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From Policy Commitments to Action

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Prof. Joy Onyesoh

Nathaniel Msen Awuapila

Patience Ikpeh-Obaulo

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Jane Siesi

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ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

The Women, Peace and Security Journal is jointly published by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding Nigeria (WANEP Nigeria) and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Nigeria (WILPF Nigeria), two organisations advancing inclusive peacebuilding, gender justice, and human security in Nigeria. WANEP Nigeria works across the thematic areas of Gender/Women, Peace and Security; Democracy and Governance; Early Warning and Human Security Response Mechanism; Research and Knowledge Management; Youth, Peace and Security; and Network Coordination and Management at national and sub-national levels. WILPF Nigeria, as part of the global Women's International League for Peace and Freedom movement, brings long-standing expertise in feminist peacebuilding, women's rights advocacy, and policy engagement aimed at transforming structural drivers of conflict and insecurity.

Through their complementary mandates and sustained engagement with state and non-state actors, both organisations support inclusive peace processes that are responsive to local realities and grounded in evidence. Within the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) space in particular, WANEP Nigeria and WILPF Nigeria play critical and mutually reinforcing roles in advancing the localisation of UNSCR 1325 through technical support, capacity strengthening, policy advocacy, and sustained engagement with government institutions, civil society organisations, and community-based actors. Their work spans the development and implementation of National and State Action Plans on WPS, the strengthening of early warning and early response mechanisms, and the promotion of gender-responsive peace and security policies.

This journal forms part of the shared commitment of WANEP Nigeria and WILPF Nigeria to knowledge generation, policy influence, and evidence-informed practice. It provides a platform for documenting lived experiences, analysing emerging security trends, and advancing research and practice that can inform decision-making, strengthen accountability, and support the effective implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Nigeria.

ABOUT THIS EDITION

This edition of the *Women, Peace and Security Journal* is published at a moment of both reflection and transition for the WPS agenda in Nigeria. More than two decades after the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, and following the launch of Nigeria's Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP III), the national conversation has shifted from questions of commitment to questions of practice, relevance, and impact. The challenge before us is no longer whether women belong in peace and security processes, but how their participation, protection, and leadership are sustained in an increasingly complex and evolving threat environment.

The 2026 edition of the journal deliberately centres this transition. It brings together scholarship and practice that move beyond traditional conceptions of conflict to examine the lived realities shaping women's security today. Across Nigeria and the wider region, women are navigating layered forms of insecurity that cut across physical, digital, environmental, and socio-political spaces. From technology-facilitated gender-based violence that silences women in public and civic life, to climate-induced flooding that destabilises rural livelihoods and deepens gendered vulnerability, the articles in this edition reflect the expanding terrain within which peace and security must now be understood.

A defining strength of this journal lies in its grounding in context. The contributions do not treat women as abstract beneficiaries of policy frameworks, but as active agents responding to real-world challenges at community, institutional, and national levels. Whether through digital advocacy, grassroots resilience strategies, or everyday peacebuilding practices, women continue to sustain peace in spaces where formal systems are weak, delayed, or absent. At the same time, the journal does not shy away from examining the structural and institutional barriers that limit women's participation, protection, and access to justice, including gaps in policy implementation, accountability, and emerging regulatory responses.

This edition also reflects a growing recognition that the Women, Peace, and Security agenda must evolve to remain effective. New forms of violence, particularly those mediated through technology and climate stress, expose limitations in existing frameworks and demand adaptive, forward-looking responses. By foregrounding these issues, the journal contributes to ongoing national and regional conversations on localisation, accountability, and innovation within WPS implementation.

As a knowledge platform, the *Women, Peace and Security Journal* seeks to bridge research, policy, and practice. It is intended as a resource for policymakers, practitioners, scholars, civil society actors, and advocates committed to advancing inclusive peace and security. The insights documented here are drawn from lived experience, empirical research, and critical reflection, offering lessons that extend beyond theory to inform action.

Ultimately, this edition affirms a central truth of the WPS agenda: sustainable peace cannot be achieved without recognising and responding to the realities women face, nor without amplifying their voices, leadership, and contributions across all spaces where security is contested and negotiated. As Nigeria continues to deepen the localisation of its WPS commitments, this journal stands as both a record of progress and a call to sustained, responsive action.

FOREWORD

This second edition of the Women, Peace and Security Journal comes at a defining moment in Nigeria's peace and security journey. More than two decades after the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, Nigeria has moved beyond symbolic commitment to the establishment of concrete policy frameworks aimed at advancing women's participation, protection, and leadership in decision-making and peacebuilding processes. The launch of Nigeria's third National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security in the last quarter of 2025 underscores this progress and reflects a renewed national resolve to deepen localisation, strengthen accountability, and close long-standing implementation gaps.

Over the years, Nigeria's engagement with the Women, Peace, and Security agenda has evolved in response to both persistent and emerging security challenges. Successive National Action Plans have contributed to strengthening institutional ownership, expanding stakeholder engagement, building capacity, and embedding gender perspectives within peace and security discourse. At the same time, the changing nature of conflict, characterised by protracted insecurity, communal violence, displacement, electoral tensions, and emerging threats within digital and civic spaces, continues to test the effectiveness of existing frameworks. These realities demand not only policy continuity but sustained reflection, learning, and adaptation.

Yet, as this journal makes clear, policy frameworks alone are insufficient. The true strength of the WPS agenda lies in how it is interpreted, adapted, and implemented within communities where conflict is experienced most directly. Across Nigeria, women continue to demonstrate resilience and leadership in the face of insecurity, often operating in informal and under-recognised spaces where risks are high and institutional support is limited. Their contributions, whether through early warning systems, mediation efforts, humanitarian response, peace education, or community mobilisation, remain central to sustaining peace at local and national levels, even when they are not formally acknowledged.

Structural barriers persist, including limited access to decision-making spaces, sociocultural constraints, resource gaps, and insecurity, which continue to shape women's participation in peace and security processes. Meanwhile, new forms of violence and exclusion, such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence, present additional challenges, requiring deliberate policy and programmatic responses. Addressing these issues demands a deeper understanding of how the WPS agenda is experienced on the ground and how women navigate opportunities and constraints in advancing peace.

The articles in this journal offer critical insights into these realities, moving beyond theory to present empirical evidence, practical lessons, and reflective analyses drawn from Nigeria's diverse contexts. Collectively, the contributions examine a range of themes across the WPS spectrum, highlighting achievements and persistent challenges. In doing so, they provide a nuanced understanding of implementing the WPS agenda in a complex, evolving security environment, emphasizing the importance of context-specific, locally grounded approaches. This journal highlights the importance of collaboration, showcasing the critical roles of government institutions, civil society organizations, traditional and community structures, and international partners in achieving sustainable peace. Where coordination is strong and local ownership is prioritized, progress is more evident; where gaps persist, strengthened partnerships and accountability are needed.

The journal also invests in knowledge as a tool for transformation, documenting women's contributions and examining policy and practice to inform decision-making, enhance programming, and improve accountability. It's a resource for practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and advocates advancing Women, Peace, and Security in Nigeria. The insights here remind us that inclusive peace is possible and necessary. The Women, Peace, and Security agenda is a lived reality shaped by women contributing to peace despite adversity. This journal honors their work, amplifies their voices, and calls for sustained action to turn commitments into lasting change nationwide.

Prof Joy Onyesoh

INTRODUCTION

Women, Peace and Security in Nigeria: From Policy Commitment to Localised Actions

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has, over the past twenty-five years, emerged as one of the most significant normative and policy frameworks shaping contemporary peace and security discourse. Anchored on the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR)1325, adopted in October 2000, the agenda fundamentally redefined how conflict, peacebuilding, and security are perceived by recognising the indispensable roles women play in preventing conflict, sustaining peace, and rebuilding societies affected by violence. In doing so, it challenged long-standing security paradigms that had historically excluded women from decision-making processes while rendering their experiences, agency, and knowledge invisible within formal and informal peace and security structures.

In Nigeria, the relevance of the WPS agenda is deeply intertwined with the country's complex and evolving security landscape. From insurgency in the North East and communal and farmer–herder conflicts in the Middle Belt, to separatist agitations in the South East, banditry and mass kidnappings in the North West, electoral violence, school attacks, and climate-induced insecurity across multiple regions, conflict continues to manifest in diverse and overlapping forms. These dynamics have disproportionately affected women and girls, exposing them to heightened risks of displacement, economic marginalisation, sexual and gender-based violence, and emerging forms of harm facilitated by digital and technological spaces. At the same time, these contexts have created spaces in which women have emerged as first responders, negotiators, peace educators, early-warning actors, and community stabilisers.

Despite these visible contributions at community and grassroots levels, women's roles in peace and security processes have often remained marginal within formal policy, institutional, and decision-making frameworks. This gap between women's lived realities and their representation in peace and security governance continues to undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of peacebuilding efforts. It also reflects broader structural and sociocultural barriers that shape access to power, resources, and influence in Nigeria's peace and security architecture.

Nigeria's domestication of UNSCR 1325 through the development of successive National Action Plans represents a deliberate effort to address these challenges. The first National Action Plan (2013–2016) established the foundation for integrating WPS principles into national peace and security discourse, while the second plan (2017–2020) sought to consolidate gains, improve coordination among stakeholders, and strengthen institutional ownership. Building on these foundations, Nigeria launched its third National Action Plan (NAP III) in 2025, signalling a renewed commitment to localisation, accountability, and inclusive implementation across federal, state, and community levels. NAP III reflects lessons learned from earlier phases and responds to both persistent and emerging security challenges, placing increased emphasis on state-level action plans, data generation, partnerships, and meaningful participation. Most remarkable is NAP III alignment with the President's **"Renewed Hope Agenda"** by prioritizing inclusion, stability, and collective progress, anchoring WPS goals within national development, and elevating women as crucial actors in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. This policy advance has been accompanied by measurable progress. Several states have developed and operationalised State Action Plans on WPS, legal and policy frameworks have increasingly integrated gender perspectives, and civil society organisations have played a critical role in translating national commitment into local actions. However, progress has remained uneven. Persistent structural barriers, including limited resources, weak coordination, insecurity, sociocultural constraints, and gaps between policy formulation and implementation, continue to undermine the transformative potential of the WPS agenda in Nigeria. New and evolving threats, such as

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV), further complicate implementation and demand fresh analytical and policy responses.

It is within this context that the Women, Peace and Security Journal is situated. This journal brings together contributions from scholars, practitioners, and policy actors whose work spans a wide range of WPS themes, including conflict prevention, women's participation in peace processes, protection from sexual and gender-based violence, technology-facilitated harms, post-conflict recovery, and cross-cutting issues shaping women's security in Nigeria. Collectively, the articles reflect the diversity, complexity, and dynamism of WPS implementation across different regions and contexts.

The journal responds to an urgent need to document, analyse, and amplify Nigerian experiences of WPS implementation through rigorous, evidence-based research and practice-oriented reflections. Nigerian women are actively shaping peace and security outcomes every day, yet their stories, strategies, and lessons are too often confined to project reports, informal narratives, or short-term interventions. This journal provides a structured and credible platform for consolidating these contributions, ensuring they inform policy debates, academic inquiry, and future programming at national and sub-national levels.

By bringing together scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and community actors, the journal seeks to strengthen national ownership of the WPS agenda while contributing to broader regional and global conversations. It affirms that advancing peace and security in Nigeria requires not only sustained political will, but also knowledge grounded in lived realities, local leadership, innovation, and the voices of women themselves.

Digital Violence, Real Consequences: Centring Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

Adebimpe Akinkuotu

University of Northern British Columbia, Canada

adebimpeakinkuotu@gmail.com; bakinkuot@unbc.ca

Abstract

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have transformed global connectivity, enabling advocacy and transnational activism within the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. However, these technologies also facilitate technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), including cyberstalking, doxxing, sexualized threats, and non-consensual dissemination of intimate content, which undermines democratic participation and peacebuilding efforts. This paper examines how TFGBV intersects with the four WPS pillars: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. Using a qualitative desk review of peer-reviewed literature, policy reports, and institutional documents published between 2000 and 2025, the analysis guided by Intersectionality and Feminist Security Studies conceptualizes TFGBV as a structural security threat rather than a peripheral digital safety issue. Findings indicate that TFGBV not only silences women and compels their withdrawal from public life but also transforms digital spaces into extensions of conflict zones. Moreover, it amplifies gendered disinformation that undermines peacebuilding efforts and exposes critical gaps in survivor-centered relief and recovery services. These dynamics create accountability vacuums and erode the transformative potential of WPS frameworks. The paper calls for embedding TFGBV into the WPS agenda through gender-responsive cybersecurity policies, harmonized legal frameworks, and survivor-centered mechanisms.

Keywords: Technology-facilitated gender-based violence, Women, Peace and Security, ICTs, Peacebuilding, Intersectionality, Feminist Security Studies

Introduction

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have revolutionized global connectivity, enabling novel forms of civic engagement and transnational activism (Mackey & Petrucka, 2021). Digital platforms have amplified marginalized voices, challenged systemic inequalities, and fostered solidarities through movements such as #MeToo and #BringBackOurGirls. These movements illustrate how online spaces shape and circulate global discourse (Quan-Haase et al., 2021; Zimmerman & Osegboun, 2025). Within the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, ICTs are increasingly central to advocacy and organizing, allowing women to expand reach, access resources, and interface with policy processes across local, national, and international scales (K.C. & Whetstone, 2024; UN Women, 2024).

Despite these benefits, ICTs have enabled new modalities of gender-based violence that are pervasive (Dunn, 2020). Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) functions not only as targeted interpersonal harm but also as a structural constraint that silences women, hinders public participation, and peacebuilding (Baekgaard, 2024; UN Women et al., 2024). TFGBV denotes gendered harms

committed, assisted, aggravated, or amplified through digital tools and platforms, including cyberstalking, doxxing, sexualized threats, and image-based abuse; these dynamics are intensified by affordances such as anonymity and searchability (Dunn, 2020). Research indicates that the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) framework, anchored in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and organized around the pillars of participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery, insufficiently integrates digital security, leaving significant gaps in national and regional action plans (Hofstetter & Pourmalek, 2023; Baekgaard, 2025).

This study addresses a critical gap by demonstrating how TFGBV constitutes a structural threat to the WPS agenda, undermining its core objectives and pillars. Employing a qualitative desk review, the research analysed peer-reviewed articles, policy reports, and institutional documents published between 2000 and 2025. Sources were identified through targeted keyword searches (e.g., "TFGBV," "Women, Peace and Security," "Intersectionality," "Feminist Security Studies," "West Africa") and screened using explicit inclusion criteria prioritising materials that substantively examined TFGBV within WPS implementation.

Grounded in Intersectionality and Feminist Security Studies (FSS), the analysis conceptualises TFGBV as a structural security threat rather than a peripheral digital safety issue and organises its findings around three thematic areas: the forms and targets of TFGBV, its impacts on the WPS pillars, and the policy gaps and entry points for integration. This study is limited by its reliance on secondary data and uneven reporting across countries, underscoring the need for primary research involving women in the public sphere and policymakers across diverse contexts.

Intersecting Insecurities: Applying Feminist Security Studies and Intersectionality to Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

This study analyses TFGBV within the WPS agenda through two complementary frameworks: Intersectionality and Feminist Security Studies (FSS). Intersectionality illuminates how overlapping identities shape differentiated risks, while FSS situates these risks within global security debates, revealing structural gaps that perpetuate insecurity (Mhajne & Whetstone, 2024). Together, they demonstrate that TFGBV is a strategic barrier to inclusive peace and democratic governance, underscoring the need to embed digital security within WPS frameworks (UN Women, 2023; Dunn, 2020). Intersectionality, developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, explains how gender, race, ethnicity, language, and class co-produce vulnerability and shape access to redress (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991).

Applied to TFGBV, it clarifies why women journalists, activists, politicians, and other public figures face compounded harms such as doxxing, sexualized threats, and identity-targeted disinformation (Baekgaard, 2025). The visibility of these women disrupts entrenched patriarchal norms, positioning them as targets within misogynistic structures (Baekgaard, 2025; Falobi, 2025). Enabled by anonymity and weak accountability, online abuse functions as a strategic tool to silence dissent, delegitimise credibility, and push women out of civic and public spaces (Dunn, 2020; Koch, Russo Riva & Steinert, 2025).

It also constitutes a direct threat to both physical and psychological security by exposing women to heightened risks such as stalking, doxxing, and sexualized violence. For example, when personal information like home addresses is leaked online, perpetrators can escalate harassment into real-world attacks, creating a continuum of harm that spans from persistent online abuse to offline violence; an escalation that traditional protection mechanisms, designed for physical conflict zones, fail to anticipate or mitigate (Dunn, 2020; Baekgaard, 2024; Sjoberg, 2016). Building on this analysis, intersectionality thus moves beyond tokenistic inclusion by revealing how overlapping identities and technological affordances interact to reproduce structural inequalities (Dunn, 2020; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2024; Sjoberg, 2024).

Feminist Security Studies (FSS) complements this perspective by reframing TFGBV as a structural security threat. Central to FSS is the argument that gender is conceptually and empirically indispensable to security analysis, and that everyday gendered violence both online and offline must be recognised as integral to what constitutes "security" (Mhajne & Whetstone, 2024; Sjoberg, 2016). By challenging the presumed neutrality of mainstream security theories, FSS exposes how the exclusion of gender perpetuates insecurity in policy and practice (Tickner, 2001, 2004). This lens expands security beyond militarised, state-centric paradigms to encompass the everyday insecurities experienced by women, particularly those with intersecting identities whose participation is essential to advancing the WPS agenda (Baekgaard, 2024; Dunn, 2020; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2024).

While digital feminism has documented online harassment, it rarely conceptualises such violence as a security threat, and both traditional and critical approaches often overlook gendered and intersectional dimensions (Mhajne & Whetstone, 2024). This analytical gap leaves TFGBV and its disproportionate impact underexamined and inadequately addressed (Mhajne & Whetstone, 2024). Addressing this gap requires a shift toward frameworks that recognise TFGBV as a structural phenomenon shaped by intersecting identities and technological affordances, rather than treating it as an isolated digital safety issue (Baekgaard, 2025; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2024).

Taken together, intersectionality and Feminist Security Studies (FSS) reconceptualise technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) as a structural and security challenge that necessitates a paradigm shift in policy and practice. This dual lens clarifies who is most vulnerable, why harms are compounded, and how digital violence operates as a strategic barrier to inclusive governance and democratic resilience (Pourmalek, 2023). Addressing TFGBV through intersectional and security-informed approaches is therefore essential to safeguarding women's leadership and ensuring that peacebuilding frameworks remain relevant in an increasingly digitalized conflict environment. Having established the theoretical foundations, the next section examines the scope and patterns of TFGBV, illustrating how these dynamics manifest in practice and why they demand urgent policy attention.

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Scope, Patterns, and Security Implications

TFGBV has become a critical security and human rights concern, situated at the intersection of rapid digital innovation and entrenched patriarchal (Baekgaard, 2024; Dunn, 2020; Falobi, 2025). Perpetrators weaponise digital surveillance and intrusive technologies to monitor, intimidate, and silence victims, producing profound psychological, social, and political consequences (Dunn, 2020). Global estimates indicate that 16–58% of women have experienced online violence (UN Women, 2025).

Evidence demonstrates the systemic nature of TFGBV across diverse contexts. Globally, 73% of women journalists report experiencing online harassment, and 46% of women parliamentarians across 50 African countries have faced online abuse often perpetrated by male colleagues and political opponents (UN Women, 2024; Inter-Parliamentary Union & African Parliamentary Union, 2021). In Nigeria, coordinated attacks target women in politics and activism to undermine credibility and discourage participation in public discourse (Falobi, 2025). Similarly, NORSAAC (2025), citing that women in the public sphere face heightened TFGBV risks, noted that the case of Gifty, a broadcast journalist in Ghana who faced severe online harassment for her reporting on political corruption and social issues. These attacks often combine gendered slurs, sexualized threats, and identity-based disinformation, functioning as a political weapon to delegitimise women's authority and silence dissent (K.C. & Whetstone, 2024; Gehrke & Amit-Danhi, 2025; Yeboah Banin, Ayisi & Larweh, 2025).

Structural weaknesses in reporting mechanisms compound the problem. In West and Central Africa, 45% of women using Facebook and Twitter report online abuse, yet only 15% of cases are formally documented (Internet Without Borders, 2019). Cultural minimization of digital harms and limited institutional capacity to investigate and prosecute cases perpetuate impunity (Dunn, 2020; UN Women, 2025). Consequently, nearly one-third of victims curtail online engagement as a self-protective strategy, weakening advocacy networks and constraining political participation (Baekgaard, 2024).

Given the prevalence and systemic nature of TFGBV, addressing this challenge must be recognized as a global security priority. Integrating this form of violence into WPS frameworks through gender-responsive cybersecurity policies, harmonized legal protections, and institutional reforms is essential to sustaining inclusive governance and democratic resilience in an increasingly digitalized conflict environment (Baekgaard, 2024; Hofstetter & Pourmalek, 2023; UN Women, 2025). Having established its scope and security implications, the next section examines how TFGBV transforms digital empowerment into exclusion, undermining the foundational pillars of the WPS agenda. This analysis explores the structural consequences of digital violence on participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery.

From Empowerment to Exclusion: The Implications of TFGBV for Women, Peace and Security

TFGBV harms women activists, politicians, journalists, and peacebuilders while simultaneously undermining the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. Although research increasingly documents its personal and structural impacts (Baekgaard, 2024; Dunn, 2020), TFGBV remains insufficiently integrated into WPS analysis and implementation (Baekgaard, 2025). This omission is significant, as it systematically undermines the foundational pillars of the WPS framework, diminishing its capacity to promote inclusive and sustainable peace.

