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Women's Experiences in Peace Building Processes: A Phenomenological Study of
Undeterred Female Leaders in Northern Nigeria

by

Roselyn Onyegbula

A Dissertation Presented to the
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Nova Southeastern University
2018

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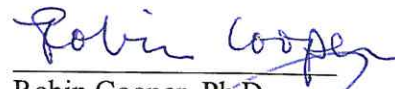
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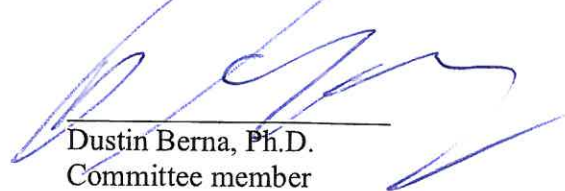
This dissertation was submitted by Roselyn Onyegbula under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

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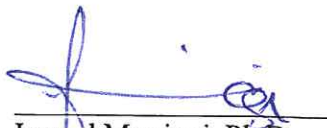
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Sonny Onyegbula whose financial and moral support made this journey possible; to my boys Sonny Jnr, Martin-Luther, Madiba and my siblings for their support and encouragement; to my late parents Mr. & Mrs. Albert Efobi who predicted right from my childhood that this was destined to happen; and to my late elder brother Emmanuel Emeka Efobi who believed in me. I know you are all watching from above and I hope I made you all proud. Finally, to the indefatigable women in northern Nigeria and beyond who despite the societal hurdles they confront daily in their quest for sustainable peace within their communities refuse to give up. May your efforts never be in vain.

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I give God all the glory for making it possible for me to undertake this journey while raising three boys that have also progressed both in life and academically. May all glory and honor be continually ascribed to your holy name.

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Lastly my heart goes out to the family of 'Sarah', one of my participants who died in a motor accident on the 20th of May 2018 on her way to a peace building engagement. Your voice remains alive through my dissertation and other projects that have your hand prints and input.

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List of Acronyms

Almajiri	Hausa word for emigrant child
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CBO	Community Based Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FMWASD	Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development
FGC	Female Genital Cutting
FST	Feminist Standpoint Theory
FOMWAN	Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LWL	Liberia Women initiative
MAM	MahilaAdhikarManch (Nepalese women organization)
Muri'amata	Voices of women
NCNC	National Council of Nigerian Citizens
NDLEA	National Drug Law Enforcement Agency
NERI	Northeast Regional Initiative
NPC	National Population Commission
NAP	National Action Plan
SMS	Short Message Service
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution

Abstract

Women living in northern Nigeria face a herculean challenge of overcoming direct and indirect violence. These include domestic violence, political instability, social inequality, and the threat of Boko Haram. Boko Haram is an extremist militant group that has been known to kidnap, rape, and torture women and young girls as means of terrorizing the Nigerian community. Northern Nigerian women have also faced challenges within their own community as they are barred from participating in public activities, are under-represented in government, forced into early marriages, and are often victims of domestic violence. This study examines the lived experiences of women peacebuilders living in northern Nigeria as they negotiate regional conflicts and manage the peacebuilding process. Seven northern Nigerian females between the ages of 30 to 60 were recruited to participate in this study. All came from diverse backgrounds but shared a commonality of peace building and conflict management within their respective communities. The goal of this study was to better understand the meaning of these experiences and to uncover how these women handle these daily challenges. Feminist standpoint and structural violence theories provide the theoretical framework to dissect the essence of their experiences. The study adopted Clark Moustaka's approach towards conducting transcendental phenomenological research methods and procedure. The results of the study will inform project design and policy formulation and serve as a source for future research and interventions by development agencies and other stakeholders interested in peace within the region.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society with an estimated population of over 160 million people, which is more than 50% of the entire population in West Africa (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2014). Nigeria has over 250 ethnic minorities, but the country is primarily composed of three major ethnic groups: the Igbo, the Yoruba, and the Hausa-Fulani (Gordon, 2003). The groups are also divided along religious lines. The Igbos reside in the eastern part of the country where there is a predominant Catholic community. The Yorubas reside in the western part of the country where there are Protestants and syncretic Christian communities. The Hausa-Fulani reside in the northern part of the country where there is a predominant Muslim community (Mathews, 2002).

A former colony of the United Kingdom, the modern-day Nigeria was created in 1914 in an attempt to consolidate British territories (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Consequently, the British authorities did not consult with the local populations during the formation of the new state, and the oversight has led to ethnic, cultural, and regional conflicts that are still proliferating in the present day. These issues include chieftaincy tussles, land disputes, and political contests between the various regions. There have been various attempts to address the issue of uneven distribution of wealth and political power—such as quota systems, to federal character and a rotational presidency amongst the different groups—but these solutions have been ineffective. The initiatives have not resolved the conflicts.

While the present-day conflicts in Nigeria relate to power, resources, and ethnic differences, women constitute a large percentage of those who are negatively impacted by the violent conflicts. Living in a highly male dominated and patriarchal society means that women have more to lose when their sons and husbands die from a violent conflict. Nigerian women are more likely to lose their properties and suffer from physical, psychological, and emotional abuses. In some cases, they must take on additional responsibilities as the head of their household following the death of their male relatives. As a result, the participation of women in post conflict peacebuilding is critical to ensure a peaceful resolution (Ezurum & Eren, 2014). Yet during the peace processes, women are severely underrepresented or sidelined from contributing to the peaceful resolution of the conflict (Women in International Security, 2012).

Statement of the problem

Women in northern Nigeria constitute a greater percentage of those impacted negatively by violent conflict. They lose husbands, sons, properties, and suffer from unspeakable violence. Most must take on additional responsibility as the head of their household. During peace processes, they are sidelined from contributing towards resolution of the conflict and prevention of future ones.

The need to increase women's involvement in peace processes is demonstrated by the landmark United Nations Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security (UN, 2010). The principles of the resolution continue to gain support globally. By 2013, seven regional organizations had adopted 1325 national action plans or related policies, conventions and protocols. (Miller, Pournik, & Wsaine, 2014).

Easy implementation of the resolution will require dealing with contextual issues at the local levels, which differ from one community to the other. Several literatures have examined the importance of the resolution, but most have overlooked the realities that make it impossible to accomplish this much-needed goal. To uncover these realities will require an examination of the experiences of women from their own point of view, the challenges they encounter as well as their suggested strategies for overcoming them. The outcome of the study will assist different development agencies and other stakeholders to develop peace initiatives strategize for more effective planning and implementation of their programs.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the experiences of female leaders engaged in peace building and conflict management in northern Nigeria and the meaning that these experiences hold for them. The region, which is currently under siege by the Boko Haram extremist group, is home to the largest population of Muslims in Nigeria where women cannot freely participate in public activities. A brief examination of the region will provide a context for the study. The effect of these violent conflicts on women within the northern region is important in several ways. While some have lost their husbands, sons or close relatives, many have lost their source of livelihood due to the physical destruction and looting that are often accompany from these violent conflicts. Women and children constitute the majority of those that now live in the Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) centers.

Another objective of this study is to assist peacebuilding practitioners in designing a more effective conflict management system that incorporates the voices of

women. To design a successful conflict management and peacebuilding program, we must pay special attention to experiences of both men and women (Agbajobi, 2010). Women constitute half of the population of most communities, as is the case with northern Nigeria, and their participation is paramount in dealing with conflict issues within these communities. Women are central caretakers of families and have played pivotal roles as peace advocates, peacekeepers, relief workers, and mediators. These important roles will remain unfulfilled if women do not participate, which can negatively impact the community.

The account from the women's perspectives will provide insight on gender and power relations and other issues affecting their communities that may be different from the dominant narrative. This will provide knowledge of not only the women in conflict management in northern Nigeria, but the experiences of men. The research will highlight the women's peace building efforts, their exclusion from formal peace processes, and their perception of exclusion from the peacebuilding process. The knowledge generated from their experience can lead towards highlighting their difficulties and inspire ideas for change in the status quo.

Rationale for the Study/Context of The Researcher

To reveal myself as a researcher, my perspectives and what led me into this research, here is my background in relation to the phenomenon studied; I worked for an organization that monitored and implemented a wide range of projects aimed at increasing women's participation in conflict management in volatile northern Nigeria. The organization collaborated with various local partners and religious leaders for capacity building. During my tenure, I would notice that only men would show up to

these training programs despite the existence of different female groups within these communities.

The men were trained in peacebuilding, and they were tasked with monitoring, reporting, and intervening in conflict related issues within their respective communities. To promote women involvement, we decided to create a different workshop that specifically targeted women peacemakers. This required several pre-workshop visits. He had to request permission from the husbands first before being able to recruit the women.

We eventually constituted a parallel committee called the Female Peace Management Committee at the end of the workshop. Both male and female committees worked independently from one and another. At one point, we tried to brainstorm for solutions that would integrate both men and women into one committee. A joint meeting of both committees was then held.

I noticed that during these joint sessions, I would be the only woman who sat with the men. The women avoided the front seats with tables and would sit in the back rows behind the men. There was a clear gender hierarchy within these communities, and the position of women was clearly beneath that of men. One of the women whispered to me to come and join other women at the back seats. I turned and replied loud enough for everyone to hear, "Leave me, I am sitting with my brothers, uncles, and fathers." Everybody burst out in laughter. I could do that because I am not from the North.

The men dominated the discussions, even the most outspoken woman kept her silence during the meeting. This is a typical interplay of religion and culture at work; women were seen and not heard. We managed to get the input of women outside the main workshop. While the women were in agreement with the men that both men and

women were needed for the harmonization of efforts towards addressing conflict issues, the women could not voice their opinions as equals during the meeting. There are certain issues involving women that the men on their own cannot handle without the women and vice versa.

This experience triggered a lot of questions in me. Are women sidelined from peace tables with their consent or nurtured to conform to societal expectations by accepting the position beneath men? How can women be equals in the peacebuilding process when they are constantly sitting behind men? How do women negotiate their values and identity? Is it possible to include women in the discussion without disrupting the status quo? I also observed that women and girls would pray behind the men in mosques as well. In some cases, they prayed in separate rooms away from the men and boys. Lost in thought, I had a lot of reflections. I see clearly that patriarchy played an important role in family/religious structures. The power hierarchy was as such that men were considered the leader then boys, then the women, and then girls.

Despite these challenges, there were some women within this region that have managed to come forward to organize other women for the purposes of peace and other development efforts. This ignited my interest in exploring further the experiences of those women. I wanted to understand how they engaged in peace building and conflict management within this region, the challenges they encounter, and their suggestions moving forward.

Research Question

What are the meanings and essence of the lived experience of female leaders who participate in conflict management in northern Nigeria?

Significance of Study

Involving women in peace processes and including their concerns will no doubt contribute towards addressing violent conflict in volatile northern Nigeria. This will require a careful study of their lived experiences in order to identify the challenges they face in intervening in conflict issues in the interest of sustainable peace efforts within this region. According to the International Crisis Group (2006), when “properly supported, women’s peace movements can affect large sectors of the population and be a powerful force for reducing violence and building democratic and participatory public institutions, particularly in the post-conflict period” (p.i)

Women are underrepresented in formal conflict resolution process even though they play a pivotal role in contributing to the informal process of peacebuilding. When women are not included, society suffers. According to the International Crisis Group (2006), “Women make a difference, in part because they adopt a more inclusive approach toward security and address key social and economic issues that would otherwise be ignored” (p.i).

In addition to other peace building, women can assist with the rehabilitation of children associated with armed groups as well as convening people across conflict lines to discuss common concerns. It will require strategies that will remove the obstacles obstructing their participation in peace processes, and successful implementation of the resolution will require dealing with contextual issues that differ among the various localities. Several literatures have focused on the importance of the resolution, but many have ignored the realities that made it impossible to accomplish its major goal. To uncover these realities, one must first examine the experiences of women from their own

point of view, the challenges they encounter, and their strategies for overcoming the challenges. Studying women living in northern Nigeria, where women's issues have been overlooked and ignored, is an ideal area of research so we can better understand the larger microcosm of gender inequality in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Below is the outline of the context of Northern Nigeria, specifically outlining the herculean challenge that women must face on a daily basis. Most notably, it will examine the rise of Boko Haram and their terrorizing activities on the Nigerian community. Next, it will examine how women living in northern Nigeria are systematically oppressed by the society, institution, education, and male patriarchy.

Context of Northern Nigeria

It is vital that we understand the northern Nigeria region in order to appreciate the herculean challenge that women face daily in their quest to be part of the peace contributors. The volatile region has been experiencing violent conflicts at various levels of the society for several decades. For instance, violence tends to erupt during election campaigns and sometimes continues well into the post-election period. Youths are often at the forefront of the violence since politicians employ them as political thugs as means for destabilizing the community in order to achieve their political ambitions. These youths are abandoned after the election. Other types of violent conflict include sexual and domestic violence against women, land disputes, and clashes between farmers and cattle herders.

Religious differences and ethnic colorations underlie many of the motives and ammunition for these violent conflicts, particularly in northern Nigeria where the largest group of Muslims resides. Nigerian Muslims have strong cultural attachments to their

land and religion. Furthermore, the emergence of Boko Haram has complicated the region, and its activities have resulted in the loss of several thousands of lives, the destruction of property, and the displacement of families and communities.

The Rise of Boko Haram

Boko Haram was formed in the 1990's by founder Mohammed Yusuf, and it is the popular name for 'Ahlisunnah Lidda'awati wa'l-Jihad', or the People Committed for the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad (Barna, 2014). Initially, Boko Haram focused its efforts in northern Nigeria with the mission of fighting against western education and influence. They wanted to convert the region into an Islamic State. While the United States eventually labeled the group as a terrorist organization, Boko Haram initially started as a peaceful movement that gradually transformed into a militant extremist. Their run-ins with the Nigerian police eventually led to the arrest of their members including their founding leader who later died in police custody in 2009.

In 2014, Boko Haram drew international attention with the kidnapping of over 200 schoolgirls in Chibok, which is a small community in the Borno State. The international groups and Michelle Obama who was United States First Lady at that time called for the release of the captured girls, but the clamor for the release of the girls eventually died down. According to experts, Boko Haram have been responsible for the deaths of thousands and responsible for displacing over two million people over the past six years (BBC Africa News, 2016).

In 2016, Boko Haram sent female suicide bombers into the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) centers that killed 70 and left 78 injured. Women and children were the main victims (Aljazeera, 2016). These female suicide bombers were the same kidnapped

girls that were held captive by Boko Haram in 2014. One female bomber refused to detonate her bomb because she believed that her parents would eventually rescue her (Aljazeera, 2016).

Mohammed Yusuf founded Boko Haram with other radical Islamic youths as a response to the corruption of the Nigerian society and lack of respect for Muslim values (Barna, 2014). The widespread youth unemployment, illiteracy rates, and weak family structures were leading factors that contributed to radicalization (Onuoha, 2014). The young boys were particularly susceptible to violence and radicalization because most were beggars who were forced to engage in harsh child labor in order to sustain themselves. There was also class segregation between commoners and elites. Islamic education and Qur'anic learning predates the colonial era, but secular education was reserved for the sons of traditional elites (Callaway, 1987). Islamic preachers capitalized on this disparity as an example of the government's weakness and corruption of the Nigerian society as a result of British colonization (Barna, 2014).

The Systemic Oppression of Women

Northern Nigerian women are often denied rights in the male dominated society. Many women have died at the hands of their husbands from domestic abuse, which can partly be attributed to the early and forced marriages that are common amongst Muslim communities. Unfortunately, these issues are rarely discussed since they are considered a private matter among family rather than a public issue relating to justice, equality, and fairness. It is thus not surprising that women within the highly conservative and Muslim dominated society experience a continuous struggle to emerge from private to public spaces and into less subservient roles (Callaway, 1987).

Interest for western education began with the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1970 when Nigeria was experiencing a boost in oil production. However, there has always been a gender discrimination in western style education in Nigerian society with women being denied equal opportunity to acquire formal education compared to their male peers (Makama, 2013). This is much more prevalent in northern Nigeria where education for young girls is often met with stiff resistance. Though UPE facilities have increased over the years, the number of girls enrolled in schools is disproportionately low when compared to boys (Callaway, 1987).

Young girls are culturally indoctrinated to value marriage more than education at an early age (Osita-Olaribe, 2007). The value of womanhood is their ability to get married and produce children. According to Osita-Olaribe (2007), “When a woman is trained therefore, the whole family is positively imparted. Their mental empowerment by education destroys foolishness and positively augments parenting, helping them impart the right kind of virtues and skills on the family” (p.33). But when denied equal access to education or sidelined from peace processes, as is the case in northern Nigeria, the society suffers.

Chapter Summary and Outline of Research

This introductory chapter provides an overview of the research. It outlined the historical context of British colonialism that has resulted in the modern political, geographic, and ethnic conflicts within the Nigerian community. It then highlighted the plight of northern Nigerian women who must navigate the structural violence.

Chapter 2 reviews the past scholarly research on gender and conflict, the impact of the United Nation Resolution UNSCR1325, and the detrimental impact of excluding

women from participating in public activities. It will also present the theoretical framework to the study. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used for the study, primarily Clark Moustaka's approach towards conducting transcendental phenomenological research methods and procedure. This study is interested in examining the lived experiences of female peacemakers living in a region that is particularly hostile towards gender equality. Chapter 4 examines the key findings from the face-to-face interviews of seven female peacemakers living in northern Nigeria. Chapter 5 is the concluding part of the research consisting of discussions, significance, implications of the study, and it provides possible solutions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Men and women living in northern Nigeria are stakeholders in conflict resolution processes. Both are affected by violent conflict though in varying degrees, and both have key roles to play in its prevention, management, and resolution. The field of conflict resolution is gradually shifting towards a gender sensitivity approach. This includes planning, implementation, analysis, and intervention (McCann & Cohn, 2013). In fact, women across the globe have made considerable progress in advancing their cause to be included in the peacebuilding discourse. They have been able to rise from obscurity in their respective countries. Throughout the years, key individuals and schools of thought have emerged and provided strategies for overcoming the challenges of including more women in peace processes.

Though women have been engaged in peace and conflict resolution within northern Nigeria for many years, professionals and academic researchers have not explored their experiences from a gender, political, and social context. The documentation of their efforts is limited to donor agencies that are funding the peace building activities. In view of this challenge, the search for related literature was expanded to include documented experiences of women in peace building in other African countries and beyond. This is in addition to introductory piece on peace building, Nigerian historical background, women in Nigeria, and the status of women in northern Nigeria to give background to the context and population studied.

The United Nations Resolution UNSCR1325

Prior to the landmark UNSCR 1325, there were international instruments calling for the robust inclusion of women in peace processes. This includes the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by 189 UN member States including Nigeria at the famous UN Fourth World Conference on Women that took place in Beijing in 1995. Women and armed conflict were identified as part of the core areas of concern which requires action to be taken by governments, international, and regional institutions outlined. The strategic objective stipulated, “Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation” (United Nations, 1995. p.91). Decades after the meeting, the declaration is still inspiring efforts at dismantling obstacles against women’s empowerment around the globe.

The need to involve women in peace building is demonstrated by the landmark United Nations Resolution UNSCR1325, which was further strengthened by resolutions UNSCR1820 and UNSCR1889. Resolution UNSCR1325 calls for an increase in women’s involvement in peace processes and the need to target female affiliates of male combatants during disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts in post conflict societies (UN, 2000). Resolution UNSCR 1820 advocates for the recognition of a direct relationship between the widespread systematic use of sexual violence as an instrument of war and the need to punish perpetrators as a deterrent (UN, 2008).

Resolution UNSCR 1820 also recognizes rape as a war crime against humanity. Resolution UNSCR 1889 further advocates for the inclusion of women’s empowerment in the post-conflict reconstruction planning and activities (UN, 2009). Easy

implementation of these resolutions will require dealing with contextual issues, which differ from one society to the other.

Peacebuilding Efforts

Peace building which became a topical issue among nations by 1990s, has been defined differently by different stakeholders. Peacebuilding was defined as actions for detecting and supporting structures that will reinforce peace in order to avoid a relapse into violence (Boutros-Ghali, 1993). It was also considered an external intervention planned to avert the outbreak or reoccurrence of armed conflict (Barnett, Kim, O'Donnell, & Sitea, 2007). These definitions were expanded to include the task of “providing for reintegration and rehabilitation programs, and creating conditions for resumed development” (Annan, 1998).

Another perspective is that “...peacebuilding is understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships” (Lederach, 1997, p.20).

The choice of term or definition ascribed to peace building is guided by its theorizing and operationalization by different government and inter-governmental peace building agencies. This is based on their mandate that in turn informs their area of focus and strategies adopted (Barnett, Kim, O'Donnell, & Sitea, 2007). For instance, the United Nations Peace Building Fund (2007) policy committee defined peace building as:

A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding

strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives. (para. 13)

According to Cohn (2013), peace process is deeply gendered and involves years of work done before and after the peace talks.

