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Article

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THE ROLE OF YOUTH POPULATION IN PEACEBUILDING FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This article examines the role of youth population in peacebuilding for national development in Nigeria. With over 65 million young people aged 10–30, Nigeria possesses one of the largest youth populations globally. Such a presentation has unique opportunity for national transformation. Despite this demographic advantage, ongoing conflicts such as banditry, Boko Haram insurgency, kidnapping, secessionist movements, and farmer-herder clashes continue to undermine national progress. Peacebuilding involves long-term efforts to foster dialogue, heal divisions, and reform institutions to benefit conflict-affected communities. Engaging youth in these processes is essential to rebuilding trust and promoting sustainable development. The article adopts the Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory, developed by Richard M. Lerner in 1990s, which highlights the strengths and active contributions of youth, viewing them as resources rather than problems. A desk research method was employed, drawing data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the National Population Commission (NPC), United Nations reports, UNDP publications, academic journals, and credible online sources. Findings reveal that Nigeria's youth are not fully harnessed due to limited job opportunities and inadequate access to relevant skills. This hampers their potential in peacebuilding and national development. The article recommended that among others government and stakeholders should invest in mentorship, skills development aligned with the fourth industrial revolution, and the creation of platforms that allow young people to showcase their talents and actively contribute to peacebuilding efforts.

Keywords: Youth Population, Peacebuilding, Community Engagement, National Development, Nigeria.

Introduction

In Nigeria, the National Youth Policy (2019) defined youth as individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 (Price, 2019). Ibrahim and Audu (2020) explained that this age range reflects the country's socio-economic conditions, educational system, and cultural norms, acknowledging the extended period many young Nigerians take to achieve full independence and employment. Internationally, the United Nations defined youth as those aged 15 to 24 primarily for statistical and developmental programming across countries (Belmonte & McMahon, 2019). However, agencies such as UNESCO and the African Youth Charter extend the upper limit to 35 years recognise the unique challenges faced by young people in developing countries (Jalloh, 2015). While the exact age range may differ, national and international definitions acknowledge youth as a critical stage of life with significant potential for contributing to peacebuilding and national development. To this end, Okijie, Effiong, and Iriabije (2023) stressed that Nigeria is home to one of the largest youth populations in the world, aged between 15 and 35 years makeup over 60% of the country's total population, which holds great significance for the nation's future. Thus, this large and growing youth population presents both opportunities and challenges. If the youths are properly educated, empowered, and engaged, this drives economic growth, innovation, and social transformation, given the opportunities for creativity and adaptability to make them well-suited to contribute to key sectors such as technology, agriculture, education, and peacebuilding (Nkechi, Emeh Ikehukwu & Okehukwu, 2012). On the one hand, challenges come when opportunities are not available for the young people to become vulnerable tools for social vices.

Certainly, Aja-Okorie and Adali (2013) reinstated that when the opportunities for education, employment, and meaningful engagement are absent, many young people become vulnerable and may resort to various social vices because they are faced with poverty, frustration, and a sense of hopelessness. Under such conditions, youths turn to criminal activities as a means of survival or expression of discontent. For instance, one of the most common vices is internet fraud (popularly known as 'Yahoo Yahoo'), which has gained widespread attention due to the involvement of young Nigerians in cybercrime both within and outside the country (Ojo, Akinola & Peter, 2025). Additionally, Ojo and Afolaranmi (2024) added that others become involved in cultism, drug abuse, armed robbery, kidnapping, and political thuggery, especially during elections when they are used by political actors to intimidate opponents or disrupt the voting process. A more troubling development is the involvement of youths in violent extremism and banditry. For example, many young people have been recruited into terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and ISWAP, while in the North-West, youth participation in armed banditry and kidnapping for ransom has become widespread (Nte, Nte, Featherstone & Eyengho, 2024). Similarly, in the South-East and South-South, some disillusioned youths have joined militant and separatist groups, contributing to the growing insecurity in these regions and threatening national peace and development as a result of the consequences of neglecting the needs and aspirations of the youths.

