

Revitalizing African Youth for Unity and Peace Building: Celebrating African Culture, History and Values

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijasct.2014/vol13n1124>

Published February 23, 2024

Citation: R.O Anho (2025) Revitalizing African Youth for Unity and Peace Building: Celebrating African Culture, History and Values, *International Journal of African Society, Cultures and Traditions*, Vol.13, No.1, pp.1-23

Abstract: *The study examined revitalizing African youth for unity and peace building: celebrating African culture, history and values. The study highlights the potential of African cultural revitalization to foster a sense of shared identity, pride and belonging for unity and peace building. Two research questions were raised and answered in the study. Survey design was adopted for this study. The population for this study comprised all African youth. The sample for this study was 1000 respondents. Stratified random sampling method was used to select youth while cluster sampling technique was used to select 5 countries in Africa in the study. The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled “Revitalizing African Youth for Unity and Peace-building Questionnaire (RAYUPQ). The questionnaire were administered using online platform such as Google Forms and Microsoft Forms. Descriptive statistics of simple percentage, mean score and standard deviation was used to answer research questions. Benchmark of 2.50 was established to accept any item with a mean rating of 2.50 or above as agreed while any item with a mean rating less than 2.50 was regarded as disagreed for research questions. It can be concluded that revitalizing African youth for unity and peace building requires a multifaceted approach that celebrates African culture, history and values. By embracing their rich heritage, youth can develop a strong sense of identity, pride and belonging. This in turn can foster a culture of unity, tolerance and peaceful coexistence. It therefore recommended that government, traditional rulers and African leaders should integrate African culture history and values into educational curricula. Support youth-led initiatives. Foster regional collaboration. Promote cultural exchange.*

Keywords: unity, peace building, African culture, history, values

INTRODUCTION

African tradition is quite diverse, with over three,000 specific ethnic groups and languages spoken in the course of the continent. This demographic dividend offers a completely unique possibility for Africa to harness the energy, creativity and innovation of its youngsters to pressure cohesion and peace building, economic growth, social improvement and cultural revitalization (Mulugeta, 2018). The traditions and customs of African cultures have been shaped by records, religion, geography, and social systems. (Mungwa, & Kashaija, 2019). African culture has a rich and complicated records that has advanced through the years. The continent's numerous geographies, in addition to its interactions with other cultures thru exchange and colonization, has shaped the improvement of African cultural traditions.

In line with historian John Henrik Clarke, "African tradition become not static or frozen in time, but rather dynamic, creative and everconverting" (Clarke, 2021). The earliest proof of human civilization on the African continent dates returned to round 7,000 BCE, with the improvement of agriculture and the formation of settled groups. this period noticed the emergence of the primary African kingdoms, inclusive of Nubia and Kush, which were recognized for their advanced civilizations and creative achievements (Shillington, 2012). Nowadays, African tradition maintains to evolve and adapt to converting social and political situations. Many African nations are experiencing fast economic increase and urbanization, main to the emergence of recent cultural forms and expressions.

However, African cultural traditions preserve to play an important role in shaping the continent's identity and selling harmony and variety. similarly to the historical and social factors which have inspired the evolution of African way of life, there are also several key cultural elements that have remained primary to African identity. those encompass oral traditions, including storytelling, song, and dance, that have been used for centuries to hold and transmit cultural understanding and values (Ogude, 2010). Family and community systems are also critical features of African tradition, with prolonged own family networks supplying support and guidance for people at some point of their lives (Mbiti, 2010).

African culture has significant relevance in cutting-edge society, specifically in promoting peace and unity. consistent with Murove and Njogu (2019), conventional African values, ideals, and practices offer important sources for building bridges among unique groups and promoting social concord. African tradition is the cost positioned on communalism, which emphasizes the significance of interdependence and cooperation in network lifestyles. This fee may be seen in lots of traditional practices inclusive of communal paintings and shared duty for community well-being. by means of selling this cost, African lifestyle can help to build stronger communities and promote social harmony.

