

Can Post-Conflict Reconstruction Foster Peacebuilding? Evidence from Students' Perceptions of the University of Benghazi

Hamd Mahmoud

Marketing Department, Faculty of Economics
University of Benghazi - Libya
hamd.mahmoud@uob.edu.ly

Abstract:

This study aims to examine to what extent the post-conflict reconstruction of the University of Benghazi campus is perceived by its students as contributing to peacebuilding and peace marketing. Guided by the following objectives: To examine students' perceptions of the physical reconstruction of the University of Benghazi campus following the 2014–2016 conflict. To what extent, if any, do students associate this reconstruction with broader peacebuilding and peace marketing outcomes? The study focuses on the perceptions of 386 enrolled students at the University of Benghazi regarding campus reconstruction following the 2014–2016 conflict. The study used the quantitative descriptive survey approach with a cross-sectional survey design, collecting data from a sample of students. The results indicate that students do indeed link reconstruction and peace. The results indicate that the strength of this association is not determined by the physical quality of reconstruction of the university campus, but rather by two main psychosocial factors: perceived safety and security, and the sense of belonging, then perceived reconstruction quality and institutional trust. The paper addresses a notable gap in the higher-education-and-peacebuilding literature by providing what is, to the researcher's knowledge, one of the first systematic, perception-based studies of reconstruction at the University of Benghazi.

Key words: reconstruction, peace, peacebuilding, peace marketing, perception.

هل يمكن لإعادة الإعمار في مرحلة ما بعد النزاع أن تعزز بناء السلام؟ أدلة مستمدة من تصورات الطلاب في جامعة بنغازي

د. حمد محمد ابوبكر محمود

قسم التسويق / كلية الاقتصاد - جامعة بنغازي - ليبيا

hamd.mahmoud@uob.edu.ly

المستخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى بحث مدى إدراك طلاب جامعة بنغازي لمساهمة عملية إعادة إعمار الحرم الجامعي التي تلت فترة النزاع، في تعزيز بناء السلام وتسويقه. وتتمحور أهداف الدراسة حول استكشاف تصورات الطلاب تجاه إعادة الإعمار المادي للحرم الجامعي في أعقاب القتال الذي شهدته المدينة بين عامي 2014 - 2016، وما إذا كانوا يربطون هذه العملية بنتائج أوسع تتعلق ببناء السلام وتسويقه. استطلعت الدراسة آراء 386 طالباً مسجلاً في جامعة بنغازي حول إعادة إعمار حرمهم الجامعي، بعد ذلك النزاع. وقد اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي الكمي من خلال تصميم مسحي مقطعي (cross-sectional survey). وتشير النتائج: إلى وجود رابط فعلي في ذهن الطلاب بين إعادة الإعمار والسلام؛ إذ لا يعتمد قوة هذا الرابط على الجودة المادية للبنية التحتية التي تمت من خلال إعادة الإعمار فحسب، بل يرتبط بشكل أساسي بعوامل نفسية واجتماعية، وهي: الشعور بالأمن والسلامة، والإحساس بالانتماء، بالإضافة إلى تقييم جودة إعادة الإعمار، ومن ثم مستوى الثقة في المؤسسة. تساهم هذه الورقة البحثية في سد فجوة ملحوظة في الأدبيات المتعلقة بالتعليم العالي وبناء السلام؛ إذ تُعد (على حد علم الباحث) واحدة من أوائل الدراسات المنهجية التي تستند إلى تصورات الطلاب حول عملية إعادة الإعمار في جامعة بنغازي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: إعادة الإعمار، السلام، بناء السلام، تسويق السلام، الإدراك.

