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Full Length Research

Roles of Christian Schools in Conflict Resolution and Peace Building in Conflict Affected Areas in South East Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the roles of Christian schools in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in conflict areas in Imo State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The area of this study was Imo State. The population for this study consisted of approximately 10,000 students in senior secondary schools (SSS) in 50 mission schools in Imo State, Nigeria. A sample of 450 participants was selected from the population. The instrument that was used for data collection was a well-structured questionnaire titled "Role of Christian schools in promoting reconciliation and peacebuilding in conflict-affected areas." Questionnaire. The validity of the instruments was determined by 3 experts from the Department of Religious Studies, Paul University Awka. The reliability of the questionnaire instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method of reliability, and a reliability index of 0.72 was obtained, making the instrument reliable. The research questions were answered using simple descriptive statistics such as the mean and standard deviation. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significance with appropriate degrees of freedom using ANOVA analysis. Results revealed that religion is significant in enhancing conflict reconciliation in Imo State, among others. The study therefore recommended that schools should integrate art therapy and counselling sessions to provide a safe space for students to express their emotions and experiences, promoting emotional healing and well-being, and policymakers of Christian schools should develop a comprehensive peace education curriculum that incorporates local case studies and real-life examples to make learning more relatable, among others.

Keywords: Conflict Resolution, Christian Schools. Reconciliation, peace Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Christian schools have historically played an integral role in moral, social and community development, especially in Southeast Nigeria. The roots of Christian schools in the Southeast region date back to the colonial era, when Christian missionaries established schools as part of their efforts to convert people to Christianity. The missionaries set up schools to educate students in reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as to promote Christian values (Quentine, 2021). After independence, the schools continued to play an important role in the

region, providing education and helping to foster a sense of community. Some of the oldest and most well-known Christian schools in the Southeast include the Queen's School, Onitsha, founded in 1927, and the Dennis Memorial Grammar School, founded in 1928. Schools like the Queen's School and Dennis Memorial Grammar School have a long history in the South East and have produced many notable alumni, including political leaders, writers, and artists. In addition to their educational role, the schools have also served as

community centres, hosting events and gatherings for people of all backgrounds. They have played an important role in promoting community pride and cooperation in the region.

Indeed, the Christian schools in Southeast Nigeria have played a number of specific roles in the communities they serve. One important role has been to promote peace and understanding between people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. The schools have hosted events and programmes that bring people together and foster understanding and cooperation. They have also promoted gender equality by educating girls and providing opportunities for them to pursue their education and participate in society (Dele & Illesami, 2024). Additionally, the schools have been involved in community development efforts, providing resources and services to improve the lives of people in the region. The Centre for Civil Society (CCS) in Nigeria found that Christian schools have been instrumental in building peace and promoting social development in the region. A study found that the schools have provided educational opportunities and training in peacebuilding and conflict resolution and have promoted economic and social development through their involvement in community projects (CCS, 2020).

There are many important reasons for promoting peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the society. First, peacebuilding can help to reduce violence and conflict, which can have devastating effects on communities and individuals. It can also help to build trust and cooperation between people of different backgrounds and can promote economic and social development. Peacebuilding efforts can also foster respect for human rights and the rule of law and can help to create more stable and democratic societies (Kew, 2021). The importance of peacebuilding in the society can never be overemphasised. Hence, the World Bank (2020) opined that investing in peacebuilding can lead to increased economic growth and reduced poverty and can also have positive effects on health, education, and other development outcomes. Similarly, the United Nations (2019) found that peacebuilding can help to create more peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. The study also found that peacebuilding can be cost-effective and can lead to long-term savings in terms of security and development costs.

