moderately effective while 5.3% answered ineffective.

4.6 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study has empirically established that the Igbo Apprenticeship System operating in Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market, Aba is an organized indigenous system with identifiable characteristics. The structure and operational dynamics of the apprenticeship system was analyzed and the results reveal that apprenticeship recruitment into the business is done through network. This is evidenced by 52.0% through family/kindred referrals and 28.0% through referrals by trusted traders.

Furthermore, 88.0% of apprenticeship contracts were not written. Informal institutions mainly operated on trust, reputation, and community sanctions as a means of monitoring. These findings support Familoni (2024) notion that Africa's informal sectors are built on social

relations and familial ties rather than contractual obligations. Also, the duration of Apprenticeship was assessed in the study and further supports the institutional logic governing training and character assessment across the market (64.0% reported 5–6 years of Apprenticeship). It implies that there needs to be a set degree of technical proficiency and moral virtues demonstrated by the apprentice for a certain number of years before settlement and independent practice were possible.

Findings show that the system has positively supported economic inclusion initiatives during this evaluation period. 41.3% of the respondents learned primarily spare parts identification and selling skills as apprentices and 29.3% learned customer relation and negotiation skills, supporting descriptive accounts of how the system trains individuals. This result provided positive economic indicators, with 64.7% indicating ownership of businesses that operated within the market and 18.6% indicating ownership of businesses that were operated in other places. The findings support the conclusions drawn by Nnonyelu et al. (2022), which indicate that the Igbo Apprenticeship System is a catalyst for indigenous entrepreneurship and high economic mobility during a time of low employment. Skills-transfers and mentoring opportunities, allow accessibility within this system. These results, when considered on a large scale of development, show how this system can work to act as an indigenous model of economic development by allowing youth and marginalized communities be part of the economy which is an important aspect of economic inclusion.

Jobs creation and social mobility evidence also reveals how apprenticeship model have contributed to promoting sustainable peace. Findings showed that 45.3% were employers of labour and 38.0% were self-employed youth while only 5.4% were unemployed. This suggest that the system greatly aids in keeping youths engaged and economically satisfied thereby reducing idleness and the frustration that lead to insecurity and conflict. This correlates with Onah et al (2025) peacebuilding framework objectives which consist of Economic

Empowerment and Social Inclusion as important aspects of sustainable peace. It allows young people to be part of a supportive business community, and helps them attain financial independence, which decreases frustrations and builds resilience at the community level. Also, indigenous economic structures help build positive peace through preventing structural violence such as poverty, marginalization, and unemployment. The results shows that apprenticeship system helps turn socially vulnerable youth into economically productive members of society. They thereby enhance communal interdependence and socialize peace-inducing norms of cooperation, reciprocity and mutual aid within the market.

Furthermore, the study gave credence to the Igbo Apprenticeship System being an effective method of conflict resolution system. This was gathered when respondents reveal that the types of conflicts, they encountered in the course of apprenticeship are master-apprentice conflicts (39.3%) and business competition conflicts (27.3%). This buttresses the idea that conflict might occur between partners in business relationship but are always informally resolved among themselves as evidenced by the response that 42.7% were solved through elders or market leader's mediation and 30.7% were arbitrated by market union. Only 8.0% of cases were brought to formal legal institutions. Furthermore, 82.0% of participants ranked mechanisms as effective or very effective. Results from this study highlight the importance of informal, local mechanisms in conflict resolution within the Igbo Apprenticeship System, adding support for current literature on informal governance and local peace structures.

Master–apprentice relationship conflicts and business interest conflicts occur. Nonetheless, conflict types such as these do not inherently indicate institutional weakness. On the contrary, Nnonyelu and Onyeizugbe (2020) noted that institutions such as markets or apprenticeship networks are places where negotiations take place. Norms are negotiated and re-affirmed when conflict arises. Mediation by elders and arbitration by market unions indicates long-standing social norms placing value on negotiation, consensus-seeking and

relationship-mending over punishment. These findings show that it is linked with concepts of restorative justice which lays emphasis on repairing harm, rebuilding trust, restoring relationships and reintegrating those involved in disputes back into the economic and social community (Peace & Anekperechi, 2023).

