

Influence of Power Dynamics on Youth Participation in Peace Building in Likoni Sub-County, Mombasa County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of power dynamics on youth participation in peace building in Likoni Sub County, Mombasa County, Kenya. The study was guided by Power Theory and examined how decision making, youth representation, leadership opportunities and community governance structures influence youth participation in peace building. The study adopted a mixed methods approach and a convergent parallel research design. The target population comprised youth aged 18–35 years in Likoni Sub County, with 384 respondents targeted and 311 usable questionnaires obtained. In addition, 10 key informants were purposively selected from community peace committees, village elders, non-governmental organizations, community based organizations and local administration. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple regression, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings indicated that youth were involved in decision making on community peace building issues, represented in community peace committees, given leadership opportunities and supported by community governance structures. However, unequal power relations continued to discourage meaningful youth participation in peace building. Pearson correlation analysis established a positive and statistically significant relationship between power dynamics and youth participation in peace building ($r = .310$, $p < .001$). Multiple regression analysis further showed that power dynamics had a positive and statistically significant influence on youth participation in peace building ($B = .288$, $\beta = .291$, $t = 5.197$, $p < .001$). The study concluded that power dynamics were critical in determining the level of youth participation in peace building in Likoni Sub County. The study recommended strengthening inclusive governance, increasing youth representation in decision making processes, providing leadership opportunities for youth, and enhancing cooperation between youth, village elders, community leaders and local administrators to promote meaningful youth participation in peace building.

Keywords: Power dynamics, youth participation, peace building, decision making, youth representation, Likoni Sub County

INTRODUCTION

Power dynamics relates to participation in decision-making, representation in peace committees, and leadership opportunities through which young people can exercise influence within community peacebuilding structures. Culture, religion, and generational hierarchy shape participation still differently in Bangsamoro, Philippines. Youth inclusion in the post-accord Bangsamoro Transition Authority has depended less on formal policy than on intergenerational relationships within a predominantly Muslim political culture. Positive collaboration between Moro elders and Moro youth has enabled some young people to enter formal political space, but this inclusion has remained limited to a minority whose participation depends on conforming to existing cultural hierarchies of deference to elders (Podder & Ragandang, 2022). Here, religious and cultural norms governing generational authority function as a socio-structural gatekeeper in ways that are distinct, though related, to the economic and informational barriers documented elsewhere

Globally, young people constitute approximately 1.2 billion individuals, representing nearly one sixth of the world's population (United Nations, 2024). Their numerical significance makes them important stakeholders in

peacebuilding and development processes. In different parts of the world, youth have participated in mediation initiatives, community dialogue programmes, social cohesion projects, and conflict prevention activities. However, research indicates that youth participation is often constrained by socio structural conditions that influence their ability, willingness, and opportunities to engage in peacebuilding activities (UNDP, 2022). These socio structural conditions form the independent variable of this study and are examined through education, income access, power dynamics, and access to information. Understanding the factors that facilitate or hinder youth participation has become an important area of scholarly and policy interest.

Youth make up a large share of Kenya's population, and play an important part in the country's development and peace building. Kenya's Constitution (2010), National Youth Policy (2019) and several youth empowerment programmes are acknowledging the need to incorporate youth in governance and development process. Despite these efforts, disparities in education, income access, unequal access to information and lack of youth influence on decision making structures have continued to be reported in studies (CHRIPS, 2022; National Youth Council, 2023). During the demonstrations in 2024, some of the concerns raised were on the marginalization of the youth in governance and public decision making (REINVENT Kenya, 2024). The socio structural factors seem to remain influential to the level of involvement young people are able to achieve in public affairs including peace building.

