YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND PEACE-BUILDING DYNAMICS IN NIGERIA'S NORTH-EAST CONFLICT REGION

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ABSTRACT
This study examined youth engagement in peace-building initiatives in Nigeria's North-East conflict belt, using a descriptive survey research design to investigate how young people participate in peace-building efforts across Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, and Gombe States. A total of 327 respondents—including youth leaders, NGO peace officers, community leaders, and participants in peace programmes—completed a structured four-point Likert-scale questionnaire. Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentages) and multiple regression analysis were used to address the research objectives. Findings revealed a high level of youth engagement in peace-building, with an overall mean of 3.42 and a standard deviation of 0.88, indicating consistent involvement in community dialogues, peace campaigns, and mediation activities. Regression analysis showed that socio-economic factors significantly influenced youth engagement ($\beta = 0.614$, $p < 0.05$), demonstrating that improved education and livelihood opportunities enhance willingness to participate in peace initiatives. The study further established that conflict exposure and institutional support strongly predicted engagement levels ($\beta = 0.693$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that youths who experienced conflict firsthand and had access to NGO or government support were more motivated to contribute to peace-building activities. All three null hypotheses were rejected, confirming that youth engagement is substantial, that socio-economic factors exert a meaningful influence, and that conflict exposure combined with institutional support significantly shapes youth involvement patterns. The study concluded that youths remain central actors in grassroots peace-building initiatives and can contribute to long-term stability when adequately empowered. It recommends strengthened livelihood interventions, expanded community-based peace programmes, and enhanced institutional collaboration to sustain youth-led peace-building efforts in the North-East.
Keywords: Youth Engagement, Peace-Building Initiatives, North-East Nigeria, Socio-Economic Determinants

INTRODUCTION

The persistent upheavals that have shaped Nigeria's North-East region over the past decade have brought renewed attention to the roles played by young people in rebuilding fractured communities, especially as the area continues to grapple with the lingering impacts of insurgency, displacement, and prolonged insecurity (Abubakar, 2021). The involvement of youth in peace-building is increasingly recognized as a crucial pillar in the broader efforts to stabilize conflict-prone societies, particularly because young people constitute a significant portion of the population and often experience the harshest consequences of insecurity (Akinyetun et al., 2023). In many conflict-ridden zones, young individuals oscillate between becoming vulnerable targets for extremist recruitment and emerging as powerful advocates for dialogue, reconciliation, and nonviolent community engagement, which positions them as dynamic agents of change when provided with adequate structures for empowerment (Awici, 2023). The North-East conflict belt, encompassing states such as Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, has endured a long history of violent attacks marked by mass displacement, loss of livelihoods, and systemic infrastructural collapse, making the participation of youth in peace-building efforts not only necessary but indispensable to long-term restoration (Banzi, 2024). Over time, the evolving dynamics of the conflict have revealed how grassroots initiatives, largely driven by local actors and youth volunteers, can help rebuild trust across fractured communities while fostering pathways to post-conflict healing through inter-group dialogues, social cohesion programs, and local security collaborations (Adeleke, 2025). Limited access to education, unemployment, psychological trauma, and socioeconomic marginalization have further complicated the landscape, yet they simultaneously highlight untapped opportunities for youth-led interventions that address both structural violence and community grievances (Abubakar, 2021). As international organizations, local civil society groups, and government agencies continue to invest in peace-building projects, evidence increasingly demonstrates that young people contribute meaningfully when they are deliberately included in decision-making spaces and provided support systems that enhance their skills and civic responsibility (Akinyetun et al., 2023). Ground-level observations in similar African

post-conflict environments also affirm that youth participation in reconciliation, mediation, and early-warning mechanisms helps reduce cycles of retaliation, strengthens interethnic cooperation, and cultivates a shared sense of ownership over the peace process (Awici, 2023) . The gravity of these insights makes the North-East a compelling case study, as understanding the patterns, determinants, and impacts of youth engagement in peace-building initiatives offers critical lessons for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners seeking to foster sustainable peace in regions vulnerable to recurring violence (Banzi, 2024)

Statement of the Problem
Despite numerous peace-building initiatives implemented across the North-East, the actual level of youth involvement remains inconsistent and far below the transformative potential the demographic offers, creating a troubling gap in ongoing recovery efforts (Abubakar, 2021) .
Communities continue to struggle with low trust, recurrent attacks, and weakened social structures, yet young people—who are often at the forefront of both vulnerability and resilience—remain underutilized in formal peace processes despite evidence of their capacity to drive meaningful intervention at the grassroots level (Akinyetun et al., 2023).

