Women Participation in Conflict Management in Nigeria: A Case of a Rural Community in the Niger Delta Area

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ABSTRACT

The Niger Delta of Nigeria is plagued by crisis and youth criminality, most of which are committed by jobless and frustrated youths. Communal/ethnic, political, and youth violence are some of the crises and community leaders, the women are usually excluded due to the cultural biases against their involvement. This study examined women participation in conflict management in Omuku, bedeviling the region. Unfortunately, in an effort to manage and tackle these crises by the government Rivers State. The main objective of the research is to determine the extent of women participation in conflict management in Omuku community. The Radical Feminist and Socialist Feminist theories were used as the theoretical framework. A sample of 150 were drawn from a population of 283,292 using the purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Collected data were analysed using a descriptive method. The research found that women had very limited participation in conflict management. The research also found that women did not have any significant roles in the management of conflict in Omuku community.

Keywords: Women, Participation, Conflict management, Niger Delta, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Omoku community has received its dark share of violence, from the community versus oil corporation conflicts to inter-cultist conflict, politically motivated conflicts, general insecurity, etc. Women in Omoku were not spared, mostly as conflict victims as they were repeatedly targeted on purpose or by accident by conflict entrepreneurs and perpetrators. However, like the majority of women universally, Omoku women have been marginalised for decades as they face scrutiny and stereotype because of socio-cultural norms which define women as fragile, incompetent and inadequate, passive, weak and intruding into the male territory in general societal affairs and the conflict management arena.

Conflict in itself may not certainly symbolize a risk to peace but negative actions by people by failing to resolve conflict at an early stage. Conflict does intensify the risk of peaceful coexistence as was experienced in Omoku community in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area in Rivers State, Nigeria and many African nations with complex ethno-cultural and religious setting. Conflicts have created devastating conditions of displacement, deaths and infrastructural destructions in Nigeria and several countries in the world. The consequence of violent conflict on women has always been brutal as most conflicts are gender-specific especially in our contemporary time. This research explores the extent of women participation in conflict management in Rivers State, the case of Omoku in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area.

1.1. Problem Statement

Conflict management is central to human life. This management requires deliberate gender incorporation in decision-making, planning, and implementation, including monitoring and accessing efforts of international organizations, States, NGOs, or individuals at local, national or international levels.

The problem is that conflict management by most forums and peacebuilding exercises in post-conflict in some countries and several communities across Nigeria, including Omoku ignores the critical participation of women in building sustainable peace after war or serious violent conflict. The roles of women in dispute resolution are very crucial because women are affected the most by violent conflict situations. Furthermore, most peacebuilding exercises ignore the interest and positions of women as their outcome only satisfies the men.

The Government of Rivers State and Omoku community leaders have put various measures in place including an African Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) method to restore peace in Omoku but most peacebuilding initiatives introduced by them have failed, probably, because they neglected gender mainstream in managing the conflict. Presently, the peace in Omoku is fragile as pockets of kidnap and killings still occur.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

In seeking to unravel the extent of women participation in conflict management and obtain a theoretical foundation for the research, a closer look at feminist scholarships was embarked upon. The reason being that feminist analysis of violent conflict management place gender and women at the heart of their analysis. In doing this, the Radical Feminist Theory also known as Patriarchy Theory and Social Feminist Theory was adopted to give a theoretical foundation to the research.

The Radical Feminist Theory, broadly views that patriarchy is the main obstacle through which men control and subjugate women's advancement. The Radical Feminist theory also regarded as Patriarchal theory seeks to overcome patriarchal norms and structures which are instruments society use to subjugate and discriminate. Early publications from Christine de Pizan on The Book of the City of Ladies, 1405 and Mary Wollstonecraft book on *A*

Vindication of the Rights of Woman in1792 stood as some early responses of women towards the subjugation, inequality and open confrontation against a patriarchal order, Sultana *et al.* (2011) and Napikoski (2017).

The philosophies of radical feminism in the USA grew from a radical protest by women beginning from the liberation movements and influence of civil rights movements in the 1960s notably making this period the feminism second wave. Some early pioneers of this wave of radical feminism include activist such as Shulamith Firestone, Kathie Sarachld and Judith Brown, etc., Linden-Ward and Hurd (1999). Many local women's organizations like the UCLA Women's Liberation Front (WLF) offered diplomatic statements of radical feminism's ideologies. UCLA's WLF co-founder Devra Weber recalls, the radical feminists were opposed to patriarchy, but not capitalism.

The Socialist Feminist theory which grew in the 1960s from the same foundation of discrimination against women marginalisation as other feminist theories which seek and focuses on claiming a greater collective role for women globally. A 1972 publication by the Hyde Park chapter of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union, "Socialist Feminism: A Strategy for the Women's Movement", is possibly the first to use the socialist feminism term. Some early feminist authors include (Zillah, 1978) essay collections of Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism in Sociology and Rhonda F. Levine anthology, Enriching the Sociological Imagination: How Radical Sociology Changed the Discipline, cites Eisenstein's article as a "*superb discussion of the socialist-feminist position*",.

The Socialist feminist theory believes that until the Radical Feminist theory (Patriarchy theory) is joined with the Marxist Feminist theory (Capitalism theory), the feminist revolution would continue in a roller-coaster and end unprofitably. The socialist feminist theory is a fusion of both radical feminist theory and Marxist Feminist theory. It tries to defeat the major claim of radical feminism's stronghold that patriarchy (male dominance) is the sole and universal channel of the oppression of women while rejecting Marxism's claim that class and class struggle (capitalism) alone is the basic determining factors in understanding the present subjugation of women. The Socialist feminist claims class and patriarchy mutually strengthen women oppressions, Mitchell (1984); Briskin (1992) and Strobe and Davenport (1999).