From the foregoing definitions, peace building is not just an activity, but a process that requires continuous engagement and covers all efforts that are aimed at dismantling structures of violence and erecting structures of peace. It encompasses proactive, preventive, management, and relationship building measures that go beyond peace talks. This includes violence prevention mechanisms such as early warning and early response as well as conflict mediation aimed at reducing tension before it escalates into violence.

In 2011, the United Nations, international agencies, and other stakeholders convened in South Korea to share their perspective on peace building and state building. They developed five goals on peacebuilding. These goals are identified as follows: legitimate (inclusive) politics, people's security, access to justice, employment generation and livelihoods support, accountable revenue management, and service delivery. This further broadened the scope of peace building to include politics, security, provision of social services and livelihoods (UN, 2011).

Prior to the increasing threat of terrorism across the global communities, most peace building efforts concentrated on building strong civil society and liberal democracy especially as a path to sustainable peace in developing countries. The growing rate of terrorism and fear of terrorist groups breeding in weak states has seen more engagement

with the states rather than civil society groups (Barnett et al., 2007). Inclusivity, institution building and sustained international support are critical actions necessary to prevent a relapse into violence and produce more resilient societies (UN, 2012).

Women in Peace Negotiation and Conflict Resolution

The average numbers of women peace negotiators, mediators, signatories or witnesses in official roles have remained notably low despite the fact that peace advocates emphasize the importance of including both males and females in the peacebuilding process since the adoption of UNSCR 1325 (UN Women, 2012). In 31 out of 39 world's active conflicts, women have been excluded from the peace process and only constitute 3% of signatories to peace agreements (Verveer & Norville, 2011). The passage of UNSCR 1325 in 2000 did little to increase women's involvement.

The experiences of women in peace negotiation varied across countries. In Sudan, Congo, and Uganda, for example, women and their children constituted a larger percentage of the internally displaced, yet women were marginalized and under-represented in formal peace processes and security sector generally (International Crisis Group, 2006). Women in the conflict zones and women who engaged in reconstruction efforts have often complained about the fact that they often had little or no voice in negotiating peace or planning reconstruction. They also lacked economic opportunities and were targets of ongoing sexual violence (Norville, 2011).

The prominent peacebuilding role of the Sudanese women did not guarantee them participation in the first six rounds of negotiations including the North-South Peace Agreement in 2005 and the Darfur Peace Negotiations in 2006. The women from Darfur eventually attended the seventh and decisive round at Abuja held under African Union

(AU) auspices. They were represented by Gender Expert Support Team (GEST), a unified platform of women from all three Darfur states from diverse tribal and ethnic backgrounds (International Crisis Group, 2006).

According to the UN (2011), “Women’s absence in peace processes cannot be explained by their alleged lack of experience in conflict resolution or negotiations. Instead, there has been a lack of effort to integrate them in formal peace processes” (p.26). According to Norville (2011), Ugandan women activists and women-led organizations played direct role in finding a negotiated settlement by mobilizing the community during the Uganda’s brutal conflict and widespread atrocities. Also, during peace talks nearing the end of the war in northern Uganda, women marched for hundreds of miles—from Uganda to the site of the talks in Juba, Sudan—to press for observer status at the talks. Even with the public protest, they were not permitted to participate in the negotiations.

Similarly, women in Liberia were not invited to peace negotiations with the rebel groups in 2003, though they did make their voices heard through marching, praying, and singing at the site of negotiations. Women were subsequently mobilized to provide support to national elections that eventually led to the presidential election of Ellen Sirleaf Johnson (Norville, 2011).

In the Republic of South Africa in the mid-1990s, South African women actively participated in the liberation struggle that succeeded in negotiating for 50% representation in the multi-party negotiation. Around 3 million women across the country participated in focus groups and discussions, and 30% quota was allocated to women in their election (Shekhawat & Pathak, 2015; UN Women, 2012).

The Djibouti Peace Talks in the Somali Republic took place in the year 2000, and it was only open to men from the country's five clans. The women formed a sixth clan, lobbied the government, and eventually participated in the negotiation. They made remarkable input and their contribution resulted in creation of gender quota for Transitional Federal Parliament seats as well as the establishment of a Women's Ministry (Cohn, 2013; UN Women, 2012).

The Burundi negotiations that took place in 2000 in Arusha, Tanzania between 19 parties to the conflict had Burundi women groomed by UNIFEM as observers. The women presented their recommendations to Nelson Mandela who facilitated the talks. More than 50% of these recommendations were incorporated into the peace agreement (UN Women, 2012).

Women have demanded a seat at peace talks, engaged in drafting constitutions in transitional governments, and pushed for increased representation in legislative bodies. Despite the progress made in Burundi, Liberia, and Congo after prolonged lobbying, it is still rare to find them leading peace negotiations (Tripp, 2012).

Women only represented 3% of the total UN military contingents in 2010 across the globe. Denmark, which is considered the most gender progressive country in the world, was one of the first countries to adopt a national action plan to implement resolution UNSRC 1325. However, women only comprised 5% of the Danish military forces and a similar percentage in peacekeeping missions (Norville, 2011).

In 2011, an experimental team of forty women soldiers were deployed for six months in Afghanistan. Their task was to meet with women and children, learn about their needs and concerns, and build trust as part of the overall counterinsurgency strategy

in the region. The existence of such teams recognizes the importance of local women's perspectives and their influence on local situations, to which the all-male forces in these cultures have limited or no access. Joint male-female forces have been credited with the potential for reducing sexual abuse of civilians by the peacekeeping troops which is rampant in several conflict zones (Norville, 2011).

Women as Peace Witness Activists

Signing ceremonies of peace negotiations are often officially witnessed by individuals or group who may or may not have attended the peace talks. They also sign the agreement on behalf of the country or countries sponsoring or facilitating the talks. Norway and European Union representatives Heidi Johansen and Anna Sundström served as witnesses in the Juba, Sudan peace talks. Similarly, Kathleen List, who, served as United States' witness, also signed the 2008 Djibouti Agreement on Somalia on behalf of USA. Witnesses make limited input into the process and the content of the accords (UN Women, 2012). It is important to point out that foreign countries that sponsor these peace talks appoint their citizens as witnesses and not the local women.

As official observers with no speaking or voting power, eight Liberian women delegates from Mano River Women's Peace Network, led by Ruth Sando Perry and Theresa Leigh-Sherman, participated in the 2003 peace talks. The Liberian Women in Peacebuilding Program (WIPNET) also served as observers at a later stage in Accra, Ghana and made more impact as agitators for peace. They organized sit-ins, vigils, demonstrations, and physically prevented other delegates from leaving the talks without first signing the peace agreement (UN Women, 2012).

Women have responded to their social exclusion in many forms. First, they have organized parallel peace conferences as a reaction to their exclusion from official peace talks, which is one of the popular methods adopted by women. Second, they have served as gender advisers to mediators, facilitators, and delegates as a way of ensuring that gender concerns are integrated into the agreements and. Third, they have served as members of technical committees or working group devoted to gender issues. Serving within the committee has enabled them the opportunity to work out the technical details for implementing the agreements. The latter mode is one of the most desirable modalities of women's participation (UN Women, 2012).

Women's Peacebuilding Initiatives Across Africa and Middle East

Peace building activities of women usually gain little or no recognition by national, regional, or international bodies when constituting peace negotiation delegations. Women's activities were relegated to more informal, localized, and private domains (Tripp, 2012). Nevertheless, women have played an important role as leaders in helping to end violent conflicts, developing post conflict reintegration efforts and economic life, and even managing camps for internally displaced persons (Norville, 2012). According to Otero, women have been able to organize, lead, and communicate the needs of other women even in the most difficult circumstances. Women peace activists in Sudan, Congo, and Uganda challenged the use of military force in addressing violent conflicts. These activists expose themselves to extraordinary personal risks all in the interest of safer communities (International Crisis Group, 2006). The degree of success varies by country.

Women in Iraq and Afghan. Afghani and Iraqi women face many changes in their quest for peacebuilding. Not only do state and religious leaders restrict their rights, but the political activism has a chance of backfiring and reversing the previously guaranteed rights. Furthermore, the lack of security, lack of educational opportunities, and lack of access to equal justice play a key role in hampering their ability to contribute to the peacebuilding processes. They also face internal challenges as a group including competition and division among women, gaps between religious and secular women leaders, lack of self-confidence, and intragroup conflict. Despite these barriers, Afghani and Iraqi women were able to promote lasting peace despite the fact that they were excluded from the peacemaking process. They were able to secure better access to finance and education, addressing peace and security issues, and positioning themselves to play important roles in their elections. They contribute to human rights, justice, national reconciliation, and economic renewal (Kuehnast, Omar, Steiner, & Sultan, 2012).

Women in Sudan. Sudanese women face a precarious situation when negotiating for peace, and their application for peacebuilding vary depending on the region. Sharia (Islamic) law has a big major influence in northern Sudan, and women within this region have to negotiate for peace within the bounds set by the strict Islamic code. They would rather argue against exploitation of Western-style secularism than oppose laws that discriminate against women (International Crisis Group, 2006). Women in southern Sudan played a larger role in formal and informal peace processes, and they are able to transcend conflict lines across the country. For instance, despite the fact that South Sudanese women were excluded from the peace negotiations, they still managed to be

involved in all stages of the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) and the Darfur-Darfur Dialogue and Consultation. They successfully lobbied the new Government of Southern Sudan for 25% of political and decision-making provision in the interim constitution as promised in a 1994 Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) Convention. Unfortunately, they lacked qualified women to fill these positions, and not enough incentive for qualified women in the diaspora to return to harsh living conditions in Juba, their capital city.

Women in Uganda. Women's peace movements in Uganda are by far the most advanced, lucid and organized when compared to their Sudanese and Congolese counterparts. They are autonomous and self-financing, relying on networking to share common experiences among disparate regions as well as providing conflict resolution training and trauma counseling. Their approach has contributed to the reduction of violence within the region (International Crisis Group, 2006). Betty Amongi is a key figure in the moment. She secured a seat as an independent in Uganda's Parliament in 2001. She worked to build a network of women parliamentarians to advocate for a gender sensitive agenda in Uganda's ongoing reconstruction and reconciliation efforts. They pushed for maternity wards in hospital construction, priority for trauma counseling, and startup capital for women to build businesses (Norville, 2011).

Women in Liberia. Tired of the civil war ravaging their country, a group of Liberian women contributed money and travelled to Ghana to be part of the Accra Clarifications Conference on Liberia in 1994. They were able to force their way into the conference and got the opportunity to share their concerns. Their action resulted in the inclusion of the only woman in a five-man council to implement peace in Liberia. Mary

Brownell headed the Liberian Women Initiative (LWI) in 1994 and brought the different factions of warlords together for peace talks. One of their pioneer members Johnson Sirleaf, was elected president of Liberia, making history as the first woman head of state in Africa. She served as president of Liberia for two terms from 2006 to 2018 (Tripp, 2012).

Prior to the formation of LWI, women peace movements made up of Liberian women from diverse ethnic, religious and class backgrounds including Muslims, Christians, urban and rural women organized for relief (Tripp, 2012). This is in addition to other peacemaking tactics employed by the women in Liberia. These tactics included organizing rallies and boycotts. They also negotiated the release of child soldiers with rebels, attracting the attention of international communities through letter writing to international agencies. According to Tripp, “These activities gained virtually no recognition by national, regional or international bodies when it comes to constructing peace negotiation delegations, which suggests that women’s activities have often been relegated to more informal, localized and private domains” (2012, p.172).

Women in Rwanda. In post-genocide Rwanda, the country witnessed a demographic shift with women constituting over 70% of the population. Women had to take on non-traditional roles that were predominantly held by men (Mzvondiwa, 2007). These tasks include finding shelter for orphans, caring for survivors, and rebuilding homes (Izabiliza, 2003). Women also became heads of households and assumed land rights and made important decisions (Mzvondiwa, 2007).

Rwandan President Paul Kagame recognized these roles and even ensured that women’s issues were taken into consideration during the 2001 general elections.

According to Mzvondiwa (2007), “Each voter used three ballots: a general ballot, a woman ballot and a youth ballot. The triple ballot voting technique was effective in getting women into office and building the partnership that Kagame talked about” (p.104).

Nigeria and the Challenge of Nation Building

Attempts to build Nigeria into a strong and stable state have been unsuccessful for the most part. Tamuno (1970) identified key sources of the conflicts and the forces that have threatened the unity of the Nigerian state since its amalgamation in 1914. The British failed to form an independent Nigeria due mostly to the constant threats of secession, which was a major obstacle to national integration. According to Tamuno, the diverse ethnic composition, cultural diversity, large size, controversial political, and constitutional arrangements, personality clashes amongst the leaders, and absence of a strong ideological magnet are the driving forces that prevent Nigeria from becoming a strong and stable powerhouse.

The earliest threat at secession occurred in the 1950s by the northern elites. The late Ahmadu Bello, erstwhile Sarduna of Sokoto called the amalgamation of Nigeria a mistake which led him and other northern elites to call for a separate political future for the North. In 1946, the then British Governor General of Nigeria, Arthur Richard, adopted a new constitution referred to as Arthur Richard constitution. The constitution divided the country into three main regions: northern, western, and eastern regions. A fourth region, the mid-west region, was added by the British before the independence of Nigeria in 1960. Political representation became a major issue during the review of Richards’ Constitution at a conference in 1950. The representation was proposed as

followed: 45% was proposed for northern provinces, 33% for the western province, and 33% for the eastern provinces. The northern delegate rejected the proposal and threatened to secede. They demanded 50% representation or a return to prior amalgamation arrangement. The then British colonial government of Nigeria gave in to their demand, and it was reflected in the 1951 constitution.

During the 1953 House of Representatives debate, the northern leaders demanded for independence and self-governance. They later settled for an eight-point program, which provided for an independent regional government. To avoid deterioration, British Secretary of States for Colonies Oliver Lyttelton invited Nigerian delegates to London for another review of the constitution.

The delegates agreed on a federation with autonomous regions but bickered over other issues. The delegates disagreed over Lagos, which was a commercial center and the future capital of a united Nigeria. The eastern delegates wanted Lagos to be considered a no man's land. The northern delegates had agreed earlier that it should be merged as part of western region for administrative purposes. They feared that whoever controlled Lagos would deny them their key outlet at Apapa, which was also in Lagos.

The British Secretary of States for Colonies overruled the delegates' decision and instead decided that Lagos would remain the capital and its municipal area considered a federal capital territory in the interest of a united Nigeria. In response, the Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who was then the premier of the western region, threatened secession in a published letter to Lyttelton. The Secretary of States for Colonies Oliver Lyttelton responded by threatening resistance and the use of force for any attempt to alter the status quo.

The issue of the right to secession resurfaced again in a conference in 1954, with the Action Group insisting that a clause allowing for the right to secede be inserted in the constitution. Attempts at holding people together against their will, they argued, will not do well for national cohesion. They further argued that lack of freedom of association and dissociation will have a negative effect on Nigeria's unity. This was countered by the NCNC of the eastern region and the other delegates. The then premier of eastern region, Late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of the NCNC, reiterated that the concept of federalism is a perpetual arrangement that can only be broken by the federating units and not one of the units acting alone. The right to secession clause was eventually excluded from the amended constitution.

This negotiation and re-negotiation of the unity of Nigeria as a united entity has continued to the present day with recurring agitation for self-determination from different groups. In all these discussions and negotiations that shaped the political history of Nigeria, women who constituted half of the population were sidelined. This is despite their dual productive and reproductive roles as producers, managers, community developers/organizers and mothers respectively. And their contributions to the economic and social development of the society, which is more than that of men (Makama, 2013). Women's participation in both formal and informal processes remains insignificant in a democratic country like Nigeria. Makama (2013) noted that the concept of democracy makes provision for diversity of opinion and involvement of different groups which cannot subsist by excluding women.

Women and Gender in Nigeria

To better situate women within the Nigerian context, it is pertinent to look at literature on women and gender in Nigeria generally before narrowing it down to northern Nigerian women. Women in Nigeria do not belong to a homogenous group; rather, they come from diverse and multiple identity backgrounds that are based on religion, class, education, and culture amongst other things. There are also differences among the various regions of the country. The term gender has been misconceived as synonymous with women. In clearing this misconception, I would like to clarify that gender is widely accepted as the roles placed on males and females by the society. These gender roles are similar in most society, but gender roles are more pronounced in certain communities that have merged these roles with their religious expectations of women.

Political, historical, cultural, and religious forces have shaped much of the roles and expectations of women, and many of these expectations vary depending on the region. To properly situate women in Nigeria will require a review of their relationship with their male counterpart, as they do not exist in isolation. Several studies conducted at the national, regional, and global levels reveal that when compared to men, women are generally at a disadvantaged position. This includes the global gender gap report index and the 2013 Nigerian gender survey.

The Global Gender Gap Report Index was initiated at the 2006 World Economic Forum as a framework for measuring the gender based disparities and progress across different countries. The measurement focuses on gaps in resources and opportunities between men and women across different countries (World Economic Forum, 2013).

Of the 145 countries ranked in the 2013 Global Gender Gap Index, Nigeria ranked 106 overall and 54 in economic participation and opportunity, 126 in educational attainment, 122 in health and survival, and 83 in political participation. A comparison of previous rankings revealed slight progress in 2012, from overall ranking of 118 in 2010 to 120 in 2011 and 110 in 2012 (World Economic Forum, 2013). By 2015, Nigeria slid to 125th position out of 145 countries ranked, 61 in economic participation and opportunity, 137 in educational attainment, 133 in health and survival, and 111 in political participation (World Economic Forum, 2015).

2013 Nigerian Gender Survey

In 2013, the Nigeria National Population Commission (NPC) conducted a health and demographic survey with the aim of providing information necessary for policy makers and program implementation on health-related issues including domestic violence and female genital mutilation. Three different questionnaires were administered to 38,948 women and 17,359 men across the six zones of the country covering its 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

The questionnaires included the Household Questionnaire, the Woman's Questionnaire, and the Man's Questionnaire. It covered relevant issues such as family planning, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, and maternal and child health. The data gathered represents a response rate of 98% of women and 95% of men (National Population Commission, 2014).

The findings of the NPC survey compared the disparity between men and women and found that men were generally more at an advantage than women in virtually all of the assessed areas. These included education, economic earning, and ownership of

assets, sexual engagement and marriage, domestic decision-making abilities, women's experience of physical, sexual and spousal violence. These factors were considered the indicators of the extent of women's empowerment generally. The results of the assessments are outlined below:

Education and economic earning. Men obtained higher levels of education than women and earn more than the few women who received cash payment. Most of the efforts of women were considered social service and thus were not remunerated. With respect to fertility, women with more education were less likely to start child bearing earlier than those with little education.

Participation in decision making. Women made less than 50% of the decision about their health, household purchases, family, or relative visits while men made over 70% of the decision about their health and family purchases.

Sexual engagement and marriage. Though women married and engaged in sexual intercourse at an earlier age, men had more sexual partners and even reported having multiple sexual partners while married. Sexual engagement has a major implication for equality and power. According to the National Population Commission (2014), "a woman's ability to negotiate when and with whom she has sex is vital for her sexual and reproductive health" (p.13).

Interestingly, sexual attitudes differed with education. Those with secondary education or above were more likely to agree to the statement that women can refuse sexual intercourse with their husbands if they knew that their husband had sexual intercourse with another partner. Those with secondary education and above also agreed that women also had the right to request to use condom during intercourse. There was

also a gender difference relating to safe sex practices. Men were more knowledgeable in HIV infection and prevention, but women were more likely to get an HIV test.

Women's experience of physical violence. Domestic violence was prevalent across all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds with women experiencing physical violence at home, school, or work place. According to the National Population Commission (2014), "nearly three in ten women have ever experienced physical violence since age 15, and 7% have ever experienced sexual violence" (p.4). This was most predominant in South-South, followed by South-East, then South-West, North-Central, North-East and North-West. Women who were most susceptible to physical violence included those who were employed but not paid in cash, widows, divorcees, and school girls.

Another form of physical violence is female genital cutting, which is the cutting or the removal of the external female genitalia. It is common in South East, South West, and North-West zones of Nigeria. Generally, older women are more likely to have experienced genital cutting. These experiences of physical violence across the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria are depicted below.