Conflict resolution means methods employed to facilitate a peaceful, mutually acceptable solution to a dispute or conflict. It involves addressing the underlying causes of conflict, reducing negative emotions, improving communication, and fostering understanding among conflicting parties. Conflict resolution aims to create a lasting, collaborative arrangement between parties in a way that avoids or minimises the potential for future conflict. According to Sandole (2020), conflict resolution

is "the reduction, elimination, or termination of conflict through non-violent means" (p. 16). It is an essential component of peacebuilding, as it seeks to transform destructive conflicts into opportunities for positive change and growth. Conflict resolution processes often involve third-party facilitators, such as mediators or negotiators, who work with the conflicting parties to find common ground and reach a mutually beneficial resolution. That is to say that conflict resolution encompasses the various approaches and techniques used to peacefully manage and resolve conflicts by addressing their root causes and fostering understanding, communication, and collaboration among the involved parties. Several scholars and authors have defined conflict resolution, offering various perspectives on this multifaceted concept. Deutsch (2019): "Conflict resolution is the termination of an ongoing process of conflict through the determination of outcomes that are acceptable to the parties and remove the source of the conflict" (p. 381). There are specific areas in which Christian schools could help in peacebuilding and reconciliation in the Southeast in general and Imo State in particular. One example is conflict resolution, which is the process of peacefully resolving conflicts between individuals or groups. This can involve mediation, negotiation, and other forms of conflict management. Conflict resolution can prevent violence and promote positive relationships and can help to build a more peaceful society. A study by Peterson and Ungerer (2020) found that schools can be important sites for "youth peacebuilding" and can help to reduce violence and promote positive youth development. Peterson and Ungerer (2020) found that schools can play a role in conflict resolution in several ways. First, schools can provide a safe space for students to express their views and share their experiences. Second, schools can help students to develop skills such as empathy, problem-solving, and communication, which can be useful in conflict situations. Third, schools can create opportunities for students to build relationships with peers from different backgrounds, which can promote understanding and reduce prejudice. Finally, schools can provide a framework for conflict resolution, including mediation, restorative justice, and other processes.

Trauma healing is another important specific area of peacebuilding that schools are capable of playing an important role in. Trauma healing is a process of addressing the emotional and psychological effects of conflict and violence and can be an important part of promoting peace and reconciliation. The role of schools in trauma healing can help to promote peaceful coexistence and reconciliation in Southeast Nigeria in several ways. First, by providing a safe environment, schools can help to reduce conflict and violence in the community. Second, by supporting students' mental health and building their coping skills, schools can help students to respond to

conflict in a more constructive and peaceful way. Third, by incorporating trauma-informed practices into the curriculum, schools can help to foster understanding and acceptance of others, which can reduce the risk of conflict. Frouws, Dryden-Peterson, and Hejab (2022) looked at the role of schools in trauma healing in Northeast Nigeria, which has experienced conflict similar to that in Southeast Nigeria. The study found that schools can play a critical role in promoting healing and that trauma-informed practices can help students to cope with the impact of conflict and violence.

Similarly, school can promote peacebuilding and reconciliation through peace education. Peace education involves teaching people about the causes and consequences of conflict and about the skills and attitudes needed to build a peaceful society. Schools can play a role in reconciliation and peacebuilding through peace education in a few different ways. First, they can teach students about the causes and consequences of conflict, as well as the importance of nonviolence and conflict resolution. Second, they can teach students about human rights and the need for respect for all people, regardless of background or beliefs. Third, they can model these values through their policies and practices, including inclusive decision-making and student leadership opportunities. Finally, they can connect students with peers from different backgrounds and perspectives, giving them the chance to build relationships across divides. Hence, a study by Akomolafe-Wilson and Yoder (2020) on a specific peace education program for children in Northeast Nigeria who have experienced significant conflict and violence revealed that the program helped children develop skills in conflict resolution, build relationships across divides, and advocate for their rights.

Furthermore, schools can foster reconciliation and peacebuilding through community development programmes. Community development is the process of building up the social, economic, and political well-being of communities. Schools can play a number of important roles in community development for peacebuilding and reconciliation. First, they can serve as safe spaces for members of the community to gather and interact, which can help to foster trust and understanding. Second, they can provide services and resources to the community, such as adult education, health clinics, and economic development initiatives. Third, they can partner with other organisations and agencies to address the needs of the community and promote peace and reconciliation. Fourth, they can work to address the underlying causes of conflict and promote dialogue and cooperation. An instance of the role of schools in community development is the Education for Peace Initiative (EPI) in Jos, Nigeria. The EPI is a community-based organisation that works to prevent violence and promote peace and reconciliation in

the Jos area. It does this through a variety of programmes, including peace clubs in schools, peace education workshops for youth, and peace-building training for teachers and community leaders. The initiative has been successful in reducing tensions and promoting a culture of peace in Jos. Mark (2018) found that the EPI had been successful in creating spaces for dialogue and interaction between members of different ethnic groups and that it had helped to reduce tensions and build trust. Similarly, Igwe (2019) found that the EPI had helped to foster a sense of belonging and responsibility among participants and that it had also strengthened community networks and improved communication between different groups.