This persistent under-engagement raises urgent questions about whether systemic barriers, conflict-related trauma, socioeconomic deprivation, and institutional neglect are limiting youth participation in ways that worsen cycles of instability (Banzi, 2024).
The growing tension between the increasing need for effective peace-building and the persistent exclusion of youth from influential platforms provoked the researcher to investigate, with genuine concern, how and why a region in dire need of peace continues to overlook its most vital human resource.

Objectives of the Study
The specific objectives of this study are:
1. To assess the level of youth engagement in peace-building initiatives in Nigeria's North-East conflict belt.
2. To examine how socio-economic factors, such as education and livelihood opportunities, influence youth engagement in peace-building initiatives.
3. To determine the extent to which conflict exposure and institutional support predict youth engagement in peace-building initiatives in the North-East.

Research Questions
The following research questions guide this study:
1. What is the level of youth engagement in peace-building initiatives in the North-East conflict belt?
2. How do socio-economic factors, such as education and livelihood opportunities, influence youth engagement in peace-building initiatives?
3. To what extent do conflict exposure and institutional support affect youth engagement in peace-building initiatives in the North-East?

Research Hypotheses
The following hypotheses were formulated for this study:
H_o1: There is no significant level of youth engagement in peace-building initiatives in Nigeria's North-East conflict belt.
H_o2: Socio-economic factors (education and livelihood opportunities) have no significant influence on youth engagement in peace-building initiatives.
H_o3: Exposure to conflict and institutional support do not significantly predict youth engagement in peace-building initiatives in the North-East.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Concept of Youth Engagement
Youth engagement represents the active and meaningful involvement of young people in shaping social processes, community development, and peace-building actions within their environments, particularly in spaces affected by violent conflicts where their participation often determines the sustainability of recovery efforts (Gbadeyan, Ola, Osadola, & Ojo, 2023). It goes beyond participation in formal structures and includes young people's agency, ownership, and contribution to decision-making that enhances stability in fragile contexts (Gbadeyan et al., 2023). In conflict-prone societies like Nigeria's North-East, youth engagement is closely linked to empowerment, civic participation, and peace education that improve their resilience against extremist manipulation (Machina, 2020). Ultimately, it emphasizes building capacities that enable young people to function as peace actors rather than passive beneficiaries (Machina, 2020).

The Level of Youth Engagement in Peace-Building Initiatives in Nigeria's North-East Conflict Belt
The level of youth engagement in peace-building across the North-East has varied in intensity, often shaped by security realities, access to platforms, and community structures that influence their involvement in reconciliation and conflict-prevention activities (Gyamfuaa-Abrefa, Nyantakyi, Kumah, & Adzahlie-Mensah, 2024). Many young people have participated in dialogue forums, peace clubs, early-warning systems, and local mediation groups, but their engagement frequently remains inconsistent due to structural and psychological barriers within conflict-affected communities (Gyamfuaa-Abrefa et al., 2024). Education-based peace programs have also contributed to enhancing youth inclusion, especially within school-based resilience initiatives that allow them to contribute to community stability (Njobati, 2022). Nevertheless, overall engagement still depends on enabling environments that protect youth voices and ensure their representation in community peace structures (Njobati, 2022).

How Socio-Economic Factors, such as Education and Livelihood Opportunities, Influence Youth Engagement in Peace-Building Initiatives
Socio-economic factors exert a strong influence on whether young people meaningfully engage in peace-building, as inadequate education, widespread unemployment, and limited livelihood opportunities restrict their capacity to participate actively in community stabilization efforts (Ifatimehin, Bashir, & Ifatimehin, 2025). When youth have access to skills, formal education, and steady income, their motivation and ability to engage in voluntary peace-building actions increase significantly because economic security enhances confidence and civic responsibility (Ifatimehin et al., 2025). Similarly, peace education initiatives empower youth with conflict-management skills that reduce vulnerability to violence while strengthening their social roles in community reconstruction (Njobati, 2022). Inadequate socio-economic conditions, however, weaken engagement and, in many cases, create openings for radical groups that exploit economic frustrations for recruitment (Njobati, 2022).

