Young Adults' Perception of Peacebuilding System for Sustainable Development and Security

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Abstract

There have been concerted efforts from government at all levels, international bodies and other peacekeeping agencies all over the world, in Africa which include Nigeria. The perceived aggressors and agitators are the young adults who are now contrarily seen as change agents if involved in peacebuilding. This paper sought to examine the significant basis of the young adult's perception of peacebuilding system for sustainable development. The study employed a descriptive survey research design; a research question was answered and three hypotheses tested using 1,830 participants from different parts of the country. A validated instrument tagged Young Adults' Peception Questionnaire (ALESDLQ; r=0.93) was used for data collection in the study. Data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics of simple percentage, mean, standard deviation and inferential statistics of t-test and ANOVA. The findings revealed that there is significant difference in young adults' perception (mean=1.24). Besides, these findings were gender sensitive (t (1,1726) =-0.03; p=0.95>0.05); age biased (F(2,1727)=0.45; p=0.61>0.05) and educational attainment (F(2,1727)=0.05; p=0.95>0.05) different. Young adults' perception was discussed and it was recommended among others that full multi-sector programmes that target youth in specific areas of activity, such as employment creation and/or peacebuilding projects should be encouraged. It is therefore recommended that this group should be better catered for and included in peacebuilding.

Keywords: *Young Adults, Perception, Peacebuilding System, Sustainable Development and Security.*

INTRODUCTION

There have been violence and unrest all over the world at various times leaving no particular area safe but despite the insecurity, live continues.

Young adults have been seen overtime as agent of conflict and destruction (Kishani, 2024). They are considered on one hand as being vulnerable and on the other, feared as dangerous, violent, unconcerned and as threats to security (Vílchez and Trujillo 2023). Their images are stereotyped as being angry, drugged and violent and as threat, particularly those who were involved in armed conflict as fighters (Harmony Ridge, 2025). Ironically, about 1.3 billion 25-24 years old across the globe as reported by Whitten, Tzoumakis, Green and Dean (2024) have witnessed violence and have vivid experience of it. This percentage of young adults due to the experience is in the best position to be considered for in peacebuilding programmes given their imagination of peaceful existence.

Crisis is often caused by exuberance, impatience and anxiety of young adults, their quest and willingness to be seen as responsible and independent, the urgency of increasing the speed of their social mobility, the perception of government as cog in the wheel of their progress and the determination to ruthlessly and jointly deal with such. Thus, joblessness, poverty, and social or political deprivation become the bone of contention. This kind of societal dynamics, segregation and discrimination vary across groups (Forrest, 2025).

The young adults play adaptable roles in different situation they find themselves, they can be champions as well as the oppressed, rescuers and courageous in the midst of crisis, as well as villains in political crisis and military affairs in trouble areas (Modi, 2023). Hence, they have the capacity of playing immense role in peacebuilding, besides their inclusion is imperative in order to fulfil Goal 16 of Sustainable Development. The goal aim is to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere (United Nations, 2020). According to Ujomu (2002) including young adults in peacebuilding poses to promote peace in the society when their energies are diverted to the application of productive peace projects. Peacebuilding efforts should go beyond signing agreements to stop violence but also involve equity and social justice for sustainable development. The availability of adequate educational infrastructure and systems, employment opportunities and other structures through which youths can be active participants in making decisions concerning their wellbeing and that of the country at large. The inclusion of this group of people in

peacebuilding can be meaningful only when there is fair play, equity, youth empowerment, right placement, adequate engagement major social restructuring predicated by continuous emphasis on these germane areas for instituting belongingness, civil and harmonious nation (Nesterova & Ozcelik, 2021). This paper sought to examine the extent to which social justice favour young adults and how it affects their inclusion in decision making in matters that concern them.

Over the years, the young adults seem not to have been given enough spaces in many areas like admission, employment, appointments, political platforms and decision making (Timreck and Emmons, 2024). They are left out in some of these things and many of them become idle, angry and hungry (Orukwue, 2024). The issues got complicated by the nation's poor economic condition created by bad governance and unrest in Nigeria and across the globe (Oke and Ahoton, 2024, Hassan, Abalaka and Ajiteru, 2024). Some of the young adults engaged in illegitimate means of livelihood while others moved far away in search of greener pastures (Muna, 2025). How great will the nation be when these young old people are given full consideration in the scheme of things? This study therefore assessed young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security.

Over time, young adults have been perceived as agents of war and devastation due to the violence and instability that have occurred around the world at different times, making no region safe. Involving young adults in peacebuilding initiatives can help advance social harmony by directing their energies toward the implementation of successful peace initiatives (Ajak, 2021).