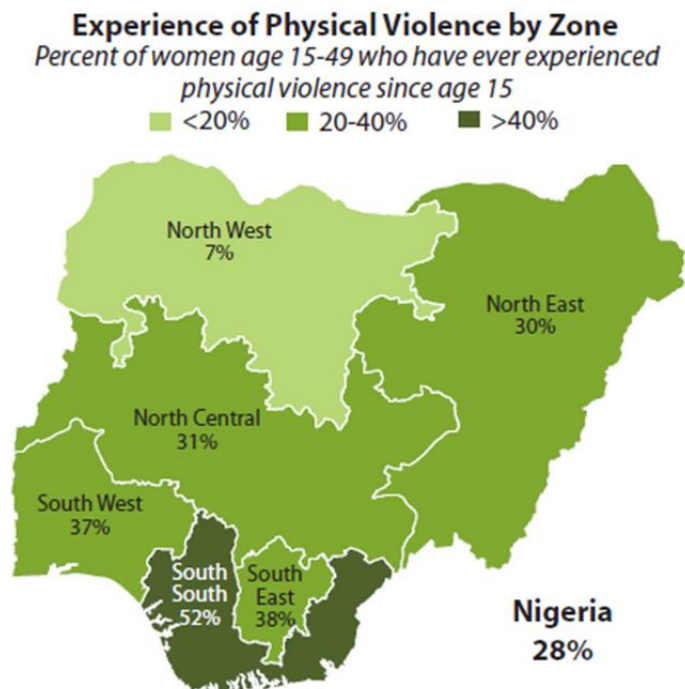


Figure 1. Experience of Physical Violence by Zone. *Note.* From National Population Commission [Nigeria] and ICF International. 2014. Gender in Nigeria: Data from the 2013 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS). Rockville, Maryland, USA: National Population Commission and ICF International.

Sexual and Spousal Violence. The National Population Commission (2014) defines spousal violence as any “physical, sexual, or emotional abuse committed by a husband or intimate partner” (p.19). Emotional violence was the most common amongst them. The survey found that spousal violence was common amongst those whose mothers suffered violence at the hands of their fathers and those whose husbands or partners are alcoholics. Interestingly, women’s attitudes towards wife beating suggests that more women than men believe that husbands are justified in beating their wives if the women neglect their children, leave the house without informing the husband, overcook the meal, argue, or refuse to have sex with their husband.

The North-East leads the other zones with the highest percentage of sexual violence against women, followed by South-South, North-Central, South-East, and South-West. Most women who experienced physical or sexual violence do not seek help. Those that sought help, do so within their family and not outside, though very few went as far as the police. A map representing sexual violence by zone is presented in figure 2 below.

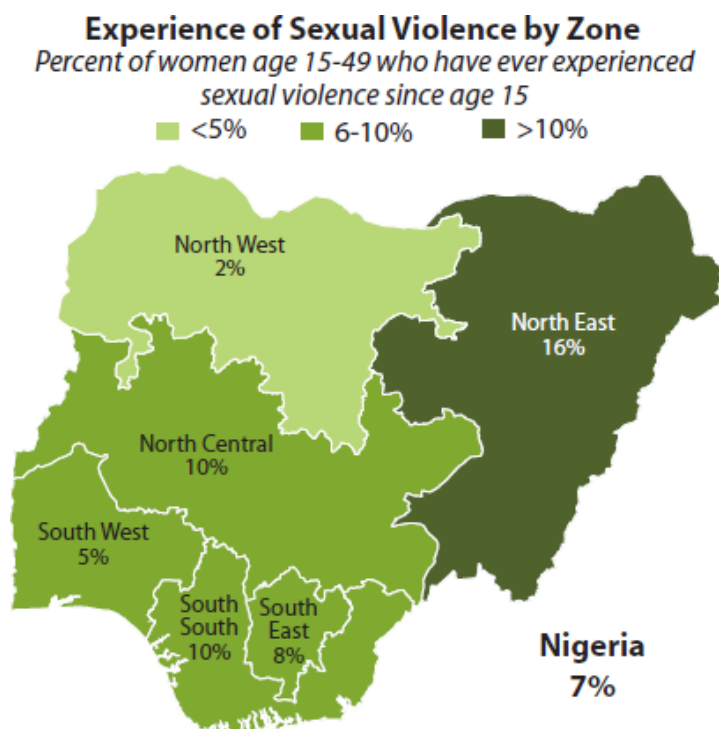


Figure 2. Experience of Sexual Violence by Zone. *Note.* From National Population Commission [Nigeria] and ICF International. 2014. Gender in Nigeria: Data from the 2013 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS). Rockville, Maryland, USA: National Population Commission and ICF International.

Brock-Utne (1989) contends that women should emphasize both domestic violence and war relief efforts as one and the same. Violence against women is a form of sexual abuse, rape, mutilation, or burned impediments to peace. This should be included in the discussion of violence in addition to war. Women's engagement in peace

movements should be from this perspective, bringing in their own insights and solutions. They should also anticipate sexism in the cause of their engagement because of the patriarchal nature of the society; this they should report, challenge the status quo, and engage in peace talks.

Ownership of assets. Valuable assets include houses, land, or other avenues of empowerment. According to the findings, men were more likely to own a house or land. The National Population Commission argued that “lack of assets is associated with greater poverty and economic vulnerability. Although the Nigerian constitution gives equal property rights to women, tradition and women’s low social and economic status limit their ownership of assets” (p.8).

As previously stated, there is dearth of literature on women in peace building in northern Nigeria. In view of this lacuna, and to give more contexts to the background of the population studied, the next section of the literature review will focus on the male-female relations in northern Nigeria in order to highlight the position of women within this context where their peace building work takes place. Furthermore, understanding gender roles and relations is necessary for peace building and its sustenance (Musingafi, Dumbu, & Chadamoyo, 2013).

Women in Northern Nigeria

Northern Nigeria is predominantly a Muslim and Hausa dominated community. Women in northern Nigeria generally face more restrictions than other parts of the country, and these restrictions are religious and cultural in nature. However, there are different hierarchies of women; not all Hausa Muslim women fit the same description or share the same experience.

There is a misconception around the meaning of Islam and Muslim, which is often muddled up or seen as synonymous. Islam is a religion or faith while Muslims are those who believe and practice Islam (Imam, 1997). Though Muslims practice Islamic religion in varying ways, there are lots of commonalities amongst them. For instance, they all use the Qur'an as the holy book and hadith for the source of Islamic knowledge. Certain common practices across different societies attributed to Muslim religion are rather cultural and not supported by the Qur'an. Triple divorce is one of them in which case a man can divorce a woman by simply saying, "I divorce you" three times (Engineer, 1994).

The Qur'an gave men certain leverage over women, but it also emphasized the equality of both genders. In the early days, great Imams and scholars injected the Qur'an with patriarchal values in order to maintain the subjugation of women. This has remained fixated despite the changing nature of society (Engineer, 1994).

Oluwafunmilayo (2006) examined the interplay of religion with development of gender equality and found that policy development and practice reiterated the religious values, norms, and indigenous customs as a tool for lending legitimacy to male dominance and female insubordination. That is, those in power used religion as a tool for subjugating others. As part of her findings, Oluwafunmilayo argued that the root causes of female disadvantage stemmed from the unequal power relations and the resultant poverty due to restrictions on their life chances. She further stated that in Islam, women were placed under men, and they were expected to marry and bear children. Men determined the number of children a woman can have, and men also could have as many as four wives.

There have been several studies conducted on specific cities in northern Nigeria focusing specifically on gender roles, the status of women, and Hausa Muslim women. Callaway (1987) conducted a two-year study in Kano city of Nigeria and explored the historical and traditional status of women and their changing role. Hausa region transitioned from a matrilineal to patrilineal society diminishing the rights of women. In fact, Muslim women were only allowed to vote in 1978 (Callaway, 1987).

In another study, Renne (2014) argued that the uniform use of work and education as well as other indicators in measuring the status of women across different societies left out some important considerations. For example, a group of Hausa Muslim women in the northern Nigerian town of Zaria included cultural and religious beliefs as well as seclusion and respect in framing women's status (Renne, 2014).

There are various dimensions of seclusion practiced amongst Muslims in northern Nigeria. The most discussed one is the one in which the garb-wearing Muslim women are forced to live in seclusion, or "pudah," in accordance with Islam. They cannot move freely nor attend public events even with their body and face covered. Access to their compound is restricted to their husbands and other females, while their husbands can move as freely as they want (Oluwafunmilayo, 2006). Inscriptions telling passersby not to peep into the walls where secluded women live while riding on donkeys and horses appear on walls within some cities in northern Nigeria (Robson, 2006).

There is another type of seclusion referred to as the seclusion of the heart which is agreed upon by both husband and wife. In this case, the wife is expected to behave in a manner befitting of her status as a married woman (Callaway, 1987). She is at liberty of using her heart to decide suitable behavior outside the house and conduct herself

accordingly. This involves cleaning the heart of any connection to worldly pleasures outside the dictates of Islam in relation to marriage and to bring her heart to a state of remembrance of Allah. According to Szeleter, Sholkamy, and Dharmalingam (2004), “Such an interpretation of seclusion allows for considerable mobility and economic opportunities for women while maintaining their ideal of respectability” (p.287). Women mainly operate within the domestic sphere, and the kitchen is an important space for them. Muslim homes are mostly polygamous with co-wives taking turns cooking for the family. The men on the other hand operate more in the public arena including markets, and farms (Robson, 2006).

The kitchen is also a place of work (unpaid) as it comprises of (1) production, which involves processing of harvested grains and other food items; (2) circulation, which is the selling of prepared food items and snacks; and (3) reproduction, which involves meal preparation and taking care of consumption needs of the family (Robson, 2006). It is also a site of power as women are responsible for making the choice of what to cook, who to give what and when to cook the food. “Thus, married women, albeit excluded physically from the public realm, exercise a form of power within the domestic relations of the private sphere” (Robson, 2006, p.671).

In some exceptional cases, some women become successful by engaging in commercial sale of cooked food from their houses. Those who choose to sale outside their houses are inferred to be either unmarried, divorced, widowed, or chose to stay single (Callaway, 1987).

Women and Peace Building in Northern Nigeria

Study on the Role of Women and Girls in Peace building in Nigeria. The study supported the drafting and implementation of a National Action Plan (NAP) on the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace, security, and the latter in its preparations for the Commission on the Status of Women 57th session in March 2013. The research consisted of a literature review and interviews of key informants in three zones including Kano. The findings revealed that women were engaged in peace building in diverse ways including participating in formal mechanisms, autonomous ‘conflict’ women’s civil society organizations, autonomous general women’s civil society organizations set up to address other issues, participation in mixed ‘conflict’ civil society organizations addressing violent conflict, ad-hoc activism in response to specific incidences of violent conflict or to prevent conflict escalating into violence, and conflict management in organized religion.

The obstacles to women’s participation identified by the study are discriminatory social norms, gender-based violence, religious interpretations, the nature of the violent conflict itself and lack of disaggregated information. The outcome of the study was used to develop the Nigerian national action plan on UNSCR 1325. The implementation of the action plan will rely on the commitment and resources of the Federal Government and state governments as well as the involvement of other civil society groups.

Study on Building Women’s Capacity for Peace building in Nigeria. Most of the work done on Nigerian women aimed at their inclusion in peace building processes after the adoption of UN resolution 1325 has been done within the academia and women, peace and conflict related institutions (Garba, 2015). Garba argues, “However not much

has been done on building the capacity of women towards their ‘full participation’ in formal peace building processes in developing countries” (p.31). The study with northern Nigeria as its limited scope was aimed at highlighting ways of developing women’s capacity so that their full inclusion in all peace building processes can be achieved.

The findings showed that the removal of the obstacles preventing women from participating in peace processes, and their potentials developed, will enhance their capacities for full and meaningful participation in all peace building processes towards a more sustainable peace.

Violence Towards Women and PTSD

Women are routinely subjected to physical, emotional, and mental violence during and after violent conflicts (International Crisis Group, 2006). For instance, they are at a higher risk of sexual violence during and after war due to their gender, race or ethnic identity (Ogbonna-Nwogu, 2008). During the 1994 Rwandan genocide, thousands of women were raped, traumatized, and or sustained permanent physical injuries (Izabiliza, 2003), and women and their children constituted a larger percentage of those internally displaced (Kuehnast, Omar, Steiner, & Sultan, 2012). It was interesting to note that after the genocide most of the internal conflicts were no longer fought in battle fields but in the villages and towns where women and children were left behind (Ogbonna-Nwaogu, 2008).

Sheikh and associates (2015) argue that the experience of violence can lead to depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD. They analyzed the outcome of the post-election violent conflict in northern Nigeria in 2011 and found startling differences between the genders. While the post-election violence affected both men and women,

women were more likely to experience depression and PTSD. This was the case, as the researchers argued, because women experienced more beating, abuse, and physical violence during their stays in the IDPs. Women were more likely to experience both physical and psychological violence compared to their male counterpart.

Theoretical Frameworks

Two theoretical frameworks were utilized in analyzing and understanding the experience of female peacebuilders living in northern Nigeria. Feminist standpoint theory enabled me to focus on the experience of women in relation to knowledge creation and power relations within a given time and space, while structural violence theory highlights the injustice embedded in societal make up against a specific group of people. Both theories are briefly discussed.

Feminist Standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint theory is an epistemological theory that focuses on the importance of social location in creating knowledge (Wood, 2005). The theory attempts to address the imbalance in power relations between men and women by redirecting the focus for constructing knowledge to women's experiences and insights. It was inspired by G.F. Hegel's standpoint of the proletariat and Karl Marx and Engels' Marxism theory on class relations (Bowell, 2011). Feminist standpoint theory analyzes how patriarchy naturally places women beneath men and makes it appear as a natural and right thing. Feminist standpoint theory posits that the work and activities we engage in shapes our identities, consciousness, and knowledge (Wood, 2005). Thus, the theory starts from the material conditions of women.

A major claim of the theory is that women's lives and that of men are systematically and structurally different, and, as a result, they produce different

knowledges. Therefore, social location significantly shapes the experiences and insights of a group of people (Wood, 2005). Though social location shapes the lives of women differently from that of men, standpoint can only be achieved by critically reflecting on power relations between both sexes and constructing a different narrative from the dominant worldview. According to Wood, “Achieving a feminist standpoint, then, does not mean one is capable of describing, explaining, predicting, increasing understanding, and/or critiquing, which are the business of theory” (p.62).

Feminist standpoint theory critiques the existing imbalance in power relations between men and women and develops an epistemology for generating knowledge from women’s experiences. While standpoint theory focuses on the generation of knowledge starting from the perspectives of the marginalized, feminist standpoint theory focuses on starting from the experiences of women (Wood, 2005). Since women are considered part of the marginalized in the society, their experiences can constitute the starting point of both standpoint and feminist standpoint theory.

The three key principles of feminist standpoint theory can be summarized as: 1) knowledge is socially situated; 2) the marginalized is equally socially situated which makes them aware and query the status quo; and 3) research on power relations should start from the marginalized (Bowel, 2011).

Considered as both a theory and a method, feminist standpoint was developed by feminists with sociological, political, and philosophical backgrounds. These feminists include Sandra Harding, Patricia Hill Collins, Dorothy Smith, Nancy Hartsock, Hillary Rose, Alison Jaggar, and Donna Haraway (Bowell, 2011). Feminist standpoint theory created a dichotomy of the marginalized and the dominant group and asserted that

epistemic privilege lied with the marginalized that see fundamental problems in the society, while the dominant group viewed them as superficial issues.

Knowledge is socially situated, and it is important to dissect the experiences of women since they are marginalized. According to Bowell (2011), a proper understanding of the experience of women due to their socio-political position will help bring about change in societies and thus should be the basis for any inquiry. Consequently, standpoint can be referred to as a specific location in time and space that determines how people view the world.

Women possess dual knowledge or two standpoints; their experience being a marginalized member and the knowledge of the dominant group. Thus, a more objective and comprehensive view of the world can be seen from the less privileged position occupied by women. Sandra Harding (1993) best captured this when she stated, "Starting off research from women's lives will generate less partial and distorted accounts not only of women's lives but also of men's lives and of the whole social order" (p. 56).

To better resolve the conflicts facing northern Nigeria, one must understand the lived experience of northern Nigerian female leaders in managing conflict. This will reveal the particularities of their everyday realities in dealing with conflict issues within the region informed by their social interactions, northern Nigeria context, and their worldviews rather than the generalized perception of the situation of all women in Muslim dominated environments.

As a method, feminist standpoint stresses the importance of women as research subjects and not as objects, which makes it ideal for phenomenological research. Thus, the attention of the researcher is drawn to the women's experience and the social context

that has shaped their lives. This underscores the importance of focusing on the northern Nigeria women's experience and their perspectives to inform knowledge of their efforts and desires for peace within their communities.

Structural Violence theory. Johan Galtung (1969) developed the concept of structural violence, which examines violence beyond its physical manifestation. Violence has invisible aspects weaved into the structures of the society that can encompass the institutions, ideologies, and histories that discriminate against certain groups of people. Thus, the structural violence denies certain members of the community the opportunity of attaining their maximum potential.

Galtung categorized violence into personal/direct violence and structural/indirect violence. This expanded the discussion of violence beyond physical pain (direct violence) inflicted on human beings to include invisible pains on humans or inequalities in the structures of the society manifesting in the disparity between the privileged and the less privileged. This is especially relevant when the disparity is obvious for a certain group of people within a given society. Galtung states, "In a static society, personal violence will be registered, whereas structural violence may be seen as about as natural as the air around us" (p. 173).

Galtung rejected the idea of restricting violence only to bodily harm, deprivation of health, or extreme case of death. This, he argues, does not capture other conditions that signify absence of social order. Therefore, violence is the cause of the gap between the actual and the potential when this gap is avoidable. Structural violence, then, occurs when individuals are unable to attain their maximum physical and mental potential in the

presence of available resources. While some can never exceed certain limits in life no matter how hard they struggle, others do not require much effort to get to the top.

To adequately capture violence, Galtung proposed six dimensional definitions of structural violence. First, he distinguished the difference between physical and psychological violence to further buttress the point that violence cannot only occur in form of bodily harm but impact the soul as well. The later consists of actions that result in decrease in mental potentials such as brainwashing, social indoctrination, deceit, and, psychological threats.

The second dimension is the distinction between positive and negative influences. Influences can be positive when a person is rewarded for doing what the influencer considers right, and influences can be negative when a person is punished for what is considered wrongdoing.

The third-dimension focuses on the physical or biological violence, which is a form of truncated violence. This includes threat of physical, psychological, or indirect mental violence as it constrains human action. This is akin to the effect of balance of power doctrine that influencers intend to achieve.

The fourth dimension of violence is considered the most important because it focuses on the subject side: whether there is a subject (person) who acts or not. Thus, violence where there is no actor is referred to as structural or indirect violence while violence with an actor is referred to as direct or personal violence with both reinforcing each other. In the case of indirect violence, the person is not directly harmed by another, but rather the violence is built upon the structure of the society, creating an unequal distribution of resources. The uneven distribution of resource includes wealth, income,

education, and medical amongst certain groups or region that determine their placement within the social structure.

The fifth dimension is a distinction between intended and unintended violence especially when determining guilt. Guilt is linked to intentions rather than consequences. The sixth and final dimension distinguishes between the manifest and latent levels of violence. Manifest violence is observable and can either be direct, indirect, personal, or structural. Whereas latent violence indicates a potential occurrence of violence even though there may not be violence at the time.

Cartia Confortini (2006) critiqued structural violence theory with respect to its gender blindness. While Galtung's theory provided a unified framework of violence from a direct, structural, and cultural framework, Confortini argued that incorporating a feminist approach could further enrich the theory. As such, she argues that violence and peace can be constituted through gendered language that violence produces which defines gender identities and vice versa (Confortini, 2006).

The northern Nigerian women are faced with both physical and structural violence on a daily basis. Domestic violence is an aspect of direct violence in which the women suffer physical abuses in the hands of their intimate partners. This unfortunate event is common within this region, and some women have died as a result of the intense beating from their husbands. Wife battery is considered a family matter and not taken seriously by the police, so most victims avoid reporting their partners to avoid societal backlash or for fear of losing their spouse.

Cultural practices and the patriarchal nature of northern Nigeria contribute to the sidelining of women from peace processes, thus denying them the opportunity to

contribute to issues that affect them. The structural conditions make it difficult for women to freely participate in public activities within this region, and their exclusion from public activities or underrepresentation denies them the opportunity to achieve their maximum potential. Galtung refers the gap between their actual and potential as violence. He states, “The object of personal violence perceives the violence, usually, and may complain - the object of structural violence may be persuaded not to perceive this at all” (p.167).

