ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACEBUILDING IN WEST AFRICA: THE CASE OF SIERRA LEONE

By

ZAINAB MONISOLA OLAITAN

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Supervisor: Prof Christopher A. Isike

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DECLARATION

I, Zainab Monisola Olaitan declare that this dissertation titled 'Analysis of women's Participation in Peacebuilding in West Africa: The Case of Sierra Leone' is my own work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at another university. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

Zainab Monisola Olaitan   Prof. Christopher Isike

   Student   Supervisor

Abstract

The low participation of women in formal peacebuilding in Africa is a burning concern in the peace and security sphere, as these peace processes have been dominated by men. This has been ascribed to several factors such as the patriarchal culture of most African societies, the "women-as-victim" narrative and the under-reporting of informal contributions women make through their participation in peacebuilding activities. This implies a dichotomy between formal and informal peace processes, and this study argues that the non-recognition of the latter largely accounts for women's under-representation in formal peacebuilding processes and structures in Africa. Thus, this study examined the informal roles women in West Africa have engaged in to foster peace in their communities, using Sierra Leone as a case to contextualize the argument.

The study used qualitative methodology as its approach of enquiry, a case study analysis as its research design, and thematic analysis as its method of analysis to answer the main research question of what informal roles women played to advance the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone. The radical feminist theory was used to provide theoretical explanation on why women are under-represented in formal peacebuilding structures and to help debunk the women as victim narrative. This is in a bid to contribute to research on women in peacebuilding in West Africa while also creating awareness on the informal peace work, they often engage in.

The study found that women participated in the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone at the informal level and that their contribution was instrumental in kick-starting the official peacebuilding process which ended the civil war. Therefore, just as women are victims of war, they are also active agents of peace, especially informal peacebuilding which are not formally acknowledged. A major recommendation is that Sierra Leone should actively implement its National Action plan on women's inclusion in peacebuilding to ensure increased women's participation. Lastly, the study suggests that the African Union should mainstream women's informal peacebuilding activities into formal peacebuilding across the continent.

Keywords: Formal, Informal, Participation, Peacebuilding, Sierra Leone, West Africa, Women.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Sierra Leonean women who in their own way agitated for peace during and after the Sierra Leonean civil war. To all the women doing their best to ensure that we live in a peaceful society within the African continent and the world at large, this work is for you.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

APSA	African Union Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
MARWOPNET	Mano River Union Women Peace Network
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
PWA	Progressive Women Association
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SLWMP	Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Assistance Mission to Sierra Leone
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WF	Women's Forum
WOMEN	Women for a Morally Enlightened Nation
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
YCWA	Young Christian Women Association.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

The subject of women's participation in post-conflict peacebuilding has always garnered much attention as one of the focal concerns of the international community (Scanlon 2016, Shepherd 2016). This concern comes from the historic passivity and low participation of women in peace and security, which informs the need to understand this passivity. The low participation of women in peace and security is often tied to gender attitudes towards war and peace. Generally, there is a perception that during times of war men are actors while women are victims, and this distinction entrenches the narrative of gender specific roles during times of war. The misconstrued agency ascribed to women during times of war and peace has a significant impact. Without evaluating its use, the term 'victim' has often been used to characterise women during pre- and post-conflict periods. This is because women are one of the main groups greatly affected by war, and they suffer multidimensional abuse because of war. While this is true, it limits the potential roles women can play. More so, this limiting agency is a derivative of the gendered attitudes towards war: Women do not fight wars; thus, they can only be victims of war and not participants. Owing to this victim-only status, women's vulnerabilities in times of conflict have long dominated the sphere of peace and security, and this is not representative of the whole situation. During conflict, it is often assumed and quite true that violence against women increases, for instance, in the first world war, 5% of persons affected were civilians of which 80% of these were women and children. According to Puechguirbal (2004:1), women and children suffer mostly during armed conflicts when they lose protection, shelter, access to food and medical care. "They account for an estimated 80% of refugees and displaced persons worldwide" and are as mentally traumatized as combatants. This shows that women are more affected by war than men because they remain unarmed and unprotected during conflict periods. Since women are most affected, they are less likely to be able to flee from fighting and indiscriminate violence. The effects of war on women can range from psychological problems, sexual violence to trauma born out of the horrific experiences of war.

However, researchers like Scanlon (2016) and Shepherd (2016) argue that women are much more than just victims during times of war. The impact of the roles women play during times

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of war becomes clear during post-conflict peacebuilding. Entrenching the notion that men are the major actors of war creates the idea that the focus should be on the participants, while the victims should be treated with care, and particularly, that the people who should take part in the peace processes should be those who participated in the war. This is false, as women do fight wars, and there is a lot of evidence of this. For instance, during the Sierra Leone war, women participated in the war and it is estimated that they made up 30% of the various armed forces, while child soldiers made up 37%, half of which were girls (Coulter 2009). The misconception that women do not participate in war leads to the unconscious exclusion of women as participants during the peace processes. This gender-informed exclusion and misconception have over the years been used as justification for the continued marginalization of women from peacebuilding.

In Africa, largely patriarchal cultures are often cited as the reason for the under-representation of women in peacebuilding (Garba 2016, Scanlon 2016, Onyenwere 2017). There are multiple reasons responsible for the low participation and representation of women in peacebuilding, but a largely patriarchal culture is often at the centre of it all. Patriarchal culture, which creates defined gender roles, informs the unequal gender interplay that impedes on women's self-actualization in the society. The unequal gender relations expand beyond the private space of personal relationships into the public space, thereby hindering the debut of women in public spaces such as peace and security. This restricts women to spaces where they cannot significantly contribute to societal change. The skewed representation of gender in peace and security means that peacebuilding has been largely dominated by men, even though women have been most affected in the conflicts and wars that have ravaged the continent. In 2014, there were 11.4 million people, mostly women and children, displaced as a result of conflict in Africa; these women suffer massive sexual and gender-based violence during this period (Scanlon 2016:5).

Recognising the gravity of excluding women from peace processes, the United Nations passed the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSRC) 1325 on October 31, 2000. This was the first time the international organisation addressed gender inequality in peace processes. According to GIWPS (2015:1), the important provisions of the resolution are:

- "Increased participation and representation at all levels of decision-making.
- Attention to specific protection needs of women and girls in conflict.
- Gender perspective in post-conflict processes; and

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- Gender perspective and training in UN support operations".

Technically, what the resolution seeks to achieve is an increase in women's participation in peacebuilding and an increased awareness of women's perspective in peace processes.

It has been years since the resolution was passed, yet the subject of women's under-representation is still a burning issue in peacebuilding. In 2015, a survey was conducted to evaluate the impact of the resolution on women's participation in peacebuilding, it showed that not much has been achieved due to women not being included in peace agreements (UN Women 2016). A UN Women (2012) review accounted for the number of women that participated in 31 major peace processes carried out since 1992:

- Signatories to peace agreements – 4%.
- As chief mediators – 2.4%
- As witnesses and observers – 3.7% and
- As negotiators - 9%.

This shows that the passing of the UNSRC 1325 has not led to drastic changes in the participation of women in peace and security, seeing as the numbers are still quite low.

With the passing of UNSRC 1325 and the continued under-representation of women in formal peace processes, there is a need to come up with a different explanation. This shifts the debate from the misconstrued agency of women during conflict to the non-recognition of women's involvement in peacebuilding. The non-recognition of women's involvement in peacebuilding feeds off the dichotomy between internationally recognised instruments of instituting peace and local ways of fostering peace. This difference takes shape as women mostly involve themselves in the latter because of their exclusion from the former. Adeogun and Muthuki (2018:1) argue that despite efforts made by the UN, "women are generally excluded from the negotiating tables based on cultural stereotypes". Scanlon (2016) argues that the distinction between formal and informal peace processes contributes greatly to the low representation of women in the sphere. This is because women, particularly African women, participate in peacebuilding at an informal level, which often is not reflected in mainstream peacebuilding. Due to the bias towards recognising more formal processes like peace agreements, peacekeeping and peace-making, the work women are doing in the informal aspects of peacebuilding is largely under-represented. These informal peace activities include mass action, lobbying husbands, acting as relief workers in their communities, and lobbying

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traditional rulers. This invariably affects the representation of this demographic in the larger peacebuilding sphere.

There has been a considerable increase in feminist scholarship around the globe, and this scholarship also moved into the area of conflict and peacebuilding. . The scholarship varies from examining women as victims or agents of wars, showing the distinctive effects of armed conflict on men and women, to the activism for the substantive representation of women in peace processes. Since the gendered perspective of peacebuilding garnered attention in the international sphere, there has been a roll out of literature. Research on women in peace and security often seeks to understand the marginalization of women in peacebuilding and the reasons for this, while mostly ignoring women as active participants in peace processes and their participation in informal peacebuilding. It is important to document both the formal and informal work women are doing in peacebuilding in order to address the under-representation of women in the sphere.

It is based on this assertion that this study seeks to understand women's substantive participation in peacebuilding, focussing on investigating the informal roles women have played to advance peacebuilding in West Africa by using Sierra Leone as a case study. The study is centered around the period of the civil war in Sierra Leone, pre-and post-war, which includes the peacebuilding phase. This study aims to bring to fore the informal contributions women have made in peacebuilding that are not recognised in mainstream peacebuilding. Thus, this research argues that although women are largely excluded from formal peace processes, they dominate the informal sphere of peacebuilding. Through engaging in the informal aspects of peacebuilding, women establish themselves as participants in peacebuilding, rather than accepting the victim-only tag placed on them. Particularly, by looking at Sierra Leone the study shows that the roles women play in fostering peace in communities is like the formalized collective instruments in mainstream peacebuilding. In order to ensure increased representation of women in peacebuilding, more light should be shed on the informal spectrum, rather than exclusively focusing on formal peacebuilding. Lastly, it will examine how the African Union (AU) African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) contributed to fostering women's involvement in peacebuilding in West Africa in order to make recommendations on how the organization can ensure increased women's participation in peacebuilding.

