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RESEARCH ARTICLE

PEACE EDUCATION AND CONFLICT PREVENTION IN WUKARI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF TARABA STATE: EVALUATING THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS.

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ABSTRACT

Wukari local government area of Taraba State has witnessed prolonged ethno-political as well as communal violence which underscores the urgent need for sustainable peace-building mechanisms to curtail future occurrences. This study evaluates the role of schools and civil society organizations (CSOs) in advancing peace education and conflict prevention. The objective is to evaluate the contributions of schools and civil society organizations in peace building and conflict prevention in Wukari Local Government area and to identify the challenges faced by schools and Civil Society Organizations in implementing peace education strategies. Grounded in Conflict Prevention Theory, which emphasizes proactive, non-coercive measures to address root causes before escalation, the framework is justified because Wukari's conflicts are cyclical and deeply tied to resource access, identity narratives, and youth mobilization all areas where education and civic actors can intervene early. Findings reveal that while schools inconsistently integrate peace education due to resource gaps and policy neglect, CSOs demonstrate stronger adaptability through community mediation and inter-group dialogues. However, both face constraints; school programs often remain theoretical, while CSOs struggle with funding and limited state cooperation. Notably, joint school-CSO initiatives including peer mediation clubs and conflict-sensitive teacher manuals show measurable success in reducing localized tensions. The study concludes that fragmented efforts and lack of comprehensive government support, limit schools and CSOs impacts. The work recommends mandatory peace education in state curricula with teacher incentives, formal partnerships between schools and CSOs for community-based simulation exercises, and government-backed early warning infrastructure leveraging civil society networks. Without these synergies, Taraba, particularly Wukari Local Government risks normalizing violence as a default dispute resolution tool.

Keywords: *Peace education, Conflict prevention, Schools, Civil Society Organizations.*

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Introduction

Peace education has emerged as a critical response to escalating global conflicts, with international organizations recognizing education as both a preventive tool and a victim of warfare. The theoretical foundations distinguish between "negative peace" (absence of direct violence) and "positive peace" (addressing structural inequalities and cultural violence), with critical peace education aiming to transform oppressive systems. Global frameworks like the UN's International Day of Peace (established 1981) and the "Manifesto 2000" have advocated for integrating peace education into national curricula, though implementation gaps persist amid ongoing conflicts(Mann, 2024).

The Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State has experienced persistent communal clashes and episodes of violent conflict, particularly along ethnic and religious lines. These conflicts have resulted in widespread displacement, the destruction of property, the loss of lives, and a deterioration of social cohesion. Despite various interventions, the recurrence of violence suggests a systemic failure in addressing the root causes of these crises. One major gap is the limited integration of peace education into local educational curricula and community development efforts.

Schools, as institutions of learning and socialization, are strategically positioned to promote peace values, tolerance, and conflict resolution skills among youths and the wider community. However, in Wukari, peace education is either absent or poorly implemented. There is limited government attention to training teachers in peace building pedagogy, and no established frameworks to incorporate conflict-sensitive education in local school systems. This has left young people vulnerable to manipulation, radicalization, and participation in violence, instead of being agents of peace and change.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have historically played vital roles in peace building across Nigeria, offering community-based solutions and educational outreach. However, their impact in Wukari is inconsistent and fragmented. Many CSOs are underfunded, lack coordination, or are excluded from policy processes, making their interventions unsustainable. Moreover, the relationship between CSOs and educational institutions remains weak, preventing the development of collaborative peace education programs tailored to the specific conflict dynamics of Weary.

Therefore, between 2015 and 2025, although various peace building projects have been implemented by both governmental and non-governmental actors, the escalation of conflict in Wukari suggests that a more systematic, school-anchored, and civil-society-supported peace education approach is needed. This study, therefore, examines how schools and CSOs can collaboratively contribute to sustainable peace and conflict prevention in Wukari, identifying the challenges, strengths, and areas for policy reform.

Objectives

The general objective of the Study is to examine Peace Education and Conflict Prevention in Taraba State, Nigeria: Evaluating the Role of schools and civil society organization, from 2015-2025. The specific objectives are:

i. To evaluate the contributions of schools and civil society organizations in peace building and conflict prevention in Wukari Local Government area, 2015-2025.
ii. To identify the challenges faced by schools and Civil Society Organizations in implementing peace education strategies.