The socialist Feminist points to reasons that, women oppression is witnessed in almost all known societies even with different historical realities such as colonialism, racism, imperialism, sexual segregation, etc and that the panorama of these oppressions differs in regards to the divergent economic realities women find themselves in. Socialist feminists suggest that capitalism and patriarchy form one system that oppresses women in our society, Hochschild (2003).

The Socialist feminist recognizes how wrong it is to assume that anyone form of oppression is a more important form of oppression. Instead, they recognize that all oppression based on sex/gender, class, race, education, politics, sexual orientation, religion, economic empowerment, etc, are linked in the oppression. To effectively challenge and overcome all oppression at the same time is to overcome one, thus they challenge various marginalisation issues, included is conflict management, Hochschild (2003).

Socialist feminists ask for women economic and socio-cultural relevance as people who give birth, socialize children and provide emotional labor for society, responsibilities that cannot be swept under the carpet as these functions are the core fabrics that create an atmosphere conducive for relaxation, recreation and development for men from the stress of work and the civic arena. This feminist believes that all these important labour is overlooked, degraded and much concern is not given to reality which Hochschild (2003) regards as *"second shift."*

As activists in the United States of America, early socialist feminists organized themselves into women's unions. The largest of these unions was the Chicago Women's Liberation Union carrying out a wide network of projects including projects on affordable childcare, reproductive rights and healthcare for women, comparable

worth. Other socialist feminists groups were the Radical Women, the Freedom Socialist Party and Big Flame in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Feminist radicals and socialist have continued to play active and impactful key roles in general society, the labour movement, movement for reproductive rights, and the movement to build gender studies and women service and contributions in conflict management, peacebuilding, and sustainable national development.

The Radical and Socialist feminist theories are solid foundations to question issues that pertain to gender subjugation and the appreciation attempt of women participation in conflict management at a multi-dimensional level.

In relation, the radical feminist theory appears to be predominant in African societies like Omoku community were women potentials and roles in conflict management and other systems are not maximized due to patriarchal structures prevalent in the community.

2.1. Conceptual Review

2.1.1.Women in Conflict Management

Women participation in conflict management is the deliberate involvement of women and girls in peacebuilding processes. Away from the official system of military-decision taking or international dispute resolutions, for centuries, women have since been working for peaceful co-existence in unofficial settings. Aware of these contributory activities, gender advocates are consistently making effort to accomplish women wholly participate in all institutions of society in consideration that, women are up to half the world's population, play vital functions in family and society sustenance, play important roles in peace advocacy and peacebuilding processes and vastly make contributions to the GDPs of their nations. Yet women are proportionately marginalised in matters that directly affect them that they should have unbiased influence over. They take the backstage in decision-making spots and implementation processes in national or community leadership, land ownership, natural resource control, political positions, skills and formal educational capacity development etc, in most societies globally, Mwangi (2015); Democratic Progress Institute (2012) The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution, Shepherd (2015) and Lindsey (2001).

The past few years have however witnessed better and increased recognition by government, civil societies and international bodies of the significance of gender especially women empowerment to attain democratic principles and poverty eradication to fast track sustainable development. Most countries are rapidly embracing the significance of gender balance in a different facet of their economies. But some scholars opine that this progress is uneven and the gains remain fragile while the world now witnesses greater violence against the female. That girls and women are victims of hardship and displacement of combat and additionally, now directly targeted with rape, murder, forced pregnancies, forced movement, mutation and assault, combatant shield as deliberate instruments of war. They are deeply affected by the war they had no role in creating at the most point, Agbalajobi (2009) and El-Bushra (2000).

These new combat strategies call for a greater measure of women inclusiveness and participation in the management of conflict which requires a drastic mind-change by negotiators on how women roles are viewed. The strategic participation of girls and women in key post-conflict processes of conflict management is diverse as Kumalo (2015) asserts.

There are different tools essential to de-escalate conflict and bring about an environment for a peaceful existence and mutual co-operation of every human to achieve sustainable development.

Shepherd (2015) acknowledges that, in strategic conflict management styles, women and men manage conflict differently. According to Shepherd findings, these conflict management styles are competition, accommodation, avoidance, collaboration and compromise. She, however, indicates that women are mostly positioned to apply a co-operative conflict management style such as collaboration, compromise or avoidance while men are most possibly positioned to compete or avoid in disagreement. She also analysis that a collaborative or compromising style, which usually gives greater advantage for peacebuilding is better applied in conflict than a competitive style. This is for the reason that, collaboration produces better constructive outputs for contending groups. In other words, the involvement of women in conflict management shouldn't be undervalued.

According to Yukl (1998) cited in Blackburn *et al*. (2006) In Role of Gender and How It Relates to Conflict Management Style and School Culture, "*the primary purpose of conflict management is to build and maintain cooperative working relationships with all stakeholders and include efforts to mediate conflicts between other people.*" The United Nations Organisation (UNO) and many international, national and grassroots-based organisations are now taking deliberate effort to achieve lasting peace and undertake the participation of boys, men, girls and women to realize the main purpose of conflict management, which is to put together and sustain a cooperative working relationship with all stakeholders in conflict, Yukl (1998).

