Research Article

Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Military Women's Participation in Peace-Building Activities in Kaduna State

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Abstract

Socio-culutral barriers significantly restrict the participation of military women in peace-building activiteis witin Kaduna State, Nigeria. Though women play a vital role in fostering peace, traditional gender roles and societal expectations often undermine their involvement and effectiveness in these efforts. This study investigates these barriers and evaluates their impact on the engagement of military women in peace-building. Using a mixed methods appraoch, the resaerch incoproated quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, gathering comprehensive data from 93 military women in Kaduna State. This appraoch provided both statistical and experiential insights into the socio-cultural factors influencing their participation. The study is framed by Social Exclusion Theory, which elucidates how entrenched cultural norms and societal structures can marginalize certain groups, limiting their participation in societal and professional spheres. This perspectives sheds light on how traditional gender roles and societal expectations exclude miltiary women from menaingful involvement in peace-building activities. A significant finding of the research is that these socio-cultural barriers, particularly traditioanl gender roles and societal expectations, profoundly hinder military women's participationi in peace-building intiatives. These obtacles constrain their opportunities and reduce their effectiveness. Based on these findings, the study recommends targeted interventions to challenge and transform entrenched cultural and societal norms. Efforts should focus on reshaping traditional gender expectations to foster inclusivity, thereby enhancing the particpation and contributions of military women in peace-building endeavours.

Keywords: Empowerment, Gender, military, peace-building, socio- cultural.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Women's agitation and the quest for inclusion as peace advocates in conflict resolution and peace-building processes across the globe have encoded women's capacity to drive and effect notable change (Abdullahi & Onabanjo, 2023. However, the endemic cultural ideologies pose barriers. As a result, women were suppressed due to stereotypes, segregation, subjugation, oppression, discrimination, and marginalisation in all key sectors of human development (Abdullahi, & Onabanjo, 2023). This limits women's freedom and access to make meaningful contributions to the peacebuilding processes of their various communities. United Nations (1995) in the Beijing conference established the first historic global policy framework that addresses all forms of discrimination against women. The framework demands for equal participation of women in civil, political social and cultural life both at the national, regional and international level. Security Council Resolution 1325 of the United Nations (2000) identifies the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and sees the need for involving women as an active agent of peace in armed conflict.

It notes that violent conflict has negative implications on women and girls either as direct or indirect victims. The low and slow inclusion of women in peace initiatives gave room for women's underrepresentation and exclusion as co-workers in peace processes (Chitando, 2019). This helped to fuel the pre- existing gender inequality sponsored by cultural norms of socialisation. Here women are socially trained to limit their activities within the conferment of their

homes and men are socially trained and empowered for the public life (Chitando, 2019). This kind of upbringing is fundamental to all forms of discrimination faced by women. Nevertheless, to further strengthen equality, the United Nations launched subsequent resolutions such as 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2016, 2122, 2242, 2467 and 2493. They stressed the need for women's engagement in the public domain, leadership position and their substantial engagement in the prevention and resolution of conflicts as well as on all forms of violence against women, especially sexual violence. United Nations (2022) states thus:

> These resolutions have since been adopted, for the importance of women's leadership: and meaningful participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, addressing the impact of sexual violence, promoting the development and use of measures and standards for monitoring the implementation of women, peace and security mandates, training and capacity building on gender equality and women, peace and security for peacekeeping personnel, engaging with civil society more comprehensively and enabling an improved understanding of gender dynamics of conflicts (United Nations, 2022).

Despite these global advancements, women, particularly those in military roles, still face significant barriers to participation in peace-building activities, largely due to entrenched gender biases, institutional discrimination, and societal norms that view peace and security as a male-dominated field. In many countries, military institutions are male-dominated, and the integration of women into these roles has been a gradual and ongoing struggle (United Nations, 2022). Even in nations that have implemented gender mainstreaming policies within their military, women often find themselves relegated to support roles rather than frontline positions in peace-building missions (Ozoani-Ene, Oyebode & Ojo, 2024). This disparity is even more pronounced when women are expected to engage in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction efforts, where they are either excluded entirely or their contributions are undervalued (Ozoani-Ene, Oyebode & Ojo, 2024). International actors have continually emphasised the importance of addressing these issues, as the inclusion of military women in peace-building activities is not only a matter of equality but also of enhancing the effectiveness of peace operations. Across Africa, the involvement of women in peace-building activities has gained increased attention, especially in post-conflict regions where women's leadership has been instrumental in facilitating community reconciliation and peace restoration (Adepoju, Gberevbie, &Ibhawoh. 2021). African women have historically played significant roles in conflict resolution at the grassroots level, often leveraging their positions as mothers, caregivers, and community leaders to mediate disputes (Adepoju, Gberevbie, &Ibhawoh. 2021). However, formal recognition of their roles in peace-building has been slow to materialise, particularly within military contexts where patriarchal structures dominate. In many African countries, including those involved in regional peacekeeping efforts, military women often encounter systemic barriers to active participation in peace-building missions. Socio-cultural factors rooted in patriarchal traditions significantly restrict women's roles within the military and, by extension, their involvement in peace processes (Okoli, 2018). Women in the military are frequently assigned to administrative or medical roles rather than being given the opportunity to serve in combat or strategic positions where they can directly contribute to peace-building activities (Okoli, 2018).

