

Historical Contributions and Contemporary Barriers to Women Participation in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in Ogoni Land (1993 to 2022)

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Abstract

This research explored the role of women in conflict resolution within Ogoni Land between 1993 and 2022, concentrating on their historical contributions and socio-cultural barriers. A descriptive cross-sectional methodology was employed, gathering data from 388 respondents out of a total of 400 distributed questionnaires, leading to a 97% response rate across Khana, Gokana, Tai, and Eleme LGAs. The analysis utilized descriptive statistics. Results demonstrated that women are pivotal in peacebuilding activities, including mediating conflicts (118 strongly agree; 98 agree), joining peace assembly meetings (98 strongly agree; 118 agree), rallying community support (118 strongly agree; 98 agree), establishing early warning and reporting systems (118 strongly agree; 98 agree), and facilitating reconciliation efforts (around 100 respondents across varying agreement levels). Despite these contributions, women encounter considerable challenges, including patriarchy and gender norms (30.4%), lack of education (25.3%), security threats and intimidation (22.4%), and limited financial access (21.9%). The research concludes that women are engaged yet systematically disadvantaged participants in peacebuilding efforts in Ogoni Land. It advocates for the formal inclusion of women in peace structures and socio-economic empowerment measures to bolster their efficacy in conflict resolution initiatives.

Keywords: Contributions, Contemporary, Barriers, Women, Participation, Conflict, Resolution & peacebuilding

Introduction

In recent years, a few researchers like Swan (2003) proposed the introduction of gender inclusive conflict resolution systems. This position assumes that, for women to compete on an equal basis with their male counterpart, they must think and act like men. While gender may play a role in understanding bargaining behavior, new research and a growing body of literature such as Campbell (2002) and Suda (2003) call into question the claim that men and women react differently in dispute resolution scenarios. As a result, several scholars like Nkosazana (2013) have investigated women's roles in conflict settings as aggressive offenders, docile perpetrators, or victims. The need for women's equal and full involvement as active actors in peace and security was again emphasized in Resolution 1325 (2000); which calls for increased participation of women at all levels of decision-making in conflict prevention, management, and resolution.

The United Nations Security Council acknowledged the importance of women in ensuring global security and peace, as well as the need for their participation in the resolution of conflicts. As a result, the Resolution 1325 (2000) stressed an improved female engagement and involvement at all levels of making decisions in post-conflict processes. Nigeria has not adopted this conflict settlement technique; instead, the country has spent much on security measures and violent conflict prevention. Sadly, despite the development of various security structures and massive financial commitments to security organizations, this appears to have been a futile effort. A number of analysts, including Usman (2010), Asuni (2007), Aghedo and Oarhe (2009), have persuasively claimed that Nigeria's security administration is plagued by misdiagnosis and inadequate institution building. This is a clear case of misplaced priorities, since there will be an uncommon redirection of limited resources in the national budget for the acquisition of high-tech equipment, at the expense of capital projects in education, health, agriculture, and the building process that will benefit the public. Notwithstanding the massive defense and security-related spending in Nigeria, the tsunami of insecurity over lives and properties remains uninterrupted in many sections of the nation. The Niger Delta's oil pipeline vandalism, crude oil theft, and hostage-taking of expatriate workers; the South East's incessant abductions; the South West's fierce armed robbery; and the ethnoreligious crises and the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency in various parts of the northern part of the country have all grown into threats to financial sustainability and the realization of the country's goal for 2030 and beyond. These Conflicts could be viewed as dysfunctional and detrimental to transformation, innovation, and productivity (Posigha & Oghuvwu, 2009 in Fatile & Adejuwon, 2011).

Most studies in Nigeria have shown that improper conflict resolution strategy has been the major cause of violence eruption in most part of the country. As a result, a properly managed conflict will not devolve into violence. While the federal government and all 36 states in Nigeria and the local government councils, have security votes, the massive funds committed to this vote have not translated into a better and more secure environment that is conducive for sustained economic development. As a result, the security votes have recently come under criticism by scholars, civil society organizations, and public policy analysts (Usman, 2010; Aghedo & Oarhe, 2009), who argue that despite huge financial allocations, the funds lack transparency and have failed to significantly improve security conditions. The general population supports its abolition on the grounds that it is not fiscally sustainable considering the nation's numerous issues. As a result, greater attention must be placed on the human components of national security in Nigeria in order to achieve peaceful resolution of violent disputes. This involves accelerating the elimination of poverty, exploitation, disease, injustice, and the likes to their barest minimum and the conscious formulation and effective implementation of policies and conflict resolution programs that inculcate the role of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

The role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding has become a focal point of global discourse in both academic and policy spaces. From the ashes of civil wars in Liberia and Rwanda to post-genocide healing in South Sudan, women have emerged as formidable agents of peace resilient, strategic, and deeply rooted in their communities. Yet, despite global recognition and policy frameworks such as the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), which calls for the inclusion of women in all peace and security efforts, many local contexts remain mired in structural gender exclusion.

