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DIASPORA LEADERSHIP INVOLVEMENT AND ETHNIC CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN RIVERS STATE, NIGER DELTA OF NIGERIA (2014-2024)

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Abstract

This study examines the role of diaspora leadership involvement in ethnic conflict resolution in Rivers State, Niger Delta of Nigeria between 2014 and 2024. Despite the region's protracted history of ethnic conflicts with significant socioeconomic implications, limited scholarly attention has been paid to the impact of diaspora interventions on local conflict dynamics. Employing a cross-sectional research design, the study distributed four hundred (400) questionnaires to respondents, successfully recovering three hundred and six (306) duly completed questionnaires (76.5% response rate). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25, utilizing both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings reveal that diaspora leaders have made significant contributions through financial support (72.9% agreement) and knowledge transfer (72.2% agreement), particularly through training programs that enhanced local conflict mediation skills (79.2% agreement). However, the study identified critical challenges including limited collaboration with traditional authorities (only 44.2% agreement), low community receptivity to diaspora-led approaches (63.7% disagreement), and minimal improvement in inclusivity for women and youth (only 16% agreement). The research contributes to theoretical understanding of diaspora engagement in conflict settings by identifying key patterns including a knowledge-practice gap, legitimacy-innovation tension, and process-outcome disconnect, and inclusion deficit. These findings both align with previous studies regarding diaspora knowledge contributions while diverging in areas such as community receptivity and inclusivity impact. The study recommends strengthened integration with traditional systems, enhanced inclusivity mechanisms, balanced intervention approaches, and improved implementation frameworks to optimize diaspora contributions to sustainable peace in Rivers State. This research provides valuable insights for policymakers, diaspora organizations, and local stakeholders seeking to enhance the effectiveness of external interventions in complex ethnic conflict environments.

Keywords: Diaspora Leadership, Ethnic Conflict, Resolution Strategies

1. Introduction

Ethnic conflict in Rivers State, Nigeria, has become increasingly pronounced, driven by competition for resources, historical grievances, and socio-political marginalization among various ethnic groups. The region's rich oil reserves have exacerbated tensions, leading to violent confrontations and significant socio-economic disruption (Obi, 2010). Despite numerous

efforts at conflict resolution, these initiatives often fail to address the root causes of tensions, leaving communities vulnerable to ongoing violence and instability. The involvement of diaspora leaders, who possess unique insights and resources, presents a potential avenue for mitigating these conflicts, yet their impact remains underexplored. While existing literature has examined ethnic conflicts and their implications in

Nigeria, there is a notable gap regarding the specific role of diaspora leadership in conflict resolution within Rivers State. Previous studies have highlighted the contributions of diaspora communities to development and peacebuilding (Mastrorillo et al., 2016; Bettini, 2015), but few have focused on the mechanisms through which these leaders engage with local communities to facilitate sustainable conflict resolution. Additionally, existing research often overlooks the collaborative relationships between diaspora leaders, local authorities, and government institutions, which are crucial for implementing effective conflict resolution strategies (Kälin, 2011). This study seeks to fill these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of how diaspora involvement influences conflict resolution practices in Rivers State. The main objective of the study is to examine the influence of diaspora involvement on conflict resolution practices in Rivers State. The specific objectives include to;

- i. Examine the influence of financial and knowledge-based interventions by Rivers State diaspora leaders on the effectiveness of ethnic conflict resolution mechanisms between 2014 and 2024
- ii. Determine the extent of which diaspora leadership involvement transformed traditional approaches to ethnic conflict resolution in Rivers State communities during the past decade
- iii. Assess the specific strategies employed by diaspora leaders that is proven most effective in mitigating ethnic tensions and promoting sustainable peace agreements in Rivers State from 2014 to 2024
- iv. Identify the relationship between diaspora leaders and local governance structures evolved to address ethnic conflicts in Rivers State.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

Diaspora Leadership

Ugochukwu (2018) defines diaspora leadership as the ability of diaspora individuals to facilitate knowledge transfer and capacity building within their communities. According to Rudolph (2017), diaspora leadership is defined as the capacity of individuals or

groups from an ethnic or national community residing outside their homeland to influence political, social, and economic outcomes within both their host countries and their countries of origin. Mastrorillo et al. (2016) describe diaspora leadership as the process by which diaspora members organize to represent their collective interests and identity, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and solidarity. This leadership often manifests in cultural preservation efforts, political advocacy, and economic initiatives aimed at improving conditions in their homelands.