This reflects a broader societal view across the continent, where women are often seen as passive actors in conflict rather than as key stakeholders in peace-building efforts. Despite these challenges, Africa has produced notable examples of women's contributions to peace. The African Union (AU) has made strides towards increasing female representation in peace and security through its various frameworks, such as the AU's Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) (Francis, 2023).

These frameworks aim to bolster women's participation in peace-building initiatives, including peacekeeping missions and conflict resolution processes. In Nigeria, the participation of women in the military dates back to the formation of the Nigerian Army Women's Corps in the early 1960s (Francis, 2023). Over the years, women have been increasingly integrated into various branches of the Nigerian Armed Forces, taking on roles that range from medical services to combat support. However, their participation in peace-building activities remains limited, particularly in regions affected by conflict, such as the northern part of the country. The socio-cultural context of Nigeria, particularly in the north, significantly influences the level of involvement of military women in peace-building activities. (Usman, 2023) Traditional gender roles, religious beliefs, and cultural expectations often confine women to domestic and reproductive responsibilities, thereby limiting their engagement in public life, including military and peace-building roles (Usman, 2023).

Northern Nigeria, including Kaduna State, is characterised by a conservative socio-cultural landscape where women's roles are often defined by patriarchal norms. This is particularly true in military settings, where women are not only outnumbered by their male counterparts but are also subjected to various forms of discrimination and exclusion from critical decision-making processes (Adeola, 2023). The Nigerian military has been involved in numerous peace-building and conflict resolution efforts both within and outside the country. In many of these missions, however, the role of women, particularly military women, has been peripheral. Peacekeeping operations led by Nigeria, such as those in

Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Darfur, have demonstrated the importance of women's participation in peace-building, yet within the Nigerian military, women are often assigned to secondary roles (Adeola, 2023).

In domestic conflicts, such as the insurgency in the North-East and communal clashes in the Middle Belt, including Kaduna State, military women's participation in peace-building efforts remains minimal (Abdullahi, & Onabanjo, 2024). This is despite the growing recognition of the crucial role that women play in fostering peace and reconciliation in post-conflict communities. Efforts to increase the participation of Nigerian military women in peace-building activities have been largely influenced by global and regional gender inclusion frameworks, including the UN's WPS agenda and the AU's initiatives (Williams, 2023). Nigeria's National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325, which was first developed in 2013 and revised in 2017, outlines strategies for increasing women's participation in peace and security efforts, including in the military. However, implementation has been slow, particularly in northern Nigeria, where socio-cultural factors continue to hinder progress (Williams, 2023).

1.2 Statement of Problem
The participation of military women in peace-building activities is a critical component in promoting inclusive and sustainable peace processes. However, in Kaduna State, socio-cultural factors significantly influence the extent to which these women engage in peace-building efforts (Abdullahi, & Onabanjo, 2024). Cultural norms, gender roles, and societal expectations within the region often limit the participation of women in traditionally male-dominated fields, including military and peace-building activities (Usman, 2023). The deep-rooted patriarchal systems prevalent in Northern Nigeria frequently dictate that women's roles are confined to domestic responsibilities, thereby restricting their involvement in broader societal and conflict resolution efforts (Usman, 2023). This cultural dynamic presents a barrier to military women who may be eager to contribute to peace-building initiatives but are hindered by societal perceptions of gender roles (Ozoani-Ene, Oyebode & Ojo, 2024). Additionally, religious beliefs and customs play a crucial role in shaping the perception of women's participation in public spheres, especially in military operations and peace-building. In a predominantly conservative setting like Kaduna State, these religious and cultural norms further reinforce the marginalisation of women in peace-building efforts. The limited participation of military women in such activities not only undermines their potential contributions but also affects the overall effectiveness of peace-building initiatives. Despite global efforts to promote gender inclusivity in peace and security, there remains a gap in research and policy implementation that addresses the unique challenges faced by military women in regions with strong cultural and religious traditions, such as Kaduna State.

1.3 Research Questions
The study is premised on these questions:
i) What socio-cultural factors influence military women's participation in peace-building activities in Kaduna State?
ii) How do gender roles and societal expectations affect the involvement of military women in peace-building efforts in Kaduna State?

1.4 Objectives of the Study
The main objective of the study is to examine the socio-cultural factors influencing military women's participation in peace-building activities in Kaduna State. The specific objectives of the study are:
i) To identify the socio-cultural factors that influence the participation of military women in peace-building activities in Kaduna State.
ii) To examine the impact of gender roles and societal expectations on military women's engagement in peace-building efforts in Kaduna State.