Availability of adequate peace building systems make youths to be active participants in making decisions concerning their wellbeing and that of the country at large (Kern, 2025). The inclusion of this group of people in peace building can be meaningful only when there is fair play, equity, youth empowerment, right placement and adequate engagement in major social restructuring (citation). Empowerment theory advocates adequate engagement of youth through steady involvement in profitable activities and skills as opined by Kern (2025). Abiola (2023) also asserted the imperative of theory of change which helps articulate the type of change desire in peacebuilding. Contact theory affirms the essentials of intergroup discussion with youth as it may be difficult or almost

impossible to meet with the total population at once. However, young adults seem not to have been given meaningful inclusion in peace building decision making. This study therefore assessed young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security. The main objectives of the study are to:

i) Assess young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security.
ii) Determine if there are any notable disparities in young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security according to gender, age and educational qualification.

As a result of the research problem stated above, this study examined the following question: *What is young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria*? The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_01: *There is no significant gender difference in the mean response of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria.*

H_02: *There is no significant age difference in the mean response of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria.*

H_03: *There is no significant educational level difference in the mean response of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria.*

METHODOLOGY

Non-experimental design of descriptive survey type was adopted for the study. This aims at investigating phenomena that are already in existence in the society, especially among the young adults. The targeted population for this study comprised all young adults from the age of twenty across the country which is about 160 million (70% of the total population of the country) as estimated by Development Research and Project Center (2024). The reason for the choice of this group of people is partly because they have major stake in peace building system, and partly because they are the change makers (DRPC, 2024). Multistage sampling technique was used to select the participants of this study across the country (first by zone and later by state). Simple random sampling was used to select three geo-political zones (southwestern, southeastern and north central zones)

from the six geo-political zones (north east, north west, south south, southwestern, southeastern and north central zones) in the country. Simple random sampling was also used to select five major cities in each zone (Abuja, Lagos, Aba, Ibadan and Oweri). Total inclusive accidental sampling technique was used to select the young adults at their different working places across these cities resulting into 1,830 young adults that participated in the study, 366b participants were selected from each city.

Instrumentation
An instrument tagged young adults' Perception of Peacebuilding Questionnaire (YPPQ) which was adapted from the publication of USAID (2020) was used to elicit information from the participants on issues that have to do with their perception of peace building in Nigeria. This is a 15-item instrument designed to collect information from the participating young adults. The instrument was made up of two sections. Sections A dealt with the background information of the respondents like their gender, age, highest educational qualification; section B consisted items in relation to young adults' perception of peace building in Nigeria. The items were rated on a four-point likert scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE). An initial pool of twenty (20) items was developed in the instrument. The items were subjected to face and content validity, in which experts in adult education and educational evaluation validated the items (how about youth experts, political scientist experts? Social development expert?). Fifteen (15) items survived the scrutiny (how was the scrutiny performed? Why are 5 variables removed? Any justification?). Comments about wordings and arrangement of items made were incorporated into the final edition of the instrument. The instrument was therefore pilot tested at a zone apart from the sampled zones (where was it piloted? Who were involved? How many participants were included?). The reliability of the instrument was calculated using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, and the instrument yielded a reliability index of 0.91. The researchers with some trained research assistants directly administered the questionnaire to the participants.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS
To make meaningful deductions, the data collected were statistically analyzed using descriptive statistics, which involve simple frequency count, simple percentage, mean and standard deviation to produce answer

to the research question and inferential statistics of t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS
The tables below show the analysis of data and results of the study.

Table 1
Socio-demographic Attributes of the Respondents

Variable		Freq.	%
Young Adults' Gender	Male	876	47.9
	Female	954	52.1
	Total	1830	100.0
Young Adults' Age	20-24 Years	680	37.2
	24-40 Years Adult	916	50.1
	Below 50 Years	234	12.8
	Total	1830	100.0
Young Adults' Educational Level	No Formal Education	495	27.0
	Secondary Education	957	52.3
	Tertiary Education	378	20.7
	Total	1830	100.0

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic attributes of the respondents. 876 (47.90%) of the respondents were males while 954 (52.10%) were females. 680 (37.20%) were between the age range of 31 - 35 years, 916 (50.10%) were within the age range of 36 – 40 years, while the remaining 234 (12.80%) were below 50 years. 495 (27.00%) were without formal education, 957 (52.30%) were with secondary education, while the remaining 378 (20.70%) were with tertiary education as at the time of data collection.