Findings from this study indicate that the Igbo Apprenticeship System is an all-inclusive and holistic system that promotes economic inclusion, social mobility, job creation and peaceful means of resolving conflicts.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 CONCLUSION

The chapter concludes the study by summarizing the key findings, drawing conclusions that relate to the research objectives and make recommendations for practice. It provides a synthesis of empirical evidence on the Igbo Apprenticeship System operating among the Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Dealers in Aba with focus on how it promotes economic inclusion, sustainable peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The chapter briefly discusses the recommended strategies to reform and reinforce the Igbo Apprenticeship System towards adapting it as an indigenous model for inclusive development and peaceful coexistence in comparable commercial communities in Nigeria.

This research focused on the Igbo Apprenticeship System as an economic inclusion model for sustainable peacebuilding and conflict resolution among traders in Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market in Aba Abia State Nigeria. Using primary data obtained from research participants; it was revealed that Igbo Apprenticeship System is a functional well-articulated Indigenous institution that promotes economic inclusion, peace building and conflict resolution through informal diplomacy. This was proven though evidence that despite being an informal institution it has structured norms, reciprocity trust and social monitoring mechanisms which ensures sustainable peace.

These results demonstrate that the apprenticeship system has a positive effect on economic inclusion since it allows apprentices to acquire necessary skills through hands-on experience. Apprentices are also able to obtain start-up funds and launch their own independent business ventures after their apprenticeship. This demonstrates that business ownership, self-employment and creation of jobs for others is high among apprenticeship graduates. It can be concluded that economic marginalization is lowered, especially for youth, through the

implementation of the apprenticeship system as it allows individuals to learn a skill and create livelihoods for themselves and others in the market.

Also, the study draws robust evidence on the relationship between economic inclusion and peace. Jobs, youth engagement and increased social standing decreases levels of factors that cause conflict like unemployment and economic marginalisation. Moreover, the apprenticeship system's reliance on informal mediation, arbitration, and restorative approaches to conflict resolution strengthens social cohesion and trust between actors in the market.

The Igbo Apprenticeship System practiced at Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market is more than an economic institution; it is a complete system for development, peace and conflict management. Given the model's linkages with entrepreneurship, mentorship, social inclusion and restorative justice, it presents itself as a potential scalable indigenous solution to unemployment, youth marginalization and conflict that can be replicated in commercial clusters nationwide.

5.2 RECOMMENDATION

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are made to enhance and reinforce the Igbo Apprenticeship System as an effective strategy for economic inclusion, sustainable peacebuilding and conflict resolution approach for Asa Nnentu Auto Spare Parts Market and other business clusters in Nigeria.

1. The Igbo apprenticeship system should be formally acknowledged as a legitimate indigenous approach to skills acquisition and entrepreneurship promotion by state and local government agencies. Government policies should aim at enhancing and encouraging the system without disrupting its informal and trust-driven characteristics. This can be achieved through capacity building programs and availing them of government's assistance programs for SMEs.

2. Although the skills transmitted through the system are those required for trade, general knowledge on finances, bookkeeping and business development could improve the sustainability of the apprentices' ventures in the long run. Market unions and traders' associations can partner with vocational or development agencies to offer training workshops from time to time.
3. Other stakeholders (including those in different markets/sectors) should take interest in learning from and replicating the Igbo Apprenticeship System model for mainstreaming economic inclusion and peacebuilding. Platforms can be created by development agencies/civil society organizations for knowledge-sharing and exchange of best practices.
4. Informal mediation (elders) and arbitration (market unions) could be supported by introducing procedural methods and documentation. This would improve transparency, accountability without compromising the restorative-community spirit of justice.

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