

# Gender and Their Role in Conflict Management: The Nigerian Perspective

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DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.8.10.2018.p8241

<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.8.10.2018.p8241>

**Abstract-** Conflict and conflict circumstance are by nature impossible to avoid in as such humans interact with different identify and race. This make peace process to be a complex state of affairs because of the win attitude of human existence. The state of resolute and peace building are vital for society and humans to strive, which springs development and society of today desert the role of women in conflict management due to customs, traditions, culture and gender. Data were basically collected from existing literature to demonstrate the role women play in conflict management. The paper concluded women should be involved in conflict management for the society to attain a holistic conflict management and peace building. The paper recommends that women should be giving more training to education which will deepen their understanding in conflict and in peace.

**Index Terms-** Gender, Nigeria, Peace and Conflict Management

## I. INTRODUCTION

Peace is absent of war, disturbance or conflict. This create conducive environment for human interaction to flourish which ensure development either humanly or economically and this in return guarantee sustainable development. In situation where this is absent conflict occurs, nothing seem to grow. Conflict resolution and peace building are however, highly gendered activities (Beth Speake,2013).

Literature have argued that men are mostly from time memorial involved in peace buliding and process neglecting the presence of women. However, the peace process don not concern those involved in war or armed conflicts, women also contribute important skills, perspectives and insights into conflict resolution and peace building activities. Therefore, their direct participation in decision making is necessary because mothers by personality and God given gift which make them closer to their children, one could say they have natural gift which strategically places them above men in peace process.

Stricklaw and Duwury (2003) have also identified that those who do take into account issues of gender, have generally failed to address the structural inequalities and power relations which are the basis for gender discrimination. Most of the arguments put forward in support of women involvement in conflict management come from a variety of disciplines, with different political opinions and recommended methods. Some see women as important in bringing about sustainable peace, others employed techniques that confine them to their roles as mothers

and caregivers, and thus denying access to a more formal and wider agenda of peace building and conflict resolution. (Puechguirbal, 2010:177).

It has been over a decade since the passage of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, which is a land mark document restating the importance of women involvement and participation at all levels of peace building and conflict management (NjidekaEbisi, 2016:). Informal contributions of women have been shown to be insufficient to resolving conflict and building sustainable peace (Pratt and Richtar-Devroe, 2011:490). However, formal building and conflict resolution initiatives have continued to ignore or marginalize issues of gender, and women's involvement in formal peace missions and talks (Diaz, 2010:1). With the new phase of globalization, women have been able to organize themselves in many unofficial ways. This they do through participation in non-profit organizations, support groups and grass roots, activities in their communities. Even in their official working places, they extend this support attitude of bringing peace when there is conflict. Women are often portrayed as victims of conflict; and, of course in large part they are: targeted for rape, become widows and suffer most from decay of social sectors. The roles of women in this modern age have changed after generations of silence. Women's stories of their struggles for social change, justice, and for peace are beginning to be told (Ferris, 2004).

However, the assumptions of this paper is about the women's inappropriate roles in the society, particularly in relation to decision-making and conventional assumptions about their areas of expertise, have been used to exclude them from informal or formal and all other peace processes. In some peace talks, for example, some male delegates questioned the presence of women, seeing their wish to be involved as interference in the process. Nevertheless, it is happy to note that the United Nations as well as other regional bodies are increasingly recognizing the position of women's leadership in the prevention and resolution of conflict and crises. For instance, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action acknowledged the crucial role of women during times of armed conflict and the collapse of communities and called for the establishment of an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective when addressing armed and other conflict (Alilu, 2012:4). The paper will be discussing the role of women in conflict management and why women are always considered less effective in peace process with specific references to Nigeria. This paper is focused on the role of women

in conflict management. In this discourse, we begin by developing an appropriate conceptual and analytical framework.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is a qualitative study which is based on secondary data. The study was carried out through the review of other existing literature on role of women in conflict management in Nigeria and across the world. Existing and applicable literature on the role of women in conflict management were reviewed, which led to insight exciting study.

