Women as Stakeholder in Peacemaking and Security in Nigeria: Efforts Towards Achieving National Development

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Sections Info	ABSTRACT
	Objective: This study investigates the underutilized yet significant role of women in peacemaking and security processes in Nigeria, focusing on their contributions as mediators, community leaders, and peacebuilders in conflict resolution and national development. *Method:* Utilizing J. Ann Tickner's feminist security theory as the theoretical framework, the study adopts a qualitative approach through thematic content analysis of secondary sources, including published and unpublished academic literature. *Results:* Findings reveal that while women possess unique capabilities to address the social and economic dimensions of conflict, cultural, religious, and societal norms continue to marginalize them from formal decision-making in peace and security efforts. The research underscores the necessity of incorporating women into official peace negotiations and security frameworks to achieve more inclusive and sustainable conflict resolution outcomes. *Novelty:* This paper contributes original insight by contextualizing feminist security theory within the Nigerian peace-building landscape and highlighting the transformative potential of women's inclusion in national security strategies. It recommends institutional mechanisms and quota-based representation to ensure women's active participation in security and peacemaking processes at all governance levels.

INTRODUCTION

The role of women in peacemaking and security has gained increasing recognition globally. However, their involvement in Nigeria remains underappreciated, despite their historical and contemporary contributions. Women's roles in conflict resolution and national security, though often marginalized, are fundamental in fostering sustainable peace and development. Their unique perspectives, rooted in their social and communal positions, allow for the cultivation of more inclusive and effective approaches to peacebuilding.

Peacemaking is a complex process that involves not only resolving immediate disputes but also addressing the root causes of conflict to ensure long-lasting peace. Successful peacemaking requires a combination of negotiation, mediation, diplomacy, and grassroots engagement. However, peacemaking efforts often face numerous challenges, including power imbalances, spoilers, and difficulties in sustaining peace after agreements are made. Despite these challenges, effective strategies and the involvement of diverse actors make peacemaking a critical tool in conflict resolution [1].

Despite the increasing recognition of women's roles in peacemaking and security worldwide, their participation in Nigeria remains significantly limited. Nigeria continues to face persistent challenges such as terrorism, communal conflicts, and political

instability, yet the country has largely failed to integrate women effectively into peace processes and security decision-making structures. This exclusion not only undermines efforts to achieve sustainable peace but also impedes national development [2].

The underrepresentation of women in formal peacemaking processes is evident in both the political sphere and security institutions. Women's contributions are often relegated to informal or grassroots roles, which are not always acknowledged by policymakers or included in national security strategies. Furthermore, cultural norms and gender stereotypes often view security and conflict resolution as male-dominated fields, reinforcing barriers to women's full engagement [3].

This problem is critical because research consistently shows that women's involvement in peacebuilding leads to more effective and durable outcomes. A study by UN Women found that peace agreements involving women are 35% more likely to last at least 15 years than those that exclude them [4]. Similarly, O'Reilly, Ó Súilleabháin, and Paffenholz, in their report Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes, emphasize that the inclusion of women broadens perspectives, fosters inclusivity, and helps address root causes of conflict more effectively [5].

However, in Nigeria, women's participation in formal peace processes is minimal, with only a few women occupying leadership roles in national peace and security institutions. For example, the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders noted that while Nigeria developed its first National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, which focuses on women, peace, and security, implementation has been slow and uneven [6]. Moreover, traditional conflict resolution structures in many Nigerian communities remain patriarchal, limiting women's access to decision-making.

Another significant issue is that Nigerian women disproportionately bear the brunt of violence and insecurity. According to a report by Amnesty International, women in conflict-affected areas, particularly in the northeast, are often victims of sexual violence, forced displacement, and abductions, further highlighting the urgent need for their voices in security matters [7]. However, despite these direct impacts, women's agency in shaping peace processes is often overlooked.