Participation: Silencing, Delegitimization, and Withdrawal

Participation is a cornerstone of the WPS agenda, yet TFGBV systematically undermines this pillar by creating hostile digital environments that silence women, delegitimise their authority, and force withdrawal from public life (Dunn, 2020; Baekgaard, 2024; Luna & Whetstone, 2024). Digital platforms, once heralded as spaces for empowerment, have become arenas of intimidation where women leaders, peacebuilders, and journalists face coordinated harassment campaigns, gendered disinformation, and threats that extend beyond the virtual sphere into physical and psychological harm (Dunn, 2020; Baekgaard, 2024; K.C. & Whetstone, 2024). These dynamics narrow the diversity of voices in decision-making spaces and erode democratic resilience, positioning TFGBV not as a peripheral digital nuisance but as a structural barrier to inclusive governance.

In Nigeria, social media has been weaponised to target women in politics and activism, where those expressing opinions on social issues face heightened harassment, including threats of physical and sexual violence (Falobi, 2025, p. 132). Similarly, in Ghana, female politicians report pervasive online abuse involving explicit threats of violence and orchestrated intimidation campaigns that exploit gender and ethnicity to delegitimise their authority and discourage political engagement (Yeboah-Banin & Larweh, 2025, p. 13). Regionally, evidence indicates that a significant proportion of women politicians in African Union member states have been subjected to online threats of violence, underscoring the systemic nature of this harm (Baekgaard, 2024, p. 12). These dynamics frequently compel women to self-censor or withdraw from online spaces, reflecting the "gendered chilling effect" of TFGBV on women's voices and deterring their participation in public discourse (UN Women, 2025; Baekgaard, 2025).

TFGBV also creates structural risks that destabilise peacebuilding and security efforts. Women activists are often dismissed as "slacktivists," a narrative that delegitimises digital advocacy and obscures its transformative potential (Maxfield, 2016). Disinformation campaigns targeting women peacebuilders frame them as partisan actors, provoking backlash and eroding credibility, which weakens inclusive governance and undermines peacebuilding processes (Baekgaard, 2024; K.C. & Whetstone, 2024). These dynamics can ultimately deter women from participating in public discourse and peacebuilding initiatives, as persistent harassment and reputational attacks force many to self-censor or withdraw from online spaces (UN Women, 2025; Baekgaard, 2024). At the organisational level, peacebuilding institutions are increasingly compelled to divert resources from core mediation and conflict-resolution activities to reputational defense, thereby diminishing their operational capacity and strategic effectiveness (Hofstetter & Pourmalek, 2023). This reallocation of resources underscores the systemic nature of TFGBV, which functions not as an isolated digital safety issue but as a structural impediment to inclusive governance and sustainable peace.

Women's withdrawal from public discourse and leadership roles further entrenches this barrier, undermining democratic governance and weakening the transformative potential of the WPS agenda, as gender equality correlates strongly with more peaceful, democratic, and prosperous societies (Baekgaard, 2025). Empirical evidence demonstrates that when women are represented in peace negotiations, agreements tend to incorporate broader political reforms, exhibit higher implementation rates, and enjoy greater legitimacy and public support (Baekgaard, 2025; Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.).

Protection: Digital Spaces as Sites of Insecurity

The protection pillar of the WPS agenda is increasingly compromised as digital platforms operate as extensions of conflict zones, exposing women to physical, psychological, and socio-economic harms without adequate legal or institutional safeguards (Dunn, 2020; KAICIID International Dialogue Centre, 2025). Unlike traditional security threats, TFGBV blurs the boundary between online and offline spaces. Digital attacks are pervasive and frequently escalate into real-world consequences, making it imperative for WPS protection strategies to incorporate online dimensions of violence (Baekgaard, 2024; Dunn, 2020; Jankowicz et al., 2024).

TFGBV imposes severe physical, psychological, and emotional burdens on victims (Dunn, 2020). Survivors frequently report chronic anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress symptoms resulting from sustained harassment and threats, illustrating the continuum of harm that extends beyond digital spaces (Dunn, 2020). These impacts are compounded by economic insecurity, as women targeted by online abuse often experience significant career disruptions (Baekgaard, 2024; Dunn, 2020; Falobi, 2025; UN Women, 2025). Such outcomes not only erode individual well-being but also undermine women's long-term socio-economic stability and representation in governance and peacebuilding processes. Compounding these harms is the absence of gender-specific legal protections against TFGBV in many jurisdictions (Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative, 2025; Jankowicz et al., 2024; UN Women, 2025). This legal vacuum perpetuates impunity and externalises the costs of harm onto survivors, who bear the psychological, physical, and economic burden of violence without adequate institutional support. Collectively, these dynamics compromise women's safety and socio-economic stability, revealing critical gaps in WPS protection strategies that demand integration of digital security measures and gender-responsive legislation.

Prevention: Gendered Disinformation and the Erosion of Peacebuilding

In the WPS agenda, prevention refers to strategies and actions aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, and recurrence of conflict and violence, with a strong emphasis on addressing the root causes of insecurity and gender-based violence (UN Women, 2020). TFGBV undermines the prevention pillar of the WPS agenda by embedding misogynistic discourse into digital spaces and enabling disinformation campaigns (Baekgaard, 2024; Dunn, 2020; K.C. & Whetstone, 2024; Jankowicz et al., 2024). Gendered disinformation weaponises stereotypes and false narratives to delegitimise women journalists, activists, and peacebuilders, provoking backlash and silencing their voices in public discourse (Baekgaard, 2024; Dunn, 2020; K.C. & Whetstone, 2024; Gehrke & Amit-Danhi, 2025). These campaigns erode trust, distort public narratives, and obstruct strategies aimed at preventing violence, thereby weakening democratic resilience and inclusive governance (Baekgaard, 2024; Hofstetter & Pourmalek, 2023).

The use of gendered disinformation as a strategic tool of TFGBV demonstrates that prevention cannot rely on traditional approaches. Unless WPS frameworks explicitly incorporate TFGBV, efforts to prevent violence will remain incomplete, perpetuating structural inequalities and undermining the transformative potential of peacebuilding. This failure to prevent digital harms has cascading effects on the relief and recovery pillar, where persistent gaps in policy and practice leave survivors without adequate support, reinforcing cycles of insecurity and exclusion.

Relief and Recovery: Persistent Gaps in WPS Action Plans

According to Nanthini (2025), the fourth pillar of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda emphasizes advancing equitable, gender-sensitive relief and recovery. However, most National Action Plans (NAPs) do not include provisions addressing TFGBV, nor outline survivor-centered mechanisms to support and protect those affected, leaving a critical gap in implementation (Baekgaard, 2025). Notably, the African Union's Continental Results Framework (2018–2028) and the ECOWAS Guidelines on Women, Peace and Security (2020) similarly omit reference to online harms experienced by women.

This policy void is exacerbated by an absence of national legislation. Significant gaps persist in national legislation addressing TFGBV. As of 2025, nearly half of the world's women lack legal protection from digital abuse, reflecting a systemic failure to integrate TFGBV-specific provisions into national cybersecurity and digital rights frameworks (UN Women, 2025). Even where countries have initiated digital safety laws, such legislation rarely includes TFGBV-specific provisions, reflecting a broader failure to align national legal frameworks with the complexities of online gender-based violence (UN Women, 2025; UN Women, 2025).

Consequently, survivors lack tailored, survivor-centred services for safe reintegration and resilience-building, weakening the relief and recovery pillar (Hofstetter & Pourmalek, 2023). Fragmented legal frameworks and inadequate support systems create an accountability vacuum, enabling perpetrators to act with impunity and forcing survivors to shoulder the ongoing physical, psychological, and economic consequences (Baekgaard, 2025; Dunn, 2020). This omission not only undermines the integrity of the WPS agenda's fourth pillar but also erodes its transformative potential as a whole. Addressing these deficiencies requires embedding TFGBV into WPS instruments, harmonising legal frameworks with international digital rights standards, and investing in comprehensive, survivor-centred support services (Baekgaard, 2025; Hofstetter & Pourmalek, 2023). This includes adopting national legislation that explicitly criminalises online gender-based violence and aligns with model frameworks such as those developed by UN Women (2025).

The analysis across all four pillars demonstrates that TFGBV is not a peripheral digital safety issue but a structural security threat that undermines the WPS agenda. Its systemic impacts silence women's voices,

destabilise governance, and perpetuate impunity through fragmented legal frameworks and inadequate institutional safeguards. Addressing these gaps requires more than incremental adjustments; it demands a comprehensive, gender-responsive approach that integrates digital security into peacebuilding strategies. To ensure that WPS frameworks remain relevant in an increasingly digitized environment, the next section outlines actionable recommendations for embedding TFGBV into the WPS agenda, advancing legal harmonization, cybersecurity reforms, and survivor-centered mechanisms as normative and strategic imperatives for inclusive peace.

A Call to Action: Embedding TFGBV into the WPS Agenda

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) represents a structural security threat that undermines the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, and current WPS frameworks lack explicit recognition of TFGBV and fail to provide operational guidance for addressing digital harms. Without gender-responsive cybersecurity policies, enforceable legal protections, and institutional reforms, WPS implementation risks becoming obsolete in an increasingly digitised conflict environment. Addressing TFGBV is therefore not only a normative obligation but also a strategic imperative for inclusive governance and sustainable peace.

Addressing TFGBV within the WPS agenda requires a multi-level, evidence-based approach that reflects both normative and strategic imperatives. First, measures to address TFGBV should be embedded in national and regional frameworks and action plans to mitigate systemic vulnerabilities that disproportionately affect women in leadership and advocacy roles. Second, comprehensive digital literacy programs are essential for enhancing women's agency and resilience in online spaces, thereby countering the structural exclusion perpetuated by digital harms. Third, capacity-building initiatives for law enforcement and judicial actors must prioritise the development of investigative and prosecutorial competencies to close accountability gaps that enable impunity.

These interventions must be reinforced through robust monitoring systems that integrate TFGBV indicators into WPS frameworks, including those of the African Union and Regional Economic Communities. In addition, establishing a Regional TFGBV Observatory is critical, as it would generate disaggregated data and provide an evidence base for policy interventions. Furthermore, technology platforms should adopt Safety by Design principles to institutionalise proactive abuse detection and rapid response mechanisms, thereby mitigating algorithmic amplification of misogynistic content. Equally important, civil society organisations such as the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) should complement institutional efforts by engaging in sustained advocacy, delivering survivor-centred services, and providing cyber resilience training, recognising their pivotal role in bridging normative commitments and lived realities. Ultimately, integrating TFGBV into the WPS agenda is not optional but imperative. Without addressing digital insecurity, peace processes risk erosion, and women's participation cannot be guaranteed as meaningful, safe, or sustainable.

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Gender Question, Family Planning, and its Implication on Health Security in Osun State

YUSUF, Olanrewaju Lateef, PhD. & FAKOLADE, Fortune Abisola

Department of Religions and Peace Studies

Lagos State University, Ojo.

olanrewaju.yusuf@lasu.edu.ng

Peace Studies Program, Department of Peace, Security and Humanitarian Studies, University of Ibadan

fakoladefortune@gmail.com

Abstract

Families are at the core of population control programs. These programmes are often restricted by the nature of the culture and adopted religion. Despite concerted efforts by the Osun State government to promote and implement the family planning needs of its inhabitants, it still faces challenges in the widespread adoption and sustenance of the programme. Little attention has been paid to gender roles and its health security implications. Gender and Development theory and Game Theory served as the framework, while a case study research design was employed. In addition, the purposive sampling technique, Six (6) Focused group discussions, comprising five male participants (3) and five female participants (3) conducted in pairs in Irewole, Ife East, and Osogbo Local Government Areas of the State, was adopted. Key Informant interviews (KII) with (10) purposively selected stakeholders, including Health Workers (6), Community leaders (3), and State Ministry of Health Officials (1), were conducted. The gathered data were then content analyzed. The findings of the study showed that Patriarchy, influenced by cultural and religious sentiments, is rife in the area; hence, family planning decisions are made based on the dictates of the head of the house, the husband. Reduction in maternal and infant mortality, mental and physical health, stability of homes, financial adequacy, and improved education are positive effects of family planning on health security in Osun State. The adverse effects include side effects such as increased size, swollen parts of the body, and sometimes, delayed pregnancies associated with wrong administration. Gender roles influence family planning decisions, which negatively affect health security in Osun State, Nigeria. Therefore, health security in the area will vastly improve through an increased sensitization drive, removal of gender, cultural, and religious stereotypes, and an improved Government's attitude towards promoting and facilitating the methods in the area.

Keywords: *Gender roles, Health security, family planning*

Introduction

It is imperative that any state whose goal is to attain some level of socio-economic, health, and indeed all-round development must seek ways to control the sum of people living in its territory. Population refers to the total number of living persons within a geographical area. It is a group of individuals of the same species living and interbreeding within a given area (Tarsi & Tuff, 2012). Although the implications of population growth differ considerably among countries, depending on their current social, economic, and political conditions, rapid population growth in developing countries has resulted in less progress than might have been expected (World Bank, 1984). Hence, there is a need for population regulation and control.

As defined by Moore (2019), population control is the alteration of the population growth rate by limiting birth rates. The methods of achieving population control are coercive and passive. Coercion requires forced mechanisms to control the population (Komu & Ethelberg, 2015). Over time, one or more of these methods were adopted by diverse governments to inhibit the explosion of population beyond specific state resources through the one-child policy, abortion, and the use of contraceptives, amongst others (Komu & Ethelberg, 2015). The latter method falls under family planning and is peculiar because it emphasizes achieving population control by paying attention to the role of the entire family.

Procreation amongst humans is not asexual but depends on sexual relations between a man and woman in which the sperm fertilizes an egg. Nurturing the fetus to the point of birth depends mainly on the woman who carries the pregnancy. Since procreation amongst humans is sexual, the gender entities involved should be responsible for decisions relating to such. Adopting one or more family planning methods is the safest way to prevent unwanted and constant childbearing. Family Planning connotes conception prevention to avoid pregnancy and abortion, but it can also refer to the efforts of couples to induce pregnancy (Samir, 2013). The World Health Organization (2012) highlighted types of family planning methods as the use of pills and mini-pills, injections, male and female condoms, implants, IUD (intrauterine device), female sterilization, vasectomy, breastfeeding method, standard days method, withdrawal, and emergency contraceptive pills.

Scholars such as Kavanaugh and Anderson (2013) and Taylor (2018) have attributed merits and demerits to the concept of family planning. In her work titled "Benefits of investing in family planning," Grant (2016) noted that family is advantageous in pole areas such as saving women's lives and preventing pregnancy-related health risks in women, reducing adolescent pregnancies, reducing infant mortality, and preventing HIV/AIDS. The relevant disadvantages of the family planning methods are associated with the side effects of each choice. Blocker (2022) explained that the disadvantages could be nausea, headache, breast tenderness, weight gain, mood changes, and disparity in effectiveness. These limitations fuel existing cultural roles related to family and family planning.

The cultural roles assigned to gender types vary across the globe despite technological and scientific advancements that mark the 21st century. These cultural roles fall under the notion of gender, which, according to Kangas et al. (2014), examines how social norms and power structures impact the lives and opportunities available to different groups of men and women. Kumar (2022) describes the types of gender from narrow and broad perspectives. The specific types are masculine, feminine, neuter, and common, while the broad types are; agender, cisgender, gender fluid, queer, intersex, non-conforming and

transgender. In some climes, the stereotypical differences are benign with the rise of feminist groups and laws accommodating the interests of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer societies (LGBTQ).

Unfortunately, gender roles remain intact in most African societies, where personal biological attributes, such as child birthing, define people. Hence, the effectiveness of family planning types, proven to inhibit pregnancy significantly, is hindered by some of these gender stereotypes in some African societies. The effectiveness of family planning may be greatly limited when it is considered a woman's exclusive responsibility based on her biological role of childbearing and nurturing. In addition, religious and sociocultural norms, poverty, and inadequate information may influence attitudes toward family planning. Despite the proven positive results of the various family planning types, there are still health security issues in Africa.

Health security is only a component of a broader theoretical framework known as human security. Human security, as defined by UNDP (1994) and cited by Johns (2014), is the safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, repression, and protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life. The UNDP also identified seven human security components: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political (Johns, 2014). This work is critical to investigating health security issues related to family planning. Health security is tantamount and entrenched in most constitutional documents as a human right (WHO, 2002). Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, cited also by WHO (2002), recognizes health security to be the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. An intensified approach to strengthening health systems to achieve global health security, often interchangeable with health security in some literature, is to promote reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health services, nutrition, communicable and non-communicable disease control, palliative care, rehabilitation, and mental health (FCDO, 2021). Reproductive and related concerns are viewable from the standpoint of family health.

The relationship between family planning and family health is reinforced by citing the United States Institute of Medicine (2009), which explains that family planning serves three purposes, namely, helping couples avoid unintended pregnancies, reducing the spread and addressing the problem of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and reducing rates of infertility. An approach to observing the implications of family planning methods on family health leads to studying all characters involved, consisting of the father, mother, unborn child, and infant. Although it is imperative to study the elements in the family, family health is not limited to the study of the sum of the personal health of individuals who form the family because it also takes into consideration interaction in terms of health (physical and psychological) between members of the family and relationships between the family and its social environment at all stages of family life in its different structural types (Gebremariam, 2004). Manciaux and Belsey (2002) replace the term family health with family care but mention that it applies to the specific functions and stages of family life comprising family planning and reproductive health, maternal and child health, school health, adolescent health, and health of older people.

In addition, the importance of family planning to national development cannot be under-emphasized as it directly influences the improvement of lives worldwide by enhancing national security and optimizing a country's financial resources, i.e., family planning can help stabilize societies (USAID et al., 2010). It

becomes imperative, therefore, that any government concerned with the overall development of its state institutionalize adequate and effective family planning programs. The Nigerian Government committed to allocating fifteen percent (15%) of the budget to family planning in 2001. However, allocation towards family planning in 2022 was meager at one percent (1%) of the national and state health annual budget (Premium Times, 2022). The Government also depends mainly on donors to finance family planning programs. The relaxed attitude of individuals in Nigeria towards this cause, as observed by some scholars, is therefore traceable to the Federal Government's approach and poor representation of the category of people directly affected by family planning methods in Government.

In any case, the Federal Government develops policies, strategies, guidelines, and plans that provide direction for the Nigerian healthcare system. However, implementing these guidelines falls on the State Ministry of Health, responsible for its state health programs. The Government empowers the thirty-six state governments and the Federal Capital Territory to handle family health by circulating family planning materials within its territory. Each state government employs an F.P. coordinator to facilitate the process of commodity ordering, transportation, and advocacy (Federal Ministry of Health, 2014).

As earlier indicated, the Federal Government suffers laxity in its focus on family planning programs, ultimately affecting state governments. This issue heightens because many state governments have not dedicated funds to transport materials to local health facilities (HPP), which affects the health security of people. Aside from the Government's role, other factors influencing family planning in Nigeria are cultural, economic, and information-related (Mandara, 2012). Osun State has six hundred and ten (610) public health facilities including teaching hospitals, general hospitals, comprehensive health centers, and primary health care (Ajala et al., 2005). There is a need to study the nature of family planning on the health security of individuals and families, despite the availability of Health Facilities in this area, to determine if family planning patterns are affected by governmental decisions as well as cultural, religious, socio-economic, and particularly, gender factors that are peculiar to this region.

Statement of Problem

Family planning focuses on improving not just the health of individual members of the family but the entire entity. There is existing literature linking family planning with health security. However, they have yet to particularly understudy the health implications of family planning in Osun State. Hence, there is a need to explore the effects of family planning on health security. In addition, since the study of family planning results in a corresponding study of family health, there is a need to study particularly the implications of family planning methods on family health in Osun State, which has yet to be investigated by previous scholarly attempts.

The state of Osun has several health facilities peculiar to most Nigerian States whose state governments are concerned with improving the health security of indigenes and non-indigenes. Therefore, the health facilities in the study area should provide one or more family planning materials. Despite adopting family planning programs in the state, health security issues remain. NDHS (2013), as cited by the Federal Ministry of Health (2014), indicated that 15.1 percent of married women of reproductive age (15–49) are using any contraceptive method; however, only 9.8 percent of these women are using modern F.P. methods. There is a need to interrogate the reason(s) for such setback.

Consequently, this work studied the challenges facing the embrace and sustainability of family planning methods hindering the success of these programs by interrogating gender questions in the area.

Theoretical framework

Gender and development theory begins with a holistic viewpoint by examining "the entirety of social organization, economic and political activity to comprehend the molding of particular areas of society, which is perhaps the most important aspect (Young, 1987). GAD is more interested in society's Gender construction and the different roles, obligations, and expectations of men and women. It pays close attention to how women are oppressed in the home and goes into the so-called "private domain" to examine the presumptions that underpin romantic relationships. It also emphasizes the Government's role in advancing women's emancipation by providing social services. Although it acknowledges the significance of class solidarity and class division, it makes the case that the patriarchal ideology oppresses women within and outside classes. As a result, socialist feminists and academics who take a GAD perspective investigate the relationships between the contradictions of gender, class, race, and development (Maguire, 1994). Strengthening women's legal rights, especially the revision of laws as they relate to women's rights is an essential area of research being done from a GAD viewpoint since it accepts contributions towards equity and social justice. The approach sees men as partners in development, and with their collaborative effort, the health security of women can be adequately handled, especially regarding family planning.

From the non-cooperative perspective, the player that acts according to his or her best interest at the expense of the other partner is usually the spouse of the woman, especially in Africa and developing countries where many women are left to cater for their health based on men's point of view on family planning and child spacing. On the other hand, the cooperative game theory involves the two parties, that is, both the husband and wife, reaching an agreement on the method of family planning and the health security of the entire family.

Methodology

This paper adopted a case study research design to investigate gender role influence on family planning and its correlative implication on the health security of Osun State inhabitants. The paper relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. It utilized a mixed data collection method comprising key informant interviews (KII) and in-depth interviews (IDI).

