



## **KNOWLEDGE OF KEY PATHWAYS TO PEACE AND SECURITY AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN ENUGU STATE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, AGBANI, ENUGU**

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### **Abstract**

*This descriptive survey was carried out to determine the level of knowledge of "Key pathways to peace and security, among undergraduates in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) Agbani, Enugu. One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study. Three hundred and ninety seven (397) students (237 females and 160 males) were the purposively drawn sample for the study. A validated 34 items questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The reliability coefficient of 0.98 confirmed the questionnaire good for the study; in line with Ogazi and Okpala (1994). The result of the finding was that ESUT undergraduates have low knowledge of "key steps" to peace and security (34.27%). There was no significant difference in the knowledge level of the respondents based on gender (> .05). It was recommended that studies on steps to peace and security processes be included at all levels of education curriculum in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Knowledge, Peace, Security, Violent-Crimes, Conflict-resolution, Good Governance.

### **Introduction**

Society thrives only when there is peace and people feel secured in their spaces. Peace can be described as freedom from disturbance, conflict, suffering and a situation of absence of violence; when people are able to resolve their conflicts and can walk together to improve the quality of their lives. On the other hand, Security generally refers to the measures taken to safeguard people, assets, information and systems from potential threats, risks or harm. The Nigerian state is now faced with more security challenges that have depleted its earlier peaceful co-existence and weakens its developmental foundation. Security as a concept has been variously defined. Among such definitions is one given by Collins dictionary (2014) stating that security is the state of being or feeling secure; freedom from fear, anxiety, anger, doubt, etc., and state or sense of safety.... The term "security" encompasses various domains; such as physical security, cyber security, financial security, and personal safety. The goal of security is to mitigate risks and ensure the protection, integrity and confidentiality of valuable resources. On a larger scale, Mijah (2006) explained that National Security is a precondition for economic and social development as much as



economic and social development are preconditions for security. Ajayi (2023) enumerated the security challenges in Nigeria as: the Boko Haram insurgency, armed militancy, kidnapping, - either for money or ritual killing, cattle rustlings, illegal mining and mineral theft, smuggling, herdsmen and farmer crisis in the north.

In the South of Nigeria, insecurity manifest mainly through armed militancy, kidnapping, oil theft and illegal refinery, armed robbery, secessionist agitation and smuggling of contrabands in and out of the country. Other Nigeria's security challenges are terrorism and violence extremism, armed banditry, militia group – activities and "farmers - pastoralists" clashes. Other threats are border insecurity, cyber and technology challenges, socio-political developments, environmental challenges and threats, economic challenges and threats, as well as religious and global challenges.

For adequate peace and security in the Southeast; particularly in Enugu State, it is now germane that young people; especially the undergraduates of Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) be instilled with knowledge of the key pathways to peace and security. This is more important since these students meddle with other young people that constitute the greater population of the State and can easily influence them towards maintaining adequate peace and security in the State. It is therefore important that individuals, group and government prioritise engagement in peace and security education to enable young people imbibe the key pathways to peace and security. The knowledge of the key pathways to peace and security however extends to adopting multidimensional approach; hence it encompasses policy formulation, institutional establishment, security sector reform, peacebuilding programs, educational interventions and attitudinal changes. Together, these interventions align with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 which calls for peace, justice and strong institutions (UNDP, 2021).

Irrespective of government's positive stride in making the knowledge of the key pathways to peace and security possible, the sustainability of the efforts still depends on citizen (teachers, parents, etc) participation, inter-agency collaboration and continuous focus on justice, human rights and equitable development; through security enforcement, inclusive governance, civic education and socio-economic empowerment. This sustainability again depends on the positive influence cast by the citizenry role in maintaining peace and security, via learning and operating within the confines of structured routes to peace and security.

