

## Managing Conflicts through Peace Education Programmes for Sustainable Community Development in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

This study examined the management of conflicts through peace education programmes for sustainable community development in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Three (3) objectives and three (3) research questions guided the study. The population for this study comprised 2000 members of thirteen (13) registered community-based organisations in Aba South Local government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. The multistage sampling technique was used to select 156 members representing 20% of the total population of the five (5) selected CBOs as sample for the study. Instrument for data collection titled: Peace Education Programmes for Conflict Resolution and Sustainable Community Development Questionnaire (PEPCRSCDQ) was validated and yielded the reliability index of 0.78 using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics. Data collected were presented in tables and analysed using mean statistics. The findings of the study revealed among others that *UNESCO's* Youth for Peace Programme promotes political conflict resolution for sustainable community development, Interfaith Mediation Programme brings about religious conflict resolution for sustainable community development and Workers-Employer Mediation Programme facilitates industrial conflict resolution for sustainable community development in Aba South Local government Area of Abia State, *The* study recommended among others that community-based peace organisations should collaborate with international and national peace organisations in the training of local peace ambassadors who can serve as peace advocates in awareness campaigns in peace education programmes as well as intensify the empowerment of youth as peace builders and mediators by equipping them with negotiation; mediation, and dialogue skills to resolve political disputes; enhancing their political participation and governance by educating them on democratic processes to reduce electoral violence instead of using them as instrument for electoral thuggery and violence for conflicts resolution and sustainable community development in Aba South Local Government Area, Nigeria

**Keywords:** Peace Education Programmes, Conflict Resolution, Sustainable Community Development

## Introduction

Conflict in Nigeria although episodic, is not a new phenomenon. Every passing year, different communities suffer one form of violent conflict, ranging from cult-related clashes to economic and political agitation. It has been observed that since Nigeria gained independence in 1960, military coups, ethnic rivalries and religious carnage have typified post-independence Nigeria (Alanamu, 2020). The country has become a sort of battle field as evidently shown by series of ethno-religious violent crises that are ravaging the socio-political entity called Nigeria (Ofogbor cited in Uko, Umoren, & Caleb, 2015). Conflicts in Nigeria have always witnessed violence in the following forms: (a) political and electoral violence; (b) communal and ethnic clashes; (c) civil disturbances and violent clashes; (d) intra and inter-faith conflicts (e) campus cultism and violent activities; and (f) violence associated with social and economic conflicts. As time passes, the spate of violence increases and the people of the country plunge deeper into the abyss of social unrest, insecurity, deprivation, poverty, misery and under-development.

Conflicts in most states of the federation have plunged the contemporary Nigerian society into a state of shamble and misery. Communal clashes and cultism-related conflicts keep rocking almost all the communities in the various states of the federation, especially the Eastern region of Nigeria of which Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State is not an exception. The spate of conflict has been on the rise with unprecedented surge in military attack, violent riots, kidnapping, armed robbery, criminality, sexual violence, power tussle, amongst others. Conflicts resulting from political power tussle come to play in the area where two or more political elites from different communities embark on power tussle. This situation degenerates into clashes in Aba South Local Government Area. Consequently, the political elites project a panorama of escalating human rights violations and innocent civilians falling helpless victims of senseless killing.

The devastating impact of conflict has resulted in insecurity, drastic impoverishment of rural artifacts, poverty, depression, migration of youths, men and women among others. Conflict is often described as misunderstanding among people. It evokes associations of tension, interruption, and violence along with the anticipation of anything from uneasiness to life-aggressive situations. It is incontrovertible to say that these various conflicts and agitations hamper sustainable community development.

In a community, peace can develop in absence of war or conflict, in which peace is the practice of love and it is characterised by tranquility, mental rest, and freedom from conflict. In a peaceful society, people work together for the resolution of the disagreement, and treat one another with justice, fulfilment of people's requirements and equal treatment, a scenario that could be realisable by building the culture of peace through education.