The rise in youth involvement in social vices is exerting a devastating impact on both lives and property through violent crimes such as armed robbery, cult clashes, terrorism, and banditry. Innocent citizens, including women and children are often caught in the crossfire of these criminal activities, leading to widespread fear and trauma within communities (Ojo, Adegoke, Akan, Egbo & Ojiziele, 2024). As a result, it has contributed to the massive destruction of infrastructure like schools, hospitals, markets, and places of worship as well as

burnt and vandalised petrol pipelines, high tension power lines, and destruction of entire villages, displacing thousands of people and making them leave their home seeking refuge in Internal Displace Person Camps (IDP) (Umoh, 2025). Similarly, in the North-West, kidnappings and bandit attacks on highways and rural areas have forced many communities to flee, abandoning their farms, homes, and businesses as well as creating economic instability that discourages investment, disrupts agricultural and commercial activities (Okoye & Mathias, 2024).

Given the involvement of youth in violent crime, Ajiboye and Olademo (2025) observed that illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, and drug abuse are among other factors that contribute to youth involvement in various violent crimes that undermine the security and socio-economic stability of the country. However, despite past and present administrations established programmes to help young people improve their personal qualities and produce positive outcomes in the society, their involvement in crime tends to increase daily (Umoh, 2025). As a result of this persistent involvement of youth in crime, the Daily Trust newspaper of 14 April 2025 reported that the President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), Dr Akinwumi Adesina disclosed that the challenge facing many African youths is the mismatch between the education they receive and the skills they need for the labour market. He added that we must prepare our young population for the rapidly changing world of the digital economy through upskilling in digital skills. Research has shown that youths are less enrolled in the educational fields that are dominating the world. While 30 per cent of Japanese youth in universities pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics, less than 25 per cent of students in sub-Saharan Africa are in these fields. This puts Africa behind in terms of its preparedness for the 4th industrial revolution, especially in fields such as artificial intelligence, robotics, automation, and cloud computing, which are revolutionising the world. Given this revelation, it is important that government and other relevant stakeholders should create platform that encourages younger people to enrol on programmes, and skills that will fit into the 4th industrial revolution. Additionally, Ojo et al (2024) study the “Get-rich-quickly syndrome” among the youth and Umoh’s (2025) study Unemployment as a Driver of Crimes revealed that ineffectiveness of Government Interventions in youths’ empowerment causes crime. On this premise, this article examines the role of youth population in peacebuilding for national development in Nigeria to unravel the demographic strength in peacebuilding and pinpoint the challenges that hinder the role of youth in peacebuilding as well as explain how the huge population of youth can be harnessed for national development.

Conceptual Clarification

Peacebuilding: According to Olsson and Moore (2024), peacebuilding encompasses a broad range of initiatives by various governmental and civil society actors at the local, national, and international levels to address the underlying causes of violence and guarantee that civilians are free from humiliation and fear before, during, and following violent conflict. Thus, peacebuilding is an activity that aims to resolve injustice in nonviolent ways and transform the cultural and structural conditions that generate deadly or destructive conflict. It is done through developing constructive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national, and racial boundaries. In this peacebuilding, includes violence prevention, conflict management, resolution, or transformation, and post-conflict reconciliation or trauma healing before, during, and after any given case of violence (Ogunode & Ayeni, 2024). As such, peacebuilding is a multidisciplinary cross-sector technique or method that becomes strategic when it works over the long run and at all

levels of society to establish and sustain relationships among people locally and globally and thus engender sustainable peace. To this end, Ayeni and Abdullahi (2024) therefore, stressed that successful peacebuilding activities create an environment supportive of self-sustaining, durable peace, reconcile opponents, prevent conflict from restarting, integrate civil society, create rule of law mechanisms, and address underlying structural and societal issues that led to conflict.

Youth Population

The Nigeria youth new policy (2019) defined youth population as the citizens between the ages of 18 and 29. Nonetheless, those between the ages of 15 and 35 are recognised as youngsters under the African Youngsters Charter (Umana, Garba, Ologun, Olu & Umar, 2024). Therefore, individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 are considered youth by the UN for statistical purposes, independent of different definitions by Member States. According to them, the youth population generally defined as those between the ages of 15 and 24 plays a significant role in determining the social, cultural, and economic dynamics of a society (Osabohien & Al-Faryan, 2025).

National Development

National development refers to the ability of a nation to improve the lives of citizens and boost economic growth. For a country to develop, it needs to invest in its human and physical capital through means of improving access to healthcare and education, building infrastructure like roads and railways, and promoting new technologies and skills training (Anam, Ironbar, Otu, Duke & Achuk Eba, 2024). Similarly, Chukwuka and Dibie (2024) stated how to know when a country's national development is high, its citizens generally have a higher standard of living, people live longer, healthier lives as well as have more economic opportunities and better access to resources and attract more foreign investment and trade, which further boosts the economy.