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1.2 Research Problem

Currently, the informal roles women have played in peacebuilding in Africa are largely under-represented in mainstream peacebuilding. This is mainly because of the under-reporting of what they are doing to engender peace in their communities. This under-reporting can be attributed to the dichotomy between formal peace roles (mediation, conflict resolution, signing peace agreements) and informal peace roles (marriage, peace advising and lobbying, non-violent protest) that often does not fit into mainstream peacebuilding. Scholars such as Randall (1987) and Shepherd (2016) argue that this dichotomy seeks to erase the contributions women are making from mainstream peacebuilding, particularly as women participate in peacebuilding in a plethora of ways, such as working as lobbyists, mobilizers for peace, peace activists pursuing democracy and human rights, working as traditional mediators, relief and aid workers, and participating in protests. This is not a new phenomenon and African women have been involved in peacebuilding in their various communities since the pre-colonial era (Alaga 2010, Amadiume 1997). These informal contributions that are made by both chiefly and non-chiefly women on the continent need to be properly documented to ensure the representation of women in mainstream peacebuilding. This study thus seeks to contribute in filling this gap by investigating the informal roles women in West Africa play to advance peace in their communities. It will consolidate its work by examining the role the AU APSA has played in fostering women's participation in peacebuilding in West Africa in order to make recommendations.

1.3 Research Objectives

- To examine women's participation in peacebuilding in Africa.
- To examine the informal ways women in Sierra Leone have participated in peacebuilding.
- To suggest measures that will foster the informal roles women play in peacebuilding in Sierra Leone and Africa generally.

1.4 Research Questions

- What are the issues surrounding women's participation in peacebuilding in Africa?
- Which informal roles did women in Sierra Leone play to advance peacebuilding processes?

- What are some of the ways through which women's informal roles in peacebuilding can be fostered?

1.5 Conceptual Clarification

The main concept that must be defined is peacebuilding: Galtung (1996) defines it "as the process of creating support structures that remove the causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where war might occur". Lederach (1997) sees it as a "comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates and sustains the full array of processes, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict towards more sustainable, peaceful relationships". Isike (2009) defines it as the processes and activities involved in normalising relations and reconciling the latent differences between the disputing sides in a conflict with a view to enabling lasting peace. Peacebuilding is a broad concept "that includes conflict transformation, restorative justice, trauma healing, reconciliation, development, and good leadership", which all have implications for conflict prevention (Isike 2009:30). It encompasses many components, such as peacekeeping, peace agreement, preventive diplomacy, and peace-making.

From the definitions above, the study will adopt an operational definition that sees "peacebuilding as a process that facilitates the establishment of durable peace and tries to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing the root causes of the conflict" through panels of enquiry, truth and reconciliation commissions and social processes (Agenda for Peace 1992: para 51). It is instructive that none of the definitions above subtract from informal processes, activities, and structures, especially at the social level, which also contributes to establishing and sustaining peace in any conflict context. These informal activities include lobbying traditional heads, mass action, council of elders, and settling disputes by family heads. These activities largely fall under preventive diplomacy and peace-making, and these two components will be the focal peace processes used in the analysis. The failure of the mainstream literature to capture these informal aspects of peacebuilding in Africa and in Sierra Leone has motivated this study. Thus, this study will look at how women have contributed informally to this peace processes with a view to contributing to knowledge in a way that bring these activities to the fore.

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1.6 Methodology

1.6.1 Methodological approach

In order to address the research question, this research will be conducted using a qualitative library research. This research will adopt the qualitative research methodology as its approach of enquiry. The qualitative research method, as explained by Bryman, is a research tool that engages "the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants" (2015:264). It "investigates local knowledge and understanding of a given programme, people's experiences, meanings, relationships, social processes and contextual factors that marginalize a group of people" (Leedy and Ormrod 2001 cited in Mohajan 2018:23) Qualitative research is a "form of social action that stresses the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences to understand the social reality of individuals" (Mohajan 2018:24). This understanding of what qualitative research is fits into the framework of the research

A qualitative approach is used because the researcher is aware that truth, meanings, and knowledge are not exclusive to the researcher and that that knowledge is relative and socially constructed. A study that seeks to uncover the various ways women have contributed to peacebuilding in West Africa has to consider several factors. These factors are specificity of context, historical background and the relationships involved, and these are not issues that can be accounted for numerically. Hence, a qualitative approach is the best option as it understands that knowledge is multidimensional, relative and context specific.

Qualitative research is also multidimensional and pluralistic, highlighting the political nature or social nature of social research. The researcher recognises that the term "social is a human construct, framed and presented within a set of discourses and conducted in a social context with certain sorts of social arrangements, involving especially finding cognitive authority and power" (Punch 1999:140).

The above statement by Punch follows a constructivist epistemological stance that argues that truth and knowledge do not exist in some external world but rather are created by our interaction with the world. This is in opposition to the positivist paradigm that seeks to understand reality as distinct from the researcher and that can only be arrived at through scientific enquiry. The constructivist paradigms gave wings to the interpretivist stance that also concedes that meanings are constructed not discovered. Interpretivism involves the

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researchers in interpreting elements of the study and appreciating differences among people. It is an "anti-positivist stance that looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social lifeworld"(Crotty 1998:67). This study embodies the above tenets, using the interpretivist paradigm as its epistemological stance. Not only does the research seek to understand how women have contributed to peacebuilding, it seeks to understand the different histories and contexts within which these peacebuilding contributions have taken place.

1.6.2   Research design

This research is a single case study analysis with Sierra Leone as the case to contextualize the argument for West Africa. A case study is a detailed account of a person, or group case and its analysis (Mohajan 2018). The case study allows for the generalization of multiple perspectives either through multiple data collections or through the creation of multiple accounts from a single method (Lewis 2003 in Gray 2014). This research, with its central question in a descriptive form, will use a single case in a bid to investigate the informal roles women have played to advance peacebuilding in West Africa. Yin (2009:4) explains a case study research as an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the context are not clear". This definition of a case study intends for a level of understanding and thorough detail in the execution of the research rather than shallow work. Under the single case study design, Yin (2009:50–52) distinguishes between the "holistic case design with a single unit of analysis and an embedded case design with multiple units of analysis". A holistic case study, for instance, will only look at the overall nature of an organisation while an embedded case study will look at the departments, organs, and structures of the organisation. This research is a holistic case study design and its single unit of analysis is Sierra Leone and the informal roles women have played to advance peacebuilding.

This case was carefully selected to develop a better understanding of the issues and to theorize about a broader context to further provide a better context to the subject that is being analysed. One of the justifications for using a single case study is to carry out thorough research work by using Sierra Leone to represent West Africa. Therefore, a single case study analysis will be used to make a valuable contribution to the research on women and peacebuilding in West Africa and at a broader level.

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1.6.3 Data collection

This will be a library/desk research with data retrieved from the public domain on women and peacebuilding in Africa. The study will largely use data from journals, articles, textbooks, literature, and published works that have been written by scholars on the topic of women and peacebuilding in West Africa. These sources will be used to provide answers to questions around the informal roles women have played in peacebuilding in West Africa and Africa. These sources will also be used to investigate the roles the AU APSA has played to advance peacebuilding in West Africa in order to suggest measures on how to foster women's participation in peacebuilding.

1.6.4 Data analysis

Since this is a qualitative research study, thematic analysis will be used to answer the research questions. Gray (2014:609) asserts that "thematic analysis is used in qualitative research and focuses on examining themes within data". This method emphasizes the organisation and description of the data set. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that it is a method to identify and analyse patterns (themes) within qualitative data. They go further and distinguish between an inductive thematic analysis and a theoretical thematic analysis. An inductive approach means that the themes emerge from the data, while the theoretical thematic analysis emerges from the theoretical stance. Both inductive and theoretical thematic analyses will be used to have a robust analysis in the course of the research, as the themes extracted from the employed theory will lend enormous support to the themes from the data set that will be used. The aim of a thematic analysis is to identify themes or patterns in the data set that are important and to use these themes to answer the research question. The process involved in thematic analysis is as follows: "Familiarization with the data, generating the initial codes, generating themes, reviewing the themes, defining themes, and writing up" (Gray 2014:610).

Using the analytical method explained above, the answering of the research questions will follow a procedure of tracing women's participation in peacebuilding to pre-colonial Africa to provide a broader picture of the subject-matter. This will serve as the contextual background to the research; then the informal roles women have played to advance peacebuilding from the case study will be looked at and categorized based on the themes extracted from the theory and data. Lastly, the stance of the AU APSA will be interrogated to understand what they have done to enhance women's participation in peace processes in West Africa and the continent

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at large. It is not enough to gather examples of women contributing to peacebuilding, which is why the study will go further and investigate the efforts of the APSA to engender female participation in peacebuilding at an optimal level.