Answering the Research Question
Results in table 2 show the mean and standard deviation scores of the rating scales items on young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria. All the items have mean rating scale above 2.50. This shows that the extent at which young adults' perceived peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria was on the high side.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria

		Freq.	%	Mean	SD	Decision
The most common sources of conflict in Nigeria included land disputes, domestic violence and debt collection.	Very Low Extent	74	4.0	3.55	0.82	Very High Extent
	Low Extent	164	9.0			
	High Extent	274	15.0			
	Very High Extent	1318	72.0			
	Total	1830	100.0			
The predominant mechanisms to manage conflict in Nigeria are household elders, town chiefs and traditional councils.	Very Low Extent	74	4.0	3.07	0.85	High Extent
	Low Extent	384	21.0			
	High Extent	714	39.0			
	Very High Extent	658	36.0			
	Total	1830	100.0			
I first seek conflict resolution through elders and the family structure.	Very Low Extent	92	5.0	3.49	0.88	High Extent
	Low Extent	199	10.9			
	High Extent	255	13.9			
	Very High Extent	1284	70.2			
	Total	1830	100.0			
Land dispute cases are the most likely to escalate to the government officials.	Very Low Extent	55	3.0	3.37	0.86	High Extent
	Low Extent	291	15.9			
	High Extent	402	22.0			
	Very High Extent	1082	59.1			
	Total	1830	100.0			
Peace Committees were found to have maximum role in dispute resolution and conflict prevention in Nigeria.	Very Low Extent	73	4.0	3.60	0.79	Very High Extent
	Low Extent	128	7.0			
	High Extent	255	13.9			
	Very High Extent	1374	75.1			
	Total	1830	100.0			
I view indigenous alternative dispute resolution mechanisms more favorably than the formal judicial system.	Very Low Extent	55	3.0	3.48	0.87	High Extent
	Low Extent	291	15.9			
	High Extent	202	11.0			
	Very High Extent	1282	70.1			
	Total	1830	100.0			
I have never used the formal judicial system.	Very Low Extent	55	3.0	3.48	0.81	High Extent
	Low Extent	200	10.9			
	High Extent	383	20.9			

		Freq.	%	Mean	SD	Decision
	Very High Extent	1192	65.1			
	Total	1830	100.0			
The formal judicial system is expensive.	Very Low Extent	37	2.0	3.63	0.67	Very High Extent
	Low Extent	91	5.0			
	High Extent	390	21.3			
	Very High Extent	1312	71.7			
	Total	1830	100.0			
The formal judicial system takes a long time to resolve cases.	Very Low Extent	91	5.0	3.68	0.80	Very High Extent
	Low Extent	110	6.0			
	High Extent	92	5.0			
	Very High Extent	1537	84.0			
	Total	1830	100.0			
The formal judicial system causes litigants to suffer other costs.	Very Low Extent	127	6.9	3.58	0.91	Very High Extent
	Low Extent	129	7.0			
	High Extent	146	8.0			
	Very High Extent	1410	77.0			
	5.00	18	1.0			
	Total	1830	100.0			
The formal justice system is seen to promote discord as opposed to social harmony.	Very Low Extent	56	3.1	3.53	0.78	Very High Extent
	Low Extent	164	9.0			
	High Extent	362	19.8			
	Very High Extent	1248	68.2			
	Total	1830	100.0			
Indigenous alternative dispute resolution mechanisms promote unity.	Very Low Extent	55	3.0	3.69	0.70	Very High Extent
	Low Extent	92	5.0			
	High Extent	221	12.1			
	Very High Extent	1462	79.9			
	Total	1830	100.0			
Formal judicial system appears more susceptible to influence from privileged and powerful individuals.	Very Low Extent	55	3.0	3.66	0.71	Very High Extent
	Low Extent	91	5.0			
	High Extent	272	14.9			
	Very High Extent	1412	77.2			
	Total	1830	100.0			
Elders and youth work together frequently on town projects such as communal	Very Low Extent	36	2.0	3.62	0.76	Very High Extent
	Low Extent	204	11.1			
	High Extent	185	10.1			

		Freq.	%	Mean	SD	Decision
cleaning or construction.	Very High Extent	1405	76.8			
	Total	1830	100.0			
I feel comfortable bringing conflicts to local leaders.	Very Low Extent	55	3.0	3.68	0.73	Very High Extent
	Low Extent	128	7.0			
	High Extent	166	9.1			
	Very High Extent	1481	80.9			
	Total	1830	100.0			