Respondents were selected using the multi-stage sampling technique. Stage A involved delineating the state purposively to three senatorial districts for an unbiased sampling and proper representation. Further, there was purposive selection of one Local Government each from the three senatorial districts based on the number of health centers, population, and heterogeneity. Respondents were then chosen purposively from the family health centers, health workers, community leaders, and the State Ministry of Health. Lastly, married men and women were purposively selected based on their involvement with the subject matter and grouped based on sex into a focused group discussion of five members only. In addition, health workers, community leaders, and workers at the State Ministry of Health were all purposively selected based on their understanding and advocacy on the subject matter.

Table 1: Sampling Technique Table

Source of Data	Method of Data Collection	Sample
Women in Ife-East	FGD	5
Men in Ife-East	FGD	5
Community Leader in Ife-East	KII	1
Health Workers in Ife-East	KII	2
Women in Irewole	FGD	5
Men in Irewole	FGD	5
Community Leader in Irewole	KII	1
Health Workers in Irewole	KII	2
Women in Osogbo	FGD	5
Men in Osogbo	FGD	5
Community Leader in Osogbo	KII	1
Health workers in Osogbo	KII	2
State Ministry of Health	KII	1

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of 10 key informant interviews Six focused group interviews were conducted covering the three senatorial districts in Osun State. Afterward, the responses were content analyzed.

Patriarchy as a limitation to family planning

Most of the study area is patriarchal, with families depending on the fathers for provisions. One woman in one of the focus group discussions noted that,

A woman's role is to take good care of the home and assist the husband in the family's welfare, while the man has to provide for the family's basic needs **(FGD/Female/Osogbo/November 2022).**

The held assumption influences the activities of both genders in the study area in meeting their desired family planning needs. It was discovered that the traditional norm of not using modern contraception exists in parts of the study area and is greatly influenced by the contribution of men who are frontiers in the home. A woman in one of the focus groups relayed that,

Men and women view family planning from the same perspective because men in this area significantly influence their wives. A woman can only do family planning in secrecy where her husband is unsupportive **(FGD/Female/Irewole/July 2022)**

Findings from the study also showed that 90% of the male population dominates the decision-making structure of family planning. In contrast, the responsibilities surrounding accepting and using family planning methods are for the women. A woman noted that,

We go through a lot when it comes to family issues. We are responsible for taking care of the home and managing challenges. Regarding family planning, most times, our husbands are constantly pushing us to it, not minding the risks and dangers that might come with it. Ordinary condoms they will not use. **(FGD/Female/Ife-East/September, 2022)**

It was observable that the cultural perception that men are the head of the household limits the adoption of family planning in many cases, where they are opinionated and dogmatic. Men's negative attitude towards family planning adoption is also traceable to limitations such as limited family planning types for the male gender and want for utmost pleasure, amongst others.

The available family planning materials for men are the use of condoms and the permanent method. Hardly any man comes for a vasectomy, and with the experiences I have had over the years, only a few men come for the collection of condoms. However, the majority of men still do not approve of the use of condoms with their spouses. The height of maltreatment and marginalization against women **(KII/Female/Ife-East/September 2022).**

A respondent of the focus group discussion stated that a few men are unwilling to use condoms with their wives. "In most cases, most men prefer to have sexual intercourse raw with us. Vasectomy is another method that most men run away from; they believe it is risky; some even believe it is a taboo." **(FGD/Female/Osogbo/November 2022).**

These cultural beliefs affect not only the men but also the women who choose to be subjected to these dogmas and refuse to explore the option of adopting these methods in secrecy.

A respondent in Irewole Local Government mentioned that,

We know some women here who still do not use family planning for cultural reasons. Non-use of family planning methods is widespread amongst people from Cotonou, Igede, Igala, and some parts of Benue state. They think it is not good **(FGD/Female/Irewole/July 2022).**

Religious sentiment also serves as a bedrock of reference for many indigenes.

The ratio of men to women when it comes to going for family planning is meager. We can also put the rate at 70:30, 70 for women and 30 for men. Besides the fact that the family planning methods for men are limited, we should not forget that religion and culture also play a significant role in determining men's and women's involvement in family planning. Many churches and mosques teach against the use of family planning. Also, it is still widely believed around here that women who do family planning have tendencies to be infidels **(FGD/Male/Ife-East/ September 2022).**

The Attitude of Government Towards Family Planning

The Government explores different methods in administering family planning products and addressing dogmas and beliefs that affect adoption. The observed methods used by the Government include sensitization, availability, and accessibility of the products. A nurse noted that the Government can correct dogmas and erroneous beliefs affecting the adoption of family planning methods through sensitization.

In the last few years, the Government of Nigeria, through some key sectors and agencies, has worked with key stakeholders to address societal norms and belief systems, such as preference for large families and other religious factors. In essence, the Government has collaborated with many agencies, all in the name of expanding the provision of family planning services. We usually distribute free materials at intervals while delivering lectures to corroborate our point. **(KII/Female/Osogbo/November, 2022)**

Aside from educative talks delivered at the health centers by health practitioners, another respondent noted that other communicative mediums, such as visuals often posted in health centers to pass across messages on the significance of family planning and other social functions that enable practitioners to reach indigenes outside the four walls of health centers enunciate other efforts of the Government. A doctor in the study area noted that the Government does not limit its efforts to the health institutions,

The activities of state agencies are usually felt when it comes to sensitization and awareness programs. Programs are usually sponsored by government agencies in public lectures, radio, and television programs. The programs have always been helpful as it has dramatically helped to open the eyes of many of our people from their superstitious beliefs and old philosophies of life. Our people's ignorance level has drastically reduced in the real sense **(KII/Man/Ife- East/September 2022).**

Other efforts employed by the Government also include counseling, seminars, and lectures.

"I have attended so many of these programs. In these programs, they bring in experts and professionals to come and talk about the significance of family planning and the devastating consequences of not adopting it. In addition, government health workers also teach the importance of family planning during infant and antenatal clinics" **(FGD/Female/Irewole/July 2022).**

It was discovered that the Government also promotes this program through access to services and commodities. When the women were asked if family planning was accessible in their area, one of them noted that,

No one can use distance as an excuse for not doing family planning because the health centers are very accessible. Sensitization is carried out very often in very remote areas. The Government also supplies us with subsidized materials and even free items occasionally. I even receive free condoms occasionally for him **(FGD/Female/Irewole/July 2022).**

However, some respondents highlighted hindrances to government efforts as inadequate health force and insufficient qualified persons based on flawed employment processes.

"The Government's efforts can be jeopardized in the wrong hands. So, the Government should employ health workers based on merit and experience so they can give proper advice to our women who go for family planning. This will reduce the health because many do not like the options of vasectomy and condoms" (KII/Female/Irewole/July 2022).

Implications of family planning on health security in Osun State

The merits of family planning in the area are reducing maternal and infant mortality as well as poverty, increased emotional stability, and a happy and balanced home, among many others. It was observed that maternal mortality has reduced drastically with family planning because of the consequent avoidance of unwanted pregnancies. Also, experiences over the years have shown that using family planning to delay first births and to increase inter-pregnancy intervals has significantly helped to decrease infant mortality **(KII/Female/Irewole/July 2022).**

A Nurse in the study area also affirmed that "family planning has helped to reduce the risks and dangers many women go through during and after pregnancy. Family planning helps women recover and regain strength from child labor before birthing another child. They can also fend for the existing family" **(KII/Female/Ife-East/September 2022).**

It is not only the women that benefit from family planning. Aside from the fact that family planning also reduces the risk of infant mortality, as earlier stated by a correspondent, men and, indeed, the entire family benefit in other ways. The health implications of family planning on men and other family members are traceable to physical, financial, and psychological stability. A man in one of the focused group discussions mentioned that,

Family planning helps our children in that the fewer children, the better their living conditions. This factor also reflects the financial status of the father. Birth spacing has allowed many of us to focus on other essential areas of life, such as career, business, academic, home care, etc. We can always differentiate between a family that can fend for its members and another that cannot cater to them.

(FGD/Male/Osogbo/November, 2022).

While corroborating the above submission, a medical practitioner in one of the study areas noted that "the world has changed; globalization and modernization have improved humankind's living conditions. Most of our mothers and even fathers can testify to this. Family planning has relieved them of physical and emotional stress of various kinds. Before adopting family planning, the family was vulnerable to many risks and challenges, such as child deformity, miscarriage, and maternal mortality. But with the practice of family planning, the story has changed for the entire family in terms of well-groomed children, sustainable finance, amongst others" **(KII/Female/Ife-East/September 2022)**

His assertions, thus, take cognizance of the rapidly changing world and how it affects health. Innovations in the health sector have brought relief to the pains and sufferings of the family, especially the mental,

emotional, and financial aspects to which family planning has contributed immensely. These innovations are a pointer to the advantages of family planning in the modern world.

It is also noteworthy that family planning improves health in this area and boosts family relationships and stability. A nurse indicated, "I have not directly experienced the case of a man running away from home at the birth of a child, but these are things we see on media outlets and hear. I have seen cases reported on OSBC where a man leaves his wife and newlyborn kids to cater for themselves. These issues exemplify the urgency of adopting family planning in homes" **(KII/Female/Osogbo/November 2022).**

This shows the importance of family planning to sustain the stability of homes. A man in one of the FGD sessions corroborated and posited that "it is funny that men like to blame women for unwanted pregnancies as if we are not responsible for it too. I remember feeling bad when my wife told me she was pregnant with our fifth child after we agreed to have just three. I had to start drinking to dampen the fear of raising a child in this harsh economy. Worse still, I met husbands who forced their wives to abort the unwanted fetus. Of course, their wives were never happy after that" **(FGD/Male/Irewole/July 2022).**

The respondent from the above is opining those fellow men encourage on the one hand and threaten on the other hand to abort the fetus in any way without recourse to the effect. Thus, the sanity and stability of homes are tied to the control of birth through the adoption of family planning methods, which helps to prevent the emergence of catering to "unwanted" pregnancies, aborting them, urgent dissolution of families, or growing unhappiness in the homes.

However, the implications of family planning on health security in the area were not merely observed from a positive lens but also examined from a negative perspective as well. The results of adopting family planning in the area are devastating health consequences, such as hormone imbalances, an increase in body weight, and delayed pregnancies. In addition, the adoption of family planning procedures has been responsible for the cause of infidelity in many homes. A respondent of the men's focused group discussion stated that family planning has disadvantages observed in the users, "the practice of family planning has brought about so many devastating consequences, most especially to the health of our mothers. All these drugs in the form of pills have side effects, which is why you see some of these women going fatter. I have also seen cases where a woman is unable to give birth after using an injectable, which discourages us **(FGD/Male/Ife-East/September 2022).**

A women's focus group discussion respondent also noted that "family planning has done more harm than good since its inception, especially the artificial methods of family planning. Our experiences in the last few years are a testament to this. Issues relating to irregular bleeding, breast pains, depression, increased weight gain, and stopped pregnancies are consequences of adopting family planning" (FGD/Female/Osogbo/November 2022). It was observed that many women refuse to use family planning based on the negative implications seen in some women. Others consult with traditional family planning providers and use herbs instead of scientific methods.

I do not want what happened to my neighbor for myself. After she removed the arm implant, she could not give birth again. My husband believes in family planning, so he did the traditional application for me. **(FGD/Female/Irewole/July 2022)**

A medical practitioner, while responding to the claims that family planning causes negative consequences on women, stated that

"It is normal for reactions to occur, like when you use chloroquine, which results in itching in some people. These reactions differ based on individual differences and makeup. This is why we suggest that pharmaceutical companies pay attention to the medical composition of some of these products that bring about a high rate of reactions in the body system of users. On our part, we do our best to interview users in order to determine the appropriate method for every individual. **(KII/Female/Irewole/July 2022).**

Aside the negative health implications of using family planning methods mentioned above, many respondents mentioned a negative social implication that affects homes in this area and impedes the adoption of the methods.

Although family planning has many good sides, it has brought about some side effects too. This issue of family planning you just raised has brought about infidelity in most homes, which has destroyed many homes. Once women do family planning, they are free to do whatever they like because they will not get pregnant while at it. Men hate infidelity here and have second thoughts about women using these products **(FGD/Male/Irewole/July 2022).**

The Relationship between Family Planning and Peace

It is important to note that just as family planning enhances health security, good health is also a catalyst and by-product of peace initiatives. According to Ghebreyesus (2022), Peace enables good health and vice versa. For instance, it builds trust in fragmented societies towards rebuilding societies riven by conflict. As earlier indicated, patriarchal family settings where the man takes sole leadership responsibilities often reject family planning. In extensive families, the woman is charged with housekeeping responsibilities that limit her participation in social, civic, and other peace-related activities. As one respondent noted,

"Birthing my chosen number of children has helped me focus on other things. I volunteer as a children's teacher at my worship center, teaching civic values and responsibilities. I cannot count the number of events I have volunteered for, and if I decide to join politics, I have all the time and stamina for it". (FGD/Female/Osogbo/November 2022)

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study, as regards the relationship among gender, family planning, and health security, unveiled that gender norms and stereotypes greatly influence the activities of both genders in the study area in meeting their desired family planning needs. The results show that men make family planning decisions, while the responsibility of acceptance is given to women. Patriarchy also thrives with the constituent cultural and religious structures in the area. The above findings extensively corroborate the positions of Lasee and Becker 1997; Isiugo-Abanihe (1994; Roudi and Asford (1996; Mbizvo and Adamchalk, 1991; Oni and MacCarthy, 1991. The above scholars have all asserted the domineering position of men on reproductive health matters. The above scholars argued that men are dominant decision-makers within the family. Fapohunda and Todaro (1988) also noted that men's negative attitude is a significant reason their wives fail to practice family planning, even when the women are encouraged to do so.

Therefore, women's fertility preferences and behavior are based on their husband's reproductive motivation. It is not difficult to see in most developing countries how women carry the burden of responsibility for contraceptive use, often with little or no support and sometimes with resistance from their male partners (Lasee & Becker, 1997; Salway, 1994; Oni & MacCarthy, 1991). From the above, it is trite to state that the prominent influence men exert over family planning issues in the study area is widely recognized. Men in the study area are aware of the concept and issues surrounding family planning but are limited by the choices of family planning methods available to their gender. A community leader noted that this excuse is not significant but that men's attitude is reinforced because they are not directly affected by the pregnancies.

Cultural and religious values, education, and norms were discovered to be structures of men's knowledge and attitudes toward family planning in the study area. Since men's domination is institutionalized in this area, the decision on family planning is usually taken by men, and it was also established that the majority of the women would either rely on the advice of their husbands or engage in joint decision-making. The impacts of cultural and societal values cannot be over-emphasized when it comes to the determinants and outcomes of family planning activities. However, this is not restricted to the study area; it is also visible in most developing nations of the world. Old traditions and the new philosophies associated with modernization have continued to be at loggerheads in most societies as most people have continued to live with the old values. It was evident from the fieldwork that many people in the study areas are still tied to their old societal values; many still see family planning as a taboo.

The Government is doing a lot to sustain family planning in the area by addressing cultural beliefs that have hitherto hindered the success of these programs. Findings from the study as regards the efforts of the Government in sustaining family planning showed that the Government utilizes instruments such as sensitization, public awareness, national family planning programs, availability, and access to services and commodities in health centers. These findings corroborate the USAID report, which established that In Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, fewer than one out of every five married women use family planning. Also, while the Nigerian Government provides contraceptives and other family planning commodities at no cost, state governments are responsible for getting the products to clinics, pharmacies, and other health facilities where women can access them. These findings also resonate with the recent report by Adejo (2022), speaking through Radio Nigeria. Adejo noted that the "The Federal Government has launched Nigeria's Family Planning 2030 Commitment and other Reproductive Health Policy Documents in Abuja, stating that this commitment was a demonstration of Nigeria's efforts towards increasing access to family planning services in the country".

Access to safe, voluntary family planning has is said to be a human right. Justifiably, family planning is a crucial factor in reducing poverty. However, in some developing countries, an estimated 257 million women who want to avoid pregnancy are not using safe and effective family planning methods, ranging from lack of access to information or services to lack of support from their partners or communities. This loophole calls for an increased partnership among international health partners and the Nigerian Government in promoting family planning activities. According to the Federal Ministry of Health report on Nigeria's Family Planning Blueprint (Scale-Up Plan) (2014), it was established that the Federal Government of Nigeria has made great strides in improving the enabling policy environment for family planning. This was said to include participation in the 2012 London Summit on Family Planning and its announced commitments to increase domestic funding for family planning. In addition, the Federal Ministry

of Health also adopted a free commodity policy in April 2011, making all Family Planning commodities at public facilities available to all women at subsidized rates.

Aside from the federal government efforts, it is also evident that the Osun State government has taken many steps to promote and sustain Family Planning activities in Nigeria. However, it is imperative to note that some challenges were identified on the field to mitigate against the sustenance of Family Planning activities. The state faces a need for professional experts in the health sector. The Government cannot employ adequate health workers who can cater to family planning needs, particularly in terms of injectable and long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) in all parts of the state due to financial constraint that affects the state and many other states in the country. This factor affects recruitment and limits the allocation of adequate resources to deliver high-quality family planning services in the area.

In order to meet up with the efforts to improve and sustain family planning in the area, it was discussed that the Government needs to be ingenuous in finding solutions to existing issues in the area. A nurse highlighted that "the family planning methods we have now are good enough, but research can still be done to create family planning methods without any form of repercussion. Although many family planning products are produced offshore, the Government can still join in conducting research that will offer better methods, especially for men.

In addition to this, emphasis was also placed on continued sensitization. A doctor mentioned that "awareness should be created in all community areas. Until every woman and man is sensitized, the job is unfinished. This finding resonates with the submissions of Tuwaijri and Saadat (2018), who affirmed that "At its core, modern family planning is managing when and how many children a woman will have throughout her life. Family planning methods, which include modern contraceptives and voluntary sterilization (for either men or women), provide women and their partners greater control over their lives. In doing so, family planning especially allows women the chance at better health, productive employment, and ability to explore their potential." They further argued that giving all women a reliable way to space births prevents unnecessary maternal and infant mortality. From the above submissions, it is trite to say that the positive implications of family planning at the household level holds the key to better health outcomes for women, children, and the entire household, as well as their social and economic empowerment.

Expressly, these findings also connect with the position of Saifuddin Ahmed (2002), who submitted that, family planning is considered one of the pillars of safe motherhood programs for reducing high maternal mortality in developing countries. He argued that findings from 172 countries showed that family planning potentially reduced almost 44% of maternal deaths globally and that in the absence of family planning programs and contraceptive use, maternal mortality would be 77% higher. Family planning techniques can play an essential role in reducing infant and maternal mortalities. Expanding the range of family planning services, which include the supply of reproductive health products and services, counseling, testing, and other health information services, will go a long way in ameliorating the problems of maternal mortality not only in the study area but also in countries of the world. The positive impact of family planning on health security established that aside from lessened infant and maternal mortality, psychological, emotional, and mental mortality, which affects the mother mainly, husbands and older children in the family past the breastfeeding stage are affected in other ways. For instance, an impeded state of finance caused by large

families affects other areas of their lives, such as physical, emotional, mental, and psychological wellbeing and, often, the quality of education.

However, the negative implications of family planning on women, as unveiled in the study, corroborate the submissions of Nwadike & Smith (2020), which affirmed that the specific side effects of family planning vary widely among individuals and pills cause different side effects. These effects include spotting, nausea, breast tenderness, and headaches. Generally, findings from the implications of family planning on women's health security showed that family planning methods used by women can have both negative and positive consequences on women.

Often, the assertion that the fear amongst women in the area to accept family planning based on side effects observed in their counterparts is due to negligence on the part of the medical practitioner saddled with the responsibility of administering the methods. Where proper consideration is placed on women's biological makeup and health history, such cases will be significantly reduced. In addition, the linkage of the adoption of family planning to infidelity further affirms the entrenchment of patriarchal rule in this setting. Men's insistence on not accepting family planning methods in their homes despite the identified benefits is significantly traceable to their efforts at limiting all cost women's social relations, which is usually judged as infidelity. Hence, the continuity of male-dominated sexual relations and family planning decisions in the area.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Gender roles still contribute significantly to the success of family planning adoption in the study area. It was established that men dominate family decisions, including reproductive choices in this area. Their supremacy is entrenched in structures such as religion and culture. Therefore, the adoption of family planning in homes in this area is greatly based on the husband's enlightenment level. Structures that promote the complacency of such men in the name of religion and culture must also be further sensitized and open to change.

The Government is doing a lot to sustain family planning in this area by subsidizing the fee of obtaining family planning materials, which improves the availability of products, and the existence of health centers that are within proximity of residents, which improves accessibility. However, efforts must be heightened in terms of pro-women legislation, which will also go a long way to improve the state of family planning in this area. An enactment and domestication of family planning laws that impose choice of birth on mutual decision will go a long way to increase acceptance of family planning methods amongst conservatives and dogmatic fellows in the area. In addition, government-promoted focused group interaction in partnership with cultural and religious leaders and non-governmental organizations in these areas will significantly improve the rate of discussion and identification of the root causes of non-adoption of family planning. This effort will also help to tackle widely spread dogmas that inhibit acceptance of the methods.

Findings showed that family planning positively impacts the entire family's health by reducing maternal and infant mortality, improving psychological and physical wellbeing, aiding financial stability, and improving emotional stability. Also, other advantages of family planning not directly traceable to health were identified regarding the stability of family existence and relationships. However, it was observed that these methods have their negative implications, often occurring as reactions. Health workers can control this

effect when they carefully recommend a suitable family planning method based on the biological peculiarity of the user. This effort will reduce the negative health implications observed amongst users.

In conclusion, the attitude of men towards family planning demonstrates their acceptance of peace reforms such as equity, enfranchisement, and equal participation in politics, amongst others. Similarly, healthy women with spaced children participate in programs that promote Peace in their communities. In contrast, a family where partners are divided on matters related to family planning lacks positive Peace. In a matter of time, crises become evident in the form of divorce, uninformed children, poverty, ill health, amongst others.