Globally, women have been recognized as vital stakeholders in peace processes through landmark frameworks like United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which highlights the importance of women's full and equal participation in peace and security efforts. Nigeria has also made some progress by adopting a National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, but implementation remains uneven. Achieving national development requires the inclusion of all segments of society, especially women, in security frameworks. Their roles as mediators, advocates, and leaders at the grassroots level are invaluable in creating long-lasting peace. Women's experiences, resilience, and abilities to mobilize communities for peace make them indispensable in addressing the deep-rooted causes of conflict and insecurity in Nigeria.

As Nigeria continues to face complex security challenges, including insurgency, ethnic violence, and social inequality, it is imperative to harness the full capabilities of its

population. Women's inclusion is essential to creating holistic, durable peace solutions that address the root causes of conflict. This paper explored the critical roles women play in peacemaking and security in Nigeria, assessed the challenges they face, and examined efforts aimed at enhancing their participation. It will also highlight how promoting women's involvement in these areas is essential for achieving national development and sustainable peace. Various methodologies were employed to accomplish this. The analysis draws on secondary sources, including published and unpublished academic literature; thematic analysis was used for analysis.

Theoretical Framework

Feminist Security Theory

The Feminist Security Theory (FST) was notably developed by J. Ann Tickner in 1992 in her seminal work Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security [8]. This theory emphasizes the unique experiences and roles of women in security issues, advocating for the inclusion of gender perspectives in peace and security. It challenges traditional security paradigms, which often marginalize women, and argues that sustainable peace requires addressing the structural inequalities that women face. FST emerged as a critique of traditional security studies, which often ignore gendered experiences of conflict and security. Its assumptions are grounded in feminist critiques of power, inequality, and exclusion in international relations [9].

The key assumptions of Feminist Security Theory include:

Security is Gendered – FST assumes that security cannot be fully understood without addressing how gender shapes experiences of conflict and insecurity. Traditional security studies focus on state and military protection, neglecting how individuals—especially women—experience insecurity differently, both during conflict and in peacetime [10].

The State is Not the Sole Provider of Security – FST challenges the state-centric focus of traditional security theories, which view the state's military strength as the primary source of security. Instead, it argues that true security must include protections for individuals—especially women—who may face violence from the state, societal structures, or within the home (e.g., domestic violence, sexual violence in war) [11].

War and Violence Have Gendered Consequences – FST posits that women are disproportionately affected by certain forms of violence, particularly sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in conflicts. Traditional security studies often overlook these consequences, making it imperative that peace and security strategies address these specific gendered impacts [12].

Inclusion of Women is Essential for Sustainable Peace – FST assumes that sustainable peace requires the active participation of women in peacebuilding and decision-making processes. Excluding women perpetuates gender inequality and undermines the legitimacy of peace agreements [13].

Power Structures Perpetuate Insecurity – FST highlights the ways in which patriarchal structures, both within and outside the state, perpetuate insecurity for women. These structures reinforce inequalities that keep women in subordinate

positions, limiting their access to economic opportunities, political power, and protection from violence [14].

Security Must Include Human Well-Being, Not Just Military Protection – FST expands the definition of security to include economic, social, and political rights. It assumes that true security cannot be achieved without addressing poverty, healthcare, education, and other social inequalities [15].

Applying this theory, we may conclude that in Nigeria, where gender inequality is a persistent issue, incorporating women in peace processes aligns with broader Feminist Security Theory principles. The theory helps analyze how women can contribute uniquely to peacemaking and how their inclusion can lead to more comprehensive and lasting security solutions. It also highlights how conflict and insecurity affect women differently and stresses the need for their involvement in decision-making.

Feminist Security Theory provides a critical framework for understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by women in Nigeria's security landscape. By promoting the inclusion of women in peace processes, expanding the definition of security to include social and economic well-being, and challenging patriarchal structures that perpetuate inequality, FST offers a path toward sustainable peace and development in Nigeria. Addressing these gendered issues is not only essential for the security of women but also for the overall stability and progress of the nation.

Women and National Development

Women are adult human females, typically recognized by their biological characteristics, such as the ability to give birth and produce milk (for those biologically capable), as well as possessing two X chromosomes. However, the concept of "woman" extends beyond biological definitions to encompass social, cultural, and personal identity aspects. Historically, women have been assigned roles related to domestic work, child-rearing, and caregiving. However, these roles have significantly shifted over time due to social and political movements advocating for gender equality.