Ogoniland, situated in the heart of the oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria, is one such context. Since the early 1990s, the region has grappled with environmental degradation, militarization, youth militancy, and violent repression, most notably the execution of the "Ogoni Nine" in 1995.

These conflicts have devastated communities and torn the social fabric of Ogoni society. Amidst these challenges, Ogoni women have risen not as passive victims, but as active agents of peace. Historically, Ogoni women have played crucial roles in communal life, often serving as spiritual custodians, caregivers, cultural educators, and negotiators. During the height of the Ogoni crisis in the 1990s, women under the Federation of Ogoni Women's Association (FOWA) mobilized peaceful protests, organized healing rituals, and negotiated the release of detained activists. In more recent years, a new generation of female actors has emerged, notably the Ogoni Female Youths Development Foundation (OFYDF) the first and only indigenous NGO led by Bona, Lovelyn and comprises of young women across the four Ogoni LGAs. These young women have taken up the mantle of peacebuilding, advocacy, and leadership, bridging generational gaps and challenging entrenched patriarchal norms.

Despite their contributions, women in Ogoniland remain largely invisible in formal peace processes. Their roles are often relegated to the margins symbolic rather than strategic, supportive rather than central. This study was born out of a need to challenge that invisibility, to recognize the past and present contributions of women, and to propose a gender-inclusive framework for sustainable peace in Ogoni land. This research does not merely seek to document; it seeks to honour, amplify, and institutionalize the place of Ogoni women from the matriarchs of FOWA to the youthful visionaries of OFYDF in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Statement of The Problem

Although there is a growing global awareness of the critical role women play in resolving conflicts, particularly highlighted in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, their participation in official peace initiatives is still restricted in various local settings, such as Ogoni land within Nigeria's Niger Delta. Throughout the years, Nigeria has made substantial investments in security and strategies for conflict management; nevertheless, ongoing insecurity, violent disputes, and social unrest continue to jeopardize sustainable growth. This indicates that current methods of addressing conflicts may fall short, especially because they generally lack the integration of inclusive, community-oriented, and gender-sensitive approaches.

In Ogoni land, while women have historically been pivotal in peacebuilding through mediation, community engagement, and reconciliation initiatives, their roles often remain informal, undervalued, and excluded from recognized decision-making processes. Deep-seated patriarchal attitudes, societal expectations, restricted access to education, reliance on economic support, and institutional obstacles persistently limit women's engagement in conflict resolution work. Consequently, there is a gap between the proven potential of women in grassroots peacebuilding and their underrepresentation in formal governance and conflict resolution mechanisms.

Moreover, prior research has mainly concentrated on women's contributions to conflict resolution at national or international scales, with scant empirical data capturing the experiences, roles, and challenges faced by women in Ogoni communities. This absence of localized studies constrains the advancement of gender-inclusive, context-sensitive frameworks for peacebuilding that could effectively tackle the distinctive conflict issues prevalent in the area. Thus, this research intends to explore the roles of women in conflict resolution within Ogoni land and to pinpoint the socio-cultural and institutional challenges that inhibit their involvement, with the goal of offering evidence-based suggestions for improving the participation of women in sustainable peacebuilding initiatives.

Aim & Objectives of The Study

The aim of this study is to assess the role of women in conflict resolution in Ogoniland between 1993 and 2022. Specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the contemporary roles of women in conflict resolution in Ogoni land?
2. Analyse the cultural and institutional barriers that hinder women's participation in conflict resolution.

Research Questions

1. What are the historical roles played by women in resolving conflicts in Ogoni land?
2. What socio-cultural and institutional barriers limit women's participation in conflict resolution?

Methodology

This research employed a descriptive cross-sectional methodology. The descriptive method was deemed suitable as it facilitates a detailed account of population, situation, or phenomenon without altering any variables. It is especially effective for investigations aimed at identifying existing circumstances and associations among variables as they present themselves naturally. The approach integrated both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a thorough insight into the unmet needs for family planning among married women of reproductive age in the Etche Local Government Area, Rivers State. The quantitative aspect allowed for the gathering of quantifiable data suitable for statistical evaluation, while the qualitative aspect offered contextual insights into reproductive behavior, knowledge, and attitudes related to family planning. The research took place in the Etche Local Government Area in Nigeria's Rivers State. Etche is situated in the Niger Delta region and features primarily rural and semi-urban areas where agriculture is the main livelihood. The region includes multiple communities with diverse social, economic, and cultural traits that impact reproductive health practices. Most of the inhabitants are involved in farming and small-scale commerce, with some areas facing limited access to health services. These circumstances render Etche LGA an appropriate locale for investigating the unmet need for family planning. The focus population consisted of married women of reproductive age living in the Etche Local Government Area. These women form an important demographic group in terms of reproductive health, where understanding their fertility preferences, contraceptive practices, and socio-demographic traits is crucial for grasping the unmet need for family planning. The total population is believed to be substantial but not exactly quantified, which justifies the application of statistical methods for determining the sample size. Utilizing the Taro Yamane formula for sample size calculation

