

Decolonizing Peace in Africa: Why African Traditions Hold a Key to Sustainable Peace ?

Abstract:

Overview: *The study on decolonizing peace highlights the critical role of African traditions in fostering peace by emphasizing indigenous approaches to conflict resolution, community cohesion, and restorative justice.*

Body of Knowledge: *This study emphasizes the importance of embracing indigenous traditions and cultural practices as foundational elements for fostering sustainable peace in Africa. African traditions, rooted in communal values, restorative justice, and consensus-building, offer sustainable alternatives to Western-centric peace building models, which often overlook the continent's unique social, historical, and cultural contexts.*

Methods: *The study was conducted in Lusaka district, the capital city of Zambia. The sample consisted 50 research participants. A purposive sampling technique was used to select key informants such as traditional chiefs, peace practitioners, academicians, and policymakers. Moreover, snowball sampling helped identify additional participants such as church leaders with relevant insights. The data collection process involved conducting semi-structured interviews and focus groups discussions (FGDs).The data collected were analyzed using study themes and content analysis.*

Results: *The findings revealed that that African traditions, such as Ubuntu and communal consensus-building, foster inclusivity and a shared sense of responsibility, enabling communities to address conflicts collaboratively and restore relationships. Additionally, African peace building frameworks, rooted in collective decision-making, respect for elders, and culturally ingrained reconciliation practices, offer sustainable alternatives to Western-centric models that often overlook local contexts.*

Recommendation: *Schools, universities, and civil society organizations should promote the communal values to cultivate a generation that prioritizes dialogue, cooperation, and collective well-being over adversarial approaches to conflict resolution.*

Keywords: *African Traditions, Conflict Resolution, Cultural Heritage, Decolonization and Sustainable Peace.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Decolonizing peace in Africa requires a critical re-examination of dominant Western frameworks that have shaped conflict resolution and governance across Africa. While colonial legacies imposed Eurocentric models of justice and diplomacy, many African societies have long possessed rich traditions of conflict resolution rooted in communal values, dialogue, and restorative justice (Chitondo et al., 2023). Traditional mechanisms such as the Ubuntu philosophy, palaver systems, and indigenous mediation practices emphasize reconciliation, social cohesion, and collective well-being rather than punitive justice. These approaches offer a more culturally relevant and sustainable pathway to peace building in African societies, particularly in regions where Western

legal frameworks have struggled to address deep-seated conflicts. By integrating African traditions into contemporary peace efforts, there is an opportunity to foster solutions that are more inclusive, context-specific, and reflective of local realities. Decolonizing peace, therefore, is not just about reclaiming indigenous practices but also about challenging the structural inequalities that have marginalized African knowledge systems in global peace discourse. Butlin (2009) says that embracing these traditions can pave the way for a more lasting and meaningful harmony, where African societies actively shape their own narratives of justice and reconciliation.

Chinweuba & Ezeugwu (2018) narrated that African traditions play a crucial role in the discourse on decolonizing peace, offering indigenous approaches to conflict resolution, reconciliation, and social harmony that have been sidelined by colonial legacies. Rooted in communal values, African traditions emphasize restorative rather than punitive justice, fostering dialogue, consensus-building, and the reintegration of offenders into society. Systems such as Ubuntu in Southern Africa, the Gacaca courts in Rwanda, and the Palaver tradition in West Africa illustrate the efficacy of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms in maintaining sustainable peace in Africa. Unlike Western legal frameworks, which often impose rigid structures, African traditions prioritize inclusivity, mutual respect, and the recognition of interconnectedness within the community (Crumley, 2009a). Furthermore, the spiritual and cultural dimensions of African peace building emphasize respect for ancestors, nature, and collective well-being, reinforcing a holistic approach to conflict resolution. Decolonizing peace requires acknowledging and integrating these indigenous methodologies into modern governance structures and peace processes, thereby restoring agency to African societies and challenging the dominance of Eurocentric models. By embracing African traditions, peace processes can become more culturally relevant, sustainable, and reflective of the lived experiences of African communities.