Today, women play diverse roles in all aspects of life, including politics, business, education, and science. From a gender studies perspective, "woman" can be understood as a socially constructed identity, influenced by cultural norms, expectations, and individual experiences. This broader view acknowledges that gender is not merely biological but is shaped by social contexts and personal identification [16].

Women's Role in Economic Development

The role of women in national development has gained increasing recognition in discussions on economic and social progress. Women's participation in various spheres — politics, economy, education, and health — has been proven to directly impact a country's development outcomes. Research suggests that closing gender gaps in the workforce could contribute significantly to global economic growth. For instance, a McKinsey & Company report found that eliminating gender gaps in employment could add $12 trillion to the global GDP by 2025 [17].

Additionally, women tend to reinvest a larger portion of their income in their families and communities compared to men, which accelerates broader social development [18]. In agriculture, which serves as the backbone of many developing economies, women's labor is crucial. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, if women had equal access to productive resources as men, agricultural output in developing countries could rise by up to 4%, significantly contributing to food security and poverty reduction [19].

Women in Politics and Governance

Women's involvement in politics is essential for inclusive governance and sustainable development. Studies indicate that when women participate in decision-making processes, policies are more likely to address key social issues such as health care, education, and social welfare [20]. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) reports that countries with higher percentages of women in national parliaments tend to pass more progressive laws on gender equality, child care, and social protection [21].

However, global representation of women in politics remains low. As of 2021, only 26.1% of parliamentary seats were held by women [21]. Barriers to political participation include gender biases, lack of financial support, and traditional norms that limit women's public roles [22]. Increasing women's representation is crucial for shaping policies that are responsive to the needs of the entire population.

Challenges to Women's Full Participation

Despite positive developments, significant barriers still prevent women from fully contributing to national development. Cultural norms, legal restrictions, and economic disparities continue to hinder progress. Akerkar argues that without addressing structural inequalities, development efforts will remain incomplete [23]. Other critical barriers include:

1. Gender-based violence, which limits women's mobility and participation in development.
2. Unequal access to resources, such as education, land ownership, and financial services.
3. Discriminatory laws and policies, which reinforce social and economic exclusion.

The United Nations stresses that the inclusion of women in national development is not only a matter of human rights but is essential for achieving economic and social progress [24]. Evidence continues to underscore the significant contributions women make to development. Thus, dismantling the barriers preventing women's full participation is crucial. Sustainable development can only be achieved through gender equality and the empowerment of women across all sectors.

Peacemaking

Peacemaking refers to the efforts and processes undertaken to establish peace between conflicting parties, often involving negotiation, dialogue, and diplomacy. It aims to address the root causes of conflict and create conditions that ensure a long-lasting resolution. Peacemaking can occur at different levels—local, national, and

international—and typically involves governments, international organizations, and civil society [25].

Peacemaking is a central concept in conflict resolution, distinguishing itself from peacekeeping (the maintenance of peace) and peacebuilding (the long-term process of sustaining peace). The United Nations defines peacemaking as efforts to bring hostile parties to a negotiated agreement through peaceful means [26].

Several theories inform the practice of peacemaking, with key approaches being realism, liberalism, and constructivism:

1. Realism and Peacemaking – Realism views peacemaking as a strategic move in the balance of power, where conflict resolution is achieved when parties calculate the costs of continued conflict versus the benefits of peace. Realist peacemaking often emphasizes the use of power and military strength to enforce agreements [27]. Hans Morgenthau argues that states primarily act in their own national interests, and peace is often achieved through deterrence or coercion rather than mutual cooperation [28].

2. Liberalism and Peacemaking – Liberalism focuses on the role of institutions, democracy, and international cooperation in fostering peace. According to Doyle, democracies are less likely to go to war with each other, and thus democratic governance is seen as a pathway to peace [29]. Liberal peacemaking promotes diplomacy, negotiation, and the establishment of international norms that discourage conflict. It assumes that international institutions (such as the United Nations and the International Criminal Court) play a crucial role in facilitating peace agreements.