Likoni Sub-County presents an important context for examining these dynamics. The area has experienced persistent challenges related to poverty, unemployment, insecurity, inadequate infrastructure, drug abuse, criminal gangs, and vulnerability to violent extremism (Mombasa County Government, 2022; Search for Common Ground, 2022). While numerous peacebuilding interventions have been implemented by community peace committees, civil society organizations, religious institutions, and government agencies, meaningful youth participation remains a challenge. Existing studies conducted in the area have largely focused on radicalization, insecurity, youth unemployment, and violent extremism (HAKI Africa, 2023; PCI, 2024). However, limited attention has been given to understanding how socio-structural dynamics influence youth participation in peace building within Likoni Sub-County, Mombasa County, Kenya. This study seeks to examine how education, income access, power dynamics, and access to information influence youth participation in peace building in Likoni Sub-County, Mombasa County, Kenya

Statement of the Problem

It's often known that social cohesiveness and long-term peace depend on young people actively participating in peacebuilding. The significance of including youth in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and international decision-making processes is emphasized in United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security (United Nations Security Council, 2015). Similarly, youth are identified as important players in governance, development, and peacebuilding in Kenya's National Youth Policy (2019). However, youth participation in community peacebuilding remains inadequate despite policy pledges, particularly in marginalized and conflict-prone groups.

Likoni Sub-County has continued to have frequented security issues including youth gangs, political violence and criminal insecurity. Several reports (HAKI Africa 2023; Search for Common Ground 2022) highlight the disproportionate impact of insecurity on the youth in the area and that they are often targeted for recruitment into criminal gangs and violent activities. In parallel, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2024) shows that young people in Kenya account for around 75% of its overall population underscoring their important role in peace building processes. Although the youth are important in the formal peace building processes in Likoni Sub-County, there has been very limited representation in the formal peace building and decision making structures in the County.

Existing evidence indicates that a variety of socio-structural factors have constrained youth participation in peace building, these factors remain under researched. Lack of access to educational opportunities, insufficient income, unequal power and decision making processes that limit the ability of youth to influence decision making, and limited access to information on peace building opportunities limit opportunities for meaningful engagement. Many youths continue to be left out of peace building initiatives, however, because they are most

exposed to conflict and insecurity. While studies on violent extremism, radicalisation, youth unemployment and criminal gangs have been undertaken in Mombasa County, little empirical work has been done on the combined impact of education, access to income, power relations and access to information on youth involvement in peace building activities in Likoni Sub-County. This is an important gap in knowledge as it is crucial to have a concrete understanding of these dynamics if evidence-based policies and interventions are to be developed to enhance meaningful youth involvement in community peace building. Thus, the goal of this study is to investigate the effects of education, access to income, power and access to information in youth participation in peace building, in Likoni Sub-County in Mombasa County, Kenya.

Research Objectives

To investigate the influence of power dynamics on youth participation in peace building in Likoni Sub-County, Mombasa County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Power Theory

The concept of power, developed by Steven Lukes (1974), is not limited to influence over decisions, but also encompasses the ability to establish agendas, affect understandings and identify the issues for discussion. The theory holds that people or communities with more political, economic and social clout have more access to information, resources and decision making processes, while marginalized groups are excluded from meaningful participation. The theory is based on the premise that, although youth may be directly impacted by conflict and insecurity, unequal power dynamics can constrain their ability to impact peacebuilding processes. Power Theory helps to explain in this study the reasons why information, education, economic resources and opportunity to participate in decision-making vary between groups and can shape youth participation in peacebuilding efforts.

Power Theory, developed by Steven Lukes (1974, 2005) is a conceptualization of power as the ability of individuals or groups to shape the behaviour, decisions and preferences of others, where that power is not immediately visible. Lukes (2005) refers to three dimensions of power. The first relates to what is observable in terms of decision making, in which by the action of individuals or institutions on the policy process, policy outcomes are affected. The second has to do with agenda-setting: the powerful actors decide which issues get the public's attention, and which do not. The third dimension is how power influences beliefs, values and preferences, which may involve individuals taking the social arrangements for granted, even if this is not in their best interests. It shows a multidimensional approach that power is deeply intertwined with political, economic and social institutions and has a strong impact on governance, participation and resource allocation.

