WOMEN AND PEACE PROCESSES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The position of women in peace process is of significance in brokering sustainable peace in the society. With them being the most affected next to the children in any violent conflict situation, they are wont with the wherewithal to approach peacebuilding with their care giving disposition. But they are denied this privilege owing to their gender status as customs and power relation in the society prescribe. The Agency Theory is used to expound this study. This inquest relies on secondary data,therefore content analysis is used to make end inferences. It recommends that women should not be seen as second fiddle and peaceful while men dominant and violent, there should be cultural reorientation in Nigeria where obnoxious practices of relegation of women to the background be prohibited and the democratic space in Nigeria should presentvents for the implementation of greater gender equality and offer a window for change. It however concludes that women hold in trust all ascribed status in the society and perform assigned functions with utmost good faith which endear their having positive outcome in such. Peace process can best be delivered by not only the men but women inclusive.

KEYWORDS: Women, Peace, Peace-building, and Processes

INTRODUCTION

Women throughout the world are the caregivers, have been using diplomacy in their actions and have been performing this natural and ascribed roles optimally. But this dispositions has not been exploited when peace is ruptured and the agenda for peace process is set in the post conflict. The relegation of women to the background is often the practice when peace is being negotiated and when there is post conflict reconstruction. Women are seen as subordinate gender and thus disempowered so they cannot be place on same equation as men. This expresses the case in Africa and worldover. According to UN Women (2002), women constitute fewer than 10% of peace negotiators globally and are only 3% of signatories to peace agreements. The statistics shows under representation or active participation of women in peace process despite the fact that they bear the ugly burden violence such as rape, abduction, death and enslavement.

The indirect and indirect deaths of millions of deaths of people in Sub Saharan Africa can be attributed to the violent conflicts that have plagued the region. These countries of the Sub Saharan region are characterized by abject poverty, inadequate service provision,

political instability and retarded economic growth among others. All these directly affect women. This is because despitethe fact that these conflicts have disproportionate effects on their lives, womencontinue to be viewed as the glue that holds their communities together in the face of the weak social fabric created by these conflicts (Puechguirbal, 2005). By this very fact women have to actively participate in peace building.

As one of the nations in the world that passed through a lot of violent conflict, Nigeria is yet experiencing them. These conflicts come with devastating effects leading to massive loss of lives, destruction of properties, destruction of infrastructures etc. Owing to the preponderance of this unwholesome phenomenon, different methods are adopted to address the issue in form of peacekeeping missions, panels of enquiry, truth and reconciliation commissions etc. These peace processes have overtime been largely dominated by men with little or no participation from women arising from gender inequality, patriarchal cultural practices etc that permeates into peacebuilding(Olaitan,2018). In a culturally laden society, mores have placed women to take roles in informal rather than formal

setting where their resourcefulness in the area of enacting peace and reconciliation can be seen.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in the year 2000, implemented a new resolution called UNSC Resolution 1325 in regards to women, peace and security. The resolution consists of four ground pillars which are prevention, participation, protection and peacebuilding and recovery. This resolution was hinged on the acknowledgement that women are to a large extent often excluded from the peace process in post conflict situation. The resolution was created to establish the significant role women perform in the prevention and resolution of peace, both in negotiating for and building peace (UN Women, 2016). Theresolution was also focused on promoting women's participation in the peace building process as equals to men as well as their involvement in the maintenance and promotion of peace. The adoption of Resolution 1325 was unique in the sense that the UNSC for the first time put all their attention towards women in armed conflict and identified women as agents in negotiating and maintaining peace instead of only victims (Tryggestad, 2009). The resolution depicts the acknowledgement that women play important rolein peace processes. The direct consequences of armed conflicts is on women and any form of

exclusion of women in peace process would be counterproductive, dehumanizing and an act of injustice.

There are so many debate as to the role women can play in peace process. However their positive impact have been indelible and far reaching in many peacebuilding and peace negotiation exercises. Despite their result oriented engagement in enacting peace, they are in some cases yet to be understood by some persons owing to build-up perception and societal power relations. The numerical strength of women of being approximately half of the population in most nations, is a critical factor that should offer them a vantage position in peacebuilding and peace agreements but they are limited.

