

Women in Peace Building Initiatives for Integrated Development: Using Faith-based Organisations and Women's Academic discipline.

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Abstract

This paper investigates the extent to which faith-based organisations and women's academic discipline influence them as agents of peace in Nigeria. The study employed an inter-disciplinary approach in analysing situations in which women have acted as agents of peace. To what extent do women in science and those in Arts/Humanities participate in peace building? To what extent do faith-based organisations promote women's participation in peace building? The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. 470 women participated in the study. Data was collected using questionnaires (women in peace building questionnaire: WPBQ). The reliability of the instrument was determined and found to be 0.85 using split half reliability coefficient. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the hypotheses. The result of the study showed that faith-based organisations enhance women's active participation in fostering peace at local, state and national levels. It also revealed that women in different academic fields possess varied skills that promote their participation in peace building at varying capacities. However, more women in Arts/Humanities rise to top positions that give them greater opportunity to be part of the decision making bodies. From the findings of the study, the paper recommended that women in faith-based organisations should be more encouraged and better empowered to increase their participation in peace building for integrated development. It also recommended that education of the girl-child should be encouraged to increase the level of formally educated women's participation in peace building in Nigeria.

Key words: Faith-based organisation, skill, peace-building, integrated development, girl-child education.

INTRODUCTION

Peace-building initiatives and activities are often carried out within a certain understanding of the concept of peace. Peace is however a concept that has defied any universally accepted definition. According to Rummel (2012) peace admits a variety of definitions which include such ideas as: absence of war, violence or conflict; a state of order; a state of law or social contract; a balance of power; social harmony etc. Peace as social harmony involves creating dynamic process that would enhance a culture of tolerance, peaceful coexistence and mutual respect of people of diverse religious and socio-political belongings. Peace in this context is not merely a socially imposed condition but a dynamic process that is promoted or distorted by human activity (Ezeh, 2012). Peace is a process that does not coexist with either overt or structural violence. Injustices such as poverty, discrimination, unequal access to opportunities which are fundamental pedigrees of conflict and obstacles of peace are within the realm of structural violence (UNICEF, 1999). Denial of fundamental human rights which is on the increase in Nigeria today calls for incessant proactive movements in the society especially by women themselves who are often the most affected victims of violence.

Thus, the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) has recognised the important role of women in peace-building, prevention and resolution of conflicts. The Resolution emphasized the significance of increased participation of women in all aspects of the process of peace-building and conflict resolution. It has also highlighted the crucial need to augment the representation of women at all levels of decision-making relating to peace process and called for innovative training of women for peace-building initiatives and conflict prevention and resolution. In Nigeria, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development is leading the development of a National Action Plan (NAP) on the

implementation of the United Nation's Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security. Since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, studies have been carried out by scholars and government sponsored bodies on the involvement and contribution of women to peace-building and conflict resolutions (Ladbury, 2011; Gender in Nigeria Report, 2012; Nwadinobi and Maguire, 2013).

Hence, it is pertinent to identify the role of Nigerian women in peace building through their various religious groups or organizations. Religion can and has been used to promote peace-building (Tsjeard, Kadayifce-Orellana and Abu-Nimer, 2005), though history has shown that religion can also be used to instigate violence. The core mission of the Christian religion is rooted in reconciliation and peace-building. The Church is moreover recognized all over the world for her peace-building initiatives. Education, on the other hand, is an indispensable factor which has the capacity of enabling women acquire and develop essential skills for peace-building and conflict resolution. These two factors, education and Christianity, play important role in peace-building initiatives undertaken by Igbo women of Nigeria in contemporary society. Indeed, the acquisition of western education and the acceptance of Christian faith have engendered significant social transformation among the Nigerian women of Igbo cultural setting.

Prior to the colonial era, women were very active agents of conflict resolution. They were community leaders and were involved in decision-making in their various communities. Most pre-colonial Nigerian societies encountered conflicts such as land and boundary disputes, inter –communal conflicts, marriage problems, widows' maltreatment and other related community issues. Women were often involved in the process of the resolution of such conflicts which may take the form of consultations, deliberation and representation. Indeed Igbo women wielded significant powers during the pre-colonial era within the socio-political organisation of indigenous society. The traditional Igbo socio-political structure was based on community consciousness. Access to power was through gender-based associations known as *umuada* for women and *umunna* for men. The right to membership of *umuada* association is conferred patrilineally to all women born of the same male lineage. In the traditional Igbo society, *Umuada* association influenced public policy and decisions in issues of common good affecting the local community by their dynamic intervention, arbitration and enforcement of justice and fairness in conflict situation. The association had the right to contest and even overturn any decision that is not in the best interest of the local community. The *umuada* association deployed various strategies in their peace-building activities. Such strategies included: public protest and demonstration, use of satirical songs known as *ikpe* to denounce immoral conduct and call the offender to order, boycotting of matrimonial duties, enforcement of direct sanctions against an offender whether male or female and the dogged mounting of pressure on the male folk to submit to *umuada's* decision (Van, 1972).

