

## ANALYZING SOURCES OF INSTABILITY IN AFRICA: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

This journal article sought to explore and analyze the various factors contributing to instability in Africa. It delves into the political, economic, and social dimensions, aiming to identify key players and their roles in perpetuating instability on the continent. The study employed a mixed paradigm and descriptive survey design that sampled Institutions of higher learning, Government ministries and Non-Governmental Organizations and interviewed university lecturers, university students and NGO members. Data was obtained from respondents by means of interviews, questionnaires and project observation schedules. The sample consisted of two hundred respondents. Frequency, percentages, tables, graphs and pie-charts were used to analyze the quantitative and qualitative data obtained. Data was then analyzed manually in some cases and also, a combination of software MS Access and MS Excel. The findings revealed that peace and conflict in Africa is a multifaceted and factors of instability in Africa often intersect and reinforce each other, creating complex and interconnected challenges and the study recommended that recommendations on solutions for addressing instability in Africa should be tailored to the specific context of each African country, as the root causes of instability can vary widely but a collaborative and adaptive approach involving governments, civil society, regional organizations, and the international community is necessary for sustainable solutions.

**Keywords:** Africa, Colonialism, Corruption, Economic Challenges, Ethnic Tensions, And Instability.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Africa has a complex history of conflicts that spans across centuries and is shaped by a variety of factors, including colonialism, ethnic and tribal tensions, economic disparities, and political instability. A broad overview of the historical context of conflicts in Africa dated from pre-colonial era (Delmas & Nigel, 2011). Africa is incredibly diverse with numerous ethnic groups, each having its own cultural and historical identity. Interactions among these groups sometimes led to conflicts over resources, territory, or differences in belief systems. tribal and ethnic dynamics in Africa. In addition, Africa is an incredibly diverse continent with a rich tapestry of tribal and ethnic groups. The dynamics of these groups have shaped the social, political, and cultural landscape of the continent. It's important to note that Africa is home to over 3,000 distinct ethnic groups, each with its own language, customs, and traditions (Hogan, 2000).

Africa is incredibly diverse in terms of ethnic groups. Ethnic diversity is the existence of people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds or identities. Diversity is about what makes each of us unique and includes our backgrounds, personality, life experiences and beliefs, all of the things that make us who we are (Chitondo & Chanda, 2023). Some of the largest ethnic groups include the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo in West Africa, the Zulu and Xhosa in Southern Africa, the Amhara and Oromo in East Africa, and the Berber and Tuareg in North Africa. Each ethnic group has its own cultural practices, languages, and belief systems. This diversity is reflected in art, music, dance, clothing, and religious practices. Nevertheless, tribalism, which refers to strong loyalty to one's ethnic group, has been both a unifying and divisive force in African societies (Tarling, 2003). It can contribute to a sense of identity and belonging, but it has also been a source of conflict, especially in the context of politics.

More so, post-colonial Africa has seen the impact of tribal and ethnic dynamics on politics. In some cases, political power struggles have been along ethnic lines, leading to tensions and conflicts (Das, 2011). The drawing of national borders during the colonial era often did not align with ethnic boundaries, contributing to some of these challenges. On the other hand, some conflicts in Africa have been fueled by ethnic tensions. Examples include the ethnic conflict in Rwanda between the Hutu and Tutsi, the Darfur conflict in Sudan, and the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, which has ethnic and religious dimensions.

Urbanization and globalization have led to increased interaction between different ethnic groups. In urban areas, people from various ethnic backgrounds often live and work together, leading to cultural exchange and sometimes the blending of traditions. Hence, balancing ethnic identity with national identity is an ongoing challenge in many African countries. Some governments promote a national identity to foster unity, while others grapple with the complexities of managing diverse ethnic groups within their borders (Karsh, 2006). Competition for land and resources can be influenced by ethnic dynamics, especially in rural areas where communities rely heavily on agriculture and pastoralism. Nevertheless, understanding tribal and ethnic dynamics in Africa requires recognizing the complexity and fluidity of these identities. While these dynamics can present challenges, they also contribute to the rich cultural heritage and diversity that define the continent. Efforts to promote inclusivity, tolerance, and equitable representation are crucial for fostering stability and development in the region.

The impact of French colonialism in Africa on political structures in the region has been profound and has left lasting legacies that continue to shape the political landscape. French colonial rule in Africa occurred from the 19th century until the mid-20th century, and its effects are evident in various aspects of political, social, and economic life (Chitondo & Chanda, 2023). The "Scramble for Africa" in the late 19th century resulted in the colonization of the continent by European powers. Arbitrary borders were drawn without regard for existing ethnic or tribal divisions, often leading to tension and conflict. Colonialism had a profound and lasting impact on the existing ethnic and tribal divisions in Africa (Bessel, Nicholas & Jane, 2010). The continent's diverse societies and cultures were significantly altered as European powers scrambled to colonize and exploit African resources during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some key ways in which colonialism affected ethnic and tribal dynamics in Africa include artificial borders. European colonial powers often drew arbitrary borders without regard for pre-existing ethnic or tribal boundaries. This resulted in the creation of artificial states that encompassed multiple ethnic groups, sometimes with historical tensions or conflicts. The arbitrary nature of these borders contributed to post-colonial political and social challenges. In addition, colonial administrations frequently favored certain ethnic or tribal groups over others for administrative or economic reasons (Hogan, 2000). This preferential treatment could exacerbate existing tensions or create new divisions among the indigenous peoples. In some cases, colonial powers appointed leaders from specific ethnic groups, which could lead to power imbalances and ethnic favoritism.

Forced labor and economic exploitation was another key factor since the economic exploitation of Africa during the colonial period often involved the forced labor of local populations. This exploitation did not always respect existing tribal or ethnic structures and, in some cases, led to the disruption of traditional economic systems. This economic exploitation could deepen existing inequalities and contribute to inter-group tensions (Burbank & Frederick, 2010). Also, European colonial powers introduced new political systems that often marginalized traditional tribal structures. Indigenous systems of governance were replaced with Western-style administrative frameworks, further diminishing the authority of traditional leaders and altering power dynamics among different ethnic groups. However, the imposition of European culture, languages, and religions had a significant impact on the cultural identities of indigenous peoples. This cultural interference sometimes led to a loss of traditional practices and values, contributing to a sense of alienation and identity crises within ethnic and tribal communities (Vansina, 2010). The "divide and rule" strategy employed by colonial powers involved playing different ethnic or tribal groups against each other to maintain control. This strategy sowed seeds of distrust and hostility among communities, and these tensions often persisted long after independence.

During the Post-colonial era in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, we can as well trace sources of Instability in Africa. Many African nations gained independence in the mid-20th century, but the process was often tumultuous. The struggles for independence sometimes involved violent conflicts, and newly formed states inherited borders

that did not necessarily align with the ethnic or tribal distributions (Short, 2012). Arbitrary borders have often resulted in multi-ethnic nations where groups with historical tensions coexist within the same political entity. Also, competition for scarce resources, such as water and arable land, has fueled conflicts, particularly in regions susceptible to drought and desertification. Rich in natural resources, Africa has often been a target for exploitation. Control over resources, particularly oil and minerals, has been a source of conflict. Disparities in wealth distribution have contributed to social unrest and conflicts, with marginalized communities seeking redress for economic grievances (Price, 2008). Some African countries have experienced prolonged periods of authoritarian rule, contributing to political instability and popular discontent. In some cases, states have collapsed or failed to provide essential services, leading to power vacuums and the rise of non-state actors.