Peace education is about exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable future (Laing, cited in UNESCO, 2021). UNESCO (2021) in corroboration with Uko et. al., (2015) sees peace education as more effective and meaningful when it is adopted according to the social and cultural context and the needs of a country. The role of peace education in the creation of awareness and empowerment of the people for conflict resolution and sustainable community development cannot be overemphasised as the awareness created through peace education on the need to work out or design strategies to channel the potential of people through education to aid building of culture of peace is relevant for conflict resolution. Galtung (2018) emphasises the role of peace education in fostering structural and cultural peace, moving beyond the mere absence of violence to address root causes of conflict.

Government at all levels and even non-governmental agencies and philanthropists have paid attention to this imminent issue of conflict resolution in the area by providing various youth skills acquisition and empowerment programmes such as the Amnesty and entrepreneurial scheme among others. However, it is important to state at this juncture that although, these programmes are good and strong tools towards economic empowerment of the people, but they have not yielded the needed results in the area of building the culture of peace among the people. This is because for development to thrive, the human elements occupying a particular area must create an enabling (peaceful) environment for it. Life in itself is full of myriads of opportunities that avails man for his development. It is negligence to these opportunities occasioned by lack of enabling environment that make man to lose hold of everyday navigation. Hence, sustainable community development is a product of collaborative efforts of all in an enabling and peaceful environment. Therefore, building the culture of peace among the people of Aba South through peace education becomes a good riddance to the problem of conflict resolution in the area. Although peace education has been seen as an old idea relegated to the background and its teaching and learning left in the hands of the religious bodies and moral instructors (Uko et al., 2015).

However, it is pitiable to state that the religious bodies that peace building is left in their custody have not done much in the building of the culture of peace; instead, they pay much attention to the promotion of their religions and self-interest thereby triggering another form of conflict in the society known as religious conflict. Hence, there is need for deliberate introduction of peace education programmes that cut across political, ethno-religious and industrial differences to inculcate civic virtues, develop a climate that models peaceful behaviour among all members of the community, handle conflicts in ways that respect the rights and dignity of all involved and provide forum for the explicit discussion of values of peace and social justice. It is against this background that this study examines managing conflicts through peace education programmes for sustainable community development in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Managing Conflicts through Peace Education**

Managing conflict is a critical skill in both personal and professional contexts, as it enables individuals and groups to address disagreements constructively and collaboratively. The process of managing conflict involves understanding the underlying issues, facilitating communication, and finding mutually acceptable solutions. Managing conflict is an intricate and essential process that permeates various aspects of human interaction, from personal relationships to workplace dynamics and even international relations. At its core, conflict arises when individuals or groups perceive a divergence in interests, values, or goals. This divergence can lead to misunderstandings, emotional distress, and, if left unaddressed, can escalate into more significant disputes. The journey toward managing conflict often begins with recognising its existence and understanding the underlying issues that fuel it. Fisher and Ury (2021) emphasise that conflicts frequently stem from unmet needs or interests, which can create a cycle of miscommunication and tension. Conflict prevention and resolution approaches aim to resolve or manage conflicts through non-violent means.

#### **Peace Education**

In its simplest sense, education is the process of transmitting knowledge, societal norms and values to people in a society. Education has been seen as a potential tool for effecting personal and national development. This is because education brings about sustainable changes that are required for achieving sustainable development. Scholars have attempted some classifications on

the concepts of peace education. Ikechukwu (2018) identified peace education as a process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavioural changes that would enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural to manage conflict peacefully and to create the conditions conducive for peace. Gamut cited in Asamonye (2022) also defines peace education as a deliberate attempt to educate children and adults in the dynamics of conflict and the promotion of peace-making skills in homes, school and communities throughout the world, using all the channels and instrument of socialisation. She further states that peace education is about the creation, sustenance and management of positive attitudes to peace among and between different levels and segments of the society. Peace education will enable community members to adopt a positive attitude regarding the different issues they face in life and help develop skills necessary for peaceful resolution of conflicts. Peace education is important for cultivating the culture of peace.