Method

This article adopts a desk research approach, relying on secondary data sourced from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the National Population Commission (NPC), United Nations reports, publications from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), academic journals, and relevant internet sources. These materials were used to examine the role of Nigeria youth population in peacebuilding for national development in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Demographic Significance of Youth Population: According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2023) reported that youth constitute a significant segment of the population, estimated at over 60% of the country's total population of more than 200 million people. Thus, Okijie, Effiong and Iriabije (2023) stated that this demographic reality presents both a challenge, opportunity for peacebuilding and national development. To him, on the one hand, the large number of young people, if not adequately engaged, can contribute to rising unemployment, social unrest, and criminal activities. On the other hand, if properly empowered and involved in nation-building efforts, they possess the energy, creativity, and innovation needed to drive positive change. However, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022), youth unemployment stood at over 40%, contributing significantly to frustration, political apathy, and susceptibility to manipulation by violent groups or political actors. For instance, this has been evident in cases such as the #EndSARS protests in 2020, where youth-led movements reflected both a cry against

systemic injustice and a call for greater inclusion in national discourse. Similarly, Akiogbe, Feng, Kurata, Kageyama and Kodama (2024) added that corruption and inequality in the distribution of wealth and lack of formulation and implementation of better policies to create employment and other opportunities have contributed to youth recruitment into insurgency, Boko Haram terrorism as well as the emergence of banditry and terrorism in the country.

Despite various youth-led initiatives such as the *Not Too Young to Run* movement successfully advocating for the reduction of age limits for political office, culminating in the signing of the Not Too Young To Run Act in 2018 demonstrated that when youth are given the opportunity and platform, contribute meaningfully to democratic development and played pivotal roles in conflict-prone regions (Akiogbe, et al 2024). To this end, Yisa and Orji (2024) in their study revealed that youth have been focused on resilience in conflict-prone zones assisting security personnel to curtail crime as well as promote peace education, reconciliation programmes supported by organisations such as Search for Common Ground and United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) has led to reduced tensions and increased community dialogue. These initiatives show that youth are not only victims or perpetrators of violence but can also be agents of peace when equipped with the right tools and support. Additionally, the former president Olusegun Obasanjo in 2009 stated that; youth are a double-edged sword: if neglected, they may contribute to instability, but if actively involved and supported, they can be powerful drivers of peace, unity, and national development. Harnessing this potential requires deliberate investment in education, employment, civic engagement, and leadership training.

Misconceptions and Missed Opportunities

Youth are often seen through a dichotomous lens: either as victims of conflict or as perpetrators of violence. This perception, however, is both narrow and misleading, as it overlooks the significant potential of young people to act as agents of positive change, particularly in the areas of peacebuilding and community development. According to Elenkova (2024), in his study discovered that this prevailing narrative fails to acknowledge that many young Nigerians are actively engaged in efforts to foster peace, reconciliation, and social cohesion in their localities. Also, Adjekpagbon (2024) in his study on Misconception that hinder youth development discovered that youth are disproportionately affected by conflict, but also how they have responded with resilience and innovation in the violence stemming from insurgencies in the North-East, such as the Boko Haram insurgency, has had devastating effects on the youth population. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), more than 1.7 million young people have been displaced in the region (UNDP, 2020). Many of these youth face challenges such as limited access to education, employment, and psychological support, making them vulnerable to being recruited by extremist groups (Elenkova, 2024).

Furthermore, a more nuanced perspective is emerging where young people are increasingly seen as proactive contributors to peace because several youth-led organisations and initiatives across Nigeria have demonstrated this shift. For instance, the *Peace Ambassadors* programme, initiated by the Nigerian Youth Peace Forum (NYPF), has involved thousands of young Nigerians in peacebuilding activities that focus on community reconciliation, conflict resolution, and the prevention of violent extremism, particularly in the Middle Belt and North-East among other regions, where intercommunal conflicts have been exacerbated by ethnic and religious tensions as well as aiming to empower youth to play a central role in preventing violence before it erupts (Adjekpagbon, 2024). Moreover, in

