



RESEARCH ARTICLE

CONFLICT, PEACEBUILDING, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ENUGU METROPOLIS: A CRIMINOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationships between conflict, peacebuilding, and sustainable development in Enugu Metropolis, analyzing it from a criminological perspective. Crime and conflict have persisted in urban cities generating lots of violence and insecurities. Exploring this study from a criminological angle examines the causes of conflicts, the patterns which conflict-related crime could take and how peace building strategies would be effective in control of crime and conflict while promoting sustainable development indicators. Not neglecting criminological analysis of those roles which local crime dynamics play in shaping peace building and sustainable development, is the research gap which this study intends to fill. This study adopts quantitative and qualitative methods, using primary (questionnaire and in-depth interviews) and secondary data. The population comprises residents, youth leaders, community leaders, and security personnel across Enugu metropolis. A sample size of 230 respondents was selected through a multi-stage sampling technique while 15 key informants were purposively selected for in-depth interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency and percentages while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The theoretical framework of this study is centered on strain and conflict theories. Findings indicate that communal and land-related conflicts, youth restiveness, cult-related activities and socioeconomic pressures are the major causes of conflict in Enugu metropolis. Although peacebuilding mechanisms such as community mediation, traditional dispute resolution, and security agency interventions exist, their effectiveness is limited by poor coordination and inadequate resources. The study concludes with recommendations for strengthening community-based peacebuilding mechanisms and integrating criminological principles into urban development planning.

Keywords: Conflict, crime, criminology, peacebuilding , sustainable development

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Nigerian urban areas have witnessed several conflicts which are associated with land disputes, youth restiveness, cult activities, communal tensions, socioeconomic pressures and struggles which translate into violent and non-violent crimes. These conflicts often generate to various forms of criminal behaviours such as assault, cultism, vandalism, armed robbery, and property destruction which undermine social order, and pose serious challenges to peace and sustainable development within communities. These crimes not only reflect underlying conflicts but also intensify them, thereby reinforcing cycles of insecurity, social fragmentation and unrest within societies which makes conflict to be perceived not “just as a disagreement,” but something that creates room for criminal behaviour (Aborisade, 2025).

Enugu Metropolis was chosen as the area that would provide the relevant context for this analysis and it comprises Enugu North, Enugu South, and Enugu East Local Government areas. Conflict has become a challenge and a defining feature of today's urban environments, particularly in Enugu metropolis, where rapid urbanization, socioeconomic inequalities, and ineffective governance structures create conducive environments for violence, insecurity and criminality (Nwabuko et al., 2024).

Criminological research shows that conflict and crime mutually encourages each other because the existence of one leads to the other (Ojewale, 2025). Steady occurrence of conflicts and crime leads to continuous social tensions that weaken the formal and informal mechanisms of social control, thereby increasing opportunities for violence, property crime, and communal unrest within societies. Conflict creates crime while crime deepens conflict and both together block development. Crime does not just result from conflict, it makes conflict worse, this means conflict and crime feed each other, forming a cycle that is hard to break. If the basic needs of man such as food, employment and basic amenities are not available or provided by the government, it could lead to conflict and push people into crime. Conflict and crime slow down development because businesses close, jobs are lost, schools and hospitals are disrupted, and government resources are spent on security, instead of development projects which distorts harmony and peaceful coexistence of the people (Ojewale, 2025).

Peacebuilding remains a remedy for conflict-crime societies because it focuses on those strategies, approaches and procedures that help prevent and reduce conflict and crime within societies which makes it a critical response to conflict and insecurity in conflict prone societies. Peacebuilding has emerged not just as theoretical strategies and approaches to crime and conflict but also a practical one. Today, peacebuilding is not only seen as the absence of violence but a framework that emphasizes and sustains social cohesion, resilience and community engagement which helps to address the underlying causes of conflicts and crime within societies. Studies have illustrated how community policing and community participation have reduced communal tensions and enhance trust between residents and security agencies (Asadu, 2023).