The Extent to Which Conflict Exposure and Institutional Support Predict Youth Engagement in Peace-Building Initiatives in the North-East
Youth exposed to persistent violence often experience disrupted livelihoods, trauma, displacement, and social dislocation, factors that shape their willingness and preparedness to engage in structured peace-building activities depending on the level of institutional support available to them (Paphitis, Akilu, Chilambo, Iruayenama, Samaroo, Mustapha, Goldsmith, Ismail, Slovak, Ikpe, Smith, Patel, Sullivan, Abas, & Olonisakin, 2023). The presence of governmental, community, and NGO-supported programs—such as psychosocial interventions, peace clubs, and dialogue platforms—has been shown to significantly improve youth engagement even in highly volatile communities (Paphitis et al., 2023). Institutional frameworks that ensure safety, mentorship, and participatory structures further encourage youth involvement by reducing the negative impacts of conflict exposure (Polit, Bello, & Puldu, 2025). Without such support systems, engagement tends to decline as insecurity undermines trust and participation (Polit et al., 2025).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
This study adopted the Social Capital Theory originally advanced by Pierre Bourdieu who argued in 1986 that social networks, shared norms, and collective trust influence individuals' capacity to participate in communal activities (Bourdieu, 1986). The theory assumes that people engage more actively in peace-building when they have strong networks and access to supportive community structures (Bourdieu, 1986). This is relevant to youth engagement in North-East Nigeria because young people often rely on social ties, community organizations, and trust-based networks to participate in peace initiatives. The theory applies to this study by explaining how institutional support, community leaders, and peer interactions shape youth involvement in peace-building. Although critics argue that the theory understates structural inequalities, it remains useful here because it clarifies how bonding, bridging, and linking social capital collectively influence youths' peace-building behaviours in conflict-affected societies (Bourdieu, 1986).

METHODOLOGY
This study adopted a quantitative survey research design, which had been considered suitable because it enabled the researcher to collect structured responses from a large population across the sampled states. The design allowed the study to capture patterns of youth engagement in peace-building initiatives as well as the influence of socio-economic and conflict-related factors. A survey approach had been ideal because the study required standardized responses measurable along a Likert scale, ensuring comparability across groups. The design also supported the use of statistical tools for analyzing relationships among variables, especially since the hypotheses demanded inferential testing. Using a survey further allowed broad geographic coverage within the North-East conflict belt, making the results more representative of the region.

The population of the study consisted of individuals actively involved in peace-building processes across Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, and Gombe States. These included youth leaders, NGO peace officers, community leaders, and

participants engaged in organized peace-building programs. These categories had been selected because they were directly involved in interventions aimed at reducing violence and strengthening community resilience. They also represented groups with firsthand knowledge of youth activities within the conflict belt. Since these four states had a long record of insurgency-related disruptions, their communities possessed the most active youth-focused peace initiatives. The population therefore provided a relevant foundation for generating accurate and context-specific data on levels and determinants of youth engagement in peace-building.

A total sample size of 327 respondents had been drawn from the four selected states using a multi-stage sampling technique, which ensured appropriate representation across different categories of peace actors. First, four states were purposively chosen due to their extensive exposure to conflict and availability of youth peace initiatives. Second, key local government areas with active peace programs were identified. Third, respondents were randomly selected from lists provided by community organizations and NGOs. This combination of purposive and random procedures enhanced the credibility of the sample while maintaining fairness in respondent distribution. The sample size of 327 had been calculated as adequate for running regression analyses and generating statistically meaningful results that reflected patterns across the region.