Power Theory is founded on three key assumptions. The first is that of the distribution of power within society which influences and results in unequal access to decision making processes, leadership positions and institutional inputs for individuals and groups. Second, there is not always an explicit exclusion, but it can also happen through agenda control, institutional practices, and social norms which marginalize certain groups. Third, inclusive governance and equitable distribution of power boosts participation, by providing opportunities for the disadvantaged to have a say in decisions that affect their lives (Gaventa, 2006).

In the context of peace building, Power Theory posits that participation of youth is essential not only to have socio-economic resources, but also to have authority, representation and influence in governance processes. Youth make up a large share of Kenya's population, but the unequal power dynamics often constrain youth from leading, decision-making in their communities and formal peace building institutions.

The theory is especially important in relation to Objective Three of this research, the power dynamics affecting youth involvement in peace building. It also aligns with the Objective Four that highlights the role of

institutional openness in access to information. From this theoretical lens the study looks at whether young people in Likoni Sub-County are having meaningful opportunities to engage in the design, implementation and evaluation of peace building initiatives, or if structural power imbalances remain in place which limit their participation (Lukes, 2005).

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Power Dynamics and Youth Participation in Peace building

The influence of power is key in shaping youth involvement in peace building. Power dynamics describe how and where power, influence and decision making is spread and applied in communities and institutions. In peace building, they decide who has access to decision making, whose voices are heard, and who has the power to shape the policy and interventions in peace building. Research indicates that such unequal power dynamics may exclude young people from the opportunity to meaningfully engage in conflict prevention, dialogue, mediation, and community governance.

Conflict Transformation Theory by Lederach (1997) emphasizes the need for participation by all members of society at all levels, including grassroots members like youth. Effective peacebuilding requires developmental relationships with a focus on collaboration and shared decision making, not hierarchical ones that exclude groups, Lederach writes. Likewise, Gaventa (2006) notes that power affects participation by determining who is given access to decision-making spaces and resources, and who is given opportunities for civic engagement. However, due to unequal power relations, youth may be less able to contribute in an effective manner to peacebuilding, whether they wish to or can.

The United Nations has long highlighted the need to include youth in peacebuilding processes at the global level. The UNSC Resolution 2250 (2015) identifies meaningful youth participation is key for sustainable peace and encourages governments and other stakeholders to provide opportunities for youth to engage in the processes of making decisions at local, national and international levels. Recent reports, however, suggest that youth are now being included at various stages of peacebuilding processes, but not necessarily in a meaningful way; their engagement carries only a limited influence on policy-making and implementation (United Nations, 2023). This means that participation mechanisms are not necessarily associated with meaningful inclusion if there are unequal power dynamics.

The dynamics between the young and the old remain present in youth participation in governance and peacebuilding processes across the African continent. Youth governance and peacebuilding participation remains governed by power dynamics in Africa. There are policies encouraging youth participation in various countries, but decision making is often dominated by political elites, high-ranking government officials and community leaders. Despite the fact that the continent is young, the representation of young people in governance and peacebuilding institutions and spaces remains constrained by institutional barriers, according to the African Union (2022)., institutional barriers continue to limit young people's representation in governance and peacebuilding structures despite the continent's youthful population. Similarly, Honwana (2012) argues that unequal power relations often prevent young people from influencing decisions that directly affect their lives, thereby reducing their confidence in formal governance institutions and limiting their participation in community peacebuilding initiatives.

Recent research also shows that inclusive decision-making increases youth engagement and improves peacebuilding results. Peacebuilding programmes that deliberately engage youth in programme planning, implementation, evaluation and accountability are more sustainable due to the elements of trust, ownership and accountability, says the Institute for Security Studies (2025). Similarly, Simpson (2018) noted that youth participation is more effective when it is built on a collaborative process among youth, community leaders, civil society organisations and the government, rather than a hierarchical approach that focuses on a few actors to make decisions.

In the Bangsamoro Region, Philippines, youth inclusion in the postaccord Bangsamoro Transition Authority

has depended less on formal policy than on intergenerational relationships within a predominantly Muslim political culture: positive collaboration between Moro elders and youth enabled entry into formal political space for some young people, but this inclusion remained limited to a minority willing to conform to existing cultural hierarchies of deference to elders (Podder & Ragandang, 2022).