The post-Cold War era, which roughly spans from the early 1990s to the present, has had complex and multifaceted effects on humanitarian crises in Africa. Here are some key aspects to consider. During the Cold War, African countries became battlegrounds for ideological struggles between the United States and the Soviet Union. This led to proxy wars, arms proliferation, and support for various regimes, contributing to instability (Reinhard & Kate, 2011). However, the end of the Cold War led to a decline in proxy wars fueled by superpower rivalry. However, this did not necessarily translate into a reduction in conflict within African countries. Many nations experienced internal strife and civil wars due to factors such as ethnic tensions, political instability, and economic inequality. The post-Cold War era also, witnessed the collapse of some African states and the emergence of weak governance structures. This created environments conducive to conflict, human rights abuses, and humanitarian crises. In addition, the economic reforms imposed by international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, sometimes led to austerity measures and economic hardships in African countries. This, in turn, contributed to social unrest and humanitarian challenges (Butlin, 2009).

Internal displacement and refugee crises became more pronounced due to conflicts and instability. Millions of people were forced to flee their homes, leading to humanitarian challenges related to shelter, food, and healthcare. The international community's response to crises in Africa often involved humanitarian aid. However, dependence on external aid also raised concerns about sustainability and long-term development. Moreover, the post-Cold War era saw the devastating spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa, posing significant health challenges and overwhelming healthcare systems (Armitage, 2009). Also, control over valuable resources, such as oil and minerals, became a driver of conflicts. The struggle for control over these resources exacerbated humanitarian challenges and fueled violence. While the end of the Cold War reduced the influence of external superpowers in African conflicts, it did not necessarily lead to a decline in humanitarian crises. The factors contributing to crises in Africa are complex and interconnected, involving internal governance issues, economic challenges, and regional dynamics (Thomas, 2006). The post-Cold War era has witnessed both positive efforts toward conflict resolution and humanitarian assistance, as well as challenges and complexities in addressing the root causes of crises. statement of the problem on sources of instability in Africa

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Africa, despite its rich cultural diversity and vast economic potential, continues to grapple with multifaceted challenges that contribute to persistent instability across the continent. Sub-Saharan Africa for example, has witnessed a recurring pattern of political instability characterized by coups, political violence, and weak governance structures. Economic challenges, including high levels of poverty, unemployment, and income inequality, pose a significant threat to stability and the prevalence of armed conflicts, both within and between countries, continues to be a major source of instability in Africa. Widespread corruption and governance deficits undermine state institutions, erode public trust, and contribute to a cycle of instability. Investigating the links between corruption, weak governance, and instability is essential for proposing targeted interventions. Ethnic and religious tensions on the other hand have played a role in fueling conflicts across the continent. Africa's rich natural resources, while holding economic potential, have often become sources of contention and external actors, including global powers and multinational corporations, play a role in shaping the political and economic landscape of Africa. Analyzing the impact of external influences and geostrategic interests on regional stability is vital for understanding the broader context of instability. By addressing these key sources of

instability, this study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing Africa and provide insights that can inform policy recommendations and interventions aimed at fostering sustainable development and lasting peace across the continent.

### 1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore and analyze the various factors contributing to instability in Africa. It delves into the political, economic, and social dimensions, aiming to identify key players and their roles in perpetuating instability on the continent.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

- i. To explore various factors contributing to instability in Africa.
- ii. To identify key players and their role in perpetuating instability in Africa.
- iii. To analyze solutions for addressing instability in Africa.

### 1.4 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the Peace and Conflict Resolution theory coined by Johan Galtung half in 1969 when he presented his theory “the Conflict Triangle”, a framework used in the study of peace and conflict and his basic point was that peace is a relation between two or more parties and that the parties may be inside a person, a state or nation, a region or civilization, pulling indifferent directions. Hence, peace is not a property of one party alone, but a property of the relation between parties. The Conflict theory looks at conflict analysis and resolution, identifies and analyses violent and non-violent behaviors as well as structural mechanisms attending conflicts including social conflicts, with a view towards understanding those processes which lead to more desirable conditions for development, good governance, and social progress, progress (Söderberg, 2019) in which the Conflict resolution theory guides the informal or formal process that two or more parties use to find a peaceful solution to their dispute.

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the findings of the study would be of help to all the stake holders interested in peaceful conflict resolutions in Africa. It would benefit the United Nations, the African Union, the current governments in power, opposition leaders, intellectuals and Non-Governmental Organizations in helping governments to continuously reviewing the peaceful resolution processes and programs in order to enhance human development and placement, organize political and economic landscapes for national development and come up with appropriate interventions in order to revamp the economies of Africa. The policy makers would benefit as the study would help them modify as well as build strong governance structures and political stability so as to revamp political and economic systems and make them more relevant to national needs. The findings would also help politicians and government officials in understanding the effectiveness of efforts in achieving long-lasting peace and stability and identifying best practices for peacebuilding and conflict resolution, exploring the role of identity-based tensions in conflict and finding ways to promote tolerance and social cohesion, identifying also the ultimate problem which lies in sustainable strategies for achieving lasting peace in Africa, which not only involve ending armed conflict but also addressing the underlying causes and fostering conditions for development, good governance, and social progress as well as create favorable local policies for placement of human resource in government and private sector, strengthen legislature, executive and judicial systems so as to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in governance.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Political Factors Contributing to Conflicts in Africa

What is the role of political instability, corruption, and governance issues in certain African countries? Political instability, corruption, and governance issues play significant roles in shaping the socio-economic and political landscape of many African countries. While it's important to note that Africa is diverse, and each country has its unique context, some common trends and impacts can be identified such as economic impact on investment and development because political instability and governance issues can deter foreign investment and hinder economic development as investors often seek stable environments to minimize risks (Gilmartin,2009). Corruption can lead to the mismanagement of natural resources, hindering economic growth and exacerbating poverty as these, in the process, brings about social impact on citizens, more especially the vulnerable in society

due to political instability and corruption which can contribute to widespread poverty and increased income inequality, as resources may be disproportionately distributed (Tonio,2010). On the whole, weak governance can result in inadequate public services, such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure, negatively impacting the quality of life for citizens.

