

Peacebuilding Initiatives and Community Security in Bwari Area Council, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria

By

Neibo, Boniface Achor

Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP)

boniface@cofpfoundation.org | +2348068053817

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between peacebuilding initiatives and community security in Bwari Area Council, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The study was motivated by persistent community-level security challenges and the need to determine whether locally implemented peacebuilding mechanisms are associated with improved perceptions of safety and security. The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design. The accessible population included eligible adult residents and relevant stakeholders across selected communities, and 424 questionnaires were planned for administration to account for non-response. The inferential analysis included 300 valid responses. Data were collected with a structured questionnaire covering peacebuilding initiatives and community security. They were analysed using means, standard deviations, Pearson product-moment correlation, and simple linear regression at the .05 significance level. Respondents reported that peacebuilding initiatives were implemented to a great extent ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.99$), and perceived community security was also high ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.97$). Peacebuilding initiatives were strongly and positively related to community security, $r = .684$, $p < .001$, $N = 300$. Regression analysis further showed a positive predictive association ($B = 0.634$, $\beta = .684$, $t = 15.24$, $p < .001$). The study concludes that stronger implementation of community dialogue, traditional and community leadership participation, collaboration with security agencies, and community-based security arrangements is associated with stronger community security in Bwari Area Council. It recommends strengthening inclusive community peacebuilding, early-warning mechanisms, youth and women's participation, victim support, and community-oriented security collaboration. Because the design is cross-sectional and non-experimental, the findings are interpreted as associations and predictive relationships rather than proof of causation.

Keywords: peacebuilding initiatives, community security, conflict prevention, community participation, Bwari Area Council

Introduction

Peacebuilding has become an important approach to addressing insecurity, strengthening social cohesion, and creating conditions for communities to pursue social and economic development. Nigeria's contemporary security challenges extend beyond conventional armed conflict to communal conflicts, farmer-herder disputes, kidnapping, banditry, violent extremism, political violence, cultism, land-related disputes, resource competition, and other forms of organised criminality. These challenges disrupt livelihoods, weaken social relationships, interrupt education, discourage investment, increase displacement and poverty, and undermine public confidence in institutions.

Recent Nigerian scholarship presents peacebuilding as more than the immediate cessation of violence. Lamidi et al. (2022) argue that its longer-term purpose is peaceful coexistence, harmonious relationships, and social stability. Akpan (2022) similarly links peace and security to development, emphasising that fear, violence, and instability constrain productive activity and institutional development. This broader conception is important because temporary reductions in violence do not necessarily remove the conditions that reproduce insecurity.

Peacebuilding therefore encompasses conflict prevention, dialogue, mediation, reconciliation, community participation, social justice, economic inclusion, institutional reform, and the rebuilding of

trust. Youth and women are particularly important actors. Waziri et al. (2022) identify youth participation and empowerment as relevant to sustainable peace, while Emordi and Ikedinma (2022) emphasise women's participation in conflict prevention, reconciliation, and community security. These perspectives suggest that inclusive peacebuilding is more likely to reflect local knowledge and address emerging tensions before they escalate.

Community participation is especially important in diverse local settings. Traditional rulers, religious leaders, youth organisations, women's associations, community-based organisations, and residents may possess information about grievances and emerging tensions before they become visible to formal security institutions. Collaboration between these actors and security agencies can therefore strengthen early warning, mediation, intelligence sharing, and crime prevention.

Bwari Area Council provides an important setting for examining these relationships because of its expanding population, urbanisation, socioeconomic diversity, and interaction among urban, peri-urban, and rural communities. The area has also faced concerns relating to kidnapping, armed robbery, youth restiveness, drug abuse, land disputes, and farmer–herder tensions. Existing peacebuilding initiatives involving traditional institutions, community associations, religious organisations, youth and women's groups, security agencies, and government institutions consequently merit empirical assessment.

Statement of the Problem

Despite peacebuilding mechanisms and security interventions, insecurity remains a concern in Bwari Area Council. Kidnapping, armed robbery, farmer–herder tensions, youth restiveness, drug abuse, land-related disputes, and sporadic communal conflicts can threaten lives and property, weaken social cohesion, and disrupt local economic and social activities.