Review of Related Literature

Peace

The concept of peace is a multidimensional idea that encompasses the absence of war, the presence of justice, and the existence of harmony within and among societies. Peace is not merely the cessation of conflict but includes the conditions necessary for individuals and groups to coexist peacefully. According to Galtung (1969), peace can be understood as both negative peace, which refers to the absence of direct violence, and positive peace, which involves the presence of social justice, equality, and human rights. This broader view of peace suggests that for societies to thrive, structural and cultural forms of violence must also be addressed.

Peace as a concept has evolved from traditional understandings centered on international relations and war to more inclusive perspectives that incorporate human security, development, and social justice. The United Nations defines peace not only as the absence of conflict but as the existence of conditions where people can live with dignity and freedom (UN, 2016). In this light, peace is intricately linked with development, governance, and human rights. A peaceful society is thus one where all individuals have access to the basic necessities of life, including education, healthcare, and political participation.

Practically, the realization of peace involves institutions, policies, and actions that reduce inequality and build social cohesion. Peace building efforts often include dialogue, reconciliation, conflict resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction. Governments, civil society, and international organizations play key roles in maintaining peace through education, mediation, disarmament, and economic reforms (Lederach, 1997). The effectiveness of peace initiatives depends on inclusive participation and the willingness to address root causes of conflict such as poverty, exclusion, and marginalization.

Therefore, peace is a comprehensive concept that goes beyond the mere absence of violence to include the presence of justice, equality, and human dignity. It encompasses individual and collective well-being and requires sustained effort across various sectors of society. Whether through legal frameworks, development programs, or cultural education, peace must be actively constructed and maintained. As such, understanding and promoting peace remains essential for sustainable development and global coexistence (Jeong, 2000).

Peace Education and Its Scope

Peace education is an interdisciplinary approach aimed at cultivating knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to foster a culture of peace in societies. It is rooted in the belief that violence whether direct, structural, or cultural can be prevented or transformed through education. According to Harris and Morrison (2012), peace education involves teaching individuals about the sources of conflict, strategies for conflict resolution, human rights, global justice, and the promotion of non-violent behaviors. It promotes empathy, tolerance, and intercultural understanding, helping learners recognize the importance of justice and equity in sustaining peaceful relationships.

The scope of peace education is broad and encompasses multiple dimensions, including personal, social, political, and environmental peace. On the personal level, it addresses issues such as emotional intelligence, inner peace, and self-awareness. At the social level, it fosters respect for diversity and cooperation within communities. Politically, peace education seeks to promote democratic values, human rights, and nonviolent conflict resolution (Salomon & Nevo, 2002). Environmentally, it includes education for sustainable development, emphasizing the importance of ecological balance as a foundation for lasting peace. One of the key areas of peace education is conflict resolution education, where learners acquire tools for resolving disputes through dialogue and negotiation. This aspect prepares individuals to handle interpersonal and group conflicts constructively, which is especially vital in multicultural and conflict-prone societies. Peace education also integrates global citizenship education by encouraging learners to understand and act upon global challenges such as war, poverty, and inequality (UNESCO, 2021). This global perspective broadens the learner's consciousness and sense of responsibility toward global peace.

Types of Peace

1. Positive Peace

Positive peace refers to the presence of justice, equity, and harmonious relationships within and among societies, beyond just the absence of violence. It includes the existence of institutions, structures, and cultural practices that create and sustain peaceful interactions and address the root causes of conflict such as poverty, inequality, and discrimination (Galtung, 1969). Positive peace promotes social cohesion, respect for human rights, good governance, and equitable access to resources. It represents a holistic and sustainable form of peace that nurtures the well-being of individuals and communities.

Positive peace is developmental and transformative in nature. It encourages active participation in society, empowerment of marginalized groups, and peaceful conflict resolution. For instance, education, economic justice, and inclusive governance are essential features of positive peace (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2020). This type of peace ensures not only that violence is avoided but that the structural conditions that breed violence are addressed and reformed. In essence, positive peace is a proactive condition that continuously fosters resilience and social progress.

2. Negative Peace

Negative peace, on the other hand, is defined as the absence of direct or overt violence, such as war or physical conflict. It is often considered a temporary or fragile state because the underlying causes of conflict such as inequality, injustice, or repression may still be present (Galtung, 1969). Negative peace emphasizes conflict containment rather than resolution and can exist in societies where human rights violations, systemic oppression, or authoritarian rule are prevalent, but where no active warfare is occurring.