Chapter Summary

The literature reviewed above reflects the experiences of women in peace building efforts across different societies, and the degree of success vary with each respective region. While women across the African continent have made considerable progress in advancing their cause to be included in the peacebuilding discourse, they still face many cultural, religious, and social barriers that affects their success, though the process vary with each region. Currently, few academic researches have focused on the peculiar obstacles impeding women’s involvement in conflict management in northern Nigeria by reviewing related literature and interviewing mostly men. None focused on the accounts by women themselves directly involved in peace building which is the focus of this study. This is relevant since women living in northern Nigeria face a herculean challenge of overcoming the religious, cultural, and social oppression that have regulated them into second class citizens. They are in a better position to tell their stories themselves.

While it is necessary to identify these challenges, it is equally important to examine what has been done, what challenges women have encountered, and learn

lessons from their experiences. This will help greatly in re-directing efforts at engaging women within this specific context. The study intends to examine the lived experiences of female leaders within northern Nigeria to better understand the challenges they face in conflict management and peace building processes.

Two theoretical frameworks were utilized in analyzing and understanding the experience of female peacemakers living in northern Nigeria. Feminist standpoint theory focused on the experience of women in relation to knowledge creation and power relations within a given time and space. Structural violence theory highlights the injustice embedded in societal make up against a specific group of people.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This chapter will focus on the research methodology and procedures utilized in conducting the study from data collection to analysis and interpretation. The research purpose, along with the research question and the methodology, is to connect interrelated parts of the research process into a cohesive whole rather than examining it as standalone parts (Morse & Richards, 2002). This interconnectedness, in addition to the theories utilized for the study, plays a huge role in the choice of the methodology for the study given the fact that this study analyzes the lived experiences of female peacemakers living in northern Nigeria.

Phenomenological Research Process

Qualitative research is usually done in a natural setting, within the environment of the participants, to get an in-depth understanding of data. This research utilized a phenomenological research method. Phenomenology is defined as “a theoretical point of view that advocates the study of direct experience taken at face value and one which sees behavior as determined by the phenomena of experience rather than by external, objective and physically described reality” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p.18).

According to Creswell (2013), “Phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p. 76). The distinguishing feature of phenomenological research method is its emphasis on phenomenon and the meaning it holds for those who experienced it, and there are different approaches to phenomenology which include transcendental and hermeneutical phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology involves the researcher’s interpretation of texts related to the phenomenon in exploration of lived experience (van Manen, 1990),

while in transcendental phenomenology pioneered by Edmund Husserl (Moustakas, 1994) the purpose of the study is to find out the meanings people ascribe to their lived experience within their given context. Both approaches maintain the same phenomenology principles but differ in their data analysis methods.

Transcendental phenomenology. Transcendental phenomenological research process as outlined by Clark Moustakas (1994) comprises of four major steps: epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation and synthesis of meanings and experiences (Moustakas, 1994). These processes are briefly explained.

Epoche or bracketing. Epoche or bracketing starts off with the researcher setting aside his or her previous experience, personal bias, and preconceived notions about the phenomenon. With an open mind, the researcher will be able to view the phenomenon as the participants present it, and this can lead to acquisition of new knowledge.

The three dimensions of epoche include: (i) observing quiet time focusing on prior opinion about the phenomenon and setting them aside, (ii) engaging in reflective mediation which involves perceiving held biases and letting them depart freely, and (iii) opening oneself up in readiness to embrace new knowledge. This can be achieved by removing normal ways of labeling or judging things. The researcher of this study spent some quiet time and reflection sessions prior to the interview in order to bracket herself of prior knowledge, opinion, thoughts, and personal experience which could have influenced her while interviewing female peacemakers living in northern Nigeria. These sessions were devoted to recalling and reviewing personal perceptions held about the phenomenon and clearing them off. Concerted effort was made by the researcher

throughout the duration of the study to empty herself of preconceived ideas about the phenomenon to the barest minimum.

Phenomenological reduction. The next step is phenomenological reduction, which is the process of describing the phenomenon as it presents itself after the elimination of ones' prior knowledge. According to Moustakas (1994), "Phenomenological reduction is not only a way of seeing but a way of listening with a conscious and deliberate intention of opening ourselves to phenomena as phenomena, in their own right, with their own textures and meanings" (p.92). This requires observing meticulously and listening attentively to be able to explain in detail every aspect of the phenomenon so that "each angle of perception adds something to one's knowing of the horizons of a phenomenon" (p.91).

Individual perception can either be corroborated or enriched when compared to the perception of others. The researcher can reach out to others to get a sense of how they perceive the phenomenon. By engaging in another angle to the phenomenon, one may open up. This is referred to as communalization, which adds to what was originally perceived.

Horizonalization. This is another dimension of phenomenological reduction. Each time we examine a phenomenon, a new horizon is created and the former regresses. Each of these horizons holds a unique character which adds to our understanding of the phenomenon. It is important to stop at some point to avoid unending discoveries. Thus, phenomenological reduction involves the elimination of every other thing and focusing on the subject under review. Through horizonalization, same value is ascribed to every statement relevant to the topic. Repetitive and overlapping statements are excluded

leaving only the horizons. This is referred to as textural meanings and invariant constituents of the phenomenon. These horizons are clustered into themes to make up the textural description of the phenomenon.

Imaginative variation. The third step, imaginative variation, focuses on extracting structural themes and textural descriptions from phenomenological reduction. According to Moustakas (1994), “Imaginative variation enables the researcher to derive structural themes from the textural descriptions that have been obtained through Phenomenological Reduction” (p.99). These structural descriptions are the conditions that gave rise to the phenomenon. It is approached by looking at the phenomenon reflectively from multiple perspectives in the quest for possible meaning. At this stage, imagined are “possible structures of time, space, materiality, causality, and relationship to self and to others” (p.99).

Synthesis of meanings and essences. This is the fourth and the last step in the phenomenological research process and involves a combination of the textural and structural descriptions to culminate in the essence of the experience. It encapsulates the what was experienced, the where, and the how the phenomenon was experienced. It is usually a long passage that explains what it is to go through the experience in that specific context.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the lived experiences of female leaders within northern Nigeria and to understand the challenges they face in managing conflict and peace building. The study also explores possible strategies that can be utilized in overcoming the identified challenges. The research question guiding the study ought to

be concise and straight to the point in order to avoid unnecessary and distractive data (Creswell, 2013). As such, the main research question for this study is: What are the meanings and essence of the lived experience of female leaders who participate in conflict management in northern Nigeria?

Transcendental phenomenology is an ideal research methodology for analyzing the lived experience of northern Nigeria female leaders who engage in conflict management in a Muslim dominated environment. According to Moustakas (1994), “Husserl’s transcendental science offers a carefully developed conceptual model that brings the person into focus as the necessary source for explicating experience and deriving knowledge” (p.48). In that regard, the women’s presentation of their experiences provided some insights that clarified some of the controversies concerning the best ways of incorporating their concerns in peace processes and how best to achieve that. They dismissed the idea of contemplating whether their concerns can be incorporated without their direct involvement. The study focused on what the women experienced and how they experienced it within the given context.

Sample Population

The study participants were drawn from female leaders living in northern Nigeria who have been engaged in conflict management within their communities. Participants in a phenomenological research are made up of a homogenous group comprising of those that have experienced the phenomenon. This includes anywhere from 3 to 4 participants to 10 to 15 participants (Creswell, 2013). The sample size for this study is made up of seven participants selected by way of purposeful sampling. Three organizations involved in peace building and conflict management in northern Nigeria served as the research

sites. The sites provided signed site approval letters as required by the Nova Southeastern University IRB. The sites assisted with the identification of potential participants for the research.

Participants were female leaders engaged in conflict management in northern Nigeria. To qualify, they also needed additional criteria based on their age, city of residence, and level of education. These criteria include: (i) city and state of residence (to ascertain that the potential participant lives and works in northern Nigeria); (ii) age bracket (a minimum age of 18 years was set for participants, this is to ensure they are adults capable of making decisions on their own), and (iii) level of education attained (minimum level of education required is high school certificate). This was to ensure that participants would be able to communicate in English, which is the language of instruction in schools in Nigeria.

As part of the IRB requirement, three site approval letters were obtained from two non-governmental organizations located in northern Nigeria and one umbrella peace building regional network organization. The participants were then contacted via these sites after securing the Nova Southeastern University's IRB approval. The sites identified and distributed the demographic questionnaires to prospective participants. The researcher then followed up with the review of the completed questionnaires and narrowing down of participants based on the selection criteria listed above. One candidate that was disqualified met all the other requirements but lacked experience managing conflict. The ten potential candidates are based in Kaduna, Jos, and Abuja.

Data Collection

Data collection took place at the venue selected by the participants and was mainly through consensual audiotaped in-depth interviews. Before the interview, participants reviewed and signed the consent form. The interview started with chitchats to create a conducive atmosphere followed by explanation of the study before moving on to the women's experience.

The participants were asked three major questions: What has been your experience managing peace within your community? Which of these experiences stood out for you? What do these experiences mean to you? This was geared towards extracting both the textural and structural description of their experiences.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process generally comprised of interconnected steps which include the organization of data, initial reading of the data, coding and establishing the themes and representing and interpreting the data. These steps are all related to analysis and representation of data. Five different qualitative research methods have additional analysis steps beyond these ones (Creswell, 2013). This study utilized the following: epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation and synthesis of meanings and experiences.

The context of the researcher—as detailed above—explains the researcher's previous encounter with the phenomenon. This is the first step of epoching. This gives the researcher the opportunity to examine the women's experiences as it is presented with little or no bias. The data which was collected via audio-tape was carefully transcribed.

The audio was then replayed while reading through the transcript to ensure that the data was captured verbatim and mistakes corrected.

Two methods of phenomenological data analysis developed by Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen and Vaan Kaam were modified by Moustakas. Each of these methods have their specific steps for analyzing phenomenological data. The Vaan Kaam method of phenomenological data analysis as modified by Moustakas' was utilized for the analysis (Moustakas, 1994). This includes; (1) Listing and Preliminary Grouping for the purposes of horizontalization, (2) Reduction and Elimination to derive the invariant constituents, (3) Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents, (4) Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application for validation purposes, (5) Individual Textural Description of the experience, (6) Individual Structural Description of the experience, (7) Individual Textural-Structural Description of the experience and finally a composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience of the group (Moustakas, 1994).

Data Analysis Process

The initial stage of the analysis process involved reading through the transcripts several times to get acquainted with the data. The seven steps listed above were then followed meticulously to arrive at the essence and meaning of the experiences.

The first step involves the process of horizontalization, which entails listing every relevant statement related to the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The horizontalized statements were highlighted green and inserted as In Vivo codes in comment boxes. These In Vivo codes which comprise of participants words and phrases from the

horizontalized statements reduced the data to manageable size and made it easier to identify the invariant constituents.

The codes were then tested by way of reduction and elimination to determine whether they meet the two invariant constituent requirements of; containing a moment of experience that is sufficiently constituent for understanding it and the possibility of abstracting and labeling it (Moustakas, 1994). To facilitate this process, the codes were extracted from the comment boxes and used to create seven columns, one for each participant. Each column assigned per participant was then reviewed using the criteria for extracting invariant constituents prescribed by the method. Repeated overlapping ones were eliminated and those with vague expressions were either eliminated or rewritten in descriptive terms (Moustakas, 1994).

For instance, this statement by Sarah, “and we saw the need that when you want to get a woman to do something, don’t give her the general activities, have her in a different place you will get the better out of her” was rewritten as *to get the best from women, give them specific responsibilities*.

The next step involved clustering the invariant constituents into themes. For each participant, a column was created and the invariant constituents that are related grouped together and assigned a label. These clusters that are labeled are the core themes of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

This was followed by a validation of the themes that were developed. This requires checking the themes against the interview transcript to determine their compatibility or whether they were explicitly stated by the participants. Those that were not explicit or compatible were deleted. The validated invariant constituents and themes

were then used to develop individual textural description of the experience for each participant. The research question and the themes derived are as follows:

Central Research Question

- What are the meanings and essence of the lived experience of female leaders who participate in conflict management in northern Nigeria?

Interview Questions;

- What has been your experience managing conflict within your community?
- Which of these experiences stood out for you?
- What do these experiences mean to you?

Four major themes highlighting the experiences of the participants with one of them having three sub-themes emerged from this analysis process, and they include;

- Patriarchal influence. Patriarchal influence restricts and undermines the woman's peacemaking ability.
- Changes Begin with Women and Girls. To change the societal structures, the peacemakers recognize that one must start working with women and girls.
- Experience Working with Men. To address patriarchal limitations, there is a need to work with men.
- Articulating a Holistic Approach. The peacemakers articulated approaches to engaging women in peace processes. The fourth theme comprising of their articulations were further divided into five sub-themes which includes, (a) unified structure/creation of space for women; (b) united voice for women/need to be heard; (c) need for capacity building; (d) women leading the process; (e) issues with the UN resolution 1325; (f) requires resources.

Ethical Issues and Reflexivity

Ethical issues may arise at any stage during the research and planning. This could arise prior to the research, while conducting the study, during data collection and analysis, or after the publication of the findings. These include issues to do with securing the necessary approval for the study from relevant bodies including the participants, being open and sincere about the study, respecting participants and not using them, respecting their privacy, avoiding harmful disclosure, and making the data available to others. (Creswell, 2013).

Before embarking on the study, all the necessary approvals were obtained from the Institutional Review Board of Nova Southeastern University and the participants. A signed letter of consent was obtained from each of the participants before their interview. They also gave approval for them to be audio-taped. Accurate information about the research was provided to the participants and pseudonyms used in all the analysis to protect their identity and avoid causing any harm to them. The outcome of the research will be made available to the participants and as many as are interested.

Summary

This chapter presented the transcendental phenomenological research method pioneered by Edmund Husserl and modified by Moustakas (Moustakas, 1994) adopted in examining the lived experience of female leaders engaged in peace building in northern Nigeria. The presentation covered the four major steps of any transcendental phenomenological process research which include epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation and Synthesis of meanings and essences of the experience.

Additionally, this chapter covered sample selection criteria, participant recruitment procedures, data collection methods, and finally, the chapter described in detail the specific steps for data analysis provided by Van Kaam and modified by Moustakas which was followed meticulously in arriving at the themes leading to the essences of the meanings of the experience of the phenomenon.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the field research that analyzed the lived experiences of female peacemakers living in northern Nigeria. To arrive at the findings, the data collected through face-to-face in-depth interview of the participants was analyzed using Moustaka's modified version of Vaan Kaam's method of phenomenological data analysis procedure. Through this process the researcher was able to arrive at the textual-structural composite description, which is a culmination of the meaning and essence of the experience of engaging in peace building in northern Nigeria for the study sample.

The outcome of this analysis and some selected segments of the interviews are presented here starting with the participants' demographics. Seven female leaders engaged in peace building and conflict management in northern Nigeria whose profiles are described below participated in this study.

Participants Profile and Biographic account

Eleven participants completed the recruitment questionnaire, but only ten met the selection criteria. While the disqualified candidate lacked the required experience in peace building and conflict management and was dropped even though she was involved in humanitarian services at the Internally Displaced Persons camp in Maiduguri. Due to logistical challenges, three potential participants could not make the interview.

The final participants comprise of seven female leaders whose age ranged from 30 to 60 years old. They come from diverse backgrounds and are all engaged in peace building and conflict management within their respective communities in northern

Nigeria. Their work spread across the northwest, northeast, the middle belt and Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria. Two of the participants are Christians while the remaining five are Muslims. Below are the descriptions and biographic accounts of the individual participants who were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities;

Benedicta. Benedicta aged between 31 and 40 years is a seasoned conflict expert engaged in peace building for over 11 years. She works with women groups in northern Nigeria. Her interest in women's issues started in 2001 with her undergraduate project that focused on images of African women. She used two books for the project, namely *Ama Ata Aidoo* and *Wole Soyinka* which depicted images of strong African women. After graduation, she gained employment with a nonprofit organization working on peace building. She recalled, "My interest was how women can understand the uniqueness of their role, uniqueness of their part in humanity and use that to foster peace among communities." She states:

I started work as a Peace builder working with women groups in northern Nigeria in 2006. And since 2006, I have worked in different conflict contexts in northern Nigeria. From the middle belt, which has predominantly issues around agro-pastoralist conflict, also to the Northeast and the North West which has some coloration of religious tension. Basically, I work more with women groups; formalized women groups in form of NGOs and CBOs as well as with women in other non-formalized sectors.

Benedicta recounted her initial exposure to how women were viewed and what can be done:

And my experiences have been that early in my career working with women, there is this general perception that women are just victims, women are just people that are affected by conflict in different contexts. While no emphasis is really placed on the fact that women are resources for peace building. And with proper mentoring and coaching, they will achieve a level where they can fully contribute to bringing about resolution to violent conflict and also preventing conflict in their different context.

Her early work focus:

Some of the early things I did in my own experience working with women, women's groups and women leaders like I said earlier is to embark on series of capacity building; capacity building in form of training, coaching and mentoring and building them into networks where they can also provide support for one another.

Changing how they perceive themselves:

Basically, it started with even enabling women to really appreciate who they are as women. That appreciation is to increase their level of confidence, their level of belief in themselves as people capable of contributing positively to peace in their communities.

So, with that consciousness and awareness understanding their uniqueness not as competing with men but as important part of the society. The capacity to use some of the positive images ascribed to women as opportunity to build peace. For example, in the African context which northern Nigeria falls into, it also sees Nigerian women as mothers. It sees women as peace builders though it is often

argued that perception of peace builder is often seen in private sector not when larger decisions are to be taken. Like peace negotiations, post-conflict resolutions and all those ones but more in the private sector.

Maimuna. Maimuna is in her forties, and she is a lawyer who obtained extensive peace building and conflict management training through her affiliation with a regional peace-building network. Besides her legal practice, she has been engaged in peace building initiatives for over 8 years, focusing on strategies for breaking barriers of male domination of women within her immediate community and beyond. She states:

The experiences for me regarding peace and conflict has been quite engaging, an eye opener in so many ways. The experience also comes from our background of culture and religion. In peace building, women, youths and children are not part of it. You go to the communities it is just aged men and men that are into talking about conflict and how to resolve those conflict, and how to move forward. As to hear the voices of others in the community as to how they are feeling about the conflict usually it is absent.

To engage women who are excluded from peace building she explains what it requires:

And where you want to engage probably women leaders also that are in the community, it is like you are breaking new grounds. You are bringing something that is unfamiliar, something that is alien, something that is strange. So, most of the times you have to get the buy in of religious leaders, you have to get the buy in of the men to even allow the woman to be present. And when the woman is present even at that forum/level, you don't get to hear her voice, hear her speak. She will have to get the men's approval for her to even talk. So, it is an

experience that engaged us to find out how can we hear the voices of women in conflict areas?

Maimuna explains how they started engaging women who are burdened in the aftermath of violent conflict:

Even where conflict has affected them, the women have become aliens in their own community, because their food and farmlands had been burnt up or destroyed, their houses have been destroyed, they have lost children, they have lost at times even the head of the home. Part of the experience that I will share with you, is that we started having meetings with women. At those meetings, women open up and like ours on the Plateau, we had a combination of conflict that was both religious and was also ethnic in nature.

Sarah. Sarah is a veteran peace builder who refers to herself as the “grandmother of peace building.” She co-ordinates a coalition of women from seven different ethnic groups brought together for the purposes of peace. Their main focus is on women and youth issues. She states:

Am a woman activist and leader in peace building. I have coordinated a network of women groups in northern Nigeria. And we saw the need that when you want to get a woman to do something, don't give her the general activities, give her more responsibility you will get the better out of her. We formed the group in 2003 in north central zone.

Sarah describes her affiliation to different women groups concerned about conflict issues within their communities and their efforts at examining the root causes:

Apart from that I am a leader of the seven communities coordinating the women's activities. There are different ethnic groups; they are the Alaguta, the Afizere, the

Biom, Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo and Fulani. It is a daughter or granddaughter of a regional network organization. And why do we have these women activities in Jos in peace building. We came together to identify what the problems were. If you remember far back in 2001, Jos had a crisis that was of global concern. We identified women groups, fortunately, I was made the leader of the group. That is whom I am and what I am, and up till today I have been in peace building, I think I am a grandmother in peace building.

Halima. Halima is a conflict management expert with a master's degree in conflict studies who has been engaged in community peace building for the past 20 years. She is in her forties. Halima is moved by the plight of vulnerable members of her community, so she focuses her efforts on domestic violence against women and child rape victims. She collaborates with law enforcement agents and the judiciary for cases that require litigation. She states:

Being a woman in northern Nigeria actually it has opened my eyes to a lot of issues. Because in northern Nigeria we look at culture, religion and traditional values. Let me say that there is very low literacy rate, so understanding some issues is not an easy task. I have been involved into conflict management for a while now, almost getting to about 20 years. And I have seen conflict from domestic violence to child abuse, rape cases, trafficking, and child labor. So, you know eh, I have had cause to be involved in all these. Including even political violence that affects women and that has also contributed to their low participation in the decision making.