Decolonization, in the context of peace building, refers to the process of dismantling colonial structures, ideologies, and influences that have shaped governance, conflict resolution, and social organization in Africa. African traditions offer a rich repository of conflict resolution mechanisms, such as communal dialogue, restorative justice, and consensus-building, which have historically maintained social harmony (Chanda et al., 2024a). Unlike Western approaches that prioritize legalistic and state-centered peace processes, African traditions emphasize reconciliation, relational healing, and collective responsibility, fostering a more sustainable and culturally resonant form of peace. The decolonization of peace in Africa requires recognizing and integrating these indigenous practices into modern governance and conflict resolution frameworks, ensuring that peace building efforts are not only effective but also rooted in African realities and historical contexts (Happens & Cain, 2016). By reclaiming these traditions, African societies can challenge the legacy of colonialism and promote more inclusive, participatory, human-centered and enduring peace strategies.

Harmony, as a central concept in decolonizing peace, emphasizes the interconnectedness and balance within African traditional systems of conflict resolution and social cohesion. Rooted in indigenous philosophies such as Ubuntu, these traditions recognize that peace is not merely the absence of violence but the presence of justice, mutual respect, and social equilibrium as Hambulo et al (2023) suggested in their study. Elders and community leaders play a vital role in mediating disputes, ensuring that relationships are mended rather than severed. The emphasis on harmony

extends beyond human relationships to include a balanced relationship with nature, reinforcing the holistic worldview that underpins African peace building practices. By embracing traditional African models of harmony, societies can foster sustainable peace that is deeply rooted in cultural values and collective well-being (Hogan, 2000).

Peace-building in the context of decolonizing peace emphasizes the need to integrate African traditions and indigenous knowledge systems into contemporary conflict resolution strategies. Colonial legacies have often sidelined or undermined traditional African mechanisms for maintaining harmony, replacing them with Western-centric approaches that may not align with local realities (Chanda & Chisebe, 2024). Decolonizing peace, therefore, requires shifting from externally imposed frameworks to approaches that respect and build upon African ways of resolving conflicts, fostering genuine and lasting harmony within societies.

Sustainability in the context of decolonizing peace emphasizes the need for long-term, self-sustaining approaches to conflict resolution that draw from African traditions and indigenous knowledge systems. Unlike externally imposed peace frameworks that often fail to address the root causes of conflicts, African traditional methods such as restorative justice, community dialogue, and consensus-building offer culturally relevant solutions that ensure lasting harmony (Chitondo et al., 2024). These practices, embedded in values of Ubuntu and communalism, prioritize reconciliation over retribution, allowing societies to heal and prevent the recurrence of violence. Additionally, sustainability in decolonizing peace requires reducing dependency on Western intervention and strengthening local governance structures that promote social cohesion. By reclaiming indigenous peace-building mechanisms and integrating them into contemporary policy frameworks, African nations can establish more resilient and contextually appropriate systems for maintaining stability (Das, 2011). Ultimately, embracing traditional approaches to peace not only ensures sustainability in conflict resolution but also fosters a sense of ownership, agency, and dignity among communities striving for sustainable peace.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The persistent challenges of conflict and instability in Africa highlight the limitations of Western-centric peace building models, which often overlook the continent's rich indigenous traditions of conflict resolution and social harmony. Englebert & Dunn (2013) says that many African societies have long relied on traditional mechanisms such as consensus-building, mediation by elders, restorative justice, and community dialogue to foster reconciliation and sustainable peace. However, colonial legacies and the dominance of Western legal and governance frameworks have marginalized these indigenous approaches, creating a disconnection between formal peace building efforts and local realities. Hence, this study sought to explore how integrating African traditions into modern peace building strategies can enhance their effectiveness, foster inclusivity, and ensure culturally relevant conflict resolution processes. By decolonizing peace and embracing indigenous knowledge systems, Africa can reclaim its agency in shaping sustainable peace initiatives that resonate with its historical and social realities. Understanding the role of African traditions in fostering lasting harmony is crucial for developing context-specific solutions that address the root causes of conflict and promote long-term stability (Head et al., 2010).