3. Constructivism and Peacemaking – Constructivism highlights the importance of identity, culture, and norms in peacemaking. It argues that conflicts often arise from perceived differences in identity or values, and thus peacemaking should address these underlying cultural or ideological differences through dialogue and understanding [30]. Wendt suggests that states do not inherently perceive each other as threats but develop such perceptions through historical interactions and social constructs [31].

By integrating realist, liberal, and constructivist approaches, peacemaking strategies can be more effective in addressing both the power dynamics and the cultural narratives that fuel conflicts. As Nigeria continues to grapple with security challenges, ethnic tensions, and political instability, a comprehensive approach to peacemaking—one that balances power dynamics, democratic governance, and cultural reconciliation—is essential for achieving lasting peace.

Security/Insecurity

Security refers to the protection of a nation's borders and territories against external threats, including military invasions and terrorism. It encompasses measures and protocols designed to safeguard individuals, property, organizations, and information from harm, unauthorized access, theft, or malicious activities [32].

In contrast, insecurity is the antithesis of security and has manifested in various patterns in Nigeria. The country faces a wide range of insecurity challenges, driven by factors such as socio-political instability, economic hardship, religious and ethnic tensions, and organized criminal activity [33].

Major Insecurity Challenges in Nigeria

Terrorism and Insurgency (Boko Haram and ISWAP)

1. Boko Haram: One of the most notorious terrorist groups in West Africa, Boko Haram has been responsible for thousands of deaths and mass displacement of people, particularly in the northeastern region of Nigeria. Their activities include bombings, kidnappings (such as the Chibok schoolgirls in 2014), and attacks on civilians and military personnel [34].

2. ISWAP (Islamic State West Africa Province): A splinter faction of Boko Haram, ISWAP has also contributed to instability in the northeast, targeting both civilians and military installations [35].

Herders-Farmers Conflict –

This conflict occurs mainly in the Middle Belt region (Benue, Plateau, and Taraba States), where disputes over land use and grazing rights have escalated into violent clashes. Armed Fulani herdsmen and local farming communities have engaged in deadly confrontations, leading to killings, destruction of property, and displacement. The competition for land and water resources, worsened by climate change, further fuels the conflict [36].

Banditry and Kidnapping for Ransom –

1. Armed bandits, especially in northwestern states (Zamfara, Katsina, and Kaduna), engage in violent attacks on villages, mass abductions, and looting.

2. Kidnapping for ransom has become widespread, affecting both ordinary citizens and high-profile individuals.

3. Recently, there has been an increase in school kidnappings, where hundreds of students have been abducted in northern Nigeria [37].

Militancy in the Niger Delta –

1. The Niger Delta region, rich in oil, has long been a hotspot for militancy.

2. Groups such as the Niger Delta Avengers engage in oil infrastructure sabotage, kidnappings, and attacks on security forces.

3. Their grievances center around environmental degradation, lack of development, and the unequal distribution of oil wealth [38].

Separatist Agitations (IPOB and MASSOB) –

1. IPOB (Indigenous People of Biafra) and MASSOB (Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra) advocate for the secession of southeastern Nigeria.

2. Their activities, including protests and civil disobedience, have led to clashes with government forces.

3. The Nigerian government has classified IPOB as a terrorist organization, although the group insists its methods are political and propaganda-based [39].

Communal and Ethnic Conflicts –
1. Nigeria's ethnic diversity has sometimes resulted in violent inter-ethnic clashes, especially in the Middle Belt and southeastern regions.
2. Disputes over political power, land rights, and traditional leadership have led to recurring violent conflicts, involving groups such as the Tiv and Jukun or the Yoruba and Hausa communities [40].

Piracy and Maritime Insecurity –
1. Nigeria's coastal waters, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea, are hotspots for piracy.
2. Criminal groups engage in hijacking of vessels, crew kidnappings, and oil theft, which threaten international shipping and Nigeria's oil exports [41].