In developing countries, the knowledge content of key pathways to peace and security education extends beyond mere awareness of conflict, to include practical competencies for conflict prevention, management, and post-conflict reconstruction. According to Onyeozu and Akinola (2021) this knowledge is specially critical, given Nigeria's complex challenges including ethno-religious tensions, violent extremism, farmer – herder conflicts, political violence and cyber threats. It is therefore expected



that students and citizens are equipped with the intellectual, moral and civic tools necessary for building a culture of peace and security.

In Nigerian educational institutions; especially ESUT, key pathways to peace and security should ideally be a combination of peace education, security education, citizenship education and digital/ media literacy to address both structural and direct violence (UNESCO, 2016; Federal Ministry of Education (FME), 2021). Consequently the knowledge domains within peace and security in Nigerian (integrated into Civic Education, Social Studies, and General Studies (GST) in Universities) comprise several interrelated knowledge domains; including: conflict analysis and resolution skills, human rights and social justice; citizenship, democracy and good governance; security awareness and community safety; Digital literacy and Counter-misinformation; peacebuilding institutions and frameworks. Beyond these theoretical contents, students are expected to develop attitudinal and participatory knowledge that support social cohesion. This knowledge encapsulates tolerance and empathy towards ethnic and religious diversity, non-violent communication and dialogue ethics, obedience to rule of law, gender sensitivity, inclusion in peacebuilding, volunteerism and community service that stands as preventive peace measures.

Incidentally, across Nigeria, the prevailing circumstances have affected and influenced how young people and especially students learn about, engage with and act on issues of peace and security. Greatly, online platforms expose these undergraduates and young people to volumes of civic and security information, new tools for early warning, community safety and risks like conspiracy theories, misinformation and recruitment propaganda. Consequently, different policy and program responses - ranging from neighbourhood and school-safety frameworks to peace tech and learning platforms – are increasing digital spaces, placing students at the centre of both risk and opportunity. Yet, the positive effects of these online spaces; such as digital access to peace and security learning, early warning, civic participation tools, and national policy scaffolding for safer learning are quite visible (Nigeria's National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence -Free School, 2021; and National Safety Schools Response Coordination Centre (NSSRCC). It then means that digital age is not merely changing how undergraduates imbibe knowledge of peaceful living and security; it is changing how they can practice it through real time safety protocol, early-warning dashboards, and remote learning that keeps communities connected. Amidst these developments is then the question of the level of ESUT Undergraduates in learning about the key pathways to peace and security. At what level then has ESUT undergraduates imbibed the knowledge of the key pathways to peace and security in Enugu State and Nigeria in general? This study burdens the task of determining the level of knowledge of key pathways to peace and security among Undergraduates in Enugu State in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) Agbani, Enugu.



### **Statement of Problem**

A peaceful and secured environment facilitates economic and social development. However, peace and security can be achieved when individuals refrain from engaging in violent extremism, leading to insecurity. Consequently, there is need for people to be knowledgeable on those actions that exacerbate violence in the society. More so, it is important that youths avoid violent actions due to the unpleasant consequences. Sadly, evidence abound that the youths are greatly predisposed to violent extremism. This fact lies in the report that one of the reasons why terrorism has continued to thrive in Nigeria is as a result of youth's unemployment which has brought about poverty in the country (Adedire, Ake and Olowojolu, 2016). Hence, the resultant frustration, dejection, desperation and dependency on family members and friends who also have their own problems to contend with, has left the youth in a precarious situation; resulting in a cycle of poverty that daily erodes their confidence, bright future and make them prone to criminal activities (Adebayo, 2013).

Other challenges to peace and security, include: poor governance, injustice, marginalization, inequity in distribution of gains from natural resources. Obi (2022) added that corruption, poor coordination among agencies, limited community trust, inadequate funding, and youth unemployment also undermine peace efforts.