Peacebuilding plays a critical role in restoring social order by addressing the structural and social conditions that give rise to conflict and crime, including inequality, exclusion, injustice and weak governance (Asadu, 2023). From a criminological standpoint peacebuilding aligns closely with



preventive and restorative approaches to crime control, emphasizing reconciliation, community participation, community policing, restorative justice, and the strengthening of justice institutions. When peacebuilding becomes effective, it serves as a mechanism for reducing conflict-related crimes, restoring trust in the criminal justice system, and promoting social control and development.

Sustainable development and peacebuilding mutually reinforce each other. Sustainable development embraces economic growth, social inclusion, environmental protection, and institutional sustainability which are basically dependent on peace and security to be effective. Peace and security are widely recognized as fundamental preconditions for achieving these goals. Criminological studies show that persistent conflict and crime undermine economic productivity, discourage investment, weaken institutions and divert public resources from social services to security expenditures (Onyeachu et al., 2025). For instance, this could be illustrated in line with the recent situations between Anambra State government and Onitsha main market traders where the governor shutdowns Onitsha main market for certain reasons best known to him. This has totally crippled economic activities, developments and peace of the state, not only that, it has as well escalated conflicts and crime within the state.

Within the urban environments, these effects are pronounced to cause persistent insecurity, disruption of individuals' social life, damaging infrastructure, deepening inequality, and destroying social cohesion which are seen as key pillars of sustainable development. This reciprocal relationship underscores the need to examine sustainable development through a criminological and peacebuilding lens (Aborisade, 2025). Conflicts, peacebuilding and sustainable development must not only focus on political, economic and social factors while overlooking the crime dynamics. Not neglecting criminological analysis of those roles which local crime dynamics play in shaping peace building and sustainable development is the research gap which this study intends to fill.

Enugu Metropolis has experienced in recent years a high level of increase in terms of social conflicts and insecurities associated with rapid urban growth, socioeconomic pressures, and political challenges. Issues such as land and boundary disputes, youth restiveness, cult-related violence, political tensions and communal disagreements have become recurrent features in parts of the metropolis. These conflicts have often escalated into criminal activities including assault, vandalism, cultism, armed robbery, and destruction of public and private property, which threatens public safety and social stability (Nwankwo, 2022). Despite the existence of peacebuilding initiatives such as formal security agencies, traditional and community-based conflict resolution mechanisms to curb conflict and crime, conflict-related crimes continue to rise which has undermined peace, social cohesion, and sustainable development in Enugu metropolis.

The persistent insecurities which are the aftermath of constant conflicts and crime have caused more harm and fear to residents of Enugu metropolis, this situation has led to discouraging investments within the state, disruption of economic activities and affecting the overall quality of life of residents. Educational activities, healthcare delivery, and small-scale businesses are often negatively affected in conflict-prone areas, thereby encouraging poverty and inequality within the environment. These conditions not only slow development but also create an environment that fuels further conflicts and criminal behaviours (Okunola, 2021).



1.1. Purpose of the Study

- 1) To identify the major causes of conflict in Enugu Metropolis.
- 2) To examine the prevalence and patterns of conflict-related crime in Enugu Metropolis
- 3) To propose strategies for strengthening peace-building mechanisms for sustainable development in Enugu Metropolis.

1.2. Research Questions

- 1) What are the major causes of conflict in Enugu Metropolis?
- 2) What is the prevalence and what patterns do conflict-related crimes take in Enugu Metropolis?
- 3) What strategies can be adopted to enhance peace-building mechanisms for effective crime control and sustainable development?