1.6.5   Justification of case study

In order to produce a valuable work, Sierra Leone was selected as the case to contextualize the argument for West Africa. The first justification is the need for an in-depth study on women's participation in peacebuilding, which is best achieved by using a single case study. The topic is a broad one that requires focus and depth in order to position the general issue in a context to produce a good work. Since a single case study allows for more observation, certain interplay of relationships can be better understood in the selected case study and this contributes to producing a high-quality theory.

West Africa is a sub-region that embodies countries with certain shared similarities in history, context, governance, and people. With the shared history of colonialism and slavery, this region faces the same lived experiences even though there are certain nuances that are not shared. This shared colonial history is a determining factor in understanding the history of the region as almost all the countries were colonized. Secondly, the post-colonial trend in this region have been somewhat similar with liberation being achieved and military coups taking place shortly after independence. It is therefore accurate to use one case to represent this almost uniform region when the need to understand a phenomenon arises. With the similarity of history and context, it is easy to use one case to generalize while recognising some differences that might exist within like different colonial masters, systems of government, and populations. Because context matters, these differences must be considered when necessary, but by selecting one country to represent the region, the study will to an extent have a balanced representation of the different contexts of each country.

Moreover, it will be interesting to see how different countries understand the notion of peacebuilding by studying how they ensure peace in their communities. So, in order to understand the different ways these societies arrive at building peace in their respective contexts, Sierra Leone will be used as a lens. Part of the shared features is the violence and civil wars that happened in the region; Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia have experienced a civil war. It is thus appropriate for the purpose of ensuring a correct representation to use Sierra Leone, as it has embedded in it the different trends that have occurred in West Africa

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over the years. Its military rule, civil war and electoral violence helps paint an accurate picture of West Africa. Therefore, the problem of faulty generalization is taken care of as the selected case helps contribute to a balanced representation of the region and produce a correct generalization of the context. Therefore, Sierra Leone will be used to examine the valuable contribution to the various research on women and peacebuilding in West Africa.

Lastly and most importantly, Sierra Leone is a perfect case as a country with rich information on women's participation in peacebuilding. In Africa, it has high female participation in the sphere of peacebuilding when we look at the number of women in the Sierra Leonean peacekeeping force, which makes it easier to further investigate the phenomenon. Countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, and Guinea also show a high participation of women in peacebuilding in West Africa. With a similar trend of active participation at the grassroot level of peacebuilding, Sierra Leone thus becomes a perfect representation of what the research seeks to investigate.

In summary, the justifications for the case study are the need for in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, accurate representation of the West African context, the similarity in history and context, a drive for a valuable contribution to research through balanced generalization, and lastly, the rich content of women's participation in peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. All these informed the careful and deliberate selection of Sierra Leone as the case study.

1.7 Significance of Study

A lot has been written on the topic of women in peacebuilding and peacebuilding as a field. However, most of this research focus on the limited participation of women or women as victims of conflict but not on women as active participants in peace processes. This study therefore breaks from the norm and will highlight the informal roles women have played to foster peace in Sierra Leone. This is to not only establish women as active participants in peacebuilding, but also to contribute to research on women in peacebuilding.

More specifically, this study seeks to establish women as active participants in peace processes in West Africa by drawing attention to the informal work they are doing to foster peace in Sierra Leone. Even though women do not see much representation in formal peacebuilding processes, they are actively participating in the informal sphere which requires documentation. By shifting the lens from formal peacebuilding to the informal sphere of

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peacebuilding, it will inform the need to incorporate informal peacebuilding into mainstream peacebuilding as women are major actors in the informal sphere.

Additionally, by suggesting measures through which women's informal roles in peacebuilding can be fostered, it will engender increased participation of women in peacebuilding at continental level. As this will help provide direction to relevant organizations like the AU, ECOWAS on what they can do to actively engage women in peacebuilding.

1.8   Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 will introduce the study with a background to the study, an outline of what the study is about, and the research problem. It will also give the research questions, research objectives, research methodology and the significance of study.

Chapter 2 will focus mainly on reviewing existing literature related to the study and it will identify the gap in existing literature that the study needs to contribute to filling. It will also include the theoretical framework, the radical feminist theory, to explain the trajectory of women's under-representation in peace processes.

Chapter 3 will be the contextual background that traces the subject of women's participation in peacebuilding from the pre-colonial era to post-colonial Africa, while also outlining the agency of West African women in peacebuilding.

Chapter 4 will present the findings of the study by answering the central research question. It will present the informal roles women have played to foster peace in Sierra Leone in themes as well as answering the concluding question on some of the ways through which women's informal roles in peacebuilding can be fostered by the AU and other relevant organizations.

Chapter 5 will summarize and conclude the study with a section on recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the review of literature on women's participation in peacebuilding and the theoretical framework. The literature review is divided into two parts; the first part is a conceptual review of peacebuilding, the debates around mainstream peacebuilding, including formal peace processes, and the arguments that peacebuilding are mostly western-centric and top-down. This section looks extensively at this to create the background for the informal peace processes that is the focus of this work. The second part is a contextual review of women's participation and representation in peacebuilding in Africa. It outlines the arguments of low participation and under-representation of women in peacebuilding as well as clarify the agency of women in peacebuilding. The theoretical framework discusses the feminist theory of peacebuilding while looking at the radical feminist theory to understand women's participation in peacebuilding.

2.2 History of Peacebuilding

The term 'peacebuilding' became widely used because of the work of Johan Galtung, who is one of the pioneers of peace studies. He introduces the concept in his work about "the three approaches to peace: Peacekeeping, peace-making and peacebuilding" (Cravo 2017:46). According to Galtung, the inadequacies of the first two approaches necessitated the third. He differentiates between positive peace and negative peace; the latter he views as the mere absence of violence and the former as the existence of social cooperation among conflicting parties (Galtung 1976). This is relevant as it shows that peacekeeping and peace-making only aspire to achieve negative peace in most cases. Cravo (2017) asserts that the international practice of peacekeeping and peace-making do not aspire to integrate the human society. By confronting the international practice, Galtung (1976) distinguishes between these two concepts and shows how insufficient they are to achieving positive peace. With the development of the concept of peacebuilding, which is more broad-based and long-term than the first two. Boutros Butrous-Ghali, the then Secretary-General of the UN, called for a review of the international policy practice and the adoption of peacebuilding as the peace model in a bid for lasting peace (Cravo 2017). This birthed the 1992 Agenda for Peace that was a response to changes in conflict, peace, and UN interventions. In 1992, Boutros Boutros-Ghali in the

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Agenda for Peace, called for an important shift in the international community's reliance on peacekeeping and peace-making to peacebuilding by focusing on "action to identify and support structures that will strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (UN 1992: para 21). Boutros-Ghali's adoption of peacebuilding intended to achieve two different but complimentary objectives: "On the one hand, the negative task of preventing the resumption of hostilities", and on the other hand, the positive task of "addressing the root causes of the conflict" (Cravo 2017:48). Boutros-Ghali intended for the model to "address economic despair, social injustice and political oppression as the sources of violence plaguing the system" (UN 1992: para 15). Thus, peacebuilding deviates from the conventional military and political processes used to foster peace and is more transformational and encompassing than peacekeeping and peace-making.

2.3 Definitions

Galtung (1976:298) defines peacebuilding as the "process of creating self-supporting structures that remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where wars might occur". Lederach (1997:20) sees it as a "comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates and sustains the full array of processes, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict into more sustainable and peaceful relationships". The UN Peacebuilding: Support Office (Alliance for Peacebuilding 2012:13) defines it as a "continuum of strategy, process and activities aimed at sustaining peace over the long term with a clear focus on reducing chance for the relapse into conflict". The Brahimi Report (2000:3) defines peacebuilding as "activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war". It further argues that it "embodies measures in the context of emerging, current or post-conflict situations for the explicit purpose of preventing violent conflict and promoting lasting and sustainable peace" (Brahimi Report 2000:3). The UN adopted the 2007 Secretary-General's policy committee definition which states that "it involves a range of measures targeted at reducing the risk of relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at levels for conflict management and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development" (UN Department of Peacekeeping operations 2008:18). Agenda for Peace (2002: para: 57) defines it as a "process that facilitates the establishment of durable peace and tries to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing the root causes and effects of the conflict through military, political, social and economic transformation". These definitions all

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agree that peacebuilding is much more encompassing and sustainable than conventional peacekeeping and peace-making. The following four themes emerged from the above definitions: Holistic, sustainable, preventing relapse into conflict, and inclusivity. The themes relate to the argument that peacebuilding is more holistic (it includes but not limited to military, political, economic, social processes etc), sustainable (it seeks to prevent a relapse into conflict and ensure lasting peace) and particularly as it allows for different ideas on instituting peace. All these relate to the idea that peace can be sort through different mechanisms recognizing the alternative ways of peacebuilding – that is informal peacebuilding which this research is about.

2.3.1 Peacekeeping, peace-making and peacebuilding

In a bid to establish peacebuilding, Galtung defines the concepts of peace-making and peacekeeping to show their inadequacies. According to Galtung, "peacekeeping is a dissociative approach with the goal to promote distance and a social vacuum between antagonists with the assistance of a third party" (1976:282). This assumes that conflict arose because of the disruption of the present system and peace can only be achieved if the present system is restored. This is problematic as it sees a restoration to the status quo as the ultimate solution without questioning the appropriateness of the status quo to achieving peace.