## III. CONCEPTUAL AND CONJECTURAL DECONSTRUCTION

Gender is defined in contrast to sex, as the social roles and interactions between men and women rather than their biological differences. (Eschborn 2001:6). It draws attention to the social roles and interactions between women and men, rather than their biological differences. Gender relations are social relations, which include the ways in which the social categories of male and female interact in every sphere of social activity, such as those which determine access to resources, power and participation in cultural and religious activities. Gender also denotes the social meanings of male and female, and what different societies regards as normal and appropriate behaviour, attitudes for women and men, although the details vary from society to society, and change over time. Gender relations always include a strong element of inequality between men and women and are strongly influenced by ideology (NjidekaEbisi, 2016:2).

On the other hand, what is biologically determined gender differences is still vaguely defined and subject of debate (Jill,1998:81). Some contend that women tend to be less-predisposed to aggressive and violent behaviour because of certain biological characteristics. These include that women have lower testosterone levels than men, and the ways women's brain is structured and developed and other biological characteristics constitute academic debates, that are responsible why most women behave the way they do in challenging and competitive ways than most men. Therefore, they posit and argue that science cannot explain all forms of different behavioural patterns and roles in society (Jill,1998:81).

For Stean and Jill (1998), It is not sufficient to focus on women alone. The ways in which men are socialised to become part of a male gender are also important. Egotistical, aggressive and dominant behaviours are common features of cultural definitions of masculinity, as is men's dominance over women at a general level (Byrne and Bridget,1996:33). Therefore, male and female roles and relations between men and women are subject to constant change because they are shaped by society. Yet, in all societies the gender relations between women and men tend to be clearly to the disadvantage of women. For example different rights and decision making powers; ability to make choices; which are determined by the existing cultural norms and values relating to masculinity and femininity (NjidekaEbisi, 2016). Therefore, gender denotes what differentiate men from women which include biological, social, and cultural attributes.

Conflict is opposition between two parties resulting from struggles over values, ideas for power and resources (Sanchez, 2011). To be in conflict connotes being in disagreement or contradictory or in opposition (Moris 2000). Conflict resolution and peace building are essential conditions for sustainable development initiatives; the cultural explicit and systematic consideration of a gender perspective in peace building and conflict resolution have either been ignored or marginalized by agencies in their efforts and strategic approaches towards crisis prevention and management. Conflict resolution and peace building are however, highly gendered activities (Beth Speake,2013).

Lederach (2000:71) sees conflict as composed of three elements: people, process and problems. Any of these and combination may cause conflict and will always be present in the development and outcome of a dispute. Conflict management involves efforts and the interventions to minimize, limit, contain, control or regulate conflict. It is a process of minimizing and controlling the negative effects of conflict through working with the disputing parties. Some authors use conflict prevention synonymously with conflict management. It seeks to reduce the negative and destructive capacity of conflict based on the realization that conflict is inevitable and that not all conflicts are resolved always. Irresolvable conflicts are controlled and managed (Obasi and Nnamani,2015:2, Ijeoma et al., nd).

Gender roles are not the same. Nature in some instances has assigned roles to men and women. While women are mothers, bringing forth new life to the world, men are the voice of the family. They care and protect mothers and the life they bring to the world. While women are traditionally the heart of the home, procurators and care-takers of the house, men control the economy and support the family (Obioma, 2001:19). Nature on the other hand has given each gender gifts according to the roles of each sex. Men cannot bear the pains of pregnancy, women have the gift. Women are strongest on this, men are weaker. It is on the basis of the different roles of sexes that tradition assigns functions to each.

Stricklaw and Duwury (2003) have also identified that those who do take into account issues of gender, have generally failed to address the structural inequalities and power relations which are the basis for gender discrimination. Most of the arguments put forward in support of women involvement in conflict management come from a variety of disciplines, with different political opinions and recommended methods. Some see women as important in bringing about sustainable peace, others employed techniques that confine them to their roles as mothers and caregivers, and thus denying access to a more formal and wider agenda of peace building and conflict resolution. (Puechguirbal, 2010:177).

Issues involving gender arise in what is sometimes called "personal life" (Minas, 1993). In collaboration with Minas (1993) Gender role depend on her personalized role in the society and people she relate with and how they perceived her. In personal relations, this can make a difference since human choice of spouse depends on gender and the quality that will upgrade us as men which are always gender related because her quality determine the choice. However this gender is not confirmed confined to men only, women also have same feeling where they now look at such qualities in choice of a female partner which

happening in the western world of today. With this recent trend we now take gender with us into the workplace and the rest of public life.