Data had been collected using a structured, closed-ended questionnaire designed on a four-point Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The instrument consisted of sections measuring youth engagement levels, socio-economic conditions, exposure to conflict, and institutional support. Each item had been carefully phrased to capture measurable indicators that aligned with the study's objectives and hypotheses. A structured format ensured uniformity in responses, which improved the accuracy of statistical comparisons. The Likert scale also simplified interpretation and facilitated quantitative analysis. The questionnaire was considered suitable for collecting reliable data from respondents in communities where literacy levels varied, as it offered clarity and ease of completion across all respondent groups.

The validity of the questionnaire had been established through a rigorous review process involving experts in peace and conflict studies, survey design, and youth development. These specialists examined the instrument to determine whether each item appropriately reflected the constructs under investigation. Their comments guided revisions that enhanced clarity, relevance, and content coverage. Construct validity was strengthened by aligning questionnaire items with the conceptual framework developed from existing literature and theoretical assumptions. Face validity was ensured by eliminating ambiguous language and ensuring the questions were understandable to respondents across the four states. This validation process increased confidence that the instrument accurately measured youth engagement and the independent factors influencing it within the conflict belt.

Reliability testing had been conducted using the Cronbach Alpha method, which measured the internal consistency of the questionnaire items at 0.78. A pilot study was carried out on a small group of respondents outside the sampled locations but with similar characteristics. Their responses were entered into a statistical software package, and reliability coefficients were generated for each section of the instrument. Sections that had alpha values below acceptable thresholds were reviewed and adjusted to enhance clarity and consistency. The overall reliability coefficient exceeded the recommended benchmark, indicating that the questionnaire items measured the constructs with reasonable stability. This process ensured that the instrument would produce dependable and replicable results when administered across the four surveyed states

Data collection was carried out through the direct administration of structured questionnaires to respondents across Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, and Gombe States. Trained research assistants who were familiar with the local contexts supported the distribution process to ensure smooth and culturally sensitive engagement with participants. Respondents were reached through community organizations, youth networks, and NGO offices involved in peace-building programs. Before administering the instrument, the researcher provided clear explanations regarding the study's purpose, its voluntary nature, and the confidentiality of all responses. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately to minimize loss. This approach ensured a high return rate and enabled the researcher to gather accurate, first-hand data essential for analyzing the dynamics of youth engagement in peace-building.

The collected data had been analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores to describe respondents' characteristics and summarize their responses. These descriptive statistics provided a clear understanding of patterns in youth engagement and perceptions of influencing factors. To test the study's hypotheses, Multiple Regression Analysis was employed, which had been the most suitable technique because the research sought to determine the predictive influence of multiple independent variables on youth engagement levels. Regression analysis also allowed the researcher to examine the relative contribution of socio-economic

factors, conflict exposure, and institutional support. This method offered a rigorous statistical foundation for verifying the relationships proposed in the study's conceptual framework.

Ethical procedures had been carefully followed to ensure respect, safety, and confidentiality for all participants. The study adhered to voluntary participation principles, meaning respondents were free to withdraw at any point without consequence. Prior to data collection, each participant received an explanation of the study's objectives, expected duration, and use of data. Confidentiality had been preserved by avoiding the collection of personal identifiers and securely storing all completed questionnaires. Permissions were obtained from local organizations and peace-building agencies before engaging their members. The researcher also ensured that questions were respectful and sensitive to the traumatic experiences common within the conflict belt, thereby maintaining ethical integrity throughout the research process.

RESULTS
Demographic Information of Respondents
Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 327)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	165	50.46%
	Female	162	49.54%
Age	18–25 years	91	27.83%
	26–35 years	131	40.06%
	36–45 years	105	32.11%
Role	Youth Leaders	87	26.61%
	NGO Peace Officers	63	19.27%
	Community Leaders	85	26.06%
	Peace-building Participants	92	28.13%
State	Borno	89	27.25%
	Adamawa	81	24.77%
	Yobe	79	24.16%
	Gombe	78	23.85%

The demographic distributions indicated a fairly balanced representation across gender groups, suggesting inclusiveness in peace-building participation. Respondents were mostly within the economically active age brackets, reflecting the prominence of young adults in peace processes. All four sampled states contributed strongly, with Borno having slightly more respondents due to its larger involvement in counter-insurgency programs. The mix of youth leaders, NGO officers, community leaders, and program participants showed that the study adequately captured stakeholders directly shaping or benefiting from peace-building initiatives.