conflict-prone areas such as Adamawa, Plateau, Kaduna, and Taraba among other States, young people have been instrumental in mediating between conflicting groups and building local peace frameworks. For example, the *Youth for Peace Initiative*, a group of young volunteers in Plateau State, has facilitated dialogue between herders and farmers, reducing tensions and fostering cooperation on shared resources (Ojo, Akinola and Peter, 2025). To them, despite the clear impact of these initiatives, the efforts of young peacebuilders often go unrecognised in national policy discussions. According to the *National Youth Policy* (2019), although the Nigerian government acknowledges the importance of youth in national development, there is limited institutional support for youth-led peacebuilding initiatives because policy's provisions for youth participation, in peace and security frameworks remain largely underutilised even though programmes like the *Not Too Young to Run Act* have facilitated youth political participation, they do not fully address the need for comprehensive youth engagement in conflict resolution and post-conflict recovery processes (Adeyami, Alao, Opakunbi and Ajibade, 2024). Thus, international organisations, such as the United Nations, have also emphasised the importance of recognising and supporting youth as peacebuilders by engaging them in peace processes is not merely an ideal but a necessity because young people make up a large proportion of the population in conflict-affected regions (UN, 2020). Despite these calls, Elenkova (2024) stressed that there remains a significant disconnect between global recommendations and local policy implementation in Nigeria.

Youth as Innovators in Peacebuilding

In the quest for lasting peace, Ogo, Ojo and Odobo (2024) stated that young people have emerged not only as participants but also as innovators, introducing new ideas, strategies, and technologies into peacebuilding processes through creativity, adaptability, and understanding of contemporary social dynamics position them uniquely to offer fresh approaches to resolving conflicts and fostering coexistence. Thus, by using digital media for awareness campaigns to organising inter-communal dialogue forums, young people are transforming the peacebuilding landscape in ways that are both impactful and sustainable (Ogo et al 2024). According to Ogidi (2024), youth are leveraging new communication platforms such as social media to challenge divisive narratives, spread peace messages, and mobilise their peers around shared goals of unity and development. For instance, *PeaceTech Lab Nigeria* is a youth-led initiative that uses technology to monitor hate speech and counter misinformation, particularly during election periods (Bell, 2024). The effectiveness of this approach has been highlighted by scholars such as Bell (2024), who observed that youth-driven digital interventions significantly reduced tension in parts of northern Nigeria by promoting dialogue and transparency. Similarly, *Building Blocks for Peace Foundation* trains young peacebuilders across several conflict-prone states, equipping them with skills in mediation, advocacy, and early warning systems to document and improve community relations and prevent escalation of violence (Bell, 2024). Moreover, research by Ogo, Ojo and Odobo (2024) found that peacebuilding initiatives led by youth tend to be more inclusive and participatory and adopt bottom-up strategies that prioritise local knowledge and community ownership with key factors in ensuring sustainability. The scholars concluded that young Nigerians, when supported, can move beyond rhetoric and implement practical peacebuilding actions that are context-specific and forward-looking.

Roles of Youth in Community Peacebuilding

According to Sokoga (2024) youth have emerged as vital contributors to peacebuilding at the community level because of their unique position as active members of society. Youth are closely connected to local realities which enables them to play meaningful roles in preventing violence resolving disputes, and promoting dialogue among diverse groups. Given this insertion, Bell (2024) argued that sometimes youths are portrayed as passive recipients of peace efforts or, worse, as drivers of conflict while many of them are actively shaping peaceful communities through grassroots initiatives and innovative strategies. Ekhatu (2024) observed in his study that peace initiatives in Adamawa State led by young people often serve as the first to detect signs of rising tension within their communities. This is because of their ability to sense and report potential threats. They therefore enables swift intervention particularly in areas where formal security presence is weak by forming local vigilance teams that monitor and report suspicious activities to traditional leaders and security agencies helping to reduce the risk of escalation. Additionally, Ojewale (2024), in his research found that another important role of youths in community peacebuilding is facilitating intergroup dialogue by ensuring that any division along ethnic or religious lines is bridged. For instance, a study by Sokoga (2024), confirmed that the *Jos Peace Dialogue Forum*, led largely by young people has been instrumental in bridging divides between Christian and Muslim communities. It contributed to a decline in reprisal attacks and improved social trust in areas affected by repeated cycles of violence.