Peace education on the other hand is the initiation of learning processes aiming at entrenching a peace culture in all and sundry in the society such that everyone in the society will be at peace with each other such that the society will attain the peaceful conditions necessary to achieve personal and sustainable development in the society. It is a process of learning that involve actualisation and rational management of conflicts and enhancement of peace and orderliness in the society (Van-Staehr, 2022; Mushakoji, 2019). According to Feardon (2022), peace education is a specific form of learning intended to prepare the learners to contribute towards the achievement of everlasting peace for his/herself and the society at large. Reardon further conceives of it as education for authentic means of achieving formidable security in the society on short and long run.

Similarly, Ajala (2023) defines peace education as the type of education that impacts in the learner, norms, values and attitudes and aspirations that bring about a conducive environment for the attainment of peace and orderliness in a given society. Peace education takes into cognisance issues relating to values, attitudes, forms of behaviour, ways of life and a commitment to the principles of freedom, justice, solidarity and tolerance among individuals and between groups in the society. Gumut (2021) argues that the objectives of peace education in societies should be about teaching and helping the people to acquire the skills needed to maintain peace and orderliness in the society. Nsikak-Abasi and Nneji (2020) describe peace education as those

aspects of formal and non-formal education, in and out-of-school aimed at the elimination of inter-groups prejudice, stereotypes and hatred which make people prefer war to peace, exclusion to cooperation and destruction to construction. Salomon (2020) conceives of peace education activities to focus four important elements namely: as a matter of changing mindset; as a matter of cultivating a set of skills, as a matter of promoting human rights, and finally as a matter of environmentalism, disarmament, and the promotion of a culture of peace. It is the form of education targeted at the reconstruction of human minds towards non-violence way of solving the conflict

Uko et al., (2015) citing UNESCO (2001), see peace education as more effective and meaningful when it is adopted according to the social and cultural context and the needs of a country. Peace education is an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence as scales ranging from the global and national to local and personal. It is about exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable futures (Laing, cited in UNESCO, 2020). For Schmidt and Friedman cited in UNESCO (2020), peace education is holistic, it embraces the physical, emotional, intellectual and social growth of people within a framework deeply rooted in traditional human values.

Peace education programmes are vital for conflict resolution and sustainable community development as they equip individuals with tools for constructive communication, empathy, and understanding of the root causes of conflict. By fostering a culture of non-violence and social justice, peace education contributes to a more harmonious and resilient society. Such programmes are pivotal in fostering knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to address disputes nonviolently and promote social cohesion. According to Harris and Morrison (2021), they are designed to cultivate empathy, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding, which are essential for building resilient societies. However, this work will examine three of such programmes, viz: Unesco's youth for peace and leadership programme, inter-faith mediation programme and workers-employer mediation programme for conflicts resolution and sustainable community development.

## Peace Education Programmes for Managing Conflicts for Sustainable Community Development

UNESCO's Youth for Peace and Leadership Programme for political conflict resolution and sustainable community development

In Aba South, a bustling commercial hub in southeastern Nigeria, political tensions have often disrupted social cohesion and economic progress. Electoral violence, youth marginalisation, and inter-party rivalries have historically fueled instability, undermining development efforts. Recognising the urgent need for inclusive peacebuilding, UNESCO's Youth for Peace and Leadership Programme (YPLP) has been instrumental in empowering young people as agents of conflict management and sustainable community development. By combining political dialogue, leadership training, and grassroots activism, the programme is designed to transform Aba South's youth from potential conflict actors into proactive peacebuilders.

The YPLP's approach is rooted in participatory education and youth engagement. Through workshops and mentorship sessions, young leaders in Aba South are trained in mediation, nonviolent communication, and political advocacy. One notable success has been the establishment of *Youth Peace Councils*, locally led platforms where young people from opposing political factions engage in structured dialogues to address grievances. These councils have played a crucial role in de-escalating election-related tensions, particularly during the 2023 general elections, where trained youth mediators worked with security agencies to prevent clashes in hotspot areas (UNESCO, 2023). A 2023 impact assessment revealed that these initiatives reduced youth involvement in political violence by 40%, as economic stability diminished the appeal of thuggery and vandalism (Nwankwo & Eze, 2024).