In Africa, political instability can lead to civil unrest, protests, and even conflict. This can further destabilize the political situation and have long-term consequences for the country. Chanda (2023) say that conflict refers to misunderstanding or disagreements between two or more people. Whenever two individuals opine in different ways, a conflict arises. Political instability can lead to displacement, food insecurity, and a lack of access to basic needs. humanitarian crises, such as stunted development as persistent political instability and governance challenges can hinder long-term development, making it difficult for countries to break out of cycles of poverty and instability. Also, political instability and corruption may drive skilled professionals and intellectuals out of the country, contributing to a "brain drain" that further hampers development (Martina, 2011). On the other hand, Corruption erodes trust in political institutions and leaders, leading to a lack of legitimacy. This can undermine the effectiveness of governance structures. Further, corruption can permeate governmental institutions, weakening their ability to function effectively and eroding public trust. Weak governance often results in a lack of adherence to the rule of law, leading to a situation where the powerful act with impunity, further perpetuating corruption. Political instability and governance issues can strain diplomatic relations with other countries. International actors may be hesitant to engage in partnerships with countries facing such challenges. However, addressing these challenges often requires a comprehensive approach involving political reforms, anti-corruption measures, and efforts to strengthen governance institutions (Daneel & Dana, 2011). International cooperation and support can also play a crucial role in assisting countries in overcoming these issues. It's important to recognize that the situation varies across countries, and solutions must be tailored to specific contexts.

Further, authoritarian regimes, coup d'états, and political power struggles have had significant and often detrimental impacts on the stability of many African countries. It's important to note that Africa is a diverse continent with a wide range of political, social, and economic situations, so the impact can vary from one country to another. However, some general trends and consequences associated with these issues include political instability brought about by Coup d'États as sudden changes in government through coups often lead to political instability. The uncertainty and power vacuums created by these events can result in a lack of governance, breakdown of law and order, and a general sense of insecurity (Schwaller, 2011). Economic Consequences is another brought about by resource mismanagement as authoritarian regimes and political power struggles often lead to the mismanagement of natural resources. The focus might be on consolidating power rather than implementing sound economic policies, which can hinder economic development. Authoritarian regimes are often associated with high levels of corruption. This can deter foreign investment, limit economic growth, and exacerbate social inequalities. Also, authoritarian regimes may suppress dissent through human rights abuses, censorship, and repression. This can lead to social unrest and negatively impact the well-being of citizens as well as to internal conflicts and displacement of populations, contributing to humanitarian crises (Walter, 2013).

Authoritarianism lead to regional instability bringing about spillover effects as the instability caused by authoritarian regimes or political power struggles in one country can have spillover effects on neighboring nations. This can include refugee flows, cross-border conflicts, and the spread of extremist ideologies. Coup d'États and authoritarian rule often undermine democratic institutions. The erosion of democratic principles can have long-lasting effects on the development of stable governance structures. Authoritarian regimes may prioritize military spending or personal enrichment over investments in education and healthcare. This can hinder human development and long-term stability. Countries with authoritarian regimes or frequent political power struggles may face international isolation. This can limit access to foreign aid, trade opportunities, and diplomatic support. Political instability and authoritarian rule can have a generational impact, affecting the mindset and opportunities of younger populations (Moore & van Nierop,2017). Rebuilding trust in institutions and establishing stable governance may take years or even decades. Therefore, it is important to approach the analysis of these issues on a case-by-case basis, as the specific circumstances and histories of individual African

countries vary widely. Additionally, positive developments and efforts toward stability and democratization are also occurring across the continent.

## 2.2 Economic Factors Contributing to Conflicts in Africa

The connection between economic challenges, resource mismanagement, and instability in Africa is complex and multifaceted, involving historical, political, social, and economic factors. Some key elements to consider include among others historical factors since many African countries have a history of colonization, where European powers exploited natural resources and established economic structures that were often extractive in nature. The legacy of colonialism has had long-lasting effects on the continent's economic and political systems. Some African countries heavily depend on natural resources (such as oil, minerals, and agricultural products) for their economic revenue (Ganesan, 2012). However, mismanagement of these resources, often characterized by corruption, lack of transparency, and poor governance, can lead to economic instability. In many cases, the benefits of resource wealth are not distributed equitably among the population. This can lead to social tensions and conflicts, contributing to instability. High levels of poverty and income inequality are prevalent in many African countries. This can result from a combination of factors, including weak economic infrastructure, lack of access to education and healthcare, and limited economic opportunities. Some if not most African nations face significant debt burdens, often due to loans taken for infrastructure development. Managing and repaying these debts can strain national economies, leading to economic challenges (Marsh, 2013).

In addition, weak governance, corruption, and lack of effective institutions can hinder economic development and exacerbate resource mismanagement (Chanda, 2023). These factors also contribute to political instability as citizens may lose trust in their governments. Several African countries have experienced armed conflicts and internal strife. These conflicts can disrupt economic activities, displace populations, and lead to the destruction of infrastructure, further exacerbating economic challenges. African economies are often vulnerable to global economic fluctuations, affecting commodity prices and trade (Holliday, 2012). External factors, such as changes in demand for natural resources, can impact the economic stability of African nations. Africa is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, which can affect agricultural productivity and exacerbate resource scarcity, leading to economic challenges. Rapid population growth can strain resources and infrastructure, making it challenging for governments to provide essential services and economic opportunities for all citizens. Therefore, the connection between economic challenges, resource mismanagement, and instability in Africa is deeply rooted in historical, political, social, and economic factors (William, 2016). Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive and sustainable strategies that involve good governance, inclusive economic policies, and efforts to promote social development. International cooperation and support can also play a crucial role in fostering stability and sustainable development in the region.

The impact of multinational corporations (MNCs) on economic dynamics in Africa is a complex and multifaceted issue. While MNCs can bring positive contributions to economic development, they can also pose challenges and risks. MNCs often bring foreign direct investment (FDI) into African countries, which can contribute to economic growth, infrastructure development, and job creation. MNCs may introduce advanced technologies and managerial practices that can enhance productivity and efficiency in local industries (Marsh, 2013). Also, access to global markets through MNCs can facilitate the export of goods and services from African countries, contributing to increased revenue and economic diversification. MNCs can create employment opportunities, helping to reduce unemployment rates and improve living standards and through training programs and skill development initiatives, MNCs can contribute to the enhancement of local human capital. MNCs may invest in infrastructure projects, such as roads, ports, and energy facilities, which can have positive spillover effects on the broader economy (UN, 2017).

As regards, challenges and risks, overreliance on a few key industries or MNCs can make African economies vulnerable to global economic fluctuations and changes in the business strategies of these corporations. There is also a risk that MNCs may engage in the extraction of natural resources without sufficient consideration for environmental sustainability or equitable distribution of benefits. Some MNCs engage in practices such as transfer pricing and tax avoidance, leading to revenue losses for host countries. MNCs may face criticism for their social and environmental practices, including issues such as labor exploitation, environmental

degradation, and inadequate corporate social responsibility McCann, 2013). Further, local communities may experience disruptions to their traditional ways of life due to the activities of MNCs, particularly in industries like mining and agriculture. The effectiveness of government policies and regulations in managing and guiding MNC activities plays a crucial role. Weak regulatory frameworks can lead to abuses and negative impacts. In addition, MNC activities may contribute to regional disparities, with some areas benefiting more than others, leading to uneven development. Hence, the impact of multinational corporations on economic dynamics in Africa is contingent on a variety of factors, including the regulatory environment, corporate practices, and the extent to which benefits are shared among various stakeholders (UN, 2016). Policymakers need to carefully balance the opportunities and risks associated with MNCs to ensure sustainable and inclusive economic development.