Discoveries from key findings on Enhancing Women Participation in Peacebuilding and decision-making processes in Zimbabwean rural communities, Rukuni *et al*. (2016) and Shepherd (2015) observed that at the grassroots women have been undertaking important informal responsibilities to build peace through diverse events like child care, psychological healing, advocating and lobbying for rights and genders concerns. The studies further discovered that their positive contributions in building relationships and finding mutual understanding across cultures are not yet fully recognized and utilized due to patriarchal social norms, especially in the developing world. The findings support the socialist Feminists approach of equal women participation in every segment of existence to facilitate an affirmative action in politics and all institutions.

Strategic cases of women participation in conflict Management which indicated positive transformation and peace mitigation in some countries are observed here:

2.2. The Participation of Nigerian Women in Conflict Management

The account of Nigerian women involvement in conflict resolution dates back to the 1926 Aba women's riot in which women protested against oppression and subjugation of their rights.

The Bring Back Our Girls campaign to return two hundred and seventy-six (276) kidnapped Chibok schoolgirls by Boko Haram terrorist group as war strategy since 2014 has stood as the most sustained protest by women against forceful adoption and kidnap in conflict since after independence. The consistent protests and demonstrations is in lieu that Government of Nigeria should locate and bring back the adopted girls to their parents. The protest has drawn global attention and kept hope alive that all girls would be safely rescued and returned back home.

Nigerian women are widely marginalized and, in the peacebuilding, environ mainly participate in an unofficial capacity such as protests. Some recent protest is 2010 Jos women protest against the killing of Christians. Enugu-North, Enugu-East, Udi and Ezeagu LGA women joint protest seeking government protection against harmed herdsmen. 2014 Borno women riot for two days at the gate of a military base on the ground that their husbands and sons were ill-equipped to fight against the Islamist terrorist group. However, the 2017 Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Progress impact report indicates that "about 30% of women in Nigeria had experienced some form of physical, sexual or emotional violence during their lifetime".

2.3. Women Participation in Conflict Management in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

Women in the oil-rich Niger Delta Region of Nigeria face many tragedies and have also led several non-violent rallies against perceived violence perpetrated against them. One of such protest in 2002 by women in Delta State, for 10 days in Escravos, in which women demanded community support, damages for environmental deprivation and increase in revenue from oil for their region against Chevron/Texaco. Their expressions led to open peace mitigations resulting in Chevron/Texaco acceptance of some community-based programmes such as job creation, clinics, women micro-credit programmes, water, local school funding, and electricity systems, BBC cited in Anderlini and Stanski (1999).

2.4. Women Participation in Conflict Management in Rivers State

The women of Rivers State at different stages have held peaceful protest to ensure their voices are heard in advocating peace in their communities. For example, in 1998, several thousand women from Egi community in Rivers state demonstrated at Elf plant calling for social investment and release of an environmental impact assessment for project in their community. Similarly, about 2,000 women protested to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), office in 2015 on electoral dissatisfaction and concerns. The Ogbakiri women roused themselves to intervene in years of conflict that intensely destroyed their community in 1999. Omoku women at different times held peaceful protest calling for a cease-fire from rival cultist and government intervention.

Additionally, the United States Institute of Peace Study Guide on Gender, War and Peacebuilding (2009) writes how Northern Ireland women carried out active and vital roles as part of those who drafted the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. Women activists jointly mobilized over two hundred (200) women organizations across socio-political and religious lines to form the Northern Ireland Women Coalition. This coalition enabled women to be part of patriarchal influenced political front and empowered women's involvement in the development and decision-making roles to contribute to important policies in housing, youth, and prison integration etc.

Women also played significant roles in achieving peace in Bougainville. In the 1980s, when government forces and rebel forces clashed as Bougainville struggled to gain autonomy from Papua New Guinea, women mobilized themselves through church fellowships to end the violence. The women held meetings with rebel groups, appealed to the government, campaigned for weapons mop up and de-militarization of the community, distributed relief material and peace forums, The United States Institute of Peace study guide on Gender, War and Peacebuilding (2009) remarked.

Furthermore, the Organization of Democratic Women of Chile, allowed women to protest the torment and murder of Chilean men. Female relatives of victims supported themselves through news spreading and campaigns. The organization remained active for about fifteen (15) years, campaigning for freedom of prisoners on political reasons. More advocacy groups emerged on different channels of outreach like 'arpilleras' knitting, tapestries and art depicting the struggle for international sale as a measure to raise international awareness. Housewives in market and shops protested with pot bangs, nurses' silent march in hospitals and many others going on hunger strike. After fifteen (15) years of mobilization, Pinochet was voted out in the poll or plebiscite, Anderlini and Stanski (1999).

2.5. Global Efforts at Women Participation in Conflict Management

The United Nations Security Council in recognition of the potentials and the participatory role of women in peace mitigations, established The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) in 2000. The UNSCR 1325, rose to be a first formidable UN resolution focused specifically on women, security and peace, but became the policy that actively advocates women protection from violence. The policy emphasizes women

importance at peace negotiations, decision-making and implementation processes to prevent, manage and resolve conflict.

The UN and other international groups have gone ahead to establish other supporting policies towards women participation in conflict management and peacebuilding as seen on Table 1 below.

Table-1. International Policy Frameworks on Women Participation in Conflict Management.