1.5 Research Hypotheses
The study is guided by the following research hypotheses
i) H_{o1}: There is no significant relationship between socio-cultural factors and military women's participation in peace-building activities in Kaduna State.
ii) H_{o2}: Gender roles and societal expectations do not significantly affect the level of involvement of military women in peace-building activities in Kaduna State.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
2.1 Conceptual Framework
2.1.1 Military
The Nigerian military, commonly referred to as the Nigerian Armed Forces, is a constitutionally mandated body responsible for defending the country from external aggression and maintaining territorial integrity. It is composed of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, each playing unique roles in ensuring national security and stability. According to Akinwale (2018), the Nigerian military serves as a guardian of national sovereignty, executing peacekeeping missions both

domestically and internationally. This role often extends to counterterrorism efforts, particularly in dealing with insurgencies and militancy across various regions of the country. In another definition, Onuoha (2020) describes the Nigerian military as a structured institution dedicated to maintaining internal order and quelling insurgencies. The military's intervention in internal conflicts, such as the Boko Haram insurgency, showcases its role beyond traditional defence to include peace enforcement and humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, the Nigerian military has become increasingly involved in nation-building, contributing to infrastructural development and disaster relief operations (Olugbode, 2019). This expanded role reflects the adaptive nature of the military to Nigeria's evolving security challenges.

Adeyemi (2021) highlights the military's critical function in regional peacekeeping and security, citing Nigeria's contributions to the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and United Nations peacekeeping missions. The Nigerian military's engagement in these missions underscores its significance in fostering regional stability and protecting human rights across Africa. Additionally, the military is a symbol of unity in Nigeria's diverse ethnic landscape, striving to uphold the nation's integrity through its disciplined operations and commitment to national cohesion (Ogundipe, 2022). The military is also seen as a key player in Nigeria's democratic evolution. As Adebayo (2022) notes, the Nigerian military has a complex history of involvement in the nation's politics, with periods of military rule between 1966 and 1999. However, since the return to democracy, the military has assumed a more professional and apolitical stance, respecting civilian authority while focusing on security duties. This transition has helped build public trust in the military as an institution committed to democratic ideals and national progress. In connection to military women in Nigeria, the role of women in the Nigerian military has evolved significantly over the years. Initially, women were limited to non-combat roles, but today, they are gradually being integrated into combat and leadership positions. According to Akinola (2020), women have been instrumental in various peacekeeping and internal security operations, contributing to the military's effectiveness in counterterrorism and civil-military relations. The involvement of women has not only diversified the military's approach to conflict resolution but has also promoted gender inclusivity in an institution historically dominated by men. Furthermore, Ajayi (2021) argues that the increasing presence of women in the military has opened opportunities for addressing issues related to gender-based violence in conflict zones, highlighting the unique contributions women can make in peace-building and humanitarian roles within military operations.

2.1.2 Peace-Building

Peacebuilding is defined as a range of efforts aimed at preventing the resurgence of violence by addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering sustainable peace. According to Lederach (2023), peacebuilding involves creating a network of relationships at various levels to prevent conflict and ensure stability. Galtung (1976) defines peacebuilding as the establishment of structures that address the underlying social injustices, which are often the root causes of conflict. In the view of Francis (2023), peacebuilding involves long-term processes that strengthen institutions, address grievances, and foster cooperation between previously antagonistic groups. Odhiambo (2022) sees peacebuilding as a bottom-up approach involving local communities in dialogue and reconciliation to create lasting peace. According to Adebayo (2023), peacebuilding focuses on empowering local stakeholders to resolve disputes through non-violent means and to rebuild institutions destroyed by conflict. Nweke (2022), describes peacebuilding as an effort that goes beyond the cessation of hostilities, aiming at addressing the societal gaps that may lead to future conflict.

2.2 Review of Empirical Literature

Empirical studies on the challenges faced by women in peacebuilding efforts offer insights into various obstacles Abubakar (2023) explored the cultural barriers women face in peacebuilding efforts in Northern Nigeria. The study employed a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews with women peacebuilders and local community leaders. The findings revealed that traditional gender roles severely limited women's participation in formal peace processes, and they were often excluded from decision-making bodies. Abubakar recommended cultural reorientation programmes aimed at community leaders and the inclusion of women in grassroots conflict resolution processes as a way to overcome these challenges. Adeola (2023) investigated the institutional challenges facing women in peacebuilding within the African Union's peacekeeping missions. Using a mixed-methods design, the study gathered data from surveys and interviews with female peacekeepers and military officials. The results indicated that institutionalised sexism, lack of training opportunities, and limited career progression were significant challenges. Adeola recommended reforms in military structures to include gender-sensitive training and policies that promote women's participation at all levels of peace operations, from planning to execution. Amadi (2022) conducted a study on the socio-economic barriers hindering women's involvement in peacebuilding efforts in rural Nigeria. The research employed a case study approach, using focus group discussions with women involved in peacebuilding at the local level. The findings revealed that poverty, lack of access to education, and limited economic opportunities were key barriers. Amadi recommended the introduction of economic empowerment programmes for women in conflict-affected regions, coupled with educational initiatives aimed at enhancing their peacebuilding capacities. Lough (2022) focused on the political exclusion of women in peace negotiations in conflict zones in Africa. The study employed a qualitative methodology, utilising interviews with female

peace negotiators and policymakers involved in conflict resolution processes. The findings highlighted that political structures were largely dominated by men, leaving women with little influence in formal peace negotiations. Lough recommended legal reforms to ensure quotas for female participation in peace negotiations and leadership positions within peacebuilding institutions.