In Sierra Leone, local councils historically made no special provision for youth representation, and young aspirants were at times denied the party backing needed to contest elections, prompting some to resort to civil disobedience rather than formal political channels (Conciliation Resources, 2012). Yet research from rural Sierra Leone also shows that where youth organised collectively through clubs and associations, they were able to compel chiefs and elders to reverse exclusionary decisions, demonstrating that power imbalances are not fixed but can shift through sustained collective agency (Alexander, 2012).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The figure below is the conceptual framework that illustrates the study variables and their presumed relationships.

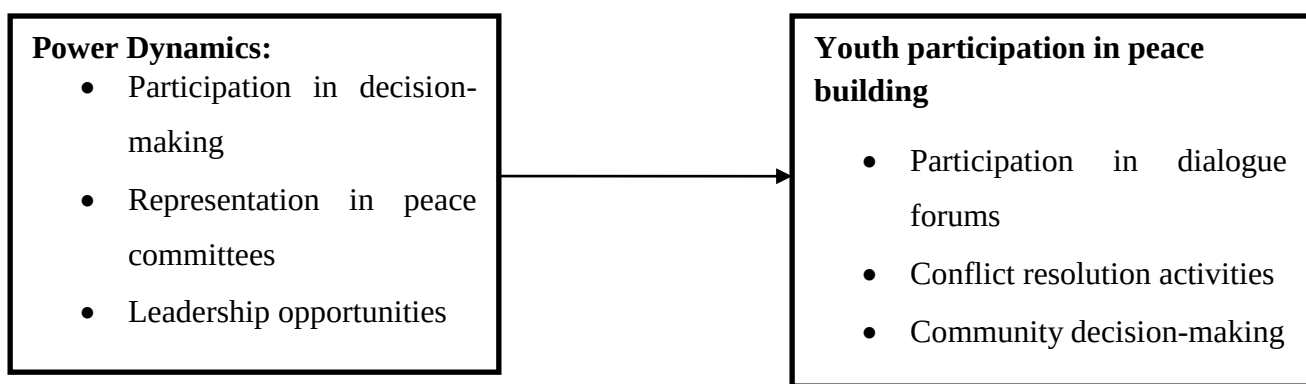


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a mixed method research approach, which means that both quantitative and qualitative methods are used together in one study to allow a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Specifically, the study adopted a convergent parallel research design. In this design, quantitative and qualitative data was collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and integrated during the interpretation of findings which provided a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The design is suitable as the researcher can look at both the tangible connections between the variables in the study and the experiences and perceptions of the participants on youth involvement in peace building.

Target Population

The research was conducted among youth aged 18–35 years in Likoni Sub-County of Mombasa County, Kenya. This age group aligned with the definition of youth as provided in the Kenya National Youth Policy (2019). The primary target population comprised approximately 103,000 young people in Likoni Sub-County, according to the 2019 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) Population and Housing Census. In addition, the study involved 10 key informants drawn from stakeholders who were directly engaged in peacebuilding within the study area. These included representatives from NGOs, CBOs, community peace committees, local administrative offices, and village elders.

Sample Size and Sampling Design

The study employed the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table, which is extensively used in social science research for limited populations. According to the chart, a population of around 100,000 or more requires a sample size of 384 respondents. Therefore, a sample of 384 youth respondents was selected for the quantitative component of the study.

In addition, the study purposively selected 10 key informants comprising village elders, members of community peace committees, representatives of non-governmental and community-based organizations, and local administrative officials. These participants are expected to provide in-depth qualitative information regarding youth participation in peacebuilding within Likoni Sub-County. Since the study was conducted in Likoni, Timbwani, and Shikaadabu Wards, the quantitative sample was distributed proportionately according to the youth population in each ward to ensure adequate representation.