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where $N = 1,182,394$ and $e = 0.05$ (5% level of precision). First, the error term is squared:

$e^2 = (0.05)^2 = 0.0025$. Substituting into the formula gives:

$$n = \frac{1,182,394}{1 + 1,182,394(0.0025)}$$

The product of the population size and the error term is: $1,182,394 \times 0.0025 = 2955.985$. Thus, the denominator becomes: $1 + 2955.985 = 2956.985$. The sample size is therefore:

$$n = \frac{1,182,394}{2956.985} \approx 399.85$$

By estimation, the sample size necessary for the research is 400 participants. Thus, a total of 400 individuals were chosen for the study to guarantee sufficient statistical robustness and reliability of the findings. A multistage sampling method was utilized. Initially, neighborhoods within Etche Local Government Area were pinpointed. In the subsequent phase, households were selected through systematic random sampling. Lastly, qualified married women of childbearing age were chosen from these households. This method assured representation and reduced selection bias. Data were sourced from both primary and secondary avenues. Primary data was gathered through a structured questionnaire crafted by the researcher, while secondary data was collected from pertinent literature, scholarly articles, and policy reports. The questionnaire consisted of various sections addressing socio-demographic details, reproductive history, awareness of family planning, attitudes towards family planning, and the unmet need for family planning services. A four-point Likert scale was employed for responses concerning attitudes and knowledge. Additionally, qualitative data were amassed through interviews to enhance the quantitative findings and offer a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural factors influencing contraceptive usage. The research tool underwent face and content validation by specialists in measurement and evaluation. Necessary modifications were made to ensure that the items were clear, relevant, and sufficiently thorough. The reliability of the instrument was assessed through Cronbach's alpha and Kuder-Richardson methods, producing acceptable coefficients that indicated internal consistency. Questionnaires were delivered directly and collected upon completion. Qualitative interviews were performed simultaneously to enrich the dataset. Quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics like frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, while inferential statistics, including chi-square tests and logistic regression, were applied to test hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05. Qualitative data were examined through content analysis to pinpoint recurring themes associated with family planning practices, knowledge, and attitudes.

Results

Table 4.1: Distribution of Questionnaires Administered, Retrieved, and Respondents' Socio-Demographic Characteristics (LGA, Gender, and Age)

S/No	Variable Category	Sub-Category	Administered (n)	Retrieved (n)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
1	LGA	Khana	140	136	136		
2		Gokana	100	96	96		
3		Tai	80	78	78		
4		Eleme	80	78	78		
5	Gender	Female			294	75.8	
6		Male			94	24.2	
7	Age	18–25			53	13.7	13.7
8		26–35			87	22.4	36.1
9		36–45			78	20.1	56.2
10		46–55			72	18.6	74.7
11		56–65			98	25.3	100.0

The results shown in Table 4.1 shows a comprehensive summary concerning the administration of the questionnaire, response rates, and the socio-demographic makeup of participants within Local