Mlambo (2023) investigated the logistical challenges women face when working in peacebuilding missions, specifically within the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Africa. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys with interviews of female peacekeepers. The findings showed that women were often disadvantaged in terms of equipment, accommodation, and field conditions, which were not designed to accommodate their specific needs. Mlambo recommended logistical reforms, including gender-sensitive provisioning in peacekeeping operations to ensure women are properly equipped and supported in the field. Nwabueze (2022) examined the challenge of societal expectations placed on women in peacebuilding roles in Nigeria. Using qualitative interviews with female peacebuilders, the study found that societal norms often expected women to play nurturing and caregiving roles, limiting their involvement in formal peace processes. These expectations also made it difficult for women to balance their peacebuilding responsibilities with family obligations. Nwabueze recommended the creation of support systems for women peacebuilders, including childcare facilities and family support services within peacebuilding organisations. Ogundele (2023) conducted a study on the barriers faced by women in leadership positions within peacebuilding initiatives in West Africa. The methodology was qualitative, based on interviews with female leaders in various peacebuilding organisations. The findings revealed that despite being in leadership roles, women often struggled with being heard and respected by their male counterparts. Ogundele recommended mentorship programmes to support women in leadership positions, along with institutional reforms to encourage gender parity in decision-making bodies.

Oyetunde (2022) focused on the financial challenges hindering women's participation in peacebuilding in Nigeria. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, using both surveys and interviews with women involved in peacebuilding organisations. The findings showed that inadequate funding was a major barrier, with women-led peacebuilding initiatives receiving less financial support compared to those led by men. Oyetunde recommended increasing funding specifically targeted at women's peacebuilding initiatives, as well as offering financial management training for women peacebuilders. Usman (2023) explored the legal and policy challenges that prevent women from participating in peacebuilding efforts in conflict-prone areas of Nigeria. The study used a qualitative case study approach, analysing policy documents and conducting interviews with female policymakers. The findings revealed that discriminatory legal frameworks and policies excluded women from formal peace processes. Usman recommended comprehensive legal reforms to eliminate gender discrimination in peacebuilding policies, as well as the development of affirmative action programmes to ensure women's participation in peace efforts.

2.3 Theoretical Framework
2.3.1 Social Exclusion Theory
Social exclusion theory provides a framework for understanding the processes that limit individuals' and groups' access to social, economic, political, and cultural participation. The concept emerged from the work of French sociologist Lenoir in 1974 when he identified a significant portion of the population as being 'excluded' from mainstream society, especially those who did not benefit from social insurance programmes. Social exclusion encompasses various forms of marginalisation, including poverty, unemployment, gender discrimination, and limited access to political power. The theory highlights how exclusionary practices can prevent individuals from fully integrating into society, often due to structural inequalities. It has since been used in multiple contexts to address the ways certain populations are denied access to opportunities and rights. Over time, the theory has been expanded by scholars such as Silver (1994) and Sen (2000), who contributed significantly to the debate on social exclusion by examining its multidimensional nature. Silver argued that social exclusion should not only be understood in terms of economic deprivation but also in terms of social and cultural isolation. Sen emphasised the capability aspect, arguing that social exclusion limits individuals' freedom to achieve essential functioning in life. The history of the theory is rooted in European social policy, particularly as it relates to addressing poverty and inequality, but it has been adapted to address issues of exclusion in diverse global contexts.

The basic assumptions of social exclusion theory revolve around the structural and systemic nature of exclusion. One key assumption is that exclusion is not only a result of individual choices or capabilities but is often embedded in social institutions and policies that perpetuate inequality. Additionally, the theory assumes that exclusion can occur at multiple levels, including economic, social, political, and cultural. It also assumes that exclusion is a process rather than a static condition, meaning that individuals and groups may move in and out of exclusion depending on changes in societal structures or personal circumstances. This dynamic nature of exclusion further reinforces the idea that addressing exclusion requires continuous effort and systemic change.

Despite its broad application, social exclusion theory has faced critique. Critics argue that the concept is too broad and lacks clarity, making it difficult to apply consistently across different contexts (Levitas, 2005). Some also suggest that it places too much emphasis on structural factors and does not adequately account for personal agency. Furthermore, the

theory has been criticised for being Eurocentric, as it was initially developed within the context of European social policy and may not fully account for the specific dynamics of exclusion in non-Western societies (Silver, 1994). These critiques suggest that while the theory offers valuable insights, it must be adapted to suit specific cultural and social contexts.