Background of the Study:

Peace Marketing is a relatively new concept representing non-profit marketing, social marketing, or a general international marketing system to establish peace (Al-Taie and Al-Hadrawi, 2021). Peace marketing uses positive-peace methods such as constructive engagement, dialogue, distributive justice and ethics (Shultz, 2007). Actions and interventions to promote peace and avoid conflicts (Huda, 2020). According to Kotler and Sarkar's work, peacemaking via marketing involves tackling systemic issues like extreme poverty, wealth and income inequality, poor governance, unemployment, environmental degradation, and war-profiting (Kotler and Sarkar, 2022). Peace-building is the actions and interventions for strengthening peacefulness and avoiding conflicts (Grewal, 2003; Galtung & Fischer, 2013). Peace marketing initiatives cannot be limited within some communication campaign, rather, peace leaders must focus on the income and wealth inequality issues that are causing all forms of conflicts and unrest in the world (Nedelea and Nedelea, 2015). Peace marketing as integrative propaganda relies on genuine constructive engagement, fostering mutual empathy and attaining distributive justice. Peace marketing seeks to understand and develop marketing programmes and insights designed to foster peace-building (Dean and Shabbir, 2019). Some argue that the peace through security could failed in stablize some countries which suffer from conflict with huge financial and human cost. While peace through reconstruction could be more effective. The ethics of reconstruction refers to the need to give priority treatment to those most affected by the conflict during the transition to peace (Del Castillo, 2010).

The University of Benghazi, founded in 1955 as Libya's first university, with roughly 70000 students and more than 30 faculties, has come to symbolise both the destructiveness of Libya's post-2011 conflicts and the country's capacity for recovery. Between 2014 and 2016, the university and its surrounding area became a battleground between armed groups and the Libyan National Army, and forces aligned with it. According to officials reporting that approximately

ninety percent of the campus complex was destroyed and that explosives had been planted across the grounds during the period of militant control (France 24, 2026). Despite this devastation, teaching reportedly continued throughout much of the conflict using alternative facilities shared with local schools, and rare historical manuscripts looted during the fighting were later recovered (France 24, 2026). Reconstruction of the campus which start from 4 yearss agoe, overseen by Libya's Reconstruction Fund, has been underway for several years and has been presented by political and military leadership as part of broader efforts to revitalise Cyrenaica (eastern Libya) and to invest in education as a foundation for long-term stability and national unity (LibyaReview, 2024). Nearly seventy thousand students currently study at the university, the majority still using temporary facilities while a new campus is completed (Arab News, 2026).

This combination of severe destruction, partial continuity of teaching during conflict, and a highly visible, politically significant reconstruction process with a large-scale, highly publicised nature makes the University of Benghazi a distinctive case for examining whether physical reconstruction is, in the perception of the students who study there, contributing to a broader sense of peace, normalcy, and reconciliation, or whether it remains primarily a physical and political undertaking disconnected from these deeper social dimensions. Especially that, armed conflict does not only destroy human lives and physical infrastructure; it also disrupts the social institutions through which trust, identity, and a shared sense of the future are normally produced. Among these institutions, higher education institutions occupy a particularly important position. They are simultaneously vulnerable targets of violence, contested political symbols, and spaces in which the attitudes of a country's future leaders, professionals, and citizens are formed (Milton & Barakat, 2018). For this reason, the rebuilding of higher education institutions after conflict has increasingly been treated by scholars and policymakers not merely as a technical exercise in repairing buildings, but as a potential instrument of peacebuilding in its own right

(Johnson & Hoba, 2015; Kester et al., 2022). Therefore, examining a question that runs through the broader peacebuilding literature: whether, and under what conditions, rebuilding the physical fabric of a conflict-affected institution contributes to peacebuilding as it is actually experienced by the people who study within it.

The study problem:

Despite extensive recent journalistic coverage of the campus's physical reconstruction, very little research has examined how the university's own students, those who experienced both the destruction of their campus and its subsequent rebuilding, perceive the relationship between this reconstruction and broader peacebuilding outcomes such as trust, reconciliation, and a sense of normalcy. The existing higher-education-and-peacebuilding literature has produced detailed case studies from sub-Saharan Africa, the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Somaliland (Johnson & Hoba, 2015; Kester et al., 2022). Yet the Libyan case, and the University of Benghazi in particular, remains largely absent from this literature. Without empirical evidence of how the direct stakeholders of reconstruction perceive its peacebuilding value, claims that rebuilding university infrastructure contributes to peace marketing remain largely assumed rather than demonstrated.