Danasabe. Danasabe is a trained journalist who specializes in peace building and conflict management. She is over 40 years old and have been engaged in peace building efforts for the past 7 years. She utilizes the knowledge and skills acquired in dealing with issues that arise from her daily interactions at home and in the office, which is a reflection of her interest and readiness to contribute to peace. She believes in empowering others and has been sharing training materials with her colleagues and friends in peace and conflict resolution. She states:

I have passion for peace. As a woman and as a mother I felt that I should give my quota to the development of peace because peace is very key to any development. Right from the home right from the individual. Because as a person you have to have peace before you can translate it to the family before you can take it to the environment you are, before you can take it to the larger society. Realizing that peacebuilding is key in all ramifications that is why I passionately engage myself in peace building and what it has to do with conflict management.

Actually, it is not easy because managing peace is not easy, because a lot of people do not even understand what you really mean. You understand, when you see people quarreling, you try to address the issue of the conflict by bringing them together. They see you as eh, how will I describe it? A lot of people from the onset do not believe that peace has come to stay. It is not an easy task, honestly when it comes to eh, it is an issue of attitude, issue of manner, issue of understanding and agreeing as a person to make peace.

Danasabe shares her peace building philosophy which guides her work and interaction with others:

In the course of my work as a Peace builder, I realize that as a person, I keep giving example with myself as a person because I have to ensure that whatever I am giving out, I have it in me. Because if I don't have peace in my heart, I don't think I can be able to give it out. So, like I always told my colleagues and friends and whoever cares to listen. I have challenged myself that I have to be in peace with myself and that is why as a family, as a forum we have to understand each other.

Kaka. Kaka is in her thirties, and she oversees an organization that is involved in peace building and social justice issues across northern Nigeria. Their peace building work is concentrated in Kaduna and Plateau States, and she has been in development work for 7 years. She states:

Looking at the crisis in Jos that had occurred, we know that several commissions of inquiry were established to look into the issues. And of course, reports were prepared but a lot of all those consultations did not really bring in the victims, the people who were really affected. And of course, you know that some of those victims would be women as well. So, their voices were not part of those consultations, they were not part of it. That is one of the challenges we also observed. So, as an organization, we started discussion with a donor agency to see how do we engage communities, so that they can begin to bring some ideas about their own peace building initiatives within their communities. That was what gave rise to the project we implemented titled, Community Driven Peace Building Processes.

And what we did was to carry out a little research and see where were some of the issues that were causing the conflict in Plateau? And then some communities had kept the peace, nothing was happening here, there was crises there, so that we can also have shared learning of what those communities were doing, those who were keeping the peace to share with those who were conflict prone.

Kaka described how her organization first carried out a study to understand the issues and who to engage before planning an intervention:

A lot of the research also showed that the communities were engaged in some little initiatives within their own communities like dialoging. So, they come together, we also discovered that in those dialogues meetings women were not part of them. That was one thing we observed, women were not mostly involved in these dialogue meetings. So, you have representatives of various ethnic groups being called together to the chief's palace. But women were not part of them, of course women don't occupy such positions in the community. So, that led to the exclusion of women in those kind of community processes.

Leila. Leila became involved in peace building due to her personal experience with violence, which left a tragic impact on her. She is in her thirties and have been engaged in peace building for more than 10 years. She states:

I have been contributing to peace and stability in Nigeria and in the region for more than 10 years. I think for me the drive has always been to move away from being a victim to an active participant. My community, my local community, my village as I talk to you today, is no more there due to violence. It is a very tiny community known as Salowe in Wase local government. And today it has been

more than 5 years that it was completely wiped off as if it never existed. My local government itself is still in the throes of violent conflict with the neighboring communities and other ethnic groups. This is something that affects me directly. I have seen family members suffer, I have seen family members killed.

Leila having suffered the impact of violence recognizes the need to act in order to avert future occurrence, and grabs the opportunity:

And so, when the opportunity to contribute meaningfully especially in the course of the work I do. It has been enriching, it has changed my life completely.

And I am so grateful to see how I have been able to transform communities, to allow people to understand their differences constructively and to deal with this conflict either collectively or as individuals, it has not been easy. Of course, for a woman and especially for a woman from the north. I am a Muslim, the disadvantages are more, I see it as more for the average Muslim woman who the customs and traditions dictate that she is not supposed to be seen and not be heard. Her role basically is to grow up, get married, give birth to children, take care of the home front and never get involved in politics or decision-making processes that involve the community as a whole. So, for me I see, I appreciate the fact that many in my community see me as being able to break those barriers. To be able to stand and talk about such issues as they affect women. To be in the forefront of building peace. My journey started in Jos, Plateau which is also a hotbed of violent conflict since 2001.

The demographics and biographic accounts of the peacemakers serve as introduction to the peacemakers, what led them to peace building and the philosophy guiding their peace building work as well as the drive that have kept them going.

A summary of the participants' demographics is shown on table 1 below.

Table 1

Demographic Makeup

	Age	Level of education	Years of Experience in Peacemaking	Marital Status
Danasabe	41 and above	Post Graduate Diploma	7years	Married
Halima	41 and above	Master's Degree	20years	Married
Leila	31-40	Graduate Degree	10years	Married
Sarah	41 and above	Master's Degree	20years+	Married
Maimuna	41 and above	Master's Degree	8years	Married
Kaka	31-40	Master's Degree	7years	Married
Benedicta	31-40	Post Graduate Diploma	11years	Married

Note. To protect participants' identity, pseudonyms were assigned to each of them

Data Collection Procedure

Having recruited participants and scheduled individual interview dates and time with them, the researcher traveled to northern Nigeria the day before the start of the interviews. Two of the participants opted to be interviewed at the researcher's hotel while the rest provided venues for their own interviews. To eliminate prior knowledge, opinion, thoughts and personal experience working with women peace builders in northern Nigeria, the researcher observed some quiet and reflective sessions before every interview. These epoche sessions were devoted to recalling personal perceptions and experiences related to the phenomenon and setting them aside. Concerted effort was then made to concentrate fully on what was being presented by the participants at the interview sessions to see things anew.

Each interview started with signing of two copies of the consent forms, one for the researcher and the other for the participant. The first set of interviews took place in Kaduna state, followed by Jos, Plateau state and then Abuja which is the capital territory of Nigeria. With the consent of the participants, the interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed. The transcription process involved playing, pausing and rewinding as many times as possible to ensure the responses were captured verbatim using Microsoft word.

Data Analysis Process

The seven steps outlined by the Vaan Kaam method of phenomenological data analysis as modified by Moustakas' was utilized for the analysis (Moustakas, 1994). The initial stage of the analysis process involved reading through the transcripts several times to get acquainted with the data. The seven steps were then followed meticulously to arrive at the essence and meaning of the experiences as follows;

The first step involves the process of horizontalization, which entails listing every relevant statement related to the phenomenon. The horizontalized statements were highlighted green and inserted as In Vivo codes in comment boxes. These In Vivo codes which comprise of participants' words and phrases from the horizontalized statements reduced the data to manageable size and made it easier to identify the invariant constituents.

The codes were then tested by way of reduction and elimination to determine whether they meet the two invariant constituent requirements of; containing a moment of experience that is sufficient constituent for understanding it and the possibility of abstracting and labeling it. To facilitate this process, the codes were extracted from the comment boxes and used to create seven columns, one for each participant. Each column

assigned per participant was then reviewed using the criteria for extracting invariant constituents prescribed by the method. Repeated overlapping ones were eliminated and those with vague expressions were either eliminated or rewritten in descriptive terms.

The next step involved clustering the invariant constituents into themes. For each participant, a column was created and the invariant constituents that are related grouped together and assigned a label. These clusters that are labeled are the core themes of the experience.

This was followed by a validation of the themes that were developed. This requires checking the themes against the interview transcript to determine their compatibility or whether they were explicitly stated by the participants. Those that were not explicit or compatible were deleted. The validated invariant constituents and themes were then used to develop individual textural and structural description of the experience for each participant. The table 2 below comprises of a sample of the invariant constituents and themes derived.

Table 2

Extracted Invariant Constituents and Themes

Theme 1: Patriarchal Influence	Theme 2: Changes Begin with Women & Girls	Theme 3: The Experience of Working with Men	Theme 4: Articulating a Holistic Approach
The patriarchal influence restricts and undermines the woman's peacemaking ability.	To change the societal structures, one must start working with women and girls.	Working with men to address patriarchal limitations	Articulating a holistic approach to engaging women in peace
A boy is considered older and wiser than the mother	Meetings reveal common victimhood	Taboo for men and women to sit together and discuss	Sensitive children on religious as a tool for unity not division
Our men feel like alpha and omega, what they say is final	Make women change from confrontation with military to dialoging	Conflict cannot be addressed without the support of men.	Need to focus on potential not gender in supporting children

Men don't know how to talk to their wives	women interfaith dialogue foster dialogue amongst divided communities & inspire men to organize theirs	Aim for gender balanced programs	Need to create space for women and build a untied structure for them
Peace cannot be achieved in that kind of environment	provide opportunity for women to share experiences	Identify and engage gender sensitive men	Need for common voice for women and opportunity to be heard
I need your support whatever I achieve is to your credit as my husband	Religious support across the divide	Trained community peace advocate group comprising of men and women sit together on peace meetings	More effort at engaging women
Patriarchal structure that believes that a man can articulate the needs of a woman	Provide trauma and psychosocial support for escaped Chibok girls and their mothers		Need for capacity building
More like men can talk for women, which for me is an abuse	Trained women to be part of meeting erstwhile exclusive for men		Opportunity for women to lead peace building processes/NGOs UN resolution 1325 elitist & need to implement laws related to women
Our patriarchal society don't recognize the voice of women			
Representatives of ethnic groups meet at chief's palace, women not part of them men have to allow women to be present.			
At such meetings they will put me behind the door and be conversing as if I don't exist			
Your resources are spent by husband or male head of the family.			
Sexual and domestic abuses are tool used to subdue women			

The research question and the themes derived are as follows;

Central Research Question and Major Themes

What are the meanings and essence of the lived experience of female leaders who participate in conflict management in northern Nigeria? The themes were constructed from the invariant constituents using phenomenological reflection and imaginative variation. The connection between the themes reflects the essence and meanings of experience of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Having identified patriarchal influence embedded within their cultural and religious dictates as a limiting factor to their effectiveness, the peacemakers set to work with women and girls to elevate them from their vulnerable state. They did not stop there, realizing that men are important for them to achieve their desired goal, they devised ways of engaging them. To further ensure more women are involved in peace building, they proposed several steps to be taken. Their experiences comprise of the four major themes and the sub-themes derived from the invariant constituents which are described below:

Theme 1: Patriarchal Influence

The patriarchal influence restricts and undermines the woman's peacemaking ability. Male dominance is enshrined in the cultural and religious practices guiding daily interactions within the region that perpetuate the subjugation of women. This limits their effectiveness as social agents of change. Educational discrimination, religious dictates, and sexual abuses are some of the tools used to subdue women and ensure their conformance to established patriarchal norms. Their denial of access to resources directly affects their access to leadership leading to the exclusion of policies of great concern to

women. Perception of women as weak and lacking strength for peace building further adds to their difficulty in getting engaged.

Despite the many years of service as peacemaking activists, all the women activists have commented on the impact of patriarchal power in limiting their sphere of influence. A boy, even at a young age, is considered more important than his older mother and other women. This was expressed by Maimuna:

Challenges is usually cultural; it is usually religious in the sense that it comes from this patriarchy that men are leaders, born leaders, even if it is your son. In the local context, here in the Plateau, even your child that you gave birth to, if it is a boy child, is older than you the mother, wiser than you the mother. So, you can't be seen to talk sense. So, the voice of the child is better.

Danasabe attributed it to the fact that men consider themselves superiors whose words or actions must be obeyed: "You know our men, they always feel that they are the alpha and omega, what they say is final". She further shared that:

The three secrets of life; please, thank you and am sorry, it is very rare with most men, you hardly hear this from the men. That is one of the problems that causes violence at home. Some men they don't know how to talk to their wives, when they are wrong they don't know how to say sorry. Some of them don't even know how to say thank you, because they feel that they are fathers of the house whatever they do is final. Peace cannot be achieved in that kind of environment.

The peacemakers often encounter difficulty leaving their homes for their peace building work. This was the case between Danasabe and her husband. She states:

Before I came out this morning I made peace in my house by sitting down my husband. I explained to him the nature of my work and duty. And that I cannot achieve anything without his support because I have confidence in you and you have been supporting me. Please I need you to continue to give me that support. So that I can achieve, whatever I am achieving is to your credit as my husband. That is what I did this morning before I came out and I am happy. I then called my children, and I said please I have a challenge this week I need you to understand and they prayed for me before I came out. And that was what happened in my house. So, if you are not happy at home, you can't be happy anywhere.

Kaka shared that the voices of women are ignored within their context:

I talked about capacity gaps especially for the women. And then our patriarchal society, they don't recognize the voice of women. They are not being carried along, they feel women cannot contribute to peace building, they have no say, it is something that requires strength, women don't have the kind of strength that is required.

With all our activities we were able to show that women are the most affected.

And if they are the most affected you cannot tell their stories for them, the losses they suffered you cannot tell. And so, they need to also be heard, they need to be given the opportunity to also put out what they have gone through.

Kaka also shared that they carried out research to find out the issues causing the conflict in Plateau State and why some communities within the state were peaceful, while some

others are in crises. To encourage sharing lessons learned amongst the communities. She states:

The outcome of the research showed that the communities were engaged in some initiatives like dialoging. We also discovered that in those dialogues women were not part of them. So, you have representatives of various ethnic groups being called together to the chief's palace. But women were not part of them, of course women don't occupy such positions in the community. So, that led to the exclusion of women in those kind of community processes.

Conducting communal peace meetings at exclusive male spaces was also alluded to by Sarah, who believes it is part of the reason women are not in peace processes. she states:

Women are not involved in the process because they believe that everything they do it in a shrine, and women don't go into the shrine. But some of us we are saying no, you have to do it with the women or else you won't succeed.

Maimuna captures the difficulty of getting women to attend peace building related meetings:

So, most of the times you have to get the buy in of religious leaders, you have to get the buy in of the men to even allow the woman to be present. And when the woman is present even at that forum/level, you don't get to hear her voice, hear her speak. She will have to get the men's approval for her to even talk. So, it is an experience that engaged us to find out how can we hear the voices of women in conflict areas?

Even when women want to contribute, they are either sidetracked or silenced. This was experienced by Leila who lamented the underrepresentation of women in some of the

commissions of enquiry set up to address the middle belt crisis. Typically, 10member commission or committee will comprise of one or at most two women who are usually dominated by the men. She recounted her personal experience:

I was the only female in an exclusive Muslim committee. At such meetings they will put me behind the door and be conversing as if I don't exist. And after they have finished, they will tell me, okay these are our resolutions. And I didn't know how to deal with that, it was so out of place, I felt out of place. I have grown beyond being kept behind the door. And I had to protest by boycotting that committee. But surprisingly I was shocked, that instead of asking me why I boycotted the meeting, to hear my grievances, I was instantly replaced by another woman willing to accept what they were doing. So, these are some of the challenges that we face, that even when you want to stand firm and make your voice to be heard, the community feels that you are replaceable.

Leila also highlighted the subjugation of women on different fronts including gender roles, marriage and resource management. When it comes to the role of women, she states:

Of course, for a woman and especially for a woman from the north. I am a Muslim, the disadvantages are more, I see it as more for the average Muslim woman who the customs and traditions dictate that she is not supposed to be seen and not be heard. Her role basically is to grow up, get married, give birth to children, take care of the home front and never get involved in politics or decision-making processes that involve the community as a whole.

With respect to resources and its management. She states:

Sometimes leadership in our context is determined by your resources. And we know that for the women in our context that has remained the bane of our being seen as leaders in the community. Access to resources is still a challenge. Because even when you own the resources, when you have access to the resources. The determining factor in how those resources are spent is seen as the role of the husband or the family head. The male head of the family. The decision to do what you want to do with such resources are out of your hands.

And on marriage she had this to say:

When we are talking about marriage, unfortunately still in our context, when we are talking about social relationship and especially for the Muslim women in our community, this is also still largely determined by family who gets married to who, how you get married, and when you get married. I got married at the age of 18. But I am happy to say that I got a very solid family support, from my marital home to my family who supported me to pursue my dream. But this is just one example. What about the millions of other young women in the north who cannot have the same? Especially now that men think that if a woman grows she becomes out of control. So that's still a very big problem. In terms of customs and tradition, when you want to engage particularly from the religious perspective they see that as an abomination. How can a woman come to address the leaders of the community? These are challenges we still face today.

Also, in the case of sexual and domestic abuses experienced by women, Leila states:

Women have faced a lot of the sexual and domestic abuses we see today. It is a tool that is being used to subdue women. So, when you want to grow, the

community will begin to say the husband is not able to control you. Or people will plan to gang rape you. And we have also seen how the role of conflict has brought an increased number of security forces within the community. That has also taken its toll, where young girls who have great potential to continue to grow, to continue to go to school, are cut short by early marriages and early sexual knowledge by security forces in the community.

On women's issues and political processes, Halima states:

There is also political violence, with no women in the State Assembly, and how do you expect women to talk about their issues. Lobbying led to the passing of the Child Rights Act for second reading after being dormant for 16 years.

Reiterating their engagement in political process challenges, Leila has this to say:

The woman faces a lot of adversities, not just as a victim of conflict but because the environment has not been made conducive for her to get involved. Already she is disadvantaged. If you are looking at all factors of engagement from political where women, am sorry to say constitute less than 1% of people engaged in politics. There have been so many adversities regarding that. And for us in the context that we live in, getting involved in political activities will catapult you into the key decision-making processes and into governance. But because we are not there we are already disadvantaged. So, most of the decision-making processes, the women are actually not there. And if we were there, then some of the policies, some of the actions, some of the pronouncements of govt that are anti-peace the women would have contributed to that.

Maimuna also added her voice to the absence of women's engagement in political processes due to patriarchal norms. She states:

Few educated women holding positions in government, the technocrats, also do not engage women at the grassroots on peace building, why? Because there is this huge gap, the way the men view them, also affect the way they are supposed to bridge the gap between the urban woman and the rural woman. There is this feeling that probably you are coming to tell them things that will make them fight the men. So, they shy away from taking responsibility of involving women in peace building processes with the men.

The degree to which men control women's involvement in peace building and other public activities vary from one ethnic group to the other. Maimuna states:

For the Fulanis you need to even seek the consent of the men to have their wives for a meeting. It was a big dilemma. So, ordinarily, you can't have the Fulani woman on the table to discuss any issue except the men grant the approval. And even when their men give their approval, at the end the women's suggested resolutions, the men will ask you, who gave you the authority to come up with such, definitely not our women. In short, that means they will not attend any meeting again.

On disregard of laws that favor women's inclusion, Maimuna states:

We have the Plateau state action plan, there is also a national action plan on UN resolution 1325, to include women at all levels of peace making, but as we are sitting, just to tell you how it is a male dominated terrain. We have the peace building agency that came into existence in 2015 or 2016 as part of this

government. The Director General of that agency is a man and when they constituted the peace committee regarding the conflict between the Fulanis and the Birom, there was no woman representative on that committee. That is to tell you how grievous it is, especially since we have the Plateau action plan that says women should be included at all levels, they should participate. So, it is one thing to have the laws, it is another for the policy makers to put in into use.

This theme highlighted the different restrictions on women's participation in peace processes within the region due to the patriarchal structure dictating relationships between women and men. This transcends every area of their lives from being relegated beneath men and boys in terms of their importance within the social strata, to their being denied the ability to interact freely and make decisions on matters affecting them physically, economically, politically and socially.

Theme 2: Changes Begin with Women & Girls

The peacemakers are optimistic and believe that to change societal structures, they must first empower women and girls who are most victimized by this experience. The participants highlighted the vulnerability of women as well as the direct and indirect impact of conflict. The plight of these women is of major concern to the peacemakers as most of their peace building work focuses on empowering and transforming them from their vulnerable state to a level where they will have confidence and belief in themselves.

Leila who was personally affected by conflict stated that for her, "the drive has always been to move away from being a victim to an active participant". Which is a common goal shared by all the participants on behalf of the women they work with

across the different communities. The interventions shared by the participants focus on their work with women, girls and sometimes youths.

Maimuna and her team recognizing that the women's voices were missing when it comes to addressing conflict which affects them the most, worked towards engaging them across the different communities in Plateau State. She states:

We started having meetings with women. At those meetings, women open up and like ours on the Plateau, we had a combination of conflict that was both religious and ethnic in nature. So, when we brought in these different women from different groups, they shared experiences, they were able to understand that oh, what the Hausa woman is going through, is also what I am going through likewise the Fulani, the Birom, Afizere or Anaguta woman.