### 2.3 Social Factors Contributing to Conflicts in Africa

Ethnic and religious tensions have played a significant role in fostering instability in various parts of Africa. It's important to note that Africa is a diverse continent with numerous ethnic groups, languages, and religious affiliations, and the dynamics vary across regions. Some key factors contributing to instability include Colonial legacy as the arbitrary borders created by colonial powers often divided ethnic groups and forced disparate communities to coexist within the same borders (Tariq, 2012). This has led to tensions over resources, power, and representation. Ethnic and religious groups may compete for scarce resources, such as land, water, and economic opportunities. In regions with limited resources, competition can escalate into conflicts between different communities. Politicians may exploit ethnic and religious differences to gain support or divert attention from other issues. This manipulation can lead to the polarization of communities and exacerbate existing tensions. In some cases, political leaders emphasize ethnic or religious identities to consolidate power. This can lead to a sense of exclusion among certain groups, creating fertile ground for conflict. Also, ethnic and religious conflicts can result in the displacement of communities. The influx of refugees into neighboring regions can strain resources and contribute to further tensions (Hapkens, & Cain, 2011).

Further, lingering historical grievances, such as perceived injustices or conflicts, can fuel resentment between ethnic or religious groups. These grievances may be passed down through generations, perpetuating cycles of conflict. External actors, including neighboring countries or international powers, may exacerbate ethnic or religious tensions by supporting particular groups or interfering in local conflicts for geopolitical reasons. Economic disparities along ethnic or religious lines can contribute to feelings of marginalization and lead to social unrest. Lack of economic opportunities can be a driving force behind instability (Ness & Cope, 2015). Weak governance, corruption, and a lack of effective institutions can exacerbate ethnic and religious tensions. When people perceive that the government is unable or unwilling to address their concerns, they may turn to alternative means, including violence. Media, especially in the age of information, can play a role in shaping perceptions and exacerbating tensions. Biased reporting or the spread of misinformation can contribute to the escalation of conflicts. However, addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that involves promoting inclusive governance, addressing economic disparities, and fostering dialogue between different communities (Porter, 2016). International cooperation and support for conflict resolution efforts are also crucial in mitigating the impact of ethnic and religious tensions on stability in Africa.

The impact of demographic trends, youth unemployment, and social inequality on stability in Africa is a complex and interconnected issue. These factors can contribute to both positive and negative outcomes, influencing the overall stability and development of the continent. Africa has experienced rapid population growth, with a large proportion of its population being young. While a youthful population can contribute to economic growth and innovation, it also presents challenges such as increased demand for education, healthcare, and employment opportunities (Prustley, 2018). The trend of urbanization is significant in Africa, with more people moving to cities in search of better opportunities. Rapid urbanization can strain infrastructure, leading to issues such as inadequate housing, sanitation, and healthcare. High levels of youth unemployment can lead to economic strain as a large segment of the population remains underutilized. This can result in frustration, social unrest, and even political instability. Also, there may be a mismatch between the skills possessed by the youth and the skills demanded by the job market. This can contribute to prolonged periods of unemployment (Hugh, 2010).

Widening income gaps can lead to social unrest and dissatisfaction. When a significant portion of the population feels excluded from economic opportunities, it can contribute to instability. Disparities in access to education and healthcare can perpetuate social inequality. Lack of access to quality education and healthcare can limit opportunities for upward mobility, contributing to social tension. On the other hand, a large and discontented youth population can become a potent political force. If their grievances are not addressed, it may lead to protests, demonstrations, and political instability (Salhi, 2002). Governments facing high levels of unemployment and social inequality may struggle to maintain stability, especially if they fail to address the root causes of these issues. If properly harnessed, a youthful population can lead to a demographic dividend, where a large working-age population contributes to economic growth. Efforts to promote entrepreneurship among the youth can create opportunities for innovation and economic development. To address these challenges and promote stability, it is crucial for African nations to implement comprehensive policies that address youth unemployment, invest in education and skills development, tackle social inequality, and promote inclusive economic growth. International collaboration and support can also play a significant role in helping African nations navigate these complex issues (Bamford, 2010).

#### 2.4 Contemporary Challenges

The rise of extremist groups in Africa has indeed been a significant contributor to conflicts and instability across the continent. Several factors have played a role in the emergence and growth of these groups, and their activities have had far-reaching consequences for the affected regions. Some key factors and examples include among others political instability due to weak governance, corruption, and political instability in certain African countries have created environments conducive to the rise of extremist groups. These groups often exploit the power vacuums and grievances of marginalized populations (Charbonneau, 2008). Ethnic and Religious tensions is another as ethnic and religious divisions have been exploited by extremist groups to mobilize support. In some cases, these groups take advantage of existing tensions and conflicts between different ethnic or religious communities, exacerbating pre-existing fault lines. Economic factors also come into play as poverty, high unemployment rates, and economic inequality contribute to the vulnerability of certain populations to extremist ideologies (Crumley, 2009a). Lack of economic opportunities can make individuals more susceptible to recruitment by extremist groups promising financial incentives or an alternative to their current situation.

Some extremist groups in Africa have established transnational connections with other global terrorist organizations. These connections provide them with additional resources, training, and ideological support. Another factor is the widespread availability of arms in certain regions facilitates the activities of extremist groups. Access to weapons often comes from both internal and external sources, contributing to the intensity and duration of conflicts (Crumley, 2009b). In some cases, the collapse of state institutions and the existence of ungoverned spaces provide opportunities for extremist groups to establish bases and operate with relative impunity. None the less, ideological factors contribute significantly to instability in Africa since extremist ideologies, often rooted in radical interpretations of religion or political ideologies, attract individuals who may feel disenfranchised or who seek a sense of purpose and belonging (Howden, 2011).

Examples of Extremist Groups in Africa is Boko Haram (Nigeria). Boko Haram, founded in Nigeria, has been responsible for numerous attacks, kidnappings, and bombings. The group aims to establish an Islamic state and has expanded its activities to neighboring countries. The other is Al-Shabaab (Somalia). Al-Shabaab, based in Somalia, has conducted attacks in Somalia and neighboring countries. The group has affiliations with al-Qaeda and seeks to establish a strict form of Islamic law (Tull, 2006). Another is ISIS in Libya. The presence of ISIS-affiliated groups in Libya has contributed to the overall instability in the country. These groups have exploited the political vacuum and territorial disputes in post-Gaddafi Libya. However, efforts to address the challenges posed by extremist groups in Africa involve a combination of military, economic, and diplomatic measures (Williams, 2009). Regional cooperation, international assistance, and addressing root causes such as governance issues and economic inequality are crucial components of a comprehensive strategy to mitigate the impact of extremism on the continent.