Women's inclusion has also been a priority. Young women in Aba South, who previously faced exclusion from political decision-making, now lead community reconciliation efforts. *The Sisters for Peace Network*, an offshoot of YPLP, trains women in conflict-sensitive reporting and advocacy, enabling them to challenge hate speech and promote gender-responsive governance. Their campaigns have increased female participation in local peace committees, shifting traditional power dynamics (Okeke, 2023). The YPLP underscores a vital lesson, sustainable peace and development are achievable when youth are equipped not just with skills, but with platforms to lead. By investing in their potential, UNESCO's programme demonstrates how political conflict

resolution and community development can go hand in hand, turning volatile spaces into hubs of resilience and innovation.

Interfaith Mediation Programme for Religious Conflict  
Resolution and Sustainable Community Development

In Aba South where Pentecostal churches stand alongside mosques and traditional shrines, religious differences have sometimes fueled tensions rather than fostering unity. *The Interfaith Dialogue and Mediation Programme* has emerged as a transformative force, turning places of worship from potential battlegrounds into platforms for peacebuilding and community development. By bringing together Christian, Muslim, and indigenous religious leaders with their congregations, this initiative has created unprecedented opportunities for understanding and collaboration in a city once fragmented along religious lines.

The programme's success lies in its innovative approach to conflict transformation. Rather than simply hosting theoretical discussions about tolerance, it facilitates practical cooperation through interfaith community projects. For example, a joint construction of boreholes in religiously mixed neighbourhoods, where Imams and Pastors can work side-by-side with their congregations to address water scarcity. Such collaborative project will help them to stop seeing each other as threats (Interfaith Peace Initiative, 2024). These shared development efforts have become powerful symbols of what becomes possible when faith communities unite around common human needs.

Youth engagement forms the heartbeat of the programme. Recognising that young people are often both perpetrators and victims of faith-based violence, the initiative trains interfaith youth teams in conflict mediation and social media peacebuilding. This helps to counter online hate speech, which frequently escalates tensions during religious festivals. Organising annual Peace Carnival, using these youth mediators, can be pivotal in attracting thousands, featuring interfaith music performances, drama sketches promoting tolerance, and football matches that deliberately mix players from different religious backgrounds (Aba South Youth Council, 2024).

The programme's impact on women has been particularly transformative. The Women's Interfaith Council, comprising market women from various faiths, has become a formidable force for conflict prevention. These women leverage their positions as mothers and traders to identify and mediate emerging tensions in their neighborhoods. Their early intervention during the 2023

election period prevented what could have been violent clashes near polling units located between churches and mosques (National Peace Committee, 2024).

By including occasional resistance from hardline elements in all faith communities, the programmes emphasis on practical cooperation over theological debate has won increasing acceptance. It links interfaith harmony with concrete community development benefits; a foundation that promises supports not just peaceful coexistence, but shared prosperity for all residents.

#### Workers-Employer Mediation Programme for Industrial Conflict Management and Sustainable Community Development

In the industrial heartland of Aba South, where thriving small-scale manufacturing coexists with persistent labour tensions, the Workers-Employer Mediation Programme has emerged as a critical bridge between economic growth and social stability. This innovative initiative tackles the root causes of industrial conflicts while creating ripple effects that strengthen the entire community's social and economic fabric.

The programmes success stems from its unique three-tiered approach to conflict prevention and resolution. At the shop floor level, trained mediators from both management and worker ranks conduct weekly "harmony circles" to address grievances before they escalate. These sessions have been particularly effective in the garment and leatherworks clusters, where disputes over wages and working conditions had previously led to frequent work stoppages (Aba Chamber of Commerce, 2024).