Galtung defines peace-making as a "comprehensive approach anchored in conflict resolution that goes beyond the cessation of hostilities to focus on ways to transcend inconsistencies and contradictions between parties" (1976:290). He argues that peace-making and conflict resolution are "narrow, elitist and negligent" because they ignore "the structural factors that are essential in building sustainable peace" in a bid to get an agreement between the conflicting parties (Galtung 1976:296–297).

Peacekeeping refers to the activities (mostly military) intended to create conditions that favour lasting peace. This deals with the military process of ensuring lasting peace that sometimes uses violent means to suppress the conflict. It is not sustainable because it only seeks to temporarily end the violent conflict. Peace-making on the other hand refers to diplomatic efforts, including UN mediated peace talks, to resolve conflict already underway or those that threaten to break beyond fixed boundaries. These variations lead to Galtung developing peacebuilding: "An associative approach to conflict, able to cope with the direct, structural and cultural causes of violence in their broadest sense", hence, in line with the concept of

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positive peace" (Galtung, 1976:297). Galtung (1976:298) states that the "removal of the root causes of violence should focus on principles such as equity", entropy and symbiosis. The concept of "peacebuilding is undoubtedly maximalist, ambitious, anchored in the idea of struggle for peace, and comprehensively covering several fronts" (Cravo 2017:47)

Peacebuilding is more rounded in its approach as it includes military, social, political, economic, and human processes to build peace. At the same time, it seeks permanence to the curb and prevent conflict by putting in place mechanisms that avoid the emergence of another conflict. Its main goal is not just to prevent a return to conflict but an integration of human society that is closely linked to Galtung's understanding of conflict transformation. It is more inclusive than peace-making and peacekeeping in terms of actors and participants and allows for a more balanced mode than the top-down approach of peacekeeping and peace-making. As stated, peacebuilding is wider in scope than peacekeeping and peace-making and should not be mistaken for one of these. The aim of all three concepts are lasting peace, but what distinguishes them is how this goal is achieved, which affects the results. Jenkins (2013:20) states that the term peacebuilding in modern usage highlights the following key sources of variation: The what, who, when and how, i.e. the period in "which peacebuilding takes place, the type of peace sought, the methods used to attain it and the key actors in the peacebuilding enterprise". He further argues that peacebuilding, like other similar concepts, seeks to prevent conflict and achieve peace systematically rather than simply through diplomatic or military processes by addressing the root causes of conflict (Jenkins 2013:21) Unlike peacekeeping and peace-making that are restricted to a particular phase of the conflict, peacebuilding is more flexible, and it can be used before the outbreak of the conflict or post-conflict, after the peace agreements have been concluded. O'Donnell (2005 in Jenkins 2013) asserts that if peacekeeping concerns the maintenance of a secure environment then peacebuilding encompasses all other tasks undertaken to implement a peace accord or sustain peace.

2.4 Liberal Peace

The term 'liberal peace' was coined because of the shift in global power that happened "after the end of the cold war; this shift affected the type of peace process implemented in conflict afflicted zones" (Cravo 2017:49). Doyle (2005) in Cravo (2017:21) asserts that "the approach that gave shape to this new ambition to promote peace in the periphery, and that was subsequently integrated into the new collective security instruments was the Western approach of liberal peace". MacGinty (2010:393) defines liberal peace as the "dominant form

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of peace-making and peacebuilding favoured by leading states, international organisations and international financial institutions". Francis (2012), on the other hand, opines that the meaning, definition, approaches and practices of liberal peacebuilding are contested. These variations are split into narrow and broad definitions of what peacebuilding is. On the one hand, liberal peacebuilding is seen as a long-term process that seeks to foster lasting peace, beginning after violent conflict has been stopped because of a ceasefire agreement; while on the other hand, it is viewed as security, political, economic, social, development and military programmes and interventions geared towards strengthening political settlements and addressing the cause of conflict. The latter definition is broader in scope as it testifies to the fact that peacebuilding efforts and interventions may take place or start during the on-going conflict.

The Tswalu Protocol (2008) states that this kind of peacebuilding is similar to stabilisation and geared towards war-torn societies emerging from war to prevent a relapse into further violence; reduce violence; protect civilians, properties and main institutions; promote political processes that create the conditions for enhanced security and stability; as well as long-term, non-violent politics and development. The different interpretations of the concept of peacebuilding have to do with the approaches, the actors, priorities of the agencies, institutions and countries involved in building peace and post-war state reconstruction (Francis 2012:5). Francis (2016:4) states that "peacebuilding has a normative orientation i.e. reconstructing a secure, peaceful and developed society". Richmond (2004:87) argues that the "basic assumptions underlying peacebuilding approaches that have contributed to the conceptualisation and practice of UN peace operations during the 1990s and after are problematic". This follows the liberalisation of what peacebuilding should look like. Francis (2012:5) stresses that despite the diversity, large scope and range of peacebuilding activities and interventions, there is an emphasis on neo-liberal political and economic policies based on the thinking that a liberally reconstructed state will be more peaceful and developed with the capacity to reduce violence, prevent relapse into further war as well as support international order, peace and security.

Richmond (2004:88) argues further that

> "what seems to have emerged is that approaches to peacebuilding, humanitarian interventions and conflict resolution have been used to provide avenues of legitimate interventions at different levels of analysis.

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This is because despite the reasons for and the forms of the objectives of interventions and peacebuilding, the assumptions underlying a future vision of peace in conflict zones adhere to and are conditional on a universal liberal model that is non-negotiable".

Thus, most peacebuilding interventions have sought to institutionalise the liberal model of peace along the lines of democratisation, private enterprise, and elections. This stems from the idea that violent conflicts predominantly happen in poverty stricken, underdeveloped and fragile states and that there will be no lasting security without development and no effective development without security and stability. This liberal peacebuilding is then expounded as the only way for these fragile states to achieve peace through development, which mostly follows a trend of top-down policy without allowing for grassroot participation. The relevance of this is to highlight the imbalance of this approach to peacebuilding and how the dominance of formal peace processes emerged. The liberal under-pin of most forms of peace processes culminated into their standardization as the acceptable means to build peace in conflict afflicted zones. Thus, the existence of a mainstream peacebuilding is not a function of the effectiveness of the approach but the power that it represents. Formal peace processes have over the years been used as the most effective model, which is also broad-based, while the infamous informal peace processes have only existed in the meagre confines of traditional societies.

2.5 Approaches to Peacebuilding

Lederach (1997) discusses three approaches to peacebuilding, namely, top-level, middle-range and grassroot approaches.

The objective of the top-level approach is to reach a negotiated settlement, a ceasefire, or a "cessation of hostilities as a first step that will lead to subsequent steps involving wider political and substantive negotiations, culminating in an agreement that creates a mechanism for political transition from war to peace" (1997:44). The framework is primarily based on a trickle-down effect, and it is believed that the accomplishment of peace at the national level will trickle down to the rest of the population. In this approach, the bulk of the responsibility for achieving peace rests with the leaders and representatives of the warring factions. It starts with the military quelling the armed conflict, signing of peace agreement and then a transition process is orchestrated by the political leaders, which paves way for democratic election. The

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liberal peacebuilding embodies this approach of using military and political processes to institute the larger picture of liberal establishments, thus equating peace to the existence of democratic structures and governance. It does not focus on sustainability of the peace and inclusion of stakeholders and quite elitist when it comes to the actors involved.

The middle-range approach is based on the idea that the middle range "contains a set of leaders with a determinant location in the conflict who, if integrated properly, might provide the key to creating an infrastructure for achieving and sustaining peace. It uses problem-solving workshops, conflict resolution trainings and development of peace commissions" (Lederach, 1997:47). The middle-range approach can help to create relationships and skill-based infrastructure that will help sustain the peacebuilding process. It is predicated on the idea that these mid-level leaders can be counted upon to play an important role in addressing the conflict using their interaction with the society as an advantage. The activities of this approach takes on a variety of forms such as; "efforts directed at changing perceptions, floating new ideas among actors close to the policymaking process, training in conflict resolution skills, and establishing teams, networks and institutions that can play an active conciliation role" (Lederach 1997:49).

Lastly, the grassroot approach is different from the top and middle-range approaches as it operates on a unique model. It follows a bottom-up approach that involves stirring up discussions to understand the causes of the conflict in order to address them and achieving an agreement between the parties. This is often done at local meetings organised by leaders of the warring factions, or elders in the community. These meetings "not only deal with issues of immediate concern at local levels but also serve to place responsibility for inter-clan fighting on the shoulders of local leaders and help identify the persons who are rightful representatives of those clans" (Lederach 1997:52). Most important in grassroot approach is the efforts to provide an opportunity for grassroot participation in the reconciliation process. Often, this approach prioritizes inclusivity of the peace process and sustainability of the peace achieved.

These approaches were explained to prove that there is not only one path to peacebuilding, but diverse approaches that accommodates many possible methods. It could be argued that the approaches that yields the best results is more inclusive and sustainable. There has been calls for peacebuilding to be more bottom-up and grassroot oriented rather than top-down, because bottom-up processes usually consider the context, history and specificity of the society, which

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allows for wider participation of the locals involved and thereby paving the way for sustainability. Grassroot approaches to building peace not only takes into consideration several factors, it enjoys certain privileges like wider participation, and most importantly, buy-in from the parties in conflict. When parties in conflict are involved in the peace processes, it aids the smooth implementation of the mechanisms agreed on to achieve peace.