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To examine the role of African traditional values, practices, and belief systems in fostering peace and harmony within African societies.
- To assess the potential of integrating African traditions in contemporary conflict resolution processes to enable sustainable peace in modern African societies.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the “Ubuntu Philosophy Theory”. Ubuntu philosophy, rooted in African traditions, offers a profound framework for understanding peace and social harmony through a collective and interconnected worldview. Ubuntu, often expressed in the phrase “I am because we are,” emphasizes the interdependence of all people and the importance of community, mutual respect, and shared humanity. This philosophy challenges individualistic Western perspectives (“you are because I am”), advocating for a model where human dignity, compassion, and solidarity are paramount. In the context of decolonizing peace, Ubuntu provides a pathway to healing historical wounds caused by colonialism, as it fosters an inclusive environment where dialogue, reconciliation, and collective efforts replace division and conflict. Hambulo et al (2023b) in their study, narrated that by embracing Ubuntu, African societies can reclaim their indigenous approaches to conflict resolution, promoting sustainable peace grounded in cultural heritage and communal values. This philosophy calls for recognizing the dignity of others, prioritizing the common good over personal gain, and cultivating harmonious relationships that transcend societal divides, offering hope for lasting peace in post-colonial Africa.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study’s significance lies in its potential to challenge and expand current approaches to peace building by highlighting the often-overlooked value of African traditional conflict resolution methods. It explores how indigenous knowledge systems, which emphasize communalism, restorative justice, and reconciliation, can offer sustainable solutions to contemporary conflicts in Africa. By examining these traditional practices, the study seeks to decolonize peace building frameworks that have largely been influenced by Western ideologies, and instead, propose an African-centered approach that is deeply rooted in cultural contexts. This research is crucial for promoting long-term peace in Africa, as it advocates for a return to the continent's rich heritage of collective healing and dialogue, offering a more inclusive and culturally relevant path toward lasting harmony and sustainable conflict resolution.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological and ethnographic approaches. The phenomenological approach explored lived experiences of African communities in conflict resolution, while the ethnographic approach involved in-depth engagement with cultural peace practices. The study was conducted within Lusaka district of Zambia in four selected communities. The study was conducted between November 2024 and January 2025. The sample size was 50 research participants which is 10% of the target population 500. A purposive sampling technique was used to select key informants such as traditional chiefs, peace practitioners, academics, and policymakers. In addition, snowball sampling helped identify additional participants such as church leaders with relevant insights. The data collection process involved conducting semi-structured interviews with traditional leaders, elders, mediators, and community members who have participated in indigenous peace building. Additionally, 2 focus group

discussions were conducted with selected participants from different ethnic groups. Also, the primary data was complimented by the secondary data which was derived from document analysis and case studies. The data collected were analyzed using themes and content analysis. For ethical reasons, the study avoided pressuring research participants to take part in the research process. Alternatively, consents and assents were obtained from the participants involved in the study and the research topic was strategically selected to ensure that there was no harm whatsoever to the research respondents. The study also upheld research ethical considerations such as voluntary participation of the respondents, confidentiality, honesty, and right of privacy.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 The Role of African Traditional Values, Practices, and Belief Systems in Fostering Peace and Harmony within African Societies

According to research findings, the role of African traditional values, practices, and belief systems in fostering peace and harmony within African societies, play a crucial role in fostering societal cohesion and lasting peace by addressing conflicts at their roots and promoting reconciliation. These mechanisms are deeply embedded in cultural traditions and local governance systems, making them more effective and sustainable in many communities. Traditional leaders pointed out that the African traditional values, practices, and belief systems play a crucial role in preserving social harmony by emphasizing communal living, respect for elders, conflict resolution, and moral responsibility. One of the leaders from community A expressed that:

“-Rooted in the principles of “Ubuntu”, which promotes interconnectedness and mutual respect, African societies prioritize collective well-being over individual gain. Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, such as mediation by elders and community councils, help maintain peace by fostering dialogue and reconciliation rather than punitive measures. Rituals, ceremonies, and customary laws also reinforce societal norms and values, ensuring that individuals adhere to behaviors that promote unity and cooperation-”.

Additionally, belief systems that emphasize ancestral reverence and spiritual accountability instill a sense of moral duty, discouraging actions that could disrupt social cohesion. By upholding these traditions, African societies create a strong sense of identity, belonging, and stability, ultimately fostering peace and harmony within communities.