This paper addresses that gap by examining how students at the University of Benghazi perceive the post-conflict reconstruction of their campus as a tool for peace marketing, and the extent to which they associate this reconstruction with broader indicators of peacebuilding. In doing so, it brings empirical, perception-based evidence to bear on a relationship between physical reconstruction and positive peace, which is rarely tested directly (Galtung, 1996; Lederach, 1997).

Therefore, this research seeks to answer the following two questions:

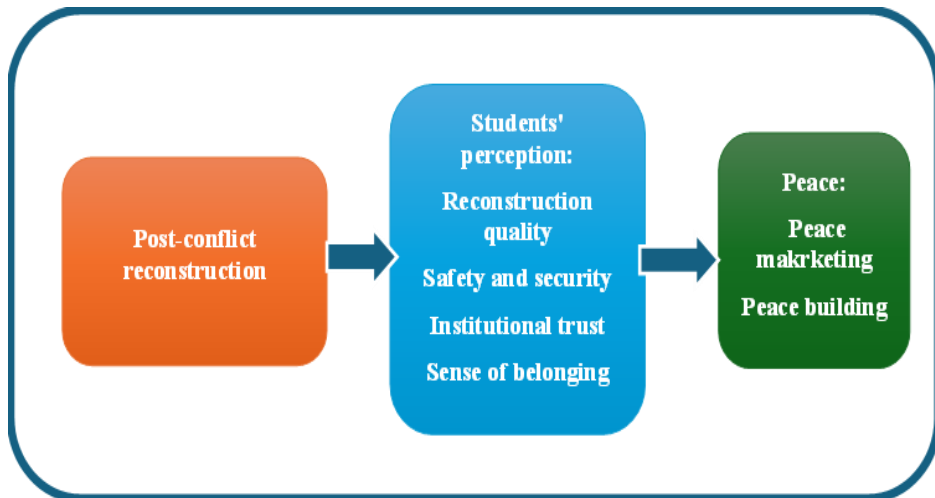
- How do students at the University of Benghazi perceive the post-conflict reconstruction of their campus?
- To what extent, if any, do students associate this reconstruction with broader peacebuilding and peace marketing outcomes?

Aim and Objectives of the Study:

The overarching aim of this study is to examine whether, and to what extent, the post-conflict reconstruction of the University of Benghazi campus is perceived by its students as contributing to peacebuilding and peace marketing. In pursuit of this aim, the study is guided by the following objectives:

- To examine students' perceptions of the physical reconstruction of the University of Benghazi campus following the 2014–2016 conflict.
- To assess the extent to which students associate this reconstruction with indicators of peacebuilding, including reconstruction quality, safety and security, institutional trust and sense of belonging.

Based on the research questions and objectives, the notion of this study can be illustrated in the following model.



Source: the author.

Figure number (1)

Significance of the Study:

This study contributes to the literature in three principal ways. Theoretically, it tests the assumed link between physical reconstruction and positive peace (Galtung, 1996) against the lived perceptions of a specific, conflict-affected student population,

contributing empirical grounding to a relationship that is frequently asserted in policy discourse but less often examined directly. Empirically, it addresses a notable gap in the higher-education-and-peacebuilding literature by providing what is, to the researcher's knowledge, one of the first systematic, perception-based studies of reconstruction at the University of Benghazi. Practically, the study's findings may be of value to Libyan policymakers, the Libyan Reconstruction Fund, and university administrators seeking to design reconstruction processes that more effectively translate physical investment into social trust and reconciliation, consistent with the broader literature's emphasis on participatory, locally grounded approaches to post-conflict rebuilding (Johnson & Hoba, 2015).