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Climate Resilience, Seasonal Flooding, and Rural Livelihood Challenges among Rural Women in Anam Communities of Anambra State, Nigeria

By
Nnamdi Peter EBOATU & Jaja Nwanegbo C, PhD, fspsp

National Defence College, Abuja, Nigeria

petereboatu@gmail.com

And

C. Jaja Nwanegbo, PhD, fspsp

Department of Political Science & Institute for Peace, Security and Development Studies (IPSDS)
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

cjaja.nwanegbo@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract:

Seasonal flooding, aggravated by climate change, poses persistent threats to rural livelihoods in flood-prone communities across Nigeria. This study explores the resilience strategies employed by women in Anam town, in Anambra West Local Government of Anambra State, a riverine community that experiences annual floods, to sustain their livelihoods and support their families. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and participant observation, the paper examines how women navigate the intersecting challenges of displacement, crop loss, food insecurity, and disruption of education for girls during the flooding season. The findings reveal that women deploy diverse coping mechanisms, including livelihood diversification, community-based support networks, cultural practices of solidarity, and adaptive innovations in farming and trading. Despite their activities, structural barriers such as inadequate policy support, poor infrastructure, and gendered social norms limit their adaptive capacity. The study underscores the need for gender-responsive climate adaptation policies and targeted interventions to strengthen the resilience of rural women and girls in the face of recurrent environmental crises. These insights contribute to the discourse on gender, climate resilience, and sustainable rural development in sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: Women's resilience, Climate change adaptation, Seasonal flooding, Rural livelihoods.

Introduction

Climate change has emerged as one of the most critical development challenges confronting contemporary societies, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where livelihoods are highly dependent on climate-sensitive natural resources. Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall patterns, and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events have intensified environmental vulnerabilities across the region. In Nigeria, climate-induced hazards such as flooding, drought, and erosion have become recurrent phenomena, posing significant threats to food security, rural livelihoods, and socio-economic stability (IPCC, 2022; Odjugo, 2010). These challenges are more pronounced in rural areas where adaptive capacity remains limited due to poverty, weak infrastructure, and dependence on subsistence agriculture.

Seasonal flooding is one of the most persistent climate-related hazards affecting Nigeria, particularly in low-lying and riverine regions. Flood events are often triggered by heavy rainfall, river overflows, inadequate drainage systems, and poor land-use planning. In recent decades, Nigeria has recorded increasingly destructive flood episodes that have displaced millions, destroyed farmlands, and undermined rural economies (Adelekan, 2016; NEMA, 2022). Southeastern states, including Anambra, have been repeatedly identified as flood-prone due to their proximity to major river systems such as the River Niger and its tributaries.

Anambra State's Anam communities, located within the floodplains of the River Niger, experience seasonal flooding almost annually. These floods inundate farmlands, residential areas, and access roads, disrupting agricultural activities and rural commerce. The agrarian economy of Anam communities relies heavily on crop farming, fishing, and small-scale trading, all of which are highly vulnerable to flood disturbances. Studies have shown that recurrent flooding in Anambra State leads to crop failure, soil nutrient loss, destruction of storage facilities, and declining household incomes (Eze & Nwankwo, 2018; Olanrewaju et al., 2019). Rural livelihoods in Anam communities are closely linked to environmental stability, making seasonal flooding a major driver of livelihood insecurity. Flood-induced losses reduce food availability, increase household dependency ratios, and compel affected families to adopt negative coping strategies such as asset liquidation or temporary migration. These livelihood disruptions are compounded by limited access to agricultural insurance, climate information services, and government support mechanisms (Adger, 2006). Consequently, rural households remain trapped in cycles of vulnerability that are reinforced by repeated climate shocks.

Within this context, rural women face distinct and disproportionate challenges arising from seasonal flooding. Gendered divisions of labour in rural Nigeria assign women primary responsibility for food production, household nutrition, water collection, and caregiving. These roles increase women's exposure to climate risks while simultaneously limiting their access to productive resources and decision-making platforms (Agarwal, 2010). When flooding occurs, women often experience greater losses in subsistence crops, increased domestic workloads, and heightened responsibility for household survival.

Empirical evidence from Nigeria and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa indicates that women's vulnerability to flooding is shaped not only by environmental exposure but also by structural inequalities. Limited land ownership rights, restricted access to credit, low levels of formal education, and exclusion from extension services constrain women's ability to adopt adaptive strategies (FAO, 2018; UN Women, 2021). In Anam communities, these constraints undermine women's capacity to recover from flood-related losses and to diversify livelihood options in the face of recurring climate shocks. Climate resilience provides a useful analytical framework for understanding how rural women respond to and recover from seasonal flooding.

Climate resilience refers to the ability of individuals and communities to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and recover from climate-related stresses while maintaining or improving their livelihoods (IPCC, 2022). For rural women, resilience encompasses access to social networks, livelihood diversification, indigenous knowledge, and institutional support systems that enhance adaptive capacity.

However, the development of climate resilience among rural women in Anam communities remains limited due to persistent socio-economic and institutional barriers. Weak rural infrastructure, inadequate flood control measures, limited early warning systems, and insufficient gender-responsive climate policies exacerbate women's vulnerability to flooding (Adelekan & Asiyanbi, 2016). The absence of targeted interventions means that women's adaptive responses are often reactive, informal, and insufficient to address long-term livelihood risks. Understanding the intersection between climate resilience, seasonal flooding, and rural women's livelihoods in Anam communities is therefore crucial for sustainable development planning in Anambra State. Such understanding highlights the need to integrate gender perspectives into climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction frameworks. Without deliberate attention to women's lived experiences and constraints, flood management policies risk reinforcing existing inequalities and undermining community resilience (UNDP, 2020).

In sum, the challenges posed by seasonal flooding in Anam communities are not merely environmental but deeply socio-economic and gendered. Rural women remain central to household survival and food security, yet they are among the most vulnerable to climate-induced livelihood disruptions. Examining climate resilience and livelihood challenges among rural women in Anam communities offers critical insights into the broader dynamics of climate vulnerability, gender inequality, and rural development in Nigeria.

Stating the Problems

Seasonal flooding has become a persistent environmental challenge in Anambra State, particularly within the Anam communities located along the floodplains of the River Niger. These communities experience recurrent inundation during the rainy season as a result of heavy rainfall, river overflow, and inadequate drainage systems. Flood events routinely destroy farmlands, wash away crops, degrade soil fertility, damage rural infrastructure, and disrupt access to markets and essential social services (Adelekan, 2016; Olanrewaju et al., 2019). As agriculture and allied activities constitute the primary livelihood sources in Anam communities, repeated flood episodes have significantly undermined household income stability, food security, and overall rural welfare, thereby reinforcing cycles of poverty and vulnerability.

Within this context, rural women are disproportionately affected by the impacts of seasonal flooding due to their gendered socio-economic roles and structural disadvantages. In rural Nigeria, women are primarily responsible for subsistence crop production, household food provision, water collection, and caregiving. These responsibilities heighten their exposure to climate-induced shocks while simultaneously limiting their opportunities for livelihood diversification (Agarwal, 2010; FAO, 2018). Flood-induced crop losses, displacement, and income disruptions increase women's unpaid labour burden and deepen food insecurity, particularly in female-headed and low-income households (UN Women, 2021).

Moreover, rural women's capacity to recover from and adapt to seasonal flooding is constrained by systemic inequalities embedded within social, economic, and institutional structures. Limited access to

land ownership, agricultural inputs, credit facilities, extension services, and climate information restricts women's ability to adopt resilient farming practices or alternative livelihood strategies (Adger, 2006; IPCC, 2022). In Anam communities, weak institutional support mechanisms, inadequate flood control infrastructure, and limited inclusion of women in local decision-making processes further exacerbate women's vulnerability to recurrent flooding and livelihood shocks.

Despite the increasing frequency of flooding and the growing emphasis on climate resilience in development discourse, empirical research on flooding in Anambra State has largely focused on environmental impacts, infrastructural damage, and general community vulnerability. There remains a significant gap in gender-disaggregated and women-centred studies that examine how seasonal flooding specifically affects rural women's livelihoods, coping mechanisms, and resilience capacities in Anam communities (Adelekan & Asiyanbi, 2016). This lack of context-specific evidence limits the design and implementation of gender-responsive climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction policies.

Consequently, the persistent exposure of rural women in Anam communities to seasonal flooding, combined with limited adaptive capacity and inadequate policy attention, poses a serious development challenge. Without a clear understanding of the livelihood challenges and resilience strategies of rural women, climate adaptation interventions risk being ineffective or exclusionary. This study therefore seeks to address this problem by systematically examining climate resilience, seasonal flooding, and rural livelihood challenges among rural women in Anam communities of Anambra State, Nigeria, with the aim of informing inclusive, gender-responsive, and sustainable climate adaptation strategies. To properly address this gap, the study is predicated on explaining how rural women in Anam communities of Anambra State of Nigeria strive to navigate the seasonal flooding through developing resilience against the harsh climatic conditions and challenges that it brings to livelihood annually.

Conceptual, Empirical and Theoretical Reviews on Climate Change, Flooding and Rural Livelihoods

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in climate patterns driven largely by human activities such as fossil fuel combustion and deforestation (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2022). In Africa, climate change has increasingly manifested through rising temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, and more frequent extreme weather events, including flooding, with severe implications for rural livelihoods and human security (Nwanegbo, 2013). One of the most visible consequences of climate change in sub-Saharan Africa is the intensification of the hydrological cycle, resulting in more frequent and severe rainfall events and flood disasters that affect already vulnerable communities (Folke, 2006; IPCC, 2022).

Flooding is commonly defined as the temporary inundation of normally dry land due to overflow of rivers, heavy rainfall, or human-induced water discharge (Adelekan & Asiyanbi, 2016). In riverine environments such as Anam town, flooding is often seasonal but has become increasingly unpredictable and damaging due to the combined forces of climate variability, upstream dam releases, urban-drainage pressures, and land-use changes (Nkwunonwo et al., 2020). Scholars have also observed that in Nigeria, flooding is closely linked to broader climate change dynamics that intensify hydrological variability and expose already fragile communities to repeated livelihood shocks (Nwanegbo, 2015). Flooding not only disrupts environmental

systems but also intersects with social and economic structures, placing already vulnerable communities at heightened risk.

Understanding the nature of these risks requires attention to how people in rural contexts sustain their livelihoods. Rural livelihoods refer to the diverse activities, assets, and capabilities that enable rural households to secure food, income, and wellbeing (Denton, 2002). These include agriculture, fishing, livestock rearing, petty trading, wage labour, and informal economic practices. Livelihoods in rural Nigeria are often multi-stranded, combining subsistence production with small-scale commercial activities. Within these livelihood systems, women play central and multi-dimensional roles, producing food, processing agricultural products, managing households, and participating in local trade, yet they often do so under conditions of structural inequality (Terry, 2009). This gendered contribution means that any disruption to rural livelihoods has profound implications for women's economic security and social responsibilities.

When climate-induced flooding occurs, the entire livelihood system is destabilized. Farmland is submerged, crops rot before harvest, stored food is lost, livestock drown or are sold off cheaply, markets close, and rural infrastructure becomes inaccessible. These shocks ripple through households and communities, affecting not only income but also nutrition, education, social roles, and long-term well-being. The impacts are therefore economic, social, and nutritional, affecting household food supply, income security, continuity of schooling, access to healthcare, and psycho-social wellbeing (IPCC, 2022; Adelekan & Asiyanbi, 2016). As Nwanegbo (2015) notes, such climate-induced livelihood disruptions intensify human insecurity and deepen pre-existing social vulnerabilities in Nigeria. Taken together, this demonstrates that climate change is not merely an environmental phenomenon but a development and human security challenge with gendered dimensions.

Gendered Dimensions of Rural Livelihood Vulnerability

Vulnerability refers to the degree to which individuals or groups are exposed and sensitive to climate hazards and their ability to adapt (Adger, 2000). In many African societies, gender norms, asset control, and social expectations shape who is most exposed and who has the least access to resources for recovery. Women typically have less secure land tenure, fewer financial resources, lower access to climate information and technology, and limited participation in decision-making processes (Denton, 2002; Rocheleau et al., 1996). Their livelihoods are closely tied to natural resources, which are highly climate-sensitive, making them more vulnerable to environmental shocks.

Flooding also intensifies unpaid care burdens, including childcare, water collection, meal provision, and care for the sick or elderly. Girls' schooling often becomes secondary to survival needs, reinforcing gender inequality across generations (Neelormi et al., 2009). Thus, gender functions as a structural lens shaping exposure, capacity, and outcomes.

Climate Change as a Stress Multiplier

Climate change functions as a stress multiplier, worsening pre-existing inequalities such as poverty, weak infrastructure, and limited institutional support (IPCC, 2022). In places where livelihoods rely heavily on agriculture and fisheries, climate shocks compound vulnerabilities that already restrict women's economic

independence and social mobility (Arora-Jonsson, 2011). Flooding not only destroys assets but also erodes long-term resilience by weakening savings, labour capacity, and social security systems.

Rural Livelihood Adaptation and Transformation

Adaptation involves behavioral, social, economic, and institutional adjustments made to cope with climate impacts (Folke, 2006). In rural communities, adaptation may includelivelihood diversification, seasonal migration, reliance on kin and community support, food preservation, changing farming calendars, and informal rotating savings groups. Women are often at the centre of these adaptations, drawing on indigenous knowledge and social networks to sustain households. However, adaptation is constrained when people lack access to secure land, credit, infrastructure, and policy support, meaning resilience is socially produced as much as environmentally tested (Terry, 2009).

This conceptual framing highlights three key ideas guiding this research: (a) Climate change and flooding are livelihood shocks that reshape social and economic systems, (b) Gender structures exposure, risk, and adaptive opportunity, and (c) Resilience is not only ecological but social, cultural, and institutional. This understanding provides the foundation for analysing women's resilience strategies in Anam town as both a survival response and a reflection of broader gender relations.

Climate Resilience, Seasonal Flooding and Gendered Livelihoods

Global scholarship on climate change and environmental hazards consistently demonstrates that climate impacts are unevenly distributed across social groups, with women in rural and low-income settings experiencing disproportionate vulnerability. This pattern is particularly evident where livelihoods are closely dependent on natural resources and climate-sensitive activities such as subsistence agriculture, fishing, and water collection (IPCC, 2022). Feminist political ecology and resilience-based studies converge in showing that flooding, drought, and extreme weather events do not operate in social vacuums; rather, they intersect with existing gender norms, class relations, and institutional marginalisation to deepen inequality (Denton, 2002; Terry, 2009). Women's socially assigned responsibilities for food production, household care, and resource management significantly heighten their exposure to climate-related risks while simultaneously constraining their adaptive choices.

Resilience theory provides a foundational framework for understanding how communities respond to recurring environmental shocks. Originating from Holling's (1973) ecological conception of resilience as a system's capacity to absorb disturbance without collapse, the theory has evolved into a social–ecological systems perspective that recognises the interdependence of human livelihoods and environmental processes (Folke, 2006). Within this framework, resilience is understood as the capacity to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and recover from climate-induced stress while maintaining core livelihood functions (Adger, 2000). Empirical studies across flood-prone regions demonstrate that resilience is not static but dynamic, shaped by social networks, knowledge systems, institutions, and access to resources.

Evidence from South Asia strongly illustrates the gendered dimensions of resilience and vulnerability during flood events. In Bangladesh, women experience increased exposure to waterborne diseases, heightened caregiving burdens, and mobility restrictions during floods due to socio-cultural norms that limit access to shelters and relief services (Neelormi et al., 2009). Similar findings from India and Nepal reveal that women in subsistence-farming households face increased unpaid labour, income loss, and psychological

stress during flood disasters (Terry, 2009). These studies reinforce the feminist political ecology argument that vulnerability is socially produced through power relations rather than being an inevitable consequence of environmental hazards alone.

Latin American studies further demonstrate how climate-induced flooding disrupts rural livelihoods and reshapes household structures. Women in small-scale farming communities often absorb the impacts of crop losses, market disruptions, and infrastructure damage by expanding informal economic activities and household survival strategies (Arora-Jonsson, 2011). Climate shocks also stimulate male out-migration, leaving women with increased responsibility for household management and food security. From a resilience perspective, these adaptive responses sustain households in the short term, but feminist political ecology reveals how they also intensify women's labour burdens and reinforce gendered inequalities.

Across sub-Saharan Africa, empirical evidence mirrors these dynamics. Flooding, drought, and land degradation undermine agriculture-dependent livelihoods, with women disproportionately affected due to unequal access to land tenure, credit, agricultural technology, and extension services (Denton, 2002). Studies from Ghana, Malawi, and Mozambique show that during flood events, women frequently lose crops and market opportunities while assuming increased unpaid labour in water collection, food rationing, caregiving, and community support activities (Terry, 2009). These activities are central to household and community resilience yet remain largely invisible in formal policy and planning frameworks.

Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) offers a critical lens for interpreting these patterns by foregrounding power, gender, and inequality in environmental relations. Developed by Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari (1996), FPE challenges gender-blind approaches to environmental management and argues that environmental change is deeply entangled with land rights, labour divisions, institutional power, and cultural norms. FPE demonstrates that women's vulnerability during flooding is not simply a result of exposure to hazards but of historically embedded exclusions from decision-making, property ownership, and formal governance structures (Denton, 2002; Terry, 2009).

At the same time, both resilience scholarship and feminist political ecology emphasise women's agency in climate adaptation. Empirical studies document women's roles in seed preservation, crop diversification, food processing, informal trading, rotating savings schemes, and mutual aid networks that sustain household wellbeing during crises (Adger, 2000; Arora-Jonsson, 2011). Social networks based on kinship, religion, and community associations serve as critical mechanisms for sharing labour, food, and information during and after flood events. These practices align with resilience theory's emphasis on learning, flexibility, and self-organisation, while FPE cautions against romanticising resilience that is built on unpaid and unequal labour.

Integrating resilience theory and feminist political ecology therefore provides a robust analytical framework for examining climate resilience and livelihood challenges among rural women. Resilience theory explains how communities adapt and persist under recurring seasonal floods, while feminist political ecology reveals why women often carry greater adaptive burdens with fewer resources and limited institutional support (Arora-Jonsson, 2011). This integrated approach avoids portraying women either as passive victims or heroic survivors, instead highlighting the structural conditions, power relations, and gendered responsibilities that shape adaptive outcomes.

Applied to flood-prone rural settings such as the Anam communities of Anambra State, this combined framework is particularly relevant. Seasonal flooding represents a recurring environmental disturbance, while women's livelihood strategies, caregiving roles, and informal economic activities constitute adaptive responses embedded within social and cultural systems. However, resilience theory also recognises that adaptive capacity can erode over time when shocks persist and institutional support remains weak (Adger, 2000). Feminist political ecology further explains how this erosion disproportionately affects women, whose resilience is sustained through continuous, often invisible labour. Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive foundation for analysing climate resilience, seasonal flooding, and rural women's livelihood challenges in Anam communities.

While there is growing global and regional literature on gender, climate change, and flooding, several gaps remain, particularly in the Nigerian context. Many studies treat women as a homogeneous group, overlooking differences in age, marital status, education, and social class that shape their experiences and strategies (Arora-Jonsson, 2011). In Nigeria, most research focuses on the immediate impacts of flooding on infrastructure and agriculture, with limited attention to the lived experiences of women and girls, especially in marginalized riverine communities like Anam (Adelekan & Asiyanbi, 2016; Nkwunonwo et al., 2020).

Additionally, there is insufficient documentation of women's agency and resilience strategies, as much of the discourse frames them primarily as victims rather than active agents of adaptation (Denton, 2002; Terry, 2009). Policies and interventions in Nigeria also remain largely gender-blind or tokenistic, lacking the empirical grounding needed to effectively support women's adaptive capacities. This study addresses these gaps by providing a detailed, context-specific analysis of how women and girls in Anam town experience seasonal flooding, the strategies they employ to cope and adapt, and the structural factors that shape their vulnerability and resilience.

Research Methodology

This study adopted Exploratory and case study design. The exploratory nature of the study reflects its aim to uncover and document phenomena that have not been extensively studied in this context. The case study design was appropriate for focusing on Anam town as a single, bounded setting that exemplifies the intersection of climate change, flooding, and gendered resilience.

Data were collected using three qualitative research methods namely; semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and participant observation. These methods were chosen to capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies of women and girls affected by seasonal flooding in Anam town.A total of 20 in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with individual women and adolescent girls. These interviews explored personal experiences of flooding, livelihood disruptions, household responsibilities, psycho-social stress, and adaptive strategies before, during, and after flood events. IDIs enabled participants to speak freely about sensitive issues that may not surface in group discussions.

A total of 6 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted. 4 FGDs with adult women and 2 FGDs with adolescent girls. Each FGD comprised 6–10 participants, allowing for rich interaction while maintaining effective group dynamics. The FGDs explored shared experiences, collective coping mechanisms, social support systems, and perceptions of community and institutional responses to flooding.

In addition, 8 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with community leaders, women's group leaders, health workers, agricultural extension officers, and local government representatives. These interviews provided broader contextual insights into disaster response structures, governance dynamics, gender relations, and institutional challenges affecting adaptation.

Participant observation was carried out throughout the study period. The researcher observed daily routines, livelihood activities, food preparation, community interactions, evacuation behaviour, and recovery processes during and after flood events. This approach allowed the researcher to complement interview data with experiential insight into social and cultural practices.