2.0. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL DISCOURSES

2.1. Conceptualization

Conflict refers to a social phenomenon which arises between individuals or groups whose interests, values and goals are incompatible which results in tension and open confrontation (Eko, 2021). In sociology and criminology, conflict could be viewed as a normal feature of social interaction arising from unequal power relations, competition over scarce resources, and structural inequalities within societies which occurs at different levels such as interpersonal, communal, national and international (Nwankwo, 2022). When conflicts escalate and persist within societies, they weaken social norms and disrupt systems of formal and informal social control, which leads to breakdown of law and order and this creates conditions that are conducive to criminal behaviour.

This breakdown of law and social order within these societies directly gives rise to conflict-related crime. Conflict-related crime refers to criminal activities that emerge and transform as a result of direct or indirect conflict situations (Ijioma et al, 2022). These crimes are often activated within environments characterized by ineffective governance, institutional breakdown and insecurity. Conflict situations provide fertile ground for various forms of conflict-related crimes such as homicide, sexual and gender-based violence, kidnapping, armed robbery, illegal arms trafficking, human trafficking, drug trafficking, vandalism, looting, and destruction of public and private property. Conflict-related crime not only deepens insecurity but also prolongs conflicts by providing financial incentives for armed groups and criminal actors (Nwabuko et al., 2024). In such contexts, crime is not merely incidental but becomes structurally embedded within the conflict itself, as ineffective institutions and insecurities allow criminal networks to thrive. This makes conflict and crime to form a mutually reinforcing relationship, where conflict generates crime and crime, in turn, prolongs conflict (Asadu, 2023).



At this point, criminology becomes essential for understanding the changes between conflict and crime. Criminology refers to the scientific study of crime, criminals, and criminal behavior which provides a useful tool for understanding the relationship between conflict and crime. Criminology provides theoretical and analytical frameworks such as conflict theory and strain theory, that explains how inequality, marginalization, and institutional failure increase criminal behaviour during conflict situations (Ijioma et al., 2022). Criminology highlights the role of peacebuilding in crime control. Restorative justice, community policing, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, and inclusive governance are criminological informed strategies that reduce crime by restoring legitimacy, social cohesion, and collective efficacy (Okunola, 2021). Therefore, criminology provides both analytical and practical tools for linking conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and sustainable development. Criminology therefore bridges the understanding of conflict as a social problem and crime as its behavioural manifestation (Aborisade, 2025).

However, understanding conflict and crime alone is insufficient without strategies aimed at transforming violent conditions. This is where peacebuilding emerges as a necessary response. Peacebuilding refers to those measures and strategies which are aimed at preventing the recurrence and continuation of violent conflict by addressing its root causes and strengthening the capacities of societies to manage disputes peacefully (World Bank, 2020). Unlike peacekeeping or peacemaking, peacebuilding is a long-term which focuses on sustainable peace rather than temporary seizure of violence. Peacebuilding includes activities such as conflict resolution, promoting reconciliation, restoring social cohesion, strengthening justice institution, community dialogue, economic empowerment, inclusive governance and rebuilding trust among individuals and communities. Through peacebuilding mechanisms such as dialogue, restorative justice, community participation, and inclusive governance, peacebuilding works to reverse the conditions that sustain both conflict and criminality (Schmidt, 2022). In this sense, peacebuilding functions as both a conflict management tool and a crime control strategy. The outcomes of effective peacebuilding naturally extend into the realm of sustainable development.

Sustainable development depends on peace, security, and social stability, as persistent conflict and crime undermine economic growth, social welfare, and institutional effectiveness. Sustainable development refers to development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (UNDP, 2022). This interconnectedness between peace, security and sustainable development is well established, this is because the development goals which include poverty, education, unemployment, quality healthcare and economic growth will remain unattainable where there is persistent conflict and crime within societies. By reducing violence, conflict and crime, peacebuilding creates an enabling environment for sustainable development indicators such as social cohesion, economic stability, good governance, and human security (Eko, 2021).