Literature Review:

Reconstruction efforts are often justified not only on economic and practical grounds, but also on the assumption that rebuilding physical infrastructure can help restore trust, social cohesion, and a sense of normalcy among populations affected by war. The University of Benghazi, Libya's oldest and largest higher education institution, offers a compelling case through which to examine these dynamics, given that it was severely damaged during the 2014–2016 conflict in Benghazi and has since undergone an extensive, ongoing rebuilding process (Johnson & Hoba, 2015; The Borgen Project, 2024). This review synthesises the theoretical and empirical literature relevant to the study's central question: whether, and how, post-conflict reconstruction can foster peacebuilding, as understood through the perceptions of university students who have lived through both the destruction and the rebuilding of their campus.

Contemporary peacebuilding research is grounded substantially in the work of Johan Galtung, who distinguished between negative peace, understood as the mere absence of direct violence, and positive peace, understood as the presence of social justice, equity, and structural harmony within a society (Galtung, 1996; Galtung, 2013). John Paul Lederach's theory of conflict transformation complements Galtung's framework by emphasising the relational and long-term dimensions of

peacebuilding. Lederach (1997) argued that sustainable reconciliation in divided societies depends on building relationships and platforms for dialogue across multiple levels of society. Together, the Galtung and Lederach traditions provide the conceptual vocabulary, structural violence, positive peace, and conflict transformation, that underpins much of the empirical literature reviewed below, including studies that treat reconstruction as a potential vehicle for restoring positive peace.

This is mean that rebuilding infrastructure does not automatically translate into peacebuilding in this deeper sense; sustainable peace is instead understood to depend on the building of relationships and locally meaningful processes of transformation across all levels of society (Lederach, 1997). Literature on post-conflict urban and institutional reconstruction reinforces this caution: rebuilt infrastructure can carry real symbolic and social value, fostering pride, trust, and a renewed sense of belonging, particularly when the process is perceived as inclusive, transparent, and locally owned (Johnson & Hoba, 2015).

Post-conflict reconstruction (PCR) is generally understood in the literature as the medium- and long-term process of rebuilding the political, security, social, and economic dimensions of a society following the cessation of armed conflict, as distinct from the short-term humanitarian relief that typically precedes it (Johnson & Hoba, 2015). Systematic reviews of the peacebuilding literature similarly conclude that no single component, including reconstruction, is sufficient on its own; rather, sustainable peace tends to result from combined and coordinated support across governance, economic, and social domains (Doyle & Sambanis, 2000).

A distinct strand of literature examines the social and symbolic significance of rebuilding physical infrastructure, beyond its purely functional value. Studies of post-war urban recovery in cities such as Sarajevo, Beirut, and Mogadishu suggest that reconstructing buildings and public spaces with strong symbolic or associative value can help societies recover a shared sense of identity and collective memory,

particularly when local communities are meaningfully involved in the rebuilding process (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2024).

This body of work suggests that the relationship between physical reconstruction and peacebuilding is not automatic: rebuilt infrastructure can act as a tangible symbol of recovery, resilience, and hope, fostering pride and a renewed sense of belonging among affected populations, but it can equally fail to generate these outcomes if reconstruction is perceived as exclusionary, opaque, or disconnected from the needs and views of the people who use the rebuilt spaces. Milton and Barakat's edited volume on higher education and post-conflict recovery provides one of the first global, systematic treatments of this neglect, examining both the impact of conflict on the higher education sector and the contributions, positive and negative, that universities can make to recovery, statebuilding, and peacebuilding (Milton and Barakat, 2018).

Comparative case studies from Afghanistan, Somaliland, and elsewhere demonstrate that higher education can cultivate social norms supportive of coexistence and nonviolence, but that this potential is shaped by pedagogical practices, institutional policy, and the broader political environment in which universities operate (Kester et al., 2022). Other studies have examined community engagement at universities in Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire, concluding that the connection between a university and its surrounding community is an important factor in building peaceful academic spaces after conflict (Johnson & Hoba, 2015). Taken together, this literature suggests that higher education institutions have mechanisms, oriented toward capacity-building and consensus-building, that are theoretically well suited to supporting peacebuilding, particularly in contexts where broader policy networks are highly fragmented (Johnson & Hoba, 2015).