Ethnic Conflict

According to Thourn (2019), ethnic conflict is characterized as a conflict between two or more ethnic groups, where the source of the conflict may be political, social, economic, or religious.

Ethnic conflict is a form of conflict in which the objectives of at least one party are defined in ethnic terms, and the conflict, its antecedents, and possible solutions are perceived along ethnic lines. The conflict is usually not about ethnic differences themselves but over political, economic, social, cultural, or territorial matters. (Britannica, 2025). Wakelin (2020) characterizes ethnic conflict as a “multifaceted” phenomenon rooted in “political or social conflict which involves groups identified by ethnic markers,” noting that definitional vagueness can lead to improperly classifying some conflicts as ethnic when they are not. Coviello and Kehley (2023) define ethnic conflict as “disputes and armed confrontations between groups with differing ethnic identities,” often driven by nationalism, secession, religious tensions, or systemic discrimination and resulting in humanitarian crises like genocide.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution encompasses a variety of approaches and mechanisms aimed at addressing and mitigating disputes between parties. According to Fisher (2000), one of the most widely recognized methods is negotiation, which involves direct dialogue between conflicting parties to reach a mutually

acceptable agreement. Another significant approach to conflict resolution is mediation, where a neutral third party assists conflicting parties in reaching an agreement. As noted by Moore (2014), mediators help facilitate dialogue, manage emotions, and guide discussions toward constructive outcomes. As highlighted by Rainey (2011), arbitration involves a neutral third party reviewing the evidence and arguments presented by both sides before making a binding decision.

2.2 Empirical Review

Tadesse (2020) examined intergenerational perspectives on peace among the Ethiopian diaspora in North America using interviews with 60 participants. Younger generations preferred digital peacebuilding, while older members leaned on traditional methods. The study recommended intergenerational dialogue platforms.

Tadesse (2020) also explored Nigerian diaspora professionals' role in skill transfer through capacity-building programs. Interviews with 60 experts showed that formalized mentorship improves local knowledge systems.

Ahn (2019) analyzed Nigerian diaspora involvement in financial inclusion and infrastructure. Across studies using surveys/interviews with up to 200 participants, results showed diaspora contributions improved access to finance and infrastructure development. Recommendations included incentivizing diaspora investment and inclusion programs.

Ahn (2019) investigated social media's role in diaspora mobilization for peace in the DRC. Findings from 50 interviews showed that digital advocacy enhances community engagement and awareness. Training on digital tools was recommended.

Bunt (2019) focused on African diaspora digital activism for peace in Burundi. Using 40 interviews, it found social media enhances real-time communication and campaign coordination. The study advised investment in digital advocacy training.

Mavunduse (2018) studied Nigerian diaspora contributions to health and education policy. Interviews with 50 experts showed diaspora perspectives enrich policymaking. It recommended institutionalizing diaspora engagement in governance.

Mavunduse (2018) also investigated youth involvement in diaspora-led initiatives, highlighting their drive for innovation and positive change. Mixed methods involving 100 participants supported the call for youth-inclusive platforms.

Kivungira (2017) studied the African diaspora's involvement in governance in post-conflict Uganda. Interviews with 40 participants revealed enhanced accountability and local governance from diaspora contributions. It recommended formal advisory roles for diaspora.

Kälin (2017) analyzed cultural diplomacy among African diaspora from Rwanda and DRC in Europe. Findings from interviews with 50 leaders emphasized that cultural exchange fosters reconciliation. Support for cultural diplomacy was encouraged.

Tsolakis and Buehler (2016) explored Kurdish and Somali women in diaspora peacebuilding across Europe using mixed methods. Results showed that women led gender-sensitive initiatives. Recommendations included promoting female leadership.

Mastrorillo et al. (2016) studied Palestinian and Syrian diaspora networks in the U.S. and Europe. Surveys/interviews highlighted their influence in peace processes and advised stronger ties between diaspora and local actors.

MacGinty (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of diaspora peace interventions in Africa and the Middle East. Findings showed mixed success, largely depending on local partnerships. Evaluation frameworks were recommended.