Government institutions, security agencies, traditional rulers, civil society organisations, and community groups have introduced different peacebuilding and security initiatives. However, persistent insecurity raises questions about how fully these initiatives are implemented and whether stronger peacebuilding is associated with stronger community security. Weak coordination, gaps in information sharing, delayed responses to threats, and low levels of public trust may limit the effectiveness of otherwise useful interventions.

Although the wider literature connects peacebuilding, human security, and development, this study's evidence directly measures peacebuilding initiatives and community security. The central empirical problem is therefore to determine the extent of peacebuilding implementation, assess perceived community security, and test the statistical relationship and predictive association between the two constructs in Bwari Area Council.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to assess the relationship between peacebuilding initiatives and community security in Bwari Area Council, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. examine the extent to which peacebuilding initiatives are implemented in Bwari Area Council;
- ii. assess the level of community security in Bwari Area Council;
- iii. determine the relationship between peacebuilding initiatives and community security; and
- iv. determine whether peacebuilding initiatives significantly predict community security.

Research Questions

- i. To what extent are peacebuilding initiatives implemented in Bwari Area Council?
- ii. What is the level of community security in Bwari Area Council?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Peacebuilding initiatives are not statistically related to community security in Bwari Area Council.

H₀₂: Peacebuilding initiatives do not significantly predict community security in Bwari Area Council.

Literature Review

Irene (2023) emphasises indigenous institutions and grassroots peace infrastructures as accessible mechanisms for mediation and dispute management. Their effectiveness, however, depends on legitimacy, inclusiveness, resources, and relationships with formal institutions. Ojewale (2025) similarly highlights indigenous conflict-management systems, traditional justice mechanisms, community policing, civic education, and cooperation between communities and government institutions. Together, these arguments support a hybrid peacebuilding approach in which formal and informal institutions complement one another.

Ajiboye and Zamani (2025) associate youth unemployment in Bwari Area Council with vulnerability to criminal activity and identify weak policing, inadequate surveillance, and limited security capacity as factors that may compound insecurity. Adelani et al. (2023), focusing on community policing in Kubwa, emphasise cooperation between security agencies and local communities, while Attah et al. (2021) indicate that community-based initiatives may produce only moderate outcomes where coordination and accountability are weak.

Akande et al. (2021) stress participatory dialogue and locally driven peacebuilding as mechanisms for conflict transformation. Oseni (2024), examining participatory communication in Mpape, Bwari Area Council, also reports that community participation in planning, implementation, and monitoring can improve transparency, accountability, and development outcomes. The literature therefore converges on participation, dialogue, institutional cooperation, and local ownership as important conditions for sustainable peacebuilding.

A key gap remains in local empirical assessment. Much of the literature explains peacebuilding conceptually or examines particular mechanisms and locations. The present study contributes by quantitatively assessing the reported extent of peacebuilding implementation and its association with perceived community security in Bwari Area Council.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Human Security Theory and Conflict Transformation Theory. The two perspectives are complementary. Human Security Theory focuses on what should be protected—the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of people and communities—while Conflict Transformation Theory focuses on how conflict-producing relationships and structures can be changed to support sustainable peace.

Human Security gained prominence through the United Nations Development Programme's 1994 Human Development Report. The framework shifted security analysis away from an exclusively state-centred focus and identified economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political dimensions of security (United Nations Development Programme, 1994). Applied to Bwari Area Council, this perspective implies that security should be assessed partly through residents' experiences of safety, cooperation, access to protective institutions, and communities' capacity to respond to threats.

Conflict Transformation Theory is principally associated with John Paul Lederach. Lederach (1995) argues for approaches that go beyond containing immediate violence to transforming the relationships and structures that reproduce conflict. Dialogue, reconciliation, participation, relationship building,

institutional reform, and empowerment are therefore central mechanisms. In this study, peacebuilding initiatives represent the transformative processes, while community security represents an important observable condition associated with their implementation.

Taken together, the theories provide a coherent analytical pathway: stronger community-based peacebuilding and conflict-transformation mechanisms are expected to be associated with stronger human and community security. The study tests this expectation statistically while recognising that its cross-sectional design cannot establish definitive causation.

Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design to examine peacebuilding initiatives and community security in Bwari Area Council, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The design was appropriate for collecting respondents' perceptions and examining statistical relationships among measured variables without manipulating them. Because the design is non-experimental, the inferential findings are interpreted as relationships and predictive associations rather than definitive causal effects.