Research that centers the perceptions of students, rather than the assessments of policymakers or institutional leaders, addresses an important gap in the broader peacebuilding literature. Comparative survey research on university students' views of conflict resolution has found that students' backgrounds and experiences meaningfully

shape their optimism about whether conflicts can be resolved and their willingness to participate in resolution processes (Ozcelik et al., 2021). Other empirical work examining conflict-affected student populations, for instance, studies of West Bank university students during periods of regional escalation, has shown that students' psychological responses to conflict and recovery are shaped by a combination of direct and indirect exposure, institutional disruption, and broader social conditions, underscoring that students are not passive observers of reconstruction but active interpreters of its meaning and adequacy (Hamdan and Hallaq, 2025).

Within the higher-education-and-peacebuilding literature specifically, scholars have argued that understanding how those most directly affected, students and faculty, perceive institutional rebuilding processes is essential, because perceptions of fairness, inclusion, and communication during reconstruction can determine whether rebuilding strengthens or undermines trust between the university community and the authorities responsible for reconstruction (Johnson & Hoba, 2015). This is consistent with the broader urban reconstruction literature's emphasis on participatory processes as a precondition for reconstruction to generate social cohesion rather than merely restoring physical structures (MARTÍNEZ MAHECHA, 2023). However, very little of the existing higher-education-and-conflict literature draws directly and systematically on student perception data from Libya, or from the University of Benghazi specifically, despite the university's significance as one of the most visibly war-damaged and subsequently reconstructed academic institutions in the region.

Three gaps emerge from this review. First, while the theoretical literature on positive peace and conflict transformation provides a strong conceptual basis for linking reconstruction to peacebuilding, relatively few empirical studies test this linkage directly at the level of a single rebuilt institution, particularly through the perceptions of its primary stakeholders. Second, although the higher-education-and-peacebuilding literature has produced rich case studies from sub-Saharan Africa, the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Somaliland, the Libyan

case, and the University of Benghazi in particular, remains comparatively underexamined, notwithstanding extensive recent journalistic coverage of its physical reconstruction. Third, the broader post-conflict reconstruction literature highlights that the social and symbolic value of rebuilt infrastructure depends heavily on the inclusiveness and perceived legitimacy of the reconstruction process, yet little is known about how Libyan students themselves evaluate these dimensions of the University of Benghazi's rebuilding.

By examining students' perceptions of the reconstruction of the University of Benghazi campus, the present study seeks to address these gaps. It situates an empirical, perception-based investigation within the theoretical frameworks of positive peace and conflict transformation (Galtung, 1996; Lederach, 1997), draws on the higher-education-and-peacebuilding literature's emphasis on the "third face" of education in conflict-affected contexts (Kester et al., 2022), and responds to calls within the post-conflict reconstruction literature for context-specific, locally grounded research that captures the perspectives of those most directly affected by rebuilding processes (Johnson & Hoba, 2015).

Conclusion:

The literature reviewed here establishes that post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding are conceptually linked but empirically distinct processes. Foundational peace theory distinguishes the absence of violence from the deeper, structural conditions of positive peace, and emphasises that sustainable peacebuilding depends on relationship-building and locally grounded transformation rather than physical rebuilding alone (Galtung, 1996; Lederach, 1997). At the same time, more applied literature on urban and institutional reconstruction shows that physical rebuilding can carry substantial symbolic and social weight, capable of either reinforcing a sense of recovery, belonging, and trust, or, where poorly managed or perceived as exclusionary, failing to do so. Higher education institutions occupy a particularly important position within this dynamic, given their dual role as both casualties of conflict and

potential engines of post-conflict social repair. The case of the University of Benghazi, severely damaged during Libya's 2014–2016 conflict and now undergoing extensive reconstruction amid a still-fragile national peace process, offers a timely and significant opportunity to examine, through the direct perceptions of its students, whether and how physical reconstruction translates into the lived experience of peacebuilding.