2.6   Formal and Informal Peace Processes

The discourse of formal and informal peace processes is closely linked to liberal peace and the approaches to peacebuilding as explained by Lederach (1997). While the former delves into the nature of the process, the latter discusses how the processes are implemented. Thus, it was important to have the above discussions to explain the term liberal peace and the various approaches to peacebuilding. It is impossible to understand formal peace processes without knowing what liberal peace is; formal peace processes are the collective peacebuilding instruments used to institute liberalised peace, such as peacekeeping, peace-making and Demilitarization, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). These instruments are embedded in the liberal idea of building peace and usually adopted to propagate the liberal idea. Richmond (2004:110) argues that the "western international community thinks of peace as an achievable ideal form, the result of top-down and bottom-up actions that rest on liberal social, political and economic regimes, structures and norms". Peace processes used by the UN, NATO, the European Union, the AU, and other established organisations usually espouse these liberal ideals even though the aim is achieving peace. Formal peace processes, such as peacekeeping, peace-making, DDR, elections, and instituting democracies, became a standardized framework for peacebuilding following what Kahler (2009) called the New York Consensus. This consensus has over the years informed how peacebuilding activities are carried out around the world, with the focus being creating multiparty democracies with market economies, strong and civil societies, secular authority, which are all based on Western liberal values and practices (Newman 2009:12).

After observing what he called the UN post-settlement peacebuilding standard operating procedure, Ramsbotham (2000:170) asserts that it usually takes on four interdependent dimensions: i) "military and security; ii) politico-constitutional; iii) socio-economic; and iv) psycho-social". This peacebuilding process has taken on a compact front that espouses the universal and hegemonic character of the liberal ideology. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, it is limited in its conception of what peace is and how it is achieved. The peace

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processes in and of themselves are meant to achieve sustainable peace, but they have been corrupted to spread liberal ideals that are sometimes antithetical to peace. The strong influence of the developed economies that propagate these instruments means that they become easily identified as formal peace processes with continuous replication across conflict afflicted zones, becoming the constitution for building peace around the world. This hegemony means that other forms of instituting peace will encounter problems when being used to achieve the same goal, as they are be perceived as being insufficient and unconventional. The "hegemonic ambitions of liberal peace means that it attempts, often successfully, to minimize the space for alternative versions of peace; it often succeeds in promoting the perception that locally inspired peace processes that do not use the approved models of the global North are somehow illiberal and illegitimate" (MacGinty 2010:403).

Informal peace processes, unlike formal peace processes, are not widely recognised and standardized because of their context-specific nature. They are mostly based on local and indigenous models of building peace and are usually practised on small-scale. It is difficult to have an organised form of informal peace processes as they are dependent on the culture and practice of a community or society. Scholars such as Richmond (2004), MacGinty (2010), Cravo (2017) while critiquing the formal peace processes of having failed in achieving its goal called for a hybridization of formal and informal processes. This is laudable but without the constant propagation of the need to recognise local forms of building peace, formal peace processes will continue to be regarded as the only acceptable forms of peacebuilding. MacGinty (2010:402) seeks to establish this by asserting that "local forms of dispute resolution and reconciliation that draw on traditional, indigenous or customary norms and practices exist in many societies". It is time that alternative forms of building peace are highlighted in order to diversify how peace is achieved. Be it through an election or mass action, the how should not create another divide. It is on this basis that this work seeks to focus on the alternative forms of building peace that women have used over the years in their communities.

2.7   Women in Peacebuilding

The debates about women and peacebuilding in Africa focus on the low participation of women in peacebuilding and the agency of women during times of war and peace. Because of these debates, research has been done to understand the place of women in peace and security. Scholars like Randall (1987), Jones (1983) and Shepherd (2016) have sought to

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understand why women are under-represented in peacebuilding. Inherent gender inequality has continuously been used as the reason, with scholars like Garba (2016) and Onyenwere (2017) arguing that patriarchy is often used to explain the unequal relationship between genders in African societies. It is therefore important to assess the credibility of this claim. Scanlon (2016) cites the conscious under-reporting of women's contribution to peacebuilding as a possible reason for the perceived low representation of women in peacebuilding. This arises from the notion that African women mostly involve themselves in the informal aspects of peacebuilding, which are often not reflected in formal peacebuilding processes. This dichotomy between formal and informal processes leads to the under-reporting of women's contribution, which in turn affects the representation of women in peacebuilding.

Another theme that emerges from the literature on women and peacebuilding in Africa is that of agency, which posits that the identity that women assume during times of war is very important as it affects their status during the peace process. Jones (1983) argues that there is a perception that war is masculine and that women do not engage in war as active participants. This leads to the perception that women are victims of war, making them seem vulnerable. She further argues that this perception is false and that women do participate in armed conflict. Shepherd (2016) consolidates this argument by asserting that women embody multi-agency during war as they act as belligerents, combatants, informants etc. Clearly the status of victims-only ascribed to women is one-sided. These themes will guide this study's exploration of women's roles in peacebuilding and provide context to the subject matter.

2.7.1   Patriarchy as a reason for low participation of women

Literature on African women in peacebuilding often dwell on their exclusion and low participation primarily because of the patriarchal nature and cultures of most African societies. For instance, Onyenwere (2017:19) explains the unequal relationship between males and females in African societies by asserting that "culture is usually the justification wielded for the denial of women's rights and the perpetuation of gender inequality". Garba (2016) argue that peacekeeping, peace-making and peacebuilding all follow a sheer discrimination against women on the basis of culture as being weak, unfit, and inferior while men are seen as providers, strong and superior.

Alaga (2010:3) asserts that West Africa is characterised by "a male-dominated and highly patriarchal socio-cultural orders" where war and peace remain "gendered activities that fall in

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the domain of men". The region is "characterised by heightened inequalities and gender imbalances that perpetuate discrimination against women". Scholars like Alaga (2010) argue that there have been clamour by women organizations such as (Women in Peace Network, MARWOPNET) for the inclusion of women as active participants into the peacebuilding sphere in West Africa. He asserts in response to the clamour that "but the enshrinement of patriarchy in society argues for gender equality to focus on the superficial empowerment of women" and not substantive "representation of women in decision making sphere" (Alaga 2010:4). This is not only tokenism but also minimalism as it continues to try and limit women's reach in public decision-making processes. Observing the gender dynamics within the peace and security sector in West African countries, it is evident that women are not participating neither are they represented. Alaga (2010) contends that women are not allowed to participate in peacekeeping operations as well as in the national armies of Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Mali. In the case of Senegal especially, the traditional culture, the patriarchal strands in Christian and Islamic religions have made it difficult for women to be allowed to participate in the security sector of the country. Diop (2011) states that "based on the Senegalese proverb that a man's success is based on his wife's care, there's strong sentiment advocating women being housewives to care for their families", making it difficult for women to be integrated into the Senegalese military. The argument that the patriarchal culture of African societies is to be blamed for low participation of women in peacebuilding is widely shared by most studies trying to explain the gender imbalance which should be subjected to re-evaluation.

Diop (1987) argues that the assumption of an inherently patriarchal African state dispels the pre-colonial history of most African societies which confirms that the matri-centric unit was the primary organizing structure of African matriarchy years before the European colonization of Africa. Many African societies were based on a matriarchal system prior to the advent of the Abrahamic religions (Christianity and Islam), introduced by the colonialists which disrupted this ordering. Isike (2009:36) also asserts that this assumption is false because it does not consider "Africa's pre-colonial social history" and fails to acknowledge the cultural, economic and "ideological evidence of matriarchy as a distinct social system". Steady(2011: 4) argues that "motherhood and matriarchy in Africa were embedded in social, political and cultural reproduction, and they point out that some aspects of the Eurocentric models of domination and hierarchy have been imposed on the African reality". Oyewunmi (2004) argues that the dichotomy of gender based on defined gender roles did not stem from

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African social systems but from the European form of patriarchy. In most pre-colonial African societies women were part of decision-making bodies. For example, Awe (1977) asserts that in the council of chiefs in the Oyo empire in West Africa, there was the Iya Lode and the Iya Loja; the former oversaw the affairs of women in the kingdom and the latter was the head of market women, and they both served as advisers to the Alaafin.

Steady (2011:13) narrates that "Queen Zinga of Angola and Congo was a warrior queen who ruled in the 17th century with an army comprising mainly of women, and she fought wars as well as signed peace treaties with the Portuguese colonialists. Asante queen mothers of Ghana were legends in their time for mothering their nations while standing up to the British colonial rulers in the 19th and 20th centuries" .Therefore, the story that African women have historically been marginalized in the public sphere is false. There is evidence of women participating as peacebuilders during pre-colonial times, backing the claim that women's participation in peace processes is not a new phenomenon in African societies. Notable examples of women who played active peacebuilding roles in pre-colonial African societies are the 'Queen Mothers' in Ghana and Yorubaland in Nigeria and the 'bondo' women in Sierra Leone. These women served as traditional peace makers, as priestesses who conferred with the gods to determine whether it was right to go to war, as praise singers for men during battles as a boost to ensure victory, or as custodians of culture" (Alaga 2010:4). In pre-colonial South Africa, there was also Tlokwa, who ruled on behalf of her son, led her people to war and negotiated a peace agreement with Moshoeshoe, leader of the Sotho tribe (Natrass 2017).