Reconciliation is another important aspect of conflict resolution. It is a process of repairing relationships that have been damaged by conflict. This can involve acknowledging past harms, restoring trust, and creating a shared vision for the future. As a matter of fact, for there to be peace in any society or organisation, especially where there is conflict, there must be reconciliation. Schools can play a number of important roles in promoting reconciliation and peacebuilding in society. First, schools can act as neutral spaces where members of different groups can come together and interact in a non-threatening environment. Second, schools can teach students about the importance of conflict resolution and peacebuilding and help them to develop the skills needed to engage in these processes. Third, schools can serve as a bridge between different communities, helping to promote understanding and cooperation. And finally, schools can help to create a culture of peace by promoting values like respect, understanding, and acceptance. There are several specific examples of how schools have played a role in reconciliation and peacebuilding. In Northern Ireland, for example, the Integrated Education Fund has helped to establish integrated schools, which bring together children from different backgrounds. In South Africa, the Children's Peace Initiative has worked to provide peace education and reconciliation training to students and teachers in schools across the country. And in Rwanda, the Rwanda Girls Initiative has used education to help girls who were impacted by the genocide to heal and rebuild their lives.

Various studies have been carried out on Christian schools, reconciliation and peacebuilding. They include Akintunde (2020), who examined the role of Christian schools in promoting understanding and peaceful coexistence in conflict-affected areas; Oluwadare (2020), who examined the role of Christian schools in promoting understanding and peaceful coexistence in conflict-affected areas using Borno State as a case study; and Oluwadare (2020), who examined the role of Christian schools in promoting understanding and peaceful coexistence in conflict-affected areas. A case study of

Borno State, Nigeria, Izunwanne (2020) examined the role of Christian schools in promoting trauma healing in conflict-affected areas using Kaduna State, Nigeria, as a case study; Eke (2020) examined the role of Christian schools in promoting peace education in conflict-affected areas. In a study of Benue State, Nigeria, Opara (2020) examined the role of Christian schools in repairing relationships in conflict-affected areas, and Okoro (2020) examined the role of Christian schools in promoting dialogue in conflict-affected areas. From the findings of these studies, one can therefore deduce that Christian schools are capable of making an important impact in reconciliation and peacebuilding. It is, however, worthy to note that none of these studies have been carried out on the role of Christian schools in promoting reconciliation and peacebuilding in conflict-affected areas in Southeast Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of Christian schools in promoting reconciliation and peacebuilding in conflict-affected areas in Southeast Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Evaluate roles of Christian schools in promoting peace education in conflict-affected areas in South East Nigeria
2. Access roles of Christian schools in promoting community development programmes in conflict-affected areas in South East Nigeria
3. Determine roles of Christian schools in repairing relationships among conflict-affected areas in Southeast Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the investigation of this study.

1. What are the roles of Christian schools in promoting peace education in conflict-affected areas in Southeast Nigeria?
2. What are the roles of Christian schools in promoting community development programmes in conflict-affected areas in Southeast Nigeria?
3. What are the roles of Christian schools in repairing relationships among conflict-affected areas in Southeast Nigeria?

Hypotheses

In statistical hypothesis testing, the researcher used the null hypothesis (H_0) to suggest that there is no

significant difference or effect. The hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

H_{01} The roles of Christian schools in promoting peace education in conflict-affected areas in Southeast Nigeria are not significant.