Stratified random sampling and purposive sampling methods were applied in the study. Stratified random sampling was used to select 384 youth respondents. This allowed for the selection of everyone in the target population, thereby minimizing selection bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, 10 key informants were chosen by purposive sampling. The method proved suitable as it allowed the researcher to find people with knowledge and experience on youth participation in peace building who could give in-depth information. According to Patton (2002), purposive sampling is appropriate when it is desired to gather rich and detailed information from respondents with a depth of knowledge about the study topic.

Data Collection Tools

Structured questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data and key informant interviews were used to gather qualitative data. The youth respondents were administered questionnaires to gather quantitative data on the socio-structural factors, which affect their involvement in peacebuilding. The social science research extensively uses questionnaires as it allows gathering standardized data of a large population of respondents in an efficient manner (Kothari, 2004). Interview of key informants was also done with the selected stakeholders like community leaders, members of the peace committee, and representatives of the civil society organizations engaged in the peacebuilding activities in Likoni. Interviews enable the researcher to gain in-depth information about the experiences and views of the participants (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Data Analysis and Presentation

Based on the convergent parallel mixed method study design, the quantitative and the qualitative data, were analyzed separately, before being integrated for discussion. The SPSS Version 30 was used to code, input, clean, and analyze the quantitative data collected. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the research variables and demographic features. Tables, charts, and/or graphs were used to present the results as needed. The researchers employed statistical tests in inferential statistical approaches to ascertain how the independent factors affected young people's participation in peacebuilding. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to investigate the association between youth involvement in peacebuilding and education, economic access, power dynamics, and information availability. After adjusting for the impacts of the other dependent factors, multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine the contribution of each dependent variable on youth participation in peacebuilding. The selected significance threshold was $p < 0.05$. Key informant interviews were used to gather qualitative data, which were then verbatim transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis using the methodology recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). Data familiarization, coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition and labeling, and theme interpretation comprised the analysis. Quotes from participants were used where appropriate to bolster the themes found. Lastly, a triangulation was used to merge the quantitative and qualitative data during the interpretation step. This is to give an insightful understanding of the socio-structural dynamics that influence youth participation in peacebuilding activities in Likoni Sub-County, Mombasa County, Kenya, the researcher was then able to compare, explain, and validate the results that emerged from both data sets.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

Power dynamics on youth participation in peace building.

The study aimed at finding out the extent of agreement of the respondents on the influence of power on youth involvement in peace building in Likoni Sub-County, Mombasa County. The respondents were asked to agree or disagree with different statements about power dynamics and youth involvement in peace building. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Power dynamics on youth participation in peace building.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std
Frequency (%)	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %		
Young people are involved in decision-making on community peace building issues.	12 4%	0 0%	15 5%	91 29%	193 62%	4.457	0.900
Youth are adequately represented in community peace committees.	25 6%	9 3%	10 3%	133 43%	134 43%	4.099	1.139
Young people are given leadership opportunities in peace building initiatives.	15 5%	25 8%	12 4%	160 51%	99 32%	3.974	1.056
Community governance structures encourage youth participation in peace building.	21 8%	0 0%	17 5%	146 47%	127 41%	4.151	1.025
Unequal power relations discourage youth participation in peace building.	14 5%	12 4%	6 2%	131 42%	155 50%	4.244	0.999
Composite Mean and Standard Deviation						4.185	1.024

Based on the results presented in Table 1, it is clear that 62% strongly agreed and 29% agreed that young people are engaged in decision making processes in relation to the issues of peacebuilding in the community. Further, 5% of the respondents were neutral, while none disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed with the statement. The majority of respondents indicated that they believe that young people are engaged in Community Decision Making, pointing to the possibility of improving their engagement in peacebuilding processes. The finding should be taken in conjunction with the demographics provided in Section 4.3 which indicates that most respondents had secondary and post-secondary education. The higher education could have improved youth's awareness of governance processes, and may have raised youth's willingness to participate in community decision-making. Being involved in decision-making does not mean that the views of young people are considered in the final decision-making process ($M = 4.457$, $SD = 0.900$).