It is important to unearth the present-day indictment of culture as the reason for women's exclusion in decision making, even though most African societies were largely patriarchal. Research has shown that there were not clearly defined gender roles in pre-colonial Africa. These defined gender roles are a result of Euro-American societies that fixed the relationship between both genders hierarchically with the husband as the head of the family and the wife as his subordinate (Oyewunmi 2004:1)

The literature shows that women were active participants in peacebuilding in pre-colonial times, and it is important to understand why that changed. Generally, this change is attributed to Africa's contact with Europe and the subsequent unequal relationship between them. Most of the traditions and practices of these African societies were lost in the new societies that survived the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The immediate colonization of African societies by Europeans also eroded a large part of the cultures and traditions of these societies. One of the

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areas affected are gender roles, which changed with the introduction of defined gender roles of the European patriarchies. Isike (2009:41) argues that this created, what he called, the new African patriarchies, "which have been wrought on the continent by the forces of imperialism and colonialism", and which he distinguishes from the old African patriarchies of pre-colonial Africa.

It is important to distinguish between these two patriarchies as failure to do so results in a misrepresentation of the realities that existed in pre-colonial Africa. According to Sadiki (2001), "violence against women in the Great Lakes region and elsewhere in Africa is an invention of modernity" and "a new phenomenon that is both a novelty and serious contradiction of the values linked to respect for human life and for women, who were seen as the provider of life in pre-colonial African societies" (2001:445–446). These new patriarchies have largely dominated the present discourse of patriarchy in Africa and its attendant consequences "for the participation of women in public decision-making processes" as African men now use them to justify their bigotry against women (Isike 2009:40). Therefore, most literature on the marginalization of women in peacebuilding refers to the new patriarchies when they argue that culture is responsible for the unequal relationship. Amadiume (1997) also notes that "women's indigenous organisations that were sources of female power and leadership were replaced or subsumed by more Westernized women's associations with functions that tend to reinforce unequal gender roles and integration into the Western capitalist system, which is built upon the sub-ordination of women" Cited in (Steady 2011:28)

2.7.2 Under-reporting of women's work in peacebuilding as a reason for under-representation

The under-reporting of women in peacebuilding arose primarily from the division between formal and informal peace processes. This division speaks to the growing popularity of the liberal peace used by vast international organisations in peacebuilding. This popularity has contributed immensely to what constitutes peace processes and what is generally acceptable as peacebuilding. Its growing popularity and acceptability are not because of its success, but a function of the ideology behind it. Until recently, peace processes were only known within

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the context of the widely used collective security instruments of the UN, but now alternative forms of peacebuilding are being recognised.

These alternative forms of instituting peace have always existed, and traditional communities have historically used these alternatives because of their nature of being context specific. These processes are rooted in the customs, traditions, and norms of the specific community, making them context specific; and therefore, they have not been recognised by the international system. Thus, these alternative forms lacked the social capital needed to be inducted into the hall of formal peace processes. Some of the major reasons for this is the specificity of these processes as they are most times only used within a community. These processes are not standardized, so they are difficult to replicate.

On the other hand, formal processes are those that are carried out in official capacities by governments, international organisations, military, such as negotiation, mediation, peace agreements, peacekeeping etc. They are usually top-down approaches to building peace which are often reflective of mainstream peacebuilding. Formal peacebuilding is dominated by men (almost all mediators, negotiators and peacekeepers are men), and women continue to be excluded from formal peacebuilding. The continued marginalization of women in formal peace processes along with the dichotomy between formal and informal peace processes contribute to the under-representation of women's contribution to peacebuilding.

With little or no chance of debuting into formal processes, women engage largely in the informal aspects of peacebuilding. Alaga (2010:5) consolidated this by asserting that given "their lack of presence at the formal political realm", the grassroot community level engagement became the main outlet for "women's peace activism". Adeogun and Muthuki (2018:85) write that in South Sudan women were largely excluded from the strategic peacebuilding plan; "however, they used their influence by adopting a bottom-up approach and were involved in peacebuilding at the grassroot level". Scanlon (2016) asserts that the under-representation of women in peacebuilding is a function of their widespread involvement in informal reconciliation rather than in formal processes. Women's efforts towards fostering and building peace in their communities has often been ignored and remained under-represented. That "even if women leaders and organisations are active in track-two mechanisms and civil society forums these mechanisms do not necessarily find their way into the formal peace processes" (UN 2000:74). Therefore, their involvement is mostly not reflected in mainstream peacebuilding, which make women's contributions to maintaining

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peace in their communities invisible to international peacekeeping organisations. Jordan (2003) argues that women who engage in peacebuilding work are rarely accorded the same recognition as the men. Alaga (2010:3) asserts that in West Africa, "women's painstaking peacebuilding work on the ground has not been institutionalised and rarely influence national and global policies on war and peace. Their knowledge, ideas and experiences remain at best marginalized and at worst invisible".

Therefore, the problem is not that women are not involved in peacebuilding, but that the work they do in their communities are not recognised. The argument here is that women are involved in peacebuilding work, the problem lies with the recognition of the work they are doing to engender peace in their various communities. Thus, the subtle discrimination against informal peace processes explains the non-recognition of indigenous methods African women are using to foster peace. This could also be ascribed to the historic use of the top-down approach to foster peace often used by the UN, which most of the time ignores indigenous practices that are mostly grassroot oriented. The UN peace operations resist adaptations to local, cultural differentiation and rely on doctrine and organisational templates (Autesserre 2014). These templates are often replicated in different conflict communities under the project of rebuilding peace without consideration for local practices and specificity of context. This problem concedes to the long overdue argument about the credence usually given to Western-centric approaches to peacebuilding while indigenous processes are not respected, however this is not always the case. UN Missions in various countries promote the idea of local ownership and take into account the value of the indigenous systems of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the communities that the work in. This is important as the contributions women make in peacebuilding are often informed by traditional forms of ensuring peace and are not represented in mainstream peacebuilding.

2.7.3 Agency of Women: Victims or Active participants?

The dilemma of seeing women as victims or active participants is a function of the concept of agency. Hitlin & Elder (2007:171) defines agency as "the capacity humans have to shape the circumstances of their own life and how the actions of free people, untainted by others, often are a result of the structures of the society one lives in". The question of the agency of women as victims or participants arose as a result of the perception that war is masculine and should only be understood in that frame. This perception is fed by the notion that women are weaker than men and thus not suited to war. Schirch and Sewak (2005) argue that because women

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have been historically excluded from participating in peace negotiations and peace processes, their interests have been misconstrued as they are viewed through the victim lens. Agbalajobi (2010) contends that the women as victim-only narrative in conflict areas must be investigated to explore the other agencies women can embody during war. Shirk and Sewak (2005) further interrogate the sociological theory about sex and gender to trace the basis of the claim. The authors argue that gender and its defined roles are not a natural phenomenon, and that "masculinity and femininity" are a product of societal construction and taught through socialization. They advocate the idea of moving beyond the notion that women are victims because this makes it harder for women to engage in peace processes as active participants.

The idea that depicts women as victims of war has been continuously challenged by scholars on the basis that women are many things during war and should not be limited by the victim-only status. One such scholars is Shepherd (2016), and she asserts that the discourse on the agency of women is based on the societal perception that they (women) are weaker than men and therefore can only be victims during war. She opines further that there is no theoretical basis for the argument that men are the perpetrators and women the victims of violent conflicts. Representing women only as victims of violence "undermines their agency, and thus, the development of peacebuilding activities in which women can participate and have their experiences of conflict addressed and not undermined" (Shepherd 2016 in Olofsson 2018:15). Coulter (2009:39) asserts that women can be "active participants in war, supporters and advocates of continued armed struggle, and they can be spies. Both men and women are victims as well as participants, but by focusing on women only as victims, we conceal their abilities as social and political actors". Andreas (1990:91) argues that the fact that women are active participants in war is mostly ignored. During the guerrilla war led by the Sendero Luminoso in Peru, women were part of the core of the *senderista* militants and held positions of rank and leadership; yet their existence was largely ignored by foreign scholars and journalists (Andreas 1990:91). In Sierra Leone, women participated in the war with their numbers in the various armed forces estimated to be up to 30%, the number of child soldiers at 37% with half of them being girls (Mazurana and Carlson 2004). Jordan (2003) asserts that the contributions of women in war and peace are often not recognised compared to men which sometimes leads to erasure.

This omission is mostly to preserve the gendered narrative of war being fought by men and women as the victims. The presence of women in war might be a phenomenon that people do

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not want to acknowledge, "it is neither new nor unusual". It is a fact that women suffer greatly in war; for example, during the war in Sierra Leone, an overwhelming majority of women were abducted from their homes when rebels attacked, and these women suffered physical abuse, frequent rapes, forced marriage etc. (Coulter 2009). Yet, despite being victims, some actively participated in the war by becoming rebel fighters. It is therefore misleading to only talk about the experience of women as victims while erasing their contributions as participants.

These stereotypes limit the objective evaluation of how women are viewed and are mostly exploited to suit certain needs. For instance, the notion that women are naturally peaceful, innocent, and passive is a good reason to use women as peacebuilders, but over the years it has been exploited by rebel groups. Mansaray (2000) in Coulter (2009:40) narrates that "in some of the Chechnyan suicide bombings, veiled women used their veils as protection from unwanted attention to perpetuate these acts. In Sierra Leone, women were used to smuggle weapons through military checkpoints in bags of women's underwear and hidden on their own bodies or their children's bodies". It is important to get rid of these gendered stereotypes as they are harmful and the discourse on women as victims-only during war is long overdue.

This section has shown women are victims as well as participants. Establishing that women are both victims and participants in war provides justifiable grounds for women's involvement in peacebuilding as participants rather than victims, as the circumstances during times of war affects the process of peacebuilding. Not only does it help to create a basis for women's participation, it also corrects the false gendered narrative of the interplay of war in most literature that have continuously influenced how women are positioned in conflict and peace studies. It is the important to correct this false narrative by constantly evaluating the agency of women during times of war and peace.