Although negative peace is a necessary condition for stability, it is not sufficient for long-term societal harmony. In many cases, it may result in a "cold peace," where tension and hostility are simmering beneath the surface. For example, a ceasefire agreement may stop active fighting but fail to address the grievances that led to the conflict in the first place. Without a transition to positive peace, societies are likely to experience recurring violence or unrest. Therefore, peace education aims not only to maintain negative peace but also to transform it into positive peace through structural change and reconciliation (Lederach, 1997).

Civil Society Organization

Civil society organizations (CSOs) comprise the diverse, non-state actors NGOs, faith groups, youth associations, and community-based organizations, traditional associations that act in the public sphere to represent interests, deliver services, advocate and mobilize citizens. The World Bank / Paffenholz and UNDP syntheses underline that civil society is not synonymous with NGOs alone but includes traditional and faith groups that are often central in local conflict contexts (Paffenholz&Spurk, 2006; UNDP, 2015). In Wukari, therefore, CSOs must be understood broadly to include faith institutions (diocesan structures), youth networks, women's groups and local community organizations.

Global analyses identify multiple CSO functions relevant to prevention: mediation and dialogue facilitation, advocacy and public communication, monitoring and early warning, service delivery that addresses grievances, socialization into civic norms, and capacity building (Paffenholz&Spurk, 2006). Locally, CSOs can convene cross-community dialogues, run non-formal peace education for out-of-school youth, and monitor incidents that feed into early warning systems. These functions make them complementary partners to schools and traditional authorities in Wukari's conflict-prevention ecosystem.

CSOs as intermediaries and accountability actors. CSOs often perform an intermediation role connecting citizens to local government and service providers and act as watchdogs for rights and fairness (UNDP, 2015). In fragile or multi-identity settings like Wukari, CSOs can amplify marginalized voices (women, youths, minority groups) and press for transparent, equitable policies (land access, school resources) that, if neglected, can fuel conflict. However, their influence depends on legitimacy, trust, and a secure operating environment.

Collaborative Strategies between Schools and CSOs in peace Education and conflict prevention

Collaboration between schools and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) plays a pivotal role in promoting peace education and grassroots peace building. Schools serve as formal institutions where structured learning occurs, while CSOs often work informally at the grassroots level, engaging directly with communities. Synergy between the two can create holistic peace building strategies that are both top-down and bottom-up. Schools can incorporate the peace education frameworks developed by CSOs, while CSOs can amplify and adapt the messages from schools for wider community impact (Davies, 2004). This integrated approach ensures that peace education is not limited to the classroom but extends to the broader social environment of the students.

Institutional collaborations for sustainable peace involve formal agreements and programs between schools and CSOs aimed at long-term peace education and conflict prevention. These partnerships often take the form of memorandums of understanding (MOUs), joint project implementation, teacher training sessions, and curriculum development. For instance, in Taraba State, the Peace Advancement Action Against Violence and Abuse Initiative (PAAVAI) collaborates with secondary schools in Wukari Local Government Area to train teachers and students on conflict resolution skills and nonviolent communication. Such partnerships institutionalize peace education, making it a core part of the school system rather than a temporary intervention (UNESCO, 2011).

Community engagement and participatory approaches are also crucial in ensuring that school-CSO collaborations are context-sensitive and inclusive. CSOs often facilitate town hall meetings, parents' forums, and youth engagement sessions that allow community members to contribute to peace building

strategies. Schools, in turn, act as bridges between the community and policy-level interventions. For example, community dialogues facilitated by the Community Peace and Development Initiative (COPEDI) in collaboration with schools in Taraba have helped de-escalate farmer-herder conflicts by involving parents, local leaders, and school administrators in joint problem-solving activities (Audu, 2020). This participatory model increases community ownership and sustainability of peace efforts.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are essential to assess the effectiveness and impact of joint peace education programs. Schools and CSOs can collaborate to develop indicators for peace education, including reductions in school-based violence, improved interethnic relations among students, and increased awareness of human rights. Regular assessments help in refining programs and scaling successful initiatives. For instance, PAAVAI uses feedback from both students and teachers to modify its peace education modules and training methods, ensuring they remain relevant and effective in the local context (Okoh & Yusuf, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

This study anchored on Conflict prevention theory Conflict prevention theory represents a significant paradigm shift in international relations, moving from reactive crisis management to proactive strategies aimed at addressing tensions before they escalate into violent conflict. The intellectual origins of conflict prevention theory can be traced to the Cold War era, specifically to United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who first articulated the concept of "preventive diplomacy" in the context of preventing local conflicts from escalating into superpower confrontations (Moolakkattu, 2021). However, the theory gained its classic formulation in the post-Cold War period through UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's 1992 landmark report, An Agenda for Peace. Boutros-Ghali expansively defined preventive diplomacy as "action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur"(United Nations, 1992, p. 45).