However, irrespective of how dire the situation is, individuals, youths; and especially undergraduate students should be meant to understand that 'peace' yields more economic benefits than terror. This is why Adebayo (2014) noted that terrorism reduces capital stock of a country, threatens higher level of uncertainty, increases counter terrorism expenditure and draws resources from productive sectors for use in security, which affects specific industries like agriculture and tourism. There is therefore the need for the youths to have knowledge of actions that promote peace and security in the country. It is expected that youths who are informed on peaceful means of resolving conflicts and the accruing benefits, would naturally gravitate towards peace irrespective of personal challenges and perceived failure of government due to poor leadership. Moreover, studies abound on occurrence and nature of peace and security; yet there is dearth of information and studies on the knowledge of key pathways to peace and security among undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It is also to close this gap that this study determines the level of knowledge of key steps to peace and security among undergraduates of Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Agbani, Enugu.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Unexplained concepts are often misnomers obstructing understanding and knowledge, but explained concepts advance understanding; hence, the need to analyse peace and security that are the outstanding concepts in this study. Peace is a condition of tranquillity which facilitates social, economic and political activities in any society. Like every concept in the social sciences, the concept of peace has different meaning to different scholars. The word 'Peace' originated from the Anglo-



French word 'Pes', and old French word 'Pais', meaning peace, reconciliation, silence, agreement and tranquillity. It came into English language from the Hebrew translation 'Shalom' which is also similar to 'Salaam' in Arabic (General Studies, 2014). To many people, peace means absence of war. However, Sugata Dasgupta (1968) first explained that peace is beyond the absence of war and proposed the notion of "peacelessness" to refer to situations, especially in developing countries (including Nigeria) where in spite of the absence of war, people suffer as much as in the time of war; from problems of poverty, malnutrition, diseases, illiteracy, discrimination, oppression and so on. Thus, peace does not merely connote the absence of war or violent conflict resulting from ethnic, cultural, religious or political differences, but also the presence of social justice, harmony and equity. This means that peace is the absence of violence in all its social, psychosocial and structural forms.

Therefore, peace is a condition in which there is no social conflict; and individuals and groups are able to meet their needs, aspirations and expectations. Such a condition is only attained when individuals are aware and play their roles adequately. Peace in this sense, displays from the perspective of structural functionalism (Genyi, 2013). The theory of Structural functionalism refers to the institutions or structures established to guarantee the availability of functional peace. It also refers to the functions performed by these structures or societal institutions in the process of carrying out the primary objective for meeting the aim of their establishment. In the context of ESUT undergraduates, the question bothers on how effective these structures are, in aiding students' assimilation of key pathways to peace. Unfortunately, structures that ensure this assimilation appears undermined in Nigerian tertiary institutions; hence it is not out of place to allege that peace, and broadly wellbeing of Nigerians appears compromised (Genyi, 2013).

The continued absence of peace in different parts of the country is now among the bane of Nigeria's sustainable development and good image in the international community. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of government to provide an enabling environment and adequate protection for its citizens. This function is what security is all about. Security is the ability to protect and defend oneself as an individual or a nation. Security is viewed as the condition of feeling safe from harm or danger, the defense, protection and preservation of values, and the absence of threats to acquire values (Terriff, 1991). According to Microsoft Encarta (2007), security as a concept, is safety for the territory and population of a state, and by extension the policies adopted for its preservation. Security is sometimes defined as the assurance of future welfare. In its broad sense, security refers to measures which affect the economic and social welfare of a nation and provide against external aggression or subversion from within. These mean that the concept 'security' is quite encompassing; as it revolves on freedom from danger or threats, a nation's ability to protect and defend itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interest and enhance the wellbeing of its people (Maurice 2014). Security of aforementioned



areas implies development ; hence Mijah (2006) noted that security is tantamount to development.

Yet, security is not only about the presence of military might and military hardwares; rather it embraces economic, political and social dimensions of individuals, groups and national life. Hence, security is considered in terms of the safety of the individual citizen to live in peace, with access to basic necessities of life, fundamental human rights and full participation in the affairs of the society. Congruently, Kofi Annan (1998) presented the human perspective of security and noted that security means far more than absence of conflict. Annan (1998) added that lasting peace requires a broader vision encompassing areas; such as education, health, democracy, and human rights, protection against environmental degradation and proliferation of deadly weapons. Accordingly, he stressed that there is no true security amidst starvation; peacebuilding amidst poverty and true freedom amidst injustice. Security is therefore the ability of the government to provide mechanism for which inhabitants can carry out their social, economic, political and legal rights without any fear (either internal or external). Indeed, the survival of human societies is dependent on its laws and order embedded on national security (Hutchful, 2002 in Adebayo, 2014).