Study Design:

This section outlines the research methodology, including the study's design, sampling, and data collection instruments. The study adopted the quantitative descriptive survey approach with a cross-sectional survey design, where data were collected at one point in time from a sample of students from the University of Benghazi, with the aim of measuring their perceptions towards the process of rebuilding the university campus and its relationship to peacebuilding and peace marketing. The study focuses specifically on the perceptions of currently enrolled students at the University of Benghazi regarding the reconstruction of their campus following the 2014–2016 conflict.

The study population consisted of students from various faculties at an online questionnaire distributed on students' Facebook groups. The study instrument consisted of an electronic questionnaire that included a section for demographic data (five questions), in addition to 32 items, all of which were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), classified into six main axes:

- Perceived Reconstruction Quality (5 items).
- Perceived Safety and Security (5 item).
- Institutional Trust (5 items).
- Sense of Belonging (5 points).
- Peacebuilding Perceptions (6 items).
- University Image and Peace Marketing (6 items).

Each axis score was calculated as the arithmetic mean of its items (Composite Score), with each axis score ranging between 1 and 5 on the same scale as the original scale.

The statistical analysis was performed entirely using SPSS 26 for importing, cleaning, and calculating composite axis scores. Also, for generate descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-tests, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and the Pearson correlation coefficient were generated. Also, statsmodels was used to build a multiple linear regression (OLS) model and calculate the variance inflation factor (VIF). The analysis steps included: (1) data cleaning and demographic standardisation, (2) constructing scores for the eight axes, (3) reliability testing, (4) descriptive analysis at the item and axis levels, (5) correlation analysis between axes, (6) multiple linear regression analysis to predict the peace and stability axis from the other axes, with multicollinearity testing using VIF and estimation of standard (β) and non-standard (B) coefficients. A statistical significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ was adopted for all tests.

Results:

The sample size, after data analysis, was 386 valid responses, distributed across 11 faculties. Responses were collected electronically (via Google Forms) during June 2026. The demographic data of respondents are in tables number 1 and 2.

Table (1): Demographic characteristics of the study sample

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage
Sex	females	300	%77.7
Sex	Males	86	%22.3
the age	Under 20 years old	153	%39.6
the age	20to 24 years	165	%42.7
the age	25to 29 years	19	%4.9
the age	30to 34 years	12	%3.1
the age	35years and older	37	%9.6

From the two tables it is notable that two-thirds of participants are females and most students who take part in the study are under 24 years old, which means that most students are undergraduate students.

Also, approximately half of the participants are from the faculties of medicine and economics; this reflects the reality, as the two faculties are among the largest at the University of Benghazi in terms of student numbers.

Table (2): Classification of students by faculty

Faculty	Number of students	Percentage
Midicine	97	%25.1
Economics	87	%22.5
Media	33	%8.5
Arts	29	%7.5
Languages	28	%7.3
Science	23	%6.0
Law	23	%6.0
Education	20	%5.2
Engneering	20	%5.2
Public health	16	%4.1
IT	10	%2.6

Regarding whether the students' university studies were affected by the conflict and fighting that took place in Benghazi city and on the university campus, two-thirds reported—either explicitly or implicitly—that their studies had been impacted. As for those who stated that their studies were unaffected, it is possible they only enrolled at the university after the fighting there had ended; this is supported by the fact that the majority of the participating students were young, suggesting they likely enrolled after 2020.

Table (3): The impact of fighting on students' studies

How were stusents affected by the fighting in Benghazi?	Number of students	Percentage
Yes	170	%44.0
no	136	%35.2
maybe	80	%20.7

When students were asked whether they had seen any media content regarding the university's reconstruction—and on which media platforms—all participants responded that they had viewed such material, particularly on social media sites like Facebook. To evaluate the internal consistency and reliability of survey or test items, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated for each axis consisting of two or more items. The reliability coefficients, as shown in Table (4), ranged between 0.84 and 0.92 for all axes, values indicating good to excellent reliability.