Religious Tensions –
1. Nigeria has experienced sectarian violence between Muslims and Christians, particularly in the northern and central regions.
2. Religious tensions are exploited by political actors, fueling conflicts, electoral violence, and communal unrest.
3. Ongoing violence in Kaduna and Plateau States has both religious and ethnic dimensions, further complicating conflict resolution efforts [42].

Political and Election-Related Violence –
1. Elections in Nigeria are often marred by violence, including clashes between rival political party supporters, attacks on election officials, and post-election protests.
2. Political thuggery and the use of armed groups to influence election outcomes

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design, drawing upon secondary data to explore the roles and challenges of women in peacemaking and security in Nigeria. The methodology was anchored in a theoretical framework informed by Feminist Security Theory (FST), which emphasizes the gendered nature of security and advocates for inclusive approaches to peacebuilding. Data collection involved an extensive review of published and unpublished academic literature, official reports, organizational documents, and empirical studies on women, peace, and security in Nigeria and globally. Thematic content analysis was utilized to identify recurring patterns and interpret the socio-political dynamics influencing women's participation in peace processes. Through this approach, the study critically assessed institutional barriers, cultural norms, and policy gaps that marginalize women from formal security structures. The qualitative data enabled a contextualized understanding of how Nigerian women engage in grassroots mediation, advocacy, and reconstruction efforts. This methodological approach allowed for a nuanced analysis of both the limitations and potential of women's involvement in national development and conflict resolution. By integrating empirical evidence with feminist theory, the study provides a grounded yet critical examination of the structural changes needed to enhance women's roles in sustainable peace and security in Nigeria.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

National Development

National development refers to the comprehensive process through which a nation improves the economic, social, and political well-being of its citizens. This multifaceted concept encompasses various aspects, including economic growth, social equity, environmental sustainability, and political stability. The overarching goal of national development is to enhance the quality of life for all citizens and create conditions that foster prosperity and social cohesion [47].

National development is a complex and dynamic process that requires a comprehensive approach to address economic, social, and environmental challenges. By investing in human capital, improving governance, and promoting sustainable practices, nations can create conditions for inclusive growth and enhance the well-being of their citizens. Achieving national development is not only a goal in itself but also essential for achieving global peace, stability, and prosperity [48].

Key Components of National Development

1. **Economic Growth and Development –**
   a. Economic growth, characterized by an increase in a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is often seen as a fundamental component of national development.
   b. However, growth alone is not sufficient for true national development. Economic development entails the qualitative improvement of the economy through equitable wealth distribution, job creation, and improved living standards, particularly for marginalized groups [49].
   c. Sustainable economic development focuses on long-term improvements in productivity, income distribution, and environmental management.

2. **Social Development –**
   a. Social development refers to improvements in the well-being of individuals and communities.
   b. It involves the expansion of social services such as education, healthcare, housing, and social security.
   c. A developed nation ensures that all citizens have access to these essential services, which are critical for human development [50].
   d. Amartya Sen's Capability Approach emphasizes that development should be measured by the capabilities people have to live the kind of life they value.
   e. In this sense, national development is about enabling individuals to reach their full potential and participate meaningfully in society [51].

3. **Political Development –**
   a. Political development involves the establishment of stable and inclusive political institutions that promote democratic governance, rule of law, and political participation.

   b. A developed nation provides a transparent and accountable political system where citizens can exercise their rights, participate in decision-making, and contribute to governance [52].

   c. Political development also requires the protection of human rights and the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as women and ethnic minorities, in political processes.

   d. Political stability is crucial for fostering economic growth and ensuring the implementation of development policies [53].

4. **Human Development –**

   a. The concept of human development, as articulated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), focuses on expanding people's choices, opportunities, and freedoms.

   b. The Human Development Index (HDI), which measures life expectancy, education, and per capita income, is a widely used indicator of national development.

   c. A developed nation invests in human capital by providing quality education and healthcare, enhancing skills, and promoting a healthy and knowledgeable population capable of contributing to society's progress [54].

