



## JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Volume 2, Number 1 (March 2026)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3093-060X (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/jpci> Email: [jppssuniuyo@gmail.com](mailto:jppssuniuyo@gmail.com)

Received: February 25, 2026 Accepted: March 18, 2026 Published: March 31, 2026

Citation: Udofia, Etebong A.; Ayatt, Ukpong U. & Umanah, Evin E. (2026). "Gender Mainstreaming and Peace Building in Nigeria." *Journal of Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, 2 (1): 1-11.

Article

Open Access

### GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND PEACE BUILDING IN NIGERIA

Etebong Alban Udofia<sup>1</sup>, Ukpong Ukpong Ayatt<sup>2</sup> & Evin Ekaete Umanah<sup>3</sup>

Department of Political Science, University of Uyo<sup>1&2</sup>

Nasarawa State University, Keffi<sup>3</sup>

Corresponding Email: [albanjnr@gmail.com](mailto:albanjnr@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>

#### Abstract

This study investigated the role of gender mainstreaming in peace building in Nigeria, focusing on how forced marriages, sexual violence, and exclusion of women from formal peace processes shape conflict dynamics. The research adopted the view that gendered power relations, patriarchal structures, and the militarization of society disproportionately expose women and girls to conflict-related vulnerabilities. Feminist Theory provides the lens for understanding how women's systematic marginalization from peace building reinforces structural inequalities and weakens the effectiveness of post-conflict interventions. The study employ a qualitative research design, drawing on empirical literature, policy documents, human rights reports, and scholarly studies to analyze patterns of gender-based violence and peace building practices across conflict-affected regions in Nigeria. Findings show that insurgents and armed groups weaponize sexual violence and forced marriages not only to assert dominance and instill fear, but also to fragment communities and perpetuate long-term instability. Survivors experienced severe psychosocial trauma, stigma, and economic exclusion, while weak state institutions and poor justice responses contributed to a culture of impunity. The research further revealed that women's exclusion from peace negotiations undermines the sustainability and inclusiveness of peace initiatives, as their experiences and needs remain unaddressed in most peace agreements. The study concluded that gender mainstreaming grounded in feminist insights is essential for developing transformative and survivor-centered peace building strategies. Key recommendations emphasized strengthening gender-responsive security structures, enhancing women's participation in peace processes, improving reintegration mechanisms, and ensuring effective implementation of gender-related policies.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Gender Mainstreaming, Conflict, Peace Building, Nigeria.

Copyright © 2026 By JPCI. Publishers: Omega Books

This is an open access article which permits unrestricted use provided the work is properly cited.

## **Background to the Study**

Gender mainstreaming refers to a strategy that seeks to integrate gender perspective into all stages of policy development, advocacy, and resource allocation to ensure that men and women benefit equally. It has become a central pillar of global peace and development policy, particularly since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. It urges governments to integrate gender considerations across all sectors as a strategy for achieving equality (UN Women, 2020). This global commitment was reinforced by the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in 2000. The emphasis is on the need to recognize women not only as victims of conflict but also as important actors in peace building, conflict prevention, and post-conflict reconstruction (UNDP, 2021). According to Enloe (2019), gender mainstreaming essentially seeks to transform institutional norms and ensure that gendered power relations are acknowledged and addressed in all peace and security processes. Nigeria provides a rich context for interrogating gender mainstreaming within peace building because of its prolonged and multifaceted security challenges. The country has experienced diverse conflicts, including the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast, armed banditry in the Northwest, farmer–herder conflicts in the North Central, militancy in the Niger Delta, and separatist agitations in the Southeast. These conflicts have collectively produced substantial humanitarian crises, massive internal displacement, economic instability, and widespread human rights abuses (Danjibo et al., 2023). Women and girls often bear the brunt of these crises through abductions, forced marriages, sexual and gender-based violence, loss of livelihoods, and disruption of social support systems (Obi & Hassan, 2020). Despite this vulnerability, women have consistently demonstrated resilience by engaging in informal peace negotiations, early-warning mechanisms, community mediation, and support for displaced persons (Okpara & Adeleye, 2021).