Table (4): Cronbach's alpha coefficient

axis	Number of items	Alpha coefficient
Perceived Reconstruction Quality	5	0.84
Perceived Safety and Security	5	0.91
Institutional Trust	5	0.86
Sense of Belonging	5	0.89
Peacebuilding Perceptions	6	0.92
University Image and Peace Marketing	6	0.91

Table (5): Descriptive statistics for the study variables

Axis	Average	Standard Deviation
Perceived Reconstruction Quality	4.30	1.02
Perceived Safety and Security	3.65	1.05
Institutional Trust	3.27	1.01
Sense of Belonging	4.10	0.90
Overall satisfaction with reconstruction	4.39	1.02
Peacebuilding Perceptions	4.00	0.89
University Image and Peace Marketing	4.29	0.85
Education and Peace (General)	4.41	0.91

Considering the descriptive analysis of the questionnaire's themes, the standard deviations are quite similar across all axes (ranging from 0.85 to 1.05), which indicates a relatively consistent spread of

opinions among your respondents regardless of the topic. As for the average, accept axes Institutional Trust and Perceived Safety and Security, all axes above 4 and have moderate or low perception strength. To measure the strength of a linear association between the study variables, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used.

Table (6): Correlation between questionnaire axes

	Perceived Reconstruction Quality	Perceived Safety and Security	Institutional Trust	Sense of Belonging	Peacebuilding Perceptions	University Image and Peace Marketing
Perceived Reconstruction Quality	1.00	0.42	0.43	0.60	0.71	0.53
Perceived Safety and Security	0.42	1.00	0.64	0.61	0.65	0.47
Institutional Trust	0.43	0.64	1.00	0.63	0.61	0.44
Sense of Belonging	0.60	0.61	0.63	1.00	0.76	0.56
Peacebuilding Perceptions	0.71	0.65	0.61	0.76	1.00	0.62
University Image and Peace Marketing	0.53	0.47	0.44	0.56	0.62	1.00

Pearson's correlation matrix showed positive and statistically significant correlations between most axes. The strongest correlations were between Peacebuilding Perceptions and Sense of Belonging ($r = 0.76$), between Peacebuilding Perceptions and Perceived Reconstruction Quality ($r = 0.71$), and between Peacebuilding Perceptions and Institutional Trust ($r = 0.61$), while the weakest correlations were between Perceived Reconstruction Quality and Perceived Safety and Security ($r = 0.42$), which indicate that most relationships range from moderate to strong.

To identify the factors that predict students' perception of the "peacebuilding" axis, an OLS multiple linear regression model was applied with the introduction of 4 independent variables: Perceived Reconstruction Quality, Perceived Safety and Security, Institutional Trust, and Sense of Belonging (n = 386).

Table (7): Variance Inflation Factor

Independent Variable	Variance Inflation Coefficient (VIF)
Perceived Reconstruction Quality	1.79
Perceived Safety and Security	1.97
Institutional Trust	2.04
Sense of Belonging	2.81

Before moving to regression analysis, it's worth using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to measure how much the variance of an estimated regression coefficient is increased due to collinearity (correlation) with other independent variables. From the table above, all VIF values are below the usual threshold (5), indicating the absence of worrying multicollinearity.

Table (8): Model matching quality

Index	Value
Coefficient of determination R^2	0.721
Modified R^2	0.717
F-statistic(380 ,4)	196.6
Significance level (p)	0.001 >

This table shows the statistical summary of a multiple linear regression model. Overall, the results indicate that the model is highly statistically significant, which means that the reconstruction has strong predictive power for peacebuilding. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.721$). This means that 72.1% of the variance in peace perception is explained by the independent variables (the predictors) in the model, such as Perceived Safety and Security and a

sense of belonging to the university. Subsequently, Perceived Reconstruction Quality and institutional trust.