2.7.4   African women in peacebuilding

Scholars have also written about women's abilities in the field of peacebuilding. Isike and Uzodike (2011:33) asserts that "traditionally women have always been at the centre of peace processes—from peace-making to peacebuilding and even sometimes, preventive diplomacy—across different pre-colonial African societies" (women's roles in peacebuilding in pre-colonial African societies was discussed in Section 2.7.1). Women have always been substantively involved in maintaining peace in their respective societies and it premises itself

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on the natural traits of women as peacemakers, and the ethic of care that women inherently harbour. They are trained to be gentle and patient and to look for solutions. These traits are part of the traditional presumptive role of being a woman. This, thus opines further that in pre-colonial African societies women were actively involved in peace processes in a myriad of ways such as, negotiators, pacifiers, envoys etc. This raises the question of why there is few, almost no, women participating in peace processes in neo-colonial Africa? The argument put forward is that the colonial patriarchal system that was introduced under colonialism disrupted gender relations in Africa. Many pre-colonial African societies were gender neutral and even when gender roles were defined, it was not gender-binary between superior and inferior genders. Instead, it was parallel genders walking side-by-side towards one goal: The communal good of the society (Isike 2009:39).

The above argument coincides with the fact that the distortion of African history has led to the loss of the agency pre-colonial African women had. Isike and Okeke-Uzodike (2011:33) explored this in which they that "women in neo-colonial Africa appear to have lost the myth/sacredness that surrounded their being and social existence in pre-colonial in Africa, because they have become victims of physical abuse and sexual violence based on a warped understanding of African patriarchy, which has produced negative masculinity on the continent".

2.8   Theoretical Framework

2.8.1   Introduction

Over the years the subject of women's participation in peacebuilding has been raised in different quarters, particularly in the international arena. This call has been accompanied by several explanations and justifications for the inclusion of women in the decision-making sphere. This call for inclusion has been preceded by the need to understand the reasons for women's exclusion from the decision-making sphere, and at the forefront of this is the feminist theory. The feminist theory positioned itself as the compass to understand the issues pertaining to women, including their role in peacebuilding which this research is focused on. While there is existing literature on feminist theory and peacebuilding, this study will use the feminist theory to make sense of Sierra Leonean women's roles in peacebuilding. It will be used to understand the intersection of women in peacebuilding as well as guide the analysis of the research. The theory will be applied to legitimize the work women in Sierra Leone are doing

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to foster peace in their communities. This will aid the actualization of one of the arguments of the theory, that of establishing women as agents of change. The section will start with the conceptualisation of the feminist theory at a broad level to provide a basic understanding of the theory and link it to peacebuilding. It will look at the various arguments of the theory that speaks to peacebuilding and apply the theory to the study to give theoretical strength to the analysis.

2.8.2 Understanding and Conceptualising the feminist theory

The feminist theory wants to establish women as equal to men in society, and especially, that women are not just victims of conflict but are also agents of change in peacebuilding. Feminism is intended as activism or scholarship that starts from the lives of women to make visible and subvert gendered relations of power in society (Ackerly 2000:17). Feminism is a contemporary social and political movement motivated by the individual and collective experiences of women based on the claim that society is based on patriarchal principles that result in "discrimination against women in public and private life" (Vukocic 2013:33). The feminist theory as scholarship is wide and diverse with no unifying definitions, though all branches analyse women's agency, experiences of gender inequality, women's oppression and how women can be repositioned to be active/equal in society.

An attempt to provide a basic definition of feminist theory starts with the claim that feminism seeks to address the inferior status of women in society and the injustice they face because of their biological sex. It advocates for a total transformation of the socio-political, cultural, and economic system to minimise to the barest minimum the discrimination against women (Freedman 2001). Feminism according to Freedman (2001:9) has shown how "historically natural difference between men and women was assumed and has analysed how these differences have been given various social, political and economic meanings in different societies and civilizations". One of the consequences of this categorization is the inferior status that has been ascribed to women because of the assumption of natural sex differences. Ortner (1974:73) argues that "the secondary status of women in society is one of the true universals, a pan-cultural fact". Freedman (2001:12) points out that the genesis of the differentiation "between men and women is the biological differences, which doubles as the justification for the creation of different social roles for men and women".

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On this basis women were judged as having lesser physical strength, which determined their social roles as homemakers, making it impossible for them to participate in the public sphere. To refute the scientific justification of women's exclusion from the public sphere, feminism started to investigate the relationship between the physical features and a "natural differentiation of gender roles for men and women and ways to overcome it . Feminism argues that although biological sex is a natural difference, all the meanings and forms of behaviour ascribed with being a woman have been socially and historically constructed by societies" (Freedman 2001:13). This agrees with the argument that a woman's inferior status is not a natural or biological phenomenon but is created by society. Freedman (2001:14) states that "Beauvoir's 1949 distinction between biological sex and the social creation of the eternal feminine is a precursor to the distinction between sex and gender, which is common in feminist theory. The sex and gender distinction have helped feminist theorists to advance the separation of the biological from the social, thereby using it as a tool of analysis". Offen (1988), while searching for a universal meaning of feminism, points out that in Wollstonecraft's 1792 "*Vindication of the Rights of Women*" and Cady Stanton's speech in 1869, one inherent tenet is the notion of self-sovereignty or women's birth right to be what they want to be. Offen argues that "these two women saw the notion of self-sovereignty as primarily a moral imperative, rather than the categorical absolute it has since become" (Offen 1988:136).

2.8.3   Radical feminism

As with all isms, feminism is not a homogeneous and unified idea, and there are different variations and types. Radical feminist theory is the variation of feminism that will be used in this study. Radical feminism is one of the directions of feminist theory formed on the idea that the social system is based on patriarchy, resulting in the marginalization of and discrimination against women in all spheres. It is a feminist theory that starts from the idea that the conflict between the sexes is a fundamental conflict and oppression against women is a direct result of patriarchy (Vukocic 2013). Bryson (1992:181) points out that the "radical feminist theory insists that male power is not confined to the world of politics and paid employment but extends into private life. This means that traditional concepts of power and politics are challenged and extended to personal areas of life such as the family and sexuality and both areas are seen as instruments of patriarchal domination".

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The main difference between radical feminism and other variants of feminist theory lies in the extent to which the social system based on power struggle between the sexes is patriarchy, the rule of men in which women are subordinate, is considered to be the root of all further oppression, inequality and injustice. Vukocic (2013) argues that it consists of the three key and interrelated concepts of power, patriarchy, and oppression, which are all used to limit the potential of women in society. Mackay (2015:2) analyses radical feminism using the following four criteria: The acknowledgment that patriarchy exists as well as the need to fight it; the advocacy for a women-only space as a strategy for organization; "a focus on all forms of male violence against women and its role as a keystone of women's oppression; and an extension of the analysis of male violence against women to include the institutions that objectifies women".

The theory further interrogates the adoption of defined gender roles based on one's biological sex. Bisong (2014:34) argues that it views the discrimination against, and subjugation of women as the most important form of injustice "that cuts across boundaries of race, culture and economic class. It is a movement intent on social change". Radical feminism revolves around patriarchy as the key factor that perpetuates violence against women in both public and private life, limiting the self-actualization of women. It is particularly focused on ending this system that discriminates against women, while abiding to the core tenets of feminism that advocates for the equality of both genders and no discrimination based on one's biological sex.

Radical feminism identifies patriarchy as the problem that hinders the achievement of the tenets of feminism and seeks for its eradication. Of all the types of feminism, radical feminism is regarded as the most extreme type of feminism as it seeks to usurp violence against women rooted in a system that are so embedded in culture that to some it seems like an impossible task. By identifying patriarchy as the problem, it uncovers the power inherent in the system that is used to subordinate women in different spaces, especially in traditional spaces such as family. The family, which is the most basic unit of society, is the space where violence against women is mostly visible. Tags such as mother and wife deprive women of the lone agency of their person and give them the attached identity of someone's wife, the mother of; the woman is inferior to her husband. All these are legitimized by the whims of patriarchy that pronounces men as the highest order in society, while leaving women to suffer continuous direct and indirect violence.

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Thus, radical feminism seeks to reposition the skewed power arrangement in society by advocating for the abolishment of the patriarchal system that continuously marginalizes and discriminates against women. By rearranging the power arrangement, it provides a space where women can be what they want to be without anything hindering them.

2.8.4   Feminist theory, women, and peacebuilding

Feminist theory and women in peacebuilding intersect on three levels: The under-representation of women in conflict and peace studies; the agency of women as victims or agents of change; and women as active participants. The contributions of the theory to peacebuilding has in many ways reconfigured the question of women and gender in peacebuilding, which yielded some results. Feminists argue that peacebuilding has been devoid of female presence and representation, making it gender-blind (Strickland & Duvvury 2003) The invisibility of women in armed conflict and peace studies are a function of the erasure of women from these writings, which cuts across other disciplines. This placed the burden on feminism to highlight the need for female representation in conflict and peace studies at all levels.