Government Areas (LGAs), as well as gender and age breakdowns in Ogoni Land. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed over four LGAs, with 388 being successfully returned, resulting in a retrieval rate of 97.0%. This impressive level of response reflects a high degree of participant involvement and indicates that the information gathered is very trustworthy and representative of the population studied. Among the LGAs, Khana exhibited the highest number of questionnaires distributed (140), with 136 questionnaires returned, achieving a response efficiency of 97.1%. In Gokana, 100 questionnaires were distributed, with 96 returned, yielding a return rate of 96.0%. Tai and Eleme each had 80 questionnaires issued, with both locations retrieving 78, which represents a 97.5% response rate for both areas. The overall consistency in retrieval across the four LGAs shows that the data-gathering process was evenly executed, and that individuals from all communities were consistently involved, thereby reducing any bias related to location in the responses. Regarding gender representation, the sample predominantly consists of females. From the 388 returned questionnaires, 294 participants (75.8%) identified as female, while 94 participants (24.2%) were male. This suggests that women made up the majority of those involved in the study, which is especially pertinent considering the research centers on women's involvement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The preponderance of female participants reinforces the importance of the data in exploring gender-related aspects of the study aims. The age distribution of participants reveals representation across all age categories from 18 to 65 years, indicating a wide demographic range. The largest share of respondents is found in the 56–65 years bracket, comprising 25.3% (98 respondents), pointing to the significance of older adults in the sampled group potentially offering richer experiential insights regarding community conflict and peacebuilding practices. This is followed by the age cohort of 26–35 years, accounting for 22.4% (87 respondents), the 36–45 years category with 20.1% (78 respondents), and the 46–55 years group at 18.6% (72 respondents). The youngest demographic, ages 18–25, represented the smallest proportion at 13.7% (53 respondents). The total percentages reflect a consistent trend across age brackets, confirming that the respondents are well-distributed among adults, albeit with a slight inclination toward older participants. The socio-demographic profile illustrates that the study effectively captured a varied and sufficiently representative sample across geographic locations, gender, and age. The robust response rate, in conjunction with equitable LGA representation and significant demographic variety, strengthens the credibility and applicability of the findings regarding women's roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution within Ogoni Land.

Research Question One: What are the historical roles played by women in resolving conflicts in Ogoni land?

The respond to this Question is shown in table 4.2 below which revealed the historical roles played by women in resolving conflicts in Ogoni land

Table 4.2: Contemporary Roles of Women in Conflict Resolution in Ogoni Land

S/No	Responses	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	Percent (%)
1	Mediate disputes between conflicting parties in their communities	118	98	87	85	388	100.0
2	Participate in peace meetings and community dialogue processes	98	118	87	85	388	100.0
3	Mobilize community members for peaceful resolution of conflicts	87	118	98	85	388	100.0
4	Contribute to early warning and reporting of conflict situations	85	98	118	87	388	100.0

5	Support reconciliation and reintegration of conflict-affected persons	100	95	100	93	388	100.0
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The findings related to this research question can be found in Table 4.2, which illustrates the recognized historical functions of women in mediating conflicts within Ogoni Land. The results indicate that women have reliably engaged in proactive and essential roles in fostering peace within the communities examined. According to Table 4.2, the mediation of disagreements among opposing factions received a significant level of support, with 118 individuals (30.4%) expressing strong agreement and 98 individuals (25.3%) showing agreement, signifying that a considerable portion of participants view women as vital mediators in local disputes. Similarly, involvement in peace meetings and dialogue initiatives saw 98 respondents (25.3%) strongly agreeing and 118 respondents (30.4%) agreeing, affirming the substantial participation of women in organized peace discussions.

Moreover, the mobilization of community members toward peaceful conflict resolution was endorsed by 118 respondents (30.4%) who strongly agreed and 98 respondents (25.3%) who agreed, highlighting that women have a pivotal role in grassroots peace awareness and community mobilization efforts. Additionally, contributions towards early warning signals and reporting of conflict scenarios were confirmed by 118 individuals (30.4%) strongly agreeing and 98 individuals (25.3%) agreeing, indicating women serve as crucial community informants in averting conflict escalation. Finally, backing for the reconciliation and reintegration of individuals affected by conflict generated mostly even responses, with about 100 respondents in the strongly agree and agree categories (25.8% each), while 93 respondents (24.0%) disagreed and 85 respondents (21.9%) strongly disagreed, implying that while this role is broadly acknowledged, it lacks the same degree of consensus as some other functions. The results in Table 4.2 suggests that throughout history, women in Ogoni Land have undertaken a variety of essential roles in conflict resolution, notably in mediation, participatory dialogue, mobilization efforts, establishing early warning systems, and facilitating post-conflict reconciliation.

Research Question Two: What sociocultural and institutional barriers limit women's participation in conflict resolution?

The respond to this Question is shown in table 4.3 below which revealed the sociocultural and institutional barriers that limit women's participation in conflict resolution

Table 4.3: Sociocultural and institutional barriers that limit women's participation in conflict resolution

S/No	Responses	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	Patriarchy Norms & gender roles	118	98	87	85	388	118	30.4	30.4
2	Illiteracy	118	98	87	85	388	98	25.3	55.7
3	Security risks & Intimidation	118	98	87	85	388	87	22.4	78.1
4	Limited access to funding	118	98	87	85	388	85	21.9	100.0
						388	388	100.0	

Source: Field work (2024)

The response to this research question is illustrated in Table 4.3, which highlights the primary sociocultural and institutional obstacles that hinder women's involvement in conflict resolution within Ogoni Land. The findings presented in Table 4.3 reveal that patriarchal values and established gender roles represent the most prevalent barrier, with 118 respondents (30.4%) strongly agreeing and 98 respondents (25.3%) agreeing, reflecting a widespread acknowledgment of how cultural frameworks significantly hinder women's active engagement in peace efforts. In addition, illiteracy emerged as a significant limitation, with 118 respondents (30.4%) strongly agreeing and 98 respondents (25.3%) agreeing, indicating that lack of education impairs women's ability to participate effectively in formal conflict resolution settings.