In applying social exclusion theory to the study of socio-cultural factors influencing military women's participation in peace-building in Kaduna State, the theory provides a useful lens for understanding the structural barriers these women face. Military women in Nigeria, particularly in Kaduna State, may experience exclusion due to a combination of gender discrimination, cultural norms, and institutional policies that limit their participation in peace-building efforts. Social exclusion theory helps to explain how socio-cultural factors, such as traditional gender roles and patriarchal structures, contribute to their marginalisation in peace-building initiatives. Furthermore, the theory highlights how military women may be excluded not only from decision-making processes but also from opportunities for career advancement and recognition in peace-building roles. By focusing on the structural and institutional barriers to inclusion, social exclusion theory allows for an examination of how military institutions and broader societal norms in Kaduna State contribute to the marginalisation of women.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
3.1 Research Design
The study adopts a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the socio-cultural factors influencing military women's participation in peace-building activities in Kaduna State. This design enables the collection of both numerical data through questionnaires and in-depth qualitative insights via interviews, providing a holistic view of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Quantitative data was collected through structured questionnaires administered to military women, while qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews with key informants to explore the cultural and societal dynamics that affect these women's roles in peace-building. This combination of methods allows for both breadth and depth in the analysis of socio-cultural factors, making it an ideal design for the study (Flick, 2018).

3.2 Population of the Study
The population for this study consists of military women serving in three selected villages—Gayam, Dogon Dawa, and Maganda—all located in Birnin Gwari Local Government Area, Kaduna State. These villages were chosen because of the severe security threats they face, making them focal points for peace-building activities (Olayoku, 2020). The total population is 100 military women, broken down into three units: number one platoon (54 women), number two platoon (21 women), and number three platoon (25 women). These platoons represent the entire group of military women available for the study. Given the relatively small population size, the entire population can be targeted for the survey, allowing for comprehensive data collection across all platoons. In addition to military women, local community members, including traditional leaders and other stakeholders involved in peace-building were included in the population for the qualitative aspect of the study. This broad population allows the research to capture diverse perspectives on the socio-cultural factors that influence women's participation in peace-building efforts (Khotari, 2011).

3.3 Sample Size
The sample size for the quantitative aspect of the study involved all 100 military women, ensuring that the data collected through the questionnaire represents the perceptions of the entire group. For the qualitative part, 15 key informants were purposively selected for in-depth interviews. These key informants included military women, community leaders, and individuals actively engaged in peace-building initiatives within Gayam, Dogon Dawa, and Maganda. The choice of military women provided critical insights into gender dynamics and the role of women in conflict resolution. Similarly, community leaders were selected due to their influence and intimate understanding of local context, while individuals actively involved in peace-building initiatives offered practical perspectives on strategies and challenges in fostering peace. This combination of a larger quantitative sample and a smaller, focused qualitative sample ensures that both general trends and in-depth personal experiences are captured in the analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.4 Sampling Technique
The study used purposive sampling for both the quantitative and qualitative components. Military women stationed in Gayam, Dogon Dawa, and Maganda who have participated in peace-building operations were purposively selected for the questionnaire distribution (Patton, 2015). In-depth interviews also employed purposive sampling, focusing on key informants who hold leadership or strategic roles in peace-building efforts or have valuable insights into the socio-cultural dynamics influencing women's participation. This technique allows the researcher to focus on participants with direct experience and knowledge related to the research topic (Yin, 2018).

3.5 Method of Data Collection
Data collection involved two main instruments: structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The structured questionnaire included closed-ended questions designed to assess socio-cultural factors such as gender roles, cultural

expectations, and societal attitudes that influence military women's involvement in peace-building activities (Bryman, 2016). The questionnaire was distributed to the selected military women in Gayam, Dogon Dawa, and Maganda. The in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 key informants, including military personnel, local leaders, and peace-building stakeholders, to explore their experiences and perspectives in detail. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics summarised the socio-cultural factors affecting military women's participation, while inferential statistics such as T-test analysis examine relationships between these factors and participation levels (Field, 2018). The qualitative data from the in-depth interviews undergo thematic analysis, allowing the identification of recurring themes and patterns related to socio-cultural influences on women's roles in peace-building (Clarke & Braun, 2017). This dual analysis method provided a comprehensive understanding of the research problem by linking statistical findings with detailed narrative accounts.

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Data Presentation

Out of the 100 targeted participants who were issued with complete the questionnaire, 93 duly filled and completed the questionnaire while 7 failed to respond to all questions in the questionnaire. Out of the expected 15 interviews, the researcher managed to conduct 13 interviews,which was 86.7%.

Table 4.1.1 Response rate

	Respondents	Response Rate (%)
Quantitative Survey	93	93
Interviews	13	86.7

Source: Field Survey, August, 2024.

Table 4.1.2 Sex Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	%age
Male	-	-
Females	93	100
Total	**93**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, August, 2024.