Beyond the factory walls, the programme has pioneered community-based solutions to labour disputes. The establishment of Joint Worker-Employer Cooperative Societies has allowed both parties to invest in shared ventures, aligning their economic interests. By adding vocational training as a component, the programme has far-reaching impact on workers' families. By offering skills acquisition programmes in high-demand fields like industrial machine maintenance and quality control, it creates alternative livelihood opportunities that reduce families' dependence on any single employer (Aba South Women's Development Forum, 2024). The Industrial Peace Ambassadors initiative recruits and trains young people from workers' and employers' families to mediate disputes and promote workplace harmony. These ambassadors are instrumental in preventing conflicts during peak production periods and could even expand their role to include community peace building beyond industrial settings.

### **Aim and Objectives**

The study examined managing conflicts through peace education programmes for sustainable community development in Aba South Local government Area of Abia State. The specific objectives are to:

1. find out ways UNESCO's Youth for Peace Programme manage political conflicts for sustainable community development in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State
2. determine ways Interfaith Mediation Programme manage religious conflict for sustainable community development in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State.
3. determine ways Workers-Employer Mediation Programme manage industrial conflicts for sustainable community development in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State.

### **Research Questions**

1. In what ways does UNESCO's Youth for Peace Programme manage political conflicts for sustainable community development in Aba South Local government Area of Abia State?
2. In what ways does Interfaith Mediation Programme manage religious conflicts for sustainable community development in Aba South Local Government of Aba State?
3. In what ways does Workers-Employer Mediation Programme manage industrial conflicts for sustainable community development in Aba South Local Government Area of Aba State?

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Three (3) objectives and three (3) research questions were generated to guide the study. The population for the study comprised two thousand (2000) members of thirteen (13) registered community-based organisations in Aba South Local government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. The multistage sampling technique was used to select 5 communities with their registered CBOs. Random sampling technique was used to select 156 members representing 20% of the total population of the selected CBOs as sample for the study. Instrument titled: Managing Peace Education Programmes for Conflict Resolution and Sustainable Community Development Questionnaire (MPEPCRSCDQ) was validated by one expert from the Department of Educational Psychology (Measurement and Evaluation), and two experts in Adult Education and Community Development, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers

State, Nigeria. The instrument was divided into two sections A and B; section A is the bio data, while section B consisted of well constructed question items designed to elicit information on managing peace education programmes for conflicts resolution and sustainable community development. The reliability coefficient index of 0.78 was obtained using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistical method which guaranteed the use of the instrument for the study. The instrument was administered by the researchers and with the help of three (3) briefed assistants. The questionnaire was patterned according to modified Likert scale type of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1) point respectively. One hundred and fifty-six (156) copies of the questionnaire was administered to the one hundred and fifty (156) CBO members and one hundred and fifty copies were completed and retrieved for data analysis. Data collected were presented in tables and analysed using weighted mean statistics.

## Results

**Research Question One:** In what ways does UNESCO's Youth for Peace Programme manage political conflicts for sustainable community development in Aba South Local government Area of Abia State?

**Table 1: Weighted mean scores on research question one**

S/N	Items	No. = 150					Mean	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD			
1.	Empowering youth as peace builders and mediators by equipping them with negotiation, mediation, and dialogue skills to resolve political disputes	80	60	6	4	3.4	Agree	
2.	Enhancing political participation and governance by educating youth on democratic processes, reducing electoral violence	98	32	12	8	3.4	Agree	
3.	Facilitating youth-police-government roundtables to address marginalization	76	60	12	2	2.8	Agree	
4.	Training young leaders to engage with local government on inclusive policies.	70	62	11	7	3.3	Agree	
5	Promoting social cohesion and tolerance by using arts, sports, and festivals to unite diverse groups	109	36	4	1	3.6	Strongly Agree	

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Aggregate mean 2.7      Agree

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Table 1 revealed that items 1 and 2 had mean scores of 3.4 respectively; items 3-5 had mean scores of 2.8, 3.3 and 3.6 respectively. However, with the aggregated mean of 2.7, the respondents agreed that UNESCO's Youth for Peace and Leadership Programme managed political conflicts for sustainable community development by empowering youth as peace builders and mediators by equipping them with negotiation, mediation, and dialogue skills to resolve political disputes, enhancing political participation and governance by educating youth on democratic processes, reducing electoral violence, facilitating youth-police-government roundtables to address marginalisation, training young leaders to engage with local government on inclusive policies and promoting social cohesion and tolerance by using arts, sports, and festivals to unite diverse groups in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria.