#### 2.5 External Factors' Contributing to Conflicts in Africa:

The destabilization of Africa can be influenced by a variety of external factors, including the actions of foreign governments and international organizations. The historical legacy of colonialism has left lasting impacts on the



political, economic, and social structures of many African nations. Arbitrary borders, ethnic tensions, and resource exploitation during the colonial era have contributed to instability. Foreign interests, including multinational corporations and governments, may exploit Africa's natural resources, leading to economic imbalances and contributing to conflict (Crumley, 2010). The competition for control over valuable resources like oil, minerals, and land can exacerbate tensions within and between nations. The flow of weapons into Africa, often facilitated by foreign governments and arms dealers, usually escalate conflicts and contribute to the proliferation of armed groups. The availability of weapons can exacerbate existing tensions and make it more difficult to achieve stability. Some foreign governments may use African nations as proxies in geopolitical conflicts. This can involve supporting opposing factions in internal conflicts, leading to prolonged instability and violence. Also, foreign governments may interfere in the internal affairs of African nations, either overtly or covertly (Lavallee & Vicard, 2010). This interference can take the form of political manipulation, support for certain factions, or attempts to influence elections, contributing to political instability. Furthermore, some organizations or groups may indirectly fuel tensions so as to benefit from Africa's rich mineral resources. Hence, it may therefore be difficult to tell who is bringing instability to Africa as for example, in mid-October 2023, a UN drone was found in a village in the Democratic Republic of the Congo loaded with 900 pounds of pure gold, guns and parachutes. Questions may arise such as Why and how should such items be found in a UN drone? Who loaded those items there? and What was the motive?

Further, loans and economic agreements with foreign entities, including international financial institutions, often lead to unsustainable debt burdens for African countries. Economic pressures and structural adjustments imposed by external actors can contribute to social unrest and political instability. Global and regional terrorist organizations may exploit existing vulnerabilities in African nations, taking advantage of political instability, poverty, and ethnic tensions. Some foreign governments may inadvertently contribute to the rise of extremism through their policies and actions. The influence of international organizations in responding to humanitarian crises can have both positive and negative effects (Head, Mayer & Ries, 2010). While aid can alleviate suffering, the mismanagement or politicization of aid efforts can exacerbate existing challenges and contribute to instability. Environmental changes, often influenced by global factors, can have a significant impact on African nations. Droughts, floods, and other climate-related events can contribute to resource scarcity, displacement, and conflicts over land and water resources. Foreign powers may pursue their own strategic interests in Africa, leading to alliances and interventions that can either stabilize or destabilize regions. Competition for influence can intensify conflicts or contribute to regional tensions (Anderson, 2010). Nevertheless, it is essential to note that these factors often interact in complex ways, and the impact of external influences can vary across different African nations and regions. Addressing the root causes of instability requires a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of these dynamics.

Arms trade and illicit financial flows play significant roles in exacerbating conflicts in Africa. Some key points that highlight their impact include fueling armed conflicts. The influx of weapons through legal or illegal channels can escalate conflicts by providing warring factions with the means to sustain and intensify violence. This is particularly problematic in regions with existing political instability and ethnic tensions as the proceeds from illicit financial activities, such as corruption, money laundering, and illegal resource extraction, can fund armed groups. This financial support enables these groups to procure weapons, recruit fighters, and sustain their activities, prolonging conflicts (Das, 2011). The availability of weapons can undermine the stability of governments and contribute to political unrest. Governments may face challenges in maintaining control over their territories, especially if armed groups have access to sophisticated weaponry. On the other hand, corruption and embezzlement of public funds can weaken state institutions, erode governance structures, and contribute to political instability. This, in turn, creates an environment conducive to conflicts.

The proliferation of weapons in one conflict zone can spill over into neighboring regions, potentially dragging multiple countries into a conflict or exacerbating existing tensions. Illicit financial activities often transcend national borders, creating regional challenges. The movement of funds across borders can finance conflicts in multiple countries, making it difficult to address the root causes of instability. The increased availability of weapons contributes to a higher level of violence and can lead to widespread displacement of populations, refugee crises, and humanitarian emergencies (Delmas, 2011). Also, the diversion of funds from essential public

services, such as healthcare and education, towards illicit activities can have severe humanitarian consequences, exacerbating the impact of conflicts on vulnerable populations. Resources that could be directed towards development projects are often diverted to military expenditures, hindering economic growth and social progress. Money laundering and corruption divert funds away from development initiatives, perpetuating poverty and creating conditions that may contribute to the outbreak or continuation of conflicts. However, addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach, including international cooperation to regulate the arms trade, strengthen financial transparency, and promote good governance in African nations (Walter, 2013). Efforts to combat corruption, improve accountability, and support sustainable development are crucial components in mitigating the negative impact of arms trade and illicit financial flows on conflicts in Africa.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research design

The research design was descriptive survey with both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection in order to attain the comprehensive results (Musonda,2009). Qualitative methods were appropriate to this investigation as it produced detailed data from a small group of participants, while exploring feelings, impressions and judgments. On the other hand, quantitative method made the use of questionnaires, surveys and experiment to gather data that is revised and tabulated in numbers, which allows the data to be characterized by use of statistical analysis (Martyn, 2008).

#### 3.2 Research Sites

The study was carried out in four institutions of Government Ministries, Universities, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) offices from which respondents were also sampled.

#### 3.3 Population, Sample and Sampling procedure

The population for the study was purposefully drawn from the Lusaka province of Zambia where all the respondents are found. Purposive sampling procedure was used to select the institutions (3) while the simple random sampling procedure was used to select the University lecturers (50); five from each institution, University students (50); five from each institution, Senior Civil Servants (50); five from each Ministry and NGO executive members (50); four from each organization (Bickel, 2007). The sample size comprised of 200 respondents. Also, the primary data was complimented by the secondary data which was derived from government policy documents, ministerial reports and relevant literature on language use.

In the sampling of province and institutions, the study adopted the stratified cluster random sampling technique. Sampling of the province was done on the basis of concentration of respondents and institutions were then done zone by zone. Universities and other institutions were clustered by zones. Two zones were purposively selected based on the basis of concentration of respondents. The sampling was done at three levels: Sampling zones, universities and other institutions- level 1, Sampling University lecturers and Civil servants-level 2, Sampling NGO Executive members-level 3.

#### 3.4 Data Analysis

In this research, data was analyzed qualitatively as in-depth interviews, questionnaires and observation schedules were used as data collection instruments. Thematic approach was used, where data analysis started with the categorization of themes from the structured interviews, questionnaires. Charts and graphs were used to analyze data. The data gathered was analyzed according to the themes of the study and per the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the interview guide was analyzed manually and also, a combination of software MS Access, SPSS and MS Excel was used to analyze data. Analysis was mainly descriptive, that is, mean, median, mode, range, and standard deviation. Related statistics were applied where possible. Statistical testing took the form of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), correlation and regression both simple and multiple.