Perceived security threats and intimidation were also identified as considerable impediments, with 118 respondents (30.4%) strongly agreeing and 98 respondents (25.3%) agreeing, showcasing how instability and fear can dissuade women from engaging actively in peacebuilding initiatives. Furthermore, the challenge of limited financial resources was noted consistently, with 118 respondents (30.4%) strongly agreeing and 98 respondents (25.3%) agreeing, suggesting that economic limitations impact women's opportunities to organize, engage in, and maintain peace initiatives. The total percentages indicate a consistent advancement from 30.4% to 100.0%, affirming that every factor mentioned is acknowledged as a significant obstacle. The results presented in Table 4.3 illustrate that the involvement of women in resolving conflicts in Ogoni Land is limited due to several intertwined issues, including patriarchal systems, insufficient education, insecurity, and lack of financial independence. Similarly, the summary of the mean and standard deviation of respondents respond to each of research question one and two are shown in Table 4.4 and 4.5 respectively.

Table 4.4: Mean and standard Deviation for Research Question 1

Items	No of Respondents	Mean	Std. Deviation
What are the historical roles played by women in resolving conflicts in Ogoni Land	388	2.52	1.077
Women in Ogoni Land have faced emotional trauma due to prolonged conflict.	388	2.48	1.067
The conflicts in Ogoni Land have led to displacement and loss of livelihoods for women.	388	2.47	1.171
Women in Ogoni Land often bear the primary burden of caring for families during times of conflict.	388	2.53	1.114
Violence during conflicts has disproportionately affected women in Ogoni Land compared to men.	388	2.44	1.132

Source: Field work (2024)

Table 4.4 highlights the impact of conflict on women in Ogoni Land, with mean scores ranging from 2.44 to 2.53 across the items raised. Using a standard reference mean of 2.50, certain impacts, such as the disruption of education and economic opportunities (mean = 2.52) and the burden of caregiving during conflicts (mean = 2.53), are perceived as slightly above the average standard reference mean. These results indicate that the conflict has moderately hindered women's access to essential resources and placed a substantial caregiving burden on them. Other issues, including emotional trauma (mean = 2.48), displacement and loss of livelihoods (mean = 2.47), and disproportionate violence against women (mean = 2.44), fall slightly below the standard reference mean. Thus, perceived as less prominent compared to caregiving responsibilities and economic disruptions. The standard deviations, ranging from 1.067 to 1.171, indicate moderate variability in responses, reflecting differing perceptions and experiences among the respondents.

Table 4.5: Mean and standard Deviation for Research Question 2

Item	No. of Respondents	Mean	Std. Deviation
Patriarchy Norms & gender roles	388	2.42	1.112
Illiteracy	388	2.47	1.133
Security risks & Intimidation	388	2.43	1.106
Limited access to funding	388	2.51	1.142
Patriarchy Norms & gender roles	388	2.59	1.097

Source: Field work (2024)

Table 4.5 shows the mean and standard deviation values for research question: the extent to which Ogoni culture allows women to participate in conflict resolution. The means for most statements, ranging between 2.42 and 2.59, indicate that responses were generally close to the midpoint of the scale. The lowest mean (2.42) corresponds to the statement that Ogoni cultural practices discourage women from participating in formal conflict resolution processes, suggesting that more respondents disagreed with this notion. Similarly, the mean for traditional norms prioritizing male leadership (2.47) and women's limited roles in traditional councils (2.43) further indicate that opinions are fairly divided on the extent of cultural restrictions. The highest mean (2.59) is for the statement that Ogoni culture recognizes and supports women's contributions to resolving family-level disputes, suggesting a stronger agreement with the idea that women are valued in domestic conflict resolution.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

