WOMEN, COMMUNITY PEACEBUILDING, AND STRUCTURAL EXCLUSION IN NIGERIA: PROSPECTS AND PERSISTENT BARRIERS

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ABSTRACT: Over the decades, the role of women has not been overemphasised at home or in society. Their various engagements in restoring social order after conflict, through resilience and leadership in grassroots peace initiatives and peacebuilding, are remarkable. Nevertheless, their efforts are often undermined by systemic barriers that limit their access to efficient governance and peace-making mechanisms. Women are often excluded from major decision-making processes, thereby relegating their roles in peacebuilding. Patriarchy has eaten deep into the Nigerian system, which has majorly hindered the comprehensive participation of women in the peace process. This study used data from public documents and the extant literature, including journal articles and books, to highlight initiatives undertaken by women to advance peace in society. The study notes that the patriarchal system, social and gender norms, are major challenges that hinder women's participation in societal affairs. The paper submits that engaging key stakeholders and implementing conventional instruments, such as Sustainable Development Goal 5, are necessary for an inclusive decision-making process on peace-making, peace-thinking, and peacebuilding at both the formal and informal levels of Nigeria's peace process.

Keywords: Women, Patriarchy, Gender Inequality, Peacebuilding, and Peace Processes

INTRODUCTION

In its Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) focused on women, peace, and security (Bag et al., 2025). This resolution comprised four fundamental pillars: prevention, participation, protection, and peacebuilding and recovery. It was developed in recognition of the frequent exclusion of women from post-conflict peace processes. The resolution highlighted women's roles in preventing and resolving conflicts, emphasising their contributions to negotiation and peace-building efforts (UN Women, 2012). Resolution 1325 emphasised women's equal participation in peacebuilding alongside men. The resolution recognised

> that an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security (Paragraph 10, UNSC Resolution 1325).

In addition, it also recognised the primacy of mainstreaming "a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations" in accordance with previous resolutions on gender consideration in peacebuilding.

This resolution reiterates the importance of women's caregiving roles and the need to integrate them into peace-building diplomacy and mechanisms. However, these abilities are underutilised in post-conflict peace processes. Women are frequently relegated to the background during negotiations and reconstruction, seen as subordinate and disempowered compared to men, thereby preventing them from being placed on an equal footing (Jah et al., 2022). UN Women (2002) noted that globally, women constitute less than 10% of peace negotiators and only 3% of signatories to peace agreements. This highlights the underrepresentation and limited participation of women in peace processes (Jah et al., 2022; Yusuf, Alabi & Fagbadebo, 2025).

Despite these international instruments for peacebuilding, women continue to be excluded from significant roles in peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan Africa, whereby the "women-as-victims-only narrative limited women's representation in peacebuilding (Olaitan, 2023, p. 185). Intermittent conflict and war have claimed many lives and destroyed property across Sub-Saharan Africa (Adeyanju et al., 2025). The consequences include exacerbated poverty levels, inadequate public service provision, political instability, and retarded economic growth. All these directly affect women. Despite the disproportionate impact of conflicts on women's lives, they are often seen as the cohesive force that binds communities together amidst the fragile social fabrics resulting from these conflicts. Consequently, women are actively engaged in peacebuilding efforts (Jah et al., 2022). This paper explores the dynamics associated with women's participation in peacebuilding in Nigeria. The central argument of this paper is that the ongoing exclusion of women from the peacebuilding process has denied society the impetus needed to achieve peaceful conflict resolution. The non-recognition of women's peace-building initiatives has been partly responsible for the festering conflict situations in Africa.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employed a qualitative literature and documentary review, with examples of women's peacebuilding initiatives in Nigeria, especially the Niger Delta region. The literature used focused on women's peacebuilding initiatives and involvement, published mostly within the last five years. The literature and documents were analysed thematically, identifying the key issues women's peacebuilding initiatives.