The study results also revealed that African traditional values, practices, and belief systems play a crucial role in conflict resolution by preventing recurring disputes and fostering long-term peace and harmony within societies. Rooted in communal living, these traditions emphasize dialogue, consensus-building, and reconciliation over punitive measures (Hook, 2012). Elders and community leaders, who are highly respected for their wisdom and experience, often mediate conflicts through structured discussions known as palaver or council meetings, ensuring that all parties are heard and that justice is served fairly. Restorative justice, a fundamental aspect of African conflict resolution, prioritizes repairing relationships and restoring social balance rather than focusing solely on punishment. Additionally, belief systems that emphasize interconnectedness, such as the philosophy of Ubuntu-which highlights shared humanity and collective responsibility promote forgiveness and reintegration rather than division and retaliation. Chitondo & Chanda (2023) added that rituals, customary laws, and symbolic peace agreements, such as the exchange of gifts or communal feasts, further solidify reconciliation efforts and prevent disputes from resurfacing. By embedding conflict resolution mechanisms within cultural and spiritual frameworks, African societies create sustainable peace models that are deeply ingrained in their social fabric, reducing the likelihood of recurring disputes.

Additionally, restorative justice, deeply rooted in African traditional values, practices, and belief systems, plays a significant role in promoting healing and reconciliation within African societies. Gilmartin (2009) noted that unlike punitive justice systems that focus on retribution, restorative justice emphasizes repairing harm, restoring relationships, and reintegrating individuals into their communities. African indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms, such as village elders' mediation, truth-telling forums, and communal dialogues, prioritize collective responsibility and reconciliation over individual punishment. Traditional African societies have long upheld values such as Ubuntu, which underscores compassion, empathy, and interconnectedness, fostering a culture of forgiveness and harmony. Practices like cleansing rituals, compensation, and public apologies serve as mechanisms for rebuilding trust and ensuring social cohesion. Additionally, Chanda & Chitondo (2023) stated that belief systems that emphasize ancestral guidance and spiritual reconciliation reinforce the moral obligation to restore balance and unity after conflicts. By integrating these traditional approaches into modern justice systems, African societies can create more inclusive, culturally relevant methods for addressing disputes, fostering long-term peace, and strengthening communal ties.

The findings also revealed that communal dialogue plays a crucial role in strengthening social bonds and fostering peace and harmony within African societies, deeply rooted in traditional values, practices, and belief systems. African cultures emphasize collective decision-making, conflict resolution, and consensus-building through structured discussions led by elders, chiefs, or community leaders (UN, 2015). These dialogues serve as platforms for addressing social concerns, resolving disputes, and reinforcing communal unity. Traditional African belief systems view harmony as essential to societal well-being, encouraging respect, reconciliation, and restorative justice rather than punitive measures. Practices such as palaver (open discussions), truth-telling ceremonies, and intergenerational storytelling further instill values of cooperation and mutual understanding. Additionally, rituals and customary gatherings provide spaces for reaffirming shared identity and cultural continuity, ensuring that younger generations inherit and uphold the principles of unity and coexistence. By promoting inclusivity and social cohesion, communal dialogue remains a powerful mechanism for maintaining peace, resolving conflicts, and strengthening relationships within African communities, demonstrating the enduring significance of indigenous knowledge and customs in contemporary society (Asaju, 2023).

Furthermore, African traditional values, practices, and belief systems play a crucial role in fostering long-term stability by promoting peace, unity, and social cohesion within societies. Rooted in communal living, these values emphasize the importance of mutual respect, dialogue, and conflict resolution through traditional mechanisms such as elder mediation and consensus-building (Chanda et al., 2024b). The emphasis on collective well-being over individual interests ensures that disputes are resolved in a manner that preserves harmony rather than deepening divisions. Practices such as Ubuntu, which stresses interconnectedness and human dignity, reinforce a shared sense of responsibility and cooperation among community members. Traditional belief systems also uphold moral codes that discourage actions that threaten stability, such as dishonesty, betrayal, and violence. Through customary laws, rituals, and cultural ceremonies, these systems instill respect for authority, encourage reconciliation, and nurture a spirit of forgiveness, all of which contribute to long-term peace and societal balance. By preserving these values amid modernization, African societies can maintain their resilience and stability in the face of social, economic, and political challenges.