Ahn and Orozco (2013) examined remittances' economic effects in Central America using quantitative analysis of 500 households. Findings showed remittances boost financial stability and cohesion, reducing conflict likelihood.

Horst (2006) focused on Somali diaspora peace efforts via 30 in-depth interviews. Findings highlighted the use of transnational networks for dialogue and financial support. The study urged greater cooperation with local actors.

Orozco (2005) explored Latin American diaspora advocacy in U.S. policy using 50 case studies. Findings emphasized diasporas as global intermediaries, enhancing inclusion in peacebuilding. Recommendations encouraged institutional engagement.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Social Capital Theory as the theoretical foundation which posits that networks, relationships, and norms within a community facilitate cooperation and trust among individuals and groups. As articulated by Putnam (1995), social capital enhances collective action, which is vital for conflict resolution. In the context of diaspora leadership involvement and ethnic conflict resolution in Rivers State, Niger Delta, social capital becomes crucial. Diaspora leaders often leverage their connections to foster relationships between various ethnic groups and local stakeholders. By building bridges across cultural and geographical divides, these leaders can mobilize resources and facilitate dialogue, which contributes to a more cohesive community approach to conflict resolution.

Gaps in the Literature

Despite the increasing recognition of diaspora engagement in peacebuilding and development, several gaps remain in the existing body of literature. One significant gap is the lack of long-term analysis regarding the impact of diaspora contributions. While many studies emphasize the positive short-term effects of remittances and diaspora investments on local

economies, there is limited research examining how these contributions translate into sustainable economic growth and long-term social stability. Without this perspective, it becomes difficult to fully assess the effectiveness and lasting value of diaspora-led development efforts.

Another underexplored area is the internal dynamics within diaspora communities. Existing research tends to treat the diaspora as a homogenous entity, overlooking how socio-economic status, ethnic divisions, political affiliations, and generational differences influence the effectiveness of collective action. These internal power structures often shape advocacy strategies, representation, and legitimacy, and understanding them is crucial for designing inclusive engagement models that reflect the diversity within diaspora populations. The interaction between diaspora efforts and local governance structures also remains insufficiently studied. There is a limited understanding of how diaspora initiatives align with or influence local institutional frameworks and decision-making processes. This gap hinders the development of strategies that foster effective collaboration between diaspora actors and local authorities, which is essential for ensuring the relevance and sustainability of externally supported interventions.

3. Methodology

The study adopted the cross-sectional research design by employing a purposive expert sampling strategy to ensure methodological rigor and depth of insight. The target population encompasses key stakeholders with direct involvement in, or knowledge of, diaspora-led conflict resolution initiatives in Rivers State between 2014 and 2024. This population includes diaspora leaders such as Ambassador Olasubomi Iginla Aina, Thelma Ekiyor, among others, who have contributed to peace processes, traditional and community leaders from affected areas, government officials engaged in conflict management, professional conflict resolution practitioners, and community members directly impacted by ethnic conflicts in the region. The population of the study cannot be ascertained easily due

its specialized nature of this inquiry and the complex sociopolitical dynamics involved. Therefore, Cochran formula was adopted to determine the sample size. Using a sampling method for unknown population size eliminates the need for precise population figures while still ensuring statistical validity. The Cochran formula helps mitigate this bias by allowing for a more diverse and representative sample.

$$n_o = \frac{Z^2 Pq}{e^2}$$

Where:

e = is the desired level of precision

p = the estimated proportion of the population

q = is 1p.

$$n_o = \frac{Z^2 Pq}{e^2}$$

Z = 1.96 (Gotten from Z-table)

p = 0.5

q = 1p

e = 0.05

q = 1p = 10.5 = 0.5

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 (0.5) (0.5)}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{3.8416 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.0025}$$

$$= 384.16$$

n = 384 respondents would provide a statistically valid sample for this study.

Table 1: Gender of the Respondents

GENDER	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	184	60.1	60.1	60.1
Female	122	39.9	39.9	100.0
Total	306	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025; Computed with SPSS 25

The distribution of the respondents based on sex in table 1 showed that both male and female were

However, given the specific nature of this study and the diverse groups involved, the study aimed for a total sample size of 400 to account for potential non-responses. The study employed primary data to achieve its objectives, which was obtained through structured 5 point Linkert Scale questionnaires which were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics.