Women and Community Peace Initiatives Process in Nigeria

Saunders (2024) defines the peace process as a political approach to resolving conflicts through peaceful means. It encompasses elements such as politics, diplomacy, relationship change, formal and informal negotiation, mediation, and dialogue in varying contexts (Cuhadar & Druckman, 2024). The peace process aims to transform conflict and alleviate tensions within countries, communities, and organisations. Saunders (2024) emphasises the importance of sustained dialogue involving citizens outside of government to address underlying racial, ethnic, and other tensions. Participation of women in formal peace processes and negotiations is often limited compared to

men, but they make valuable contributions (Brannon, Thomas, & DiBlasi, 2024). Women are known for their diverse conflict experiences and represent different interest groups, prioritising peace over other concerns.

However, women can form coalitions and bridge political, ethnic, and religious divides, even though this role is usually underrecognised (Gloria, 2025). This falls within the liberal and illiberal contexts of peacebuilding. As Anderson et al (2025, p. 4) have noted, "these approaches help us see peace as a dynamic, ongoing process that occurs through local, often informal actions, even in the most restrictive environments". In Nigeria, violent conflicts have led to the loss of lives, property destruction, and infrastructure damage (Durojaye et al., 2025). Efforts to address these conflicts include peacekeeping missions, inquiry panels, and reconciliation commissions, which have most often proven abortive. Women's participation in these processes has been limited by gender inequality and cultural norms. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for women to strengthen peacebuilding in Nigeria (Babatunde, 2025; Mari Tripp, Maiga, & Yahi, 2025). This sort of involvement in peaceful processes extends well beyond the battlefield and into civil society (Anderson et al, 2025).

Nigerian women have suffered immensely from violent conflicts in Nigeria, but they have also played crucial roles in grassroots peace-building efforts (Favour, 2025; Babatunde, 2025; Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2025). Nigerian women have been involved in organising networks of informal grassroots initiatives and forming intercommunity coalitions against violence. Organisations such as loan committees, mothers' groups, and neighbourhood alliances allow women to address conflicts and influence behaviour (Onuh et al, 2024). This involvement draws on feminist peace perspectives that seek a comprehensive, transformative, and stable environment through a gender equality orientation and mentality. This notion of gender equality remains central to recognising the substantial role of actors, irrespective of gender, in signalling structural transformations essential to sustainable peace (Anderson et al., 2025). This indeed aligns with UNSCR 1325.

Historically, Nigerian women have played significant roles in both peace and war, often through traditional means. Women have served as traditional peacemakers, consulting deities to determine whether war was justified, and during battles, women sang praises for men, boosting their morale and helping ensure victory (Samson & Origbo, 2022). Queen Amina of Zaria, who led the Zazzau City-State to victory against its opponents to expand her territory (Iweze & Amos, 2024). Queen Moremi Ajasoro rescued her people of Ile-Ife through self-denial and espionage, revealing the secrets of the opponent's power, thereby leading to their defeat (Layiwola, 1991; Iweze & Amos, 2024). Many women's significant traditional contributions remain unrecorded, and some women submit to altruistic suicide to save their communities from prolonged crises, such as Omu Okwei of Ossomari (Abdulyakeen, 2022). Others were forcibly taken as sacrifices to appease the gods and restore peace in certain lands (Okoro, 2013; Ottuh, 2025). These stories exemplify the rich history of African traditional peace-making processes involving women, even when their contributions were not formally documented (Samson & Origbo, 2022).

Traditionally, women have played a crucial role in peace-making across various capacities in domestic disputes. In times of war, they are often called upon to initiate ceasefires (Agbese, 2021; Shuaibu, 2024). Their significance stems from being seen as life-givers, life-sustainers, and builders

of society. Additionally, women bear the responsibility of nurturing children and ensuring their well-being, health, and education. Their multifaceted contributions have a lasting impact on communities and conflict resolution. The international dimension of this role indicates the importance of women's involvement in decision-making. Cultural beliefs that position women as peacemakers and accord them the status of mothers serve as vital cultural resources. These resources can be harnessed to empower women within male-dominated political societies. Thus, this necessitates appreciable recognition for comprehensive and nondiscriminatory involvement, with adequate empowerment to harness their peacebuilding potential (Adeoti, 2025; Samuel, 2025).