Youth Contribution to National Development in Nigeria

Peace serves as the bedrock of any meaningful development because, without peace, efforts to improve the economy, governance, or social services may be futile. Lack of active involvement of youth in sustaining peace has a direct impact on the broader national development agenda (Udeh, Daraojimba, Odulaja, Afolabi, Ogedengbe & James 2024). Thus, Ajaude (2024) added that when young people participate in peacebuilding, they help create an environment that allows education to flourish, businesses to grow, and institutions to function more effectively. Youths therefore contribute to preventing violence and also promote social cohesion, civic responsibility, and good governance. Moreover, NPC (2023) reported that Nigeria has one of the youngest populations in the world, with more than 60% of its citizens under the age of 30 years. This represents a unique advantage as their energy and potential can be positively harnessed through involvement in governance, innovation, agriculture, entrepreneurship, and volunteerism to drive progress in both urban and rural communities. For instance, a study conducted by the British Council (2016) revealed that young people who are involved in civic activities are more likely to trust government institutions and work towards community development. Furthermore, Olurin (2024) in his research found that the involvement of youth in electoral processes through movements like *Not Too Young to Run*—has led to a noticeable shift in political participation with more young Nigerians contesting and winning seats in local and national assemblies, enhances democratic values, and strengthens public institutions. Likewise, in the area of economic development, young people are increasingly taking the lead in start-up businesses, digital innovation, and creative industries and programmes such as the *Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria* (YouWiN!). The *N-Power* scheme have shown that, when empowered, youth can drive productivity, reduce unemployment and experience lower rates of crime and political violence (Ojo & Afolaranmi, 2024).

Challenges to Effective Youth Participation in Peacebuilding

Young people hold enormous potential as peacebuilders but they continue to face several structural and social challenges that limit their meaningful participation in peace processes such as limited access to quality education, high rates of unemployment, political marginalisation, and inadequate mentorship. These challenges not only stifle their contributions but also increase their vulnerability to violence and exploitation (Okoi, 2024). However, the issue of youth unemployment remains particularly pressing according to the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), which reported that over 40% of Nigeria's youth are either unemployed or underemployed. Such economic exclusion often fuels frustration, which lead to engaging in criminal activities or recruitment into violent groups (Ajaude, 2024). In support of this Okoi (2024), asserted that limited access to education, poor educational infrastructure, insecurity, and poverty have left many young Nigerians without the skills or knowledge necessary form the challenge of peacebuilding. From a different perspective, Ojewale (2024) argued that one of the challenges youth face is political exclusion it is a major obstacle, despite making up the majority of the population, youth are often left out of decision-making platforms. Scholars such as Ojo and Afolaranmi (2024) noted that political structures in Nigeria are largely dominated by older elites, with limited space for youth participation. As a result, young people are often relegated to the role of political foot soldiers during elections, rather than being seen as stakeholders in governance and peacebuilding (Ojo & Afolaranmi, 2024). According to Onyewuchi, Jawan and Ahmad (2024) to fully harness the potential of Nigerian youth in peacebuilding, there must be deliberate efforts by the government and civil society to include them in decision-making processes, training, mentorship, and leadership opportunities. Such inclusivity will allow them to contribute meaningfully to shaping a peaceful and prosperous Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This article adopts the Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory, propounded by Richard M. Lerner in 1990s, to underpin the role of youth population in peacebuilding for national development in Nigeria. The theory emphasises the strengths, potential, and active involvement of young people in shaping their communities. Rather than perceiving youth as problems to be managed, PYD recognises them as valuable assets to be nurtured. This perspective aligns strongly with the need to engage Nigerian youths in peacebuilding processes and broader national development efforts. PYD supports the idea that when provided with the right support such as mentorship, leadership training, and inclusive policies, young people can serve as agents of peace, innovation, and progress, particularly in post-conflict recovery and reconciliation. The theory also demonstrates that in communities affected by violent conflict such as parts of Adamawa, Borno, Katsina, and other states across Nigeria youth have played a pivotal role in supporting displaced persons, facilitating trauma healing, and rebuilding fractured relationships among community members. Through their voluntary engagement in reconciliation projects youths have significantly contributed to restoring inter-communal trust and promoting long-term peace. Furthermore, promoting inclusion and social justice forms a critical aspect of youth involvement in peacebuilding. Youths have emerged as vocal advocates for marginalised groups, challenging societal structures that perpetuate inequality and exclusion. Their active participation underscores the importance of empowering the youth population in driving sustainable peace and fostering national development.

Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal that Nigerian youths have become vital innovators in peacebuilding, introducing creative solutions that bridge divides and foster reconciliation within their communities. By utilising technology, social media, and local initiatives, they promote dialogue, counter hate speech, and strengthen social cohesion. Their adaptability and energy have transformed peacebuilding from elite-driven efforts into inclusive grassroots movements. Programmes such as youth-led mediation forums, peace education campaigns, and digital advocacy highlight how innovation is redefining the nation's conflict management landscape. In terms of national development, youths contribute significantly across economic, social, and political spheres, drive entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and digital innovation, thereby enhancing productivity and governance. The active involvement of young Nigerians in democratic processes and community development initiatives demonstrates their commitment to building a stable and prosperous nation. Their efforts in agriculture, education, and technology underscore their importance as catalysts for national transformation and sustainable peace. However, effective youth participation in peacebuilding faces persistent challenges. High unemployment rates, limited access to education, political marginalisation, and inadequate mentorship hinder their full potential. Many young people remain excluded from decision-making processes and lack institutional support to sustain their initiatives. Additionally, socio-economic inequalities and insecurity discourage long-term engagement in peacebuilding. Overcoming these challenges requires deliberate policy actions that promote youth inclusion, create employment opportunities, and strengthen mentorship frameworks. Empowering youths through these measures would enhance their capacity as agents of peace and key drivers of national development in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The article reveals that Nigerian youth are often stereotyped as either victims or perpetrators of violence, the reality is that they are also dynamic and active agents of peace in their communities. Their efforts, however, are frequently underappreciated and unsupported by national policies. To harness the full potential of youths in fostering peace and national development, there needs to be a more inclusive approach, one that recognises their capacity for leadership, innovation, and reconciliation. Policies should not only address the vulnerabilities of youth but also empower them as key players in the peacebuilding process. In areas affected by prolonged violence such as Kaduna, Benue, Borno and other States, youths have played a crucial role in healing fractured communities. They have led reconciliation efforts, initiated trauma support programmes, and revived traditional conflict resolution practices to suit present realities. Their ability to connect across ethnic and religious lines has proven particularly effective in reducing mistrust and fostering intergroup understanding. Youth are not merely the leaders of tomorrow they are innovators of peace today because their actions reflect a deep commitment to shaping a more just and harmonious society. By recognising and investing in their ideas, the country can harness this innovation to build enduring peace and national development. Additionally, in areas where youth are making a significant impact through the use of social media, community radio, street drama, and school-based outreach, young Nigerians are raising awareness about non-violent conflict resolution and the dangers of hate speech. The youth in Nigeria are not merely participants in peacebuilding they are central actors in creating and sustaining peace at the community level. Their roles, ranging from conflict prevention and education to dialogue and reconciliation, demonstrate their capacity to act as agents of positive change. Recognising and supporting these efforts through policy and institutional frameworks is

essential for building inclusive, peaceful, and cohesive communities across the country. Furthermore, the lack of mentorship and guidance deprives many young Nigerians of role models who could help channel their energy towards constructive change. The absence of structured mentoring programmes within schools, communities, and civil society leaves many youths disconnected from meaningful civic engagement, weakening their potential as leaders and peace agents. These barriers, if not addressed, risk turning a vital national resource into a source of instability. Therefore, removing the obstacles to effective youth participation is not only a moral imperative but a strategic necessity through interventions that will focus on expanding access to education, creating sustainable employment opportunities, promoting youth inclusion in governance, and establishing mentorship schemes that nurture leadership potential.

Recommendations

- i. The government and stakeholders should invest in mentorship, skills development aligned with the fourth industrial revolution, and the creation of platforms that allow young people to showcase their talents and actively contribute to peacebuilding efforts.
- ii. The government should strengthen the structure of mentorship and civic engagement programmes that can encourage youth participation in governance, community dialogue, and peace initiatives to promote social inclusion and national unity.
- iii. Government and relevant stakeholders should strengthen Mechanisms to check policies developed to support youth-led enterprises, create job opportunities, and provide platforms where young people can showcase their talents, thus reducing frustration and the likelihood of involvement in violence or criminal activities.

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