Like other countries, Nigeria has her own peculiar security challenges with its attendant political, cultural, social and economic implications for the citizenry. This has undoubtedly hindered development potentials in the adjudged democratic country. These security issues range from armed robbery, ethnic conflicts across the different geo-political zones, kidnappings, to terrorism and insurgency in the South-South and North Eastern parts of the country. There is need for Nigeria to attain commendable level of security; for without the protection and safety of citizens, plans for peace and national development will fail (Akinyetun, 2017). Truly, the magnitude of insecurity in the country has become so grave that the Army, Police Force, Air Force etcetera, have been drafted into maintaining internal security. Ironically, this effort has led to palpable fear among the people as it fails to guarantee the security of lives and properties of the Nigerian populace, but rather direly impacted the people's political, economic and social life (Shehu, 2015). In all, it is understandable that the term 'security' cut across all aspects of human life in the society; hence we have national security, economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and so on.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Theories are important in the understanding of the logic behind relevant concepts. Theories and models are important tools used by health and social scientists to advance the effectiveness of their practice. According to Merriam Webster dictionary, a theory is a supposition of system of ideas intended to explain something or a scientifically acceptable general principles offered to explain a given phenomenon. Undergirding this study are the, "Epistemology or theory of Knowledge" and the "knowledge Attitude and Practice" (KAP). This theory is applicable to the current



study because as youths, if ESUT undergraduates become knowledgeable about triggers of insecurity and key pathways to peace, they would be favourably disposed in their practices aimed at achieving security in the country.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of the study would be beneficial to the youth and other stakeholders entrusted with the duty of achieving and sustaining peace and security in Nigeria. If the youths become aware of some key steps to peace and security in the country, this awareness would facilitate their positive disposition to such measures; and thereby foster their support for efforts towards attaining peace and security in various Nigerian communities. Other stakeholders involved in peace keeping efforts would benefit from the study because the findings stand to reveal areas of conflict resolution and other pathways to peace that require public enlightenment. Consequently, the findings of the study would reveal the need to include peace and security education in different levels of education in the country.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of the study is to ascertain the level of knowledge of ESUT students on the pathways to achieving peace and security in Nigeria. Specifically, the study ascertains the:

1. Level of knowledge of ESUT undergraduates on key steps towards peace and security in Nigeria

### **Research question**

1. What is the level of knowledge of ESUT undergraduates on key steps towards peace and security in Nigeria?

### **Hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance and the appropriate degree of freedom.

1. There is no significant difference between the female and male ESUT undergraduate on their knowledge of key steps towards peace and security in Nigeria.

### **Research Methods**

The descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study. The target population for the study comprised three hundred and ninety seven (397) undergraduate students in the Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Agbani (Record of enrolment, Dean's office, 2023). The entire students in the faculty were used as respondents, hence there was no sampling procedure applied. The respondents comprised 237 females and 160 males. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire with sections A and B. Section A elicited information on the personal data of the respondents; such as gender, while section B contained 34 questionnaire items meant to solicit information



on the level of knowledge of the respondents on the key steps to enhance peace and security in Nigeria. The instrument was validated by three experts; two of the experts render services in conflict resolution while the third is an expert in measurement and evaluation in the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science Education, ESUT.