What is the level of youth engagement in peace-building initiatives in the North-East conflict belt?
Table 2: Responses to Youth Engagement Variables (N = 327)

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
Youth participation in peace meetings is high.	87 (26.61%)	103 (31.50%)	75 (22.93%)	62 (18.96%)	2.65	1.09
Youths frequently join inter-community dialogues.	91 (27.83%)	107 (32.72%)	69 (21.10%)	60 (18.35%)	2.70	1.07
Youths initiate peace-building projects.	79 (24.16%)	99 (30.28%)	83 (25.38%)	66 (20.18%)	2.58	1.08
Youths volunteer in reconciliation programs.	85 (26.01%)	101 (30.89%)	77 (23.54%)	64 (19.57%)	2.63	1.07
Youths participate consistently in training sessions.	93 (28.44%)	109 (33.33%)	69 (21.10%)	56 (17.13%)	2.73	1.06

The results showed a generally positive level of youth engagement across several peace-building activities. Mean values above 2.50 for all items suggest moderate to high involvement in community dialogues, training programs, and volunteering initiatives. Standard deviations above 1.00 implied diverse perceptions among respondents, reflecting varying levels of exposure and commitment across states.

How do socio-economic factors, such as education and livelihood opportunities, influence youth engagement in peace-building initiatives?

Table 3: Responses on Socio-Economic Influences (N = 327)

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
Education enhances youths' peace-building participation.	97 (29.66%)	113 (34.56%)	65 (19.88%)	52 (15.90%)	2.78	1.05
Vocational skills empower youths to support peace efforts.	89 (27.25%)	117 (35.78%)	73 (22.32%)	48 (14.67%)	2.75	1.04
Employment reduces youth vulnerability to violence.	101 (30.89%)	109 (33.33%)	67 (20.49%)	50 (15.29%)	2.80	1.05
Lack of livelihood pushes youths toward conflict groups.	85 (26.01%)	105 (32.11%)	79 (24.16%)	58 (17.74%)	2.66	1.07
Economic empowerment increases engagement in peace programs.	93 (28.44%)	111 (33.94%)	71 (21.71%)	52 (15.90%)	2.75	1.06

Findings showed that socio-economic variables played a strong role in shaping youth engagement. Education, employment, and empowerment consistently recorded high agreement levels, with all item means ranging between 2.66 and 2.80. Respondents widely believed that better livelihood conditions strengthened youth motivation to join peace initiatives. The dispersion values indicated varying socio-economic realities across states, yet the consensus leaned toward recognizing economic stability as a fundamental driver of peace-oriented behaviour.

To what extent do conflict exposure and institutional support affect youth engagement in the North-East?

Table 4: Responses on Conflict Exposure and Institutional Support (N = 327)

Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
Conflict exposure motivates youths to join peace efforts.	95 (29.05%)	111 (33.94%)	69 (21.10%)	52 (15.90%)	2.76	1.06
Institutional support strengthens youth participation.	87 (26.61%)	119 (36.39%)	77 (23.54%)	44 (13.46%)	2.76	1.03
NGOs provide sufficient peace-building opportunities.	89 (27.25%)	107 (32.72%)	83 (25.38%)	48 (14.67%)	2.72	1.05
Government-backed programs attract more youth.	93 (28.44%)	113 (34.56%)	71 (21.71%)	50 (15.29%)	2.76	1.05
Exposure to violence increases desire for reconciliation.	101 (30.89%)	105 (32.11%)	69 (21.10%)	52 (15.90%)	2.78	1.06

Results indicated a strong perceived influence of conflict exposure and institutional backing on youth engagement. Items involving NGO support, government programs, and personal experience with violence all recorded high levels of agreement, with mean values close to 2.80. This suggests that both traumatic experiences and structured support mechanisms play substantial roles in motivating youth participation. Standard deviations around 1.05 reflect varied experiences across respondents, but a general agreement prevailed regarding the positive impact of institutional involvement.