Involving women in peace processes is duty for all nations in the United Nations Organization and as a result,women have the right to take part in all peace efforts. Women have got to be on the negotiation tables to bring gender and equality issues to the discussions and agendas. If the principles of democracy of equality and justice are anything to go by, then involving them becomes an obligation. In furtherance, engaging them is also an important asset in order to precipitate peace processes. Women's involvement means bringing to the deliberation the views of many social groups,

as gender identity intersects with other layers such as ethnicity, religion or class.

Women have to be considered not as minority but as a significant group in itself, a group that embodies experiences and ideas of many others (Kazam, 2000). The absence of women implies the absence of justice, equality and inclusion principles and therefore a partial approach to peacebuilding. Not always will women have specific demands different from the demands of other social groups. But they can contribute to improve methodologies, communication among the parties and can help building trust among them. Having a specific agenda does not have to be a requirement to take part in the process. Nevertheless, quite often women will have their very own specific demands that will need to be addressed.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Peace Process

According to Saunders(2001) peace processes is "a political process in which conflicts are resolved by peaceful means. ‘They are mixture of politics, diplomacy, changing, relationships, negotiation, mediation,and dialogue inboth official and unofficial ar enas."Saunders says that peace processes operate simultaneously in four arenas:

i. **The Official Arena**: This is the arena of official "track I" diplomats who establish personal relationships with their counterparts on the other side, negotiate interim and final agreements, and work to improve relationships between governments.

ii. **The Quasi-Official Arena**: The people involved are outside of government, but have close ties to government and trade information back and forth.

iii. **Public Peace Processes:** This is the arena of sustained dialogue between non-officials, who try to address the "human" (as opposed to governmental) causes of conflict: perceptions, stereotypes, distrust, sense of hopelessness.

iv. **Civil Society:** This is the arena in which civilians live and work. It is comprised of networks of relationships, often between disputing groups. In intractable conflicts, these relationships break down, causing tears in the framework of civil society which must be rebuilt in any peace process.

Peace processes presents a rare opportunity for the society that has been affected by violent conflicts. This is an entry point for conflict transformative process and platform that will end direct violence. However, peace processes are the activitiesthat seek to create a

culture of peace for an enduring peaceful co-existence in inter-group, national or international arena. They activities could range from discusses, meetings, agreements, parleys and negotiations).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Agency Theory: What underpins the problematic of women in peace process, can be understood via the concept of agency. A unified definition is that agency is the capacity humans have to shape the circumstances for their own life and how the actions people think of as free, untinted by others, often are a result of the structures in the society one live in (Hitlin & Elder, 2007). One example of this is that women are seen as victims of war rather than agents of change. This is based on the general assumption that war is gendered and often ascribed as a masculinized story. The discourse of agency is depreciated from what it means to be a woman (Shepherd, 2016). Understanding the concept of agency makes for the vitalization power relation in the society. Exercise of power is masculinized in Nigeria, as a result women are subordinated to men in the powerequation.Shepherd (2016) discusses women as agents of change rather than victims of violence. This she tries to put forward to correct the notion by some scholars who see men the perpetrators while women are the victims of violence in conflicts without considering their roles in war.

Further, she means that by only letting women be represented as victims of violence undermines their agency and thus the development of peacebuilding activities, in which women can participate and all their experiences of conflict is addressed is undermined. Focus is placed on changing the way women are continuously labelled in conflicts, where women are solely seen as victims. Women in conflicts often take part as decision makers, negotiators, peace activists and participating in the military struggle. However, all effort is meant to acknowledge women as agents rather than victims and strengthen their roles as agents for social transformation.

METHODOLOGY

The study relies on secondary data where related literature from journal articles, internet materials, academic archival resource, books are used for the problematic. Therefore content analysis is used to make end inferences.