Framework	Resolution and Key Positions	Further Information
Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	This framework was adopted to define and categorically outline what discrimination against women is and draw up agenda for national action to end all forms of such discriminations against women.	Established in 1979
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action	The Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration is said to be the most comprehensive policy and design for action that specificallyforeseesgirls and women defense, gender equality and the protection of human rights.	Established in 1995 after a two weeks session of deliberations by participating states in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China.Twelve (12)significant areas with set objectives that are of concern to women were published.
The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court	The international court declares that any kind of sexual and gender based violence committed in intra-state or international conflict stands as crime against people. Perpetrators of crimes like rape, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, forced prostitution, enforced sterilization, trafficking and other sexual violence committed shall be prosecuted. The court also declared to give gender inclusive justice in all proceeding.	Established in 1998 but startedbeing enforced in 2002
UN Women,	**UNSCR 1325 (2000)** is a resolution that calls to bear theneed for stronger womenparticipation in conflict management and protection of women rights in conflict or post-conflict andalso having a gender-sensitive approach to peacebuilding	Resolution 1325, is a symbolic beacon of hope for womenrights globally. The Security Council concretely established that to include women in conflict management and peacebuilding is imperative, fair and essential in attaining sustainable peace, security and development globally
UN Security Council Resolutions		
The UN Security Council (UNSC) has gone ahead to pass seven resolutions n the auspices of security, peace and women agenda.		Established in 2008
	UNSCR 1820	
	Specifically addresses Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) during conflict.	Launched in 2009
	UNSCR 1888	
	Supports the responsibility of UNSCR 1820.	

	UNSCR 1889 enacted to reinforce UNSCR 1325. It calls for taking actions to realize UNSCR 1325 through inclusive strategies and mechanisms focused at objectivesachievementvia prorammes and monitoring. It also highlights that gender-sensitive education and economies is important.	Constituted in 2009
	UNSCR 1960 enacted to reinforce UNSCR 1820.	
	UNSCR 2106	
	Was created topay attention to issues on sexual violence in conflict.	
		Established in 2010
	UNSCR 2122	
	Is enacted for the purpose of civilian protection	
	UNSCR 2242	Establish in 2013
	Highlight the responsibilities of States towards women better participation in security and peace concerns at every level.	
		Established in 2013
		Established in 2015
EU Comprehensive Approach for Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 1820	The EU adopted UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 1820 to guide its policies and principles on defense and security policy mission alongside mainstreaming gender	
NATO Action Plan	The NATO action plan was founded to guarantee that UNSCR 1325is mainstreamed and a gender lens is integrated in conflicts it manages. It is to also guide NATO achieve optimal results in its operations on a top-bottom strategies it applies	Endorsed in 2010
General Recommendation 30 of the CEDAW Committee on Women in Conflict Situations	The GR30 is a binding force that propels committed states which have ratified CEDAW to uphold principles of human right promotion, women and girl during conflict and in post-conflict. It require that, responsible government report to CEDAW committee of actions on their national action plan implementation of UNSCR 1325	Issued in 2013.
National Action Planto implement UNSCR 1325	From the 192 States that adopted UNSCR 1325, as at January 2016, only 55 States had developed national plans to foresee the resolution implementation	National action plan is created to fast track activities to create awareness, build capacity, develop and localize UNSCR 1325
United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Goal 5: Gender Equality Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Adopted in 2015, the SDGs goal significantly aims to reduce poverty and inequality at every leveland also work hand-in-hand with community members and governments to find lasting

		solutions to gender equality, conflict and insecurity globally.
UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPO)	Promulgated to sustain UN efforts at peacekeeping operations	Establishment in 1992
International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict	The recognition of this day is established to awaken the consciousness of the international community to arise and bring to an end conflict-related sexual violence	Celebrated 19th June of every year
Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict	The summits which holds once every five years is a gathering pot for stakeholders to brainstorm and suggest best practices on reducing and bringing to an end sexual violence in conflict	Started in 2014
International Women's Day	Global celebration of womanhood. Different themes are focused on and agitated for by women	Observed August 8th every year
International Day of Peace	The day is sanctioned by the UN to promote world peace	Celebrated September 21 every year

Source: Strachan and Haider (2015). No Woman, No Peace: Gender Equality, Conflict and Peace in Myanmar (2016) and War, Gender and Peacebuilding (2009)

2.6. Strategies for Improving Women Participation in Conflict Management

Women take central stage in peacebuilding and democratic transformations in societies but still, they are repeatedly marginalised because of deep-rooted gender biases that continue to support socio-cultural inequality especially in third world societies such as Omoku community in Nigeria. The persistence of this cultural practices despite Nigeria's adoption of UNSCR1325 indicates that a new approach and strategy is called for to enable women to participate better in conflict management, Yildiz (2014).

Women in Nigeria especially in the Niger Delta are mainly viewed in victimhood and as vulnerable fellows of conflict, often tagged alongside children, elderly and handicapped who are positioned mainly to benefit handouts and basic necessity from humanitarian groups and not negotiators or decision-makers who bring solutions to end conflict.

Agbalajobi (2009) in the study on the Role of African Women in Peace Building and Conflict Resolution: The Case of Burundi and Yildiz (2014) argues that, the challenges to the non-involvement of women in peace mitigation is multi-faceted but mostly based on general structural and cultural biases against women activities in the public sphere. Women take the back bench in most peace processes because they lack political influence and platforms to participate in formal peace processes even if they were actively rallied for peace at the grassroots in conflict or post conflict environment because most societal conflicts wear political garments. In addition, most women also lack resources, education, and mitigation skills or social status required to deliver changes in peacebuilding.

The challenge of the conventional male and complementary female stereotype in the different segments of society which the Radical and Socialist feminist theorist advocates against also build concerns for women participation in conflict management. This none or only little involvement in negotiations thus, limits and inhibit women concerns from being considered and are often entirely left out from many agreements.