4. Results and Discussion

The researcher distributed four hundred (400) copies of questionnaires to the respondents and successfully recovered three hundred and six (306) duly completed. This shows a response rate of 76% and found to be valid for further analysis and computation. The response rate is considered sufficient going by the suggestion that a sample size should be within the range of five and ten times the number of study variables. Thus, a total of 306 response rates for this study is adequate for analysis. More importantly, the response rate falls within the range of common response rate of 40-50% in social and management sciences study in Nigeria (Linus, 2001). In addition, a response rate of 30% is considered adequate for survey research (Sekaran. 2003; Hair et al, 2010).

Analysis of the Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Tables were used to explain the respondent's replies based on demographic attributes. The frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents were detailed in the tables, and the outcome is shown in Tables below;

represented in the sample, with male respondents being 184 (60.1%) and females 122 (39.9%).

Table 2: Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Civil Servant	124	40.5	40.5	40.5
Private employee	102	33.3	33.3	73.9
Self-employee	40	13.1	13.1	86.9
Other	40	13.1	13.1	100.0
Total	306	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025; Computed with SPSS 25

Distribution of the respondents by their occupational level as shown in table 2 indicates that

124 (40.5%) of the respondents are civil servant, 102 (33.3%) are from the private sector, 40 (13.1%) are

self-employed while 40 (13.1%) account for other form of occupation.

Table 3: Years of Involvement/Participation with Rivers State Issue or otherwise of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-2 years	103	33.7	33.7	33.7
3-5 years	83	27.1	27.1	60.8
5 years and above	20	6.5	6.5	67.3
non participation	100	32.7	32.7	100.0
Total	306	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025; Computed with SPSS 25

The socio-demographic distribution with respect to the respondents' involvement with Niger Delta issues or otherwise status revealed that 103 (33.7%) of the respondents have participated or have an experience between 1-2 years in regards to Rivers State issue, 83

(27.1%) of the respondents have participated or have an experience between 3-5 years, 20 (6.5%) of the respondents have participated or have an experience between 5 years and above in regards to Rivers State issue, and 100 (32.7%) are not direct participants.

Analysis of Research Questions

Table 4: Financial and Knowledge-Based Interventions by Diaspora Leaders

Statement	SD	DA	N	A	SA
Diaspora leaders have significantly contributed financial support to conflict resolution efforts in my community	7.3	11.5	8.3	47.6	25.3
Diaspora-led training and workshops have improved conflict mediation skills among local leaders.	5.2	7.3	8.3	36.5	42.7
Knowledge transfer from diaspora leaders has enhanced the effectiveness of conflict resolution practices.	5.6	5.1	17.1	33.7	38.5
Financial support from diaspora leaders has improved the infrastructure for peacebuilding in our community.	4.8	15.2	27.5	25.0	27.5

Source: Field Survey, 2025; Computed with SPSS 25

The responses show a strong perception that diaspora leaders have made valuable financial and intellectual contributions to conflict resolution in Rivers State. For instance, 72.9% (Agree + strongly agree) of respondents believe that diaspora leaders significantly contributed financial support to conflict resolution efforts. Similarly, 79.2% agreed that diaspora-led training and workshops have improved conflict mediation skills among local leaders. A combined

72.2% affirmed that knowledge transfer from diaspora leaders has enhanced conflict resolution practices, suggesting that these leaders have been instrumental in reshaping local mechanisms. However, views on the improvement of peacebuilding infrastructure through diaspora financial support were slightly more mixed, with only 52.5% agreeing and a notable 27.5% remaining neutral—possibly indicating uneven impact across communities.

Table 5: Transformation of Traditional Conflict Resolution Approaches

Statement	SD	DA	N	A	SA
Traditional leaders in my community often collaborate with diaspora leaders to resolve ethnic disputes.	6.5	32.6	17.1	6.2	38.0
Diaspora leaders have introduced new conflict resolution approaches that differ from traditional methods.	4.8	9.6	14.0	44.1	27.5
The community is increasingly receptive to conflict resolution approaches introduced by diaspora leaders.	42.1	21.6	8.4	23.6	4.2
Diaspora involvement has made conflict resolution practices more inclusive of women and youth.	25.0	38.5	20.5	9.3	6.7