Semi-structured interview and FGD guides containing open-ended questions were used to ensure consistency across interviews while allowing flexibility for participants to narrate their experiences in their own words. Interviews were conducted in English and/or Anam (Igbo) dialect, the local language depending on participant preference. With informed consent, all interviews and discussions were audio-recorded, and detailed field notes were taken.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed. This method was appropriate because the study sought to gain deep insight from individuals with direct experience of seasonal flooding rather than aiming for numerical representation.Participants were eligible if theywere residents of Anam town, had experienced at least three years of seasonal flooding, were engaged in livelihood activities such as farming, fishing-related work, trading, domestic labour, or care giving and were willing to voluntarily share their experiences. Efforts were made to include diversity acrossage groups, marital status, educational background, livelihood type and socioeconomic status

Key informants were selected based on their leadership roles, professional responsibilities, community influence, or institutional knowledge relating to disaster management and gender issues.

Anam town was purposely selected as the study site for several reasons. First, it is one of the most flood-prone riverine settlements in Anambra State, located along the banks of the Niger and Anambra rivers. The community experiences annual seasonal flooding, with severe flood disasters recorded in 2012, 2018, and 2022. Second, the population relies heavily on climate-sensitive livelihoods such as farming, fishing, and petty trading, making flooding a major determinant of economic security and survival.Thirdly, women in Anam play central roles in household provisioning, food production, and care giving, yet face structural barriers including limited land ownership, restricted access to credit, and marginalization in decision-making processes. This makes the area particularly suitable for examining gendered dimensions of climate resilience.

Finally, there is limited empirical research focusing specifically on women's lived experiences of flooding in riverine communities in southeastern Nigeria. Studying Anam therefore contributes new context-specific knowledge that can inform gender-responsive climate adaptation policies.

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured, and pseudonyms are used in reporting findings. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence.

Findings / Results

This section presents the findings of the study, organized into four major themes that emerged from the data: (1) impacts of flooding on women's and girls' livelihoods, (2) women's coping strategies, (3) the role of social networks and community solidarity, and (4) institutional and structural challenges.

Impacts of Flooding on Women's Livelihoods

The seasonal flooding in Anam town has significant and far-reaching consequences for women's and girls' livelihoods. Female participants consistently described how floods destroy farmlands and wash away crops, undermining household's ability to sustain their families through agriculture, the primary source of income and food security. One respondent stated: "We lose everything when the water comes, our yams rot in the ground, cassava is gone, even the vegetables. Then we have nothing to sell in the market." For women engaged in petty trading, flooding disrupts local markets and destroys stored goods, making it difficult to recover financially. Fishing activities, often undertaken by men but supported by women in processing and marketing fish, are also severely disrupted. Flooding also affects education, particularly for girls, who are often withdrawn from school during displacement or to help with household survival efforts. Many participants reported increased health risks during and after floods, including malaria, diarrhea, and skin infections, especially among children and pregnant women. Overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions in temporary shelters exacerbate these health challenges.

Navigating the Waters: Women's Coping Strategies

Despite these challenges, women in Anam demonstrate remarkable resilience through a variety of coping strategies. Many diversify their income sources by engaging in alternative livelihoods such as weaving mats, selling cooked food, or offering small services in upland areas. Some women preserve crops like dried cassava and vegetables before the flood season to ensure some food security and income during displacement. Relocation to higher ground - either to relatives' homes in neighboring towns or to makeshift shelters on elevated land - is a common survival strategy, though it is often fraught with hardship. Women also ration food and organize communal child-care during crises to reduce the burden on individual households. These strategies reflect a combination of foresight, resourcefulness, and communal support.

Role of Social Networks and Community Solidarity

Social networks and community solidarity play a vital role in helping women cope with and recover from floods. Women's groups, extended families, and informal savings schemes (esusu) provide emotional, financial, and material support during displacement and recovery. Many women reported relying on neighbors for food, loans, and assistance with childcare and rebuilding after the waters recede. For example, one participant shared: "We help each other; we don't wait for government. If one woman has a little food, she shares with others, and we work together to rebuild huts when the water goes." This communal spirit enhances women's ability to adapt, even in the absence of formal institutional support.

Institutional and Structural Challenges

Participants expressed frustration with the lack of institutional support and poor infrastructure in the community. Government and humanitarian responses were described as sporadic, insufficient, and often delayed. Many women reported that promised relief materials either never arrived or were captured by local elites and not distributed equitably. Inadequate infrastructure - such as poor roads, weak embankments, and absence of functional drainage systems - exacerbates the impacts of flooding. Limited access to credit, lack of land ownership rights, and exclusion from formal decision-making processes further constrain women's ability to build long-term resilience. One woman lamented, "They come and take pictures and promise us help, but after they leave, nothing happens. We are left on our own."

Table 1: Summary of Key Findings

S/No	Theme	Key Insights
1	Impacts on livelihoods	Crop loss, loss of trading goods, market disruption, school dropout for girls, and health risks.
2	Coping strategies	Income diversification, food preservation, relocation, communal childcare, and rationing.
3	Social networks	Support from women's groups, neighbors, extended families, and informal savings.
4	Institutional challenges	Weak or absent government support, elite capture of aid, poor infrastructure, and exclusion of women from decisions.

These findings highlight both the vulnerabilities and the resilience of women and girls in Anam town, underscoring the need for targeted, gender-responsive interventions that build on their strengths while addressing systemic barriers.

 Discussion

This study examined the gendered impacts of seasonal flooding in Anam town, southeastern Nigeria, and the resilience strategies employed by women and girls in response. The findings confirm and deepen existing evidence on the intersection of climate change, flooding, and gendered vulnerability while also revealing unique, context-specific insights into women's activity and structural constraints.

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existing evidence on the intersection of climate change, flooding, and gendered vulnerability while also revealing unique, context-specific insights into women's agency and structural constraints. The findings illustrate that women in Anam demonstrate significant resilience, consistent with the resilience theory perspective (Adger, 2000; Folke, 2006). Women deploy diverse strategies - such as food preservation, income diversification, and relocation - to absorb and adapt to recurrent floods while maintaining household and community wellbeing. These practices show their capacity to cope under stress and align with the concept of social - ecological resilience, which emphasizes local adaptive capacity and learning in response to disturbance (Folke, 2006). However, resilience here is not limitless. Persistent losses, inadequate institutional support, and compounding vulnerabilities (e.g., poverty, exclusion from decision-making) threaten to erode women's adaptive capacity over time.

The findings also resonate with feminist political ecology (FPE), which highlights the role of gendered power relations in shaping environmental vulnerability and adaptation (Rocheleau et al., 1996; Terry, 2009). Women in Anam face disproportionate burdens because of their socially assigned roles as caregivers, food providers, and managers of household resources. Their lack of secure land rights, limited access to credit and information, and exclusion from formal decision-making spaces further exacerbate their vulnerability. The participants' accounts of elite capture of aid and neglect by state agencies underscore how institutional and structural inequalities impede their capacity to adapt—an insight that supports FPE's critique of top-down, gender-blind adaptation policies (Denton, 2002; Arora-Jonsson, 2011).

These findings are consistent with global and regional evidence on the gendered impacts of climate change and flooding. Similar to women in Bangladesh (Neelormi et al., 2009) and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa (IPCC, 2022), women in Anam experience intensified livelihood insecurity, health risks, and social disruption during floods. However, the study also reaffirms that women are not passive victims; rather, they actively organize, innovate, and sustain their families through adaptive strategies (Arora-Jonsson, 2011).

The importance of social networks and community solidarity, highlighted in this study, aligns with findings from other African contexts where women's informal groups, kinship ties, and reciprocal exchange systems have been shown to strengthen resilience to climate-related shocks (Adelekan & Asiyanbi, 2016; Terry, 2009).

This study addresses several gaps in the literature. First, it documents the lived experiences of women and girls in a marginalized riverine Nigerian community, providing context-specific insights that are often missing from national and regional studies. Second, it goes beyond documenting vulnerabilities to also highlight women's agency, resilience strategies, and the crucial role of social capital in adaptation— elements that are often overlooked in disaster studies that frame women primarily as victims. Finally, by integrating theoretical perspectives from resilience theory and FPE, the study offers a nuanced understanding of how women navigate the dual challenges of environmental hazards and structural inequality.

The findings underscore the need for gender-responsive and locally grounded adaptation policies. Policymakers and development actors should recognize and support women's adaptive strategies, strengthen social safety nets, and invest in resilient infrastructure. Addressing structural barriers—such as

unequal access to land, credit, and participation in decision-making—is critical to enhancing women's resilience and fostering more equitable and sustainable responses to climate change.

In summary, the discussion highlights how women in Anam are both vulnerable to and resilient in the face of seasonal flooding. Their experiences exemplify the complex interplay of environmental, social, and institutional factors that shape gendered vulnerability and adaptation, affirming the value of feminist and resilience-based approaches to understanding and addressing climate impacts.

Conclusion

This study explored the gendered impacts of seasonal flooding and the resilience strategies of women and girls in Anam town, southeastern Nigeria. The findings revealed that flooding has severe consequences for women's and girls' livelihoods, disrupting farming, trading, education, and health, while increasing their care burdens and risk exposure. Despite these challenges, women in Anam demonstrate remarkable resilience through adaptive strategies such as income diversification, food preservation, relocation, and communal childcare. The study also highlighted the critical role of social networks and community solidarity in supporting women's adaptation, as well as the significant institutional and structural barriers they face, including inadequate government support, elite capture of aid, poor infrastructure, and exclusion from decision-making processes.

These findings underscore the need to recognize and strengthen the capacities of women and girls, address structural inequalities, and implement targeted interventions that enhance gender-responsive resilience to climate-induced flooding.

Recommendations

Disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation strategies in Anam town must intentionally respond to the specific needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities of women and girls, who are central to household survival and community resilience. A gender-sensitive approach goes beyond simply including women as beneficiaries; it ensures that women actively shape planning, implementation, and monitoring processes at every stage of flood preparedness, response, and recovery.

1. Integrating Women's Needs into Disaster Risk Planning

In Anam, women face distinct risks during floods, including livelihood loss, increased unpaid care burdens, exposure to health risks, and disruption of girls' education. Disaster management plans should thereforeassess gender-specific risks, such as lack of mobility, childcare responsibilities, and resource access, provide targeted livelihood protection, including small grants, agricultural inputs, and market recovery support for women traders and farmers, ensure safe evacuation systems, including transport and child-friendly provisions, include maternal and reproductive healthcare provision during displacement and provide psycho-social support for women caregivers and adolescent girls. Local women should be consulted in hazard mapping, evacuation route design, and relief-distribution planning to ensure these systems reflect daily realities in Anam.

2. Women's Participation in Decision-Making

Historically, disaster-related decisions in Anam have been dominated by male traditional and political leaders. A gender-sensitive approach requires institutionalizing women's leadership roles in disaster governance. This may include establishing women-led disaster risk committees in each village, guaranteeing a minimum of 40–50% female representation on community disaster committees, allocating leadership roles to women's group leaders, traders' associations, and widows' representatives, and involving adolescent girls' representatives in youth-focused programming. Women's participation should be meaningful, not symbolic. This means scheduling meetings at times women are available, providing childcare support where necessary, and ensuring meeting venues are accessible to women in remote or flooded locations.

3. Recognizing and Using Women's Local Knowledge

Women in Anam possess deep knowledge of flood timing and river behaviour, soil conditions and crop resilience, survival strategies and social support systems, safe shelter locations and evacuation routes, and food preservation and rationing techniques. This knowledge should be formally incorporated into disaster planning bydocumenting women's local wisdom through participatory mapping, integrating women's advice into annual flood preparedness plans, and recognizing women as community-level risk analysts and first responders. Women should also be engaged in community-based early warning systems, including radio alerts, phone messaging chains, and church or market-based announcements.

4. Gender-Responsive Relief and Recovery

Relief support in Anam has often been uneven and sometimes captured by elite actors. A gender-sensitive approach should commit to transparent, equitable distribution and gender-targeted assistance, includingfood packages tailored to household caregiving needs, dignity kits for women and adolescent girls, clean water and sanitation facilities designed with privacy and safety in mind, livelihood recovery grants prioritizing female farmers and traders, and safe-space shelters for women and children. Distribution committees should be co-led by women, and feedback mechanisms should exist for reporting exclusion or exploitation.

5. Strengthening Women's Resilience Capacity

Women in Anam already play key resilience roles. To strengthen their adaptive capacity, programs should includetraining in climate-resilient agriculture and income diversification, access to micro-credit and cooperative financing, financial literacy and business-recovery support, leadership and negotiation skills training and school-continuity support for girls during floods. These interventions acknowledge women not just as beneficiaries but as strategic partners in climate adaptation.

6. Partnership with Traditional Leaders and Faith-Based Groups

Given the strong role of traditional institutions and churches in Anam, gender-sensitive disaster risk management should be developed in partnership withtown unions, traditional councils, Catholic and Anglican parish communities, women's associations, and youth and cultural groups. This ensures cultural alignment and broad community ownership.

7. Institutionalising Gender-Sensitive Policy Support

At the local government and state levels, gender should be mainstreamed into disaster policy by:

aligning programs with the National Gender Policy and National Adaptation Plans, designating female disaster focal persons at community and LGA levels, and providing gender-sensitivity training to relief and emergency workers. Monitoring frameworks should track gender-disaggregated data to measure inclusion and impact. Expected outcomes for includes Implementing gender-sensitive disaster risk management, which will likely as reduce livelihood lossesamong women, strengthen community preparedness, protect girls' education, reduce trauma and vulnerability, improve fairness in relief distribution, and increase resilience at household and community levels. Ultimately, empowering women as disaster risk managers enhances the resilience of the entire Anam community. Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed for policymakers, practitioners, and development partners:

By investing in women's capacities and addressing the underlying inequalities that exacerbate their vulnerability, policymakers and development actors can enhance not only the resilience of women and girls but also the overall adaptive capacity of the community. Building on the strength of women's agency, social networks, and knowledge systems is essential for fostering equitable and sustainable responses to the growing challenges of climate change and flooding in rural Nigeria.

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Men as Allies: Engaging Men in Women, Peace, and Security Initiatives in Nigeria

By: **Stella Okechukwu-Kalu**

Background:

Feminist scholars have long explored the relationships between masculinities, femininities, and war, yet men are rarely named in Women, Peace and Security (WPS) policies, and masculinities even less commonly. Some activists in favor of bringing analysis of masculinities into WPS policies propose that a focus on reshaping masculinities and femininities as a strategy for resisting militarism is necessary to return the agenda to what they perceive as its "original" purpose of preventing war. Drawing on my personal experiences as an NGO advocate, and on participant observation and interviews with UK government officials, this article explores what we can learn from efforts to integrate a "masculinities perspective" into WPS policies. I argue that, while some language concerning men and boys and, to a lesser degree, masculinity/ies has been incorporated into these policies, this is usually done in ways that subvert the intentions of civil society actors who have advocated for this shift. As a result, these concepts have been assimilated in ways that do not challenge militarism, and indeed at times serve to normalize it. I argue that this demonstrates the limitations of WPS policies as a vehicle for pursuing feminist anti-militarist goals. (www.tandfonline.com)

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda has been instrumental in highlighting the critical role women play in promoting peace and security globally. (unitednationspeacekeeping.org) However, the success of this agenda depends on the engagement and support of men as allies. In Nigeria, where gender inequality and violence against women persist, engaging men in WPS initiatives is crucial. This article explores the importance of men as allies in WPS initiatives in Nigeria, the benefits of their engagement, and strategies for effective engagement.

Over the years, men have been discovered to be key in promoting the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. Having had perpetrators amongst them, they are instruments of ending such violence. The peace agenda can be achieved fully through them. Men tend to dominate the formal roles in a peace-building process; there are mainly male peacekeepers, male peace negotiators, male politicians, and male formal leaders. It is peace that brings security. Peace can be achieved when inequality and discrimination are absent, violence, poverty, lack of education, lack of economic opportunity, political oppression, and other destabilizing factors. Hence, security analyses have inherent challenges and recommend ways of promoting women, peace, and security through men's sustained advocacy.

The international laws enabling the implementation of women's peace and security will follow; UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and its companion resolutions UNSCR 1820 (2008), UNSCR 1888 (2009), UNSCR 1889 (2009), UNSCR 1960 (2010), UNSCR 2016 (2013), and UNSCR 2122 (2013) (collectively referred to herein as 1325, the 1325 framework, or women, peace, and security framework) provide an internationally-recognized legal framework for promoting gender equality in peace and security,

ensuring the participation of women in all levels of decision-making, protecting women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, improving the prevention of violence against women, and integrating gender perspectives in all processes. In promoting men's involvement in peace and security, it is essential to understand that men are both victims and also sources of insecurity. (Oluremi 2021)

Nigeria is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society. Nigeria has a long and very rich history of supporting peacekeeping operations. Nigeria has made contributions to peacekeeping operations in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East region. Despite these international achievements of peacekeeping, the existence of multi-religious and multi-ethnic groups in Nigeria has disrupted the peace and resulted in perennial crises that often degenerate into civil disturbances and religious violence in some parts of the country (Acheson 2014)

Peace and security in Nigeria are challenged by patriarchy, inequalities and violent masculinities, militarization and socio-economic injustice. Men are connected to all of the above-mentioned. The root causes of war and violence have contributed to the rise of violent extremism with armed non-state actors such as Boko Haram, Massob, and the Niger Delta Avengers. (Flood 2018) These non-state actors have been programmed by their background, belief system, and cultural inclinations to adopt terrorism as a way to receive entitlements. Hence, they are operating based on their orientations. However, this orientation cannot be changed, but can be engaged constructively. The massive destruction of the lives of women and children, witnessed and recorded, cannot be overemphasized. Violence and conflict endanger growth and development. However, research has shown that the perpetrators of anti- peace and anti-security activities are mostly men.

The Importance of Men as Allies: The Why?

Men play a vital role in perpetuating or challenging gender stereotypes and norms that perpetuate violence against women (Flood, 2018). Engaging men as allies in WPS initiatives can help challenge harmful gender norms and promote gender equality. In Nigeria, where patriarchal norms dominate, men's engagement is critical in promoting women's participation in peace and security processes (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020). Men are the major stakeholders in the communities and national platforms. They are the channels and custodians of laws, traditions, and customs. Involving them would go a long way to change the narratives.

The ICRWs' 2018 report on Gender Equity and Male Engagement also notes that, on a practical level, it makes sense to work with men to end VAWG, because they tend to hold positions of power in male-dominated societies and have, therefore, the power to address VAWG and gender equity in public policy and institutions, both formal and informal. In addition, when women experience violence and interact with local institutions, they may well encounter male service providers or officials. The engagement of these men is, therefore, vital to ensure women's access to care and justice. It is, however, a thing of ego and pride for a man to hold up and cater for a project or venture under his custody, hence the VAWG project. Finally, engaging and sensitizing men on VAWG may help to prevent a backlash, which could itself be violent, in reaction to women's greater agency and empowerment in other sectors (i.e., education or financial independence).

Benefits of Engaging Men

Engaging men in Women Peace and Security initiatives has several benefits, including:

Challenging harmful gender norms and stereotypes (Flood, 2018): Gender stereotypes are widely accepted views, features, attributes, or roles expected to be possessed by a certain gender. Gender stereotypes can be limiting when it impinges on the capacity or growth of the individual or people affected. Africa, in particular, has been bedeviled by several disheartening norms and stereotypes that are gender-driven. The range from ages and stages in life; involving the girl child in all household chores and limiting boys to household chores, girls are customarily expected to take care of their younger ones, women are not to eat the gizzard of a chicken, and a female is not meant to climb a tree. (www.ohchr.org) A female is not meant to rule a community or be a member of the council of chiefs; it's not legal for a woman to buy land or build a house; it's wrong for a woman to collect the child's dowry on behalf of the late husband. In this case, you see uncles who know nothing about the struggles to raise a young lady take over the bride price and gifts from the in-laws. In the area of inheritance, the daughters, in most cultures, are not captured in their late father's will or inheritance. I was a victim of this incident. How could a mother be a spectator in her own child's traditional wedding rites? When the mothers are identified, they get something meager.

Combating gender-based violence: Gender-based violence (GBV) is violence related to gender differences that result in unequal roles and power relations. The various forms of Gender Based Violence include physical, sexual, emotional, economic, and social violence. Domestic violence, sexual assault, rape, child maltreatment, and spousal battery is most common, and women are more of the survivors. Gender Based Violence has been an existing panacea for decades. The GBV has a major effect not only on women but also on families and communities, and on national development. The effects of violence often keep girls out of school or prevent women from participating in the community or workplace. Men and boys are also victims of GBV, and may face even greater barriers than women in reporting it and seeking justice. Despite the prevalence of GBV and its threat to national and global security, security sector initiatives to address it are usually not prioritized and are underfunded. Gender sensitive security improves prevention and response to GBV by including women and training personnel on issues of gender and gender-based violence. There is also a growing recognition of the need to address the particular experience of men and boys, both as victims and sources of insecurity. Increasingly, groups are examining masculinity: the characteristics and behaviors expected of men and the way that they are socialized. This includes analyzing the factors that lead men to violence and the factors that help prevent it. Conditions such as male youth violence, gangs, and child abuse influence the way that men behave. Both inside and outside of armed conflict, gun culture is overwhelmingly associated with cultural norms of masculinity, including men as protectors and warriors. (Flood 2015).

Confronting Militarized Masculinities: In July 2020, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the world's oldest and longest standing women's peacebuilding organization, and the MenEngage Alliance, a global network working to engage men and boys in women's rights and gender justice, launched a joint programme called *Confronting Militarised Masculinities: Mobilizing Men for Feminist Peace.*

With violence and war having a devastating effect on countries, communities, and individuals across the globe, the programme sheds light on and challenges the gendered root causes of violence and armed conflict around the world. Through a body of cutting-edge research and analysis, the programme advances global understanding of how the 'war system' is enmeshed with practices and representations of masculinity associated with power, violence, and control, and spotlights the vital work of men working in solidarity with women activists and those beyond the gender binary to advance feminist peace.