H_{02} The roles of Christian schools in repairing relationships in conflict-affected areas in Southeast Nigeria are not significant.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for this study consisted of approximately 10,000 students in senior secondary schools (SSS) in 50 mission schools in Imo State, Nigeria. A sample of 450 participants was selected from the population. This includes 300 students in senior secondary schools (SSS) in mission schools, 75 teachers and administrators with experience working in conflict-affected areas, 25 Christian religious leaders and clergy who oversee mission schools, and 50 community leaders and stakeholders who have interactions with mission schools in conflict-affected areas. The instrument used for data collection was a well-structured questionnaire titled "Role of Christian schools in promoting reconciliation and peace building in conflict-affected areas in Southeast Nigeria: a study of mission schools in Imo State." Questions were drawn based strictly on the stated objectives and literature reviewed. The validity of the instruments was determined by 3 experts from the Department of Religious Studies, Paul University Awka. The reliability of the questionnaire instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method of reliability, and a reliability index of 0.72 was obtained, making the instrument reliable. The research questions were answered using simple descriptive statistics such as the mean and standard deviation. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significance with appropriate degrees of freedom using t-test analysis. The hypotheses of no significant difference were retained if the p-value was greater than the 0.05 level of significance; otherwise, the null hypothesis was rejected.

RESULTS

Research Question one

What are the roles of Christian schools in promoting peace education on conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean Scores and Standard deviation of the respondents on the roles of Christian schools in promoting peace education in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria

SN	Roles of Christian schools in promoting peace education on conflict affected areas	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
1	Christian schools in Imo State incorporate peace education into their curriculum.	3.23	1.151	Agree
2	Christian schools promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students to resolve conflicts peacefully.	3.31	1.189	Agree
3	Christian schools in Imo State teach students about the causes and effects of conflict.	3.30	1.074	Agree
4	Christian schools promote empathy and understanding among students from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.	3.01	1.315	Agree
5	Christian schools in Imo State provide opportunities for students to engage in peace-building activities.	3.37	1.193	Agree
6	Christian schools promote a culture of peace and non-violence among students.	3.22	1.123	Agree
7	Christian schools in Imo State encourage students to take leadership roles in promoting peace and conflict resolution.	3.32	1.181	Agree
8	Christian schools provide training and resources for teachers on peace education and conflict resolution.	3.22	1.154	Agree
9	Christian schools in Imo State engage with local communities and organizations to promote peace education and conflict resolution.	3.29	1.074	Agree
10	Christian schools promote long-term positive relationships among students from different backgrounds.	3.37	.952	Agree
Cluster Mean Score		3.264	1.1406	Agree

Table 1 sought to ascertain the roles of Christian schools in promoting peace education in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria. Data from the table revealed that the cluster mean of items 1-10 was 3.264. This is above the bench mark score of 2.50 of a 4 -point rating scale. This implies that Christian schools play a significant role in promoting peace education in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria. The Table also revealed that the cluster standard deviation of items 1-10 was 1.1406. This also shows that the respondents were not far from the mean and the opinion of one another in their

responses on the roles of Christian schools in promoting peace education in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria, adding further validity to the mean.

Research Question two

What are the roles of Christian schools in promoting community development programs in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard deviation of the respondents on the roles of Christian schools in promoting community development programs in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria

SN	Roles of Christian schools in promoting community development programs on conflict affected areas	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
1	Christian schools in Imo State implement community development programs to promote peace and reconciliation.	3.10	.961	Agree
2	Christian schools promote community engagement and participation among students and staff.	3.14	1.023	Agree
3	Christian schools in Imo State provide resources and support for community development initiatives.	3.02	.966	Agree
4	Christian schools promote collaboration and partnerships with local organizations and stakeholders.	3.12	.973	Agree

5	Christian schools in Imo State empower students to take leadership roles in community development initiatives.	3.16	.958	Agree
6	Christian schools promote a sense of social responsibility among students and staff.	3.22	1.056	Agree
7	Christian schools in Imo State provide training and capacity-building programs for community members.	3.02	.981	Agree
8	Christian schools promote community-based initiatives to address conflict-related issues.	3.08	1.360	Agree
9	Christian schools in Imo State foster partnerships with local government and NGOs to promote community development.	3.14	1.176	Agree
10	Christian schools promote sustainable community development programs that address the root causes of conflict.	3.19	1.231	Agree
Cluster Mean Score		3.11	1.068	Agree

Table 2 revealed that the cluster mean of items 1-10 was 3.11. This is above the bench mark score of 2.50 of a 4-point rating scale. This implies that Christian schools play a significant role in promoting community development programs in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria. The Table also revealed that the cluster standard deviation of items 1-10 was 1.068. This also shows that the respondents were not far from the mean and the opinion of one another in their responses on the

roles of Christian schools in promoting community development programs in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria, adding further validity to the mean.