Statement to the Problem

The lack of cultural awareness, education and empowerment among African youth has led to a disconnection from their cultural heritage, values and history resulting in a sense of identity loss, cultural erosion and social disintegration. Furthermore, this disconnection has contributed to the prevalence of social conflict, ethnic tension and underdevelopment in many African countries. Therefore, it is essential to revitalize African youth by promoting cultural awareness, education, celebrate African culture, history and values. This will enable them to develop a strong sense of identity, cultural pride and social responsibility which are critical for promoting unity, peace building and sustainable development in Africa.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised in the study:

1. What are the importance of African culture, history and values in revitalizing youth for unity and peace building
2. What are the strategies to improve African culture, history and values in revitalizing youth for unity and peace building

REVIEW

African culture, history and values in revitalizing youth for unity and peace building

African culture, history and values are a set of methods, practices, and customs that have been used by African societies for centuries to resolve conflicts, unity and peace building within and between communities. These mechanisms are deeply rooted in African culture and reflect the continent's diverse history and traditions. The use of African culture, history and values has been recognized as a valuable tool for promoting peace and unity in African societies, particularly in the context of post-conflict reconstruction and development (Afolayan & Ololajulo, 2020).

African culture, values, beliefs, and practices have played a significant role in promoting peace and unity on the continent. One key value that underlies many African cultures is the concept of Ubuntu, which emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals and communities (Tutu, 2010). This value promotes a sense of collective responsibility for the well-being of all members of society and encourages individuals to work together to solve problems and promote social harmony (Murove, 2013). Another important traditional African belief that promotes peace and unity is the emphasis on consensus-building and conflict resolution through dialogue (Mbiti, 2011). African societies traditionally use methods such as mediation, negotiation, and reconciliation to resolve conflicts and promote understanding between individuals and communities (Obadina, 2014).

Traditional African practices such as music, dance, and storytelling also play an important role in promoting peace and unity. These practices are often used to convey cultural values, history, and

social messages, and can bring people from diverse backgrounds together to celebrate shared cultural experiences (Ogude, 2010). Additionally, traditional religious practices, such as ancestor veneration, can also serve as a unifying force, as they promote a sense of connection between individuals and their ancestral heritage (Awolalu, 2016). According to Afolayan & Ololajulo (2020) African culture, history, and values that can promote unity and peace building:

Cultural Values

1. Ubuntu: A philosophy emphasizing interconnectedness, community, and mutual support.
2. Hospitality: Welcoming strangers and treating them with respect and kindness.
3. Respect for Elders: Valuing wisdom, experience, and traditional knowledge.
4. Community over Individualism: Prioritizing collective well-being over personal interests.
5. Reconciliation and Forgiveness: Emphasizing healing and moving forward after conflicts.

Historical Examples

1. Ancient African Empires: The Mali, Songhai, and Ghana empires demonstrated peaceful coexistence and cultural exchange.
2. Pan-African Movement: A historical movement promoting unity, solidarity, and liberation among African people.
3. African Traditional Conflict Resolution: Methods like mediation, arbitration, and restorative justice have been used to resolve conflicts peacefully.

Traditional Practices

1. Council of Elders: A gathering of respected community leaders to resolve disputes and make decisions.
2. Community Dialogue: Open discussions to address issues, promote understanding, and build consensus.
3. Rituals and Ceremonies: Traditional practices that foster unity, reconciliation, and healing.
4. Storytelling: Sharing stories to preserve history, promote cultural heritage, and teach valuable lessons.

Values for Unity and Peace Building

1. Interconnectedness: Recognizing the shared humanity and interconnectedness of all Africans.
2. Mutual Respect: Valuing diversity and promoting respect for different cultures, traditions, and beliefs.
3. Empathy and Compassion: Encouraging understanding, kindness, and concern for the well-being of others.
4. Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Fostering a culture of forgiveness, healing, and moving forward after conflicts.

5. Collective Responsibility: Encouraging individuals to take responsibility for promoting peace, unity, and development in their communities.

The importance of African Culture, History and Values in Peace Building

African culture plays a significant role in peace-building efforts on the continent. According to Mulenga and Mwape (2020) African culture has the potential to promote peaceful coexistence among different ethnic groups, foster reconciliation, and contribute to conflict resolution. The richness of African culture lies in its diversity, which has been a source of unity and strength in the continent for centuries. One way African culture promotes peace-building is through the use of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms such as mediation and reconciliation processes. These mechanisms draw from indigenous knowledge systems, values, and norms that have been passed down through generations. As stated by Adebayo (2019), these traditional mechanisms have proven effective in resolving conflicts and promoting peace in various African communities.