Table 4.1.2 indicates that the study exclusively focused on female military personnel, with 93 women participating in the research, representing 100% of the sample. This underscores the study's sole emphasis on understanding socio-cultural factors affecting military women's roles in peace-building in Kaduna State. Consequently, the findings offer a gender-specific perspective, potentially limiting insights into broader gender dynamics in peace-building efforts.

Table 4.1.3 Age Distribution of Respondents

Age (years)	Frequency	%age
18-25	5	5.4
26-33	41	44.1
34-41	39	41.9
Above 41 years	8	8.6
Total	**93**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, August, 2024.

Table 4.1.3 reveals that the majority of participants in the study were aged between 26 and 33 years (44.1%) and 34 to 41 years (41.9%), with only a small proportion being either younger than 25 years (5.4%) or older than 41 years (8.6%). This age distribution suggests that the socio-cultural factors influencing military women's participation in peace-building are primarily shaped by individuals in their mid-career stages, potentially reflecting their greater experience and involvement in such activities.

Table 4.1.4 Educational Attainment of Respondents

Education	Frequency	%age
Primary and Secondary certificates	47	50.5
Graduate	41	44.1
Post-Graduate	5	5.4
Total	**93**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, August, 2024.

Table 4.1.4 shows that half of the participants hold only primary and secondary certificates (50.5%), while a significant proportion are graduates (44.1%), and a small fraction possess postgraduate qualifications (5.4%). This distribution suggests that socio-cultural factors influencing military women's participation in peace-building are more prevalent among those with lower educational backgrounds, potentially highlighting the need for targeted educational and professional development initiatives to enhance their involvement.

Table 4.1.5 Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	%age
Single	32	34.4
Married	38	40.9
Divorced/ Separated	16	17.2
Widowed/ Widower	7	7.5
Total	**93**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, August, 2024.

Table 4.1.5 indicates that most participants are married (40.9%) or single (34.4%), with fewer being divorced/separated (17.2%) or widowed/widowers (7.5%). This distribution suggests that socio-cultural factors influencing military women's participation in peace-building are significantly shaped by their marital status, with married and single women being the predominant groups involved.

Table 4.1.6: socio-cultural factors affecting military women's participation in peace-building activities in Kaduna State

Variables	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Remark
Traditional gender roles hinder military women's participation in peace-building activities.	58(232) (62.4%)	23(69) (24.7%)	9(18) (9.7%)	3(3) (3.2%)	3.5	Accepted
Cultural beliefs in Kaduna State support the active involvement of military women in peace-building efforts.	62(248) (66.7%)	21(63) (22.6%)	3(6) (3.2%)	7(7) (7.5%)	3.5	Accepted
Religious norms in the community discourage military women from participating in peace-building activities.	64(256) (68.8%)	23(69) (24.7%)	2(4) (2.2%)	4(4) (4.3%)	3.6	Accepted
Societal expectations regarding women's roles affect the extent of military women's engagement in peace-building activities.	56(224) (60.2%)	22(66) (23.7%)	3(6) (3.2%)	12(12) (12.9)	3.3	Accepted
Average Overall Mean					**3.5**	

Source: Field Survey, August, 2024. The theoretical mean for accepting the mean is 3.0 remark and above.

Table 4.1.6 presents that traditional gender roles and religious norms are widely accepted as barriers to military women's participation in peace-building, with mean scores of 3.5 and 3.6 respectively, indicating significant agreement. Cultural beliefs are also perceived to support their involvement (mean of 3.5), while societal expectations are seen as a moderate influence (mean of 3.3). The average overall mean of 3.5 suggests a consensus on the impact of socio-cultural factors on women's engagement in peace-building activities. The interviews with military women involved in peace-building efforts

in Kaduna State reveal recurring themes of undervaluation, exclusion from decision-making, and underutilisation of skills. Respondent 1 stated that:

> From my perspective, the biggest challenge we face as military women in peace-building efforts is the lack of recognition and support from our male colleagues. Often, our contributions are undervalued, and we are not given the same opportunities as men to take on leadership roles. This makes it difficult to fully engage in peace-building activities because we're constantly fighting to prove ourselves. I also feel that there's a lack of mentorship for women in the military. We need more support systems that empower us to take on more responsibilities and truly make an impact in these missions. Without that, it feels like we are always at a disadvantage (KII, August, 2024).

Respondent 2 asserts that:

> I agree with my comrades. One of the most frustrating challenges I have faced is the limited involvement in strategic decision-making. Despite our unique insights into the needs of local communities, especially women and children, we are often sidelined when it comes to planning peace-building strategies. This not only undermines our contributions but also limits the effectiveness of the overall mission. Another challenge is the cultural perceptions within the military itself—there's still a belief that women should play a secondary role, and this mentality holds us back. If these barriers were removed, we could contribute so much more to peace-building efforts (KII, August, 2024).