Research Question three

What are the roles of Christian schools in repairing relationships in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean Scores and Standard deviation of the respondents on the roles of Christian schools in repairing relationships in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria

SN	Roles of Christian schools in repairing relationships in conflict affected areas	Mean	Std. Dev.	Remark
1	Christian schools in Imo State facilitate reconciliation programs to repair relationships among students from conflict-affected areas.	3.28	.618	Agree
2	Christian schools promote forgiveness and healing among students affected by conflict.	3.20	.708	Agree
3	Christian schools in Imo State encourage students to engage in community service projects that promote unity and reconciliation.	2.96	.885	Agree
4	Christian schools provide counseling and support services to students affected by conflict.	3.42	.650	Agree
5	Christian schools in Imo State foster partnerships with local organizations to promote reconciliation and peace-building.	3.33	.971	Agree
6	Christian schools promote empathy and understanding among students from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.	3.18	.928	Agree
7	Christian schools in Imo State encourage students to engage in reflective practices that promote personal healing and reconciliation.	3.09	.818	Agree
8	Christian schools provide training and resources for teachers on reconciliation and peace-building.	3.15	.715	Agree
9	Christian schools in Imo State promote restorative justice practices among students.	3.05	1.013	Agree
10	Christian schools foster a culture of reconciliation and peace-building among students and staff.	3.15	1.093	Agree
Cluster Mean Score		3.18	0.839	Agree

Table 3 sought to ascertain the roles of Christian schools in repairing relationships in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria. Data from the table revealed that the cluster mean of items 1-10 was 3.18. This is above the bench mark score of 2.50 of a 4-point rating scale. This implies that Christian schools play a significant role in repairing relationships in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria. The Table also revealed that the cluster standard deviation of items 1 – 10 was .839. This also shows that the respondents were not far from the mean and the opinion of one another in their responses

on the roles of Christian schools in repairing relationships in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria, adding further validity to the mean.

Hypothesis one

The roles of Christian schools in promoting peace education on conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria is not significant

Table 4: ANOVA Analysis of the role of Christian schools in promoting peace education conflict affected areas in South East

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	25.600	3	8.533	17.513	.000
Within Groups	217.319	446	.487		
Total	242.919	449			

The data in Table 4 shows an f-calculated value of 17.513 and significant p-value of .000. Since the p-value of .000 is less than 0.05 level of significant, the null hypothesis is therefore not retained. Consequently, the role of Christian schools in promoting peace education in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria is significant.

Hypothesis Two

The roles of Christian schools in promoting community development in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria is not significant

Table 5: ANOVA Analysis of the role of Christian schools in promoting community development in conflict affected areas in South East

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.959	3	.320	1.421	.256
Within Groups	140.362	446	.315		
Total	141.321	449			

The data in Table 5 indicates an f-calculated value of 1.421 and significant p-value of .386. Since the p-value of .256 is greater than 0.05 level of significant, the null hypothesis is therefore retained. Consequently, the role of Christian schools in promoting community development in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria is not significant.

Hypothesis Three

The role of Christian schools in repairing relationships in conflict affected areas in South East Nigeria is not significant.

Table 6: ANOVA Analysis of the role of Christian schools in repairing relationships in conflict affected areas in South East

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.682	3	1.227	4.561	.003
Within Groups	127.569	446	.286		
Total	131.251	449			

The data in Table 6 indicates an f-calculated value of 4.561 and a significant p-value of .005. Since the p-value of .003 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null

hypothesis is therefore rejected. Consequently, the role of Christian schools in repairing relationships in conflict-affected areas in Southeast Nigeria is significant.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.