Gender affects our perspectives on others as well as the way others perceive us; even when our relationships with them cannot be seen as "personal". Very early in our lives, we learn whether we are girls or boys and accordingly, what we are expected to do or not to do. Gender expectations for children (e.g., what types of clothing are appropriate for which gender) are somehow simple, compared to what is expected of adult men and women. Societal expectations for adults can be very limiting with restrictions, for example a particular kind of behaviour can attract a more severe sanction or penalty for one gender than for the other. Also a certain posture or sitting position may pass as normal for a man but may attract unwelcome sexual attention if taken by women. Career paths in the work place are laid out according to gender; it is much easier for one gender than the other to join particular careers and to remain and progress in them. In all, it is difficult to find any segment or area of human life where gender fails to make a difference. It systematically favours men over women, it continuously maintain and encourage structures that ensure men receive better treatment and have more available options than women. These structures are well found in both private and public life. Gender is a social acquisition that creates many differences between men and women. (Minas, 1993:2).

In fact more than a decade ago, on 31 October 2000 the United Nations took the first step in identifying the important position women hold in preventing and resolving Conflict with the passage of a resolution which stressed the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts of the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. It also emphasized the need to increase their role in decision making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution. The impact of this resolution was further solidified by the establishment of national action plans by 24 nations, confirming government support at the national level for the inclusion of women in conflict resolutions (Alilu, 2012:5).

Women therefore have a role in ensuring a peaceful and healthy society. They can do this by inculcating sound moral instruction into the younger generation. Naturally, children tend to endere more to their mothers than fathers. This provides a good channel for mothers to impact positive virtues of peace to their children and ward right from childhood because a peaceful society begins with a peaceful home. Many of the conflict enveloping the globe emanate from the family to community and like a spark of fire spreads across a state and its environs. Often times, issues such as poverty, struggle for scarce resources, lack of infrastructures and violations of human rights are indentified as the root causes of conflict in the society. In this regard, successful strategies for empowering women should be put in place. Informal activities such as peace marches and protests, intergroup dialogue, the promotion of inter-cultural tolerance should be encouraged to be spearheaded by our women.

#### IV. THE NIGERIAN WOMAN

The Nigerian woman is bold and industrious. She is a mother and leader in the family and community. Before the advent of colonial rule and the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914, many women have made history in the political and socio-economic levels of their environment at a time not known. According to Nnamani&Okpara (2010: p. 95 in Obasi& Nnamani,2015:4), the gallantry efforts of Queen Amina of Zaria, Moremi of Yorubaland, Queen Kambasa of Ijawland and Queen Owari of Ilesha were recorded in history. In Igboland, many priestesses intervened to avert family and communal conflicts. The advent and influence of colonialism eroded the traditional autonomy of Nigerian women. It affected and reduced their peace efforts in the early days to their charging. It was against this background that the Aba women riot of 1929 took place. It was staged against the British high-handedness, policies against women and taxations. Nnamani&Okpara (2010: p. 95 in Obasi& Nnamani,2015:4) affirmed that the Egbasu women group from Yoruba nationality staged another protest in 1941 and 1947 against injustice melted against women and the exploitations by the colonial administration. The Nigerian women have come of age since independence. They are now more organized than ever. They fight against abuse of women, trafficking of girls, marginalization, exploitation and disempowerment. In the mid 1970s, the women of Umueleke staged a protest against sexual child abuse and for some days left their homes for their men who did not do so much to punish the culprit. The women took refuge at the St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Umuezeala, Ehime Mbanu, Imo State. Their action attracted attention and the men were forced to act immediately. We cannot forget how women such as Fummilayo RansomeKuti and Margaret Ekpo stared a revolution that brought about changes in our country. Women on their part, should be mindful of the power that lies inside of them and use it positively amidst numerous challenges to positively change the world.

#### V. MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT BY WOMEN

Over the years, women have been relegated to the background in the area of conflict management. It is about high time the women contributions to peacemaking must be acknowledged. Abdukarim (2002) said 'it is about time that the people of Nigeria are indeed of the whole world appreciated the tremendous potentiality that is inherent in this (so called) weaker sex. "Many ways, they are much stronger".

Peace women (2004) asserted. That "women and men have different access to resources, power and decision making before, during and after conflicts. The experience of women and men in situations of tension, war and past conflict reconstruction is significantly different". In many organizations it seems many women do not have free access to resources, power and decision making as regards to conflict as much as their male counterparts. This situation has jeopardized the management of conflict in the organizations.