The study population comprised adult residents and relevant stakeholders in Bwari Area Council, including community leaders, youth groups, women's associations, traditional institutions, security personnel, civil servants, and other residents with knowledge of community peacebuilding and security. The manuscript identified an accessible population of 10,000 eligible respondents. Using the Taro Yamane finite-population formula at a 5% margin of error, the estimated sample was 385; a 10% allowance for non-response increased the planned questionnaire distribution to approximately 424.

A multistage sampling procedure was used. Communities were first treated as geographical sampling units, selected communities were chosen for coverage, and the sample was distributed among them. Ordinary respondents were selected using probability-based procedures where sampling frames permitted, while key stakeholders with specialised knowledge were purposively identified. The inferential tables report 300 valid cases; accordingly, all inferential results in this article are explicitly reported with $N = 300$. The difference between planned distribution and valid analysed responses is treated as non-response and/or unusable returns and should be documented in the study records.

The main instrument was a structured questionnaire. Items measured peacebuilding initiatives such as dialogue, mediation, reconciliation, peace education, community participation, early-warning mechanisms, and stakeholder collaboration. Community-security items covered residents' perceptions of safety, cooperation with security agencies, community-based security arrangements, information sharing, conflict reduction, and early-warning response. Respondents recorded responses on a five-point Likert-type scale from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1).

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) addressed the research questions. Pearson product-moment correlation tested the relationship between peacebuilding initiatives and community security. Simple linear regression assessed whether peacebuilding initiatives statistically predicted community security. Null hypotheses were tested at $\alpha = .05$. For APA-consistent reporting, probability values originally displayed as .000 are reported as $p < .001$.

Results

Table 1

Extent of Implementation of Peacebuilding Initiatives in Bwari Area Council

S/N	Indicator	M	SD	Decision
1	Community dialogue and reconciliation programmes are regularly organised	3.72	0.91	High
2	Traditional and community leaders participate in conflict-resolution activities	3.86	0.84	High
3	Government and security agencies collaborate with communities to prevent conflict	3.54	0.97	High
4	Peace education and awareness programmes are implemented in communities	3.48	1.02	High
5	Youth and women are involved in peacebuilding activities	3.31	1.08	Moderate
6	Early-warning and early-response mechanisms are used to prevent conflicts	3.26	1.05	Moderate
7	Community-based organisations participate in peacebuilding programmes	3.59	0.94	High
8	Victims and affected persons are supported during peacebuilding processes	3.18	1.11	Moderate
	Grand mean	3.49	0.99	High

Table 1 indicates that peacebuilding initiatives were generally implemented to a high extent ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.99$). Traditional and community leadership participation received the highest mean ($M = 3.86$), followed by community dialogue and reconciliation ($M = 3.72$). Youth and women's involvement, early-warning mechanisms, and support for victims recorded comparatively lower means, indicating areas that require strengthening.

Table 2
Level of Community Security in Bwari Area Council

S/N	Indicator	M	SD	Decision
1	Residents feel safe within their communities	3.46	0.98	High
2	Community members cooperate with security agencies	3.71	0.87	High
3	Security agencies respond promptly to security threats	3.38	1.01	High
4	Community-based security arrangements help prevent crime	3.64	0.92	High
5	Incidents of violent conflict have reduced in the community	3.27	1.09	Moderate
6	Early-warning mechanisms help communities respond to security threats	3.21	1.06	Moderate
7	There is effective information sharing between residents and security agencies	3.57	0.94	High
8	Peacebuilding activities have contributed to improved community safety	3.69	0.89	High
	Grand mean	3.49	0.97	High

The overall level of perceived community security was high ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.97$). Cooperation between community members and security agencies recorded the highest mean ($M = 3.71$), while early-warning mechanisms recorded the lowest ($M = 3.21$). This pattern suggests strong cooperation but ongoing weaknesses in prevention and early response.

Table 3
Pearson Correlation Between Peacebuilding Initiatives and Community Security

Variables	Peacebuilding initiatives	Community security
Peacebuilding initiatives	1.000	.684**
Community security	.684**	1.000

Note. $N = 300$. ** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

There was a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between peacebuilding initiatives and community security, $r = .684$, $p < .001$, $N = 300$. H_{01} was therefore rejected. Communities reporting stronger peacebuilding implementation also tended to report stronger community security.