It also reveals that 43% of the respondents strongly agree and 43% agree that youth are well represented in community peace committees. Further, 3% of the respondents were neutral, 3% did not agree and 6% strongly disagreed with the statement. This means that overall, youth are seen as sufficiently represented in community peace structures, though a minority of respondents felt youth are still not sufficiently represented. Combined with the previous finding, the results indicate that youth have access to formal peacebuilding structures, and that representation does not necessarily mean that youth have influence on decisions regarding peacebuilding in their community ($M = 4.099$, $SD = 1.139$).

The findings also show that 32% of the respondents strongly agreed and 51% agreed that young people are given leadership opportunities in peace building initiatives. Furthermore, 4% were 'neutral', 8% disagreed and

5% strongly disagreed that it was. The results indicate that leadership opportunities have positive effects on youth involvement in peace building activities. However, the fact that the proportion of those disagreeing with the statement of leadership opportunity is higher than the other statements suggests that there is an unequal access to leadership roles for the entire young population, which may in turn affect the influence they have in the community peace building process ($M = 3.974$, $SD = 1.056$).

Similarly, 41% of the respondents strongly agreed and 47% agreed that community governance structures encourage youth participation in peacebuilding. Furthermore, 5% of the respondents were neutral, while none disagreed and 8% strongly disagreed with the statement. The finding shows that overall, community governance structures create conducive conditions for youth participation in peace building processes. When this is combined with the above, it is clear that governance structures have opened opportunities to involve youth in the decision-making process, in leadership and in representation in decision making and peace building processes ($M = 4.151$, $SD = 1.025$). Finally, the results showed that 50% of respondents strongly agreed and 42% agreed that unequal power relations deter youth from taking part in peace building. Also, 2% of respondents were neutral and 4% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed with the statement. The findings indicate that while there are structures in place to engage youth, unequal power relations persist and hinder meaningful youth engagement in peace building efforts. Combined with the previous findings, the results suggest a common theme: although opportunities exist to have a say in decisions that affect community peace building, this is not always the case, with young people having a limited influence overall ($M = 4.244$, $SD = 0.999$).

The qualitative results complemented the quantitative results as it was able to explain how the power dynamics affect the participation of youth in peace building. PC1 reported that opportunities for youth to engage in peace building exist within existing community leadership and peace committees in the community as well as community dialogue forums. The quantitative result was echoed by the qualitative result where majority of the respondents agreed that young people are involved in decision making and represented in community peace committees. Likewise, NGO1 noted that there has been an increase in trust building and peaceful interactions through dialogue-based conflict resolution processes between village elders and youth in conflict resolution. This further confirms the relationship between supportive governance systems and youth involvement in community peace building. However, VE1 has noted that the voice of youth is not being heard in decision-making processes as older leaders tend to dominate them in relation to peace and security issues. Why, even though a lot of the respondents reported youth participation in peace building, they also indicated that youth participation in peace building is discouraged due to unequal power relations. Similarly, LA1 pointed out that the voices of young people are included in some peace processes, but not all of them are considered in decision-making, calls into question the meaning of representation. NGO2 then stated that many young people are not motivated to actively engage in peace building efforts due to unequal power dynamics, political interests and limited leadership opportunities; this would result in less meaningful youth participation in the peace building process in Likoni Sub-County, PC2 said that having more youth in community-based leadership positions or in decision making processes would increase youth involvement and participation in meaningful community-based efforts. When both quantitative and qualitative results come together, this shows methodological triangulation, which adds to confidence in the findings that meaningful youth participation comes from representation and from having an actual influence in community decision-making.