**Research Question Two:** In what ways does Interfaith Mediation Programme manage religious conflict for sustainable community development in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State?

**Table 2: Table 1: Weighted mean scores on research question one**

S/N	Items	No. = 150				Mean	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD		
6.	Promoting religious tolerance and understanding through interfaith dialogue sessions and regular meetings where Christian, Muslim, and traditional religious leaders discuss shared values.	50	78	17	5	3.1	Agree
7.	Organising joint worship and peace events like interfaith prayers, cultural festivals, and community service projects	54	68	18	10	2.6	Agree
8.	Organising Religious Education Workshops focused on teaching youth about different faiths to dispel myths and stereotypes.	68	70	8	4	3.3	Agree
9.	Promoting interfaith community projects for joint initiatives like building schools, health centers, or sanitation projects	87	43	15	5	3.4	Agree

10. Employing the power of sports & arts such as inter and intra-religion football matches, drama, and music events to unite youths across religions	103	40	7	-	3.6	Strongly Agree
Aggregate mean					3.2	Agree

Table 2 showed that items 6-9 had mean scores of 3.1, 2.6, 3.3 and 3.4, indicating that the respondents agreed to the items, while item 10 scored 3.6, indicating a strongly agree response. However, with an aggregate mean of 3.2, the respondents agreed that Interfaith Dialogue and Mediation Programme managed religious conflict for sustainable community development by promoting religious tolerance and understanding, organising joint worship and peace events, organising Religious Education Workshops, promoting interfaith community projects and employing the power of sports and arts to unite youths across religions for conflict resolution and sustainable community development in Aba South Local government Area of Abia State, Nigeria.

**Research Question Three:** In what ways does Workers-Employer Mediation Programme manage industrial conflict for sustainable community development in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State?

**Table 3: Weighted mean scores on research question one**

S/N	Items	No. = 150				Mean	Decision
		SA	A	D	SD		
11.	Creating grievance reporting systems like anonymous complaint channels for workers to voice concerns before conflict worsen	67	65	13	5	3.2	Agree
12.	Promoting contract dispute resolution through agreement clarifying employment terms to prevent misunderstandings.	72	60	10	8	3.3	Agree
13.	Improving workplace conditions and fair wages/settlement by providing opportunity that help workers and employers to agree on fair salaries and benefits	60	80	5	5	3.3	Agree
14.	Reducing exploitation and unfair labour practices through Anti-Discrimination Advocacy	58	66	20	6	3.1	Agree
15	Strengthening labour rights awareness through workshops on Nigerian Labour Laws such as the Labour Act, National Industrial	51	40	30	9	2.6	Agree

Court (NIC) procedures, and trade union rights

**Aggregate mean**

**3.1 Agree**

Table 3 revealed that items 11 had mean score of 3.2, items 12 and 13 had mean scores of 3.3 respectively while items 14 and 15 had mean scores of 3.1 and 2.6 respectively. However, with the aggregated mean of 3.1, the respondents agreed that Workers-Employer Mediation Programme managed industrial conflicts for sustainable community development by creating grievance reporting systems, promoting contract dispute resolution through agreement clarifying employment terms to prevent misunderstandings, improving workplace conditions and fair wages/settlement and strengthening labour rights awareness through workshops on Nigerian Labour Laws such as the Labour Act, National Industrial Court (NIC) procedures, and trade union rights for conflicts resolution and sustainable community development in Aba South Local government Area of Abia State, Nigeria.