Recognizing these realities, Nigeria has developed several frameworks aimed at integrating gender into peace and security governance. These include the National Gender Policy (2006), the National Action Plan (NAP) for implementing UNSCR 1325 first adopted in 2013 and revised in 2017 and institutional initiatives championed by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and civil society organizations such as WACOL and WRAPA. These frameworks aim to increase women’s meaningful participation in peace building, enhance protection mechanisms, and improve gender-responsive decision-making. International development partners such as UN Women, ECOWAS, and UNDP have supported these efforts through training, advocacy, and capacity-building programmes (UN Women, 2020; UNDP, 2021). However, the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Nigeria remains limited and inconsistent. Research shows that women continue to occupy marginal positions in formal peace and security institutions, representing less than the recommended threshold for effective gender representation (Adebajo & Omotola, 2021). Barriers such as patriarchal norms, weak institutional capacity, insufficient funding, absence of gender-disaggregated data, and limited political will continue to undermine progress (Danjibo et al., 2023). Furthermore, peace negotiation processes at federal, state, and local government levels rarely include women, despite evidence that women’s participation leads to more durable peace outcomes (Okenwa, 2022). The persistence of these challenges underscores the need for a deeper examination of gender mainstreaming in Nigeria’s peace building architecture. Understanding how gender perspectives are currently integrated and the obstacles that impede their effective implementation offers critical insights into enhancing the country’s peace building strategies. As Galtung (2019) argues, sustainable peace requires inclusive

processes that address the structural and cultural causes of conflict. Therefore, strengthening gender mainstreaming in Nigeria is not only a policy imperative but also a pathway toward achieving lasting stability and development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite increasing global recognition of the importance of gender mainstreaming in peace building, Nigeria continues to struggle with effectively integrating gender perspectives into its peace and security architecture. Although frameworks such as the National Gender Policy (2006) and the National Action Plan (NAP) for implementing UNSCR 1325 (2013; revised in 2017) were established to promote women's participation in peace processes, significant gaps remain between policy commitments and actual practice. These frameworks largely exist on paper and have not translated into meaningful structural changes within institutions responsible for conflict management and security governance (Danjibo et al., 2023). A major problem is the persistent marginalization of women in formal peace building mechanisms. Women are routinely excluded from high-level peace negotiations, security decision-making bodies, conflict-resolution committees, and early-warning systems. Existing studies show that women make up less than 10% of Nigeria's peace and security institutions, far below international recommendations (Adebajo & Omotola, 2021). This exclusion limits the diversity of perspectives needed to understand the gendered dimensions of conflict and undermines the effectiveness of peace interventions. Furthermore, gender-based violence remains widespread in conflict-affected regions. Women and girls continue to experience abductions, sexual violence, forced marriages, and displacement, yet their specific needs are rarely prioritized in humanitarian responses (Obi & Hassan, 2020). The lack of gender-disaggregated data also prevents policymakers from designing targeted interventions.

Additionally, socio-cultural norms and patriarchal structures pose serious barriers to gender mainstreaming. Deeply ingrained traditions restrict women's mobility, voice, and leadership opportunities, making it difficult for them to participate in public decision-making processes (Okpara & Adeleye, 2021). Weak institutional capacity, limited funding, poor coordination among agencies, and inadequate monitoring of gender policies further compound the challenge. Consequently, Nigeria's peace building efforts remain largely gender-blind, failing to address the unequal impacts of conflict or harness the transformative role women can play in preventing violence and promoting lasting peace. This persistent gap highlights the need for a critical assessment of gender mainstreaming strategies within Nigeria's peace and security landscape.

### **Objectives of Study**

The specific objectives of the study are on gender impact assessment focusing on:

- i. examining how exclusion of women in formal peace-building mechanism undermines peace building efforts in Nigeria.
- ii. ascertaining whether forced marriage and sexual violence are widespread in conflict-affected regions in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

Two research questions guided the study:

- i. How does exclusion of women in formal peace-building mechanism undermines peace building efforts in Nigeria?
- ii. How widespread are forced marriages and sexual violence in conflict affected regions in Nigeria?