The strengths of conflict prevention theory are substantial and empirically grounded. Scholars note that compared to the enormous human and financial costs of war, the resources required for prevention are dramatically smaller (Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1997). Statistical research on third-party diplomacy supports the efficacy of early intervention, demonstrating that acting before conflicts intensify yields better outcomes than attempting to end ongoing wars (Lund, 2009). The theory provides an "all-encompassing organizational principle" around which states and international organizations can coherently formulate defense, foreign, and aid policies (Sriram, 2002, p. 10).

Despite its theoretical appeal, conflict prevention faces significant weaknesses and implementation challenges. A persistent gap exists between the rhetorical promise of prevention and its actual pursuit by policymakers (Sriram, 2002). Jonathan Eyal argues forcefully that prevention theories rest on fallacious assumptions, noting that the Yugoslav conflict was "the most widely predicted war in modern history" yet warnings were deliberately ignored (Eyal, 1994, p. 12). Politicians in democracies face structural disincentives: preventing a conflict yields no visible achievement for which voters reward them, while successful prevention remains an invisible non-event that cannot generate political capital (Lund, 2009).
The application of conflict prevention theory to peace education in Wukari Local Government Area necessitates an understanding of education's role in mitigating the root causes of violence. A foundational framework is provided by UNESCO's work on education for conflict prevention, which argues that educational planning must go beyond traditional mechanisms to analyze the root causes of conflict and mitigate tensions by being flexible and responsive to local needs . This theoretical perspective suggests

that in a context like Wukari an area that has experienced ethno-religious tensions schools and civil society organizations (CSOs) must first engage in a diagnostic role. They are tasked with identifying the underlying structural drivers of conflict, such as economic marginalization or historical grievances, and then designing educational interventions that address these specific local realities rather than applying generic peace education curricula.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine the role of schools and civil society organizations in peace education and conflict prevention in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State between 2015 and 2025. The qualitative approach is considered appropriate because it enables the study to explore, in depth, the experiences, perceptions, practices, and contributions of relevant stakeholders concerning peace education and conflict prevention within the study area. The study utilizes both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data are obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted with purposively selected key informants who possess relevant knowledge or experience of peace education, conflict prevention, schooling, and civil society interventions in Wukari, including teachers, school administrators, students where appropriate, community leaders, government officials, civil society practitioners, and other relevant stakeholders. Purposive sampling is employed to select participants based on their knowledge, involvement, or experience in issues relating to peacebuilding and conflict management, thereby ensuring that the information obtained is relevant to the objectives of the study. The interviews are guided by research questions and focus on issues such as the nature and effectiveness of peace education programmes in schools, the contribution of civil society organizations to conflict prevention, challenges confronting these interventions, and the extent to which schools and civil society organizations have promoted peaceful coexistence in Wukari during the period under study. Secondary data are sourced from textbooks, scholarly journals, academic publications, government reports and policy documents, publications of civil society organizations, newspapers and other online media, as well as relevant archival and institutional materials. These sources provide the historical, conceptual, and contextual background necessary for interpreting the primary evidence and enable the researcher to corroborate information obtained through interviews. Data collected are analyzed thematically and textually: the thematic method involves identifying and interpreting recurring themes and patterns emerging from the interview responses and documentary materials, while textual analysis is used to critically examine the content, meaning, context, and relevance of selected documents and written sources to the research questions. The study also employs triangulation by comparing evidence from interviews with information obtained from documentary and scholarly sources in order to enhance the credibility, consistency, and validity of the findings. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the protection of participants' identities, are observed throughout the research process, while the researcher maintains objectivity and acknowledges the limitations of the available evidence in interpreting the role of schools and civil society organizations in peace education and conflict prevention in Wukari Local Government Area from 2015 to 2025.