O'Reilly (2024) asserts that peace-making potential is not limited to women but is a shared responsibility with men to build and maintain peace. However, women often exhibit greater creativity and effectiveness in peace-making (Lwamba et al, 2022). They are naturally endowed with emotional strength, with an inherent disposition toward peacebuilding. In the challenging context of the Niger Delta, women and their groups emerged as unsung heroes. According to Onu and Onokpite (2022), these women actively participate in various regional peace-building initiatives. Often, women's groups lead the charge, advocating and championing necessary interventions in the region. Their resilience and commitment play a crucial role in fostering peace and stability despite the difficult circumstances (Siloko, 2024).

Women's Communities' Peace Process Initiatives in Nigeria

The Niger Delta crisis brought to the fore the various activities of women in the peace process. Women in the Niger Delta usually lived in constant fear due to the volatile security situation. Armed conflicts, violence, and criminal activities created an environment of uncertainty and danger (Svallfors et al, 2024). Economic hardship is a daily reality for many women in the region, as environmental degradation has damaged their livelihoods (Samuel & Agbai, 2022; Svallfors et al., 2024). Women and their families suffer from respiratory illnesses and other health issues associated with oil exploration in the region. The inadequate healthcare infrastructure contributes to a high infant mortality rate. Lack of access to quality prenatal care and safe delivery services affects both mothers and newborns in this region. These challenges disproportionately affect women because of their vulnerability, given their position in society. This is grounded in the feminist perspective that describes vulnerability as a universal condition rooted in "people's reliance on human and non-human support systems" (Baumann, H., & Moore, 2025, p. 26).

It should be noted that women face a heightened risk of sexual violence, including rape, where conflict situations exacerbate this vulnerability, leaving women traumatised and without adequate support from the government. The realisation of this potential risk is enough for women to initiate protective measures in collaboration with relevant government agencies. In response to the hardships suffered by women in the Niger Delta, especially military brutality against women during a peaceful protest in 2022, the Niger Delta Women was established (Tomwarri & Igoli, 2024). The organisation sought collaboration with the Nigerian Government and multinational oil companies to promote sustainable peace and development in the region. By advocating for women's rights and addressing community challenges, they contribute to positive change and resilience in the Niger Delta (Tomwarri & Igoli, 2024). The women love to participate in conflict resolution, especially when it involves their children. This initiative falls within the broader perspective of women's local

peacebuilding activities, which have been adjudged to have broad transformative impacts on gender relations and roles in society (Mari Tripp, Maiga, & Yahi, 2025).

Women established various non-governmental organisations to champion community peace initiatives. The Federation of Ogoni Women's Organisation (FOWA), the women's wing of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), stands out as a powerful force in the Niger Delta (Udogbo, 2021). Through their actions, these women have gained significant visibility. FOWA was at the forefront of stakeholder engagement in the face-off over the activities of a major multinational oil company, Shell, advocating for the region's political autonomy. In the face of adversity, FOWA, in collaboration with other advocacy groups in the region and internationally, demonstrated women's resilience and determination in promoting peace and justice (Keys, 2021). Through transnational advocacy, FOWA was instrumental in raising global awareness of environmental degradation in the region, attracting a series of international actors and environmentalists.

In 2002, women's non-violent protest against environmental degradation caused by Chevron oil exploration activities in Escravos, Delta State, Nigeria, marked a significant act of women's resilience in promoting peace (Munir, 2021). Women rose because they were the ones with their children at the receiving end of the atrocities committed by Chevron (Obiakor &Usiemure, 2021). The protest gained international attention and inspired other similar protests. The protest halted all Chevron operations, and the oil company was forced to declare "force majeure" (Akubor & Akubor, 2021). Consequently, the negotiation that followed led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the company and the women (Akubor & Akubor, 2021).