With a focus on four countries Afghanistan, Cameroon, Colombia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the programme comprises four key elements: alliance building between women's peace organisations and organisations working with men for gender equality; a growing body of research and analysis on the causes, manifestations and responses to militarised masculinities; national, regional and global advocacy; and a set of communications tools a newly commissioned one-hour documentary called *Power On Patrol*, and an online photography exhibition– which explore notions of militarized masculinities and alternatives to them from around the world. (WILPF 2022 Report). Masculinity, in this context, refers to the qualities that a man is seen to possess. Masculinity, hence, can be understood as the social roles and behaviours prescribed for men in any society at a particular time. Masculinity, in other words, defines what a man ought to be. In other words, masculinity prescribes qualities for males within society. A militarized society puts women more at risk.

According to *Reaching Critical Will,* a program of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom:

Irresponsible transfers of weaponry, munitions, armaments, and related equipment

Across borders have resulted in acts of GBV perpetrated by both state and non-state actors. Thus in the recent negotiations of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), civil society organizations and like-minded governments worked together to ensure that the treaty included a legally binding provision on preventing armed gender-based violence. (www.reachingcriticalwill.org)

Reaching Critical Will works for disarmament and arms control of many different weapons, the reduction of global military spending and militarism, and the investigation of gendered aspects of the impact of weapons and disarmament processes.

 Eradicating harmful traditional practices against women: In 2013, six international and inter-regional organisations, namely the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), the United Nations

Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF/Liaison Office to the AU and UNECA), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA/Liaison Office to the AU and UNECA), and the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices (IAC) gathered to form a collaborative strategy on how to ameliorate HTPs. According to the body, HTPs are "forms of physical or psychological violence that prejudice the bodily integrity or mental well-being of women and children, especially girls, based on the inferior position they have in the social grouping and are considered as long-established and community accepted practices deserving tolerance and respect". (Omoniyi (2021)

The practices are inclusive of all sets of behavior and corresponding attitudes that negatively affect women's and children's fundamental rights, such as their right to life, physical integrity, health, dignity, education, and protection from any form of violence (Otinche et al, 2015).

Omoniyi (2020) in his *Appraisal of harmful traditional practices in Nigeria: magnitude, justifications and interventions,* wrote: There is a high prevalence of HTPs across Nigeria, which the cultural and secular laws are silent about. It was discovered that many children (underage 10-15years of age) in Hausa/Fulani lands are prone to marriage by adoption, force or early marriage of girls between, while in the Eastern part, the is high magnitude of child hustling, outrageous dowry payment, separatist theory as practiced in *Osu* caste system, servitude (Maid) e.t.c, and in the West are practices of scarification, wife battery, polygamy. They rely on socio-cultural, psycho-sexual, spiritual, and aesthetic justification. (Omoniyi 2021) Other demeaning traditional practices against women abound; female genital mutilation, inherited marriage, marriage to a dead man to bear children for the childless dead man, through intercourse with other men (this was discovered recently in some parts of Ebonyi State), widowhood torture, stopping women's movement in specific market days thereby infringing on their rights to movement and association.

Increasing women's political participation in peace and security processes (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020)

The national average of women's political participation in Nigeria has remained 6.7 percent in elective and appointive positions, which is far below the Global Average of 22.5 percent, the Africa Regional Average of 23.4 percent, and the West African Sub-Regional Average of 15 percent. For instance, out of the 36 recently confirmed ministerial appointments by the administration now in power, only six (6) are women, representing 16.7 percent. In the National Assembly, women constitute 5.6 percent of members of the House of Representatives and 6.5 percent of the Senators. Also, with the fifteen years of uninterrupted democratic governance (1999-2015), Nigeria has yet to produce a female governor in any of the 36 states of the Federation. This paper seeks a critical review of the importance of data in monitoring women's participation in politics in Nigeria vis-à-vis the affirmative declaration. (Ihejrika 2020)

When women are empowered to engage in politics, they are simply taking up responsibilities that they would take up without struggle. This goes to say that women by nature are better managers and better implementers of laid-down policies, plans, and budgets. There have been electoral reforms in place to combat electoral malpractices and insecurities to encourage women to contest and vote, yet the menace of militarism persists. From the post-mortem dialogues conducted through the Women Situation Room Nigeria by Women International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Nigeria, one of the reasons for the decline in the number of female voters, especially during the last 2023 presidential and gubernatorial elections, was due to the undue display and use of arms and ammunition. In Ebonyi and Benue States, women were threatened with arms to vote for the preferred candidates of the thugs against the women's wishes.

Peace and security are areas in which women have been marginalized, especially where key policy decisions are made and resource allocations are decided. Their continued marginalization of women in peace-building and conflict resolution processes has affected development and community resilience, particularly at the local level, since tradition does not encourage women's leadership. Feminist scholars and gender activists studying and/or working in conflict areas had long highlighted the need to focus on the roles played by men and women during conflict, the gender differential impact of violent conflict, the need to address the challenges of women and to increase their participation in peace and security structures and processes. Oluremi (2021)

Enhancing the Effectiveness of the WPS Agenda (Diaz et al., 2018): The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda is a framework that aims to promote the participation of women in all aspects of peace and security efforts. It was established to address the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and to recognize the vital role women play in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding. The key Components of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda are **Participation** which consists of encouraging the meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes related to conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding and recognizing the importance of women's perspectives in creating sustainable peace and security. **Protection**: Ensuring the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence during and after conflicts and prioritizing the specific needs of women and girls in humanitarian responses and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. **Prevention**: Emphasizing the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting gender equality to prevent the outbreak of violence. **Relief and Recovery**: Acknowledging the unique challenges faced by women in conflict-affected areas and advocating for their inclusion in relief and recovery efforts. However, the essence of men involvement is to optimize the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. However, every effort and policy implementation of the men and boys put in towards women's peace and security should be protective of their lives and wellbeing, preventive of violence and conflict towards women, and provide succor, counselling and liberation for the female survivors.

Promoting gender equality and social justice (Kimmel, 2018) It is possible to engage men and boys in gender equality work in ways that ultimately shore up their privilege, through language that constructs men as protectors of women, or by rewarding men for small acts of solidarity that do not involve giving up power over women, often entailing work that women have been doing for years with little recognition or recompense. Flood (2015). The US Institute of Peace (USIP) frames men as an "untapped resource in promoting gender equality, peace, and stability," calling on policymakers to "identify concrete ways that men can be allies in the Women, Peace, and Security agenda" (USIP 2013, 2, 10). Similarly, Women for Women International explains its decision to launch programs working with men and boys on the basis that the charity's work on women's empowerment would be ineffective unless male leaders began to advocate for women's rights (Schmidt et al, 2017). Where men are explicitly named in WPS policies, it is often in this capacity as allies, and in this respect this argument is perhaps one of the most successful in its aims.

Confronting Fear and Insecurity:

 Fear and insecurity are resistances to social change and personal development.

> *The world can never be at peace unless people have security in their daily lives. Future*
>
> *conflicts may often be within nations rather than between them, with their origins*
>
> *buried deep in growing socio-economic deprivation and disparities. The search*
>
> *for security in such a milieu lies in development, not in arms.*

(1994 Human Development Report)

Where there is inequality and discrimination, violence, poverty, lack of education, lack of economic opportunity, political oppression, and other destabilizing factors, there is a risk of conflict. Women, especially those in crisis and post crisis settings have been subjugated by fear of their lives, safety of their properties, economic wellbeing and sexual freedom. The essence of men engagement transcends to ensuring the right to life and freedom to own property for women which is encoded in the constitution of the federal government of Nigeria. United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report (HDR) highlights two major components of human security: freedom from fear and freedom from want. It recognizes that states will not be able to achieve their major goals, including peace, human rights and democratization, without human security.

The threats to human security are no longer just local or national, but rather global. Drugs, HIV/Aids and other health epidemics, human trafficking, gender-based violence, poverty, environmental disasters, displacement of populations, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and violent extremism do not respect national borders. They affect the world. In 2012 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on human security that recognizes the links between development, human rights, and peace and security, stating that human security calls for people-centered, comprehensive, context-specific, and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people and all communities. For most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life. Job security, income security, health security, environmental security, and security from crime: these are the emerging concerns of human security all over the world.

Strategies for Effective Engagement: The How?

Effective engagement of men in WPS initiatives requires:

Gender-sensitive training and education (Flood, 2018): For gender equality to be achieved, men must also be educated on perspectives, experiences, and challenges women face and then engaged as their crucial allies working hand in hand to transform the world into a place where men and women can thrive equally. Men in privileged positions within diverse social, political, and economic fora may use their influence to echo messages of equality and lead by example among their peers, catalyzing impact and triggering truly transformative change towards gender equality and making it everyone's responsibility. (Otinche et al 2015). He who plays the piper, they say, dictates the tune. It is in men's place to initiate this revolution of gender equality. They can mainstream the Latter in their areas of influence to drive this cause to a fulfilling end.

Strategic Advocacies: This refers to concerted efforts encouraging men's participation in WPS advocacy and activism (Diaz et al., 2018). Men's collaboration with women in peace negotiations, peace operations, and post-conflict reconstruction has been proven to be productive. Though turning the commitment to actions requires persistence and proactivity. The influence men command cannot be overemphasized. There is a common belief that women's leadership and engagement is essential to preventing and resolving deadly conflict; building stable, just, and prosperous societies; and creating a peaceful global security order. A commitment to use connections with other government and institutional leaders, predominantly men, to reinforce, amplify, and open doors for the voices of women activists, especially grassroots advocates who speak with unique authority and authenticity, has recorded success. (WILPF 2022 Report).

Challenges of Men's Engagement in Women's Peace and Security

Engaging men to achieve women's peace and security are not without challenges.

Publicity Gaps:

To claim that the WPS framework has been inattentive to the role of men and masculinities in addressing the needs of women and girls in armed conflict and peace processes is not to suggest that men have been entirely ignored within WPS. After all, many actors working on the WPS agenda either explicitly name gender norms of masculinity as a primary cause of violence or implicitly invoke the specter of men as the

abusers of women. (Pankhurst 2016). However, the paucity of attention to the role of men is reflective of the wording in the original WPS resolution (UNSCR 1325), which contained no mention of men, as Cockburn explains: 'The Resolution's focus had been on women as victims to be sorry for, as competent actors with use-value in peace-making, and as potential decision-makers. Nothing had been said either, during the drafting and redrafting of the Resolution and its negotiated passage through the Security Council, about men and masculine cultures of violence. There was much in the Resolution 1325 text about women's sexual vulnerability, but nothing about those who were the main source of danger to women. It noted women's absence from significant positions, not the overwhelming presence of men in places of power. (Cockburn 2013).

Recommendations:

Explicitly feminist, anti-militarist WPS advocates such as WILPF have long advocated for the transformation of masculinities to be part of the WPS agenda. However, others have more recently started or stepped up lobbying in this area. The Netherlands-based international NGO (INGO) WPP, for example, worked with partners around the world to implement programs challenging patriarchal masculinities as a peacebuilding endeavor.

Government's Proactiveness: As regards tackling the bane of harmful traditional practices (HTPs, the government needs to be proactive in ameliorating the evil effects of HTPs on the lives and livelihood of the Nigerian people. There is a need for special focus of actions towards the main drivers of HTPs, who are mostly men who serve as leaders and elders in the society, by redirecting them to uphold and engage in harmless traditional practices. Most significantly, traditional institutions should be saddled with the responsibility of reorienting their subjects on global best practices of treating human beings. There is a need for action-related studies followed by proper education intervention through video, pictorial and print evidence to portray the effects of harmful traditional practices to be shown or pasted on every nook and cranny of the society. This will tell the horror story people go through daily as a result of harmful traditional practices. (Omoniyi 2021)

Dialogue, Meaningful Partnerships and Networking: Conducting town hall meetings and dialogues, relevant to men's engagement. In such platforms, issues concerning women are discussed and handled at their source. From the 2023 pre-elections town hall meeting for relevant stakeholders, I attended in Ebonyi State, powered by Kedi Foundation, I noticed a high level of cooperation during elections and pre-elections There are different men's networks with the goals of ending gender-based violence, promoting

fundamental human rights, ending gender inequalities, economic empowerment of households, granting scholarship to indigent and girls with disabilities.

From dialogues and meetings, partnerships are built and sustained through resourceful activities involving outcome harvesting.

While networking is about building a wide range of connections, strategic partnerships take it a step further. A strategic alliance is a mutually beneficial collaboration between two or more entities to achieve a shared goal. Strategic partnerships can create synergies when done right, resulting in exponential growth for all parties (claritysoftware.org)

Networking is more than just a buzzword; it's the art of building meaningful connections with people and companies who share your interests, goals, or values. These connections can lead to opportunities to grow your business, expand your expertise, and become more successful. Whether you're an entrepreneur, an SME, or a global company, networking can open doors that wouldn't otherwise exist. Through networking, you can access resources, such as funding, mentorship, or even critical information about market trends and competitors that you wouldn't be able to otherwise. Networking also provides the opportunity to learn from the experiences and expertise of others. It's important not to limit your network to people in your immediate field, as diverse connections can bring fresh perspectives and new opportunities.

Women's Involvement in their Peace Processes: Achieving a peaceful society necessarily requires a conscious effort from the government in guaranteeing the safety and security of citizens and non-citizens within its territory. Conflict resolution is important for sustainable development. Even though the Nigerian government has employed some of the resolution processes such as negotiation, arbitration, mediation, and collaboration, to try to resolve conflicts, some of these resolutions have not been effective and efficient due to the non-involvement of women in the peacemaking efforts. It is therefore germane to put in place conflict resolution mechanisms that will adequately incorporate/recognize the contribution of women in conflict resolution processes if development programmes embarked upon by the government are to achieve results. (SDSN 2013). With respect to the involvement of women in peace processes, the UNSCR 1325 Resolution calls for action around four themes:

1. Full participation of women in peace processes (including conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction.

2. The incorporation of gender perspectives in peacekeeping operations and training;

3. The protection of women and girls and respect for their rights (including the prevention of violence); and

4. Gender mainstreaming in the United Nations reporting and implementation system. (UNSCR 1325 Report 2020)

Conclusion:

Engaging men as allies in WPS initiatives is crucial in Nigeria, where gender inequality and violence against women persist. By challenging harmful gender norms and stereotypes, increasing women's participation in peace and security processes, and promoting gender equality and social justice, men can play a vital role in promoting peace and security in Nigeria. Effective engagement strategies, including gender-sensitive training and education, encouraging men's participation in WPS advocacy and activism, supporting men's engagement in community-based initiatives, and addressing and challenging harmful gender norms and stereotypes, are essential for promoting men's engagement in WPS initiatives.

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A Critical Analysis of Climate Change, Security and Women's Livelihoods in Africa

Ajibola Samsideen Shekoni, Ph.D.

Centre for Peace and Security Studies,

Lagos State University, Ojo,

Abstract

This paper critically analyses the nexus of climate change, security, and women's livelihoods in Africa, building upon the findings of "Gender, Security, and Climate Change in Africa." The primary objective is to elucidate how climate change disproportionately impacts women's security and economic well-being, leading to increased displacement, gender-based violence, and resource scarcity. The research utilises an explorative research design. Conceptually, the study clarifies that women, as primary caregivers and resource managers, face heightened vulnerabilities during climate-induced events such as droughts and floods, which severely restrict their mobility and economic opportunities. Key findings underscore that climate change significantly exacerbates existing gender inequalities, transforming environmental stressors into security threats. Recommendations advocate for gender-sensitive climate mitigation strategies that empower women as central figures in climate action and community resilience. In conclusion, fostering environmental sustainability and gender equality necessitates integrating women's perspectives and leadership into all climate adaptation and security frameworks.

Key words: Africa**,** Gender, Livelihood, Climate Change, Security

Introduction

The African continent is at the forefront of the global climate crisis, facing impacts that threaten to undermine decades of developmental progress and exacerbate existing vulnerabilities (IPCC, 2021). The complex interplay between climate change, security, and women's livelihoods in Africa has garnered increasing attention from both academic and policy circles, necessitating a nuanced and critical analysis. This introduction lays the groundwork for a thorough examination of how climate change serves as a threat multiplier, heightening security challenges and disproportionately impacting the livelihoods of women in diverse African contexts. The continent's dependence on rain-fed agriculture, combined with fragile governance systems and pre-existing socio-economic disparities, makes its populations particularly susceptible to climate-induced shocks (Mastrorillo et al., 2016). The rising frequency and severity of extreme weather events, such as extended droughts and catastrophic floods, have a direct effect on agricultural productivity, resulting in food insecurity and displacement (UN Women, 2020). These environmental pressures frequently intersect with pre-existing ethnic, political, and economic tensions, leading to resource-based conflicts and internal displacement, thus posing significant risks to both regional and national security (O'Reilly et al., 2015). For example, the Sahel region illustrates how climate change-

driven desertification and water scarcity can incite competition over diminishing resources, resulting in conflicts between pastoralist and agricultural communities.

Amidst this intricate array of challenges, women in Africa find themselves at a critical juncture of climate vulnerability and socio-economic marginalization. They frequently serve as the main providers of food, water, and energy for their families, thereby linking their livelihoods closely to the well-being of natural ecosystems (Cockburn & Zarkov, 2002). Nevertheless, conventional gender roles, restricted access to land ownership, financial resources, and decision-making opportunities often hinder their adaptive capacities and heighten their exposure to climate-related risks (IPCC, 2021). The deterioration of natural resources as a result of climate change directly affects women's capacity to support their families, resulting in increased workloads, diminished income, and greater susceptibility to poverty and exploitation. The unequal effects of climate change on women can be traced back to their socio-economic responsibilities within households and communities. For instance, women are generally responsible for obtaining vital resources such as water and food; thus, when these resources become scarce due to climate-related incidents like droughts or floods, their responsibilities and burdens increase significantly (Brouwer et al., 2020).

Women's limited access to education and their lack of involvement in decision-making processes further intensify their vulnerability during climate emergencies (Alston, 2013). Acknowledging these gendered effects is essential for crafting effective policies that address both security concerns and climate adaptation efforts. The relationship between gender and security in the context of climate change is critically important. As natural disasters become more frequent and severe due to climate change, challenges such as displacement and migration arise. Women face unique threats in displacement situations, including increased risks of violence and exploitation (Schraven et al., 2021). Moreover, traditional security frameworks frequently disregard the gender-specific needs in disaster response strategies. By analyzing these dynamics, this study aims to provide policymakers with insights into the urgent necessity of incorporating gender perspectives into security planning related to climate change. Women, despite facing various challenges, are crucial in the battle against climate change. They often lead grassroots initiatives that encourage sustainable practices and advocate for environmental justice (Mastrorillo et al., 2016). This research will focus on case studies that highlight how women's leadership has led to effective community-based adaptation strategies.

The research aims to accomplish specific objectives. Firstly, it will examine the distinct ways in which climate change affects women's economic activities, particularly in agriculture, water access, and health outcomes. This study will investigate the connection between women and environmental changes, focusing on how climate variability influences women's roles in food production and resource management. The research intends to produce empirical results that shed light on the challenges women encounter amid changing climatic conditions. The second emphasis of this paper will be on conceptualizing the relationship between women and climate change in Africa. Additionally, a further investigation will assess the link between climate-induced displacement and the increased risks of gender-based violence (GBV) that women face. This research evaluates case studies from various regions throughout Africa, where environmental degradation has led to forced migration. The study concludes by reviewing the existing policies that address climate change adaptation and gender equality in African countries.

The central aim is to evaluate how well existing frameworks incorporate the perspectives and needs of women, particularly regarding security challenges that have been intensified by climate change. This evaluation seeks to identify gaps and propose recommendations for more inclusive and effective climate security policies and interventions. The intention is to develop recommendations for policymakers that foster gender-responsive approaches to strengthen women's resilience against security threats arising from climate-related issues. The next session will consist of a literature review, followed by a detailed methodology. The findings will be presented, drawing from interviews that include personal narratives of displacement, experiences with gender-based violence linked to resource scarcity, economic vulnerabilities and livelihoods, and the impact on health and well-being. Adaptation strategies will also be examined. The quantitative analysis reveals several significant correlations, and geographic disparities in impacts will be scrutinized. An interpretation of the findings in relation to existing literature will be provided, leading to implications for understanding gendered vulnerabilities. Ultimately, recommendations and a conclusion will be presented.

Conceptualising Women's Security and Climate Change in Africa

Women in Africa frequently act as the foundation of rural economies, especially in the agricultural sector. They play a crucial role in food production, often participating in subsistence farming to nourish their families (Terry, 2009). This direct dependence on natural resources renders them particularly susceptible to climate fluctuations. For example, extended periods of drought can result in crop failures, which directly affect food security and increase the pressure on women to seek alternative food sources (ActionAid, 2011). Likewise, floods can devastate homes and farmland, displacing communities and interrupting women's caregiving and resource management duties (Oxfam, 2012). The convergence of gender and climate change indicates that women face distinct vulnerabilities due to existing social, economic, and political disparities (Resurreccion, 2013). These disparities restrict their access to land ownership, credit, education, and information, all of which are essential for adapting to evolving climatic conditions. In spite of their vulnerabilities, women hold invaluable traditional knowledge and skills that are crucial for adapting to climate change. This knowledge often encompasses an understanding of local ecosystems, traditional agricultural practices, water conservation techniques, and early indicators of environmental shifts (Mbow et al, 2014). For instance, indigenous women in various African communities have established practices for selecting drought-resistant crops or sustainably managing communal water resources (Shackleton et al, 2007). When this traditional ecological knowledge is combined with scientific methods, it can result in more effective and culturally relevant climate solutions (Mercer, 2010). Empowering women to share and apply this knowledge not only boosts their adaptive capacity but also strengthens the resilience of their entire communities (Shekoni, 2025).