The contributions of schools and civil society organizations in peace building and conflict prevention in Wukari Local Government area.

In an in an interview with a secondary school teacher in wukari when asked: What contributions have schools made to peacebuilding and conflict prevention in Wukari Local Government Area between 2015 and 2025?

> "Schools have contributed to peacebuilding mainly by teaching students to understand that people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds can live together peacefully. In my experience, teachers use social studies, civic education, assemblies and other school activities to teach students about tolerance, respect, dialogue and peaceful coexistence. Schools also discourage students from bringing community disputes into the school environment. When there are tensions in the community, teachers normally talk to students and advise them not to participate in violence."

The response indicates that schools contribute to conflict prevention primarily through peace education and behavioral transformation. The respondent identified classroom instruction, civic education, school assemblies and teacher-student interaction as important mechanisms through which peaceful values are transmitted. An important point in the response is the emphasis on tolerance and peaceful coexistence among people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. This suggests that schools serve not only as institutions for academic learning but also as spaces where young people acquire social values and attitudes that can either promote or prevent conflict.

The respondent also highlighted the role of teachers in preventing students from becoming involved in community violence. This is particularly important because young people can become vulnerable to manipulation during periods of communal tension. By discouraging students from participating in violence, schools perform a preventive function. The response therefore demonstrates that the contribution of schools extends beyond formal curriculum content to include informal peace education, counseling, moral instruction and behavioral guidance.

In an interview with another respondent when asked: Apart from classroom teaching, what specific activities have schools undertaken to promote peace and prevent conflict among students and in the wider community?

> "Schools have organized activities that encourage students to interact with one another irrespective of their backgrounds. We have debates, sports, cultural activities, clubs and discussions where students are encouraged to work together. Guidance and counseling are also important because students sometimes come to school with grievances or experiences from their communities. We try to resolve these issues before they become bigger problems. During periods of tension, school authorities also communicate with parents and advise them to protect the children from being drawn into conflicts."

The Respondent expands the understanding of the contribution of schools by identifying extracurricular activities and school-based conflict management mechanisms. The response indicates that peacebuilding does not occur exclusively through academic subjects. Sports, debates, cultural activities and clubs provide opportunities for students from different backgrounds to interact and develop relationships. Such interaction can reduce prejudice and stereotypes by enabling students to see one another as colleagues and friends rather than representatives of opposing communities.

The respondent also emphasized guidance and counseling. This is significant because unresolved grievances among students may develop into physical confrontation or reproduce wider community tensions within the school. Counseling therefore functions as an early-warning and early-response mechanism. Another important finding is the involvement of parents and the wider community. The school administrator's statement suggests that schools can act as a bridge between families and

communities during periods of tension. Communication with parents helps prevent young people from being mobilized into violent activities.

Thus, the response reveals three major school-based peacebuilding mechanisms:

i. Social interaction and integration through sports, clubs and cultural activities.
ii. Early conflict management through counseling and dialogue.
iii. Community engagement through communication with parents and families.

The contribution of schools can therefore be understood as both preventive and responsive.
In another interview with a Civil Society Organization Officer when asked: What role have civil society organizations played in peacebuilding and conflict prevention in Wukari Local Government Area between 2015 and 2025?

> "Civil society organizations have supported peacebuilding through community sensitization, peace meetings, youth programmes, women's programmes and dialogue between communities. Some organizations have trained young people as peace advocates and have encouraged them to reject violence. We have also worked with community leaders, religious leaders and other stakeholders to identify tensions before they become serious conflicts. The major contribution of civil society is that we can work directly with communities and reach people outside the formal government structure."

The response demonstrates that CSOs have played a community-based and participatory role in conflict prevention. Unlike schools, whose immediate focus is largely on students, CSOs operate across the wider community and engage different categories of stakeholders. The respondent identifies community sensitization and dialogue as major interventions. These activities are important because conflict prevention requires communication among groups that may have grievances or mistrust against one another.

The training of young people as peace advocates is another significant contribution. Youth are often central to conflict dynamics because they may be vulnerable to recruitment and mobilization for violent activities. Transforming young people into peace advocates can therefore convert a potential source of conflict into a resource for peacebuilding. The response also emphasizes the involvement of women, traditional leaders and religious leaders. This indicates that CSOs adopt an inclusive approach to peacebuilding. The participation of these groups is important because community conflicts affect different sections of society differently, and sustainable peace requires broad community ownership.