2.1.1. Major Causes of Conflict in Enugu Metropolis

Communal and Land-related Conflicts: This refers to those conflicts that happen between communities, villages, families, or kindreds (Umunna). Land-related conflicts occur when people disagree over ownership, usage and inheritance of land. In Enugu Metropolis land is a very sensitive



issue because it is linked to family history, inheritance and survival, as a result of this, people fight hard to protect it. As Enugu metropolis keeps expanding, land that used to be farmland is now valuable and needed for houses, roads, and businesses. Neighboring communities often disagree over land boundaries or argue over who owns a piece of land. Sometimes families and communities claim the same land, which leads to conflict among them, when such situation arise, government intervenes and take the land without proper agreement (Nwankwo, 2022). This dispute is perceived to be a fight to protect their ancestral rights and community pride, but to compromise becomes difficult. When elders or authorities fail to settle the issue, violence follows which basically leads to deaths and property destructions.

Youth Restiveness: This involves aggressive and criminal actions carried out mainly by young people. In Enugu metropolis, many young people do not have jobs and sometimes underemployed. Some of them are educated but no employment. Without those means of livelihood, youths become frustrated, lacking hope, angry and restless. Some youths join bad groups and engage in street fights, theft, pick pockets, just to survive. These jobless youths are easily used for violence, political fights, cultism, and crime. During elections, these youths are paid to intimidate opponents, giving them arms and ammunitions to perpetrate crimes but after the elections, these youths are abandoned and they resort to crime with those arms given to them during elections (Iwuzor & Offor, 2024). Youth violence increases fear, revenge attacks, and mistrust in communities, making peaceful coexistence difficult (Ijioma et al., 2022).

Cult-Related Activities: Cult-related activities involve secret groups that engage in violence and illegal acts within societies. Cult groups are active in many parts of Enugu metropolis, they are known for fighting over territorial control within the city they operate, especially in urban neighborhoods. This group often leverage on promises of protection and money to attract unemployed and vulnerable youths for recruitment. Members often carry knives and guns to attack rival groups, such clashes sometimes happen in schools, motor parks and neighborhoods, which causes injuries, deaths, property destruction, and forces innocent residents to live in fear (Okunola, 2021).

Socioeconomic Pressures and Struggles: This refers to the economic hardship, struggling to meet daily needs and poor living conditions of people within societies. In Enugu Metropolis many residents struggle with poverty, unemployment, low standard of living, high cost of living, low income and inequality between the rich and poor which become frustrating and create resentment (Iwuzor & Offor, 2024). As the cost of living keeps rising, basic needs of man such as housing, food, and healthcare become difficult to afford. People become angry and blame others and the government for their suffering, this economic hardship pushes people towards crime, violence, and conflict as a means of survival.

2.1.2. Prevalence and Patterns of conflict-related crimes in Enugu Metropolis

One-Chance Robbery: One-chance robbery is a common urban crime in Enugu Metropolis, where criminals disguise as public transport operators and pretend to be normal passengers or drivers to rob and attack victims inside the vehicle. The name “one chance” means, *you only have one chance to enter the vehicle, once inside, you are trapped*. One-Chance robbery is closely linked to youth unemployment and restiveness, socioeconomic hardship, weak transport regulation, and urban



insecurity, making it a recurring pattern of conflict-related crime (Iwuozor & Ofor, 2024). Their pattern of operation occurs more during early mornings, late nights, odd times and rainy periods. This group often comprises 2–5 criminals, mostly criminal gangs or cult groups who target workers, students and traders. Once the car or bus moves, criminals threaten the victims, forced them to surrender their phones, money, ATM cards and PINs, they might use guns, knives or drugs to perpetrate this act. After the robbery, some victims are beaten and injured while some are pushed out of the vehicle in lonely areas.