The study findings also noted that African traditional values, practices, and belief systems play a significant role in promoting cultural resilience and fostering peace and harmony within African societies. Rooted in a deep respect for community, family, and social cohesion, these traditions often emphasize the importance of unity, mutual respect, and collective responsibility (Delmas & Nigel, 2011). One of the peace practitioners from community B stated that:

“-Values such as Ubuntu, which stresses interconnectedness and the well-being of others, encourage individuals to prioritize communal interests over personal gain. Traditional practices, such as conflict resolution mechanisms like mediation and dialogue, are integral in addressing disputes within communities, promoting reconciliation and understanding-”.

Hopkins (2008) added that these practices help to prevent violent conflict by encouraging peaceful resolutions based on respect for all parties involved. Additionally, African belief systems often link spiritual and social life, offering moral guidance that underpins harmonious living, spiritual balance, and mutual support. As a result, the preservation and practice of African cultural values and beliefs not only strengthen community bonds but also contribute to long-term peace building by nurturing respect for diversity, promoting inclusivity, and maintaining social stability.

Moreover, in many African communities, decision-making is often a collective process, rooted in the idea of communalism and shared responsibility. Chanda (2023) supported this finding by stating that elders, spiritual leaders, and various community members engage in dialogue to reach decisions that serve the collective good. This participatory approach ensures that all voices, especially those of marginalized groups such as women, youth, and minority communities, are heard, promoting social cohesion and inclusivity. Additionally, African belief systems often emphasize respect for individuals and the community, which creates a sense of duty toward maintaining harmony and resolving conflicts peacefully. Traditional rituals, ceremonies, and practices, such as the use of councils or community assemblies, reinforce the importance of consensus-building, dialogue, and respect for diverse opinions, further strengthening the foundation for peaceful coexistence. By valuing collaboration and consensus over confrontation, African traditional values contribute to long-standing mechanisms of conflict prevention and resolution, supporting peace and harmony within societies (Cárdenas, 2022).

3.2. The Potential of Integrating African Traditions in Contemporary Conflict Resolution Processes to Enable Sustainable Peace in Modern African Societies

The findings revealed that the integration of African traditions with contemporary conflict resolution mechanisms peace can be a powerful approach to creating sustainable peace in modern African societies. African traditional conflict resolution mechanisms have long been based on values such as community, dialogue, reconciliation, and the restoration of relationships. Betts (2005) says that these mechanisms often emphasize collective decision-making, restorative justice, and the importance of elders and other respected community members in mediating disputes. The research participants indicated that:

“-Emphasizing dialogue and reconciliation as a means of integrating African traditions with contemporary peace building frameworks presents a viable approach to creating sustainable conflict resolution strategies in modern African contexts-”.

Traditional African societies have long relied on communal dialogue, consensus-building, and restorative justice mechanisms to resolve disputes and maintain social harmony. Tamale (2020) revealed that these indigenous practices, which prioritize reconciliation over punitive measures, align with contemporary peace building efforts that advocate for inclusivity, participatory governance, and long-term stability. By integrating traditional wisdom with modern conflict resolution frameworks, African nations can develop more culturally relevant and effective

solutions that address the root causes of conflict while fostering social cohesion (Burbank & Frederick, 2010). This approach not only strengthens local ownership of peace processes but also ensures that solutions are deeply rooted in African values, making them more sustainable in the long run. Moreover, incorporating traditional conflict resolution practices into modern governance structures can help bridge the gap between formal legal systems and customary justice mechanisms, thereby enhancing trust and legitimacy in peace building efforts. Ultimately, by emphasizing dialogue and reconciliation, African societies can harness their rich heritage to create resilient and adaptive frameworks for conflict resolution that promote lasting peace and development (Daniel & Dana, 2011).

Further, community-based approaches hold significant potential in integrating African traditions with contemporary peace-building frameworks to create sustainable solutions for conflict resolution in modern African contexts. One of the academicians' from community C narrated that: "In many African societies, the community plays a central role in resolving conflicts. Integrating community-driven approaches into contemporary peace building frameworks ensures that peace building efforts are locally owned, culturally relevant, and sustainable. This also involves empowering local actors, such as women, youth, and traditional leaders, to actively participate in peace building-".