Leila and her organization focused on transforming the youths through constructive engagement. She states:

We were able to bring together many of those divided communities. And in particular young people who are the instruments used to perpetrate violence to be able to respond to the situation. And we used a multitude of approaches and tools. For example, to get the attention of young people, media was a very good tool we used to engage and to change their perceptions and attitudes. We also engaged young people through facilitating actions by asking young people to design actions to target communities. Many of them we were surprised chose sports which brought together divided communities.

Maimuna and her team worked with women and indirectly with the youths to change their confrontational style of addressing their conflict with the military to dialoguing. She states:

In Biron, we have particular issues with them, the women and youths collaborated and protested against the military in their locality. But because we had started the meetings with those group of women, we made them realize that it was not the proper move to take. Thereafter, they resorted to having dialogue with the security and it really reduced and brought down to zero their conflict with the military.

Their grouse then was that the military were killing their children not knowing it was the Fulanis that were responsible. So, when they come out to retaliate and protest, we reminded the women, you don't have guns, so if they shot you or your children that are participating, what will happen? So, from there, you know they went back to the round table and said this dialogue thing is really working.

Through dialogue, the military was able to tell them about the issues they didn't even know. You know gradually it closed up that divide.

Through the dialogues between the different ethnic /religious divides, the peacemakers led the women to realize their common victimhood irrespective of which side of the divide they belong to which gingered them to put their differences aside and unite for peace. This was shared by Maimuna, she states:

At meetings, women open up and like ours on the Plateau, we had conflict that was both religious and ethnic in nature. So, when we brought in these different women from different groups, they shared experiences, they were able to understand that oh, what the Hausa woman is going through, is also what I am

going through, likewise the Fulani, the Birom, the Afizere or Anaguta. So, it was at such forums that women will cry, weep and realize at the end of the day we are all women and that it is the men that go out to fight. And then why are we not also carried along?

Kaka also shared similar experience working with erstwhile segregated communities, she states:

In some of our projects we have experiences where if the Christians are saying their prayers, Muslims will protect them and when the Muslims are praying, the Christians will also go out to provide security. So, we have those kinds of things. Communities sitting together and agreeing to seek peace, including communities that were not relating before. In fact, we were in Bukuru sometime two or 3 years ago and the community leader was appreciative of the work we had done.

Because for him, for people to begin to go back to markets to buy goods and services, relate with one another is a welcome development.

The peacemakers are usually referred issues concerning women by their communities to assist them deal with psychological and physical effects of conflict. Danasabe and Halima shared their experiences in this regard. Danasabe:

During the trauma counseling one of the mothers of the Chibok girls in my group nearly gave up. The medical teams tried different things to help check their blood pressure which was just shooting up. This woman refused to take anything, she will do as if she will seize her breath, she was in my group, I will tell my group to start singing, we will sing until we bring her back. That woman almost gave up,

she didn't even believe in the drugs that were provided at that time. But I think, her believe in God kept her till now.

Halima states:

With respect to the Chibok girl's abduction, the first 57 girls' escapees we provided them with psycho-social support along with religious leaders and medical personnel. It took three days to break the silence due to the ordeal they went through in the hands of their abductors.

On their activities generally, Maimuna has this to say:

With all our activities were able to show that women are the most affected. And if they are the most affected you cannot tell their stories for them, the losses they suffered you cannot tell. And so, they need to also be heard, they need to be given the opportunity to also put out what they have gone through. In terms of sharing through some formal counseling to be able to share what they have experienced and then putting it behind them and looking at how they can move on with their lives.

On the success of their effort at including women through their program, Kaka states:

When the village head wants to have meetings with traditional leaders, he also calls the representatives that we have trained. We call them, Community Peace Advocates, CPA. So, he will call members of the CPA to be part of those meetings. So, that way the women that were trained were beginning to make contribution to the discourse at that level.

Peace building platforms also serve as support system for women including the peace makers themselves. Danasabe states:

As a mother and as a wife there was a time it was so tough for me, I had to take it to one training we were doing on conflict management so that the forum can help me address the situation. Because it has reached to a level now that if you have a problem, it is not your own alone. You should learn to share experience so that you can get solution. I took it to the forum and I was advised. When I came back I was able to use it solve my own internal problem. Today, we are a happy family.

The peacemakers recorded some successes working with women and girls by focusing on their connectors, providing them with counseling and psycho-social support as well as training them as CPA and providing them access to erstwhile exclusive male spaces.

Theme 3: Experience Working with Men

The peacemakers recognize the importance of working in collaboration with men to address patriarchal limitations and for peace to reign in their communities but find it challenging to engage them from the position of weakness they find themselves.

However, some of them found creative ways of engaging men as well as identifying those they consider as allies within the region to support their cause. This was expressed by the participants in different ways;

Maimuna states:

Generally, men and women cannot sit on the same table to discuss issues that affect the whole community, it is unheard of. I remember talking on the radio on some of those issues, one of my uncles said no, that I have gone bunkers, that they should tell me oh, that this cannot work. And that is an educated person.

Danasabe shared similar experience, and she states:

It is not easy handling men, we have never done a forum that is purely men. When we have a forum for women, the men will come and join us. So, my focus is mainly women, but we are trying to bring the men together so that we can also eh. The issue of conflict management cannot be achieved, cannot be addressed without the support of men.

Maimuna and her team employed some strategies to engage men. She states:

When we have meetings based on conflict that men are supposed to be present. We will request for them to add at least two women if there are five men representing their locality. And some groups complied, others will not do it still.

Kaka employed a similar strategy while selecting participants for their community peace building training. She states:

We were so deliberate even in the selection of participants. So, if we select a community, if you are bringing a huge representative, it must be male and female. So, we made a deliberate attempt to ensure good representation of both men and women at the meetings, and youth groups too. So, that we don't have the communities bringing to us traditional rulers who are the same people sitting at those community dialogues.

Another strategy was utilized by Maimuna and her team. She states:

Men that are educated and at times part of the peace building process also want to engage women to say, let's hear your own angle or perspectives. So, that was the key we used in identifying men that were gender sensitive and have a wider understanding that their own perspectives are also different from the perspectives

of the women. So, we now brokered like a middle ground in respect of that but it was not easy.

Leila in recognition of women's power restricted to the Homefront states: "We know that even when women are not seen in public, they still have roles to play behind the doors".

Danasabe made similar observations about the power ascribed to women in the privacy of her home. She states:

We should be passionate about what affects the women, if the woman is at peace, if the woman is healthy she will produce a healthy and peaceful home. But when the woman is not at peace, she is not healthy, her home is crashed. Though she needs the support of her husband, she needs to stand on her feet. She is mother to her children and mother to her husband. They (men) have admitted that the women are their mothers too. Because the way you are handling the younger ones that is the same way he too will be behaving to you at home, so you have become his mother.

Recognizing the cultural and traditional restrictions inhibiting free interaction between opposite sexes, the peacemakers devised ways of circumventing them; they identified as allies gender sensitive men amongst the menfolk and utilized gender criteria for participation in their community programs.

Theme 4. Articulating a Holistic Approach

The peacemakers feel so passionate about advancing their work to make more impact. They all wrapped up their interview sessions articulating causes for action and their aspirations that will result to a holistic engagement of women in peace processes within their various communities. This was expressly stated by Leila who said, "We have

to have a holistic approach to engaging women”. Their articulations are categorized into six sub-themes: (a) unified structure/creation of space for women; (b) united voice for women/need to be heard; (c) need for capacity building; (d) women leading the process;(e) issues with the UN resolution 1325; (f) requires resources.

Before getting to these needs, Danasabe emphasized the need for change to start from the home which requires focusing on ties that bind and children’s potential not their gender; on ties that bind she states:

It is high time for us to rise up to the challenge of sensitizing our children to know that religion must not divide us, culture must not divide us. We are doing intermarriage now, you will see Yoruba marrying Hausa, and Igbo marrying Hausa. I have a friend that her daughter from this side is married to Igbo. I have friends that are doing intermarriage. Then why are we quarrelling? We are just pretending.

On shift of focus from gender, she states:

Until we begin to show our children that we eh see, you as a boy, if you violate the rights of a girl or a woman, somebody will also violate the rights of your daughter. At this stage we should start telling them to learn to respect each other. And we should treat our children equally. When you educate the boy child, you give the girl child equal education. Let’s start looking at their potentials not gender and support them. The boy will eat and he will leave plate for you and you make the girls pack the plates. Tell the boy to pack the plates and wash it. Tell your boy child, let him learn how to wash the toilet, there will be respect. Teach your boy child to know how to sweep the house, it is not meant for the women.

Violation even starts from home, so it is when we start addressing these issues that is when we will be addressing conflict.

Unified structure/creation of space for women. Leila emphasized the need for women to form a bloc for peace rather than individual actions. She states:

Women have not been able to coordinate well, we are doing so much work relatively in the few years that we have seen the achievement and at least some improvement in the role women play in building peace in the region. I will say that these are largely attributed to the individual interventions or the role that we play. I have not seen where we have been able to harness our potentials and our knowledge and skills. Harnessing them and putting them into one basket to make concrete meaning. We all are doing our thing. So that is basically still a very huge challenge.

Besides bringing women from the two major religions in the region for activities, Leila expressed the need to establish a unified structure for both sides in the interest of peace.

She states:

Religion is still a problem, when talking of the north there are two major religions; Christianity and Islam. But most importantly we have not seen how these religions have been able to come together. What you see is mostly maybe structures of Muslim women or structures of Christian women mostly pursuing their separate agendas. And so, the women at the end of the day will suffer it. In the case of the context of politics we play in this region. Political leaders take advantage of the use of the divide and rule tactics. And we have been able to give them that platform to really use religion to divide us.

Kaka acknowledging the women's lack of capacity, has this to say about giving them space:

Women may be limited in terms of capacity, but let's also not think that they do not have solutions to issues. Give women platform and provide safe space for them to talk to overcome the culture that hinders them from talking about issues around conflict. They suffer the most, but sometimes they are not given that platform to really talk about what has happened to them. And so, in Jos, when women were talking about what they have gone through, the men were crying. It was really touching to see that men were really weeping because of the testimonies of the women.

Kaka concluded by saying:

I think for me the major challenge is being given that platform or that space. If they are given that space of course women have a lot to contribute to peace building. But our culture and our society, the way we were all brought up, our upbringing makes us think that women have nothing to contribute. But I think, people use safe space approaches, because for me it has worked on different initiatives. Give them those kinds of platform, women can really come out and talk about their issues.

United voice for women/need to be heard. Leila advocated for a common voice across the region, the need to examine the reason for the increase in women suicide bombers and act to stem the tide, build the capacity of women and to engage women more. On having a common voice, she states:

How come we now have many women suicide bombers, what has changed in the dynamics of the conflict. And I think that calls for us to really see what went wrong, how come women are now getting more engaged in terrorist activities. And how do we also make sure we bring others out of it. A lot of attention, there is a lot of work being done, you know the north is a very vast region, 19 states. It is a country of its own in many other contexts, and so the dynamics is so different. We have different dimensions of conflict happening in different places. But we don't have a common voice unfortunately.

Maimuna emphasized the need for inclusion of the voice of women. She states: "The neglect of a woman's voice in the society will mean only one thing; doom. Every one that exists comes through a woman, so if that channel is neglected, you can imagine what will happen".

Kaka talking about the need for a unified voice on conflict issues within the region, has this to say: "But how do we all have a voice so that we are all singing the same song based on the issues that are coming". And on the need to hear the voices of women she states:

With all our activities, we were able to show that women are the most affected. And if they are the most affected you cannot tell their stories for them, the losses they suffered you cannot tell. And so, they need to also be heard, they need to be given the opportunity to also put out what they have gone through.

Need for capacity building. This was captured by Leila and Kaka.

Leila states:

There are a lot of challenges facing us, we need to do a lot more to improve our capacities. Looking at the changing trends and the dynamics of the conflict. Many issues are coming up; new factors are coming into the conflict and the conflict is so fluid. We need to keep talking about these things. We need to keep getting the capacity needed in dealing with the conflict. What we learnt ten years ago are not the same tools we are using today. The world keeps changing and so also is the conflict.

Kaka reiterated her submission on creation of space for women and touched on capacity building as well. She states:

For me the role of women in peace building can never be overemphasized. It is just key and there is need for that platform number one and then probably their capacity need to be built based on the gaps identified, it should be built so that women can have a stronger voice.

Women leading the process. Leila states:

I have not seen strong women led movements or organizations or interventions. I work for an organization, NGO which is not women led. Even when we have the passion to have women led NGOs, most donors don't have the confidence to actually think that women can do so. We talk about communities not respecting women's right to participate, donors are also virtually doing the same thing. I can count how many women led NGOs we have, and how many are active, how many are getting the necessary support to be able to intervene. And I will tell you, for most NGOs the only way to go forward is to support women led programming. I think we have to have a holistic approach to engaging women.

Issues with the UN resolution 1325. On UN resolution 1325, Leila states: UN resolution 1325 is also one of our key challenges, the resolution is elitist, unfortunately only the educated and the elite know about it. If you go to the grassroots, you can't even talk about 1325 because nobody will even know about it. How do we popularize and contextualize it? You cannot talk about increasing women's participation in the context of the environment, because it differs. Yes, we have a lot of frameworks, we have a lot of laws and we have to contextualize it. And the only way to do that is for the women to lead the process, to go into the communities to engage more women. Have women movements at various levels from the grassroots, women can do it. After all we have strong women movements regarding politics. How do we take advantage of that and turn it into peace and security issues? And we can do it if we are committed to that. How come women will come out en mass during politics as united voice, and decide what they want regarding politics. But when it comes to peace and security women are not on the table.

Leila further states:

People have assumed role that they have given women to just fill the quota, they can be members but cannot lead the process. We need to start doing some pilots around this to see if women are given the opportunity to lead, it might actually be sustained and have more impact. Because what we see today, they are not making any impact, they dissolve once the hostilities have ended. And then we wait for the next round of violent conflict.

Requires resources. The need for resources was emphasized by the participants.

Leila states:

How do we engage women? I always feel inspired by the stories that happened in Liberia, I am so inspired by that, it is not magic. This is what we can do. If given the right opportunity and the resources to do it. Because for me, I think women can stop the violence in this region. We can force government, conflict parties to stop, by learning and getting inspirations from stories from Liberia. But we are not doing that, we are not taking advantage of that, we are not coordinated, we are not getting the kind of support and the resources that we need to be able to do it.

Sarah states:

Do you have the time, when will you have the time to go out and be sitting with these people, will they have the time to listen to you, do you have the resources when they want to do something?

The peacemakers articulated the need for a united front for women from both religions and the provision of safe space to enable women to promote a common stand on issues. Also, there is the need to popularize and contextualize the UNSCR 1325 as well as the need to fund the implementation of the national and regional action for the implementation of the resolution.

Identification of the invariant constituents and themes covers up to step four of the seven steps of van Kaam's phenomenological analysis as modified by Moustakas. Steps five and six which involve the construction of the individual textural, and individual structural description of the experience are as follows;

Individual textural descriptions and structural descriptions. These are participants' actual words extracted from the interview transcripts separated into seven columns described earlier that are linked to the themes and invariant constituents. See Table 3 below.

Table 3

Benedicta's Textural Descriptions Relating to the Themes

Theme 1: Patriarchal Influence	Theme 2: Changes Begin with Women & Girls	Theme 3: The Experience of Working with Men	Theme 4: Articulating a Holistic Approach
The patriarchal influence restricts and undermines the woman's peacemaking ability.	To change the societal structures, one must start working with women and girls.	Working with men to address patriarchal limitations	Articulating a holistic approach to engaging women in peace
More like men can talk for women, for me is an abuse	Embark on capacity building in form of coaching, mentoring and building them into support network	Organize dialogue for women to see how they can influence men and young peoples to imbibe positive behavior and attitude	To ensure the sustainability of any initiative, it must be embedded in a structured platform in that community How do we get structured platform; encompassing, not discriminatory, that allows women across divides sit and talk.
You hardly see women to engage for peace apart from the platform of religion	Capacity to use some of the positive images ascribed to women as opportunity to build peace	Remain committed to working with women until potentials for facilitating peaceful co-existence at the private and public levels are achieved	
Northeast is a region where women are battling stereotypical identity that limits their participation in public life	Christian women leaders in solidarity with Muslim women opportunity for communities to humanize one another.		Needs of women should be factored into all initiatives and interventions in northeast
	Women interfaith dialogue foster dialogue amongst divided communities & inspire men to organize theirs		Need to bring out and harmonize voices of women.

Contributed to the men, the traditional, religious and other leaders to also initiate separate dialogue

Needs of women and girls be addressed at post insurgence stage

It takes creative and strategic engagement among women to carve out a niche and be able to voice out and contribute to peace

2017 proposed budget did not devote resources to the national action plan

First step having national action plan, next thing to agitate to ensure it is funded.

Benedicta's Individual Textural Description of Her Engagement in Peace Building

Benedicta's peace building experience is one in which the subjugation of women by men affects their effectiveness in peace building. The men positioning themselves as mouthpiece for the women, she considers inadequate and which needs to be rectified:

Of course, there is still the patriarchal structure that believes that a man can articulate the needs of a woman. Part of the challenge is analysis and presentation of needs by the men, not women themselves saying these are our needs. It is still more like men can talk for women, which for me is an abuse. No way can a man articulate the need of a woman adequately like a woman will articulate those things.

Patriarchal influence and religious restrictions make it challenging to get women to engage for peace especially in the northeast:

There is this common occurrence that you hardly see women to engage positively for them to really contribute to issues of peace. Their voices have been absent in

calling for peace, apart from in some instances while on the platform of religion, may be as CAN or FOMWAN, FOMWAN is for Muslims, CAN is for Christian women. Where the women wing has tried informally to make some contributions. But formally standing out to talk, most of the time it is led by other groups and not the women in most of the states affected by the ongoing insurgency. For example, even if you look at the Chibok girls that were abducted by Boko Haram in 2014, there has not been strong northeast based women's group that is really agitating. Most of the agitations are still being done from the national level led by different activists.

To change these structural restrictions, Benedicta and her colleagues first resorted to working with women and girls who are the most vulnerable. Their efforts through series of capacity building and interfaith dialogues led to the realization by the women of their common victimhood thus pushing them to unite for peace. The women were moved to organize inexpensive activities, one of such initiatives resulted in their humanization of one another which inspired the men to replicate their effort:

The Christians and the Muslims decided to support each other during religious celebrations. For example, when the Muslims were having their Ramadan fast, the Christian women leaders supplied them with pap, which is a symbol that we understand what you are doing and we are in solidarity with you. And when it was time for Christmas, the Muslim women also gave them gifts which for the first time was an opportunity for different communities to once again humanize one another. And see themselves as all victims of this conflict and also look at ways to really move beyond the situation. That contributed to the men, the traditional,

religious and other leaders to also initiate separate dialogue. They had a rethink looking at what the women were doing which informed the progress that was recorded in that process.

Dedicated to expanding their success beyond their domestic sphere of influence of working with women and girls, Benedicta and her colleagues are devising ways of engaging men in the interest of peace for all. She is not giving up: “I remain committed to working with women, young people, young women, elderly women across different generations on ensuring that the potentials for facilitating peaceful co-existence not just at the private level but at the public level is achieved”. Her conviction is based on her experience which showed that “women have interest to contribute to peace but they also need this special space that can nurture them, bring their own confidence level up before they can comfortably sit with men to make demands and agitations”. Thus, capacity building is an essential requirement for women to be able to engage men at the same level.

A holistic engagement of women in peace processes in addition to the ongoing efforts for the good of their region will require taking certain steps articulated by Benedicta as: Creating well established platforms for women to sustain their efforts:

One of the lessons I learnt in my experience is that to ensure the sustainability of any initiative, it must be totally embedded, perhaps in a structured platform in that particular community. But the gap always remains, how do we get a structured platform that is all encompassing, that is not discriminatory, that allows women across the different divides to sit together and talk.

Women articulating their needs themselves which should be incorporated in all peace processes:

In addressing issue of Boko Haram, there is no effort specifically articulating the needs of women in post insurgency stage. The needs of women should be factored into all the initiatives of the federal government and all the interventions being done in the northeast.

There is the need for conscious and deliberate attempt to really bring out and harmonize the voice of women. Articulate their issues so that they can be part of all the developmental projects. That has been a major gap which should really be addressed for the needs of women and girls to be adequately addressed at the post insurgency stage.