During the colonial era, the power which women seemed to relish was restrained with the introduction of customary and civil courts by the British colonial masters which replaced the traditional structures of resolving conflicts. Only men were appointed as judges and paramount rulers to these courts. By appointing only men to supervise these courts, the colonialists undermined the roles women had been playing in conflict resolution (Chukwu, 2005). In the education sector, curriculum for female education was based primarily on home management while men were encouraged to opt for courses that fostered their capability to occupy major positions of power (Opara and Ezeh, 2012).

However, in 1929, Igbo women devised some strategies against the British colonial government unpopular tax laws and policies in a confrontation that brought the government close to its knees (Ezeh, 2005). This singular action of Igbo women has been described by various authors as "Aba riots" or "Igbo women's war" (Van, 1976; Uchem, 2001). The strategized action of Igbo women forced the colonial government to rethink some of its policies especially with regards to the revision of the tax laws and female education. It led to the harmonization of the curriculum of studies for both boys and girls, and mounting of more concerted efforts to promote female education (Opara and Ezeh, 2012).

Since after independence, female education has significantly improved at all levels. The rise of female enrolment at third level education has been significant. The 1989 National University Commission annual report, for example, recorded the enrolment stand for Nigerian universities as 46,524 female and 172,404 males (NUC, 1989). According to Adeyemi and Akpotu (2008), female enrolment in Nigerian universities rose from 25.27% in 1988/1989 to 37.25% in 1996/1997 in South-east geopolitical zone.

Recent studies by Opara and Ezech (2012) reveal that female enrolment is on the increase in some academic disciplines like Science Education, Management Sciences and Engineering fields which used to be dominated by male. Igbo women entry into various fields of academic discipline including science, technology, and engineering and management studies has been a source of empowerment for their access to positions of leadership in the society particularly in the womenfolk associations.

However, the school system of western education and the Christianisation of Igbo society have also introduced a significant paradigm shift from the traditional umuada womenfolk to Christian denominational women associations: Catholic Women Organisation (CWO), Anglican Women Association (AWA), Christian Women Association (CWA) etc. Though there are several other faith-based organizations in Nigeria, some of which are listed in appendix A, this study is basically concerned with CWO and AWA because these two organizations, which are composed of high percentage of literate women are powerful proactive bodies recognised at local, state and national levels. In modern society, Igbo women continue to exercise their peace-building activities and conflict resolution but more often along the line of their religious organisations. The high point of such activities takes place in their annual August events popularly known as “August Meeting/Conference”. The leadership of the various women’s religious associations is often championed by the educated members.

Though women employ the avenues of these religious organizations to establish their involvement in peace building and conflict resolutions, women still play a minimal role in politics despite the 1999 Nigeria Constitution which guaranteed the political and civil rights of women. According to Qualls (2015) political parties do not look favourably upon female candidates and women are not given equal opportunity with men to be involved in politics or decision-making bodies against violence, notwithstanding that women are the greatest victims of violence. Hence, it appears that western influence of the colonial era which restricted women’s participation still holds sway today (Qualls, 2015).

This paper therefore sets out to investigate the extent to which women in Arts/Humanities and science/science related courses belonging to different faith-based organisations in Ihiala Local Government Area participate in peace-building initiatives.

Research questions

1. What is the mean score of women’s involvement in peace-building through the faith- based organisations?
2. What is the mean score participation in peace-building of women in science/science related fields and those in Arts/Humanities?

Hypotheses

There is no significant difference in the mean score participation in peace-building of women in science/science related fields and those in Arts and Humanities

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised of all women of Anglican and Catholic faith-based organisations in Ihiala Local Government Area, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Research Design

The study used a descriptive survey design.

Sampling Technique

The sample for the study comprised 470 women. Cluster method was used to draw all women who were at annual meetings of the organisation in two faith-based organizations belonging to the Anglican Church and Catholic Church in Ihiala Local Government. Purposive sampling was used to draw only women who had obtained National Certificate in Education and Bachelor’s degrees. Sample composition comprised 273 women in Arts and Humanities and 197 in science and science related courses.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for the study, women in peace-building (WPBQ) was a 20 item questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections A and B. Each section comprised 10 questions which required the respondents to indicate their opinion on each item statement based on Likert four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD). Section A sought to determine the extent women in faith-based organizations are involved in peace-building while section B sought to determine the degree of participation of women in science/science related fields and those in Arts and Humanities.

Reliability of the Instrument

To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was carried out using forty women in Awka South Local Government. Reliability of the instrument using split half reliability coefficient was found to be 0.85.