Communal and Land-related Conflicts: This is the situation where communities or families argue over land boundaries, leadership, resources and also when Government acquires land without proper agreement, which increases tension among community members. Sometimes old disputes over land boundaries and acquisition that happened longtime ago are reopened and this makes the conflict a recurring one. Conflicts emanate when youths from the opposing communities engage in physical fights, attacking persons from rival communities, destroying things, burning houses and farmlands (Schmidt, 2022). There comes a revenge attack when one side feels cheated and this makes the conflict to reoccur. Once violence starts, it follows a cycle of revenge where assaults, murder, destruction of property, retaliatory violence become the order of the day, where family and community members turn against one another (Asadu, 2023).

Cult-Related Activities: This involves when cult groups recruit vulnerable youths to fight with their rivals for control and influence (Okunola, 2021). When cult groups clash, they involve in stabbing and shootings, night attacks, targeted killings of rival members, where they murder rival members, wrongly identified persons and innocent citizens who mistakenly get on their ways. The members of these cults possess illegal weapons and organize violent attacks towards other people. Cult-related crimes are usually planned, repeated, and retaliatory, not accidental.

Ineffective Conflict Resolution: This is the situation where police response becomes slow, seen as unfair and when court takes long to settle cases. When this happens, communities take laws into their hands where they beat and kill suspected criminals without waiting for law enforcement agents or the judiciary. As a result of this ineffectiveness in conflict resolution, communities adopt mob justice, vigilante killings and assaults without legal process (Olowu, 2021). When people lose trust in the justice system, violence replaces law.

Socioeconomic Pressures: This is the situation when poverty, unemployment and high cost of living create stress and frustration among people. At this point people struggle to put food on their tables or meet their basic needs. Some individuals perceive crime as the only way out for survival, they go further to organize or join robbery gangs, kidnapping for ransom, extortion and fraud to make a living. Socioeconomic pressure pushes people into crimes that are money-driven and organized to survive (Okunola, 2021).

2.3. Strategies to Enhance Peace-building Mechanisms and Sustainable Development

Peace-building and sustainable developments are closely connected and are seen as two sides of the same coin. Without peace, development cannot last, and without development, peace is difficult to maintain. Where there is constant conflict, development projects fail. Where people are poor,



unemployed, and excluded, peace becomes impossible. The strategies below show how both can be strengthened together.

Strengthening Community-Based Conflict Resolution Mechanisms: This is a community-based peace building strategy that focuses on resolving conflicts at the grassroots level before they become violent. Traditional institutions such as traditional rulers, town unions, elders, women leaders, and youth groups understand the root causes of conflicts within their community better than outsiders. These groups also mediate disputes among community members which involves land and boundary issues, family and inheritance conflicts and youth misunderstandings. To enhance peacebuilding among the community members, early dialogue among the parties involved is advised which prevents violence and loss of life as the case maybe, this is because peaceful communities attract investment, businesses, and development projects which promote trust and social cohesion between residents of the community.

Promoting Security Institutions and Community Policing: Peace cannot exist without effective and trusted security systems. The situation where the security agencies become lousy and display care-free attitude in the protection of lives and property discourages community members to involve them when conflict and crime occur. To make this a fair play, the Police and security agencies must respond quickly to crime, act fairly and professionally and have respect for human rights. Community policing on the other hand encourages cooperation between residents and law enforcement agents which makes their work effective and efficient. When there is cooperation and collaboration among these security agents, it will reduce crime and enhance safety for businesses and investors. It will also facilitate trust in security agencies which discourages mob justice and revenge attacks. Stable security organization allows social and economic activities to flourish within communities.

Youth Empowerment and Employment Generation: This is one of the most critical peace-building strategies among communities. It is referred as critical because poverty, unemployment and economic hardship make the youths more vulnerable and prone to crime and conflicts of all sorts such as cultism, political violence, armed robbery and kidnapping. Through empowerment, youths are called to order by training them in relevant skills, career or vocational training and giving them access to business loans. There is an adage that says *'idle mind is a devil's workshop'*. When youths are engaged and employed, they are less likely to join cult, gangs and criminal groups or engage in violence, conflict or crime, this reduces frustration and resentment against people and the state. Youths should be included in decision making and community projects of their communities to help them become more productive and contribute to the growth of the economy at every level.