5. **Environmental Sustainability –**

   a. In modern discourse, environmental sustainability has become an essential aspect of national development.

   b. It refers to the responsible management of natural resources to ensure that future generations can meet their own needs.

   c. Sustainable development strategies are essential for addressing issues such as climate change, deforestation, pollution, and resource depletion.

   d. For national development to be truly comprehensive, economic growth must be aligned with environmental preservation and sustainability [55].

By integrating these key components, nations can achieve holistic and inclusive development, ensuring a better quality of life for their citizens while contributing to global stability and progress.

Various Efforts By Women To Achieve Peace And Security In Nigeria

Despite the challenges women face in peacebuilding and security, Nigerian women have made significant contributions to conflict resolution, mediation, and national security. Through grassroots activism, advocacy, political engagement, and social initiatives, women have played vital roles in fostering peace in conflict-affected communities. Below are key efforts by Nigerian women in their pursuit of peace and security:

Grassroots Peacebuilding and Mediation Women in many conflict-affected areas of Nigeria have taken on informal roles as mediators and conflict resolvers at the grassroots level. They have been instrumental in negotiating ceasefires between warring factions, resolving community disputes, and promoting dialogue among diverse ethnic

and religious groups. During communal clashes in the Middle Belt region, women's groups organized peace talks between communities, drawing on their roles as mothers and caregivers to appeal for peace. According to Ekiyor and Gbowee, women's grassroots peacebuilding efforts in Nigeria often succeed where formal processes fail, as they focus on rebuilding trust within the community [56].

Formation of Women's Peace Organizations Women in Nigeria have formed numerous organizations dedicated to peace, conflict resolution, and security. These groups provide platforms for women's voices in peace processes and allow them to lead peace initiatives. One notable example is the Women's Peace and Security Network (WPSN), which unites women from across Nigeria to address conflict resolution, protection of women in conflict zones, and implementation of UNSCR 1325.

WPSN has been instrumental in advocating for greater representation of women in security and peacebuilding processes in Nigeria [57]. Advocacy for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 Nigerian women's organizations have been at the forefront of pushing for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, which emphasizes the role of women in peace and security.

Nigeria adopted its first National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 in 2013, with a revised version in 2017.

Organizations such as the Nigerian Women Mediators Network (NWMN) have worked to increase women's participation in peace processes and ensure protection of women and girls in conflict zones. Their efforts include training women in mediation and negotiation and advocating for their inclusion in peace talks and decision-making bodies [58].

Participation in Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Women have played significant roles in post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation, particularly in regions affected by insurgency such as Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States. Women's groups have assisted in rebuilding communities, supporting victims of violence, and reintegrating former combatants into society. The Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) has provided educational and psychosocial support to women and children affected by Boko Haram insurgency [59].

Women as Peace Advocates in Conflict Zones In conflict-affected regions like the Niger Delta and the Northeast, women have organized peace marches, protests, and advocacy campaigns to demand peace and security.These advocacy efforts have raised awareness of the plight of women and children during conflicts and pressured the government and armed groups to consider peace.

Women in the Niger Delta organized protests against environmental degradation and violence, calling for peaceful resolution of militancy in the region. According to Akinyemi , women's advocacy in these regions has been crucial in drawing attention to humanitarian crises caused by conflicts [60].

Engaging in Political and Diplomatic Processes Although women remain underrepresented in political leadership, some Nigerian women have made significant strides in political and diplomatic efforts for peace and security. Amina Mohammed,

former Minister of Environment and currently the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, has played a vital role in global peace and security discussions.

Oby Ezekwesili, former Minister of Education and co-founder of the Bring Back Our Girls Movement, has advocated for policies prioritizing security, protection of civilians, and women's empowerment in conflict-affected areas [61]. The Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) Movement One of the most prominent examples of women-led peace and security efforts in Nigeria is the Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) Movement.

Founded in response to the abduction of over 270 schoolgirls by Boko Haram in Chibok in 2014, the movement, led by Oby Ezekwesili and other prominent women, raised global awareness of the plight of abducted girls. The movement engaged in continuous advocacy, protests, and diplomatic efforts, ensuring that the issue of abductions and security challenges remained a national and international priority [62]. Support for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Women's groups have been critical in supporting internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria. Many IDPs are women and children fleeing conflict.