Another way African culture contributes to peace-building is through its emphasis on the collective over the individual. The concept of Ubuntu, which translates to "I am because we are," highlights the interconnectedness of individuals and the importance of community in African societies. This value system encourages cooperation, empathy, and mutual respect, all of which are essential for peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution. In the same vein, African culture promotes peace-building is through its traditional practices of forgiveness and reconciliation. In many African cultures, forgiveness is not just an individual act, but also a communal one. Communities come together to facilitate the process of reconciliation between perpetrators and victims, as well as to restore relationships that have been broken by conflict. As noted by Adegbite and Adediji (2018) this approach to forgiveness and reconciliation can contribute to sustainable peace and the restoration of social cohesion in conflict-affected communities.

History telling for Unity and Peace building

Mulenga and Mwape (2020) outline ways History telling can promote unity and peace building in Africa such as:

Shared Heritage Narratives

1. Highlighting shared experiences: Emphasize common historical events, cultural traditions, and values that unite people across different communities.
2. Celebrating diverse contributions: Acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of diverse groups to the shared heritage.

Inclusive and Diverse Storytelling

1. Incorporating diverse perspectives: Include stories and experiences from diverse communities, promoting a more nuanced understanding of history.
2. Challenging dominant narratives: Encourage critical thinking by presenting alternative viewpoints and challenging dominant historical narratives.

Reconciliation and Healing

1. Truth-telling and accountability: Encourage open discussions about past conflicts, injustices, and human rights abuses to promote healing and accountability.
2. Acknowledging historical injustices: Recognize and acknowledge historical injustices, promoting a sense of responsibility and remorse.

Strategies to improve African culture, history and values in revitalizing youth for unity and peace building

African culture, history and values can play a role in promoting peace and unity beyond the continent. As noted by Abubakar (2019) the African diaspora has a rich cultural heritage that can be leveraged to promote peace and unity around the world. By sharing and celebrating their cultural traditions, members of the African diaspora can build bridges and foster understanding with other communities. Incorporate inclusive and diverse historical narratives into educational curricula, promoting empathy and understanding. Organize public awareness campaigns, exhibitions, and events to promote historical awareness and understanding. Afolayan & Ololajulo (2020) noted that one way to improve African culture, history and values is to support community-led history initiatives, promoting community engagement and ownership. Facilitate dialogue between people of different ages and backgrounds, promoting knowledge sharing and wisdom transfer.

Adegbite and Adediji (2018) organize cultural exchange programs, festivals, and events to celebrate shared humanity and promote cross-cultural understanding. Encourage collaborative research between historians, communities, and institutions, promoting a more nuanced understanding of history. Obadina (2014) highlighted ways to improve African culture, history and values in revitalizing youth for unity and peace building as follows:

1. Integrate African history and culture into school curricula: Ensure accurate and comprehensive representation of Africa's rich heritage.
2. Develop cultural exchange programs: Encourage people-to-people exchanges between African countries and cultures.
3. Create public awareness campaigns: Promote African values, culture, and history through media, arts, and community events.
4. Establish cultural centers and museums: Showcase African art, history, and culture.
5. Support traditional arts and crafts: Encourage and promote African artisans and their work.
6. Preserve historical sites and monuments: Protect and restore Africa's cultural heritage sites.
7. Foster community dialogue and engagement: Encourage open discussions on cultural values, history, and unity.
8. Empower local communities to preserve their culture: Support community-led initiatives to preserve and promote their cultural heritage.
9. Promote cultural festivals and celebrations: Encourage the celebration of African cultural festivals and traditions.
10. Promote visionary leadership: Encourage leaders to prioritize unity, peace, and cultural preservation.

11. Foster good governance and accountability: Ensure transparent and accountable governance to promote peace and stability.
12. Support regional and continental integration: Encourage cooperation and collaboration among African countries.

METHODOLOGY

Design

Survey design was adopted for this study. The researcher used survey design as an appropriate design because information was obtained on revitalizing African youth for unity and peace building: celebrating African Culture, History and Values

Population

The population for this study comprised all African youth.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for this study was 1000 respondents. Stratified random sampling method was used to select youth while cluster sampling technique was used to select 5 countries in Africa in the study.

Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled “Revitalizing African Youth for Unity and Peace-building Questionnaire (RAYUPQ). The instrument is divided into part A and B. Part A is concerned with personal information about the respondents. Part B solicits responses on all the research questions. Each item was anchored on a four rating scale of: Strongly Agree (SA), Agreed (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with a corresponding nominal value of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

Method of Data Collection

The instrument was administered by the researcher and two research assistants who are vast with online survey forms. The questionnaire were administered using online platform such as Google Forms and Microsoft Forms.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics of simple percentage, mean score and standard deviation was used to answer research questions. Benchmark of 2.50 was established to accept any item with a mean rating of 2.50 or above as agreed while any item with a mean rating less than 2.50 was regarded as disagreed for research questions.

Table 1: Responses to the importance of African culture, history and values in revitalizing youth for unity and peace building

| S/N | Items | SA | A | D | SD | STD | Mean |
|-----|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------|------|
| 1. | Welcoming strangers and treating them with respect and kindness | 291 29.1% | 286 28.6% | 193 19.3% | 230 23% | 2.98 | .82 |
| 2. | Respect for Elders i.e valuing wisdom, experience, and traditional knowledge | 402 40.2% | 320 32% | 101 10.1% | 177 17.1% | 3.16 | .74 |
| 3. | A gathering of respected community leaders to resolve disputes and make decisions. | 214 21.4% | 445 44.5% | 52 5.2% | 289 28.9% | 2.96 | .90 |
| 4. | Sharing stories to preserve history, promote cultural heritage, and teach valuable lessons. | 131 13.1% | 400 40% | 366 36% | 109 10.9% | 2.94 | .89 |
| 5. | Encouraging individuals to take responsibility for promoting peace, unity, and development in their communities. | 527 52.7% | 76 7.6% | 306 30.6% | 91 9.1% | 2.78 | .79 |

From table 1, respondents agreed on all items on the importance of African culture, history and values in revitalizing youth for unity and peace building.

Table 2: Responses to Strategies to improve African culture, history and values in revitalizing youth for unity and peace building

| S/N | Items | SA | A | D | SD | STD | Mean |
|-----|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------|------|
| 1. | Integrate African history and culture into school curricula. | 250 25% | 250 25% | 200 20% | 300 30% | 3.24 | .77 |
| 2. | Encourage people-to-people exchanges between African countries and cultures. | 333 33.3% | 196 19.6 | 256 25.6% | 215 21.5% | 2.92 | .78 |
| 3. | Promote African values, culture, and history through media, arts, and community events. | 317 31.7% | 210 21% | 123 12.3% | 350 35% | 2.94 | .84 |
| 4. | Showcase African art, history, and culture. | 260 26% | 95 9.5% | 201 20.1% | 444 44.4% | 3.02 | .84 |
| 5. | Encourage the celebration of African cultural festivals and traditions. | 291 29.1% | 286 28.6% | 222 22.2% | 201 20.1% | 2.88 | .77 |

From table 2, respondents agreed on all items on the strategies to improve African culture, history and values in revitalizing youth for unity and peace building.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The outcome of the analysis showed the importance of African culture, history and values in revitalizing youth for unity and peace building. This is in line with Mulenga and Mwape (2020) African culture has the potential to promote peaceful coexistence among different ethnic groups, foster reconciliation, and contribute to conflict resolution. The richness of African culture lies in its diversity, which has been a source of unity and strength in the continent for centuries. One way African culture promotes peace-building is through the use of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms such as mediation and reconciliation processes. These mechanisms draw from indigenous knowledge systems, values, and norms that have been passed down through generations.

It also revealed strategies to improve African culture, history and values in revitalizing youth for unity and peace building. This is in line with Obadina (2014) & Adegbite and Adediji (2018) who posit that organize cultural exchange programs, festivals, and events to celebrate shared humanity and promote cross-cultural understanding. Encourage collaborative research between historians, communities, and institutions, promoting a more nuanced understanding of history. Integrate African history and culture into school curricula. Encourage people-to-people exchanges between African countries and cultures. Promote African values, culture, and history through media, arts, and community events.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that revitalizing African youth for unity and peace building requires a multifaceted approach that celebrates African culture, history and values. By embracing their rich heritage, youth can develop a strong sense of identity, pride and belonging. This in turn can foster a culture of unity, tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

Recommendations

It therefore recommended that government, traditional rulers and African leaders should integrate African culture history and values into educational curricula. Support youth-led initiatives. Foster regional collaboration. Promote cultural exchange.

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Brief Academic Biography of the Author

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