Table 4
Simple Linear Regression Predicting Community Security

Model	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	1.274	0.148	—	8.61	$< .001$
Peacebuilding initiatives	0.634	0.042	.684	15.24	$< .001$

Peacebuilding initiatives significantly and positively predicted community security ($B = 0.634$, $\beta = .684$, $t = 15.24$, $p < .001$). H_{02} was rejected. Because the study is cross-sectional and non-experimental, this result reflects a predictive statistical association rather than proof that peacebuilding caused the observed security outcomes.

Discussion of Findings

The descriptive results indicate that respondents recognised substantial implementation of peacebuilding mechanisms in Bwari Area Council. Traditional and community leaders, dialogue and reconciliation programmes, collaboration with security agencies, and community-based organisations were prominent. This pattern aligns with the emphasis Irene (2023), Ojewale (2025), and Akande et al. (2021) place on locally grounded and participatory peace infrastructures.

The comparatively lower scores for youth and women's involvement, early-warning mechanisms, and victim support are important. They indicate that the existence of peacebuilding structures does not mean that all components are equally developed. Waziri et al. (2022) emphasise youth participation, while Emordi and Ikedinma (2022) stress women's roles in sustainable peacebuilding. Strengthening these dimensions could therefore improve the inclusiveness and responsiveness of local peacebuilding.

Community security was also perceived as high overall. Cooperation between residents and security agencies, community-based security arrangements, and information sharing were among the stronger indicators. These findings align with a human-security perspective in which safety depends not only on formal state institutions but also on relationships, trust, and community capacity.

The inferential findings provide the study's central empirical contribution. The strong positive correlation ($r = .684$) indicates that stronger peacebuilding implementation is associated with stronger

community security. The regression coefficient similarly indicates a statistically significant predictive association. These findings support Conflict Transformation Theory: dialogue, participation, reconciliation, and institutional cooperation are associated with security conditions that are less conducive to recurrent conflict.

Nevertheless, the results should be interpreted within the limits of the design. Both principal constructs were measured through a cross-sectional questionnaire; the valid inferential sample was 300, and the study used no experimental or longitudinal design. The findings therefore demonstrate association and statistical prediction, not definitive causation. Sustainable development remains an important contextual implication of improved security. Still, it is not presented here as a directly tested outcome because the submitted results did not contain the corresponding sustainable-development analysis.

Conclusion

The study concludes that peacebuilding initiatives and community security are strongly and positively associated in Bwari Area Council. Community dialogue and reconciliation, participation by traditional and community leaders, cooperation between residents and security agencies, and community-based security arrangements emerged as important features of the local peace and security environment. Pearson correlation and simple linear regression both showed statistically significant positive relationships between peacebuilding initiatives and community security.

The findings also identify areas requiring attention, particularly early-warning and early-response mechanisms, youth and women's participation, and support for victims and affected persons. Strengthening these areas may improve the inclusiveness and responsiveness of community peacebuilding. However, interpret the findings as cross-sectional associations rather than causal effects. Broader claims about sustainable development require separate empirical testing with reported sustainable-development measures.

Recommendations

- i. Government and relevant stakeholders should strengthen community-based peacebuilding structures and formalise collaboration among traditional rulers, religious leaders, youth groups, women's associations, community organisations, and security agencies.
- ii. Early-warning and early-response systems should be strengthened through clearly defined reporting channels, community focal persons, rapid information sharing, and regular coordination with formal security institutions.
- iii. Youth and women should be more deliberately included in peace committees, dialogue platforms, mediation processes, peace education, and local security consultations.
- iv. Security agencies should deepen community-oriented policing through regular town-hall engagements, feedback mechanisms, intelligence-sharing arrangements, and trust-building activities.
- v. Peacebuilding programmes should provide stronger support for victims and conflict-affected persons, including referral, psychosocial, reconciliation, and reintegration mechanisms where appropriate.
- vi. Future research should use longitudinal or mixed-method designs and should separately measure sustainable-development outcomes if the objective is to estimate the relationship among peacebuilding, security, and development.

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