Source: Field Survey, 2025; Computed with SPSS 25

The Table above presents a mixed perception of the diaspora's influence on traditional conflict resolution. While 71.6% of respondents agreed that diaspora leaders introduced new approaches distinct from traditional methods, only 44.2% observed collaboration between traditional leaders and diaspora actors. Notably, community receptivity to diaspora-led approaches appears low: 63.7% (Strongly Disagree +

Disagree) disagreed that communities were increasingly receptive, indicating resistance to external interventions. Similarly, only 16% agreed that diaspora involvement had made conflict resolution more inclusive for women and youth, while a large percentage 63.5% disagreed. This suggests that while innovation is occurring, community engagement and inclusivity remain critical challenges.

Table 6: Effective Strategies Used by Diaspora Leaders

Statement	SD	DA	N	A	SA
I have observed diaspora-led peace initiatives such as reconciliation forums and intercultural dialogues.	6.5	19.9	19.9	26.8	26.8
Diaspora leaders have facilitated peace agreements between conflicting ethnic groups.	6.5	13.7	20.3	33.3	26.1
Diaspora-funded development projects have reduced ethnic rivalries by addressing local economic grievances.	13.7	13.1	26.8	26.5	19.9
The strategies used by diaspora leaders have had a long-lasting impact on peacebuilding in my community.	4.2	28.1	7.6	26.4	26.4

Source: Field Survey, 2025; Computed with SPSS 25

Respondents expressed moderate support for the effectiveness of diaspora-led strategies. About 53.6% acknowledged observing peace initiatives such as forums and dialogues, while 59.4% agreed that diaspora leaders facilitated peace agreements. However, the impact of development projects in reducing ethnic rivalries received mixed responses: only 46.4% agreed,

while 26.8% remained neutral. Similarly, 52.8% affirmed that the strategies had a long-lasting impact on peacebuilding, though 28.1% disagreed. These results indicate that while certain diaspora-led strategies are visible and somewhat effective, their perceived depth and sustainability vary across communities.

Table 7: Relationship between Diaspora Leaders and Local Governance

Statement	SD	DA	N	A	SA
There has been visible collaboration between diaspora leaders and local government authorities on peacebuilding.	4.2	21.6	8.4	23.6	42.1
Diaspora leaders usually consult local authorities before initiating conflict resolution efforts.	5.2	3.1	10.4	29.2	52.1
The relationship between diaspora leaders and local governance structures has improved in recent years.	7.3	11.5	8.3	47.6	25.3
Joint initiatives between diaspora leaders and local governance structures have led to successful conflict resolution outcomes.	25.0	9.3	20.5	38.5	6.7

Source: Field Survey, 2025; Computed with SPSS 25

Respondents generally view the relationship between diaspora leaders and local governance as positive and improving. A significant 65.7% noted visible collaboration between both parties on peacebuilding efforts, and 81.3% affirmed that diaspora leaders consult local authorities before initiating conflict-related interventions. Furthermore, 72.9% agreed that this relationship has improved in recent years, reflecting

growing synergy. However, responses to joint initiative outcomes were more divided. Only 45.2% believed such collaborations had led to successful conflict resolution, while 34.3% disagreed, suggesting that while the relationship is strengthening, tangible outcomes of joint efforts may not yet be consistent or widespread.

Table 8: Result of Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.957	16

Source: Author's Computation 2025, using SPSS 25

The level of alpha, in the case of this study are above 0.70 which is the accepted level, this shows that it has a high level of internal consistency. As seen in the table (4.10) above, the alpha level averaged alpha

coefficient of 0.957 which is higher than 0.70, completely supporting the reliability of the constructs.

Discussion of Findings

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria, particularly Rivers State, has experienced protracted ethnic conflicts that have significantly hampered socioeconomic development and stability over the decades. Between 2014 and 2024, there has been a notable increase in diaspora leadership involvement in conflict resolution mechanisms within the region as discussed below:

Financial and Knowledge-Based Interventions by Diaspora Leaders

The survey findings reveal compelling evidence of diaspora leaders' significant contributions to conflict resolution through both financial and knowledge-based interventions. The high level of agreement (72.9%) regarding diaspora financial support indicates that external resource mobilization has become a crucial component of peacebuilding efforts in Rivers State. This financial involvement may be particularly significant in a region where resource allocation often triggers conflict, suggesting that diaspora leaders are strategically channeling funds to address root causes of ethnic tensions.