Women also played a crucial role in the activities of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in the wake of the Boko Haram insurgency in Borno State (Bamidele, 2025). Women within the CJTF actively participated in intelligence gathering, patrols, and community policing. Their local knowledge and dedication enhanced the effectiveness of these efforts by supporting returned abductees. Many of these abductees were pregnant or had children whose fathers were associated with the terrorist group. Women provide emotional support, mediate family reunions, and facilitate the reintegration of these survivors into their communities. By building community support networks, they create a sense of belonging and healing for those affected by violence (Bamidele, 2025). This aligned with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), which emphasised the primacy of women's participation in peacekeeping, conflict prevention, and post-conflict reconstruction.

Women and Peacebuilding in Nigeria

The peace-building process involves a series of transformative efforts, spanning economic empowerment, political inclusion, social change, and psychological transformation (George & Mathew, 2024). These endeavours often take considerable time to achieve and require commitment from all parties involved. In the Nigerian context, effective peacebuilding hinges on transforming the lives of women, whether or not they are victims of conflict. Empowering women and enhancing their capacity to participate in peace processes should be a central focus. When women are included but unable to engage fully, their participation remains limited and insignificant (Grasso & Smith,

2022). It is important to note that by prioritising women's involvement and ensuring their active participation, peace-building efforts can yield more sustainable and inclusive outcomes (Aggestam & Holmgren, 2022).

Government-led resolution mechanisms are predominantly male-dominated, and efforts are needed to change this. Both men and women should participate equally in peace-building processes to achieve a more holistic approach to sustainable peace. Acknowledging women's perspectives is crucial, as conflict affects them differently. Initiatives like the Program on Women, Peace, and Security in Nigeria aim to increase women's effective participation in peace and security processes (Afolabi, 2022). Grassroots efforts led by Nigerian women also play a vital role in building peace and fostering community dialogue in conflict-affected areas. Throughout history, Nigerian women have actively contributed to peace within their communities. Notably, the 1929 Aba women's riot and the 1948 Abeokuta market women's protest demonstrate their resilience against oppressive social policies (Abdulkareem, 2025). Addressing this gap is essential. When women are actively involved in peacebuilding, their unique perspectives and contributions can lead to more comprehensive and sustainable solutions. Despite formal barriers, women have demonstrated their capacity to promote peace through informal means. These efforts include community organising, conflict resolution, and fostering dialogue.

Barriers Against Women's Participation in the Peace Process in Nigeria

Women in Nigeria face significant challenges when participating in peace processes. Even though their roles are critical to peacebuilding, they operate mostly informally, as their efforts are often relegated and thereby excluded from "broader national and regional peace strategies" (Olaitan & Taiwo, 2025). Most Nigerian societies are patriarchal. Thus, women are still restricted by this patriarchal practice and other discriminatory cultural norms (Adepoju, Gberevbie, & Ibhawoh, 2021; Johnson, Aliegba, & Zamani, 2025). Culture shapes ways of life, encompassing language, norms, values, and practices. The various cultural groupings in Nigeria have segregated elements in defining the roles of men and women in societal activities and engagements. In Yoruba culture, for instance, men hold positions of power and authority, while women are often expected to be submissive and fulfil supportive roles within the family and community (Adebayo, 2021). Despite some changes over time, practices such as favouring male heirs in inheritance and limiting women's participation in decision-making persist.

Among the Igbo, culture is characterised by vibrant traditions and gendered norms (Emua & Etieyibo, 2023). Men are often seen as the primary breadwinners and decision-makers in the family. Nevertheless, Igbo women have historically made significant contributions in areas such as trade, agriculture, and community development, even if their influence has not always been acknowledged or celebrated. The Islamic norms relegate women to the background in the Hausa/Fulani culture (Asubiaro-Dada, 2025). The purdah practice, where women are secluded from public life, persists in conservative households. Unfortunately, this restricts women's mobility and their active participation in public affairs. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that Hausa/Fulani women also engage in informal networks, such as women's associations, where they actively address community issues and contribute to social cohesion.