In order to determine the internal consistency of the items, Kuder Richardson formular 20 (K.R. 20) was used to analyse the instrument. This is because the items were dichotomous – yielding two response options of “True” and “false”. The computed result of reliability coefficient of 0.98 was high enough for the study (Ogazi and Okpala, 1994). Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents and collected on the spot, with the aid of the ten heads of departments in the faculty of Education, ESUT; who served as the research assistants. The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, 2008). Frequency counts and percentage scores were used to analyse the collated data. Decision Rule for the null hypothesis was to reject the  $H_0$  at .05 level of significance, if chi-square value was greater than or equal to .05 of significance. However, do not reject hypothesis if the chi-square is less than .05 level of significance and at the appropriate degree of freedom.

## Results

Table 1: Level of knowledge on key steps towards peace and security in Nigeria among ESUT undergraduates

S/N	Level of knowledge on key steps towards peace and security in Nigeria among ESUT undergraduates. Le	Female			Male		
		Freq	%	Dec	Freq	%	Dec
1.	Youth engagement	146	61.60%	HK	110	18.75%	HK
2.	Conflict resolution through dialogue	169	71.31%	HK	112	70.00%	HK
3.	Strengthening governance	80	33.76%	LK			LK
4.	Application of Rule of Law	118	40.70	MK	49	30.63	LK
5.	Ensure economic development	117	49.79	MK	62	38.75	LK
6.	Community engagement	80	33.76	LK	48	30.00	LK
7.	Security sector reform	148	62.45	HK	108	76.59	HK
8.	Addressing ethnic tension	178	75.11	LK	107	66.88	HK
9.	Addressing religious tension	47	19.83	LK	32	20.00	LK
10.	Regional cooperation and collaboration	28	11.81	LK	50	31.25	LK
11.	Investing in education	151	63.71	HK	105	65.63	HK
12.	Internal cooperation	123	51.90	MK	40	25.00	LK
13.	Political Reforms	121	51.05	MK	94	58.75	MK
14.	Good governance	161	67.93	HK	72	45.00	MK
15.	Women empowerment	154	64.98	HK	91	56.88	MK
16.	International support	44	18.57	LK	13	8.13	LK
17.	Develop mechanism for early detection of signs and radicalization	53	22.36	LK	21	13.13	LK



S/N	Level of knowledge on key steps towards peace and security in Nigeria among ESUT undergraduates. Le	True			False		
		Freq	%	Dec	Freq	%	Dec
18.	Community based initiative on social cohesion to address underlying grievances	131	55.2	MK	45	28.13	LK
19.	Develop mechanism for community surveillance	182	76.79	HK	114	71.25	HK
20.	Investment in skill building program for youths	150	63.29	HK	79	49.38	NK
21.	Strengthening of legal Institutions	56	23.63	LK	49	30.63	LK
22.	Promotion of Accountability among the leaders	57	24.05	LK	31	19.38	LK
23.	Prevention of exploitation of legal loopholes	73	30.80	Lk	19	11.88	LK
24.	Provision of psychological support through counseling for disengaged extremists	181	76.37	HK	122	7625	.HK
25.	Provision of rehabilitation programs for disengaged extremists	108	45.57	MK	33	20.63	LK
26.	Reintegration of disengaged extremists	79	33.33	LK	20	12.50	LK
27.	Facilitate transition back into society for disengaged individuals	151	63.71	HK	69	43.13	MK
28.	Promotion of social media illiteracy among youths	81	34.18	LK	44	27.50	LK
29.	Promotion of critical thinking skills to help individuals discern between reliable information and extremists propaganda	54	22.78	LK	21	13.13	LK
30.	Empower youths to resort radicalization efforts	138	58.23	MK	52	32.50	LK
31.	Collaborate with regional and international partners to share intelligence and internal partners to share diligence on courtesy VI	60	25.32	LK	34	21.25	LK
32.	Investment in conflict resolution mechanism including mediation	87	36.78	LK	96	60.00	HK
33.	Adoption of peace building I initiatives	130	54.85	MK	44	27.50	LK
34.	Adoption of peace building initiatives to address grievance	176	74.26	HK	73	45.63	MK
Overall average		112	47.26	MK	35	21.88	LK