#### 3.5 Ethical Issues

The study avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. Alternatively, permission consents, assents were obtained from respondents involved in the research and the research topic was strategically selected to ensure that there was no harm whatsoever to the research respondents. In this research, the study was fully conscious of the need to abide by the ethical rule of respecting the privacy of individuals taking part in

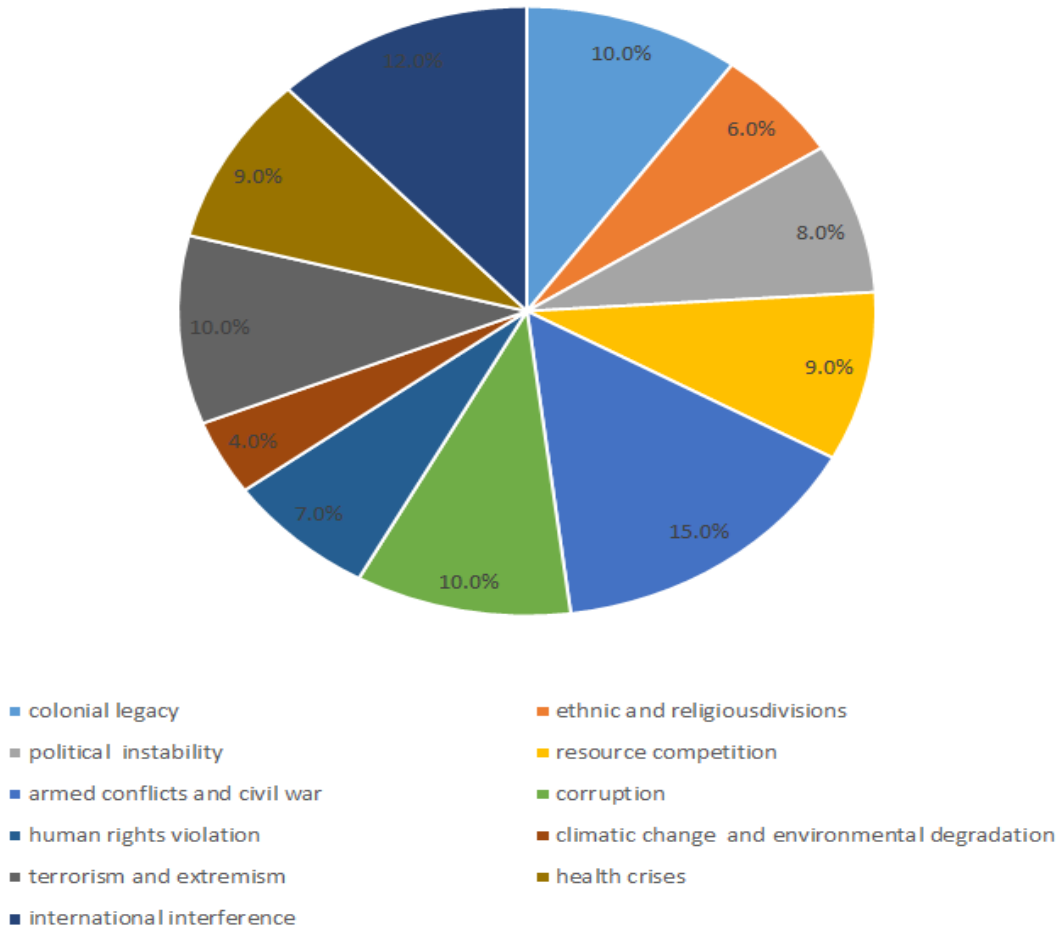
the research. In the same way, all the respondents of the research were to remain unidentified to the public as all their valuable views, opinions and perceptions were only known by the researchers for use only in the research and participant's identities will forever remain hidden. However, the identity of respondents was concealed in the article but for identification in the article, the fifty lecturers were allocated numbers 1 to 50, the fifty students were allocated ordinal numbers 1<sup>st</sup> to 50<sup>th</sup>, the fifty NGO members were allocated names of fifty Primary schools in Lusaka, the fifty Civil servants were allocated names of fifty secondary schools in Lusaka and Zones and institutions used pseudo names. The Researchers got permission from the Vice Chancellors to interview lecturers and students, from Permanent secretaries to interview senior civil servants in the Ministries and Executive officers to interview NGO members.

#### **IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

##### **4.1 Various Factors Contributing to Instability in Africa**

According to study findings, the factors contributing to instability in Africa are complex and multifaceted, often stemming from a combination of historical, political, economic, social, and environmental factors as illustrated in Figure 1 below. The study findings reviewed that factors contributing to instability in Africa are complex and multifaceted, often stemming from a combination of historical, political, economic, social, and environmental factors. Some key elements that contribute to instability in various regions of Africa include colonial legacy in which the arbitrary borders drawn by colonial powers divided ethnic groups and created artificial nations, leading to ethnic tensions and conflicts. The other key element reviewed was ethnic and religious divisions as Africa is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups and religions (Priestley, 2018). Hence, ethnic and religious tensions often lead to conflicts, as seen in cases like Rwanda, Sudan, and Nigeria. Political instability, brought about by weak governance, corruption, and autocratic rule contribute to political instability. Lack of political stability makes it difficult to implement effective policies and maintain social order. In addition, poverty, unemployment, and economic inequality contribute to social unrest. High levels of poverty and limited economic opportunities can lead to the rise of insurgent groups. Control over valuable resources, such as oil, diamonds, and minerals, can fuel conflicts and power struggles both within and between nations. Armed conflicts and civil wars is another key factor the study reviewed, many African countries have experienced civil wars and armed conflicts. These conflicts often result from a combination of political, economic, and social factors (Hapkins, 2016). Above all, corruption is a pervasive issue in many African countries. It undermines governance, erodes public trust, and exacerbates economic disparities.

Further, the study reviewed human rights violations as another key factor. Human rights abuses, including violence, forced displacement, and discrimination, contribute to social unrest and instability. Terrorism and Extremism is another key factor contributing to instability in Africa as some regions in Africa face threats from terrorist organizations and extremist groups. These groups exploit existing grievances and contribute to instability (Marsh, 2013). International interference: fuel instability as well since the involvement of external powers in African conflicts either exacerbates or mitigates instability, depending on the motives and actions of these external actors. Outbreaks of diseases, such as Ebola, HIV/AIDS, and more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic, strained healthcare systems and exacerbated existing challenges. Also, Climate change and environmental degradation is a factor in that climate change and environmental issues, such as droughts and desertification, can lead to resource scarcity, displacement of communities, and competition for limited resources (Holliday, 2012). However, the study reviewed that addressing instability in Africa requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach that takes into account the interconnected nature of these factors. International collaboration, good governance, economic development, and conflict resolution efforts are crucial for fostering stability on the continent.