Traditional African societies have long relied on communal decision-making, restorative justice, and consensus-building through mechanisms such as elders' councils, community mediators, and customary dispute resolution processes. These indigenous methods emphasize reconciliation, healing, and social harmony rather than punitive justice, aligning closely with modern principles of transformative conflict resolution. By incorporating these traditional elements into contemporary peace-building efforts, communities can foster local ownership of conflict resolution processes, enhancing legitimacy and sustainability (Fukuyama, 2013). Additionally, blending African traditions with modern frameworks allows for more culturally relevant strategies that address the root causes of conflicts while adapting to contemporary socio-political realities. Engaging local leaders, religious figures, and women's groups further strengthens peace efforts by ensuring inclusivity and leveraging trusted community networks. However, successful integration requires careful negotiation to balance tradition with human rights principles, particularly in cases where customary practices may conflict with modern legal frameworks. Through participatory dialogue, legal recognition of indigenous peace mechanisms, and capacity-building initiatives, African nations can develop hybrid conflict resolution models that bridge traditional wisdom with contemporary governance structures (Chitondo & Chanda, 2023b). Ultimately, leveraging community-based approaches in this manner enhances social cohesion, fosters sustainable peace, and strengthens resilience against recurring conflicts across the continent.

The study also found that spiritual and cultural resources play a crucial role in integrating African traditions into contemporary peace-building frameworks to create sustainable solutions for conflict resolution in modern African contexts. African societies have long relied on indigenous mechanisms such as mediation by elders, traditional healing practices, and communal reconciliation rituals to resolve disputes and restore social harmony. Ha (2010) added that these traditions emphasize restorative justice, dialogue, and consensus-building, aligning with modern peace-building principles that prioritize reconciliation over retribution. Additionally, African spirituality, rooted in ancestral reverence and moral ethics, fosters a sense of collective responsibility, unity, and respect for human dignity, which are essential values for sustainable peace. By integrating these traditional approaches with contemporary legal and institutional frameworks, a more holistic and culturally relevant conflict resolution strategy can be developed.

This fusion can enhance the legitimacy and acceptance of peace initiatives, making them more effective in addressing conflicts rooted in historical grievances, ethnic divisions, and socio-political tensions. Furthermore, the use of traditional storytelling, proverbs, and music in peace education can reinforce values of tolerance, coexistence, and non-violence, ensuring that peace-building efforts resonate deeply with local communities (Ganesan, 2012). Recognizing and leveraging these spiritual and cultural resources can bridge the gap between indigenous knowledge systems and modern governance structures, leading to more inclusive, participatory, and enduring peace solutions in Africa.

Additionally, Traditional African conflict resolution mechanisms, such as community mediation by elders, restorative justice, and consensus-based decision-making, emphasize reconciliation and social harmony rather than punitive measures. These indigenous approaches, rooted in cultural values of unity and dialogue, can complement modern frameworks that focus on legal and institutional mechanisms for peace building (Augoustinos & Reynolds, 2001). By combining these systems, African nations can develop more sustainable and contextually relevant strategies for conflict prevention, ensuring that solutions are not only legally sound but also socially accepted. One of the church leaders from community D explained that:

“Traditional systems often emphasize the importance of preventing conflict before it escalates. Contemporary peace building frameworks can integrate early warning systems, community-based monitoring, and local conflict prevention strategies to address tensions before they lead to violence-”.

The integration of traditional dispute resolution techniques into contemporary practices, such as early warning systems, inclusive governance, and human rights-based approaches, can enhance the effectiveness of peace initiatives by fostering trust and local ownership of conflict resolution processes. Additionally, leveraging indigenous knowledge systems can bridge the gap between state actors and local communities, reducing tensions and fostering a collaborative approach to peace (Isife & Agbanus, 2022). This hybrid model can be particularly effective in addressing conflicts rooted in ethnic, religious, and socio-political divisions by promoting culturally sensitive solutions that resonate with affected communities. Therefore, the potential of blending African traditions with modern peace-building methodologies lies in creating holistic, inclusive, and enduring frameworks for conflict prevention and resolution across the continent.