Table (9): Model parameters (multiple linear regression analysis)

Independent Variable	B (non-standard)	Standard error	Value of t	p Value	β (standard)	Significance
The constant	0.038-	0.137	0.28-	0.780	—	Non-functional
Perceived Reconstruction Quality	0.163	0.037	4.38	0.001>	0.16	*function
Institutional Trust	0.104	0.034	3.05	0.002	0.12	*function
Sense of Belonging	0.272	0.045	6.08	0.001>	0.28	*function
Perceived Safety and Security	0.414	0.046	9.04	0.001>	0.40	*function

The results show that all variables were statistically significant predictors of peacebuilding. Using standardized coefficients (β), the order of effect strength was as follows: Perceived Safety and Security ($\beta = 0.40$), sense of belonging ($\beta = 0.28$), Perceived Reconstruction Quality ($\beta = 0.16$), and Institutional Trust ($\beta = 0.12$).

Discussion:

These findings are discussed in light of three key research questions: How do students at the University of Benghazi perceive the process of rebuilding their campus? To what extent do they link this process to broader peacebuilding outcomes? And what factors shape the strength or weakness of this connection in their perceptions?

How do students perceive the reconstruction process?

The results reveal a heterogeneous student perception across different dimensions, clearly divided into two levels. At the tangible, physical level, students express strong positive evaluations for Perceived Reconstruction Quality (4.30 out of 5) and Sense of Belonging (4.10). In contrast, positive perceptions clearly decline in Perceived Safety and Security and Institutional Trust. Trust in the university administration is the weakest axis (3.27). While the sense of security falls in the middle (3.65), reflecting incomplete improvement. This discrepancy indicates that students clearly distinguish between what has actually been achieved on the ground (physical construction and renovation) and what is still lacking at the institutional level (transparency and administrative openness), a distinction that carries significant implications: physical reconstruction. However good, is not enough on its own to build full institutional trust. However, overall satisfaction with reconstruction was (4.39).

The extent to which students link reconstruction and peacebuilding?

The results indicate that students do indeed link reconstruction and peace, and this link is remarkably strong at the general and aspirational level. The overall average for the "Peacebuilding Perceptions" axis was 4.00. However, the average of University Image and Peace Marketing axis was 4.29 and Education and Peace in general was 4.41. Aspirational items hope for a better future; the university campus as a symbol of hope and recovery. This pattern suggests that students subscribe to the general narrative that "education and reconstruction are a path to peace."

Factors shaping the strength of the link between reconstruction and peace.

The multiple regression model, which explained approximately 72% of the variance in perceptions of peace indicates that the strength of this association in students' minds is not primarily determined by the physical quality of the infrastructure. But rather by two main psychosocial factors: Perceived Safety and Security ($\beta = 0.40$), and

the sense of belonging itself ($\beta = 0.28$). Perceived Reconstruction Quality ($\beta = 0.16$) and Institutional Trust ($\beta = 0.12$) contributed to a lesser extent, although they remained statistically significant. Interestingly, while the sense of belonging initially showed a strong correlation with peace at the simple correlation level ($r = 0.76$), Perceived Reconstruction Quality ($r = 0.71$). however, Perceived Safety and Security and Institutional Trust have a correlation with peace at ($r=0.65$) and ($r=0.61$) respectively. In other words, the decisive factor in determining whether a student will strongly or weakly associate reconstruction with peace is not "how beautiful and safe the building has become," but rather "to what extent this student feels pride and belonging to their university".

Practical Implications:

These findings have important practical implications for university administration and for those involved in reconstruction and peacebuilding programs within university settings. Investing in infrastructure alone, while clearly important, is insufficient to maximise the impact on students' perception of peace. It appears that parallel investment in enhancing administrative transparency, building genuine channels of communication with students, and designing institutional activities and narratives that foster pride and belonging (events, visual symbolism, student participation in decision-making) may be more effective in translating reconstruction into a lasting understanding of peace and stability than focusing solely on the construction aspect. Overall, this study provides empirical evidence that the success of university reconstruction projects in contributing to peacebuilding is measured not only by the quality of cement and facilities, but also by their ability to restore or enhance students' sense of belonging and institutional pride. The role of the media is critical in supporting the reconstruction process is to prepare the public to perceive reconstruction efforts as a crucial step toward consolidating peace, instilling hope, and restoring normal life following a conflict that resulted in both material and human losses.

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