## **Discussion of Findings**

### **UNESCO's Youth for Peace Programme for Political Conflicts Resolution**

The study findings revealed that UNESCO's Youth for Peace and Leadership Programme effectively managed political conflicts for sustainable community development by empowering youths as peace builders and mediators *through* negotiation, mediation, and dialogue skills to resolve political disputes, enhancing political participation and governance through reduction of electoral violence and marginalisation, training young leaders to engage with local government on inclusive policies and promoting social cohesion and tolerance by using arts, sports, and festivals to unite diverse groups. This is in consonance with the finding of the impact assessment by Nwankwo and Eze (2024) which revealed that these initiatives reduced youth involvement in political violence by 40%, as economic stability diminished the appeal of thuggery and vandalism. Also, UNESCO, (2023) found that such programmes played pivotal role in de-escalating election-related tensions, particularly during the 2023 general elections, where trained youth mediators worked with security agencies to prevent clashes in hotspot areas. Okeke (2023) concluded that the YPLP underscores a vital lesson, sustainable peace and development are achievable when youth are equipped not just with skills, but with platforms to lead. By investing in their potential, UNESCO's programme demonstrates how managing political conflict and community development can go hand in hand, turning volatile spaces into hubs of resilience and innovation.

### Interfaith Mediation Programme for Managing Religious Conflicts

The finding of the study revealed that Interfaith Dialogue and Mediation Programme managed religious conflict resolution and sustainable community development by promoting religious tolerance and understanding through interfaith dialogue sessions and shared values, joint worship and peace events like interfaith prayers, cultural festivals, and community service projects, religious education workshops and employing the power of sports and arts such as inter and intra-religion football matches, drama, and music events to unite youths across religions for conflict resolution and sustainable community development. This is in corroboration with Interfaith Peace Initiative, (2024) that a joint construction of boreholes in religiously mixed neighborhoods, where imams and pastors can work side-by-side with their congregations to address water scarcity helped them to stop seeing each other as threats. These shared development efforts have become powerful symbols of what becomes possible when faith communities unite around common human needs. Also, Aba South Youth Council (2024) found that peace carnival, using these youth mediators, featuring interfaith music performances, drama sketches promoting tolerance, and football matches that deliberately mix players from different religious backgrounds are pivotal in attracting and uniting thousands.

### Workers-Employer Mediation Programme for Managing Industrial Conflict

The finding of the study revealed that Workers-Employer Mediation Programme managed industrial conflict for sustainable community development through Anti-Discrimination which strengthens labour rights awareness through workshops on Nigerian Labour Laws such as the Labour Act, National Industrial Court (NIC) procedures clarifying agreement employment terms to prevent misunderstandings, improving workplace conditions and fair wages/settlement, and trade union rights for conflicts resolution and sustainable community development. This finding is in corroboration with Aba Chamber of Commerce, (2024) who found that worker-employee mediation programmes have been particularly effective in the garment and leatherworks clusters, where disputes over wages and working conditions had previously led to frequent work stoppages.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that managing peace education programme is very vital in resolving conflicts in Aba South Local Government Area. Peace

education is pivotal in resolving political, religious and industrial conflicts ravaging the study area today. Therefore, having such knowledge of peace education programme to strengthen trust and social cohesion cannot be understated because it is a pre-requisite for sustainable community development in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria cannot be understated.

### Recommendations

From the findings and conclusion of the study the following recommendations are made;

1. Government and other stakeholders should intensify the empowerment of youth as peace builders and mediators by equipping them with negotiation, mediation, and dialogue skills to resolve political disputes for enhancing their political participation and governance.
2. Community and religious leaders should collaborate in organising joint worship and peace events like interfaith prayers, cultural festivals such as inter and intra-religion football matches, drama, and music events, and community service projects like building schools, health centers, or sanitation projects to promote religious tolerance and understanding, thereby melting down the religious hate and bigotry eating deep into the fabrics of the system.
3. Employers and workers should work to create grievance reporting systems like anonymous complaint channels to voice concerns before conflicts worsen, introduce contract agreement clarifying employment terms, wages/settlement benefits to reduce the cases of “oga-boy” misunderstanding and conflicts in the area

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