Challenges Faced by Schools and Civil Society Organizations in Implementing Peace Education Strategies

To examine the challenges encountered by schools and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in implementing peace education strategies in Wukari Local Government Area of Taraba State between 2015 and 2025, interviews were conducted with several respondents. The respondents were drawn from relevant stakeholders involved in education, peacebuilding, and community development

In an interview with a respondent when asked: What are the challenges your institution/organization faces in implementing peace education programmes in Wukari Local Government Area?

> "One of the major challenges we face is inadequate funding. Peace education requires training, teaching materials, seminars and sometimes community outreach, but the school does not have enough money to support these activities. Most of the time, teachers are expected to teach peace-related issues without special materials or additional support. This makes it difficult to sustain the programmes."

The response indicates that inadequate funding is a significant obstacle to the implementation of peace education in schools. Peace education is not limited to classroom teaching; it requires instructional materials, teacher training, workshops, extracurricular activities and, in some cases, engagement with parents and the wider community. When schools lack adequate financial resources, peace education may become an occasional activity rather than a sustained component of the educational process.

The respondent also points to the problem of expecting teachers to implement peace education without adequate resources. This suggests that the effectiveness of peace education depends not only on teachers' willingness but also on institutional support. Therefore, financial constraints can reduce the quality, scope and continuity of peace education programmes in Wukari.

A Civil Society Organization Representative was also asked the same question and he responded:

> "For CSOs, funding is also a serious problem, especially because many peacebuilding projects depend on donor funding. When funding ends, some programmes have to stop even when the community still needs them. Another challenge is reaching some communities regularly because of transportation problems and the cost of moving staff and materials from one place to another."

Respondent 2 reinforces the issue of financial constraints, but from the perspective of Civil Society Organizations. The response reveals that dependence on external or donor funding can affect the sustainability of peace education initiatives. A programme may be successful during its funding period but become difficult to maintain once financial support is withdrawn.

The respondent also identifies logistical challenges, particularly transportation and access to communities. This is important because effective peace education often requires CSOs to move beyond their offices and work directly with schools, youths, community leaders, parents and other groups. High transportation costs and difficulties in reaching communities can therefore limit the geographical coverage of peacebuilding interventions.

In an interview with another respondent when asked: How does inadequate training of teachers and CSO personnel affect the implementation of peace education programmes?

> "Many teachers have not received specialized training in peace education or conflict resolution. They understand that students should be taught tolerance and peaceful behavior, but they may not know the best methods for handling sensitive conflicts between students or discussing difficult community issues in the classroom."

The response indicates a capacity-building gap among teachers. General knowledge about peace and tolerance may not be sufficient for effective peace education. Teachers require specialized skills in conflict resolution, mediation, dialogue facilitation, non-violent communication and handling sensitive discussions.The absence of such training can make teachers less confident in dealing with conflicts that

arise within the school environment. It may also result in peace education being taught theoretically rather than through practical and participatory approaches.

A Civil Society Organization Representative was also asked the same question and he responded:

> "Some of our staff have experience in community development but not necessarily specialized training in peace education. We sometimes depend on short workshops to improve their skills. The problem is that one or two days of training cannot provide everything a person needs to work effectively in a conflict-affected community."

The respondent confirms the existence of limited professional training among CSO personnel. The response particularly criticizes reliance on short-term workshops. While such workshops may introduce important concepts, sustainable peacebuilding requires continuous professional development. The response implies that CSOs need personnel with specialized knowledge of conflict analysis, peace education, trauma-sensitive approaches, mediation and community dialogue. Without adequate training, the effectiveness of programmes may vary considerably between organizations and locations.

In the same vein, another respondent responded that:

> "Teachers need more practical training. We are sometimes told to promote peace, tolerance and reconciliation, but we are not always shown how to handle situations where students come from families or communities with different experiences of conflict. More training would make teachers more confident."

This response emphasizes the need for practical rather than purely theoretical training. Teachers may understand the general principles of peace education but encounter difficulties when applying them to real-life situations involving students from different backgrounds.

The response therefore suggests that teacher training should include practical exercises, simulations, mediation techniques, classroom conflict management and strategies for facilitating sensitive discussions. Such training could strengthen teachers' ability to transform peace education from a theoretical concept into a practical school-based intervention.