Method of Data Collection

On the whole, six hundred and forty copies of the questionnaire were administered with the aid of eight research assistants. 90% of the papers distributed were returned for data analysis. Seventy copies (12%) were discarded because they were not properly completed. Consequently, four and seventy copies (78%) of the total responses were used for data analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions.

Decision Rule

Using an interval scale of 0.05, the rule was established at 2.50. Any mean response scores of 2.50 were accepted, while any response 2.50 was rejected.

Results

Table 1: Mean Response of Women's Involvement in FBO

S/N	Women's involvement in peace-building through the faith-based organisations	Mean Response ($\bar{x}$)
1.	Christian women use their faith-based organisations (Catholic Women Organisation, Anglican Women Association, and Women's Guild etc.) as important organs of peace-building and conflict resolution.	3.5
2.	Women in faith-based organisation do not interfere in conflict situation in their local community.	1.9
3.	Women in faith-based organisations use dialogue with local Chiefs or Clan Heads to resolve land disputes.	3.0
4.	FBO are effective organs for women to cause problems in their local communities.	1.9
5.	FBO weaken women's resilience to take part in creative and critical activities for peace-building at state and national levels.	1.95
6.	Faith-based organisations organize seminars and workshops to educate their members and equip them for a more harmonious living in society.	3.3
7.	Women in FBO are not important actors in social, economic and political life in Ihiala L.G.A.	2.2
8.	Women in FBO are passive in resolving conflicts on child-abuse or women violence.	2.0
9.	Through FBO women provide family support services.	2.93
10.	FBOs are means by which women unite social groups for peace-building.	3.1
	GRAND MEAN	2.58

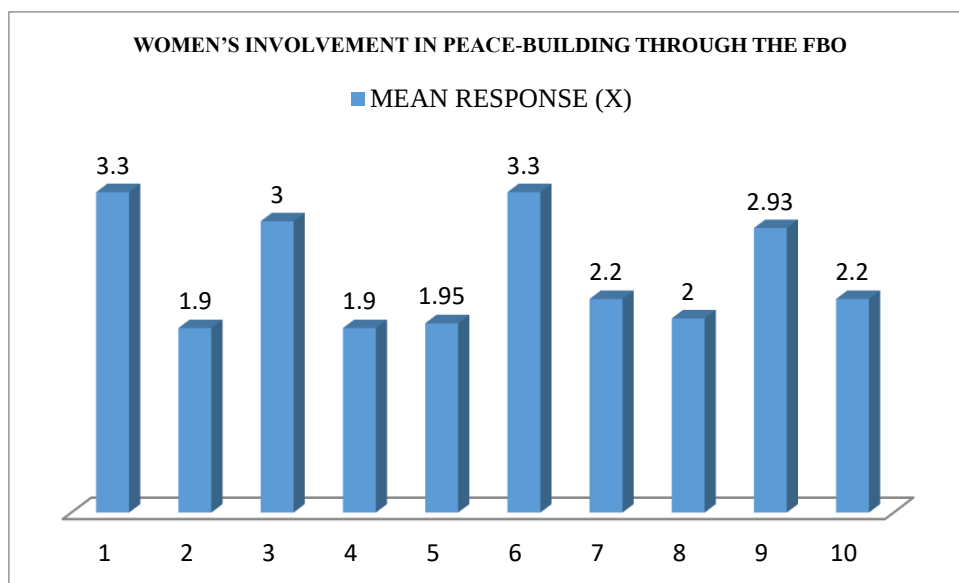


Figure 1: Women's involvement in peace-building through FBO.

The mean scores of women's response as in figure for items 1, 3, 6, and 9 showed that women agreed to the statement items while mean scores for items 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8 which are below the interval scale of 2.5 were rejected. However, the grand mean of 2.8 which exceeds the interval scale of 2.50 is accepted as positive (agreed) response.

Table 2: Participation in Peace-Building of Women in Science/Science Related Fields and those in Arts/Humanities.

S/N	Mean score participation in peace-building of women in Science/Science related fields and those in Arts/Humanities	Mean Response ($\bar{x}$)
1.	More women with Arts/Humanities degrees are involved in peace building activities than women who possess degrees in science/science related courses.	2.9
2.	Women leaders in FBO who possess degrees in science/science related fields are less active agents of peace process in their local community than those who possess degrees in Arts/Humanities.	3.2
3.	Women in science/science related fields through faith-based organisations establish and manage training centres for skill acquisition and self-development than women in Arts/Humanities.	2.6
4.	Women in Arts/Humanities have less capacity to lead in peace-building initiatives through FBO than women in science/science related courses.	3.1
5.	Women in Arts/Humanities facilitate cooperation in society than those who possess degrees in science/science related fields through FBO.	2.1
6.	Women in Arts/Humanities do not possess the skills to facilitate economic empowerment as much as women in science/science related fields.	2.5
7.	Women in science/science related courses are more involved in community development than women in Arts/Humanities who are members of same FBO.	2.8
8.	Decision-making at higher levels through the FBO is easier for women in science/science related fields than those in Arts/Humanities.	3.0
9.	More women in Arts/Humanities rise to top positions through their involvement in peace-building initiatives in FBO than those in science and science related fields	3.5
10.	Peace education programs being championed by FBO are usually headed women in science/science related fields than those in Arts/Humanities.	2.9