Livelihood diversification serves as a prevalent coping mechanism in response to climate change, with research indicating gender-specific variations in diversification decisions (Al-Hassan & Al-Hassan, 2024). Although a significant portion of the literature on livelihood diversification is quantitative, certain studies offer in-depth gender analyses, illustrating how women's enhanced financial independence and social networks, resulting from diversification, can elevate their status within the household. Nonetheless, these strategies are frequently depicted as personal choices, lacking a comprehensive contextualization of the wider socioeconomic and political factors that shape them (Vercillo, 2022). Droughts and floods pose two major climate-related challenges that are increasingly apparent across Africa. Niang et al. (2014) note that the intensity and duration of droughts are on the rise, driven by increasing temperatures and changes in

precipitation patterns. The Sahel region, for instance, has experienced recurrent droughts since the 1970s, leading to significant food insecurity and the degradation of livelihoods (Niang et al., 2014). Simultaneously, flooding events have become more prevalent in various African areas, intensified by heavy rainfall linked to climate change (IPCC, 2021). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts that the frequency and severity of these extreme weather phenomena will continue to escalate as global temperatures rise. The consequences of these events are dire. Droughts lead to water shortages, crop failures, and livestock deaths, all of which have direct repercussions for food security (Mastrorillo et al., 2016). Flooding can destroy infrastructure, displace communities, and disrupt economic activities. The World Bank (2021) highlights that such disruptions can result in significant economic losses for the affected countries. The socioeconomic impacts of climate change are particularly pronounced for women in Africa, who are essential to agriculture and food production (Shekoni, 2024).

During periods of flooding, women face an increased risk of violence and exploitation as a result of being displaced from their homes (UN Women, 2020). The ensuing loss of livelihoods exacerbates gender inequalities, given that women typically have restricted access to vital resources, such as land ownership and financial services, compared to men (FAO, 2020). As a result, climate change presents a dual challenge, threatening the environment while also intensifying existing social disparities. The effects of climate change in Africa—particularly through phenomena like droughts and floods—have significant socioeconomic implications that disproportionately affect women. To effectively address these challenges, it is crucial to implement focused strategies that consider gender dynamics and enhance resilience to climate-induced shocks. Traditionally, security has been understood as the protection of state sovereignty and territorial integrity; however, this definition has broadened to encompass a wider range of issues, especially in the context of climate change. The contemporary understanding of security now includes human security, which prioritizes the safety and well-being of individuals rather than merely the interests of states (Brauch, 2016). The threats that climate change poses to human security are considerable, resulting in increased instances of natural disasters, food insecurity, and forced migration. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) notes that climate change can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and create new risks that threaten both livelihoods and health (UNDP, 2020).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlights that the repercussions of climate change are not experienced uniformly; they disproportionately affect marginalized groups, particularly women (IPCC, 2021). This revised understanding of security calls for the implementation of a gender-sensitive approach that acknowledges the distinct effects of climate change on various genders (Shekoni, 2023). Gendered vulnerabilities arise from societal norms that allocate roles and responsibilities based on gender. Women often suffer a disproportionate impact during climate-related disasters, primarily due to pre-existing inequalities in access to resources, decision-making power, and social networks (Alston, 2013). For instance, women are frequently responsible for collecting water and producing food; thus, when these resources become scarce due to climate change, their workloads increase significantly (Mastrorillo et al., 2016). Research indicates that women's vulnerability is intensified by factors such as poverty, lack of education, and limited access to technology. In many areas, cultural norms further restrict women's mobility and participation in disaster response efforts (Neumayer & Plümper, 2007). Consequently, women experience higher mortality rates during disasters compared to men. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that women are more vulnerable to health issues associated with climate change, largely due to their caregiving responsibilities (WHO, 2018).

Instances of gender-based violence are likely to increase during emergencies. Displacement resulting from climate events can heighten the risk of violence against women and girls, as they may find themselves in vulnerable living situations lacking sufficient protection or support systems (Peterman et al., 2020). To effectively address these vulnerabilities, it is essential to incorporate gender perspectives into climate policies and security frameworks. A thorough understanding of security in relation to climate change must encompass gender analysis. Recognizing the distinct vulnerabilities experienced by women can lead to more effective policy responses that enhance resilience against climate impacts. As global efforts advance in combating climate change, it is vital that gender considerations are prioritized within security frameworks. A significant amount of research has underscored the heightened vulnerability of women to the repercussions of climate change. Alston (2013) observes that women often rely more heavily on natural resources for their livelihoods, making them particularly susceptible to environmental changes such as droughts and floods. This vulnerability is intensified by societal norms that limit women's access to resources, education, and involvement in decision-making (Mastrorillo et al., 2016). For instance, Doss (2018) highlights that women's restricted rights to land ownership hinder their ability to adapt agricultural practices in response to changing climatic conditions.

Despite this, women exhibit resilience and agency in their reactions to climate change. Arora-Jonsson (2014) demonstrates that women engage actively in community-based adaptation strategies that address not only immediate environmental challenges but also promote their social and economic empowerment. Initiatives spearheaded by women in water management, for example, have proven effective in strengthening community resilience while furthering gender equality (Bennett et al., 2020). Furthermore, Oxfam (2019) highlights that women's participation in climate policy discussions can lead to more inclusive and effective solutions. The experiences of women concerning climate change are not homogeneous; they vary considerably based on socio-economic status, ethnicity, and geographic location. Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality provides a useful framework for understanding these diverse experiences. A study conducted by Zomer et al. (2021) indicates that Indigenous women face unique challenges due to their cultural ties to land and traditional knowledge systems, which are increasingly jeopardized by climate change. This emphasizes the necessity of creating tailored approaches that consider the specific contexts of various groups of women.

Disproportionate Impacts on Women's Livelihoods

The unequal effects of climate change on the livelihoods of rural women in Sub-Saharan Africa are complex, primarily arising from their significant dependence on climate-sensitive sectors and their established roles within households and communities. Variability in climate, such as extended droughts and erratic rainfall patterns, poses a direct threat to agricultural productivity, which is fundamental to the economic stability of many rural women (United Nations, 2023). As the main producers and providers of food, women frequently suffer the consequences of crop failures, resulting in heightened food insecurity for their families and communities (FAO, 2022). This situation demands a greater investment of time and effort in locating alternative food sources, often requiring longer journeys and more strenuous labor (Care International, 2021). In addition to food production, women are generally tasked with gathering vital resources such as water and fuel (WHO, 2023). Climate change intensifies the scarcity of these resources, compelling women to travel greater distances and devote more time to these daily responsibilities (UNDP, 2020). This increased burden of unpaid labor limits their availability for income-generating activities, education, or involvement in community decision-making processes, thus perpetuating cycles of poverty and

disempowerment (IFAD, 2021). The cumulative impact of these difficulties can result in serious health consequences, including malnutrition, stress, and heightened susceptibility to gender-based violence as resource scarcity escalates competition and social tensions (PCC, 2022).

Agricultural Impacts and Food Security

In Sub-Saharan Africa, rural women are mainly involved in subsistence agriculture, where they cultivate crops intended for family consumption and local sales (AFDB, 2023). Climate change-related events such as extended periods of drought, flooding, and irregular rainfall patterns significantly jeopardize agricultural output, causing substantial crop losses (Oxfam, 2021). A study by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) indicated that in areas prone to drought, women farmers suffer a more pronounced decrease in crop production than men, primarily due to their limited access to essential resources like irrigation technology and climate-resilient seeds (FAO, 2023). This decline in agricultural yield leads to food insecurity at the household level, prompting women to resort to coping strategies such as reducing meal sizes, selling productive assets, or engaging in distress migration (UNDRR, 2020). During these challenging times, the nutritional well-being of women and children is particularly compromised, resulting in increased malnutrition rates and related health complications (WFP, 2022).

Increased Unpaid Labor Burden

The conventional roles attributed to women in numerous Sub-Saharan African communities position them as key figures in managing household resources (Yayi, 2025). With the escalation of climate change, the accessibility of vital resources such as water and fuel wood is declining, which significantly heightens the time and effort required from women to obtain these resources (Ibeanabo, 2025). For instance, in regions facing acute water shortages, women may dedicate several hours each day to traversing long distances to collect water, often from hazardous sources (Lerbi, 2025). This laborious endeavor not only drains precious time that could otherwise be allocated to education or income-generating pursuits but also subjects them to physical exertion and safety hazards (Mbali, 2024). Likewise, the challenges posed by deforestation and desertification, worsened by climate change, complicate the gathering of fuel wood, compelling women to journey farther and invest more time in locating this crucial resource for cooking and heating (Lerbi, 2025). This heightened burden of unpaid labor restricts women's economic prospects and reinforces their reliance on livelihoods sensitive to climate variations.

Economic Disempowerment and Poverty

The cumulative impact of agricultural losses combined with a rise in unpaid labor significantly leads to the economic disempowerment of women in rural areas (Daramola, 2023). Diminished agricultural outputs result in a reduced quantity of produce available for sale, thereby lowering their potential for income generation. The hours dedicated to collecting water and fuel further limit their capacity to engage in market activities, seek alternative sources of income, or embark on entrepreneurial initiatives. This economic fragility is frequently intensified by prevailing gender disparities, such as restricted access to land ownership, credit facilities, and agricultural extension services. Consequently, women find themselves less equipped to cope with climate-related shocks and are at a higher risk of descending into more severe poverty cycles (Tewuha, 2023). The financial pressure may also escalate household conflicts and, in certain instances, lead to an increase in gender-based violence as resources become increasingly scarce.

Health and Social Impacts

The unequal effects of climate change on rural women significantly impact their health and social well-being. Malnutrition, which arises from food insecurity, poses a major health risk, especially for pregnant and lactating women as well as young children (Constant, 2024). The physical strain of heightened labor, such as transporting heavy loads of water and fuel, can result in chronic pain, fatigue, and various other health issues. Additionally, the stress and anxiety linked to climate unpredictability and resource scarcity can lead to serious mental health repercussions (Agarwal, 2019). Socially, the increased demands on women's time and energy restrict their involvement in community events, educational initiatives, and decision-making processes, further marginalizing them and obstructing their capacity to advocate for their needs and rights within climate adaptation strategies (Mbali, 2024).

Nexus between Resource Scarcity and Conflict: The Gendered Impacts

Climate change is increasingly acknowledged as a major factor contributing to resource scarcity, which subsequently intensifies existing vulnerabilities and can provoke or escalate conflicts on a global scale. The relationship between climate-induced resource scarcity and conflict disproportionately impacts women, heightening their risks of violence, displacement, and exploitation (World Bank, 2019). Women's traditional responsibilities, which often include managing household resources such as water, food, and fuel, position them at the forefront of addressing these scarcities. This closeness to diminishing resources can render them direct targets or victims in disputes over access and control. For example, as water sources become more limited, women and girls, who are typically tasked with water collection in many communities, may need to travel greater distances to obtain water, thereby increasing their vulnerability to violence, including sexual assault (UN Women, 2023). Likewise, competition for arable land, worsened by desertification or unpredictable rainfall, can result in inter-communal conflicts where women and children frequently bear the brunt of displacement and targeted violence. Despite their essential roles in resource management and their increased vulnerability during conflicts, women are often excluded from formal conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts (McLeman & Smit, 2006). This exclusion not only perpetuates their vulnerability but also disregards their invaluable insights and knowledge regarding sustainable resource management and community resilience. Studies show that peace agreements tend to be more sustainable when women are actively involved in their negotiation and implementation (True, 2012). The absence of women's participation in these vital discussions means that gender-specific consequences of resource scarcity and conflict, such as heightened gender-based violence, food insecurity within households, and restricted access to healthcare and education for women and girls, frequently go unaddressed (Sida & UN Women, 2020). Addressing these disparities requires a concerted effort to integrate gender perspectives into climate adaptation strategies, humanitarian responses, and peacebuilding initiatives, ensuring women's agency and leadership are recognized and supported (Shekoni, 2025).

Critical Analysis of Current Research and Interventions

The gendered aspects of climate change in Africa are increasingly recognized; however, a thorough examination of existing research and interventions uncovers considerable biases and deficiencies. The current body of literature frequently simplifies the varied experiences of women across distinct regions and socioeconomic levels in Africa, resulting in generalized conclusions that may not truly represent local

circumstances (Alston, 2014). For example, a significant amount of research tends to portray women as a uniform vulnerable demographic, neglecting their agency, adaptive capabilities, and varied contributions to climate action. This oversight can lead to interventions that lack context-specificity or cultural relevance, thus diminishing their effectiveness (Neumayer & Plümper, 2020). Additionally, there is a conspicuous absence of disaggregated data by gender, age, and other intersectional elements, which obstructs a detailed understanding of how climate change affects different groups of women and men.

A notable bias exists in the overwhelming emphasis on women's susceptibility to the effects of climate change, frequently overlooking their vital roles as change agents and innovators in strategies for climate adaptation and mitigation (Peterman et al, 2020). This narrative of "victimhood" can unintentionally disempower women and obscure their traditional knowledge, leadership, and contributions to sustainable resource management (Doss, 2018). For instance, while research emphasizes the heightened burden on women for water collection due to drought, fewer studies investigate their innovative techniques for water conservation or their leadership in community-based adaptation efforts. Another significant gap is the insufficient examination of the intersectionality of gender with other social determinants such as class, ethnicity, disability, and age (Bennet et al, 2020). The experiences of a rural elderly woman in a drought-affected area of the Sahel will markedly differ from those of an urban, educated young woman in a coastal city; however, many studies fail to acknowledge these distinctions. This absence of intersectional analysis may result in generic interventions that are ineffective or even harmful to particular marginalized groups (Agarwal, 2019).

Research often overlooks the gendered power dynamics that influence access to resources, decision-making processes, and benefits from climate finance. Even when climate adaptation projects are designed with gender considerations, they may not adequately address underlying structural inequalities that limit women's participation and control over resources. For instance, land tenure systems in many African countries often disadvantage women, making it difficult for them to access credit or benefit from agricultural climate resilience programs, even if they are the primary farmers. There is also a dearth of research on the gendered impacts of climate change on men, particularly in areas such as migration, mental health, and changing livelihood strategies, which are crucial for a holistic understanding of climate change impacts on African societies. Finally, a significant methodological gap exists in the limited use of qualitative and participatory research methods that could provide deeper insights into lived experiences and local perspectives, often favoring quantitative approaches that may miss critical social and cultural nuances.

Recommendations

To address these gaps and biases, future research and policy initiatives should priorities:

1. Focus on the complex socioeconomic and political structures that influence gendered vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities.

2. Reorient research to center voices and perspectives from the Global South, challenging Western-centric knowledge production and incorporating diverse social identities.

3. Ensure research findings are accessible to African institutions and communities that can most benefit from them.

4. Examine the power relations between researchers, funding agencies, and African institutions to foster more equitable partnerships.

5. Shift the emphasis from individual responsibility to systemic issues, holding states and corporations accountable for their roles in climate change and gender inequality.

6. Utilise ethnographic research and other qualitative methods to capture the nuances of adaptation and vulnerability that quantitative data alone cannot.

7. Prioritise research on coastal areas, conflict, education, energy, migration, urban areas, and water, integrating gender analysis comprehensively.

8. Ensure that climate adaptation strategies are gender-responsive, addressing women's specific vulnerabilities and empowering them through increased access to resources and decision-making.

Conclusion

This critical analysis has illuminated how climate change acts as a significant threat multiplier, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and disproportionately impacting women across the continent. The changing climate disrupts traditional agricultural practices, depletes natural resources, and intensifies competition over scarce assets, frequently leading to displacement and conflict. Women, often primary caregivers and food producers, bear the brunt of these environmental shifts, facing increased burdens in securing food, water, and energy for their households. This vulnerability is further compounded by pre-existing gender inequalities, limited access to resources, and inadequate representation in decision-making processes. The security implications are profound, as climate-induced resource scarcity and displacement can fuel inter-communal tensions, radicalization, and armed conflict, further eroding the social fabric and hindering development efforts. Women in conflict-affected areas are particularly susceptible to gender-based violence, exploitation, and the breakdown of essential services. Despite these immense challenges, African women are not merely victims; they are also powerful agents of change, often at the forefront of climate adaptation and mitigation efforts within their communities. Their traditional knowledge, resilience, and innovative strategies are crucial for building sustainable and climate-resilient societies.

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Empowering Women, Ensuring Peace: Exploring the role of ATR in Promoting Gender Equality and conflict Resolution in Lagos State.

By

Adepeju O. Johnson-Bashua (PhD)

Department of Religions and Peace Studies

Faculty of Arts

Lagos State University,

Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria

Abstract

In contemporary Lagos society, as in many other parts of the world, there has been a general acknowledgement that women are important to sustainable development. Based on this, they are propelled into leadership roles in an effort to increase women's participation at all strata of society, both at local and national levels. Consequently, African women can legitimately be said to be seemingly empowered in a patriarchal setting. However, this has not generated the much-desired gender equality, which would provide an enabling environment to perform optimally. The disadvantaged position women still experience is deeply rooted in religious and cultural traditions. Religion is believed to shape one's perspectives of the world and all forms of engagement as strategies of participation in various societal activities. Therefore, religion can be seen as a relevant tool in capacity building and for a sustainable and enduring society. The methodology adopted by the paper is qualitative, with the use of secondary sources such as Books, Journals, and Internet sources. This paper, therefore, examines the role played by African Traditional religion towards gender equality, women's empowerment, and conflict resolution in Lagos. The study reveals that in order to promote peaceful co-existence and sustainable progress in Lagos state, the government should incorporate the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (S/RES/1325) policy to consider the special needs of women during conflict. Women should be granted more empowerment rights, which would help bridge the socio-cultural disparities and the unequal access to resources. The paper recommends increased inclusion of women's participation at all levels of decision-making in the state and the inculcation of religio-cultural doctrines of African religion that promote human dignity and communal well-being as a resourceful means of gender equity and conflict resolution.

Keywords: Women, Empowerment, African religion, Gender Equality, Peaceful Co-existence.

Introduction

This paper examines the relationship between religion, women's empowerment, and its effects on the harmonious co-existence of Lagosians, which can lead to democratic sustainability of the most prestigious state in Nigeria. The relationship between these three elements in societal development is symbiotic because they are requirements for a holistic human development. In contrast to the West's confidence in human dependence and capacity to solve problems, Africans in general have a "deep sense that man is finite, weak and impure or sinful and stands in need of a power not of his own." He believes in a supernatural power he can totally depend on to sustain him through life's journey. The constant communion with this power through religion helps in the healing of many emotional imbalances, illnesses, and other physical problems. This is why African indigenous religiosity is not a matter of adherence to a doctrine, but it is concerned with supporting fecundity and sustaining the community. It is believed that religious ethics, when positively imbibed, can enhance the quality of life and character. When one thinks religiously, it leads to a paradigm shift that goes beyond conventional limits.

The gender discrimination against women, which has fueled the level of violence and hostility in Lagos state, has called for a multifaceted approach in managing these conflicts. Despite the enviable level of education and modernization in Lagos state, men continue to have a firm grip on positions of power, leadership, and decision-making. Women still struggle with the issue of gender equity and its retrogressive implications, which have greatly retarded the human and economic development of the state. This paper explores the various ways society often appeals to culture and religion to justify gender discrimination and the politics of exclusion, overlooking the African values that encompass pluralism and inclusion. These exploitative customary mores and traditions negate the African values, which place emphasis on complementary roles for both sexes. Consequently, there is a need for a proper reinterpretation of African traditional religious precepts, which place emphasis on complementary roles for both sexes.

It is no exaggeration to say that imbibing these religious precepts is an essential step towards developing human capacity to relate peacefully in any society. To ensure peaceful coexistence in a diverse society like Lagos, leaders must make a conscious effort to bridge the gap in gender inequality. The focus of this paper is to examine how the dynamics of African religion can help promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Theoretical Framework

Gender equality issues have received intellectual discourse in several fields, including those of the Social Sciences. Therefore, several theories provide a valuable framework for conceptualization, which includes the leadership categorization theory. The leadership categorization theory (LCT) proposes that the more leaders match their subordinates' cognitive image (prototype) of an ideal leader, the easier it is for subordinates to "categorize" them as leaders and consequently follow their leadership. In other words, when a leader is perceived as ideal for a specific role by the followers, they easily submit to such leaders and this usually contributes to their leadership success.[6] The LCT theory stems from the ingrained cultural practices and beliefs about the capabilities of both men and women, which play a role from a very early age and are solidified in our social practices. It is believed that, because women and men have traditionally occupied different roles, people might perceive women and men as having different leadership skills to

hold key political positions in society. Consequently, people have a tendency to approve individuals as leaders based on discriminatory parameters such as gender, religion, social, and cultural taboos and restrictions.

Under leadership categorization theory (LCT), gendered modes of leadership are described as either "agentic" or "communal." When women display the traits of the communal orientation, such as being affectionate, helpful, kind, and soft-spoken, they are seen as not being agentic enough and hence not capable of leadership. But when they display the agentic behaviours such as being aggressive, ambitious, dominant, self-confident, and forceful, as well as self-reliant and individualistic, they are seen as not communal enough, and they tend to be accused of being inauthentic. These tacit prejudices are institutionalized in everyday practices and eventually shape individuals' embodied existence within their societies. This lack of authenticity usually causes women to conform to gender stereotypes that urge them to refuse leadership positions or take them on with great discomfort and pessimism. One of the central assumptions that has become institutionalized within many societal practices is the notion that women are society's caregivers. This care-giving takes place primarily as unpaid labour within the private sphere It is generally accepted that leadership positions within society typically go beyond care-giving towards roles that require strong direction, control, and agency, from which women are often excluded because they are seen as being reserved for men.