Youth participation in peace building

The researcher sought to determine level of agreement on youth participation in peace building in Likoni Sub-County, Mombasa County, Kenya

Table 2 Youth participation in peace building

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std
Frequency (%)	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %		
I participate in community	12 4%	21 8%	12 4%	163 52%	103 33%	4.041	0.994

dialogue forums aimed at promoting peace.							
I take part in conflict prevention and conflict resolution activities.	17 5%	3 1%	15 5%	93 30%	183 59%	4.357	1.021
I participate in community decision-making on peace and security matters.	49 16%	24 8%	30 10%	75 24%	133 43%	3.704	1.473
I actively participate in community peacebuilding initiatives.	17 5%	3 1%	15 5%	93 30%	183 59%	4.356	1.021
I participate in activities that promote social cohesion within my community.	12 4%	30 10%	47 15%	105 34%	117 38%	3.916	1.121

The results presented in Table 2 show that 33% of those surveyed strongly agreed and 52% agreed that they took part in community dialogue forums which encouraged peace. Further, 4% of the respondents were neutral, while 8% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed with the statement. The high percentage of respondents who crossed the middle two categories of strongly agree and agree indicates that the community dialogue forums are a useful platform for youth participation in peacebuilding processes in Likoni Sub-County. This finding should be taken in conjunction with demographic characteristics reported in Section 4.3 which indicated that most of the respondents had had at least secondary education. This educational level can contribute in raising awareness on community issues and raising engagement in dialogue groups for peaceful living ($M = 4.041$, $SD = 0.994$).

The findings further indicate that 59% of the respondents strongly agreed and 30% agreed that they took part in conflict prevention and conflict resolution activities. Additionally, 5% of the respondents were neutral, whereas 1% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed with the statement. From these results, it can be concluded that most youths are actively involved in the activities of preventing conflicts and settling disputes in their community. In combination with the previous finding, the results prove that youth participation also goes beyond the dialogue forum, and encompasses practical peacebuilding activities that can help prevent and resolve community conflicts ($M = 4.357$, $SD = 1.021$).

The findings show 43% of the respondents strongly agreed and 24% agreed to have been involved in community decision making on peace and security issues. By contrast, ten per cent of respondents were neutral, eight per cent disagreed and 16 per cent strongly disagreed. While most respondents reported some level of involvement in community decision-making, a higher percentage disagreed, which indicates that opportunities for community involvement in peace and security governance are uneven. Fewer young people agreed that they participate in decisions around peace and security ($M = 3.704$, $SD = 1.473$), compared with the previous statements, suggesting that while many young people are involved in peace building activities, fewer are involved in influencing decisions related to peace and security.

In the same way, 89% of the respondents strongly agreed and 30% agreed that they actively engaged in community peacebuilding efforts. Furthermore, 5% agreed, 1% disagreed and 5% strongly disagreed. The findings show that young people are highly engaged in organised peace building activities throughout the study area. When combined with the results from the dialogue forums and conflict resolution, this means there is a consistent pattern that shows youth are actively involved in implementing peacebuilding activities in the community ($M = 4.356$, $SD = 1.021$).

Finally, 38% of the respondents strongly agreed and 34% agreed they were involved in activities that foster social cohesion in their community. In addition, 15% of the respondents were neutral, whereas 10% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed with the statement. The results indicate a significant percentage of the youth are involved in activities that promote unity, trust and peaceful coexistence, but there is variation in the extent to which this occurs among the respondents. The findings overall evidence that young people are active in

various aspects of peacebuilding such as dialogue, conflict prevention, organised peacebuilding initiatives and social cohesion building. Compared to other elements of community decision-making, however, the participation of youth is less strong, and while young people are active in peacebuilding activities, they do not necessarily have equal opportunities to impact decisions on peace and security ($M = 3.916$, $SD = 1.121$).