## **Conceptual Clarification and Literature Review**

**Gender and Gender Mainstreaming:** Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, expectations, behaviours, and power relations associated with being male or female within a given society, distinguishing it from biological sex (Connell & Pearse, 2015). These constructions shape access to resources, opportunities, and authority, often producing structural inequalities that limit women's participation in governance, conflict resolution, and development processes (World Bank, 2019). Gender mainstreaming emerged as a global strategy to address these gaps by ensuring that gender perspectives are integrated into policies, institutions, and programme cycles at all levels (UN Women, 2020). It promotes the systematic assessment of how proposed actions may affect women and men differently to prevent reinforcing inequalities. In peace building, gender mainstreaming strengthens inclusivity, enhances conflict-sensitivity, and ensures that interventions respond adequately to the needs of diverse groups affected by violence (True, 2016). Incorporating women's voices and experiences contributes to more durable peace outcomes, as societies that adopt gender-responsive approaches tend to implement more equitable, legitimate, and sustainable post-conflict reforms (O'Reilly, Ó Súilleabháin, & Paffenholz, 2015). Thus, gender mainstreaming is both a normative commitment and a practical framework for improving peace building effectiveness.

**Peace Building:** Peace building refers to deliberate efforts aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, or recurrence of violent conflict and fostering sustainable peace within societies (Galtung, 2019). It encompasses a wide range of activities, including conflict prevention, negotiation, mediation, reconciliation, post-conflict reconstruction, institution-building, and promoting social cohesion. Peace building is multidimensional, addressing not only immediate security concerns but also structural causes of conflict such as inequality, exclusion, weak governance, and socio-economic marginalization (Lund, 2020). Effective peace building requires inclusivity, participation, and legitimacy, with actors ranging from state institutions and international organizations to local communities and civil society groups. The success of peace building efforts is often contingent on integrating diverse perspectives, including those of marginalized groups, to ensure that the root causes of conflict are addressed. Without comprehensive approaches, peace building interventions risk being superficial, unsustainable, or inadvertently exacerbating existing tensions (Paris & Sisk, 2009). Thus, peace building is not only a security-oriented strategy but also a social, political, and economic endeavour that requires long-term commitment.

**Gender Mainstreaming in Peace Building:** Gender mainstreaming in peace building involves the systematic integration of gender perspectives into all stages of conflict management, peace negotiations, and post-conflict reconstruction (Okenwa, 2022). It recognizes that men and women experience conflict differently, with women often facing sexual violence, displacement, and economic marginalization, while also contributing uniquely to peace and reconciliation efforts. By incorporating gender considerations, peace building processes become more inclusive, equitable, and effective, enhancing the legitimacy and sustainability of interventions (True, 2016). Research indicates that women's participation in peace processes leads to more durable peace agreements, stronger community cohesion, and improved monitoring of ceasefires and human rights protections (O'Reilly, Ó Súilleabháin, & Paffenholz, 2015). Gender mainstreaming requires legal frameworks, institutional reforms, and capacity-building measures to ensure that women are actively involved in decision-making and that policies are sensitive to gender-specific vulnerabilities. In practice, this

includes designing programmes that address women's security needs, promoting equal representation in peace committees, and implementing mechanisms to monitor gender outcomes. Hence, gender mainstreaming is both a normative and practical approach that enhances the effectiveness of peace building.

**Nigeria's Peace and Security Context:** Nigeria's peace and security landscape is complex, characterized by multidimensional conflicts with political, economic, religious, ethnic, and resource-driven dimensions. The Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths, mass displacement, and widespread disruption of social and economic life (Danjibo et al., 2023). In the North Central region, clashes between pastoralists and farmers over land and water resources have caused recurring communal violence, while armed banditry in the Northwest threatens public safety and economic activities. In the Niger Delta, resource-related militancy has historically undermined regional stability, affecting both local livelihoods and national development (Adebajo & Omotola, 2021). Women are disproportionately affected, facing abductions, sexual violence, forced marriages, and loss of access to education and livelihoods. Despite these vulnerabilities, women actively participate in informal conflict resolution, community mediation, and humanitarian support, demonstrating resilience and leadership (Okpara & Adeleye, 2021). Addressing Nigeria's conflicts effectively requires peace building approaches that incorporate gender perspectives, ensuring both the protection of women and their meaningful participation in decision-making processes to foster inclusive and sustainable peace.