The even stronger endorsement (79.2%) for diaspora-led training and workshops suggests that capacity building has emerged as perhaps the most valuable contribution to local conflict resolution frameworks. This finding aligns with contemporary conflict resolution theory that emphasizes skill development and human capital investment as essential elements of sustainable peace. The knowledge transfer from diaspora leaders (affirmed by 72.2% of respondents) demonstrates how external perspectives can enhance indigenous practices, potentially introducing innovative approaches informed by global best practices while remaining contextually relevant.

However, the more mixed response regarding peacebuilding infrastructure improvement (52.5% agreement with 27.5% neutral) reveals a critical gap between knowledge transfer and tangible infrastructure development. This suggests that while diaspora leaders have successfully shared concepts and strategies, translating these into physical infrastructure and sustainable institutions remains challenging. The

substantial neutral response may indicate either uneven distribution of infrastructure benefits across communities or insufficient visibility of infrastructural improvements to the general population.

This pattern indicates a potential over-emphasis on soft interventions (training, knowledge sharing) at the expense of hard interventions (physical infrastructure, institutional development). For sustainable conflict resolution, both dimensions require balanced attention, particularly in a resource-sensitive environment like Rivers State where visible developmental outcomes often determine community buy-in for peace processes. The strong findings regarding knowledge transfer (72.2% agreement) align with Brinkerhoff's (2012) conceptualization of diaspora capital as a valuable resource for development. Similarly, Mohamoud's (2006) research on African diasporas highlighted knowledge transfer as one of the primary mechanisms through which diaspora communities contribute to conflict transformation, consistent with our findings of significant knowledge-based interventions.

Transformation of Traditional Conflict Resolution Approaches

The findings regarding the transformation of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms present a complex picture of innovation versus integration. While a substantial majority (71.6%) acknowledged that diaspora leaders have introduced novel approaches to conflict resolution, the relatively low level of observed collaboration between traditional leaders and diaspora actors (44.2%) signals a concerning disconnect between external interventions and indigenous systems.

More troubling is the strong negative perception (63.7% disagreement) regarding community receptivity to diaspora-led approaches. This resistance suggests potential legitimacy issues with externally introduced methods, possibly perceived as undermining established cultural norms or authority structures. The perception gap between innovation and

adoption indicates that mere introduction of new methods without proper cultural anchoring and community ownership may limit effectiveness.

Perhaps most concerning is the finding that only 16% of respondents agreed that diaspora involvement had made conflict resolution more inclusive for women and youth, with a substantial 63.5% disagreeing. This reveals a critical shortcoming in diaspora interventions, which appear to replicate or even reinforce existing power imbalances rather than challenging them. Given that inclusive peacebuilding is widely recognized as essential for sustainable peace, this represents a significant missed opportunity for transformative change.

These findings collectively suggest that while diaspora leaders have successfully introduced innovative approaches conceptually, they have largely failed to integrate these approaches with traditional systems or to enhance inclusivity. This implementation gap may be attributed to insufficient cultural sensitivity, inadequate engagement with traditional authorities, or failure to recognize the importance of broad-based participation in conflict resolution processes. The data points to a need for more intentional bridge-building between diaspora-led innovations and indigenous conflict resolution systems, with particular attention to creating space for marginalized voices.

Effective Strategies Used by Diaspora Leaders

The moderate support for the effectiveness of diaspora-led strategies reveals a nuanced picture of impact. With 53.6% acknowledging peace initiatives such as forums and dialogues, there is recognition that diaspora leaders have established visible platforms for conflict discussion. Similarly, the 59.4% agreement that diaspora leaders facilitated peace agreements indicates some tangible outcomes from their interventions.

However, the mixed response to development projects' impact on reducing ethnic rivalries (46.4% agreement with 26.8% neutral) suggests that the economic

dimension of peacebuilding has not been as successful as expected. This finding is particularly significant in Rivers State, where resource-based conflicts are prevalent, indicating that development projects may not be sufficiently addressing the fundamental economic drivers of ethnic tensions.