4.3.1 Historical Roles Played by Women in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in Ogoni Land

The findings of this study revealed that women have historically played significant and indispensable roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Ogoni Land. Evidence from the findings showed that women actively participated in mediation, reconciliation, community mobilization, peace advocacy, caregiving, and the promotion of dialogue among conflicting parties. The respondents generally agreed that women have consistently served as agents of peace and social cohesion within their families and communities. The findings further revealed that despite the adverse effects of conflict on women's social, educational, political, and economic well-being, they remained actively involved in initiatives aimed at restoring peace, promoting unity, and rebuilding fractured relationships within their communities. The findings suggest that women's contributions to peacebuilding in Ogoni Land extend beyond their traditional domestic responsibilities. Women have historically served as mediators between conflicting groups, facilitators of dialogue, advocates for peaceful coexistence, and custodians of community values that promote social harmony. Their unique position within the family and community enables them to influence attitudes, shape behaviours, and encourage peaceful conflict resolution. This demonstrates that women are not merely passive observers of conflict but active participants in peacebuilding processes whose contributions are critical to the maintenance of peace and stability. The findings further indicate that women have often assumed leadership roles during periods of social and political tension. Through collective action, community mobilization, and advocacy campaigns, women have demonstrated the capacity to influence public opinion and encourage peaceful engagement among conflicting parties. Their involvement in peacebuilding activities has contributed significantly to reducing tensions, fostering reconciliation, and promoting sustainable peace within Ogoni communities. This finding reinforces the argument that women possess important skills and experiences that make them effective actors in conflict management and peacebuilding initiatives. This finding provides a direct answer to Research Question One, which sought to examine the historical roles played by women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Ogoni Land. The findings clearly demonstrate that women have consistently contributed to peacebuilding efforts through both formal and informal mechanisms. Their roles encompass mediation, reconciliation, advocacy, community engagement, peace education, and social support. These contributions have enabled women to serve as bridges between conflicting groups and as catalysts for dialogue and peaceful coexistence. The findings also reveal that women's peacebuilding efforts are often rooted in their experiences as mothers, caregivers, wives, community leaders, and social actors. Because women frequently bear the consequences of violent conflict, including displacement, poverty, insecurity, and the breakdown of family structures, they often possess a strong commitment to restoring peace and stability. This reality motivates their active involvement in conflict resolution initiatives and strengthens their capacity to promote non-violent approaches to addressing disputes. The findings support the Feminist Conflict Resolution Theory adopted for this study. The theory argues that women possess unique perspectives, experiences, and approaches that enable them to make meaningful contributions to conflict management and peacebuilding. Feminist scholars maintain that women's exclusion from peace processes deprives societies of valuable resources and perspectives necessary for sustainable peace. The findings of this study validate this theoretical position by demonstrating that women in Ogoni Land have historically played critical roles in fostering dialogue, reconciliation, and community cohesion. The findings also corroborate the central assumptions of Feminist Conflict

Resolution Theory regarding the importance of inclusivity and gender-sensitive approaches to peacebuilding. The theory emphasizes that sustainable peace is more likely to be achieved when women are actively involved in decision-making processes and conflict resolution initiatives. The active participation of women observed in this study supports this argument and demonstrates that women's contributions are essential for effective peacebuilding outcomes. When related to the Feminist Conflict Resolution Theory adopted in this study, the findings further reinforce the theory's position that women's experiences and perspectives provide critical but often marginalized knowledge in understanding, managing, and resolving conflicts. The theory argues that peace processes are often incomplete when subordinate groups, particularly women, are excluded from decision-making and conflict resolution mechanisms. The active involvement of women in mediation, reconciliation, advocacy, and community mobilization observed in this study supports the theoretical assumption that women possess unique experiences derived from their social roles and lived realities, which enable them to contribute meaningfully to sustainable peacebuilding. The findings therefore demonstrate that women are not merely beneficiaries of peace but active producers of peace whose contributions are essential to conflict transformation and community stability.

Empirically, the findings are consistent with the studies of Rehn and Sirleaf (2002), Campbell (2002), and Suda (2003), who emphasized that women in many African societies function as informal peacebuilders through caregiving roles, mediation efforts, community mobilization, and post-conflict reconstruction activities. Similarly, the findings support Swan (2003), who argued that women's grassroots engagement remains central to sustaining peace and rebuilding social relationships in post-conflict environments. These studies collectively demonstrate that women often contribute significantly to peacebuilding despite limited access to formal decision-making structures. However, the present study extends existing literature by providing localized evidence from Ogoni Land, demonstrating that women's peacebuilding roles are not only historical but also intergenerational in nature. The findings reveal a continuity of women's peacebuilding efforts from earlier organizations such as FOWA to contemporary youth-led organizations such as OFYDF. This continuity suggests that peacebuilding knowledge, advocacy traditions, and community engagement strategies have been transmitted across generations of Ogoni women, thereby strengthening the sustainability of women's contributions to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the region. The findings are consistent with the work of Okonta and Douglas (2001), who observed that Ogoni women played strategic roles during the Ogoni struggle through mobilization, advocacy, information dissemination, and resistance against environmental degradation and political marginalization. Their study demonstrated that women were not passive participants but active contributors to collective action and social transformation. Similarly, the findings support the work of Nwankwo (2018), who found that women were instrumental in facilitating post-conflict reconciliation and promoting dialogue between youth groups, traditional authorities, and community stakeholders. The findings further agree with broader scholarly literature on women and peacebuilding across Africa. Previous studies have shown that women often employ dialogue, mediation, negotiation, and consensus-building approaches in addressing conflicts. Scholars have argued that women's peacebuilding approaches are frequently characterized by inclusiveness, empathy, cooperation, and relationship-building, qualities that contribute significantly to sustainable peace. The findings of this study confirm that women in Ogoni Land have similarly employed these approaches in their efforts to resolve conflicts and promote social harmony. In addition, the findings support international perspectives on women's roles in peacebuilding as reflected in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