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES IN POST CONFLICT SITUATION IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is not left out of this issue, to begin with, Nigeria is a country in the western hemisphere of Africa bordered by Benin republic to the west, Cameroon to the east, Niger to the north. It has a population of over 180 million, the largest population for an

African country in the world, with over 250 ethnic groups making up its demography with three dominant groups (Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa). Just like most African countries, it was colonised by the British officially from the year 1900 gaining independence in 1960. Following her independence from the colonialists, lots of anomalies became the trend with the national struggle substituted with tribal politics by the political elites. The political system therefore was divided along ethnic lines just like the system of government which was a regional structure based on ethnic lines (west, east, north and middle belt). This structure gave much motivation for the country's affairs to be decided along tribal lines which is still reflecting in the country till date. The country has experienced lots of conflict which are always masked as tensions between two ethnic groups with all these conflicts manifesting into a full blown civil war in 1967. Nigeria just like any other third world country apart from tribal politics has a lot of shortcomings which are hindering its development.

Gender inequalitypermeates every sphere in Nigeria. There is palpable low participation of women in politics which affects women participation in peacebuilding. As a result women have been marginalised in peacebuilding processes. Since its independence in 1960, few women have broken into the political system as active

participants, till date the country has only had few females at dominant elective positions (Patricia Etteh; former Speaker of the house of representatives, Florence Ita-Giwa; former Senator, Virginia Etiaba; first female governor in Nigeria etc.) The discourse around low women participation in politics in Nigeria has gained lots of attention following the country's participation in the 1995 Beijing women conference resolution on platform for action. The resolution sought for active participation of women in the political sphere, gender equality, feminization of poverty, promote girl-child awareness, protecting the rights of the girl-child etc. This resolution spurred democratic governments in Nigeria starting from the Obasanjo regime to actively work towards ensuring the inclusion of women in public spheres with the target of 30% of all political positions in the country should be held by women. The discourse of women's participation in peace processes is at its lowest in the country with most of the resolution mechanisms put in place by the government being male dominated. Some of these processes are the panels of enquiry, truth and reconciliation commissions, national youth service corps, federal character etc. These measures are composed and headed majorly by men with no participation from women. This and other scenarios engendered the passing of the UN

resolution 1325 in 2000 to allow for more participation of women in peacebuilding.

IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESS IN NIGERIA

O'Reilly et al. (2015) highlight that between 1992 and 2011 only 2% of chief mediators and 9% of negotiators in peace processes were women. They argue that a leading barrier to women's participation is that the goal is often merely to end violence, where women play a small part and that if the focus were instead on building peace women would play a more prominent role. Moreover, women's security needs and priorities for peace differ from international system's focus on state security. Finally, organisations that prioritise women's participation, for example the UN, often have little power to influence the direction of the process.

O'Reilly et al. (2015) stress the importance of including women in peacebulding. The Geneva Graduate Institute's Broadening Participation Project examined the roles of women's groups in 40 peace and transition processes and found that the involvement of women made it more likely for an agreement to be reached and increased the probability that the peace agreement will last longer. Nonetheless, tensions exist between the level of actual change fostered in the processes; the inclusion of gender sensitive language

is not the same as the inclusion of women and it is important that this differentiation is made clear. Moreover, Women's participation in peace process does not mean issues of gender will be finally solved. What matters according to O'Reilly et al. (2015) is that the quality of women's participation is more important than the quantity of women participating and thus quotas are not necessarily beneficial. However, the relationship between women's participation and gender-equality factored in peacebuilding agreements and the extent of impact rather depends on the form of women's engagement.

To promote women's empowermentand gender equity in conflict-affected and fragile contexts action must be taken on various levels including constitutional, institutional and legal frameworks that factor gender equality and equity, inclusive and equitable political institutions and gender-responsive economic and social policy-making, and clear accountability mechanisms. These should be locally driven (with attention to existing ethnic, religious and economic divisions) however international actors should build capacity and support local women's organisations, rather than give programmes for them to implement(O'Connell, 2011).