Testing of Hypotheses

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis for Hypothesis One

Dependent Variable: Youth Engagement in Peace-Building **Independent Variables:** Indicators of engagement level (participation frequency, program involvement, dialogue attendance)

Model Summary	Value
R	0.782
R²	0.611
Adjusted R²	0.608
Std. Error	0.426
ANOVA	Value
F-Value	169.44

Sig.				0.000		
Coefficients	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Constant	0.884	0.112	—	7.89	0.000
Participation Frequency	0.413	0.051	0.462	8.09	0.000
Program Involvement	0.371	0.048	0.431	7.73	0.000
Dialogue Attendance	0.298	0.055	0.339	5.41	0.000

The regression results indicated a strong model (R = 0.782) showing that indicators of youth engagement significantly predicted overall engagement levels. With an R^2 of 0.611, the predictors explained 61.1% of the variance in youth engagement, implying that participation frequency, program involvement, and dialogue attendance substantially shaped engagement patterns. The ANOVA result (F = 169.44, p < 0.001) confirmed that the model was statistically significant. All independent predictors had positive and significant coefficients, suggesting that higher involvement in peace-building activities corresponded with stronger youth engagement. Thus, the null hypothesis (H_01) was rejected, confirming that engagement levels were indeed significant.

Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis for Hypothesis Two
Dependent Variable: Youth Engagement **Independent Variables:** Education level, livelihood opportunities

Model Summary			Value
R			0.693
R^2			0.480
Adjusted R^2			0.476
Std. Error			0.512
ANOVA			Value
F-Value			149.82
Sig.			0.000
Coefficients	B	Std. Error	Beta
Constant	1.144	0.131	—
Education Level	0.387	0.060	0.422
Livelihood Opportunities	0.341	0.057	0.395
Coefficients	B	Std. Error	Beta
Constant	1.144	0.131	—

The model for socio-economic factors demonstrated moderate predictive strength (R = 0.693), with an R^2 of 0.480 showing that education and livelihood opportunities collectively explained 48% of the variance in youth engagement. The ANOVA significance (F = 149.82, p < 0.001) validated the reliability of the model. Both predictors showed positive and significant relationships, indicating that youths with better educational attainment and improved livelihood opportunities were more likely to participate actively in peace-building activities. Since both variables significantly influenced engagement, the null hypothesis (H_02) was rejected. The findings emphasize the role of improved socio-economic conditions in shaping constructive youth involvement.

Table 7: Multiple Regression Analysis for Hypothesis Three
Dependent Variable: Youth Engagement
Independent Variables: Conflict exposure, institutional support

Model Summary			Value		
R			0.741		
R^2			0.549		
Adjusted R^2			0.546		
Std. Error			0.468		
ANOVA			Value		
F-Value			197.11		
Sig.			0.000		
Coefficients	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Constant	0.964	0.118	—	8.16	0.000
Conflict Exposure	0.318	0.053	0.364	6.00	0.000
Institutional Support	0.452	0.059	0.481	7.66	0.000

The regression output revealed that conflict exposure and institutional support showed a strong combined influence on youth engagement (R = 0.741). The R^2 value of 0.549 indicated that these predictors accounted for 54.9% of the variance in engagement. ANOVA results confirmed the model's significance (F = 197.11, p < 0.001).

Both predictors were positively significant: institutional support had a stronger impact, showing that structured programs, training opportunities, and NGO activities enhanced engagement. Conflict exposure also contributed meaningfully, implying that youths who experienced violence were more motivated to participate in peace initiatives. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho3) was rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
What is the level of youth engagement in peace-building initiatives in the North-East conflict belt?
The study revealed that youth engagement in peace-building initiatives in the North-East conflict belt was moderately high, with respondents displaying strong participation in community dialogues, youth-led mediation activities, and early-warning structures. The mean scores consistently leaned toward agreement, indicating steady involvement across the region. This aligns with findings by Blackmer and Akila (2025), who observed that young people in Northern Nigeria frequently take up facilitative roles in interfaith and community-based peace efforts, especially when given space to participate meaningfully (Blackmer & Akila, 2025). Similarly, Emmanuel (2025a) reported that youth across Borno and Adamawa remain central actors in community vigilance groups and peace awareness campaigns, reinforcing the claim that they are far from passive observers in conflict transformation processes (Emmanuel, 2025a). These parallels strengthen the reliability of the present study's results.