In an interview with a Civil Society Organization Peacebuilding Officer who lament that:

> "Another challenge is staff turnover. Sometimes an organization trains staff and they later leave for another job. The organization then has to train new people. This affects continuity and increases the cost of implementing peacebuilding programmes."

The response introduces staff turnover as an institutional challenge. Investment in training may not produce long-term organizational benefits when trained personnel leave. This creates a cycle in which CSOs repeatedly spend resources training new personnel. The problem may also affect institutional memory. When experienced staff leaves, newly recruited personnel may lack knowledge about previous interventions, community relationships and lessons learned from earlier programmes. This can negatively affect continuity and programme effectiveness.

Discussion of findings

The findings of the study reveal that schools and civil society organizations (CSOs) made significant and complementary contributions to peacebuilding and conflict prevention in Wukari Local Government Area between 2015 and 2025. The evidence from the interviews indicates that schools served as important institutions for cultivating peaceful attitudes and preventing the transmission of communal tensions among young people. Through subjects such as Social Studies and Civic Education, school assemblies, teacher-student interactions, guidance and counseling, students were exposed to values of tolerance, respect, dialogue, peaceful coexistence and acceptance of ethnic and religious differences. This role is particularly important in a conflict-prone environment such as Wukari because schools bring together young people from diverse social, ethnic and religious backgrounds and therefore provide an opportunity for positive intergroup interaction. The findings further demonstrate that peace education in schools extended beyond the formal curriculum to extracurricular activities such as sports, debates, cultural programmes and clubs, which encouraged students to cooperate and interact across social boundaries. Such activities helped to reduce prejudice, stereotypes and hostility by creating opportunities for students to develop friendships and a sense of shared identity. The study also found that teachers and school authorities played an important preventive role by discouraging students from bringing community disputes into schools and advising them against participating in violence during periods of communal tension. Guidance and counselling were particularly significant because they provided an avenue for identifying and addressing grievances before they escalated into physical confrontation or broader disciplinary problems. In addition, communication between schools and parents during periods of tension indicates that schools functioned as a link between the educational environment, families and the wider community, thereby helping to shield young people from violent mobilization. On the other hand, CSOs operated at a broader community level and complemented the peacebuilding efforts of schools through community sensitization, peace meetings, inter-community dialogue, youth empowerment, women's programmes and engagement with traditional and religious leaders. The training of young people as peace advocates was especially important because youths can be vulnerable to recruitment and manipulation during periods of conflict; empowering them as agents of peace can therefore transform them from potential participants in violence into active contributors to conflict prevention. The involvement of women, community leaders and religious leaders also demonstrates the inclusive nature of CSO interventions and the recognition that sustainable peace requires the participation of diverse stakeholders. Furthermore, CSOs contributed to early warning and conflict prevention by working directly with communities to identify emerging tensions and facilitate dialogue before disagreements developed into violent conflict. Their ability to operate outside formal government structures gave them flexibility and greater access to community members, particularly groups that may not always be reached effectively through formal institutions. Taken together, the findings suggest that schools and CSOs performed different but mutually reinforcing peacebuilding functions: schools concentrated largely on shaping the attitudes, values and behaviors of young people, while CSOs extended peacebuilding interventions into the wider community through dialogue, sensitization, empowerment and stakeholder mobilization. The findings therefore demonstrate that effective conflict prevention in Wukari cannot depend on a single institution but requires collaboration among schools, families, community leaders, religious institutions, CSOs and government agencies. The combined contribution of these actors helped create spaces for tolerance, communication, early conflict management and peaceful coexistence; although the interview evidence also implies that their interventions were largely preventive and community-based rather than capable of addressing all the structural causes of conflict.