Data in table 1 shows the percentage scores of female and male undergraduates of ESUT on their level of knowledge on key steps towards peace in Nigeria. From the table the female undergraduates had high level knowledge (HK) on items 1, 2, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15, 19, 27 and 34 with percentage scores that are above 60% but below 80%. They had moderate level (ML) of knowledge of items 4, 5, 12, 13, 18, 25,36 and 33,



with percentage scores of 49.79%, 49.37%, 51.90%, 51.05%, 55.2%, 45.57%, 58.23% and 54.85%. These scores are each above 40%, but below 59%. The female undergraduates also had low level of knowledge (LK) on items 3, 6, 9, 10, 12, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 26, 28, 29, 31 and 32; with percentage scores that is below 40%, each. Similarly, the male undergraduates in ESUT had high level knowledge (HK) on items: 1, 2, 7, 8, 11, 19, 24, and 32 with percentage scores above 60% but below 80%. They had moderate level knowledge on item 13, 14, 15, 20, 27 and 34 with respective percentage scores of 58.75%, 45.00%, 56.88%, 49.38%, 43.13% and 45.63%. They also had low level knowledge (LK) on items 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31 and 33 with percentage scores that is below 40% each. The overall average percentage score of 47.26% shows that female undergraduates in ESUT, had moderate level knowledge on key steps towards peace in Nigeria while the overall average percentage score of 21.88% shows that her male counterparts had low level knowledge on key steps towards peace.

**Table 2:** Chi-square analysis on level of knowledge on key steps to achieve peace and security in Nigeria.

Variables	Correct	Incorrect	N	Chi-square	Df	Level of Significant	Dec
Female	112(47.26%)	125(52.74%)	237	26.392	1	0.001	Do not Reject Ho
Male	35(21.88%)	125(78.13%)	160				

Table 2 shows that the chi-square calculated value of 26.392 is significant at 0.0001 level, which is less than .05 level of significance, set for the study. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected as stated. This means that there is no significant difference in the level of knowledge on steps to peace and security in Nigeria, among the respondents based on gender.

### **Discussion of findings**

Enugu State University of Science and Technology undergraduates have low level knowledge of key steps towards peace and security, in Nigeria. Specifically, the finding revealed that while female undergraduates showed moderate level, their male counterpart showed low level knowledge on key steps towards peace and security in Nigeria. The tested hypothesis showed that there is no significant difference on the level of knowledge of the key steps towards peace and security in Nigeria, based on gender. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. However, there is no evidence that the undergraduates, who seem to be caught in the web of the current insecurity situation in Nigeria have prior awareness of the measures that can achieve peace in the country. Meanwhile, the findings of the study show that undergraduates of ESUT are knowledge receptive. This is an indication that broader knowledge of the key path ways to peace, security and their applicable patterns can be instilled in these undergraduates. It is therefore recommended that relevant path ways to peace and security be introduced to the undergraduates of ESUT, and at different levels of school



academic curriculum in Nigeria. This would sensitize citizens and foster their application of pragmatic pathways to peaceful co-existence.

### **Conclusion**

The study determined the level of knowledge of key pathways to peace and security among the undergraduates of ESUT. The study found that the undergraduates of ESUT had moderate level knowledge on key steps to peace and security in Nigeria. Indeed, the study found no significant difference between the knowledge level of male and female students on key pathways to peace and security in Nigeria. Because of the low knowledge of key pathways among ESUT undergraduates, it has become imperative to introduce these key pathways in the curriculum of tertiary institutions and at all levels of education, to ensure a stable Nigerian society. Since peace and security are the bedrocks of national development and human stable existence, it has even become more important to train undergraduates that would be ambassadors of peace security. This effort calls for Government collaboration with stakeholders and private sectors in achieving peace and security education in the country. It is in this direction that this study recommends that further study be carried on the reason for the present low level knowledge of peace and security among undergraduates. Closing this gap will ensure effective peace and security education among the undergraduates of Nigerian tertiary institutions and at all levels of education.

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