Women by their nature are good nurturers, social problem solvers and excellent negotiators. The Gender schema theory confirms these attributes of women. The theory was propounded by Sandra Bem in 1981. This theory combines the social learning

and cognitive learning theories. Gender Schema theory implies children learn about what it means to be male and female from the culture in which they live. It concerns the development of an internal Schema, or mental framework which organizes and directs the behaviour of an individual (Brannon 2002).

In the Nigerian society, girls are made to believe that they must be obedient, do not say while resolving, remain quiet and last to speak. In work place conflict management, the qualities of women are more likely to be utilized in the conflict management because of work ethics but despite these men still dominate the process.

There are other certain attributes that a problem solver or conflict manager must possess and one of them is tact. Diaz (2008) said that "tact is being mindful of the other person and the context while taking into account one's own account". Tact is very important for keeping or creating harmonious relationship. Women are more tactful than men. Even in the families, they utilize this attribute, by keeping the family coordinated and organized. Those women in the organization can also utilize this potential if they are given the opportunity to manage conflict in the organization.

Diaz (2008) also went on to bring forth another factor that can help in conflict management and he said "Words were originally magic and to this day words have retained much of their ancient magical power. By words one person can make another blissfully happy or drive him to despair". Women use more soft and low tone in situation of chaos unlike the men. Magic language is good for negotiated solutions and it may generate the changes required for conflict management. Women who are more sensitive than men, and more emotionally attached to people. They are the ones that often use this magic language.....words. All these go to buttress the point that more women must be employed in conflict resolution in organizations because of these their attributes (Ijeoma et al., nd).

Foundation coalition (2011) came up with modes for conflict management. Five modes were listed and analyzed. Conflict management decreases the odds of non productive escalation. It involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills and establishing a structure for management of conflict in the organization.

women are naturally perceived as weak and cannot make quick decision which constitute a big obstacle in conflict resolution process. But women are intelligent, not lazy, energetic and not weak. However, ethnic, religious group, or other community have not look beyond this, women are only recognized in modern organization which is also peculiar to Nigeria but traditionally there is a big constraint in their role in peace process. It seems evident that there is lack of political commitment on the part of governments and decision making bodies (at both national and international level) to promoting changes in favour of gender balance and mainstreaming into decision making bodies such as peace building committees and etc. d. There is also lack of comprehensive, systematic national strategy for implementing all the measure connected with a peace building agenda. In many countries, political authorities lack the capacity and/or are unaware the need to address peace building projects and platforms, and mobilize resources for such gender awareness training. They are also unable to influence policy at

community level. e. One of the major obstacles to the peace building process and especially role of peace makers, is the failure not only to acknowledge and accept the respective interests and priorities of all the parties concerned and their willingness to also cooperate and negotiate which ultimately hinder negotiations. f. Patriarchal cultural pattern that rely on certain traditional beliefs, assumptions and expectations with regards to men's and women's role in dialogue and peace building may become a major obstacle in affirming new gender roles and approaches to sustainable development as conflict free environment.

## VI. CHALLENGES WOMEN IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE BUILDING

According to Iruloh and Uche (2017) argued that the following are challenges women face in playing their role in conflict management and this include the following:

1. Women themselves are not ready to champion their own course
2. Lack of cooperation from men for fear of women leadership
3. Negative societal perception of the role of women
4. Lack of awareness of benefits of gender equality
5. Lack of awareness of gender issues
6. Implementation of already existing policies to back women

## VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Society can only progress if there is no stereotype, the wide range of obstacles, both obvious and hidden that undermine women's ability to use their powers and capacity to bring about change in peace building processes. The discrepancy of influence, control and power between women and men in all aspect of their societal life particularly in decision making process and representations is still a global problem, where certain position are meant for the men alone. In Nigeria there is lack of gender Awareness among those responsible for Gender Mainstreaming in Government Bodies and Public Administrations. Therefore, creating awareness on gender equality and women empowerment for development is one to get more women into conflict resolution and peace building. Time has come for everybody to be aware of gender equality and participation in conflict resolution and peace building. However mothers should teach their children skills of anger management from home because this can lead to a peaceful state and globe peace which is among the only way the world can be safe, peaceful and enjoyable.

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