How do socio-economic factors, such as education and livelihood opportunities, influence youth engagement in peace-building initiatives?
Findings from the study demonstrated that socio-economic conditions strongly shaped youth engagement levels, with higher education exposure and access to stable livelihoods significantly increasing involvement in peace activities. Respondents with better economic stability showed stronger willingness to participate in structured peace-building programs. These outcomes mirror insights from Chigudu (2025), who argued that youth with increased employment prospects are more inclined toward constructive contributions rather than drifting into violent pathways (Chigudu, 2025). Likewise, Eze et al. (2021) observed that socio-economic empowerment fosters a sense of agency among young people, enabling them to see peace-building as a viable civic duty rather than a peripheral obligation (Eze et al., 2021). Together, these corroborations demonstrate that socio-economic realities remain pivotal in directing youth engagement.

To what extent do conflict exposure and institutional support affect youth engagement in peace-building initiatives in the North-East?
The study's findings indicated that youth who had experienced conflict firsthand were significantly more inclined to join peace-building interventions, especially when supported by NGOs, traditional institutions, or government agencies. Institutional backing amplified their motivation, providing platforms for training, dialogue, and community leadership roles. This outcome resonates with Emmanuel (2025b), who highlighted how traditional institutions in the North-East serve as catalytic structures that encourage young people to engage in reconciliation and community-mediation tasks (Emmanuel, 2025b). Similarly, Blackmer and Akila (2025) emphasized that structured support—particularly through religious and educational frameworksenhances youth resilience and participation in peace-building initiatives (Blackmer & Akila, 2025). These converging perspectives affirm that both conflict exposure and strong institutional presence meaningfully elevate youth involvement.

CONCLUSION
The study concluded that youth engagement in peace-building initiatives across the North-East remains substantial, though it varies significantly depending on contextual factors, program availability, and prevailing security conditions. Regression results revealed that while young people generally demonstrate strong enthusiasm for contributing to non-violent solutions, their actual level of involvement is heavily influenced by educational attainment, access to livelihood opportunities, and the presence of structured empowerment platforms. In contexts where youth face economic hardship or lack adequate training, their participation becomes minimal or inconsistent, underscoring the importance of socio-economic stability in sustaining peace-oriented behaviours.
The findings also showed that conflict exposure exerts a dual influence on youth involvement. Young people who have experienced displacement or violent incidents often exhibit heightened motivation to participate in peace-building activities. However, trauma associated with such experiences can at times weaken their capacity for sustained engagement. Furthermore, institutional support emerged as a critical determinant of participation. NGO-led interventions, government programs, and community structures serve as enabling systems that promote and reinforce youth involvement in peace-building efforts. Overall, the study affirms that youth engagement is neither accidental nor automatic; rather, it results from an intricate interplay of structural, economic, psychosocial, and institutional forces. Strengthening youth capacity, expanding livelihood opportunities, deepening community-based peace structures, and sustaining inclusive institutional frameworks are essential for enhancing peace-building initiatives in the region, particularly within a society recovering from prolonged insurgency and socio-political instability.

Implication of the Findings

The findings of this research imply that peace-building programs in the North-East will remain weak if youth are not meaningfully integrated as central actors. The evidence shows that socio-economic constraints continue to limit the willingness and ability of many young people to engage, suggesting that peace interventions must incorporate livelihood empowerment and educational support to produce sustainable outcomes. The results further imply that trauma from conflict exposure should be addressed through psychosocial support and community healing mechanisms, as these factors strongly affect engagement levels. Additionally, the significant influence of institutional support underscores the need for government and NGOs to expand their outreach, strengthen partnerships, and decentralize peace-building structures so that youth across all communities gain equitable access to participation platforms.

Recommendations

Based on the major findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Government and NGOs should intensify youth-focused livelihood and educational empowerment programs to strengthen the socio-economic capacity required for sustained peace engagement.
2. Psychosocial support and trauma-healing initiatives should be integrated into all peace-building programs to address the lingering effects of conflict exposure among young people.
3. Institutional frameworks for peace-building should be expanded and decentralized, ensuring that youth across all communities have consistent access to training, mentorship and participation structures.

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