Testing the Hypotheses

H_01: There is no significant gender difference in the mean response of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria based on gender

	Young Adults' Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Young Adults' Perception	Male	876	53.0514	3.50097	.11829
	Female	954	53.1698	2.98413	.09661

Table 3

t-test analysis of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria based on gender

		F	Sig.	t	df	Mean Diff.	Std. Err.Diff.
Young Adults' Perception	Equal variances assumed	29.817	.000	-.781	1828	-.11844	.15170
	Equal variances not assumed			-.776	1726.431	-.11844	.15273

A **t-value of –0.781** indicates that the difference between the two group means (or the test value) is very small. The negative sign only shows direction, not significance. It implies that there is no significant difference between the groups being compared. The observed mean difference is likely due to chance.

Results in tables 3 and 4 show that there was statistically significant difference ($t_{(1,1828)}$ = -0.78) in young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria based on

gender ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$). The mean and standard deviation values also show statistically significant difference in young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria based on gender. Therefore, the null hypothesis that says that there is no significant gender difference in the mean response of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria is accepted. It means this hypothesis needs to be accepted, implying that the perception of young adults when it comes to peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria does not differ gender-wise.

H_02: There is no significant age difference in the mean response of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria based on Age.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
31-35 Years	680	53.9721	3.31429	.12710
36-40 Years	916	52.5044	3.37315	.11145
Below 50 Years	234	53.0000	1.47074	.09615
Total	1830	53.1131	3.24147	.07577

Table 6
ANOVA of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria based on Age. There is a statistically significant difference between the group means. This means the differences among groups are not due to random chance, but due to a real effect.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	844.134	2	422.067	41.969	.000
Within Groups	18373.452	1827	10.057		
Total	19217.585	1829			

Results in tables 5 and 6 show that there was statistically significant difference ($F_{(2,1829)} = 41.97$) in young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria based on Age ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$). The mean and standard deviation values also show statistically significant difference in young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria based on Age. Therefore, we do not accept the null hypothesis that says

that there is no significant age difference in the mean response of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria.

$H_0$3:   *There is no significant educational level difference in the mean response of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria.*

Table 7
Descriptive Statistics of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria based on educational level.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
No Formal Education	495	54.1192	3.46818	.15588
Secondary School	957	52.8067	3.28577	.10621
Tertiary School	378	52.5714	2.44438	.12573
Total	1830	53.1131	3.24147	.07577

Table 8
ANOVA of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria based on educational level.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	701.809	2	350.904		
Within Groups	18515.776	1827	10.135	34.625	.000
Total	19217.585	1829			

Results in tables 7 and 8 show that there was statistically significant difference ($F_{(2,1829)}$ = 34.63) in young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria based on educational level (p = 0.00 < 0.05). The mean and standard deviation values also show statistically significant difference in young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria based on educational level. Therefore, we do not accept the null hypothesis that says that there is no significant educational level difference in the mean response of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
The discussion in this study was done according to the findings of this study. Findings from table two showed that the extent at which young

adults' perceived peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria was on the high side. Besides, there was no significant difference in gender except for age and educational level differences in the mean response of young adults' perception of peace building system for sustainable development and security in Nigeria.

The findings support the view of Abubakar (2021) who discovered that young adults are critical stakeholders in peacebuilding and should be involved at all stages of peace process for the sake of sustainability. It is also in line with the view of Berent & McEvoy-Levy (2014) who examined the age specific as well as gender, and other contextually specific roles of youth as they relate to everyday peacebuilding. However, this finding is at variance with those of Talentino (2007) who observed that the perception of peacebuilding nowadays is neither here nor there, people in selected community tend to be skeptical of transformation. The author explained further that given the segregation and abuse suffered in the past, there is likely to be distrust for change particularly when it does not meet the need of whatever group. Enforcement or imposition of change will likely result in resistance and counter productivity, thereby causing unrest in such places.

CONCLUSION
Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that young adults' perception of peacebuilding is significantly based on age, gender and education. This means that the inclusion in peacebuilding and care of this group of citizens in the society would consequently enable the development of sustainable peace and security. Adequate investment in young people's agency in peace processes has good potential of yielding positive results, the peace dividend will increase significantly.

RECOMMENDATION:
Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:
  i) Full multi-sector programmes that target youth and is devoid of gender in specific areas of activity, such as employment creation and/or peacebuilding projects should be encouraged.
  ii) Policies and institutions that enable investment in youth to succeed at various levels should be encouraged.
  iii) Peacebuilding programmes should involve the demand of the target group.

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