**Empirical Review:** Gender Mainstreaming for peace building is a widely trending issue. It covers several viewpoints including how women are excluded in peace building mechanisms in Nigeria. For instance, Obi and Hassan (2020) examined the extent to which gender perspectives have been integrated into formal peace building processes in Nigeria. The study highlights that women remain significantly underrepresented in peace and security decision-making bodies, including mediation committees, local peace councils, and government task forces addressing conflict. Using qualitative analysis of government reports, policy documents, and interviews with key stakeholders, the authors argued that Nigeria's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 has had limited practical impact due to weak institutional mechanisms and patriarchal sociocultural structures. The authors note that women's participation in formal peace initiatives rarely exceeds 10%, thus undermining the inclusivity and effectiveness of conflict resolution processes. The study emphasized the role of grassroots women's organizations, which often lead informal mediation and reconciliation efforts in conflict-prone communities. However, these organizations face systemic challenges, including limited funding, poor coordination with government agencies, and insufficient technical support. Obi and Hassan concluded that bridging the gap between policy and practice is crucial. They recommend strengthening institutional gender mechanisms, promoting women's leadership in peace committees, and systematically integrating gender-sensitive approaches into all stages of peace building initiatives to improve sustainability and societal acceptance of peace accords.

Furthermore, Danjibo, Ibrahim, and Yahaya (2023) focused on Nigeria's implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which mandates the integration of women into all aspects of peace and security. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining content analysis of policy documents with interviews of government officials, civil society actors, and women leaders engaged in peace building.

Findings indicate that while Nigeria has formalized mechanisms such as the National Action Plan (NAP) and gender desks within security agencies, actual implementation remains limited due to inadequate funding, poor monitoring systems, and low prioritization by political leaders. The study also noted the lack of gender-disaggregated data, which hampers evidence-based decision-making and planning. At the community level, women continue to participate actively in conflict mitigation, especially in informal mediation, peace education, and reconciliation initiatives. However, their efforts are often unrecognized in official policy evaluations. Danjibo, et al. concluded that achieving meaningful gender mainstreaming in Nigeria requires not only policy frameworks but also political commitment, institutional capacity building, and the creation of accountability mechanisms to ensure women's voices are included at all levels of peace processes. Additionally, Okenwa (2022) explored the impact of gender mainstreaming on inclusive peacebuilding across sub-Saharan Africa, with Nigeria serving as a primary case study. The study adopts a comparative qualitative approach, analyzing the experiences of women in formal and informal peace building structures in Nigeria, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Findings revealed that women's participation significantly improves peace process outcomes by fostering reconciliation, community engagement, and accountability. In Nigeria, women's groups have demonstrated leadership in mediating local conflicts, rehabilitating victims, and advocating for policy reforms that protect marginalized groups. Despite these contributions, the study highlighted persistent obstacles, including patriarchal cultural norms, low political representation, and insufficient integration of gender perspectives in state-led interventions.

Okenwa emphasized that inclusive peace building requires deliberate strategies to elevate women's roles beyond symbolic participation. Recommendations included establishing mandatory quotas for women in negotiation tables, enhancing funding for women-led peace initiatives, integrating gender expertise into security agencies, and promoting gender-sensitive curricula for conflict resolution practitioners. The study concluded that gender mainstreaming is essential for the legitimacy, durability, and effectiveness of peace building efforts in Nigeria and similar contexts. Okpara and Adeleye (2021) examined the role of women in community-level peace building in conflict-affected regions of Nigeria, including the Northeast and North Central zones. The study uses case-study methodology, combining interviews with women peace builders, local leaders, and civil society organizations. The findings demonstrated that women are central to informal conflict resolution processes, including dispute mediation, negotiation, and reconciliation. Women also facilitate psychosocial support for victims of violence and contribute to local early-warning systems for conflict prevention. However, the study identifies critical challenges: women's initiatives are underfunded, marginalized in formal state structures, and often lack official recognition. Socio-cultural barriers, including patriarchal norms and limited mobility, further restrict women's participation in broader policy and security decision-making. Okpara and Adeleye argued that these gaps undermine the overall effectiveness of peace building efforts; integrating women more fully into formal and informal processes is crucial. Policy recommendations include creating structured partnerships between grassroots women's organizations and government agencies, providing capacity-building support, and ensuring women's representation in all peace building platforms.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Feminist theory provides a critical framework for understanding how gendered power relations shape social, political, and institutional processes. Early foundational contributions

include Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), who argued that women's subordination is socially constructed, not biologically determined. Later, scholars such as Betty Friedan (1963), bell hooks (1984), and Nancy Fraser (1995) expanded feminist inquiry into political structures, economic inequalities, and social justice. Within international relations and peace studies, the work of Cynthia Enloe (1990, 2000), J. Ann Tickner (1992, 2001), and Carol Cohn (2013) significantly advanced feminist perspectives by highlighting how militarism, conflict, and peace processes are shaped by gendered assumptions that privilege male experiences while marginalizing women's voices. Feminist theory argues that conflict is not gender-neutral; rather, men and women experience violence differently and peace building efforts that exclude women fail to address the full spectrum of conflict's impacts (Tickner, 1992). Feminist scholars emphasize that women are not merely victims but active agents in conflict resolution, community mediation, and reconstruction (Enloe, 2000). They also critique the masculine orientation of security institutions, which often limits women's participation in peace processes and policy formulation (Cohn, 2013).

Feminist theory is directly relevant to this study on gender mainstreaming for peace building in Nigeria because it helps explain why women remain underrepresented despite their significant contributions at grassroots levels. The theory reveals how patriarchal norms, institutional biases, and security-centered approaches systematically silence women in Nigeria's formal peace building architecture. By applying feminist insights, the study underscores the need to integrate women's perspectives into decision-making structures, policies, and programmes to enhance inclusivity and effectiveness. Furthermore, feminist theory aligns with global frameworks such as UNSCR 1325, which advances women's participation, protection, and involvement in peace and security governance. It therefore provides the conceptual lens for recognizing women's strategic roles and for arguing that sustainable peace in Nigeria requires dismantling gendered barriers and institutionalizing gender-responsive approaches.

### **Methodology**

The study uses secondary sources for data collection. The sources of data include journals, textbooks, newspapers, conference papers, and official documents. These sources help in exploring the impact of Gender Sensitivity in the efforts of peace building in Nigeria.

### **Exclusion of Women in Formal Peace-building Mechanism and Peace Building Efforts in Nigeria**

This question is central to evaluating how gender mainstreaming (or its absence) shapes the effectiveness, inclusiveness, and sustainability of peace building in Nigeria. It directly interrogates the relationship between women's participation and the quality of peace outcomes, which lies at the heart of the study. The research question aligns perfectly with the study because the core aim of gender mainstreaming is to integrate women's perspectives and experiences into policy and decision-making processes. Since peace building is a multidimensional process, excluding women potentially creates a gender gap in conflict diagnosis, negotiation, and resolution. Therefore, the question helps assess whether Nigeria's peace building remains ineffective partly due to the absence of women in formal structures such as; peace committees, mediation teams, security sector institutions, and reconstruction and reconciliation commission. From a Feminist Theory perspective, exclusion of women reflects patriarchal power structures that limit whose voices matter in formal political processes. Feminist theorists argue that peace efforts are weakened when they do not reflect the diverse experiences of all conflict-affected populations. From a

Human Security perspective, excluding women means essential human needs such as safety, livelihood recovery, psychosocial well-being, and community resilience may be overlooked, making peace unstable. Thus, the research question is rooted in the theoretical frameworks guiding the study.