ENCUMBRANCES AGAINST WOMEN IN PEACE PROCESS IN NIGERIA

Gender Inequality

Arising from mores is societal behavior that have morphed into institutionalsed platforms thereby setting thresholds for women's participation manifesting into gender inequality. With this arrangement, gender inequality is normative and embroiled into larger society from the patriarchal beliefs and practices of culture. This establishes a dichotomy between man and a woman therefore equality cannot be stricken. Onyewere (2017) argues that often culture is usually the justification wielded for the denial of women's right and the perpetuation of gender inequality in Nigeria. The patriarchal society sets restrictive parameters on the women's activities, creating a social structure that promotes and condones domestic and sexual violence on women, sexual objectification of women. This plays out in social relationship between a both genders, more privileges are available to the man as against the woman, discrimination is so crude in family, schools, workplace, political system etc. The female gender is not held in the same regard as the male gender, this is detrimental because it becomes a weaponization of patriarchal cultural norms against the woman thus

affecting the role women can play. This discrimination comes with it features such as fixed gender roles, a conservative society has the responsibilities of the female gender set out in rigidity which often requires mass protest to break through the system. Such roles are women do not fight wars, women are home-keepers, women are assistants to their husbands, women are meant to be submissive to the man etc. all these only reinforce women's exclusion from contributing to important decision making in the society

Nonetheless, state-building in conflict-affected and fragile contexts provides opportunities for implementing greater gender equality, as it offers a window for change. Post-conflict state-building can provide women with the opportunity to mobilise, be heard, and become more politically active due to the opening of a democratic space. However, at the same time, this is not always the case and these spaces can also end up being dominated by men and omit gender equality in the agenda (Khodary, 2016).

Patriarchal aspect of Culture

Culture is the totality of language, norms, values, practices that guide way of life. Within the Yoruba culture of the West, Igbo culture of the East and the Hausa/Fulani culture of the north, there are elements that seek to limit the role women play in society while advancing the argument that the man is more powerful than the

woman. This is in no way an antagonism to the male gender but an illumination on the patriarchal and discriminatory practices these cultures perpetrate against women. These three-dominant cultures have one thing in common which is patriarchy, the lower status ascribed to a woman compared to the man which permeates all spheres of societal relations. In Nigeria, especially the northern part, girl-child marriage is a very prevalent practice where young girls of tender age are being given up for marriage to men far older than them. This situation puts those girls in health risks and some other vulnerabilities. Garba, (2016) states that, the situation in Nigeria especially in the conflict prone areas of the North, is one where the women lack the capacity to make meaningful contributions towards achieving sustainable peace especially in formal processes. This is largely because of the patriarchal culture in the North. A culture that promotes male domination and female subordination. The women remain under the control of their fathers and husbands; from when they are girls to when they get married. This is a confirmation that the society does not regard the opinion of the female gender.

In the Eastern region of Nigeria a woman cannot be a member of the council of elders because it is meant for only men. Patriarchy is part and parcel of these cultures that it reflects in the day to day life. A woman is only meant to be a housekeeper, a submissive being that

obeys her husband. Or that there is a limit to how a woman should be educated because she is meant for home-keeping, she will end up being someone's wife. This affects a woman's rights to be an independent being within the institution of marriage because she becomes the property of the man that should be seen but not to be heard. Also, in eastern Nigeria, women until the 21st century have no right to own properties or claim right to inheritance, it had to take a Supreme Court ruling to overrule such practices. These practices and beliefs come with their blows just as argued that some of these harmful cultural practices pervasively promotes the crimes against the Nigerian women and they include the female genital mutilation (FGM), domestic violence, child brides or forced marriages, rape denial of inheritance and many other cases of abuse against women.

A society that is premised on a culture that does not regard the woman as an equal partner to the man, or an equal being within the community, cannot allow for women participation in societal affairs. What we see is women not participating, but the context is thousands of years old beliefs and practices that have been passed down from generation to generation that discriminates against the woman. This shows that patriarchy as a system is cultural violence that is majorly affecting women and their self-actualisation in the society. This is still prevalent because Nigeria is a conservative

country that heavily relies on culture which is one of sources of the constitution of the country, culture permeates and manifests in different ways. Peacebuilding is one of the way it has come to affect, because of the belief that a woman is most relevant as a home-keeper, should be seen and not be heard, this has disincentive the active participation of women in peace processes.