These dominant Nigerian cultures, Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa/Fulani, share a common patriarchal thread. Women often face discriminatory practices and a lower status compared to men. This gender imbalance permeates all aspects of societal relations, highlighting the need for greater gender equality and recognition of women's agency. The prevalence of these cultural norms persists in Nigeria due to its conservative nature. Culture significantly influences societal structures, and it is deeply ingrained in various aspects of life. This affects peacebuilding efforts, as the belief that women are primarily homemakers who should be seen but not heard discourages their active participation in peace processes.

Gender Inequality

Gender inequality often arises from institutionalised societal norms, creating barriers to women's participation in societal affairs. Patriarchal beliefs and cultural practices further entrenched these norms. This perpetuates a dichotomy between men and women, making true equality elusive (Jah et al., 2022). According to Onyewere (2017), culture is frequently used to justify denying women's rights and perpetuating gender inequality in Nigeria (Ezenwa-Ohaeto, 2024; Nwankwo, 2025). The patriarchal society imposes strict limits on women's activities, leading to a social structure that condones domestic and sexual violence against women and objectifies them sexually. In social relationships, gender-based privileges often favour men over women. Discrimination is prevalent in various spheres, including family, schools, workplaces, and the political system. In conflict-affected and fragile contexts, state-building provides an opportunity to promote gender equality. Post-conflict state-building enables women to mobilise, be heard, and participate more actively in politics by creating a democratic space that opens up (Liu & Liu, 2024). However, it is crucial to acknowledge that these spaces can also be male-dominated, potentially overlooking gender equality in the agenda.

Women Under-Representation

In conflict-affected regions, such as Nigeria, peace processes are critical for stability and reconciliation. Women's voices and contributions are often marginalised or overlooked during these processes (Badom & Ndeeue, 2024; Gbadeyan et al, 2024). The challenge from this view is that women have been subjected to traditional gender norms that have limited their access to decision-making spaces, and perceptions that women lack expertise in security and diplomacy hinder their inclusion (Huber, 2025). Women see this marginalisation as an absence from formal peace negotiations and high-level discussions. The initial issue arises from the belief that women do not actively participate in formal peacebuilding, undermining their contributions to the informal sector (O'Reilly, 2024; Bendung & Sama-Lang, 2025).

Despite notable peace-building roles women have played in society, patriarchal discrimination continues to hinder women's participation in peace processes, and their efforts remain underrepresented. The myopic perception that women do not engage in warfare further hinders their inclusion. Unfortunately, women's victimhood in war is often overlooked in Nigeria. For instance, the composition of panels of inquiry for the Jos conflict lacked female representation, relegating them to tokenistic roles (Adamu, 2024; Yusuf, Alabi & Fagbadebo, 2025).

Lack of Political will of the Government

The Nigerian government's lack of political will to address women's marginalisation exacerbates the problem. Despite the formulation of policies, implementation remains a significant challenge, particularly for the 30% affirmative action for women in political positions, as outlined at the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference (Ifejika & Ojo, 2024). The underrepresentation of women in Nigerian politics remains a pressing issue, despite policy efforts ratified by the two legislative houses. Despite ratified decisions, commitment to ensuring women's representation has stagnated (Udoh et al., 2025). Gender-related violence and hate speech persist due to misconceptions about women's intentions towards politics and in the decision-making process.