Linking this theory to women's quest for equality and leadership, this probably accounts for low participation of women in political and leadership positions, despite overt acknowledgement of equal rights and opportunities. This is based on the belief that women are not born to rule and that leadership, authority, and responsibility reside in men, while nurture and dependence are the lot of women. This is probably why, in many societies around the world, the majority (including women) are usually not comfortable with women holding on to leadership roles. For example, in patriarchal societies, powers and possessions are passed on from father to son, and descent is reckoned along the male line. In traditional African societies, like Nigeria, a woman's place is seen to be in the home space, where she is confined to domestic chores, bearing and rearing of children, whereas the man roams the wild looking for adventure in work and war This distinction of roles and expectations, functions to create and maintain unequal power relations between people of different biological sexes and results in the domination and exploitation of women as a group. In cases where women refuse to conform to these roles, they are regarded as deviants

Many African societies, before the advent of colonization, recognized gender boundaries. It was an inclusive governance that saw women playing leadership roles based on their individual prowess. Those who had the ability to lead any sector were not denied leadership, and this is why African history is replete with women who were exceptional leaders. This genderless basis for power acquisition promoted a peaceful and harmonious society. However, colonization upset the power balance that existed between the sexes and further assisted men in consolidating their status as the domineering gender. From the foregoing, it means that women are considered subordinate rather than in leadership roles with the man as the dominating gender. Unfortunately, the mindset of Africans is still geared towards the lens of gender in assigning societal roles.

Clarification of Concepts

Women Empowerment

Power has been defined as exercising "control over resources, ideology and self," and critically extends to "socio-political and economic context." The extent of power is dependent on the amount of resources that accrue to a person or group. Ordinarily, empowerment means giving someone power, a capacity to do something mentally or physically, or devolving or delegating authority to someone or a group. In a broader sense, empowerment could also connote the process of challenging existing power relations and gaining greater control over the resources of power. The concept of empowerment in this context is germane to the understanding of women's agitation for leadership positions in a democratic setting. This is because it involves power. Two critical things gleaned from the concepts of power and empowerment are: 1. Those in power are not going to give power away easily. Reason: paraphernalia of power make people want to retain it. 2. The interest in perpetuating oneself in power through his successor. Empowerment with regard to women does not connote giving away power but involves struggling for it. When applied to women in a democratic setting, it would mean a conscious effort to wrest power from men or to plead for it. The underlying result is that women's leadership roles can only be appreciated as a consequence of unrelenting agitation.

Gender Equality

Gender equality is when people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. It is also known as sexual equality or equality of the sexes. It is the state of equal ease of access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, including economic participation and decision-making, and the state of valuing different behaviors, aspirations, and needs equally, regardless of gender. Equity is used, for example, within the education, health, and humanitarian sectors, referring to the equal distribution of resources based on the needs of different groups of people. UNICEF says gender equality "means that women and men, and girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities, and protections. It does not require that girls and boys, or women and men, be the same, or that they be treated exactly alike." Gender equity puts the focus on fairness and justice regarding benefits and needs for women and men, girls and boys. Women and men are entitled to equal civil and political rights, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other international commitments. On a global scale, achieving gender equality also requires eliminating harmful practices against women and girls, including sex trafficking, femicide, wartime sexual violence, the gender wage gap, and other oppressive tactics.

African Traditional Religion

ATR is the religion that originated with the African people and their worldview of life. Unlike Christianity and Islam, which are imported religions, Africans are born into it and live it on a daily basis, and from one generation to the next. It is a religion that links the present to the past and the forefathers to their descendants. ATR refers to the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the African people. Mbiti regards African religion and philosophy as a systematic study of the attitudes of mind and belief that have evolved in the many societies of Africa and affect the way of life of most African people.[19] Similarly, Awolalu

says that "when we speak of African traditional religion, we mean the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Africans.[20] It is the religion which resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present Africans". In summary, ATR can be defined or regarded as the "Religion founded by Africans and for the Africans".

Conflict Resolution

According to Rahim, conflict is an interacting process that shows itself as disagreement, dissonance, or incompatibility within or between social entities, such as individuals, groups, organizations, and so on. Conflict arises when individuals pursue goals that are incompatible with one another. However, conflict resolution is an attempt to address the cause of conflict and seeks to build a new and lasting relationship between hostile groups. It is a worldwide trend stimulated by serious inter-community strife, such as that witnessed during the war in Bosnia. Conflict resolution provides an opportunity to interact with the parties concerned, with the hope of at least reducing the scope, intensity, and effects of conflicts. During formal and informal meetings, conflict resolution exercises permit a reassessment of views and claims as a basis for finding options to the crisis and to divergent points of view.

Interrogating Women's Empowerment in Lagos State in the Context of Gender Equality.

Lagos state, which is the political and economic nerve of Nigeria has a population size of 16.536 million with a female population of 4.39 million and the Yoruba people as the dominant culture. Women play an active role in the economy of the state based on the Yoruba cultural belief that women were expected to be economically active and largely independent of husbands. This propels their dominance in the business sector with most of them as traders. Sudarkasa posits that "in Yoruba society, the world of the market is primarily a woman's world" where gender power relations privilege women in the market context. It must be stated that the majority of these traders are on the individual self-sustainability level without any economic empowerment from the state. The values Lagos women traders attach to their self-employment, its performance, and the income it brings (regardless of whether it is at survivalist or accumulative levels) help to add contextual meanings to the economic pedigree of the state. A reflection on the large number of Lagos women involved in trading should naturally lead to the conclusion that the institutional rhetoric of successive governments in Lagos state on women's empowerment would have factored them in as a priority, given their enormous contributions. The market women should be the primary target for any government aiming to improve gender equality in the economic sphere considering the large number of women involved in grassroots trading. However, this is not the case despite promises to empower the poor and especially women engaged in economic activities.

The 'empowerment' spoken of has often come to mean a few hand-outs to some cronies. The measures put in place by the government for women to access loans are often stringent, making the scheme hostile rather than alleviating their poverty. This demonstrates that most of the efforts by the government to improve the economic condition of women in Lagos state have not had any real positive impact on the lives of many. This naturally results in both physical and psychological suffering for them. The dismal performance in job creation, human capital development, and poverty alleviation projects has resulted in the migration of women to other parts of Africa and Europe in search of greener pastures. The deplorable economic conditions have forced many shops to close up with an increased number of women entering

the labour market to seek greener pastures, leading to sexual exploitation. This shows the gendered nature of the so-called poverty alleviation scheme of the Lagos state government and the untold hardship it has unleashed on women, both physically and psychologically. The performance of the government, though improving, can still be considered dismal.

Role of ATR in Promoting Gender Equality

Gender discrimination is prevalent in the vast majority of institutionalized religions, where it is left undisturbed or tackled. It is no gainsaying that the male domination of religion limits women's role within a religion, and their ability to be office holders. Perhaps the greatest problem is that most women, especially in Africa, do not challenge the fundamental gender roles that subordinate them to males and give power primarily to men. If religion and women's rights is accepted as clashing and mutually exclusive, without conscious efforts at resolving the conflict for peaceful co-existence, then it is inevitable that gender equality will not be fully realized.

In recent times, the status of women in African religion is constantly evolving to a more prestigious stance. Women are conscious of the need to play not just complementary roles alone but also become crusaders of a new religious heritage befitting the new world order. The emerging religiosity of modern society does not view institutionalized religion and religiosity as identical. A growing number of women in every religious community are in search of a tolerant creed to further human understanding beyond an exclusionary, intolerant institutional religiosity. Women, through the doctrinal precepts of ATR which are majorly favorable to them, are demanding for a paradigm shift in several ways: firstly, female practitioners are more emboldened in demanding equal recognition from their male counterparts on the premise of divine provision. The recognition given to women by the Supreme Being since the inception of the world means that they hold a valuable status which men are expected to respect. Female suzerainty at the creation of the world is attested to in *Odu Osa Meji* where it is said that *Olodumare* gave woman (*Odu*) control on the condition that they use her enormous powers with care and discretion. *Olodumare* also compelled that whatever may happen, men should always incorporate women in all their endeavors. The divine superiority of women is also reinforced in *Odu Irete* through the cosmogonical marriage of *Orunmilla* to *Odu* who is believed to hold the knowledge of the oracles and divination. It is *Odu* who gave *Orunmilla* the '*Awo*', which is the secret power to control the '*Ase*'. This is the basic reason why women are included in all ritual cults, even those described as strictly masculine cults, have at least one powerful female member. A classic example of this is the Egungun cult where the Alaagba and Iya Agon (male and female titles) share equal status of authority. The realization that women are fundamental to their success and if sidelined can be a hindrance to their progress both physically and spiritually, is a germane tool employed for gender advocacy and equality.

In the African Religious sphere, the realm of ritual has proven versatile for displaying to a large extent, favorable feminine gender construction**.** Spiritual responsibilities are not always biologically determined, but rather become a space for showcasing spiritual endowment and competence by both sexes. Olajubu emphasizes that "African gender relations are usually marked by mutual respect and complementary relations." This is demonstrated in women's spirituality as it manifests in their leadership roles, healing practices, spirit possession, fertility rites, goddess worship and divination practices. This simply means that

women in African religions enjoy a degree of religious independence compared with Christianity and Islam. Hence, ATR is not an advocate of female subjugation but rather stipulates that men must recognize their invaluable influence.

The dual personality ascribed to women in ATR is a compelling factor for gender equality, which has yielded many results. Africans believe that women can be both cool and hot at the same time. Her outward calm nature is never mistaken for cowardice; rather, it serves as a covering for an inner masculine aggressiveness, which is only displayed when threatened or provoked, hence the Yoruba adage "*esu lobirin*" meaning "women are tricksters like Esu". This unpredictable and contradictory nature makes men wary of them at all times. This belief is corroborated by *Odu Ifa Osetura*:

Akere finu sogbon

Ni oruko ti an pe Ifa iran

Ija gidigidi ko kan agba

Eniti Olorun ba ni agba

Baba lama pe

Adifa fun Osetura ti o ma ti kere

Gba agba lowo olodunmerinlogun

The small one whose mind is full of wisdom

Is the name we call Ifa iran

Violent scuffles has nothing to do with old age

He who the god's ordain as elder we call father

Ifa divination was performed for Osetura

Who performed a fatherly role despite his small age

The *Odu* reiterates that if women are not given honor and respect, then they can be angry and destroy the world. If a woman intends to capture power from a man she can use 201 tricks that are intrinsic to all females and an additional 50 tricks after which the man's power will be theirs if they desire it. The lives of all males are said to be in the hands of women. If a husband is to succeed, it depends on the wife. The success of the family also depends on her. The *Odu* also warns that men should not devalue women. The socio-cultural pattern of the people also corroborates this from the home front in terms of husband and wife relations. In African society, a woman after long years of marriage becomes the bedrock of the home. This is in recognition of her endurance and tenacity at holding the home intact despite all odds. At this stage, She metamorphosis from ordinary wife (*iyawo*) to *iya wa* (our mother) and is addressed personally by all members of the family, including the husband as *ma'ami* (my mother). The strong will and enduring nature of women probably informed the reason why they were included in governance in the pre-colonial era and despite marginalization, still hold prominent offices, especially at the market place till date

Motherhood and the secretive nature of women are important factors that naturally compel unique status on women in African society. The natural fear that men have for women when it comes to the negotiating power of motherhood and secrecy has in most times, provided a platform for not just gender equity but also female superiority. Africans perceive a fundamental difference characteristically between male and females in the ability to conceal or reveal secrets. For example, the Yoruba stress this distinction in the adage "Inu *obirin jin*", which simply means "women are more secretive than men". This belief is buttressed by the Odu Ifa *Ogbe Iwori*. This describes how a king lost his life for revealing the mysteries of the *Oro* cult to his wife and warns men that revealing secret will bring destruction. The inscrutable secretive nature of women commands respect for them and validates their possession of the *ase*. It is believed that the concentration of the vital force (*ase*) in women creates extraordinary potential that can manifest itself in both positive and negative ways. It manifests positively when used in invoking blessing. For example, it is believed that the power of a mother to evoke blessings or curses upon her children by the virtue of motherhood is a very potent force. This is why Africans regard mothers as a "god". This belief is typified in the Yoruba adage "orisa bi iya kosi"; therefore, children are expected to accord their mothers the same respect giving to the gods. Her mystical powers can also be used negatively when operating as a witch. This mystical power is greatly dreaded in African society, thereby evoking much respect for them from their male counterparts. It is believed that when angered, they unleash their wrath of destruction on their victims, resulting in all forms of maladies. Their wrath can only be placated after sacrifices of appeasement are made unto them.[37] The secretive nature of women is a primary manifestation of feminine power in ATR.

From the above it is obvious that African women in ATR are not expected to be treated with indignation by being subjected to male superiority as a form of subjugation but rather as a means of protection. ATR presents a complementary status for both sexes. This is aptly expressed in the adage *owo ni afin we owo koto mo* meaning the use of both hands are required for a proper cleansing of the hands. This is also expressed in the cosmogonical plans of the Supreme Being for both sexes. It is said that the male and female were created as helpmates and therefore must recognize and appreciate the worth of each other. The belief that women should be seen and not heard is not in tandem with ATR religious view it is a byproduct of colonial influence. Consequently, it is only when women assume the right to define for themselves the parameters of their own identity in retrospect to their religious doctrines and stop accepting unconditionally and without question what is presented as tradition then will they be able to effectively assume equal status with men. What African women are agitating for presently is the opportunity to use, to the full extent, their God-given capabilities to nurture and enrich African religion and culture.

ATR, Gender Equality and Conflict Resolution in Lagos State.

The improved status of women today is as a result of the reinterpretation of religious and cultural laws, which was manipulated to suit the dominant positions held by men in the society. The reinterpretation of these laws by major African scholars, feminists and human rights activist such as Bolanle Awe (1992); Oyeronke Oyewumi (1999); Mercy Amba Oduyoye (1992); Sophie Oluwole (1993) has provided the

enabling environment for better gender negotiations both at the home front and in public space. The benefits of these on the status of women is apparently visible in Lagos state when compared to other states in Nigeria. The megacity of Lagos, being the hub of civilization and religious activities in Nigeria provides ample opportunities for the actualization of gender equality, to which women have taken adequate advantage.

The exposure to civilization and modernization for both genders has stifled harmful cultural practices, which place women at a disadvantaged position, such as early marriage, which truncates their education, inheritance laws that deny females of any inheritance, Widowhood practices that deny women social and economic rights, Female genital mutilations, and the preference of male over female children. The continued invocation of culture, sexuality, and religion in order to treat women unequally is under constant, well-grounded criticism by human rights activists and feminist movements who have identified them as discriminatory and demeaning. Lagos state holds the highest record of girl-child and women in education. The high level of educational awareness in the state provides equal status for both sexes to pursue their educational ambition without the inhibition of gender discrimination still operating in rural areas. This has resulted in more women being employed in the public sector of the state, holding managerial positions, while a large number are now into professions so far dominated by men, and more women are becoming self-employed. This has helped in no small measure to promote good human relations (based on mutual respect) and to promote peaceful coexistence in the state.

In the same vein the religious ideals of African religion provide a safe haven for the preservation of cultural practices that promotes dignity of women. For example, customs and beliefs relating to the traditional view of sex and sexuality have continued to endure against the European permissive expression of sexuality which has distorted the traditional role of sex in contemporary times. For instance, African religion forbids the arbitrary use of sex and sexuality. This is basically because sex is regarded as a spiritual act confined to married couples and expressed purposefully for procreation. This belief still holds sway despite the high level of literacy and Westernization in the state, making marriage a priority for Lagosians. The consciousness that marriage confers a status of respect on a woman is prevalent in the minds of Lagosians; this is why, despite the high level of educated women, many of them count it a big achievement to be married[46] The sanctity of sex and sexuality enforced in the state has helped to curb the level of sexual immorality and abuse against women. This makes Lagos a prime example of how traditional culture continues to impact on aspects of sexuality despite modernization. Consequently, discrimination against women based on gender is condemned in ATR. This has helped to promote conflict resolution with regard to the status of women as mere objects of sexual gratification in an age where sexuality and its relevance are so distorted.

Also, the high demand for gender equality within the state has lowered the cultural belief that women are domestic servitudes of their spouse. In rural areas, women are responsible for most tasks involved in producing food for families, including obtaining water and firewood, often across long distances. In urban centers like Lagos, though women still experience unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities and financial resources, the percentage is quite minimal compared to rural areas. In homes where the men abandon their responsibilities, a high record of domestic violence has been reported. It is a known fact that the prevalence of extreme poverty in Nigeria and other West African countries functions as a major push factor for domestic and civil unrest. In order to prevent the prevailing occurrence of such conflicts, the government must ensure equal access to employment and other amenities within the state. The cry

of feminist groups and organizations, for the most part, concerns how the crises of women's empowerment can be resolved, since there is a strong conviction that the resolution of the problem will lead to improved development and peaceful coexistence in societies.

Despite the improved status of women in Lagos state, tension in gender relations still persists even as the government adopted internal gender equality mechanisms or complied with legislated quotas, women still struggle against discriminatory attitudes and behavior, as well as threats and intimidation, aimed at preserving male-dominated power structures. It is obvious that institutional and legislative change has not necessarily spurred permanent shifts in organizational culture or gender norms that inhibit women. Men still enjoy a higher status in the sense that they are overrepresented in leadership positions, resulting in women having to organize against the constant threat of marginalization through local and international support to address these inequities.

From ATR's perspective, gender-based agitations leading to conflict resolution can be resolved when an inclusive system of governance is operated as ordained by the Supreme Being. According to God's creative plan, interdependency and mutual sustenance mark African gender relations. This is evident in God's relations with the divinities who function as ministers in his theocratic system of governance. Powers were distributed equally to both male and female divinities, each one manning his or her portfolio of responsibility. The conduct and interaction of goddesses in African religious narratives provide models for female roles at the religious and social levels. For example, goddesses are closely connected to the governance of some African communities. Osun, the goddess of cool waters in Osogbo, Nigeria, is closely connected with the sovereignty of the town and the king. Osun is recognized as the owner of the land on which Osogbo stands. Appreciation for her care is demonstrated yearly in an elaborate festival that attracts devotees from within and outside Nigeria. Consequently, in Africa, religious cosmological accounts lies model for sustainable gender-based relations from which Lagos state can model.

Conclusion and recommendation

The paper discussed gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of ATR and how this can facilitate peaceful coexistence in Lagos state. It attempted to give an exposé of the challenges women face due to their subordinate status in society, despite the fact that women and men are viewed as equal citizens. Unfortunately, this is not reflected in the public sphere where men benefit more, and women are denied the applicability of substantive gender equality in the societies. African cosmological accounts often submit that God, the Supreme Being, created the world and the first humans as male and female, though the exact methods of creation may differ from one locality to another. African cosmologies and ritual spaces display a generally positive attitude to the world and the place of humans within it, thereby giving both sexes secular and religious power based on the individual's worth. This was the premise upon which power was allotted in the pre-colonial era, where women enjoyed a fair degree of equality. A good understanding of African religious traditions is essential for a renegotiation of gender equality in Lagos, where the status of women is far better compared to other states in Nigeria. Lagos Women are continually defying the limitations that society has historically placed on them through nationalist and feminist agendas in order to further their rights as individuals. The study recommends a need for a cultural shift on stereotypical traditions that deny women the opportunity to explore their God-given talents. This will

serve as one of the many media of advocacy for gender equity commitments in the socio-political agenda of the state. Understanding gender relations from *Ifa* perspective, which instructs a harmonious and mutual cooperation between the genders, may well be the potential driving force for the much-needed social change. It is believed this will bring about enduring peace and holistic progress within the state. Also, there is a need for the government to adopt international humanitarian and human rights law in the protection of women, which is germane in conflict resolution. Women must be encouraged and supported by relevant state agencies and traditional authorities because of the invaluable roles they play in society.

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ABOUT WANEP NIGERIA

BACKGROUND:

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP-Nigeria) serves as a national platform for collaborative peacebuilding, bringing together indigenous organisations working in conflict prevention, transformation, and peacebuilding. As part of the regional WANEP structure in West Africa, the Network supports sustainable peace and development by strengthening the capacity of local NGOs and community-based organisations. Through its membership system, WANEP-Nigeria provides technical support, coordination, and grassroots engagement to address the complex conflicts affecting Nigeria's stability.

WOMEN IN PEACEBUILDING NETWORK (WIPNET)

At the core of WANEP-Nigeria's work is the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), a programme dedicated to amplifying women's voices, leadership, and participation in peace and security processes. WIPNET has over one hundred active members across Nigeria, serving as a nationwide force for women-led mediation, early warning, community engagement, and policy advocacy. The programme is central to advancing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, and has played a pivotal role in the development, localisation, and implementation of Nigeria's National, State, and Local Action Plans (NAPs, SAPs, and LAPs) on UNSCR 1325.

GOAL:

To build a sustainable, peaceful coexistence amongst all the various sectors and groups of the Nigerian community, thereby creating an enabling environment for national growth and development.

OBJECTIVES:

WANEP-Nigeria seeks to strengthen the peacebuilding capacity of organisations and practitioners to actively engage in the prevention and/or peaceful transformation of violent conflicts in Nigeria, and increase awareness and the use of non-violent strategies as a proactive response to conflicts in order to avoid violence. Promote principled and responsive leadership in the country within the context that appreciates the culture of non-violence, advocates for just social and political structures and relationships; Engender conflict prevention and peacebuilding issues in the country; and harmonize and develop conflict prevention through peacebuilding activities by networking and coordinating WANEP members into viable networks and mechanisms.

FIELDS) OF ACTIVITY:

The Network works under 5 thematic areas that include

- Democracy and Governance

- Early Warning and Human Security Response Mechanism

- Gender / Women, Peace and Security

- Network Coordination and Management

- Research and Knowledge Management

- Youth, Peace and Security

ADDRESSES: LAGOS; 27 Adeniji Street, Off WEMPCO Road, Ogba, Lagos - Nigeria ABUJA: House 6, A close Eagleville Estate, Mabushi, Abuja Tel: +234-806-207-2468 Email:wanep@wanepnigeria.orghttp//:www.facebook/com/wanepnigeria Website: http//:wanepnigeria.org WANEP - NIGERIA