Table 3: Grand Mean Score and Standard Deviation for Women in Science/Science Related Fields and those in Arts/Humanities.

Participation in Peace-Building of Women in science/science related fields and Women in arts and humanities	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Inference
Women in science/science related fields	273	2.68	0.12	Agree
Women in arts and humanities.	197	2.93	0.17	Agree

Table 4: t-test for Women in Science/Science Related Fields and those in Arts/Humanities.

Participation in Peace-Building of Women in science/science related fields and Women in arts and humanities.	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	cal	Tab-t	P	Decision
Women in science/science related fields	273	2.68	0.12	468	6.5	1.65	0.05	Accepted
Women in arts and humanities.	197	2.93	0.17	-				

Table 3 reveals that the overall mean score participation of women in science/science related courses 2.68 is lower than that of women in Arts/Humanities as the latter had an overall mean score of 2.93. Further analysis using independent t-test shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean rating of women in Arts/Humanities and women in science/science related courses. T-test (t-6.5 at $p < 0.05$) showed that there is statistically significant difference between women in Arts/Humanities participation in peace-building and women in science/science related courses.

DISCUSSION

The mean score of 3.5 in item 1 showed that women agreed that FBOs are important organs through which women participate in peace-building, with mean score of 1.95 in item 2, women disagreed that they do not interfere in their local communities when conflicts arise. Therefore, they use the process of dialogue with their local heads and chiefs to resolve community conflicts. The mean response score for item 4 examined if women need the FBO to cause problem gave 1.95 appeared to depict that women strongly disagreed that FBO fosters women's inclination to cause problems in the community in item 7, a mean score of 2.2 showed that women disagreed that women are not important actors in social, economic and political life in Ihiala L.G.A. A mean score of 2.0 in item 8 revealed that women in FBOs are passive in resolving conflicts on child-abuse and violence against women.

A mean score response of 3.3 in item 6 appeared to reveal that women agreed to the statement that FBO do organize seminars and workshops in order to educate and equip their members for place-building activities in the community. The mean score in item 9 showed that women agreed that FBOs provide family support services for them. Finally, through FBOs women seem to use social groups for peace-building as the mean score response in item was 3.1. Thus, one may infer that through the FBOs women pool together as social groups to provide scaffold for them to participate in peace-building activities. The apparent difference between the level of participation of women in Science/Science Related Field and those in Art/Humanities revealed that the latter play more active role than the former.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The result from the findings of this study has shown that faith-based organisations enhance women's active participation in fostering peace at local, state and national levels. However, more women in Arts/Humanities rise to top positions that give them greater opportunity to be part of the decision-making

bodies than their counterpart in science/science related courses. The findings of the study warrant the following recommendations:

- Women in faith-based organisations should be more encouraged and better empowered to increase their participation in peace-building for integrated development.
- Peace-building initiatives of women are to be recognised and integrated in the national and international programmes for peace-building.
- Policy makers should identify the peace-building potentials of women in faith-based organisation and involve them in decision-making.
- Government should provide more opportunities and sponsor the training of women in faith-based organisations for peace-building initiatives.
- Education of the girl-child should be encouraged to increase the level of formally educated women's participation in peace building in Nigeria.
- Government should invest more on better funding and scholarship programmes for girl-child education in science/science related courses.
- Curriculum makers should integrate peace-building programme in the education system.

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Appendix A: Faith-based organisations in peace-building initiative in Nigeria.

- Anglican Women Association (AWA)
- Catholic Women Organisation CWO)

- Christian Women Association (CWA)
- Christian Women for Excellence and Empowerment in Nigerian Society (WEENS)
- Federation of Muslim Women's Association in Nigeria (FOMWAN)
- Muslim Sisters Organisation (MSO)
- Kanem Women Association (KWA)
- Women Inter-faith Council (WIC)
- Women Without Walls Initiative (WWWI)
- Christian Association of Nigeria and Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs
- Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC)
- People Oriented Development (ECWA)
- Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)
- Christian Health Association of Nigeria (CHAN)
- People Oriented Development (Evangelical Churches of West Africa)
- Pro Labore Dei
- World Vision International (WVI)
- Catholic Relief Service (CRS)