In some Nigerian societies, equal rights are not extended to all citizens, particularly women. They are often regarded as second-class citizens and face restrictions on their participation, even at the grassroots level. Thus, societal norms sometimes confine women to traditional roles, emphasising their place in the kitchen (Adekoya, Adamson, Mordi, Ajonbadi, and Adisa, 2024). Additionally, limited access to education and scholarships affects women's ability to compete effectively with men in the labour market for desirable, fulfilling jobs and to play effective roles in society, particularly in decision-making processes (Uduji & Okolo-Obasi, 2025).

Prospects

Women in Nigeria, despite facing significant challenges, are actively engaged in grassroots peace-building initiatives (Gbadeyan et al, 2024). These efforts are crucial for creating lasting solutions in conflict-affected communities. Their role as role models and mediators is pivotal in fostering peace within communities. For instance, Friends Advocating for Mental Health (FAM) is a grassroots initiative that takes a proactive approach to educating adolescents about mental health (Owolabi et al, 2024). Through mental health-oriented clubs in schools, they discuss topics such as anxiety disorders, PTSD, and depression. By addressing adolescents' mental health, FAM has created an environment conducive to trauma sharing and healing, especially at the end of the conflict (Onuh et al., 2024).

The UN Women's Country Office in Nigeria often collaborates with partners to advance the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda (Walker & Kuriansky, 2024). The organisation ensures that women are actively engaged in peacebuilding initiatives by providing them with resources, training, and networks. By equipping them with the necessary tools and support, women can build a more peaceful and resilient world. This organisation also ensures women's voices are heard in decision-making and actively promotes their inclusion in peace negotiations are critical steps toward achieving gender equality and sustainable peace. By creating spaces in which women can participate meaningfully, we enhance the effectiveness and legitimacy of peacebuilding processes (UN Women, 2022).

Women's participation in peacebuilding is crucial, as they make up half of every community. Effective peacebuilding requires collaboration between women and men (Agbalajobi, 2010). Women have historically played a crucial role in caring for children and elderly family members across diverse cultures. Societal norms often place a disproportionate burden on women, expecting

them to manage caregiving and household responsibilities. When women are marginalised and excluded from peace-building initiatives, the consequences affect everyone. Therefore, it is essential to actively involve women in the peace-building process.

O'Reilly et al. (2022) have identified seven measures for women's participation in peacebuilding. Women can engage in peacebuilding through observer status, mass action, consultations, participation in negotiation, problem-solving workshops, inclusive commissions, and involvement in public decision-making. Peacebuilding stakeholders in Nigeria can adopt these measures to encourage women's participation in peace-making processes. By emphasising the need for active female participation in relevant processes and mechanisms, the gender-differentiated impact of conflict on women would be ameliorated.

It is necessary to eliminate the structural and cultural violence that has weakened women's participation in the peace-making process. Inequality occasioned by pervasive patriarchal structures should be removed to ensure a more equitable society for women in peace-making and peacebuilding. These efforts promote gender equality and challenge stereotypes. When women hold leadership positions, their perspectives contribute to a more balanced and effective decision-making process. The important role that the traditional leaders will play is crucial in eliminating gender roles and patriarchal structures. This is because they are closer to the communities, and the communities rely on their trust in them. It is easy to use these channels to address gender roles and to ensure women's inclusion at all levels of the peace process, formal and informal.

Women can create collaborative groups to combat discrimination and marginalisation. These groups can organise workshops to educate the public about the importance of women's participation in social issues. By showcasing examples of women actively engaging in societal affairs, they can illustrate the possibility of a society that views women as equal human beings, rather than submissive individuals. Empowered women, who understand the impact of gender inequality, can collectively raise their voices to create positive change (Chikwe, Kuteesa, and Ediae, 2024). To empower women as active peacebuilders, several strategies can be effective. Advocating for quotas specifically for women's participation in peace processes is a crucial step. Similar to the 30% affirmative action for political participation, these quotas create an obligation for the government and the public to include women in peace processes. While immediate results may not be spontaneous, such quotas set the stage for meaningful change and underscore the importance of women's involvement in building lasting peace (Walsh & Murphy, 2025).