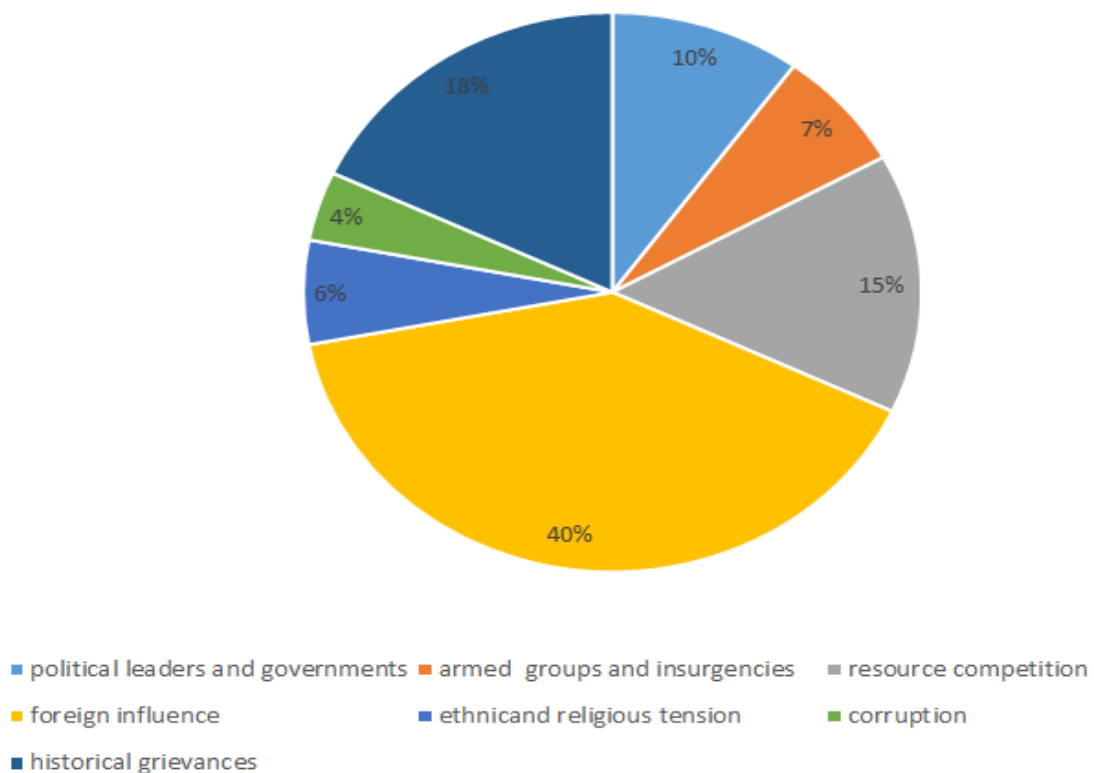
**Figure 1:** Showing Distribution of Various Factors Contributing to Instability in Africa

#### 4.2 Key Players and their Role in Perpetuating Instability in Africa

According to study findings, attributing instability in Africa to specific individuals or groups is complex, as the causes of instability are multifaceted and often rooted in historical, political, economic, and social factors. Additionally, the situation in Africa is dynamic, and key players may change over time. However, some factors and actors that have been associated with contributing to instability in parts of Africa include foreign influence at 40%, historical grievances at 18%, resource competition at 15%, political leaders and governments at 10%, armed groups and insurgencies at 7%, ethnic and religious tensions at 6% and corruption at 4% as illustrated in Figure 2 below. The study findings reviewed that attributing instability in Africa to specific individuals or groups is complex, as the causes of instability are multifaceted and often rooted in historical, political, economic, and social factors. Additionally, the situation in Africa is dynamic, and key players may change over time. However, some factors and actors that have been associated with contributing to instability in parts of Africa include foreign influence since external actors, including foreign governments and multinational corporations, can sometimes play a role in perpetuating instability by supporting certain governments or groups for strategic or economic interests (Moore & van Nierop, 2017). Historical grievances were reviewed as lingering historical grievances, such as those related to colonialism and post-colonial power struggles, can contribute to ongoing instability. Certain groups of people bring out the wrong or hard ship suffered in the past, these brings about conflicts and have negative impact on development. Resource Competition was also reviewed as the competition for control over valuable resources, such as oil, diamonds, and minerals, has fueled conflicts in several African countries. This struggle for resources can lead to violence and instability (Marsh, 2013).

Further, the study reviewed that political leaders and governments is a key player in perpetuating violence in Africa because some political leaders have been accused of perpetuating instability through corrupt practices, human rights abuses, and authoritarian rule. This can lead to social unrest and resistance movements as long-

standing political conflicts and power struggles within and between governments can contribute to instability. Armed groups and insurgencies: are also key players in that various armed groups and insurgencies, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, al-Shabaab in Somalia, and rebel groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo, have been responsible for violence, displacement, and insecurity in their respective regions (Walter, 2013). Ethnic and religious tensions play a role in fueling instability in Africa as deep-seated ethnic and religious tensions have contributed to conflicts in various African countries. Political manipulation of these divisions can exacerbate instability. Also, corruption play a role since corruption at various levels of government can weaken institutions and lead to economic disparities, fostering an environment conducive to instability. However, it is crucial to recognize that the situation in Africa is diverse, and generalizations may oversimplify the complex realities on the continent (Delmas, 2011). Moreover, progress and positive developments are also occurring, with many African countries working towards stability, economic growth, and improved governance.



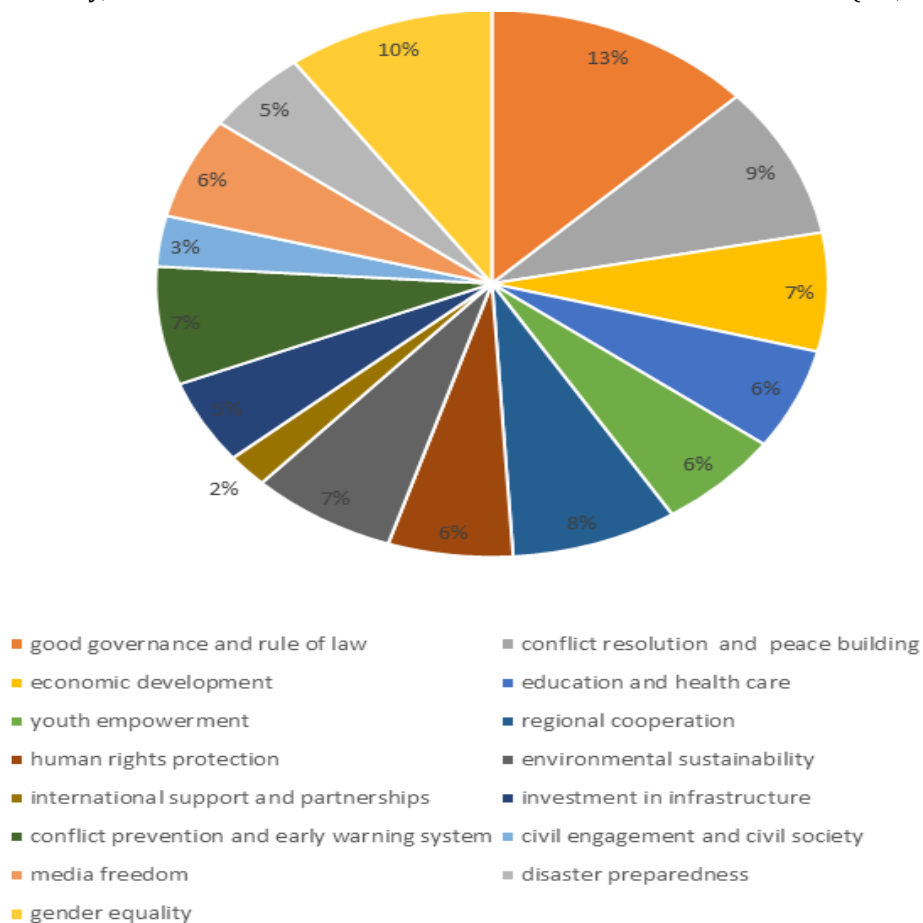
**Figure 2:** Showing Distribution of Key Players and their Role in Perpetuating Instability in Africa