The results also showed that incorporating indigenous knowledge into contemporary peace-building frameworks presents a significant opportunity to integrate African traditions with modern conflict resolution strategies, fostering sustainable solutions in the African context. Traditional African societies have long relied on community-driven approaches such as mediation by elders, restorative justice, and consensus-building to resolve disputes and maintain social harmony (Zezeza, 2014). These practices emphasize reconciliation, collective responsibility, and the reintegration of individuals into the community rather than punitive measures, aligning with modern principles of restorative justice (Jabri, 2013). By integrating indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms with contemporary legal and diplomatic frameworks, African nations can create more culturally relevant and locally accepted peace-building models. This approach not only enhances the legitimacy of conflict resolution efforts but also ensures that solutions are deeply rooted in the values and social structures of the communities they serve. Furthermore, the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in peace-building initiatives empowers local actors, fosters intergenerational knowledge transfer, and promotes a more holistic understanding of peace and security. However, Kgatla (2017) expressed that for this integration to be effective, it requires institutional support, recognition of traditional leaders' roles, and policies that bridge the gap

between customary and formal governance systems. By embracing indigenous knowledge as a core element of peace-building, African societies can develop resilient, context-specific strategies that address conflicts in a sustainable and culturally meaningful way.

Moreover, Sylvester & Antony (2014) explained that building trust and legitimacy in conflict resolution requires a deep understanding of both traditional African customs and contemporary peace building frameworks to develop sustainable solutions that resonate with local communities. African traditions emphasize communal decision-making, consensus-building, and respect for elders, which align with modern principles of restorative justice and participatory governance. By integrating these traditions into contemporary peace building efforts, legitimacy is reinforced as local populations see their cultural values reflected in conflict resolution processes (Price, 2008). Traditional authorities, such as chiefs and elders, often hold significant influence and can serve as mediators, bridging the gap between conflicting parties through culturally appropriate reconciliation methods. Additionally, storytelling, rituals, and customary negotiation practices can complement legal and institutional frameworks, fostering trust among stakeholders who may be skeptical of externally imposed solutions. However, for this integration to be effective, there must be a deliberate effort to balance indigenous practices with human rights principles, ensuring inclusivity and fairness. Reinhard & Kate (2011) also observed that the fusion of African traditions with modern peace building approaches can create resilient conflict resolution mechanisms that not only address immediate disputes but also strengthen social cohesion and prevent future conflicts. This approach ultimately promotes sustainable peace by embedding legitimacy within community-driven initiatives, enhancing the credibility of governance structures, and fostering long-term stability in modern African societies.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study;

1. Integrating Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms into National Peace building Frameworks:

- Governments and peace building organizations should integrate the indigenous practices into formal legal and governance structures. This could involve creating hybrid justice systems that blend customary and modern legal frameworks to ensure culturally relevant, inclusive, and sustainable peace processes.

2. Revitalizing African Communal Values in Education and Policy:

- Schools, universities, and civil society organizations should promote the communal values to cultivate a generation that prioritizes dialogue, cooperation, and collective well-being over adversarial approaches to conflict resolution.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, decolonizing peace in Africa demands a profound shift in how global communities understand and implement conflict resolution, recognizing that the indigenous wisdom of African traditions offers transformative insights for achieving lasting harmony. These traditions, deeply rooted in communal values, restorative justice, and the recognition of interconnectedness, challenge the often exclusionary frameworks imposed by colonial legacies. By embracing and integrating indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms such as consensus-building, mediation, and the reparation of relational ruptures peace processes can become more inclusive, contextually relevant, and genuinely sustainable. African traditions emphasize healing over punishment and

communalism over individualism, providing alternative models that not only mend historical wounds but also lay the groundwork for equitable and resilient societies. Ultimately, incorporating these time-honored practices into modern peace building initiatives can catalyze a transformative shift towards a world where love, social, justice and unity prevail over hatred, divisiveness and historical inequities.

Ethical Approval:

As per international standards or university standards written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

Consent

As per international standards or university standards, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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