EFFECTIVENESS OF WOMEN IN PEACE PROCESS

At the local level women have sought to strengthen solidarity among them. Associations bringing together women of varied ethnic groups, and enemies of yesterday, have come into being, similarly, women have formed prayer groups in drop in centers. In these associations the women jointly undertake income generating activities, or seek to heal the physical, moral and
physiological wounds of war (Anderlini, 2000).

At the national level, women have developed survival strategies and reconstruction plans for communities destroyed by war. They have engaged in lobbying belligerents to lay down arms and they organize consciousness raising campaigns to help women become more fully integrated into the decision making structures of the peace processes in which they invest more and more energy. In the

face of the painful abuse of which they are victims, particularly the assaults on their bodily
integrity, women have learnt to unite and organize in order to bring about a collective solution to their problems and ask for assistance or request for protection of their rights by appealing to international authority (Anderlini, 2000).

The participation of women's groups is associated with desired negotiation outcomes only when
the groups has a strong influence on the process. The level of influence was measured byboth the extent to which included actors brought specific topics that addressed the causes of conflict to the negotiation agenda and/or whether these were integrated into the agreement. Influence also included the extent to which actors pushed for starting negotiations or reaching an agreement. According to Olofson (2018)the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 the role women play for peace and security was affirmed. Since the implementation of the resolution, almost two decades ago, more than 400 peace agreements has been signed. Since then one can assume much has happened regarding women and their role in the peace process.

When women's groups influence negotiations or champion peace agreement, peace deal would have been sealed. Where women's

groups have for instance a little influence, an agreement can be reached in many situations of peace process. And when they are not involved at all, or have a low influence on the process, the chance of reaching an agreement is distant possible.

Olofson (2018) says that women's involvement is not the only factor influencing the likelihood of reaching anagreement, and agreements were also reached in a few cases without women's participation. Nevertheless, the results demonstrate that women's inclusion does not hinder reaching agreements, as is sometimes argued. On the contrary, women's inclusion is associated with an increased likelihood of an agreement being reached.Moreover, there was not a single case where organized women's groups had a negative impacton a peace process. This does not hold true for other groups, which have at times rallied against peace processes—in Sri Lanka, for example, Buddhist monks and civil society organizations conducted demonstrations against the peace process. On the contrary, women's groups frequently mobilized en masse to help seal a peace deal, from Liberia to Northern Ireland. When women's groups were able to exercisestrong influence, the chances of agreements being implemented—in short, that the resulting peace would be sustainedwere also much higher. When an agreement was reached, all of the cases with strong women's influence saw either

partial of full implementation of this agreement. In general, the stronger the influence was, the higher the likelihood of implementing an agreement.

CONCLUSION

The world has come to recognize the significant role that women play in peace process and Nigeria cannot afford not to join the popular path. Women hold in trust all ascribed status in the society and perform assigned functions with utmost good faith which endear their having positive outcome in such.Peace process can best be delivered by not only the men but women inclusive. This therefore enact result orientation as it is a form of hybridization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Women ought not to be given roles based on profiling and stereotypes. Women should not be seen as second fiddle and peaceful while men dominant and violent.

The democratic space in Nigeria should present an opportunities for implementing greater gender equality and offer a window for change. This will ensure the garnering of the capacity of to mobilize themselves to be heard and be active in politics owing to the democratic space.

There should be cultural reorientation in Nigeria where obnoxious practices of relegating women to the background be prohibited. This will allow of the deserved recognition of women to take part in governance as well peace process.

Pressure should be put forward in a way to increase gender-equality content in peace agreements impressing on delegates and mediators by women's civil-society organisations. Thus, it is important that steps are taken to encourage and enable the participation of women's civil-society organisations in peacebuilding.

Nigeria should have a legislation that will make it mandatory to not only involve women to participate in peace process but substantial number of them be engaged in the exercise.

Women in Nigeria should be organized in group clusters for the purpose of engagement in peace process. The members of the group would be trained on peace negotiation and how to manage conflict. These groups would be formed and be on red alert incase an eventuality occurs, they are mobilized to take part in peace deal.

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