Benedicta believes that the articulation of needs by the women is particularly important in the northeast region where women's voices are mostly silenced:

Northeast has a peculiar case where the voices of women have really been silent. Resolution 1325 which calls for women's participation in every level of peace and security, either from the negotiation, from the peace table, or from the post conflict situation. Contrary to what that resolution has proposed which of course Nigerian government has also developed a national action plan for the implementation of 1325. But the reality on the ground is that there is just simply no structured platform for the voices of women to be heard in decision being taken or issues of ending the insurgency, or issues of post-conflict reintegration or issues of rehabilitation.

Benedicta also believes that the effort at engaging more women in peace building as stipulated by the UN resolution 1325 does not stop at establishing action plans, but requires financial commitment towards the execution of the plans:

For the national action plan on the implementation of 1325 in Nigeria, I was in a meeting in September 2016 where the action plan, the pillars, and the implementation were discussed. Unfortunately, even the 2017 proposed budget did not devote any resources to implementing recommendations in the national action plan. As far as am concerned that is lip service. My experience is that at least the first step should have been taken in having this national action plan. The next thing will now be to agitate to ensure that it is funded.

Benedicta emphasized the need for women's voices to be heard beyond the platform of religion and every stage of the peace process and not men speaking for them. As well as the need for government to devote resources for the implementation of UNSCR1325 action plan.

Benedicta's Individual Structural Description of her Engagement in Peace Building

The individual structural description based on the individual textural description and imaginative variation portrays the underlying dynamics of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). "The structures are brought into the researcher's awareness through imaginative variation, reflection and analysis, beyond the appearance and into the meanings and essences of the experience" (p.135). This includes Benedicta's thoughts and feelings about the experience and the conditions that gave rise to them. That conveys her perceptions and experiences of patriarchal influences affecting her peace work, working with women and girls to change their lot and working with men to address the

patriarchal restrictions. These experiences resulted in her articulating steps for a more holistic approach to engaging women in peace building within northern Nigeria.

Regarding patriarchal restrictions, Benedicta feels degraded as a woman being spoken for by men as if she is incapable of speaking for herself. “It is still more like men can talk for women, which for me is an abuse”. She believes women are in a better position to speak for themselves and identify their own issues. “No way can a man articulate the need of a woman adequately like a woman”.

Benedicta knew ahead of time what to expect within the context of northern Nigeria. Especially with the narrow perception of women as just victims of conflict and no room for their recognition as resources for peace. “...there is this general perception that women are just victims, women are just people that are affected by conflict in different contexts... no emphasis is really placed on the fact that women are resources for peace building”. “Unfortunately, the northeast is a region where women are still battling with a lot of stereotypical identity that limits their participation in public life”. This informed the decision to work with women and girls to change some of these skewed perception and position them for peace which they have the capacity for.

Benedicta sees the stereotyping of women as part of the reason for their lack of confidence to work comfortably with men. She remains committed to working with women until they emerge from their level of obscurity in private spaces to public spaces. This, she believes will require creation of space for women, nurturing them to build their capacity and confidence level, incorporating their articulated needs into peace initiatives and for action plan on resolution 1325 to be funded beyond lip service being paid by government.

Benedicta's Individual Textural-Structural Description of her Engagement in Peace Building

A combination of the invariant constituents and themes is used in the construction of the individual textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience required for step 7 of the analysis method (Moustakas, 1994). From the perspectives of Benedicta, the meanings and essences of the experience of her engagement in peace building in northern Nigeria are portrayed through her experience and perceptions of patriarchal restrictions affecting her peace work, working with women and girls to effect structural change in society, working with men to address patriarchal influences and articulating a holistic approach to engaging women in peace building.

The patriarchal restrictions requiring Benedicta and her fellow women to rely on men as their mouthpiece is a challenge and an abuse which portrays them as people incapable of speaking for themselves. "Part of the challenge is analysis and presentation of needs by the men, not women themselves saying these are our needs. It is still more like men can talk for women, which for me is an abuse". This silences women and deprives them of the opportunity of raising their concerns for integration into peace processes. Benedicta believes that "no way can a man articulate the need of a woman adequately like a woman..."

The experience of working with women and girls to effect societal changes for Benedicta can be achieved through capacity building and bringing women across different religious and ethnic divides for interfaith dialogue in the interest of peace for all. Through the successes recorded by the women resulting in their humanization of one another, the men were inspired to organize their own. "...contributed to the men, the

traditional, religious and other leaders to also initiate separate dialogue. They had a rethink looking at what the women were doing which informed the progress that was recorded in that process”.

Determined to continue to make more impact, Benedicta is committed to ensuring women attain the level required for them to move from private to public spaces working in collaboration with men. “I remain committed to working with women, young people, young women, elderly women across different generations on ensuring that the potentials for facilitating peaceful co-existence not just at the private level but at the public level is achieved”. She has confidence in the ability of women to contribute effectively to peace if given the right opportunity.

For a more holistic approach to engaging women in peace building, Benedicta believes some important steps need to be taken. This will require; creating space for women to provide them the opportunity of making their own input; building their capacity will enhance their ability and position them to be able to work comfortably with men; funding UN resolution 1325 action plan in existence within the region as a way of addressing the exclusion of women from peace processes within the region. “My experience is that at least the first step should have been taken in having this national action plan. The next thing will now be to agitate to ensure that it is funded”.

Textural - Structural Synthesis for the Group

This is the last stage of the analysis process which results in the culmination of the experience for all the participants. It is a combination of all the individual textural-structural descriptions.

The peacemakers who are constantly confronted with strong cultural, religious and patriarchal barriers engaging in peace building both at the family and societal level, devise ways of getting around some of these challenges. Transforming the lives of fellow women and girls facing similar challenges to avoid their having similar experiencing becomes paramount to them. The paradox of their experience is that of one possessing power and being powerless at the same time. Self-recognition of their power and strength evident in their role of giving and nurturing life though downplayed by male dominated narratives kept them pushing forward. This is in addition to their awareness that a healthy home is dependent on the 'health status' of the woman. As well as their creative use of mundane things like songs to turn around dire situations.

The powerlessness stems from their continuous reminder of their place under men. Their subservience to their husbands as dictated by the marital system operating within the region and their status which is beneath men and boys roll over to their peace building work. Thus, restricting them to working within their sphere of domesticity which includes working in their homes, with their fellow women, girls and sometimes youths. This they find confining and they would like to wriggle out of it, to work with men as a bona fide member of the society in the interest of peace for all. Their ability to pull other women along in the interest of peace varies depending on the community and the identity affiliation of the women.

Marriage to them requires their surrendering of their economic resources which translates into giving up access to leadership as both are tied together. They feel their potentials are not adequately tapped as they have more to offer but would need the support of men. Rather than men speaking for them, they would like to speak for

themselves to adequately articulate their concerns. The metaphor for their experience is that of a bird desirous of escaping from its cage for the good of everyone including their captors.

Synthesis of meanings and essences of the experience of female leaders engaged in peace building in northern Nigeria. The peacemakers who have dedicated their lives to preventing and resolving conflict within a tough terrain though not deterred by external circumstances, they still feel like second class citizens. To change society, they feel they should start from women and girls who are the most vulnerable. As they push to work with men as partners, they hunger for more space and platforms to contribute more towards sustainable peace within their communities.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

A discussion of the research findings detailing the experiences of female leaders engaged in peace building and conflict management in northern Nigeria will be presented in this chapter. Its connection to the literature reviewed in chapter two, the implications and limitations of the study as well as its contribution to the field of conflict studies will also be addressed. This is in addition to the discussion of the relevance of the theories and concepts utilized for the study that became even more relevant as the research unfolded. Conclusions will also be drawn based on the findings and discussions of the in-depth interview of the study participants.

Summary of Research Findings and Discussion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of female leaders engaged in peace building and conflict management in northern Nigeria and the meaning that these experiences hold for them. Seven participants who met the study criteria shared their experiences of the phenomenon through an in-depth face to face interviews with the researcher.

The findings from the analysis extracted from their interview transcripts using Moustaka's modified version of Vaan Kaam method of phenomenological data analysis resulted in four broad themes. These include their experience of patriarchal influence, which restricts and undermines their peacemaking ability. They demonstrate that to change the societal structures, one must start working with women and girls. They were able to persevere even when working with men within a tough environment. They articulated a holistic approach to engaging women in peace within their region. The

fourth theme comprising of their articulations were further divided into five sub-themes which includes, (a) unified structure/creation of space for women; (b) united voice for women/need to be heard; (c) need for capacity building; (d) women leading the process; (e) issues with the UN resolution 1325; (f) requires resources. Their entire experience can be demonstrated using the metaphor of a caged bird looking for escape route to better its life and that of its captor. These themes are discussed below:

Theme 1: Patriarchal influence. The patriarchal structure of their environment entrenched in their cultural and religious dictates was a major factor in limiting their effort at building peace. The women's experience of marginalization cut across different aspects of their lives starting with their placement beneath men and boys in order of importance within their communities.

Another factor is the educational discrimination against them based on their gender, which affected their level of understanding and contribution to peace processes. Their lack of opinion in making marital decisions including choice of a husband, the control of their resources either by their husbands or male head of the family, their experience of sexual and domestic violence and the expectations from them to remain silent are all part of the attempt to maintain their subjugation.

The arrogation of the right to speak on their behalf was expressed in different ways by all the participants denying them the opportunity to engage and make contributions on issues affecting them which they also considered as a form of abuse. They felt intimidated at meetings with men, and in some instances, they require approval from men to express their opinion. Even when they are ready to contribute, they were sidelined, as was the case with Leila who recounted her experience as the only female

member of a peace committee. The men kept her behind the door after deliberations they would hand her their resolutions.

Conducting communal peace meetings at exclusive male spaces like the Chief palaces and 'shrine' as described by some of the participants is part of a deliberate attempt to exclude women from those meetings. Also, the perception of women as weak and lacking strength fed into their stereotypical identity, which also limited their participation in public life. According to Weeks (1992), the effect of stereotyping on individuals is very disastrous. He states, "You feel violated, misunderstood, and somewhat helpless to show the world who you really are." (p.114) This in addition to the different factors highlighted above that affect their level of effectiveness in peace processes, which places them in a metaphoric cage.

While theme one highlighted the challenges the peacemakers face, the rest of the themes are somewhat solution oriented.

Theme 2: Changes begin with women and girls. The peacemakers were attempting to change the societal structure despite still being caged due to patriarchal influences restricting their peace work. They identified women and girls as the most vulnerable members of the community and worked towards elevating them from their disadvantaged position. This demonstrated their level of resilience and their commitment to peace.

Through their doggedness, the peacemakers were able to address to some extent some of the gaps they identified. They trained, coached, mentored some of the community women, and formed into networks. The outcome of these empowerment programs led to a change in the dynamics of the relationship between the women and

their communities. The peace building platforms created also serve as support system for women including the peacemakers. Through sharing of experiences at these programs, the women realized that they share a common victimhood, irrespective of which side of the divide they belong. This has led them to put their differences aside and unite for peace.

The women on their own also initiated some activities across their segregated communities at little or no cost. They showed support and solidarity across the divides during their respective religious celebrations, which inspired the men to have a change of heart and also reach out to their counterparts. Thus, this process helped bridge the divide created by the conflict. In addition to this feat, one of the participants and her team trained women and men as peace advocates which enabled them attend meetings at the chief's palace, an erstwhile exclusive male space. Another group of female peacemakers successfully changed the dynamics between the military and the hostile community emerging from the effects of conflict. Through peace building process, they were able to convince both the women and their youths to drop their confrontational style and instead adopt dialogue in addressing their issue with the military.

Theme 3: Experience working with men. Realizing that they cannot address conflict within their communities on their own, the peacemakers made extra efforts to engage the men in their programs despite the fact that men and women sitting together to discuss is considered a taboo within the region. This required breaking the cultural barrier. The peacemakers found some creative ways of engaging men. While recruiting participants for their programs, they would request for both men and women. Beside aiming for gender balanced participation for their programs, another strategy adopted by

some of the peacemakers was to identify gender sensitive men and invite them to their programs. These are usually educated men that were receptive to working with women and willing to hear the women's perspectives on various issues.

Despite their accomplishments at changing societal structure by working with women and girls and reaching out to men, the peacemakers remain committed to engaging more women in peace building. They demonstrated this by outlining some of the actions necessary for increasing the participation of women in peace building. Their articulations gave rise to the next theme.

Theme 4: Articulating a holistic approach. Tired of staying in the cage and working from a disadvantaged position, the peacemakers advocated for an all-inclusive approach towards engaging women in peace processes. Part of their recommendations are for more comprehensive capacity building, sensitization of women and by extension the populace, creation of united platform/structure for women, more effort at engaging women, and having united voice for women.

This will require creating space for the women to operate and expand their work of transforming attitudes and behaviors within their communities. The changes advocated for starting from the home, included socializing children to view religion as a unifier and not a dividing force. They also emphasized the connectors, such as intermarriages amongst the different groups and promoting potential while de-emphasizing gender when it comes to educating the children.

There is also the need to create a unified and more structured platform for women in order to ensure the sustainability of their peace building efforts. This is in addition to the need for capacity building, emphasized by all the participants. They believe this will

help build their skill and confidence so that they could make meaningful contributions while in the midst of men.

They all advocated for a unified voice for women and to be able to make meaningful impact and effect the desired change; the peacemakers felt women should be given the opportunity to also lead peace processes, women movements and organizations. One of the participants castigated donor agencies for aligning with the men to marginalize them; by denying them opportunity to lead NGOs and their seeming lack of support and confidence even with the few women led organizations. Addressing these issues raised by the women will facilitate their release from the metaphoric cage.

Similarities and Dissimilarities to Literature Review

The experiences shared by the participants is in overall agreement with the existing literature. It further provided useful insights on the different issues raised by the literature. Participants corroborated the outcome of the 2013 health and demographic survey conducted by the Nigeria National Population Commission (NPC). The study found men were more educated and earned more than their female counterparts. The findings also revealed that women who earned a high salary were also denied the freedom to disburse their earnings. These women had to rely on their husbands or the males of the family in order to determine how the resources were to be spent.

Women engaging in peace building were advised to incorporate their perspectives, insights and solutions and anticipate sexism in the cause of their engagement due to the patriarchal nature of the society which they should report, deal with and forge ahead (Brock-Utne, 1989). Findings of this study revealed that sexism and the intricacies of patriarchy intertwined with religious and cultural practices, which was

the reality of the northern Nigerian women cannot be surmounted by the women alone. The peacemakers acknowledged its existence and the need to address the issue head on, though this may require external help and gender sensitive men they consider as allies.

In addition to patriarchy and misinterpretation of the Qur'an identified as major barriers to Muslim women's involvement in public activities in their communities (Engineer, 1994), participants included cultural and traditional practices as contributory factors too.

To prevent relapse into violence and produce more resilient societies, inclusivity, institution building and sustained international support were identified by the UN as required actions. (UN, 2012). This is in agreement with the suggestions by the participants that inclusive peace building will require building of their capacity, providing them with the necessary support as well as creating platforms for them to get involved. In addition, the peacemakers would like to lead some of the processes.

Married women though excluded physically from the public realm they exercise a form of power within their homes and private spaces (Robson, 2006). This was acknowledged to be the case in the different communities by the participants who are advocating for opportunities within public spaces for women as well.

Barnett et al. (2007) argued that peace building gets more attention on paper, but it falls short in practice due to actual funding allocation. This research was also consistent with previous findings. Despite the meetings and extensive discussions on the action plan, its pillars and implementation, no resources were allocated for its implementation in the 2017 budget released after the meeting.

Part of the root causes of female disadvantage in northern Nigeria included unequal power relations and poverty induced restrictions on their life chances. In Islam, the men decided the number of children the wives should have thereby denying the woman power over her body (Oluwafunmilayo, 2006). This is in line with the submissions of the participants. However, the peacemakers felt that this could be addressed by educating and empowering the women to understand the need to give birth to the number of children they can comfortably take care of and avoid having children that are easily drawn to violence like Boko Haram members.

Beyond these similarities and dissimilarities to the literature reviewed, the findings highlighted the ingenuity of the peacemakers in confronting the skewed societal structures in favor of men limiting their effective engagement in peace building. Their accounts of the different strategies they utilized placed them as ‘masters’ in a game of chess. Being able to penetrate one of the exclusive male spaces—such as the chief’s palace to sit and discuss with men, which is on its own considered a taboo—is remarkable. This is in addition to their detailed account of their experiences which cannot be found in any literature.

Theoretical Relevance

Feminist standpoint and structural violence theories were utilized to better understand the experiences of women leaders engaging in peace building in northern Nigeria. The two theories and the phenomenological research method utilized for the study complemented one another in providing insight into the lived experiences shared by the peacemakers and became even more relevant as the study progressed. The findings aligned with some of the core principles of both theories.

Feminist Standpoint was also utilized as a method with women as the subjects and their experiences as the focus of the study. The social locations of women living in northern Nigeria were based on their ethnic and religious affiliation, which determined much of their challenges. Leila who worked in Jos, Plateau for several years before moving to Maiduguri was shocked at the low level of engagement of women in Maiduguri compared to Jos. Though women encountered challenges participating in Jos, they still spoke their mind when given the opportunity while their Maiduguri counterparts conceded to men speaking for them. Relying on the opinion of men alone in dealing with the Boko Haram insurgency in Bornu, Maiduguri had been a huge challenge for both the state and the federal government. Some of the governors were already soliciting women's opinion in the quest for alternative perspectives different from men, which might make the needed difference. Thus, one can argue in line with feminist standpoint theory that women possess some exclusive information based on their position within their communities.

The participants in addition to identifying the obstacles inhibiting women's participation in peace processes based on their experiences are also privy to how and what can be done to overcome them in the interest of peace for all. Some of them adopted strategies to address the ones they can while highlighting the ones that required the attention and input of other stakeholders. These suggested strategies if tackled will no doubt ensure the attainment of the transformative objective of standpoint theory. According to Harding (2004), "Standpoint theories map how a social and political disadvantage can be turned into an epistemic, scientific and political advantage" (p.7-8).

Thus, the women were taking the standpoint required in taking action beyond identification of problems.

Some members of the dominant group who are open minded can also assist in knowledge generation process in conjunction with the marginalized. Standpoint was not possessed either by one being a woman or by merely having perspective but rather by understanding the societal structure and the inequalities (Harding, 1993). As pointed out by Maimuna, there are some educated men who were gender sensitive and receptive to women's perspectives on issues. Such men in collaboration with women could underscore the need for change in societal practices that were skewed against women and detrimental to societal progress.

Getting more women engaged in peace processes is an important step identified by the participants towards addressing the conflict issues within their region. The desire for a change in status quo has spurred the women to seek for ways and means of changing their lot from both within and outside the country. This was demonstrated by Leila, who sought for help from other conservative Muslim communities and countries to share their perspectives on engaging women. The peacemakers are aware of their situation and the challenges posed by restricted gender and power relations in favor of men, which adds to the puzzle pieces required for peace. The men may be oblivious to this knowledge due to their privileged position.

Structural violence theory captured the peacemakers' experience of both direct and indirect violence. Women belonged to the marginalized group and their exclusion from peace processes within their various communities affirmed by the participants is a clear case of structural violence. This includes any form of exclusion like the conduct of

some community activities in exclusive male spaces like the shrine and traditional Chief's palaces. Which is a clear indication that women are not wanted at those meetings.

Participants also highlighted the injustices against women as patriarchal influences intertwined with cultural and religious practices embedded in the structure guiding interactions within northern Nigeria. While direct violence included a subject, an object, and an action, indirect violence did not require a person or subject (Galtung, 1969). In this instance, the system dictating gender interactions directly perpetuated the violence. Also, the ranking of boys above women in order of importance within the communities was an indication of women's inferiority status within the social hierarchy.

A good example of these practices was the personal account given by the only female member of a peace building committee. She was placed behind the door during the meetings and was excluded from the deliberations. The committee handed down their resolution at the conclusion of the meeting. She captured her frustrations, "I mean I felt out of place. I have grown beyond being kept behind the door". This was a clear case of indirect violence inflicted on her simply because she was a woman. She protested by boycotting subsequent meetings, and as a result they replaced her with another woman representative.

According to Young (1990), oppression can be considered a form of structural violence. Young defined oppression as disadvantages or injustices suffered daily due to societal practices. She categorized oppression into five forms namely exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, violence and cultural imperialism. Going by the experiences of northern Nigerian female peace builders, one can state that they suffered

some levels of oppression. Their stereotypical identity as victims, weak and lacking strength required for peace work were all part of the violence they experience.