The finding of the study for research question one revealed that Christian schools play a significant role in promoting peace education in conflict-affected areas in Southeast Nigeria. Specifically, these schools contribute significantly to fostering a culture of peace and understanding by incorporating peace education into their curriculum. Christian schools in Imo State encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students, enabling them to resolve conflicts peacefully. By teaching students about the causes and effects of conflict, these schools promote empathy and understanding among students from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Moreover, Christian schools provide opportunities for students to engage in peace-building activities and encourage them to take leadership roles in promoting peace and conflict resolution. This approach is further supported by offering training and resources for teachers on peace education and conflict resolution. Engaging with local communities and organisations allows further Christian schools to promote peace education and conflict resolution beyond the classroom, fostering long-term positive relationships among students from different backgrounds. The study validated the findings of Eke (2020) on the role of Christian schools in promoting peace education in conflict-affected areas: A study of Benue State, Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that Christian schools played a significant role in promoting peace education among students in conflict-affected areas. Specifically, the results showed that students who attended Christian schools tended to have higher levels of knowledge, more positive attitudes, and more peaceful behaviours compared to students who attended public schools.

Findings from research question two revealed that Christian schools play a significant role in promoting community development programmes in conflict-affected areas in Southeast Nigeria, especially in Imo State. Specifically, Christian schools in Imo State contribute significantly to peacebuilding and reconciliation through various community development initiatives. Christian schools in Imo State actively engage with their communities, fostering participation and collaboration among students, staff, and local stakeholders. By providing essential resources and support for community development initiatives, these schools create opportunities for students to take leadership roles in peacebuilding efforts. In promoting social responsibility among students and staff, Christian schools cultivate a sense of ownership and commitment to community well-being. This is further supported by offering training and

capacity-building programmes for community members, empowering them to address conflict-related issues and contribute to sustainable peace. Collaboration with local organisations, NGOs, and government entities enables Christian schools to foster strategic partnerships that promote community development and reconciliation. Through sustainable, community-based initiatives, these schools effectively tackle the root causes of conflict and create lasting positive change. This is in line with the findings of Njoku (2020) on the role of Christian schools in promoting community development in conflict-affected areas in Taraba State, Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that Christian schools played a significant role in promoting community development in conflict-affected areas. Specifically, the results showed that Christian schools were involved in various community development initiatives, such as economic empowerment programmes, health education, and infrastructure development projects. The study also found that Christian schools' community development initiatives had positive outcomes, including improved economic well-being, social cohesion, and infrastructure development.

In line with research question three, the study found that Christian schools play a significant role in repairing relationships in conflict-affected areas in Southeast Nigeria, particularly in Imo State. Specifically, the study found that Christian schools in Imo State facilitate reconciliation programmes that aim to repair relationships among students from conflict-affected areas. By promoting forgiveness and healing, these schools create an environment conducive to rebuilding trust and understanding. They also engage in community service projects that encourage unity and reconciliation, which are central to the approach taken by Christian schools. Counselling and support services provided to students affected by conflict further foster individual healing and well-being. Christian schools in Imo State also partner with local organisations to strengthen peace-building and reconciliation efforts within the wider community. Moreover, Christian schools cultivate empathy and understanding among students from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, facilitating dialogue and mutual respect. This agrees with the findings of Opara (2020) on the role of Christian schools in repairing relationships in conflict-affected areas. The main objective of the study was to investigate the impact of Christian education on interpersonal relationships and community cohesion in conflict-affected areas. The findings of the study revealed that Christian schools played a significant role in repairing relationships in conflict-affected areas. Specifically, the

results showed that Christian schools' initiatives, such as forgiveness programmes, reconciliation workshops, and community service projects, helped to improve interpersonal relationships and community cohesion. The study also found that Christian schools' relationship-repairing initiatives had positive outcomes, including increased trust, reduced conflict, and improved community relationships.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that Christian schools contribute significantly to promoting understanding, trauma healing, peace education, community development, relationship repair, and dialogue among students in conflict-affected areas. This is done by ensuring empathy, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills among students. Hence, students should be equipped with the necessary tools to navigate and address the challenges arising from conflict. Recommendations

1. School-community relationships should be strengthened by partnering with local organisations and stakeholders to identify community needs and implement joint peace-building initiatives.
2. School administrators should encourage the formation of student-led support groups where students can share their experiences and discuss effective conflict resolution strategies.
3. School administrators should establish debate clubs and forums where students can engage in respectful and empathetic discussions on conflict-related issues, fostering open-mindedness and tolerance.
4. Religious leaders should be true to the tenets of their religion and be vigilant so as to not allow themselves and their followers to be used by others who parade themselves as champions of their interests.
5. Government should always address the problems of unemployment, food insecurity, poverty and youth mobilisation, which are threats to the security of the nation.

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