The qualitative findings supported the quantitative results by providing an explanation of how the youth are involved in peace building activities in Likoni sub-County. PC1 noted that community based-peace committees, community based organisations and local administration organised community dialogue forums, conflict resolution meetings and peace awareness campaigns, which are well attended by youth. This corroborates the quantitative results which showed that most of the respondents are involved in dialogue and conflict prevention activities. Likewise, NGO1 reported positive effects on the awareness of young people related to conflict, with a focus on peaceful coexistence, and that this is leading to greater involvement in community dialogues and peacebuilding efforts. VE1 said that the dialogue between the village elders and the youth has been effective in promoting collaboration for community-based conflict management, even though the conflicts have not yet reached the level of violence, in line with the results that many respondents actively participated in conflict prevention and resolution. LA2 also noted that through community gatherings, youth groups and digital platforms like WhatsApp, youth have better communicated and coordinated with each other, leading to greater awareness and engagement in peace building efforts. Some young people, however, do not regularly engage in peace building activities because of limited financial resources, lack of opportunities to meaningfully engage in decision making, and unemployment, NGO2 stated. This discovery aids in understanding why participation in community decision-making had lower levels of agreement than participation in dialogue forums, conflict prevention and organised peace building activities. PC3 also emphasized that institutionalizing the representation of youth in community leadership, creating more opportunities for youth to access livelihoods and more civic awareness programmes would improve youth participation in peace building. The synergies between the quantitative and qualitative results, therefore, suggest that although young people are actively involved in activities related to peacebuilding in the community, some young people are still not able to participate fully, especially in decision-making processes, due to structural and socio-economic factors.

Correlation Analysis Results

Correlation between power dynamics and youth participation in peace building

The correlation between power dynamics and youth participation in peace building in Likoni Sub-County, Mombasa County. The table shows the results of the correlation analysis.

Table 3: Correlation between power dynamics and youth participation in peace building

		Youth Participation in Peace building
Power Dynamics	Pearson Correlation	.310**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	311

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings indicate that there is a positive statistically significant relationship between power and participation of the youth in peace building in Likoni Sub-County, Mombasa County. The Pearson's correlation coefficient is $r = 0.310$ and the significance is $p < 0.001$. The p-value is $< .01$, which means that the relationship is statistically significant at the 1% level. Higher power dynamics (as assessed in the study) are linked to higher youth participation in peace building, which has a positive correlation. The correlation coefficient of 0.310 is a moderate positive correlation, indicating that while there is a correlation between power dynamics and youth participation, this does not equate to causation. This discovery indicates that higher levels of youth involvement in decision-making, youth representation, leadership opportunities and supportive governance structures correlate with higher youth involvement in peace building efforts. The finding aligns with the argument of Altiok, Porrás and Lee (2023) that unequal power relations and lack of access to

decision-making are significant factors that hinder meaningful youth engagement in peacebuilding and that more inclusive approaches can enhance youth engagement and leadership.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The study also concluded that power dynamics are critical in determining the level of youth participation in peace building. These findings confirmed that inclusive leadership, equitable decision-making processes, and working together between community leaders and youth improves youth engagement in peace building activities. It also revealed, however, that unequal power dynamics and lack of youth representation in decision-making positions remain a barrier to meaningful participation. This means that enhancing participatory governance and increasing opportunities for youth participation in decision making are essential to effective youth ownership of peace building interventions.

Recommendations

The study recommends that community leaders, county government officials, formal peace institutions, traditional leaders and security agencies strengthen inclusive governance by ensuring that youth are recognized as equal strategic partners in peacebuilding rather than merely as beneficiaries or security threats. Youth should be provided with meaningful decision making authority in community peace committees, dialogue forums and local governance structures. Moving away from transactional and elite driven peacebuilding requires institutions and community leadership structures to create mechanisms through which young people can exercise real influence over decisions affecting peace and security in Likoni Sub County.

The study further recommends strengthening cooperation between youth, village elders, community leaders, local administrators and security agencies through participatory peacebuilding mechanisms that promote trust and shared decision making. The relationship between youth and state security agencies should be improved through approaches that reduce mutual suspicion and promote constructive engagement. Security initiatives, including counter terrorism and anti gang operations, should avoid approaches that broadly profile young people in ways that may alienate them from formal peacebuilding structures. Instead, security agencies should strengthen dialogue and partnership with youth and community peace committees to encourage young people to contribute to peace and security initiatives.

Traditional leaders, formal institutions and security agencies should also create structured opportunities for youth leadership and representation in peacebuilding processes. Such arrangements should move beyond nominal representation by ensuring that youth views are considered in deliberations and reflected in decisions. This would address the unequal power relations identified in the study and strengthen meaningful youth participation in peacebuilding in Likoni Sub County.

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