Ropers-Huilman (2002) research indicates that, some strategies to manage conflict in lieu of better women participation is to support gender sensitive approaches through mainstreaming to categorically incorporate needs of both women and men in conflict or post conflict environment. The study reveals that, a gender-specific analysis

helps in classifying the different roles, interests and needs of all involved. Mainstreaming is important also in consideration that, men and women participate and operate differently in power structures, supremacy and resources access.

Ropers-Huilman (2002) study further proclaims that, conflict management strategies for women can be better achieved when peace constituencies are established to involve both political actors and members of civil societies who are committed to promoting non-violent solutions that considers the interest of all actors in conflict and make gender equality a paramount interest.

Warren *et al.* (2018) evaluates that, women can strategically participation in conflict management through activating a national action plan towards achieving the CEDAW and UNSCR 1325 goals that foster peaceful reforms. As well as create gender quotas, build women capacity, enable strategic relationship-building, collaborate regional and intercontinental groups that promote gender equality.

Formal education gives enormous advantage for women capacity development in conflict management.

3. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

A total 283,294 male and female resides in Omoku, according to the 2006 National population commission. But mainly literate residents who were able to offer apt and valid information needed for the study of conflict management were purposely chosen for the study of women participation in conflict management in Rivers State, the case of Omoku. The target population was one hundred and fifty (150) persons. The criterion for selection was women, boys, girls and men who reside in Omoku community while the criteria for exclusion was those who do not reside in Omoku community.

The Purposive and Snowball Sampling methods were adopted in the research. The purposive sampling method was used to enable the researcher hand pick sample elements while the snowball sampling technique was used to cut across the elements to reach target populace. Sample size of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents who are aged 18 years and above representing the sample population was selected to form the framework. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was composed of ten (10) members of Omoku community.

The study was based mainly on primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected with structured questionnaire. The questionnaires were close ended questions and handed directly to respondents. The secondary data was gotten from search and review of journals, books, unpublished and published articles, internet documents from international and national organizations to build the study.

Two basic instruments were used for data collection, questionnaire and FGD. The questionnaire was structured in two sections. Section A was structured to generate demographic data of respondents while section B was to extract information relating to research questions. Structured close-ended questions to enable respondents' tick the appropriate boxes that best suits their answers on a five (5) likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), Agree (A), and Don't Know, options were presented; while the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was comprised of ten adult members of Omoku community. The key area of research interest was intensely discussed. The discussion was tape-recorded and content analysed. Participants were drawn across security operatives, Local Government staff, market women association, Omoku women association, okada rider association, local security members, and youths.

Data were analysed with the simple percentage and the simple mean score. Tables, graphs and simple percentage were used to analyse section A while the simple mean score with tables was used to analyse section B.

Using the mean score of   Σ   FX
                                N

Σ FX   = frequency multiplied (X) score

   N   = Total Number of population

The cut-off point was fixed at 3.0. A mean score above 3.0 was accepted while a mean score below 3.0 was rejected.

Also the qualitative data from the FGD was content-analysed through identifying relevant categories and matching views of participants to the categories. This enabled researcher to associate the views of participants with the variables measured in the work.
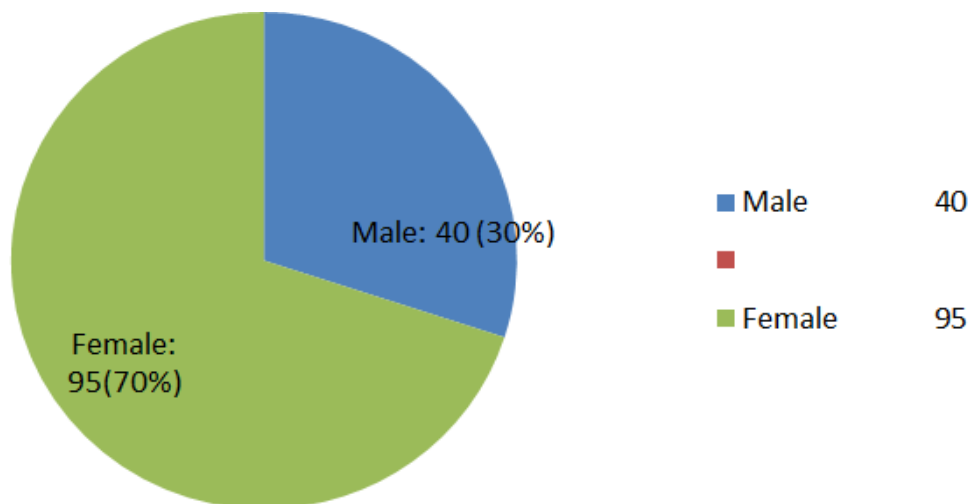
4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Data Presentation

Table-2. Number of Questionnaires Distributed and return by Gender on Women Participation in Conflict Management in Niger Delta.

Community	Sample size	Returned Questionnaire		Percentage
Omoku	150	Male	40	30%
		Female	95	70%
Total	150	135		100%

Source: Field work 2018.

Figure-1. Gender Distribution of the Questionnaire.

The table and chart above shows that a total of 150 questionnaires were distributed and 135 (90%) were retrieved, a number the scholar regards as adequate for data analysis.