Organizations like Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) and FOMWAN have provided humanitarian assistance, including food, shelter, medical care, and psychological support. These groups also work to empower displaced women through skills training and education, helping them rebuild their lives and contribute to peace and development [63]. Training and Capacity Building Nigerian women's organizations have invested in training and capacity-building programs to equip women with skills necessary for effective participation in peace processes. Initiatives by groups such as Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) focus on training women in conflict resolution, leadership, and negotiation. These efforts aim to build a network of women leaders who can influence peace processes at local, national, and international levels [64].

Discussion

Implication Of Women's Role Towards National Development

Women's participation in peacemaking and security has far-reaching implications for national development in Nigeria. Their involvement in peace processes, governance, and security sectors strengthens social stability, economic growth, human security, and democratic governance. The following are key implications of women's role in peacemaking and security for national development:

Enhanced Social Stability and Community Cohesion

Women's participation in peace processes leads to more durable and inclusive outcomes, as they often focus on rebuilding social fabric, fostering reconciliation, and addressing the needs of vulnerable groups.

1. Studies show that peace agreements are more likely to last when women are involved in negotiations, reducing the risk of conflict resurgence and fostering long-term stability, which is critical for national development.

2. Inclusive peace processes have been found to result in stronger, more cohesive societies, which are better equipped to pursue economic growth and development goals [65].

Promotion of Human Security and Economic Development

When women are engaged in security and peacebuilding, they emphasize human security, which extends beyond military solutions to address economic empowerment, education, and healthcare—all crucial for national development.

1. Research by the McKinsey Global Institute (2015) reveals that advancing gender equality, particularly in peace and security roles, can have significant economic benefits.
2. It estimates that if Nigeria closes the gender gap, it could increase its GDP by 23%, underscoring the economic potential unlocked by women's full participation in peacemaking and security [66].

Reduction in Gender-Based Violence and Empowerment of Women

Active involvement of women in security sectors leads to more effective measures against gender-based violence (GBV), creating safer environments for women and girls.

1. This has profound implications for national development, as reducing GBV increases women's participation in education, the workforce, and leadership roles.
2. A society that actively addresses GBV and empowers women enhances its overall human capital, fostering inclusive growth and development [67].

Improved Governance and Democratic Development

Women's involvement in peace and security initiatives contributes to more transparent and accountable governance systems.

1. By advocating for social justice, human rights, and equitable policies, women help build institutions that are more responsive to citizens' needs.
2. When women take part in governance, it leads to more inclusive and democratic societies, strengthening the rule of law, reducing corruption, and fostering national stability.
3. This creates an enabling environment for development efforts to flourish [68].

Strengthened Social Services and Education

Women engaged in peacebuilding often prioritize the delivery of essential services such as healthcare, education, and social welfare, which are fundamental pillars of national development.

1. By addressing the underlying social needs that fuel conflict, women help create environments conducive to long-term peace and development.
2. Investments in social services directly contribute to improving human capital, boosting productivity, and fostering sustainable development [69].

Advancement of National Security Through Inclusive Policies Integrating women into security sectors helps redefine national security strategies by making them more inclusive and comprehensive.

1. Women's perspectives on security often emphasize human security over traditional military approaches, addressing economic disparities, justice, and social cohesion.
2. This shift promotes holistic security solutions that contribute to the well-being of the entire population, leading to a safer and more stable nation, which is a prerequisite for sustainable development [70].

Challenges Faced By Women In Peacebuilding Efforts

Despite global recognition of the importance of women in peacebuilding, women in Nigeria face significant challenges that limit their participation in formal and informal peace processes. These barriers, rooted in cultural, socio-economic, political, and institutional factors, hinder their ability to contribute meaningfully to conflict resolution and national security. The following are the major challenges faced by women in peacebuilding:

Cultural and Societal Norms

1. Traditional gender roles and patriarchal structures in many Nigerian communities view women primarily as caretakers and nurturers, relegating them to the domestic sphere.
2. Peacebuilding, like many other political and security-related activities, is often seen as a male domain.
3. Cultural beliefs that men should lead while women follow limit opportunities for women in conflict resolution, mediation, and leadership roles in peace processes.
4. Ekiyor and Gbowee (2014) highlighted that in several Nigerian communities, women are excluded from decision-making councils, even though they are often the most affected by conflict [71].