Effective Management of Land and Communal Conflicts: Land and communal conflicts are major sources of conflict in urban centers like Enugu, it could be effectively managed if proper things are put in place. Conflict arises when there is poor land documentation and non-transparent allocation processes, corrupt land dispute tribunals, and unfair compensation on acquired land concerning the government, individuals and communities. Governments must establish transparent land administration systems to reduce land and communal conflicts among communities because when communities are peaceful and stable, they attract investments and developments of various degrees to themselves.



2.2. Theoretical Framework: Strain Theory and Conflict Theory

Strain Theory best explains this study as its theoretical framework, with Conflict Theory as the supporting theory to explain the causes, prevalence and patterns of conflict-related crimes in Enugu Metropolis. These theories help us understand why people engage in violence, crime, and conflict, especially in urban environments marked by poverty, inequality and competition over resources. Strain Theory was developed by Robert K. Merton (1938). The theory explains crime as a result of pressure or strain experienced by individuals when they are unable to achieve socially approved goals through legitimate means. When people want success, money, or respect but cannot achieve them legally, they experience frustration. This frustration may push them into crime, conflict or violence as the case maybe. Societal pressure (strain) increases the likelihood of crime and conflict among individuals. Strain Theory explains how socioeconomic pressures and struggles in Enugu Metropolis lead to conflict-related crimes, especially among youths who feel excluded and frustrated.

Conflict Theory is rooted in the works of Karl Marx, it views society as a place of constant competition over limited resources such as land, wealth, power, and political influence. Society is divided into groups with different levels of power. Those with power protect their interests, while those without power resist and struggle. Conflict Theory explains how competition over land, power, and resources leads to communal disputes, cult clashes, and political violence in Enugu Metropolis. These theories complement each other in this study in explaining conflict-related crime, this is because, as strain theory explains crime at the individual level (frustration, unemployment, poverty), conflict theory explains crime at the structural level (inequality, power imbalance, land struggles). Together, they show that conflict-related crimes in Enugu Metropolis arise from both personal frustration and structural inequality. Therefore, addressing these crimes must require economic empowerment and structural reforms to promote social justice and sustainable peace.

3.0, MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts qualitative and quantitative methods using primary (questionnaire and in-depth interviews) and secondary data. This research was carried out in Enugu Metropolis, focusing on three local government areas, namely, Enugu North, South, and East local government areas. These areas were selected because they experience youth restiveness, cult-related activities, land disputes, socioeconomic pressures and struggles. A sample size of 230 respondents was selected out of the population of 1016 people (the population of the three local government areas that make up Enugu metropolis). Purposive sampling was used to select key informants such as residents, youth leaders, community leaders, and security personnel across Enugu metropolis. These groups were chosen because they are directly affected by conflict-related crimes within the city. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select respondents for quantitative data. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages while Qualitative responses were analyzed and interpreted using thematic analysis according to the important themes of the research questions.

4.0. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained in the course of this work are quantitative and qualitatively presented thus:



From quantitative findings, the result for research question one indicates that majority of the respondents representing 72% believe that youth unemployment and poverty are the major causes of conflicts in Enugu metropolis followed by others. In collaboration with the qualitative findings, one of the key informants had this to say, *“When young people do not have jobs or hope, they become angry. That anger turns into violence, cultism, and crime.”* (Youth Leader, Enugu North)

Another key informant states that, *“Most of the serious fights we see today start from land issues. Families and communities fight because land is scarce and very valuable now.”* (Resident, Enugu East)

Another key informant had this to say, *“If the government can provide jobs or skills for the youths, most of these crimes will reduce. Idle hands are the cause of many problems here.”* (Community Leader, Enugu South)

These findings suggest that conflicts in Enugu Metropolis are largely driven by economic hardship and structural ineffectiveness, rather than cultural or ethnic factors. The dominance of unemployment and poverty as the causes of conflict and crime aligns with Strain Theory (Merton, 1938), which argues that when individuals are unable to achieve socially approved goals through legitimate means, they resort to deviant and criminal behavior. This is also explained in line with Alemika and Chukwuma (2018) they stated that economic deprivation has been linked to youth violence and criminality.