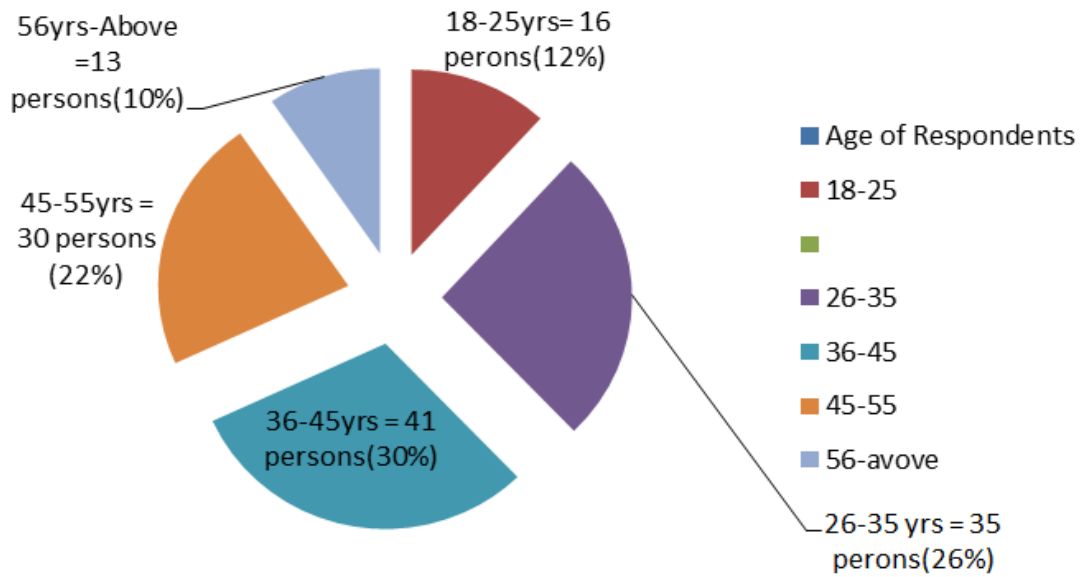30% of the retrieved questionnaires are men and 70% women.

Figure-2. Age Composition of the Respondents.

The data shows that majority of the respondents (30%) fall between 36-45 years age bracket, 22% are 44-55 years, 18-25 years are 12%, and those above 55 years are 10%.
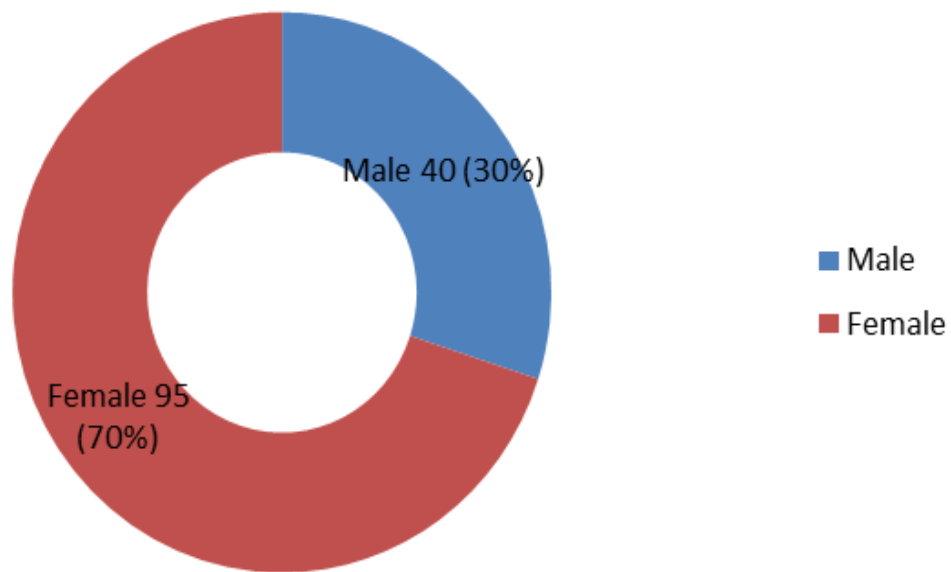

Figure-3. Sex Compositions of Respondents.

Data shows that overwhelming majority of the respondents (70%) are females while 30% are male. The overrepresentation of women among the respondents is because this study was intended to capture more of the women's view of how they feel about certain cultural practices especially their involvement in conflict management in the community.
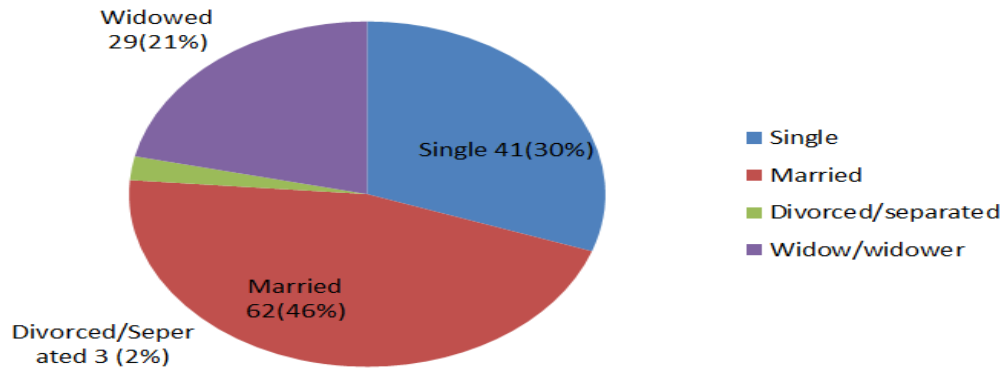
Figure-4. Marital Status.