This is in line with existing empirical studies in Nigeria (e.g., Obi & Hassan, 2020; Okpara & Adeleye, 2021; Danjibo et al., 2023) which show that women play critical roles in informal peace mechanisms mediation, early-warning systems, and rehabilitation but remain marginalized in formal mechanisms. These studies find a clear link between exclusion of women and; weakened legitimacy of peace agreements, reduced community buy-in, ineffective monitoring of ceasefires, and failure to address gender-specific harms (e.g., sexual violence, displacement and forced marriages). In the context of Nigeria's conflicts, Boko Haram, banditry, farmer–herder clashes, and communal violence affect women disproportionately. Women often manage the humanitarian burden, serve as informal negotiators, and act as community stabilizers. Excluding them from formal platforms means missing essential insights needed for sustainable peace. Within the context of Islamic dominance in several theatres of violence in Northern Nigeria, women have little or no voice on peace negotiation even in the IDP camps (Adebajo & Omotola, 2020). It is therefore evidence that women contribution to peaceful resolution of conflict in the northern part of the country is negligibly felt.

### **Forced Marriages and Sexual Violence in Conflict Affected Regions in Nigeria?**

The relationship between forced marriages, sexual violence, and conflict-affected regions in Nigeria is firmly documented in both empirical studies and policy reports, illustrating that such gendered harms are integral to the dynamics of contemporary violence rather than incidental by-products. Empirical research on Nigeria's conflicts shows that insurgent and armed groups most notably Boko Haram in the Northeast have used abduction, enforced marriage and systematic sexual violence as deliberate instruments of control, intimidation, and social disruption, producing long-term trauma and fracturing community ties (Obi & Hassan, 2020; Danjibo, Ibrahim, & Yahaya, 2023). Field-based case studies further reveal that women in the Northwest and North Central are subjected to forced marriages and sexual assault during raids and kidnappings by bandit groups, practices that are deployed as strategies for ransom, displacement, and the assertion of power (Okpara & Adeleye, 2021; Adebajo & Omotola, 2021). These empirical accounts align with broader cross-national research showing that sexual violence in conflict is frequently instrumentalized to achieve military and political objectives and to reinforce patriarchal social orders (Enloe, 2019; O'Reilly, Ó Súilleabháin, & Paffenholz, 2015). Moreover, UN and development agency reports emphasize that the breakdown of law, weakened governance, and inadequate protection systems in conflict zones create permissive environments for gender-based violence, while the chronic lack of gender-disaggregated data and monitoring mechanisms undermines capacity to design targeted responses (UN Women, 2020; UNDP, 2021). The consequences of forced marriages and sexual violence are multidimensional: they produce stigma and exclusion that hinder survivors' social reintegration, generate psychosocial and health crises that burden families and communities, and perpetuate cycles of grievance that can fuel revenge and renewed violence, thereby impeding reconciliation and long-term peace building (Okenwa, 2022).

Furthermore, empirical studies indicated that where women's perspectives and experiences are absent from formal peace processes, peace agreements and recovery programmes frequently fail to address these gendered harms, resulting in incomplete

remedies and fragile outcomes (Obi & Hassan, 2020; O'Reilly et al., 2015). Consequently, the literature converges on a central policy implication for Nigeria: addressing forced marriages and sexual violence must be central to any gender-mainstreamed peace building strategy, through survivor-centered services, accountability for perpetrators, inclusion of women in negotiation and monitoring mechanisms, improved gender-disaggregated data, and strengthened protection policies if peace interventions are to be legitimate, inclusive, and durable (Danjibo et al., 2023; UN Women, 2020).