From the quantitative findings, the result for research question two state that more than half of the respondents representing 68% are of the view that one-chance robbery is the most prevalent conflict-related crime, followed by others.

In collaboration with the qualitative findings, one of the key informants states that, *“One-chance robbery has become very common within the city. It is now part of daily fear in the city whenever one wants to board a bus or taxi.”* (Resident, Enugu South)

Another key informant states that, *“Most of these one-chance robberies we handle are linked to cult rivalry and drug abuse among youths.”*(Security Personnel, Enugu East)

Another key informant had this to say, *“One-chance robbery has made people afraid of public transport. Criminals pretend to be drivers and rob passengers inside the vehicle.”* (Resident, Enugu North)

This is explained in line with Okunola, (2021), who states that the prevalence of one-chance robbery reflects adaptive criminal strategies in urban environments marked by unemployment and structural ineffectiveness. This is also aligned with Olowu, (2021), who states that cult-related violence supports youth marginalization and drug abuse to encourage gang formation and violent crime.



From the quantitative findings, the result for research question three states that majority of the respondents, representing 81% identified youth employment and empowerment as the most effective peacebuilding strategy followed by others.

In collaboration with the qualitative findings, one of the key informants states that

“If government can give youths skills and jobs, crime will reduce naturally. Police alone cannot solve the problem.” (Community leader, Enugu North)

Another key informant states that: *“When community leaders are involved early, many conflicts do not turn violent.”* (Community leader, Enugu East)

Another key informant had this to say, *“Youth empowerment is the solution. When youths are engaged, peace will return.”*(Youth leader, Enugu South)

Another key informant states that, *“Most one-chance cases involve unemployed youths working in groups.”* (Security Personnel, Enugu East)

This is explained in line with UNDP (2022), which stated that community participation, strong institutions and socioeconomic inclusions are foundations for sustainable peace. This is also in line with Eko (2021), who states that addressing unemployment directly tackles the strain that pushes individuals toward crime, while community dialogue reflects traditional African conflict-resolution strategies.

5.0. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study examined the major causes of conflict, the prevalence and patterns of conflict-related crimes, and the strategies for enhancing peace-building mechanisms for effective crime control and sustainable development in Enugu Metropolis. Drawing from both quantitative and qualitative data, the study established that conflict in Enugu Metropolis is largely driven by socioeconomic strain, youth marginalization, land-related disputes, and ineffective institutional structures.

The findings revealed that youth unemployment and poverty constitute the most significant cause of conflict, pushing many young people into criminal activities such as one-chance robbery, cultism, and gang violence. These crimes have become dominant patterns of conflict-related crime within the metropolis, creating fear, insecurity, and disruption of economic and social life. Land and communal disputes, intensified by rapid urbanization and increased land value, also contribute to recurring conflicts and violence.

Furthermore, the study demonstrated that existing peace-building mechanisms are largely perceived as ineffective, mainly due to poor implementation, lack of community participation, and inadequate attention to root causes of conflict. Both quantitative and qualitative findings confirmed a strong relationship between effective peace-building and sustainable development. Theoretically, the



findings strongly support Strain Theory, which explains how lack of economic opportunities and poverty generate frustration that leads to crime, and Conflict Theory, which highlights how inequality, competition over scarce resources, and ineffective justice systems fuel social conflict. Therefore, the study concludes that peace-building and sustainable development in Enugu Metropolis cannot be achieved through security measures alone, but require comprehensive socioeconomic inclusions, institutional effectiveness, and community-based interventions.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that no conflict of interest exist in this manuscript.

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