Data in Figure 4 above shows that 30% of the respondents are single, while 21 are widowed, and only 2% are divorced or separated.
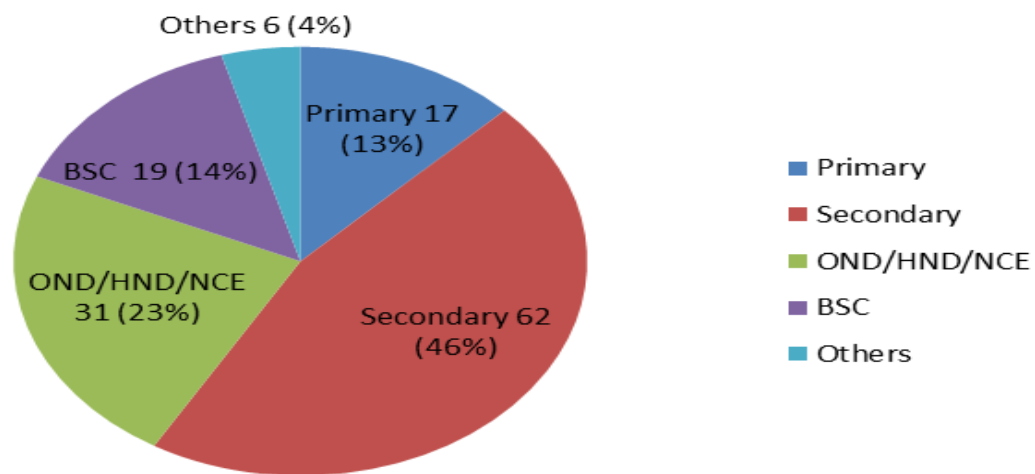

Figure-5. Educational Qualifications.

Data in Figure 5 shows that majority of the respondents are educated at the secondary school level (46%), while 23% has OND/HND/NCE, 14% has college/university education (14%), while 13% has primary education.

4.2. Data Analysis

Question 1: What are the causes and nature of conflict in Omoku Community?

Table-3. Causes and Nature of Conflict in Omoku Community.

S/N	Variable	SA	A	SD	D	Don't Know	Mean Score	Remarks
1	The major causes of conflict in Omoku community are Cultism, power dominance Illiteracy, Politics, Resource Control, Policies of multi-national co-orporations	101	25	3	6	0	4.6	Accept
2	Unemployment, poverty, traditional ruler interest, collaboration of institutions, unionism, family/marriage crisis cause violent conflict in Omoku community?	92	30	6	7	0	4.5	Accept
3	The nature of conflict in Omoku is usually violent?	76	48	0	11	0	4.4	Accept

Source: Field work 2018.

Question 2: What impact does the conflict in Omoku community have on women?

Table-4. Impact of conflict on women in Omoku community.

S/N	Variable	SA	A	SD	D	Don't Know	Mean Score	Remarks
1	Women are not part of people that cause violent conflict in Omoku Community?	57	53	10	12	3	4	Accept
2	The conflicts in Omoku usually affect women mostly?	34	25	20	45	11	3.2	Accept
3	Women in Omoku community suffered kidnap, rape, death and other forms of harm during the conflicts?	110	12	3	10	0	4.6	Accept
4	The conflicts directly affect women's economic, political, education and religious/social participations?	95	36	2	4	0	4.6	Accept

Source: Field work 2018.

Question 3: What is the extent of women involvement and participation in the management of conflict in Omoku community?

Table-5. Extent of women involvement in conflict management in Omoku community.

S/N	VARIABLES	SA	A	SD	D	Don't Know	Mean Score	Remark
1	Women organization/groups are invited during peace meetings in Omoku community?	15	25	36	57	2	2.9	Reject
	Women are part of decision making group in conflict management processes in Omoku?	8	17	57	50	3	2.8	Reject
	Men and women have equal opportunities in conflict management in Omoku community?	25	4	9	111	0	2.3	Reject
	The patriarchal nature of Omoku society do not prevent women from actively contributing to peace processes in Omoku community	12	20	34	61	8	2.7	Reject

Source: Field work 2018.

Question 4: Do women play any significant role during conflict management in Omoku community

Table-6. Do women play any significant role in conflict in Omoku community.

S/N	Question	SA	A	SD	D	Don't Know	Mean Score	Remarks
1	Women play significant roles in the management of conflict in Omoku community?	12	20	62	19	0	2.6	Reject
2	Women are part of people who conduct and benefit from DDR exercise in Omoku Community	8	17	71	34	8	2.9	Reject

Source: Field work 2018.

4.3. Discussion of Findings

In determining research question one, opinions varied as correspondents strongly indicated that presented variables to test causes and nature of conflict in the society were accepted such as cultism, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, politics, influence of traditional rulers, international co-operations policies, resources control, family/marriage causes conflict and that the nature of conflict in Omoku community is always violent. This finding

stands in line with Kudakwashe and Richard (2015) study of Armed Conflict and their Effect on Women, pointing out that, armed conflict causes are frequently connected with an attempt to control economic resources like oil, metals, diamonds, drugs or contested territories as was experienced in Omoku community with abundant natural crude and gas resources. Similarly, Stewart (2002) cited in Holdstock and Jarquin (2002) noting that.

Modern war is not an expression of innate aggression but an economic and social construction. It is an attempt to settle, by violence, disputes over … societal stresses such as injustice and poverty. It is vital to address the roots of conflict.