Political Marginalization

1. Women are significantly underrepresented in political leadership and security institutions in Nigeria.
2. According to UN Women, women occupy less than 10% of leadership positions in Nigerian politics, with even fewer holding key roles in the military, police, or peace commissions.
3. This lack of representation reduces women's ability to influence policy and decisions related to peace and security.
4. Political parties and institutions remain male-dominated, creating additional obstacles for women seeking leadership positions in peacebuilding efforts [72].

Limited Access to Education and Training

1. Many women, especially in conflict-affected areas, have limited access to education and specialized training in peacebuilding, negotiation, and leadership.
2. In regions like the northeastern states, affected by insurgency, girls are more likely to drop out of school or face barriers to higher education.

3. Lack of education translates to reduced capacity to engage in peacebuilding processes or influence policies.

4. Soyinka (2017) argues that without necessary skills and knowledge, women are often perceived as lacking qualifications to participate in formal peace processes [73].

Economic Disempowerment

1. Poverty and economic disempowerment are significant barriers to women's participation in peacebuilding.

2. Women, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas, often lack financial resources to engage in peace initiatives or attend peacebuilding forums.

3. According to The World Bank, women are disproportionately affected by poverty in Nigeria, limiting their ability to organize, mobilize, or participate in peacebuilding roles.

4. Economic dependence on male family members further restricts women's ability to act independently in public or political spaces [74].

Security Risks and Violence

1. Women engaged in peacebuilding often face security threats and violence, especially in conflict zones.

2. Women activists and leaders advocating for peace may be targeted for harassment, intimidation, or physical violence by armed groups or political actors.

3. For example, in the northeastern region, women who have taken leadership roles in peace negotiations with Boko Haram or in managing IDP camps have been exposed to attacks and kidnappings.

4. Amnesty International documented cases where women mediators in conflict zones were threatened or assaulted, deterring others from taking similar roles [75].

Lack of Institutional Support

1. Despite the adoption of policies such as Nigeria's National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace, and Security, institutional support for women's involvement in peacebuilding remains inadequate.

2. Implementation of these policies is slow, underfunded, and uneven across the country.

3. According to Human Rights Watch, many local governments do not prioritize women's involvement in peace initiatives.

4. Additionally, there is a lack of accountability mechanisms to ensure women's meaningful participation [76].

Lack of Recognition for Grassroots Efforts

1. While women play a significant role in informal and grassroots peacebuilding efforts, such as:
   a. Mediating family or community disputes
   b. Organizing support for displaced populations

   c. Rebuilding communities
2. Their contributions are often undervalued or ignored.
3. O'Reilly, Ó Súilleabháin, and Paffenholz noted that formal peace processes rarely acknowledge these grassroots contributions, depriving women of a voice in national-level peace negotiations [77].

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study confirms that Nigerian women have played vital roles in peacebuilding through grassroots activism, political engagement, and community support, despite systemic barriers that hinder their full participation in formal peace and security processes. **Implication :** The findings highlight the urgent need for institutional reforms, including quota-based representation and targeted capacity-building programs, to ensure women's meaningful involvement in decision-making structures related to peace and security. Integrating women more effectively into these frameworks is not only a matter of equity but also essential for achieving long-term, inclusive national development. **Limitation :** The study relies primarily on secondary data, which may not capture the nuanced, lived experiences of women in conflict-affected regions. This limits the generalizability of findings and underscores the need for primary, context-specific data. **Future Research :** Future studies should adopt empirical methodologies, including fieldwork and interviews, to explore women's peacebuilding contributions across different regions of Nigeria. Comparative studies examining the impact of women's inclusion in other post-conflict societies could further enrich the discourse and inform localized policy interventions.

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