### **Summary of Findings**

The following findings were made;

- i. Forced marriage and sexual violence are tools of domination, coercion and social destabilization by armed groups, and weak governance, inadequate security architecture, and poor access to justice in conflict-affected regions create enabling environments where gender-based violence escalates unchecked.
- ii. Women's exclusion from peace negotiations, community security forums, and post-conflict reconstruction processes undermines the effectiveness and sustainability of peace building programmes.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study found that forced marriages and sexual violence are not incidental outcomes of conflict in Nigeria but are systematically deployed tools of domination, coercion, and social destabilization by armed groups, including Boko Haram, bandit groups, and other non-state actors. Evidence drawn from field-based reports and empirical studies shows that insurgents use abduction, rape, and enforced marriage to exert territorial influence, weaken community resilience, and reinforce patriarchal power structures. These practices were found to contribute significantly to long-term social fragmentation, psychological trauma, and the erosion of traditional community protection mechanisms. The study also revealed that weak governance, inadequate security architecture, and poor access to justice in conflict-affected regions create enabling environments where gender-based violence escalates unchecked. Law-enforcement agencies often lack capacity and coordination, resulting in limited prosecution of perpetrators and a pervasive culture of impunity. The absence of gender-responsive early-warning systems and poor documentation of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), particularly the lack of gender-disaggregated data, further weaken the state's ability to plan and implement targeted interventions. An important finding is that survivors of sexual violence and forced marriages face multidimensional reintegration challenges, including stigma, rejection by families, health complications, and economic marginalization. These challenges were found to hinder community healing, reinforce cycles of silence, and obstruct broader peace building initiatives. In many communities, cultural norms discourage open discussion of sexual abuse, leaving survivors without psychosocial support or legal remedies.

The study also found that women's exclusion from peace negotiations, community security forums, and post-conflict reconstruction processes undermines the effectiveness and sustainability of peace building programmes. Where women's voices are absent, peace agreements fail to address gender-specific harms, resulting in incomplete recovery interventions. Conversely, empirical cases from Nigeria and wider Africa suggest that women's participation enhances accountability mechanisms, improves community trust, and strengthens monitoring of human-rights violations. Lastly, the study revealed that current peace building and security frameworks in Nigeria both governmental and donor-led are

insufficiently gender-mainstreamed. While policies such as the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 outline gender-responsive commitments, implementation remains weak, poorly funded, and inconsistently monitored. As a result, survivors' needs are inadequately addressed, and structural conditions that enable gendered violence persist. The findings therefore emphasize the need for a survivor-centered, gender-responsive peace building architecture grounded in accountability, community empowerment, and institutional reform.

### **Conclusion**

This study examines gender mainstreaming and peace building in Nigeria with focus on forced marriages, sexual violence, and women's exclusion from peace building structures, within the dynamics of conflict in Nigeria. Findings revealed that sexual violence and forced marriages are not peripheral or spontaneous outcomes of conflict but are systematically deployed strategies used by armed groups to assert power, intimidate communities, and perpetuate instability. These gendered atrocities flourish in an environment characterized by weak governance, inadequate security institutions, and deep-rooted patriarchal norms that limit women's agency and silence survivors. The research further showed that survivors face long-term psychosocial, economic, and cultural challenges which complicate reintegration and hinder community cohesion. The study also concluded that the persistent exclusion of women from peace building processes significantly undermines the sustainability and inclusiveness of peace initiatives in Nigeria. When women who disproportionately bear the burden of conflict are absent from decision-making structures, peace agreements fail to address gender-specific harms, structural inequalities, and the root causes of gender-based violence. Although Nigeria has adopted key gender policies such as the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, implementation remains weak, under-funded, and inconsistent.

In essence, the study underscores that sustainable peace cannot be achieved without gender mainstreaming, accountability for sexual violence, survivor-centered interventions, and the active participation of women in peace and security processes. Addressing forced marriages, sexual violence, and women's exclusion is therefore not only a human-rights imperative but a prerequisite for durable peace and post-conflict reconstruction in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

- i. **Strengthen Gender-Responsive Security and Justice Mechanisms:** The government should enhance the capacity of security institutions to prevent, document, and prosecute sexual and gender-based violence in conflict zones. This includes establishing specialized Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) units within the police and military, deploying trained female officers, enforcing the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP Act) across all states, and creating survivor-friendly reporting and protection systems to end impunity.
- ii. **Mainstream Gender in Peace Building and Decision-Making Structures:** Women must be included at all levels of peace building processes from negotiation and mediation to ceasefire monitoring and post-conflict reconstruction. Gender quotas should be adopted to ensure women's representation, and peace agreements must explicitly address forced marriages, sexual violence, survivor rehabilitation, and structural gender inequalities.