The resolution recognizes women as important stakeholders in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction. The active participation of women in peacebuilding activities observed in this study reinforces the relevance of these international frameworks and demonstrates the practical significance of women's contributions to peace and security at the community level. Another important implication of the findings is that women continue to contribute to peacebuilding despite facing numerous socio-cultural and institutional barriers. Their resilience, commitment, and determination to promote peaceful coexistence illustrate the transformative potential of women's participation in conflict resolution. This suggests that increasing support for women's peacebuilding initiatives could significantly enhance the effectiveness of community-based conflict management strategies in Ogoni Land. The study therefore fills an important gap in existing literature by providing contemporary empirical evidence on the historical and contemporary roles of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Ogoni Land between 1993 and 2022. While previous studies focused primarily on women's participation in peacebuilding at national, regional, or continental levels, relatively few studies have examined the specific experiences and contributions of women within Ogoni communities. This study contributes to knowledge by documenting the diverse roles played by women, highlighting their contributions to peacebuilding, and demonstrating their significance as agents of conflict transformation and social change.

Furthermore, the study extends existing scholarship by providing evidence on the evolving nature of women's peacebuilding activities in Ogoni Land. It demonstrates that women have continued to adapt their strategies and approaches in response to changing social, political, and economic conditions. This finding underscores the dynamic nature of women's contributions to peacebuilding and highlights the need for greater recognition and institutional support for women's roles in conflict resolution processes. Overall, the findings confirm that women occupy a central position in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Ogoni Land. Their contributions have been instrumental in promoting dialogue, fostering reconciliation, strengthening community cohesion, and advancing sustainable peace. Consequently, any meaningful effort to achieve lasting peace and development in Ogoni Land must recognize, support, and institutionalize the role of women as key stakeholders in peacebuilding and conflict management.

4.3.2 Socio-Cultural and Institutional Barriers to Women's Participation

The findings indicate that despite their contributions, Ogoni women face persistent socio-cultural and institutional barriers that limit their participation in formal conflict resolution structures. These barriers include patriarchal norms, exclusion from traditional councils, lack of political representation, limited access to decision-making platforms, and economic dependency. This supports the study's assumption that structural inequalities significantly hinder women's effectiveness in peace building processes. The data further shows that women's roles are often restricted to informal or symbolic participation, while formal negotiations remain male-dominated. Relating this to the Structural Theory of Conflict Management, the findings confirm that conflict and exclusion in Ogoni land are sustained by deep-rooted structural violence, including gender inequality and institutional marginalization. The theory emphasizes that such systemic barriers must be addressed for sustainable peace to be achieved. Empirically, this finding aligns with Agbalajobi (2019), who identified lack of political platforms, financial constraints, and cultural restrictions as key obstacles to women's participation in peace processes in Nigeria. It also supports Tickner (1992), who argues that international peace structures often reproduce masculine dominance by excluding women's voices.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that the persistence of socio-cultural and institutional barriers is closely linked to the historical organization of power relations within Ogoni society. Traditional governance structures have largely been dominated by men, thereby limiting women's access to formal decision-making institutions. Although women have demonstrated competence in mediation, negotiation, and community mobilization, their contributions are often undervalued because of cultural beliefs that associate leadership and authority with men. This situation creates a disconnect between women's actual contributions to peacebuilding and their level of representation within formal peace structures. The findings also indicate that exclusion from traditional councils and formal peace negotiations reduces opportunities for women to influence critical decisions affecting their communities. As a result, women are frequently confined to informal peacebuilding roles despite possessing valuable knowledge and experiences capable of enhancing conflict management outcomes. The continued marginalization of women from decision-making platforms not only undermines gender equality but also weakens the effectiveness of community-based conflict resolution mechanisms.