Findings from research question two which seeks to verify the impact of the conflict on the women of Omoku community opted to verify first if women were part of conflict entrepreneurs to establishing the extent of women involvement in conflict creation and then participation and the effect it had on them. It was confirmed that women were not part of those who cause conflict in the community although the conflict in Omoku community adversely affected them as they were either killed or positioned to bear family responsibility for fled or dead male relatives. Women become head of household in conflict which Takarinda *et al.* (2015) and the Myanmar Policy Briefing on No Woman No Peace: Gender Equality, Conflict and Peace in Myanmar (2016) observed that, although women were not usually directly wounded during armed conflicts, the tremendous outcome of combat on their families affect them as they become widows, household heads. Affirming that women are also isolated by conflict thus adding to the breakdown of social institutions leading to the death of more women indirectly from the consequences of conflict such as lack of clean water, no food or health services. It was further indicated that women/girl become targets of kidnappers and rapist during conflict. An FGD participant made known that her relative, a female, while travelling along the Omoku/Ikiri road was kidnapped in 2015. When security agents arrested a kidnap syndicate along that Ikiri road in 2017, it was discovered that the said relative was molested, killed and buried in a shallow grave inside the forest by the syndicate members who also committed other atrocities against women and men in that environment. Stewart (2010) also pointed out how women suffer from rape and GBSV related issues during conflict. Furthermore, variables presented additionally indicated that, women economic, political, educational participation were affected as the conflict restricted movement even though, Strachan and Haider (2015) alleges that, although gender roles often changes along conflict by making women take greater risk and increased responsibilities in gaining independence economically and politically but the changes are momentary because it doesn't add benefits to the women political or economic status thereafter. Based on respondents' views analysed, it was found from research question three seeking to verify the extent of women involvement and participation in the management of conflict in Omoku community shows women and men in Omoku community never experience equal opportunities in conflict management. It was further understood that the sphere of women influence is mostly felt unofficially as the men handle the official matters of decision-taking and policy implementations of issues that concern the community in conflict management and development decisions. This further exposes the patriarchy influence on all sectors of the community which the radical and socialist feminist theories this research is established on advocates against. As Sikoska and Solomon (1999) in their work, Introducing Gender in Conflict and Conflict Prevention: Conceptual and Policy Implementations affirms that, gender relationships get worst in patriarchal societies. Further citing Pankhurst, they claim the challenges often become too grate in patriarchal society for healthy gender-relationships in post-conflict since the past contributions of women turn out to be marginalised officially and on account of war. The study on Why Gender Matters in Conflict by United Nation Women (2015) opined that, in spite of the diverse ways Mon women were affected by war and contributed to peacebuilding in their communities, they were enormously less represented in formal institutions and structures established to manage conflict, create sustainable peace and development. Not surprising the UNDP (2001) report

on Gender Approaches in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations and Shepherd (2015) confirms that, for a long time, females have been active at the informal peace level unofficially for as long as war has been a feature of human existence but they do not get entry to peace processes formally which are eventually implemented and often jeopardized with women exclusion. Omoku women are specialist in mobilising themselves through the Omoku Women Association (Omoku community largest social organisation). If the mobilising potentials of women as was implemented in places like Uganda and Liberia can be properly harnessed, early warning, deterrence and proper conflict handling can be established on time, to thwart the escalation and crisis that was witnessed in Omoku community. Perhaps the women of Omoku have to borrow an extra leaf from the women of Ukraine and Myanmar who decided to be peace ambassador amidst crisis in their countries through a National Action Plan and Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women calling for better participation of women in peacebuilding, Yildiz (2014). Through research question four, the study also discovered that, women do not play any significant role in conflict management in Omoku community. As Yildiz (2014) further established, women are less represented in peace processes because of domestic responsibilities, no family support, prevailing cultural attitudes regarding women roles in society, lack confidence, no financial resources etc.

Furthermore, participation or needs of girls and women were also ignored during DDR procedures in Omoku community. Not surprising, Strachan and Haider (2015) referring to Save the Children (2005), cited in Justino (2012) argues that, women specific needs in DDR are often ignore, for example, citing cases in Sierra Leone that, only five thousand (5,000) female went through DDR process despite a report of twelve thousand (12, 000) female involvement in the conflict because they are often considered as only victims in conflict rather than combatants for gender perceptions that stand to stigmatise women. The report suggests that DDR processes should be gendered to consider not only men and boys needs but also those of females and the vulnerable groups. As former UN Secretary General categorically noted (Kofi, 2002).

5. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the women in Omoku community like most other patriarchal controlled communities universally; especially in third world nations have limited roles and participation in management of conflict. Women roles are gender stereotyped which considers women as weak and only being able to contribute in domestic affairs. This insinuation and perception undermine the woman capacity and capability to contribute to sustainable peace and development which is for the enjoyment of all and sundry.

5.1. The Following Recommendations are Suggested Based on Research Findings

There should be adequate engagement of Omoku youths by Government and private organizations through the provision of employment as a way of preventing them from engaging in cultism and other criminal activities. There should be mass education orientation for youths within the Omoku community.

Because women and children are adversely affected by the impact of conflict and war the concerns and needs of women alongside men should also be given priority considerations in time of decision taking and safe zones provision in crisis.

Women should be deliberately and significantly given better roles in conflict management such as official conflict resolution duties within the community.

There should be deliberate government effort to increase women participation in conflict management and other peace building processes in the state, so as to give them a sense of belonging.

Lastly, since Omoku women have a strong mobilisation front through the Omoku Women Association (OWA), the virtues of this organisation can be used to mobilise all women against conflict. Training of Omoku women leaders on conflict management is a training for the whole community as such training can be transferred back home to their fellow women, husbands, children and all members of the family/society.

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