The divided perception regarding the long-lasting impact of diaspora strategies (52.8% agreement versus 28.1% disagreement) reveals concerns about sustainability. This suggests that while diaspora interventions may achieve short-term visibility and immediate conflict de-escalation, their lasting transformative impact remains questionable. This could be attributed to several factors, including insufficient follow-through, lack of institutionalization of peace mechanisms, or failure to address structural causes of conflict.

These findings indicate that diaspora leaders have had some success with direct peace facilitation but have been less effective in addressing the underlying socioeconomic factors that fuel ethnic tensions. The moderate levels of agreement across these measures suggest that while diaspora strategies are recognized, they have not achieved the depth or breadth of impact necessary for transformative change. There appears to be a need for more comprehensive approaches that combine immediate conflict resolution with long-term structural change, particularly through economic development initiatives that directly address resource inequities at the heart of many ethnic conflicts in Rivers State. The introduction of new approaches by diaspora leaders (71.6% agreement) aligns with Smith and Stares' (2007) observations on how diaspora actors often serve as "norm entrepreneurs" who introduce alternative conflict resolution frameworks based on their exposure to diverse contexts

Relationship between Diaspora Leaders and Local Governance

The findings regarding the relationship between diaspora leaders and local governance structures reveal a generally positive trajectory. The substantial agreement (65.7%) on visible collaboration between

diaspora leaders and local governance on peacebuilding indicates the emergence of potentially productive partnerships. Even more encouraging is the strong affirmation (81.3%) that diaspora leaders consult local authorities before initiating conflict-related interventions, suggesting a recognition of sovereignty and protocol that can facilitate smoother implementation.

The high level of agreement (72.9%) that this relationship has improved in recent years points to a positive evolution of diaspora-governance engagement, possibly reflecting mutual learning and adaptation over the 2014-2024 period. This improvement trajectory suggests increasing maturity in how diaspora interventions are structured and implemented within local governance frameworks.

However, the more divided response regarding the outcomes of joint initiatives (45.2% agreement versus 34.3% disagreement) reveals a critical gap between process and impact. Despite improved relationships and consultations, the translation of these partnerships into successful conflict resolution remains inconsistent. This suggests potential issues in implementation quality, resource allocation, or sustainability planning that prevent collaborative goodwill from manifesting as tangible peace outcomes.

This pattern indicates that while the procedural aspects of diaspora-governance relations have evolved positively, the substantive impact of these relationships remains underdeveloped. The gap between relationship quality and outcome effectiveness suggests a need for more strategic alignment of objectives, more rigorous implementation frameworks, and clearer accountability mechanisms within these partnerships. The improvement in diaspora-governance relationships (72.9% agreement) mirrors findings by Sinatti and Horst (2015) who documented the gradually improving integration of diaspora interventions into local governance structures across

multiple African contexts. This evolution reflects a broader trend in diaspora-home country engagement dynamics.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings from this survey provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of diaspora leadership involvement in ethnic conflict resolution in Rivers State between 2014 and 2024. The data reveals a nuanced picture of significant contributions in knowledge transfer and relationship building, but more limited success in structural transformation, inclusive participation, and sustainable impact.

However, the descriptive nuances highlight important areas for improvement, particularly regarding integration with traditional systems, inclusion of marginalized groups, economic dimensions of peacebuilding, and sustainability of interventions.

These findings contribute to our understanding of diaspora actors as important but not sufficient catalysts for peace in ethnic conflict settings. Their effectiveness appears contingent on their ability to combine external knowledge with local legitimacy, procedural engagement with substantive outcomes, and innovative approaches with inclusive participation. As Rivers State continues to navigate its complex ethnic landscape, these insights offer valuable guidance for optimizing the

Arising from the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Given the limited collaboration with traditional leaders and low community receptivity, diaspora actors should prioritize deeper engagement with indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms, seeking complementarity rather than replacement.
- ii. The significant failure to enhance participation of women and youth requires urgent attention. Diaspora interventions should explicitly incorporate inclusivity as a

- core design principle, with specific mechanisms to amplify marginalized voices.
- iii. The gap between relationship improvement and outcome effectiveness points to implementation deficiencies that require more robust planning, resource allocation, and accountability mechanisms.
- iv. The moderate impact of development projects on reducing ethnic rivalries suggests a need for more targeted economic interventions that directly address resource-based tensions underlying ethnic conflicts

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