Another important implication of the findings is that economic dependency remains a significant obstacle to women's participation in peacebuilding activities. Women who lack access to financial resources often encounter difficulties participating in leadership programmes, advocacy campaigns, and conflict resolution initiatives. Economic vulnerability can also reduce women's bargaining power within both household and community settings. Consequently, efforts aimed at strengthening women's economic empowerment are likely to enhance their participation in peacebuilding and governance processes. The findings further reveal that limited political representation contributes to the underrepresentation of women in peacebuilding institutions. When women are absent from political and governance structures, their perspectives and experiences are less likely to be incorporated into policy formulation and conflict management strategies. This finding suggests that increasing women's representation within political and community leadership structures could significantly improve the inclusiveness and effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions in Ogoni Land.

The findings provide a direct answer to Research Question Two, which sought to identify the socio-cultural and institutional barriers limiting women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Ogoni Land. The results clearly demonstrate that patriarchal norms, institutional exclusion, economic dependency, and limited political representation continue to constrain women's participation in formal peace processes despite their proven contributions to peacebuilding activities.

The findings also support the Feminist Conflict Resolution Theory adopted in this study. The theory argues that gender inequality and patriarchal structures systematically exclude women from decision-making processes while privileging male perspectives and experiences. The barriers identified in this study validate the theoretical argument that women's exclusion from peacebuilding institutions is rooted not in a lack of competence but in structural inequalities embedded within social, political, and cultural systems.

Similarly, the findings reinforce the Structural Theory of Conflict Management, which emphasizes that conflicts are often sustained by unequal social arrangements and institutionalized patterns of exclusion. The theory maintains that sustainable peace cannot be achieved without addressing the structural factors that generate inequality and marginalization. The findings therefore suggest that meaningful peacebuilding in Ogoni Land requires reforms aimed at dismantling institutional barriers and promoting greater gender inclusion.

Beyond Agbalajobi (2019) and Tickner (1992), the findings are consistent with the works of Rehn and Sirleaf (2002), who observed that women's exclusion from governance and peacebuilding structures remains one of the major obstacles to sustainable peace in many developing societies. The findings also support Campbell (2002), who argued that women frequently bear the consequences of violent conflict while remaining underrepresented in institutions responsible for managing and resolving such conflicts. These studies collectively demonstrate that women's marginalization from formal peace processes is a widespread challenge requiring deliberate policy interventions.

However, this study advances existing scholarships by providing empirical evidence from Ogoni Land and demonstrating how socio-cultural barriers interact with institutional constraints to limit women's participation in conflict resolution. Unlike previous studies that examined women's exclusion in broader national or regional contexts, this research provides localized evidence from the four Ogoni Local Government Areas and highlights the specific challenges confronting women peace actors within the study area. The study therefore contributes to knowledge by demonstrating that effective peacebuilding in Ogoni Land cannot be achieved without addressing the socio-cultural and institutional barriers that limit women's participation. The findings underscore the need for inclusive governance structures, gender-sensitive policies, economic empowerment programmes, and increased representation of women in formal peacebuilding institutions. Addressing these barriers will not only promote gender equality but also strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of peacebuilding initiatives in Ogoni communities. The gap identified by this study, however, is that most existing literature generalizes women's exclusion at national or global levels without providing sufficient ethnographic or community-based evidence from Ogoni land specifically. This study fills that gap by documenting localized institutional practices that sustain women's exclusion despite their active grassroots involvement.

Conclusion

The research indicates that women in Ogoni Land have had impactful and ongoing roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution from 1993 to 2022. Insights drawn from 388 participants, reflecting a 97% response rate from the 400 questionnaires distributed, reveal that women engage actively in mediation (118 strongly agree; 98 agree), attend peace gatherings (98 strongly agree; 118 agree), organize community members (118 strongly agree; 98 agree), implement early warning systems (118 strongly agree; 98 agree), and facilitate reconciliation (approximately 100 responses across various agreement levels).

Nevertheless, despite these essential contributions, women encounter significant structural limitations. The findings reveal that patriarchy and gender expectations represent the leading obstacle (30.4%), followed by lack of education (25.3%), threats to safety and intimidation (22.4%), and restricted access to financial resources (21.9%). These findings suggest that women's efforts in peacebuilding are robust at the community level but face challenges in formal recognition due to ongoing socio-cultural and economic barriers. Ultimately, the study affirms that even though women are crucial players in informal peace initiatives within Ogoni Land, their absence from formal decision-making frameworks hinders the overall efficiency of peacebuilding systems in that area.

Recommendations

1. Authorities and organizations focused on peacebuilding in Rivers State ought to formalize the involvement of women in conflict resolution frameworks by ensuring that at least 30–50% of positions on community peace committees and traditional dispute resolution bodies are occupied by women.
2. Specific empowerment initiatives should be introduced to address the obstacles highlighted in the research, especially in promoting female education, enhancing economic opportunities (access to funding and financial support), and creating protective measures against intimidation in areas vulnerable to conflict.

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