### 4.3 Solutions for Addressing Instability in Africa

According to study findings, addressing instability in Africa requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that takes into account the complex and interconnected factors contributing to the challenges faced by the continent as illustrated in Figure 3 below. The study findings reviewed that addressing instability in Africa requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that takes into account the complex and interconnected factors contributing to the challenges faced by the continent. Some potential solutions reviewed included Good governance and rule of law and as a solution, countries need to strengthen institutions and promote good governance to reduce corruption as well as enhance the rule of law to ensure justice and accountability (Das, 2011). On gender equality, there is need to promote gender equality to empower women and ensure their full participation in society. and also, address issues such as gender-based violence. The study also reviewed that conflict resolution and peacebuilding is a solution to instability and governments should support diplomatic efforts to resolve ongoing conflicts. and above all, invest in peacebuilding initiatives to address the root causes of conflicts. Regional cooperation is another solution to conflict resolution and African countries should strengthen regional organizations and promote cooperation among African countries as well as collaborate on security issues, trade, and infrastructure development (UN, 2017). Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Systems, countries need to strengthen mechanisms for conflict prevention and early warning systems and also, address potential sources of tension before they escalate.

Further, the study reviewed that economic development is cardinal in curbing conflicts in Africa and individual countries need to promote inclusive and sustainable economic development as well as encourage investment in key sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, and technology. Education and Healthcare are a necessity and governments should improve access to quality education to empower the population as well as enhance healthcare systems to address public health challenges. More so, youths need to be empowered by creating opportunities for education, skills training, and employment for the youth and they should be involved in decision-making processes (William, 2016). Human rights protection is a solution as well and countries should uphold and protect human rights to ensure the dignity and well-being of citizens. and should also, combat discrimination and promote inclusivity. Countries should address environmental challenges, such as climate change and resource scarcity as well as promote sustainable development practices.

In addition, the study reviewed that investment in infrastructure is cardinal and countries should develop and maintain critical infrastructure, including transportation, energy, and communication and improve connectivity within and between countries. They should promote civic engagement and the role of civil society in holding governments accountable as well as encourage the development of a vibrant civil society. Governments should ensure freedom of the press to foster transparency and accountability and also, support independent media outlets to provide balanced information (Hapkins, 2015). All African countries should develop and implement strategies for disaster preparedness and response as well as mitigate the impact of natural disasters on communities. International Support and partnerships should be encouraged since Africa belongs to the global world and countries should encourage international support for African initiatives as well as foster partnerships with the international community for aid, trade, and development though should be done between and amongst African countries to avoid manipulations by the West. Nevertheless, the study findings reviewed that these solutions are interconnected, and progress in one area often contributes to improvements in others. Additionally, the involvement and commitment of African governments, regional organizations, the international community, and local communities are crucial for the success of these efforts (UN, 2016).



**Figure 3:** Showing Distribution of Solutions for Addressing Instability in Africa

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing the sources of instability in Africa is a complex challenge that requires a multifaceted and comprehensive approach. Instability in the region can be attributed to a variety of factors, including political, economic, social, and environmental issues. Some recommendations for potential solutions include the following:

### 1. Good Governance:

- Strengthening democratic institutions and promoting good governance is essential. This includes transparent and accountable leadership, effective rule of law, and mechanisms for citizen participation.

### 2. Conflict Resolution and Mediation:

- Encouraging and supporting peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms is crucial. Regional organizations and international bodies can play a role in mediating disputes and promoting dialogue between conflicting parties.

### 3. Economic Development:

- Addressing economic inequalities and promoting sustainable economic development can contribute to stability. This involves investments in infrastructure, job creation, and fostering a business-friendly environment.

### 4. Education and Skills Development:

- Investing in education and skills development is key to building human capital. An educated and skilled workforce is more likely to contribute to economic growth and social stability.

### 5. Healthcare Infrastructure:

- Improving healthcare infrastructure is vital for addressing health challenges and preventing the spread of diseases. A healthy population is more resilient and better able to contribute to economic development.

### 6. Natural Resource Management:

- Proper management of natural resources, including land, water, and minerals, is essential. Transparent and responsible resource governance can help prevent conflicts over these valuable assets.

### 7. Youth Empowerment:

- Engaging and empowering the youth through education, employment opportunities, and involvement in decision-making processes can contribute to long-term stability.

### 8. Corruption Prevention:

- Tackling corruption is critical for fostering economic development and ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and fairly.

### 9. International Cooperation:

- Encouraging international cooperation and collaboration is essential. Regional and global partnerships can provide support for conflict resolution, development projects, and capacity building.

### 10. Climate Change Mitigation:

- Addressing environmental challenges, such as climate change, is crucial. This includes promoting sustainable practices and building resilience to climate-related impacts.

### 11. Security Sector Reform:

- Reforming the security sector to ensure professionalism, accountability, and respect for human rights is important for maintaining stability without resorting to authoritarian measures.

### 12. Human Rights Protection:

- Protecting and promoting human rights is fundamental. This involves creating a culture of respect for human dignity and equality.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the factors on the sources of instability in Africa often intersect and reinforce each other, creating complex and interconnected challenges. Addressing instability in Africa requires a comprehensive and

multidimensional approach that considers political, economic, social, and environmental factors. Additionally, the situation on the continent is dynamic, and ongoing research and analysis are crucial for understanding and addressing evolving sources of instability. Weak governance structures and institutions contribute significantly to instability. Issues such as corruption, lack of transparency, and ineffective rule of law erode trust in government and hinder social and economic development. Ethnic and tribal divisions remain a source of conflict in many African nations. Competition for resources, political power, and historical grievances often exacerbate these tensions, leading to violence and instability. Economic disparities and poverty contribute to instability. High levels of unemployment, unequal distribution of resources, and inadequate economic opportunities can create fertile ground for social unrest. Political instability, characterized by frequent changes in leadership, coups, and contested elections, disrupts the stability of many African nations. Weak political institutions and power struggles among political elites can undermine democratic processes. Competition for natural resources, such as oil, minerals, and water, can fuel conflict. Control over these resources often becomes a source of tension between different groups or nations. The involvement of external actors, whether through geopolitical interests, arms trade, or interventions, can contribute to instability. Proxy conflicts and interference by foreign powers may exacerbate existing tensions. Pervasive security challenges, including terrorism, organized crime, and insurgencies, pose a significant threat to stability. These issues often transcend national borders and require regional cooperation to address effectively. Demographic factors, such as a large and unemployed youth population, can contribute to instability. Frustration among young people facing limited opportunities can lead to social unrest.

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