Respondent 3 assert that: "*For me, one of the most significant challenges is the lack of access to proper resources and training specific to peace-building. We are often expected to perform at the same level as our male counterparts, but without the same level of preparation or access to essential tools*" (KII, August, 2024).

She stated further that:

> This disparity limits our ability to be as effective as we could be in these missions. Additionally, there's a real issue with balancing our military duties with peace-building roles. We're stretched thin, and without proper support, it becomes difficult to manage both responsibilities. I think if there were more tailored training and resources available to us, we could overcome these obstacles more easily (KII, August, 2024).

Respondent 4 stated that:

> In my role as a platoon leader, I have seen the challenges from both a leadership perspective and as a woman in the military. One of the key issues is the systemic bias that still exists within the military structure. Women are often seen as not being "tough enough" for the complexities of peace-building, which is a complete misconception. This bias leads to fewer opportunities for women to take on meaningful roles in these missions. Additionally, the logistical challenges we face, such as limited funding and inadequate support for female soldiers, make it even harder to contribute effectively. If the military were more inclusive and supportive of women in these roles, I believe we would see much more success in peace-building initiatives (KII, August, 2024).

The interviews collectively suggest that military women in Kaduna State continue to face structural limitations that hinder the full impact of their peace-building efforts.

Table 4.1.7: influence of gender norms and community perceptions on military women's involvement in peace-building efforts in Kaduna State

Variables	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Remark
Gender norms in Kaduna State limit the involvement of military women in peace-building efforts.	68 (272) (73.1%)	19(57) (20.4%)	2(4) (2.2%)	4(4) (4.3%)	3.6	Accepted
Military women are discouraged from peace-building roles due to societal expectations regarding gender.	53(212) (56.9%)	30(90) (32.3%)	7(14) (7.5%)	3(3) (3.2%)	3.4	Accepted
The community views military women's contributions to peace-building efforts as equally important as those of their male counterparts.	55(220) (59.1%)	33(99) (35.5%)	4(8) (4.3%)	1(1) (1.1%)	3.5	Accepted

Community perceptions create barriers to military women's participation in peace-building activities.	60(240) (64.5%)	25(75) (26.9%)	3(6) (3.2%)	5(5) (5.4)	3.5	Accepted
Average Overall Mean					**3.5**	

Source: Field Survey, August, 2024. The theoretical mean for accepting the mean is 3.0 remark and above.

Table 4.1.7 shows that gender norms in Kaduna State are seen as significantly limiting military women's involvement in peace-building, with a mean score of 3.6. Societal expectations also discourage their roles (mean of 3.4), while the community generally views their contributions as important (mean of 3.5). Perceptions creating barriers to their participation have a mean of 3.5, reflecting a general agreement on the impact of socio-cultural factors on military women's peace-building activities. The overall average mean of 3.5 indicates a consistent recognition of these barriers. The interviews with military women involved in peace-building efforts in Kaduna State reveal recurring themes of undervaluation, exclusion from decision-making, and underutilisation of skills. Respondent 5 stated that:

> As a military woman actively engaged in peace-building efforts in Kaduna State, I have always believed that our role is crucial, especially in connecting with local communities. In my experience, we bring a unique ability to communicate with women and children, which fosters trust and reduces fear. However, it is frustrating that our contributions often go unnoticed. Many times, it feels like we're not fully appreciated by our male colleagues or superiors. If more recognition were given to the work we do, I'm confident that our peace-building missions would be far more effective. It's disheartening to be seen as playing a secondary role when, in reality, we are at the heart of fostering peace (KII, August, 2024).

Building on this, Respondent 6 reinforces the notion that military women offer a unique approach to peace-building, focusing on dialogue and reconciliation. However, she highlights the *"exclusion from strategic decision-making, which diminishes the effectiveness of their contributions"* (KII, August, 2024). This exclusion mirrors the institutional barriers identified by many respondents in the questionnaire and points to structural issues that limit their role in peace-building efforts. Respondent 3 agrees with the above, adding that "*female soldiers help maintain social cohesion within conflict-torn communities, particularly through their interactions with women and children*" (KII, August, 2024). However, she expresses frustration over being relegated to administrative roles, despite their capacity to contribute directly to peace-building missions. This underutilisation of skills echoes the institutional challenges highlighted in both the interviews and the questionnaire, as many military women face barriers that prevent them from fulfilling their potential. Respondent 4, as a leader, sees the untapped potential of military women in peace-building efforts. She asserts that: "*women's emotional connections in gender-sensitive situations could greatly enhance peace-building outcomes*" (KII, August, 2024). However, like the others, she experiences the same marginalisation, even in her leadership role. This sentiment reinforces the need for greater inclusion of women in leadership and strategic positions to maximise their contributions to peace-building. The interviews collectively suggest that despite their significant potential, military women in Kaduna State continue to face structural limitations that hinder the full impact of their peace-building efforts.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses
Table 4.2.1: There is no significant relationship between socio-cultural factors and military women's participation in peace-building activities in Kaduna State

variables	Sample Size (N)	Mean	Standard deviation	t-value	p-value	Significance level	Decision
Socio-cultural Factors vs Participation	93	3.6	0.9	2.45	0.015	0.05	Null hypothesis rejected

Analysis:

The t-test value (t = 2.45) with a p-value of 0.015 is less than the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). This means the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected. Therefore, socio-cultural factors significantly influence military women's participation in peace-building activities in Kaduna State.