In addition to indirect violence encountered, they also experienced direct violence both during violence and in peace times. The high rate of domestic violence which left physical marks and scars—while in some extreme cases leading to death—were part of the direct violence encountered by women within this region as shared by the participants. The abduction of Chibok girls by the Boko Haram terrorist group could be categorized as both direct and indirect forms of violence. Their pain went beyond physical including the resultant unwanted pregnancies to psychological and emotional trauma. The trauma extended to the mothers of the Chibok girls who received psycho-social therapy sessions from some of the participants in collaboration with the medical team.

Nexus Between Feminist Standpoint Theory, Structural Violence Theory and Transcendental Phenomenology Research Method

Feminist standpoint theory, structural violence theory, and transcendental phenomenological research method complemented one another in providing insight into the lived experiences shared by the peacemakers. Transcendental research method embodied a combination of structural violence and feminist standpoint theories utilized in making sense of these experiences. It also serves as a method in addition to the theoretical aspect of feminist standpoint.

Feminist Standpoint posited that "starting off research from women's lives will generate less partial and distorted accounts not only of women's lives but also of men's lives and of the whole social order." (Harding, S.1993. p. 56). This was akin to epoche,

the first step in Moustaka's (1994) analysis process that required the researcher to set aside previous experience and focus on the women's experiences.

Structural violence included both direct and indirect impeding a group of people discriminated against from attaining their full potential. With indirect violence embedded within the structures of the society (Galtung, 1969). While imaginative variance, the third step in Moustaka's analysis process focused on structural meaning fundamental to the textural meaning, the underlying contexts that gave rise to the phenomenon and structures leading to experience of the phenomenon "... such as the structure of time, space, bodily concerns, materiality, causality, and relation to self, or relation to others" (Moustakas, 1994, p.99).

Feminist standpoint theory categorized women as part of the marginalized in the society, and the epistemic knowledge generation should start from their experiences. This was to provide them with the opportunity of adding their voice hitherto missing from the dominant narrative. Structural violence theory recognized marginalization as violence, thus naming the exclusion of their opinion as violence. Transcendental phenomenology method was anchored on the need to focus on the phenomenon under study for the generation of knowledge, eschewing prior knowledge of the phenomenon. This also advocated for the promotion of the voices of the researched, which in this case were the women peacemakers.

The method aspect of Feminist standpoint was utilized with women as the subjects and their experiences as the focus of the study. This had a direct connection to the first step of Moustaka's transcendental analysis known as epoche, which required one to focus on the women's experiences while eliminating one's prior knowledge. The

analysis of the data centered on the actual language of the participants, which were captured and presented in the In Vivo codes and invariant constituents used to arrive at the meaning units of the women's experiences. Words like "alpha and omega", "whatever they say is final" used by participants to describe the superiority and dominance of their men were captured and categorized under the patriarchy influence theme. This was to enrich the understanding of their worldviews shaped by their experiences that spoke directly to the feminist standpoint theory (Bowell, 2011). Standpoint theory was referred to a specific location in time and space that determined how we see the world (Harding, 1993).

Thus, transcendental research process reflects the core of both the feminist standpoint theory as it relates to epoche, and the structural violence theory in relation to imaginative variance. With imaginative variance being the structural description or conditions that gave rise to the phenomenon.

Contribution to the Field of Conflict Studies

Researching lived experiences of women engaged in peace building and conflict resolution is a conflict resolution study. Efforts directed towards ensuring the full participation of men and women in peace processes will no doubt contribute to the field of conflict resolution core goal of achieving sustainable peace within and amongst various communities. Participants unanimously agreed that women were excluded from peace processes within the various communities in northern Nigeria. Those that tried to scale the hurdles faced a lot of challenges in varying degrees based on their ethnicity, locality, and religious affiliation. This did not deter them from recording some successes in conflict management while encountering challenges, learning lessons, and sharing their

hopes for a brighter future for the region. It became imperative that they shared their challenges and suggested strategies for addressing the problem.

The first step in addressing any conflict issue was identifying the problems and providing solutions towards addressing it or generating transformative ideas required to change the status quo. Both steps had been covered by the study. It was then left for the planning and actual implementation of the suggested way forward. The onus of which lied with concerned stakeholders. To increase the participation of women in peace processes within their various communities will require creating opportunities for their inclusion.

Implications of the Study

The outcome of the study incorporated the experiences of the peacemakers and their thoughts on how to address the challenges they face in their peace building work. This has both professional and academic implications. For the academic part, the study has contributed to the existing literature on women in peace building and provided specific details of the experiences of female peacemakers within northern Nigeria. Participants indicated interest in receiving the outcome of the study which will be made available to them and as many as are interested. It will serve as a reference material or as a springboard for other related research as well as a step towards addressing the gap of documentation of women's peace building efforts within the region.

On the professional side, the outcome of the study has practical implications for stakeholders interested in peace within northern Nigeria. This study can be constituted as a conflict management program portfolio comprising of different projects. The study outlined the obstacles against inclusive peace building in northern Nigeria, the successes

recorded by female peace builders in the face of these challenges, and their hopes and aspirations for sustainable peace within their region.

Interested stakeholders who might find the outcome of the study useful include but not limited to northern Nigeria state governments, federal government of Nigeria, members of the communities studied, community based organizations, development organizations including NGOs, INGOs, donor agencies as well as inter-governmental agencies engaged in development work within the region.

UNSCR 1325 widely acknowledged and embraced worldwide calls for women's participation in peace processes. The frustrations of not making much progress 15 years plus after its celebration calls into question the need for a closer look at the factors responsible. Continuous call for nations to act without acknowledging and addressing the diverse challenges faced by women across different communities in addition to funding difficulties will continue to hinder its progress.

The study which identified specific challenges encountered by women within the communities studied, the creative ways they used in handling some of them, and their opinion for way forward will be a useful resource. It will guide planning for future interventions as well as serve as assessment tool for those engaged in peace and conflict management within the region.

Limitations of the Study

Funding challenges restricted the interview to 3 out of the 19 states that make up northern Nigeria. However, the experiences captured in the study covers more than the 3 states visited as some of the participants were engaged in peace building and conflict management in 2 or 3 states, though one participant works with an umbrella body that

covered the entire northern region. Also, the data collection took place in December, which was close to the end of year. This made scheduling of the interviews and other logistics including inter-state traveling challenging as most of the organizations were rounding up their activities for the year. As a result, 3 of the participants that met the criteria ended up not making the interview.

Suggestions for Further Study

The data for this study comprised of individual accounts of the experiences of female peacemakers in northern Nigeria obtained via face-to-face interview. For additional insights into the experiences of women within this region, a study of the women who were mentored and groomed by these female leaders may be a good consideration. And the outcome compared to that of the female leaders.

As an 'outsider' who is not from northern Nigeria, I am curious as to the role it played with respect to the data collected. Another study can be conducted by a female from the region and the outcome compared with that of this study. The comparative study might provide additional or different data which will complement the one already gathered. Another idea might be to conduct a focused group interview as group exchanges might arouse reactions that were not shared by the individual participants. These ideas for future research do not in any way diminish the importance of the specific experiences of the participants interviewed.

For the development agencies, the outcome of the study can form an entire program broken down into several projects. Each of these projects will require more investigation to better position these agencies to tackle the identified challenges. A research detailing the various local peace structures that exist within the various

communities including a gender disaggregated data of their membership composition will be a good baseline for intervention purposes.

Another important research will be a more elaborate study of the suggested strategies focusing on how, who and what resources are required for their implementation. This can serve as a blueprint for engaging different stakeholders based on their areas of focus and capabilities. It will also be an important consideration to conduct a comparative study of the experiences of men engaged in peace building and conflict management within the region.

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Appendix A: Site Approval Letter 1



Khaliben
SUPPORT FOUNDATION
(Peace building & Development Initiative)

Head Office:
Post Office Premises Opp. Sir Yahaya Memorial
Hospital, Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State.
Tel: 08066179544
Email: gwimiseb@yahoo.co.uk

7th October, 2016

Nova Southeastern University
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314-7796

Subject: Site Approval Letter

To whom it may concern:

This letter acknowledges that I have received and reviewed a request by Roselyn Onyegbula to conduct a research project entitled "Women's Experiences in Peace Building Processes: A Phenomenological Study of Female Leaders in Northern Nigeria." at Khaliben Konsult, and I approve of this research to be conducted at our facility.

When the researcher receives approval for her research project from the Nova Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board/NSU IRB, I agree to provide access for the approved research project. If we have any concerns or need additional information, we will contact the Nova Southeastern University's IRB at (954) 262-5369 or irb@nova.edu.

Sincerely,

Gwimi S. Peter
Founder (Khaliben Konsult Nigeria)
Tel: +2348066179544
Email: gwimiseb@yahoo.co.uk

Appendix B: Site Approval Letter 2



GENDER AWARENESS TRUST

Protecting & Promoting Gender Equality

Address: F3 Barnawa Shopping Complex,
New Extension Kaduna South,
Kaduna State, Nigeria.
Tel: +234 (0) 809 140 0769, +234(0) 803 3146 543
E-mail: gat_org@yahoo.com
Website: www.gat-ng.org

Nova Southeastern University
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314-7796


Subject: Site Approval Letter

To whom it may concern:

This letter acknowledges that I have received and reviewed a request by Roselyn Onyegbula to conduct a research project entitled "Women's Experiences in Peace Building Processes: A Phenomenological Study of Female Leaders in Northern Nigeria." at Gender Awareness Trust, and I approve of this research to be conducted at our facility.

When the researcher receives approval for her research project from the Nova Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board/NSU IRB, I agree to provide access for the approved research project. If we have any concerns or need additional information, we will contact the Nova Southeastern University's IRB at (954) 262-5369 or irb@nova.edu.

Sincerely,


20/10/16
Dr. Lydia Umar
Executive Director
+234(0)8033146543
lyumar@yahoo.com

lydiau@gat-ng.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Prof. Dennis Ityavyar, (Chair) Patricia J. Danmaida (Vice Chair) Samie Ihejirika, Esther H. Ijeaku
Dupe Atoki, Dr. Abiola Afolabi Akiyode, Dr. Lydia Umar (Executive Director)

Secretary: Emmanuel Owoicho Esq.

Appendix C: Site Approval Letter 3



WANEP Nigeria

West Africa Network for Peacebuilding Nigeria

27, Adeniji Street, Adeniji Estate, Off WEMPCO Road,
Ogba, Lagos State, Nigeria; Phone: +2348062072468

Email: wanep@wanepnigeria.org; Website: www.wanepnigeria.org

October 21, 2016

Nova Southeastern University
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314-7796

Subject: Site Approval Letter

To whom it may concern:

This letter acknowledges that I have received and reviewed a request by Roselyn Onyegbula to conduct a research project entitled “Women’s Experiences in Peace Building Processes: A Phenomenological Study of Female leaders in Northern Nigeria” at West Africa Network for Peace building, WANEP” and I approve of this research to be conducted at our facility.

When the researcher receives approval for his/her research project from the Nova Southeastern University’s Institutional Review Board/NSU IRB, I agree to provide access for the approved research project. If we have any concerns or need additional information, we will contact the Nova Southeastern University’s IRB at (954) 262-5369 or irb@nova.edu.

Sincerely,

Bridget Osakwe
National Network Coordinator
234 – 803-324-3345
bosakwe@wanepnigeria.org

Appendix D: Letter to Participate



Dear Friends/Colleagues,

RE: Invitation to participate in a research study titled “Women’s Experiences in Peace Building Processes: A Phenomenological Study of Female leaders in Northern Nigeria”.

My name is Roselyn Onyegbula, I am a Doctoral Candidate of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University, Florida. I am currently completing my dissertation in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

My proposed study titled, “Women’s Experiences in Peace Building Processes: A Phenomenological Study of Female leaders in Northern Nigeria” seeks to examine the lived experience of women in conflict management in northern Nigeria. This is to understand the meaning these experiences hold for them and utilize it in addressing the research question aimed at uncovering the challenges they encounter.

The need to understand the experiences of women in regard to peacebuilding is demonstrated by the landmark United Nations Resolution 1325 which calls for increase in women’s involvement in peace processes and the need to include female affiliates of male combatants during disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts in post conflict societies. Easy implementation of the resolution will require dealing with contextual issues which differ from one society to the other.

The outcome of the study will hopefully inform project design and policy formulation as well as serve as reference material for future research and interventions by development agencies interested in peace within the region. The study will also be pivotal in exploring possible strategies that can be utilized in overcoming the identified barriers.

I am using this medium to solicit for your assistance in participating in this study. To participate in the study, participants are required to be women leaders in peace building and conflict management, who reside and work in northern Nigeria, 18years of age and older with a minimum of secondary school education which is the equivalent of high school diploma.

Participants are required to complete a short demographic questionnaire which will accompany the recruitment letter. This questionnaire will be helpful in recruiting the participants who meet the criteria for the study.

Selected participants will receive consent forms and given 2days to review it and decide whether to participate in the study or not. The interview for willing and qualified participants will be conducted in northern Nigeria at a convenient time and secured location chosen by the participant. The duration of the interview will be 90minutes or less for each individual. The interview which will be interactive will dwell on a broad based question focusing on the women's experiences.

Any information obtained during this research will be confidential; the real names of the participants will not be used.

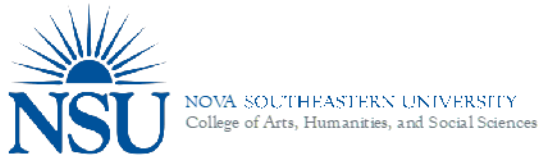
This project has also been thoroughly reviewed, critiqued, and approved by the Nova Southeastern University Institutional Review Board, with the goal of ensuring the safety of all research participants. However, the findings from this study will be published in a dissertation.

I sincerely appreciate your contribution to this study, and look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,

Roselyn Onyegbula
3100 Palm Trace Landings Drive
Davie, Florida, 33314
United States of America
Telephone: 1-407-953-5679 Email: ro227@nova.edu

Appendix E: Consent Form



Consent Form for Participation in the Research Study Entitled:

Women's Experiences in Peace Building Processes: A Phenomenological Study of Female Leaders in Northern Nigeria.

Funding Source: None.

IRB protocol #:

Roselyn Onyegbula, Conflict Analysis and Resolution

3100 Palm Trace Landings Drive

Davie, Florida, 33314

United States of America

1-407-953-5679

For questions/concerns about your research rights, contact:
Human Research Oversight Board (Institutional Review Board or IRB)
Nova Southeastern University
(954) 262-5369/Toll Free: 866-499-0790
IRB@nsu.nova.edu

Khaliben
Support Foundation
(Peacebuilding and Development Initiative)
Post office premises opposite Yahaya Memorial Hospital
Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State, Nigeria

What is the study about?

The proposed study titled, "Women's Experiences in Peace Building Processes: A Phenomenological Study of Female leaders in Northern Nigeria" seeks to examine the lived experience of women in conflict management in northern Nigeria. This is to understand the meaning these experiences hold for them and utilize it in addressing the research question aimed at uncovering the challenges they encounter.

Why are you asking me?

As a female leader working on peace issues, your participation will contribute towards identifying the challenges you and your colleagues face and hopefully inform project design and policy formulation to address them. Up to 10 female leaders will participate in the research.

What will I be doing if I agree to be in the study?

The study will be explained to you before the interview as well as the interview process which will include note taking audio recording with your consent. High level of confidentiality as well as my responsibility throughout the process will be upheld. Alphabets and pseudonyms will be used in place of your actual name on written documents and your name will not be asked in the audio tape for confidentiality purposes. The tape will be locked away safely when not in use.

Your participation in the study is voluntary, you have the option to withdraw at any time during the study. There will be minimal or no risk involved, however if there is an indication of any danger to you as a result of your participation, the interview will be called off. Any questions and concerns you have about the process or the study will be addressed before you sign and date two copies of the consent forms you received before the interview. The interview which will last for 90minutes or less will be held in a secured location of your choice.

Is there any audio or video recording?

This research project will include audio recording of the interview, you will be informed when the recording starts as well as when it ends. This audio recording will be available to be heard by the researcher, the IRB, and the dissertation chair and committee as appropriate. The recording will be transcribed by the researcher. The recording will be kept securely in safe cabinet at the researchers home at 3100 Palm Trace Landings Drive, Davie, Florida, USA. The recording will be kept for 36 months and destroyed after that time by burning the tape. Because your voice (or your image and your voice) will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears (or hears and sees) the recording, your confidentiality for things you say (or do) on the recording cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described in this paragraph.

What are the dangers to me?

All studies are considered to have some risk. This study has minimal risk to you as a participant. The procedures or activities in this study may have unknown or unforeseeable risks".

If you have any questions about the research, your research rights, or have a research-related injury, please contact the researcher, Roselyn Onyegbula at +14079535679 and Dr. Ismael Mvingi who is the Committee Chair/Advisor at 9542623023. You may also

Are there any benefits for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits to you as a participant.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There will be no payments nor will the participants incur any cost for taking part in the study.

How will you keep my information private?

Alphabets and pseudonyms will be used for the participants to avoid easy identification. The audio-recorder, transcripts and notes taken during the interview will be locked in a file cabinet in my home located at 3100 Palm Trace Landings Drive, Davie, Florida, 33314. My personal computer that is password protected assessable to me alone will be used for the study. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The tape recordings and other research documents may be reviewed by the IRB personnel and my committee chair. The research documents including the tape recorded will be destroyed after 36 months from the conclusion of the study.

What if I do not want to participate or I want to leave the study?

Participation in the study is voluntary. You have the right to leave this study at any time or refuse to participate. If you do decide to leave or you decide not to participate, you will not experience any penalty or loss of services you have a right to receive. If you choose to withdraw, any information collected about you **before** the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the conclusion of the study and may be used as a part of the research.

Other Considerations:

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available, which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you by the investigators.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By signing below, you indicate that

- this study has been explained to you
- you have read this document or it has been read to you
- your questions about this research study have been answered
- you have been told that you may ask the researchers any study related questions in the future or contact them in the event of a research-related injury

- you are entitled to a copy of this form after you have read and signed it
- you voluntarily agree to participate in the study entitled "Women's Experiences in Peace Building Processes: A Phenomenological Study of Female Leaders in Northern Nigeria".

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Questionnaires

Recruitment Questionnaire

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. The information provided will help determine your eligibility to participate in this study. The information will be used to uncover the challenges faced by women engaged in peace building processes in Northern Nigeria and recommend possible strategies for addressing them.

Name:.....

Phone number:.....

Email address.....

Ethnic Group of Origin.....

City & State of Residence:.....

Sex:.....

Marital Status:.....

What is your age bracket? *Please circle one*

A) 18-30 B) 31-40 C) 41 and above.

Highest Level of Education:.....

Employment Sector:.....

Job Title:.....

Name of Organization:.....

Have you been involved in peace building/conflict management?.....

How long have you been engaged in peace building/conflict management?.....

Have you encountered challenges trying to resolve these conflicts?.....

Signature.....

Date.....

Page 1 of 1

Appendix G: IRB Approval Form

MEMORANDUM

To: **Roselyn Onyegbula**
College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences

From: **Pei-Fen Li, Ph.D,**
Center Representative, Institutional Review Board

Date: **November 11, 2016**

Re: **IRB #: 2016-537; Title, "Women's Experiences in Peace Building Processes: A Phenomenological Study of Female Leaders in Northern Nigeria"**

I have reviewed the above-referenced research protocol at the center level. Based on the information provided, I have determined that this study is exempt from further IRB review under **45 CFR 46.101(b) (Exempt Category 2)**. You may proceed with your study as described to the IRB. As principal investigator, you must adhere to the following requirements:

- 1) **CONSENT:** If recruitment procedures include consent forms, they must be obtained in such a manner that they are clearly understood by the subjects and the process affords subjects the opportunity to ask questions, obtain detailed answers from those directly involved in the research, and have sufficient time to consider their participation after they have been provided this information. The subjects must be given a copy of the signed consent document, and a copy must be placed in a secure file separate from de-identified participant information. Record of informed consent must be retained for a minimum of three years from the conclusion of the study.
- 2) **ADVERSE EVENTS/UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS:** The principal investigator is required to notify the IRB chair and me (954-262-5369 and Pei-Fen Li, Ph.D, respectively) of any adverse reactions or unanticipated events that may develop as a result of this study. Reactions or events may include, but are not limited to, injury, depression as a result of participation in the study, life-threatening situation, death, or loss of confidentiality/anonymity of subject. Approval may be withdrawn if the problem is serious.
- 3) **AMENDMENTS:** Any changes in the study (e.g., procedures, number or types of subjects, consent forms, investigators, etc.) must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Please be advised that changes in a study may require further review depending on the nature of the change. Please contact me with any questions regarding amendments or changes to your study.

The NSU IRB is in compliance with the requirements for the protection of human subjects prescribed in Part 46 of Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46) revised June 18, 1991.

Cc: **Ismael Mvingi, Ph.D.**