The government should ensure that quotas play a crucial role in ensuring women's representation during critical phases of transition. By incorporating a specific percentage (e.g., 35%) for women's participation in peace agreements, we create an obligation to include them. Additionally, these quotas increase the visibility of women's contributions. In addition, there is a need for specialised training in negotiation, mediation, conflict resolution, and leadership skills for women. These skills enhance women's effectiveness as peacebuilders. For effective peacebuilding, women should be equipped with the knowledge and tools needed to actively engage in peace-building processes. All this knowledge acquired will facilitate connections among women peacebuilders because networks allow for information sharing, collaboration, and mutual support, while pairing experienced leaders

with emerging peacebuilders, learning from all these mentors enhances skills and confidence for women at any level of development in society (Brubaker, Bennett, and Erikse, 2024).

Various media outlets should be encouraged to feature stories of women's engagement in peacebuilding. Their work often goes unnoticed, and amplifying their voices creates awareness by producing documentaries and conducting interviews that showcase the resilience, courage, and contributions of women peacebuilders. Others can be through community dialogue by sharing their experiences and failures, education and awareness of their roles in conflict prevention, resolution, and reconciliation, and public campaigns highlighting their successes and partnerships with government and organisations, both locally and internationally (Brubaker et al., 2024; Hirblinger, 2024). Fifth, women should be included in decision-making forums that are related to peace and security. Their unique perspectives enrich discussions and contribute to more comprehensive solutions. Additionally, the United Nations should adopt measures that increase the representation of women delegates in peace processes, ensuring a more inclusive and effective approach to conflict resolution (O'Rourke, 2024).

Women need to be supported by addressing the needs of survivors of sexual violence and trauma during conflict and post-conflict phases by providing specialised care and resources to help them heal. It is important to prioritise healthcare, education, and economic opportunities for women affected by conflict so they can rebuild their lives and contribute to their communities (Onu et al., 2024). There is a need to enhance women's participation in peacekeeping forces; currently, women constitute only a small percentage of peacekeepers. Promote women's involvement in various roles, including military contingents, police units, and justice personnel.

Gender transformation is necessary for shifting mindsets within communities, often initiated by influential figures. Collaborating with and sensitising religious leaders, traditional leaders, and respected community members as allies or advocates is valuable for promoting gender transformation (Akintayo, Ifeanyi, & Onunka, 2024). Nigerian women's grassroots initiatives are essential for peacebuilding. By utilising informal networks and addressing critical issues such as mental health, they actively raise living standards and foster resilience within their communities. All peace-building processes.

Conclusion

The UNSC Resolution 1325 and the SDG 5 complement each other as instruments of gender equality in peacebuilding. They reinforced the critical roles of women not only in conflict situations but also in society generally as peacebuilders. Women's involvement and engagement in peace initiatives is not only a matter of equality but also a strategic investment in the security and development of society at large. Their contributions are vital for creating lasting peace and prosperity in communities worldwide. The successful implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) hinges on political will to turn its provisions into reality. Empowering women in peacebuilding is a crucial, ongoing mission, particularly in conflict-affected regions such as Africa. Where this is absent, as is the case in Nigeria, conflicts will continue to fester, and women will remain vulnerable to the various consequences. Thus, rather than being used only at the

informal levels, the paper concludes that stakeholders and government agencies should integrate women's peacebuilding efforts into formal peace processes.

In Nigeria, women predominantly lead grassroots peace-building organisations, mostly at an informal level. However, women have been seen to play a critical role in peacebuilding and security, representing half of the population in fragile and conflict-affected communities. They frequently endure conflict-related violence and specific harm. Their active engagement is vital for achieving sustainable peace and development, which is necessary for achieving SDG5. Despite barriers to empowerment, these women support one another in their efforts to promote peace within their communities. These efforts should be transformed into a national policy and a framework for engagement. Their implementations, with expected positive outcomes, would boost formalised women's participation in peace-building activities with several initiatives.

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