### **References**

- Adebajo, T., & Omotola, J. (2021). Women, conflict, and Peace building in West Africa. *African Security Review*, 30(4), 345–360.

- Adejumo, A. (2020). *Gender-based violence and insecurity in Northern Nigeria: Trends and implications for peacebuilding*. *African Journal of Peace and Security Studies*, 9(2), 45–62.
- Akinyemi, A., & Isiugo-Abanihe, U. (2022). *Conflict, displacement and gender vulnerabilities in Nigeria*. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 35(4), 789–805.
- Amnesty International. (2020). *Nigeria: Evidence of war crimes and human rights violations in the Northeast*. Amnesty International Publications.
- Bamgbose, O. (2021). *Sexual violence as a weapon of war: The Nigerian experience*. *Journal of Gender and Conflict Studies*, 5(1), 1–18.
- CEDAW Committee. (2019). *General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations*. United Nations.
- CEDAW Committee. (2021). *Concluding observations on Nigeria*. United Nations.
- Connell, R., & Pearse, R. (2015). *Gender: In world perspective* (3rd ed.). Polity Press.
- Danjibo, N., Ibrahim, H., & Yahaya, U. (2023). Evaluating Nigeria's implementation of UNSCR 1325: Progress, challenges, and prospects. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 18(2), 112–128.
- Enloe, C. (2019). *Bananas, beaches and bases: Making feminist sense of international politics* (4th ed.). University of California Press.
- Galtung, J. (2019). Peace building revisited: Concepts and complexities. *Journal of Peace Research*, 56(3), 301–317.
- Human Rights Watch. (2020). *Nigeria: Violence and insecurity in the Northeast—Impacts on women and girls*. HRW Publications.
- Igbuzor, O. (2019). *Gender, security, and peace building in Nigeria: A review of policy frameworks*. *Nigerian Journal of Public Affairs*, 12(3), 55–72.
- Krishnaraj, M. (2020). *Understanding feminist theory: Gender, power and social transformation*. Oxford University Press.
- Lund, M. (2020). *Conflict prevention and sustainable peace: A critical assessment*. Routledge.
- Nwankwo, C., & Aluko, O. (2023). *Gender mainstreaming and women's participation in peace processes in Nigeria*. *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, 18(1), 76–94.
- Odeyemi, T., & Oladipo, S. (2020). *Sexual and gender-based violence in Nigeria: A systemic review of causes and implications*. *Review of Gender Studies*, 14(2), 110–129.
- O'Reilly, M., Súilleabháin, A., & Paffenholz, T. (2015). *Reimagining peace building: Women's inclusion in peace processes*. International Peace Institute.
- Okenwa, R. (2022). Gender mainstreaming and inclusive peace building: Lessons from sub-Saharan Africa. *African Journal of Gender and Development*, 9(2), 87–104.
- Obi, C., & Hassan, Z. (2020). Gender, insecurity and the limitations of peace building in Nigeria. *Security Studies Quarterly*, 12(1), 58–74.
- Okpara, O., & Adeleye, A. (2021). Women and community-level peacebuilding in Nigeria: An assessment of grassroots initiatives. *Nigeria Journal of Social Sciences*, 17(1), 22–38.
- Paris, R., & Sisk, T. (2009). *The dilemmas of state building: Confronting the contradictions of postwar peace operations*. Routledge.
- Sjoberg, L. (2018). *Gender, war, and conflict: A feminist perspective*. Routledge.
- True, J. (2016). *Women, peace and security: A critical analysis*. Oxford University Press.
- UN Women. (2020). *Gender mainstreaming in development programming*. United Nations.
- UNDP. (2021). *Human security and development: A policy guide*. United Nations Development Programme.
- United Nations Security Council. (2000). *Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security*. United Nations.
- World Bank.(2019). *Gender equality and development report*. World Bank Publications.
- World Bank. (2022). *Gender and conflict: Dynamics of insecurity and women's vulnerability in Nigeria*. World Bank Publications.