Table 4.2.2: Gender roles and societal expectations do not significantly affect the level of involvement of military women in peace-building activities in Kaduna State.

variables	Sample Size (N)	Mean	Standard deviation	t-value	p-value	Significance level	Decision
Gender roles Vs Involvement	93	4.1	1.1	3.12	0.002	0.05	Null hypothesis rejected

Analysis:

The t-test value (t = 3.12) with a p-value of 0.002 is less than the significance level (α = 0.05). Hence, the null hypothesis (H₀₂) is rejected. This indicates that gender roles and societal expectations significantly affect the involvement of military women in peace-building activities in Kaduna State.

4.3 Discussion of the Findings

i) The study identifies that traditional gender roles and religious norms are significant socio-cultural factors influencing military women's participation in peace-building activities in Kaduna State. This finding aligns with Abubakar's (2023) research, which highlights how entrenched cultural barriers in Northern Nigeria severely limit women's involvement in peace processes. Both studies underscore the restrictive nature of traditional gender norms and call for cultural reorientation to enhance women's participation in peace-building. Contrastingly, Amadi's (2022) research on socio-economic barriers in rural Nigeria introduces an additional dimension by focusing on poverty and lack of access to education, which are also crucial but distinct from the socio-cultural factors identified in Kaduna State. While socio-economic challenges are important, the Kaduna State study specifically addresses how cultural and religious norms create barriers, suggesting a need for targeted interventions within these cultural contexts. Further, Nwabueze's (2022) study on societal expectations aligns with the Kaduna State findings by illustrating how societal norms restrict women's roles in peace-building, echoing the study's emphasis on traditional and religious norms. However, Nwabueze's (2022) focus is broader, addressing general societal expectations rather than the specific traditional and religious barriers highlighted in the Kaduna State research. In contrast, Johnson's focus on psychological challenges and Mlambo's (2023) investigation of logistical barriers highlight practical issues that affect women's participation but do not directly intersect with the socio-cultural factors found in the Kaduna State study. These studies point to different aspects of the broader challenge of integrating women into peace-building roles.

ii) The study highlights that gender roles and societal expectations significantly impact military women's involvement in peace-building efforts in Kaduna State. This finding is consistent with Nwabueze's (2022) research, which underscores how societal norms constrain women's roles in peace-building, aligning with the study's emphasis on the limitations imposed by traditional gender roles and societal expectations. However, Adeola's (2023) examination of institutional challenges in African Union peacekeeping missions presents a contrasting perspective. Adeola's (2023) findings focus on institutionalised sexism and limited career progression, highlighting structural barriers that differ from the societal and cultural constraints identified in Kaduna State. While both studies address barriers to women's participation. Johnson's (2022) focus on psychological challenges and Mlambo's investigation of logistical issues provide insights into other dimensions of barriers faced by women in peace-building. These practical challenges, while relevant, are distinct from the societal and cultural barriers highlighted in the Kaduna State study.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
5.1 Conclusion

This study provides a thorough examination of the socio-cultural factors affecting military women's participation in peace-building activities in Kaduna State. It highlights how traditional gender roles and societal expectations shape and often restrict the involvement of women in these critical initiatives. The research underscores the significant impact that deeply entrenched cultural norms and religious beliefs can have on women's opportunities to engage meaningfully in peace-building efforts. By analysing the interplay between gender roles and societal expectations, the study offers insights into the broader context of how these factors influence women's roles within military and peace-building domains. It reveals that overcoming barriers to women's participation involves addressing both cultural perceptions and structural constraints. The implications of this study are pertinent to understanding the broader dynamics of gender and peace-building, extending beyond the specific context of Kaduna State. It sheds light on the importance of recognising and addressing the socio-cultural challenges that hinder women's full engagement in peace-building activities. In conclusion, the research enhances the understanding of the complex socio-cultural landscape that influences military

women's roles in peace-building. It provides valuable insights into how cultural and societal factors shape women's participation, contributing to the broader discourse on gender equality and peace-building effectiveness.

5.2 Recommendations

i) To address the barrier of traditional gender roles and religious norms in Kaduna State, it is recommended that the Nigerian military implement targeted educational and community outreach programmes. These initiatives should focus on challenging and transforming entrenched stereotypes and cultural norms that restrict military women's participation in peace-building activities.

ii) To mitigate the impact of gender norms and societal expectations, the Nigerian military should develop and enforce policies specifically in Kaduna State that promote gender equality. This includes creating supportive frameworks for military women, such as mentorship and career advancement programmes, to encourage their active involvement in peace-building roles and shift societal attitudes towards greater inclusivity.

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