The findings reveal that schools and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Wukari Local Government Area faced several interconnected institutional, financial, human-resource and logistical challenges in implementing peace education strategies between 2015 and 2025. A major challenge identified by both

schools and CSOs was inadequate funding, which constrained the provision of teaching and learning materials, teacher and staff training, seminars, community outreach and other activities necessary for effective peace education. For schools, the lack of financial resources often meant that teachers were expected to incorporate peace-related issues into their teaching without specialized instructional materials or additional institutional support, thereby limiting the scope, quality and sustainability of peace education programmes. Similarly, CSOs were heavily dependent on donor funding, creating difficulties in sustaining interventions after the expiration of project grants. This finding suggests that although donor assistance plays an important role in supporting peacebuilding, excessive dependence on external funding can make programmes vulnerable to discontinuity and reduce their long-term impact. The logistical difficulties reported by CSOs, particularly high transportation costs and challenges in reaching communities regularly, further demonstrate that peace education in a conflict-affected environment requires resources beyond conventional classroom activities. Another significant finding was the inadequate specialized training of teachers and CSO personnel. Although respondents acknowledged that teachers understood the importance of tolerance, peaceful behavior and reconciliation, many lacked the practical skills required to manage sensitive conflicts, facilitate dialogue, mediate disputes and address issues arising from students' different experiences of communal conflict. The evidence further shows that short-term workshops attended by CSO personnel are insufficient for developing the comprehensive competencies required for effective peacebuilding in complex and conflict-affected communities. Consequently, peace education may remain largely theoretical rather than being translated into practical skills and behaviors' among learners and community members. The respondents' emphasis on practical training is particularly important because teachers operate directly within diverse school environments where conflicts may reflect broader social and community tensions. Training in conflict resolution, mediation, non-violent communication, classroom conflict management, trauma-sensitive approaches and participatory teaching methods would therefore enhance their capacity to respond effectively to such situations. In addition, staff turnover among CSOs emerged as a further challenge because trained personnel sometimes leave for other employment opportunities, forcing organizations to incur additional costs in recruiting and training replacements. Beyond financial implications, this turnover can weaken institutional memory, disrupt relationships with communities and reduce continuity in peacebuilding interventions. Taken together, the findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of peace education in Wukari is constrained not by a single factor but by mutually reinforcing challenges involving inadequate and unsustainable funding, limited professional capacity, weak institutional support, logistical barriers and staff instability.

Conclusion

The study concludes that schools and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) played significant and complementary roles in peacebuilding and conflict prevention in Wukari Local Government Area between 2015 and 2025. Schools contributed primarily by promoting peace-oriented values, attitudes and behaviors' among young people through classroom instruction, guidance and counseling, teacher-student interaction, sports, debates, cultural activities and other forms of extracurricular engagement, while CSOs extended these efforts into the wider community through sensitization, inter-community dialogue, youth empowerment, women-focused programmes, early-warning mechanisms and collaboration with traditional and religious leaders. Collectively, these interventions created opportunities for tolerance, communication, social interaction, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence and helped reduce the likelihood that communal tensions would escalate into violence. However, the effectiveness and sustainability of these efforts were constrained by inadequate and unsustainable funding, dependence of CSOs on donor support, insufficient training of teachers and peacebuilding personnel, high logistical and transportation costs, weak institutional support and staff turnover. The findings therefore indicate that

while schools and CSOs have considerable potential to contribute to sustainable peace in Wukari, their impact remains limited when peace education is implemented sporadically, without adequate resources, specialized skills and institutional continuity. The study consequently concludes that sustainable conflict prevention in Wukari requires an integrated and adequately resourced peacebuilding framework in which schools, CSOs, families, traditional and religious institutions, communities and government agencies work collaboratively. Addressing these challenges would enable peace education to move beyond theoretical awareness and short-term interventions towards a sustained, practical and context-sensitive mechanism for preventing conflict, strengthening social cohesion and promoting lasting peaceful coexistence in Wukari Local Government Area.

Recommendations

This work recommends among other things the following:

i. Establishment of a sustainable, multi-stakeholder peace education and funding framework: The Wukari Local Government Council, relevant state and federal education authorities, CSOs and community stakeholders should establish a coordinated peacebuilding framework that provides dedicated and sustainable funding for peace education in schools and community-based interventions. Rather than relying predominantly on short-term donor grants, the framework should mobilize government allocations, community contributions and responsible private-sector support to finance teaching materials, peace clubs, inter-community dialogue, youth and women's programmes, community sensitization, transportation and early-warning activities.
ii. Institutionalization of continuous professional training and retention programmes: Schools and CSOs should develop regular, practical capacity-building programmes for teachers, counsellors and peacebuilding personnel in conflict resolution, mediation, non-violent communication, classroom conflict management, trauma-sensitive approaches, early warning and participatory peace education. The training should move beyond occasional workshops to continuous professional development supported by mentoring and practical community-based exercises.

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