The history of feminist theorizing of women's representation in peacebuilding is linked to feminist advocacy for women in peace, and thus, the scholarship and advocacy contributed to the development of the feminist theory of peacebuilding (Cockburn 2007). A group of peace historians led by Bernice Caroll were among the first to recognise the significance of gender in war and peace. The question of the place of women in peacebuilding became the focal point of subsequent discussions in peace studies in the works of scholars such as Randall, Jones, Sharoni. By highlighting the different contributions women have made to the history of peace and conflict, feminist contributors embarked on making women more visible as victims, participants, and theorists. The gendered narrative of wars causes, and consequences is one of the feminists' contributions to peace studies, making it imperative to shift from a gender-blind peacebuilding to gender-conscious peacebuilding. Feminist writers like Betty Reardon, Elise Boulding and Hilkka Pietila were instrumental in bringing about the passing of the UN resolution 1325. Their work and the Fourth Conference on Women in 1995 also known as the Beijing Women's conference were the catalysts for the passing of the UNSCR 1325, which advocated for a gendered perspective on war and peace, and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in the 2000s (Confortini 2010).

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McKay and Mazurana (2007:3) contend that "feminist analysis looks at the world by gathering and interpreting information through the eyes of women as subjects". Young (1992) asserts that "it separates itself from a patriarchal world view and the constraints of a male-dominated theoretical analysis by seeking to explain the importance of women's oppression in terms of their unequal status in society" cited in (McKay and Mazurana 2007:3). Feminist analysis of peacebuilding brings women to the forefront of peace research by pointing to the social, political, and economic impact of violence against women in peace and war. Jennifer Lobasz (2009) disputes the account of human trafficking that does not recognise women's agency and feeds on gendered stereotypes of who constitutes a trafficked person. She further states that feminism studies the "manner in which gender stereotypes are used to establish or reproduce categories of practices, perpetrators and victims" (Lobasz 2009:323). Feminist literature has raised interesting arguments against accounts equating women to victims, emphasizing that women are not just victims but agents during and after armed conflict. El-Bushra (2007: 134) argues that "to cast women as victims of male violence in war ignores the complex realities of women's experience, denies them agency and negates the spirit with which women have responded to crises". By asking 'where are the women', feminism brings to light all marginalized spaces not visible in the centres of powers, yet without which peace cannot be built (El-Bushra 2007:135). Elshtain (1995:3–13) contends that depicting women as victims or beautiful souls to be protected and men as just warriors in charge of protection is a myth that serves war-making and allows the militarization of everyday life for both men and women

Feminists from the global South argue that the conflict and peace experiences of women in the global North is different from those of the South and should not be used to represent the universal narrative of women in peace. They argue that the act of universalizing the experiences of Western women is a form of self-identification that distorts the emancipation of third world women, because they begin to internalize the experiences of women from the global North, making them believe in their emancipation which has not happened yet and pay marginal attention to the acts of political/personal violence against themselves (Confortini 2010). Third world feminist theorists such as Oldenburg (2002), Sinha (2000) and Jawardena (1986) argue that it is important to understand the context under which women in the global South live, and that one needs to take into account the violent practices against women in the

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third world; the history of colonial relations; their interactions with domestic patriarchal structures; the contemporary manifestations of imperialism; and third world women's agency.

The feminist theory of peacebuilding does not only dispute the claim that women are victims of conflict and post-conflict reconciliation but also attempt to establish that women must be made more visible as agents of change. This speaks directly to the under-representation of women in male-dominated peacebuilding and post-conflict reconciliation. This under-representation has many causes like patriarchal culture, under-reporting of women's work in peacebuilding and the women-as-victim narrative and continue to be at the epicentre of feminist critique.

In disputing patriarchal culture as a challenge, feminists used Johan Galtung's (1969) cultural and structural violence as a framework. He argues that direct violence is only a manifestation of underlying contradictions and attitudes and termed it structural and cultural violence. In 1964, he came up with the term structural violence when he visited Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and observed the disproportionate pay gap between the races and genders. The term became popularised in his 1969 article 'Violence, Peace and Peace Research', where he defined it as a "type of violence in which structures or institutions harm people by preventing them from fulfilling their basic needs". It is an indirect violence whereby societal structures are hindering the self-actualization of individual needs such as food, shelter, and safety. Colonialism, caste, apartheid, racism, tribalism, and gender are all forms of structures that limit one's potential to flourish in a society. On the other hand, "cultural violence refers to the aspect of culture that can be used to normalize or legitimize direct or structural violence and may be exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, and empirical and formal science" (Galtung 1969). It is just certain aspects of a culture, not its entirety, that makes structural violence look normal.

From this, we have direct violence, which is the manifested behaviour, and can be physical, non-physical, verbal, or non-verbal (psychological). Structural violence is the overarching system that harbours and advances the process and attitudes that give birth to direct violence, while cultural violence is the context and contradictions that give permanence to structural violence. To apply this theory, low women's participation is the direct violence we are trying to understand, and the challenges are the institutions and aspects of culture that have led to this problem. Radical feminism unmasked patriarchy as a form of structural and cultural violence that hinders the participation of women in peace processes. Galtung's analysis of

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cultural and structural violence is an impactful work in the field of peace studies as it helps to understand the underlying causes of violent conflict and serve as a guide to proffering solutions in peacebuilding.

The essence of this background is to give credence to the analysis that patriarchal culture is a form of violence against women as its limit their potential in the society. After Galtung established this, radical feminists argued that it is important to usurp this violence rooted in culture and manifesting itself in certain structures, such as gender inequality. Confortini (2010) asserts that attention to patriarchy as a form of structural violence that is enacted as personal violence directed at women is distinctly feminist. Thus, feminism brings attention to the continuity between all forms of personal and structural violence. Birit Brock-Utne (1989) distinguishes between structural violence that shortens people's lives and structural violence that threatens the self-actualization of individuals. She posits that violence against women works to perpetuate a system of structural violence that is contradictory to peace. Enloe (2005:281) argues that one of the feminism's tasks is to expose how "patriarchy in all its varied forms—camouflaged, khaki-clad and pinstriped—is the principal cause of both the outbreak of violent societal conflicts and of the international community's frequent failures to provide long-term resolutions to the violent conflicts". Confortini (2006) states that feminists have observed that the marginalization of women from the public realm results in an unjust social order that is antithetical to peace. As far back as the 1900s, literature have argued that war is one of the manifestations of patriarchal culture and androcratic rule founded on conquest (Josephson 1985:800–801). This argument further equates patriarchy to violence against women that manifests in the exclusion of women from the public sphere. Patriarchy is related to the institution of war because masculine ideologies pervade political decision-making sites; military expenditures divert funds from social economic infrastructures, thus contributing to structural violence; and women are excluded from power. Hence, women's equal access to political structures could mean more peace. Feminists make women as actors visible by looking at the ways in which they participate or sustain war efforts through their work in defence industries, as nurses on the battlefield, in combat as soldiers or revolutionaries, and in their roles as sex-workers and entertainers to the soldiers

As early as the 19th and 20th century, feminists have asserted that women in general dislike war and violence more than men, and therefore, had a special responsibility in the creation of peace. Josephson propose that peace should be founded on matriarchal principles of reason,

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truth, political decentralization and restoring women's dignity and authority (1985:800–801). The innate or nurtured features of women as caring, loving, and empathetic that are often disregarded by peace research and politicians constitute important resource for peace (Boulding 1976, Brock-Utne 1985, Reardon 1998). Boulding (1976) further observes that a human longing for peace manifests itself in every society and that in every society women's cultures have carried on the caring, nurturing and conflict-resolving work necessary for the preservation of the community. Hence, a world that values those skills that are traditionally, even stereotypically, associated with women's everyday lives would be more peaceful and just.

The feminist theory of peacebuilding is primarily concerned with the emancipation of women from the secondary or inferior status that has been ascribed to them in society, and specifically, with the inclusion of women in the decision-making sphere and their increased participation as participants in peace processes. Prior to the feminist debut in peacebuilding, women were largely absent from the sphere with little or no mention of their contributions and sufferings or how conflict and war affect them. With the works of numerous scholars (El-Bushra 2007, McKay 1999, Confortini 2010), the question of 'where are the women' became prevalent in the sphere of peace and conflict studies. The genesis of the inclusion of women in conflict and peace started with understanding how war affects women and with women being adjudged to be one of the most affected groups during war, along with the aged, children and disabled. This birthed the women-as-victim narrative that is mostly found in writings about the agency women embody during times of war and peace. The women-as-victim narrative traces its origin to the biological features of a female and their lesser physical strength. This fact informs the argument that women are fragile beings because of their physiology and are susceptible to more damage during war than men. Feminists deconstructing the women-as-victim narrative points out that there is a difference between one's capability based on biological features and what society accrues to one's sex. Being a woman does not mean that women are weak physically and are unable to fight wars because one's sex is different from one's gender. Sex is a natural and biological phenomenon, while gender is a societal construct used to categorize people based on their social roles. The distinction between gender and sex clarified the notion of women are weaker beings: Women are meant to be homemakers, and women should be restricted to the private life and not be seen in the public sphere. Feminists argue that one's

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gender is not naturally bestowed, making it fluid, which makes it easy for society to ascribe certain roles to qualify a gender.

The women-as-victim only narrative also overlooks the fact that women can and are many things during war, which is mostly ignored in order to consolidate the myopic narrative of women as victims. The agency of women in conflict are much bigger than is generally perceived with examples feminists affirmed that women are combatants in battlefield, informants, spies etc. However, clarifying the agency of women during conflict did not lead to better representation of women as participants in conflict studies and it takes constant activism and policy formulation to ensure the actualization of this task. Resolving the agency of women during conflict period is not the end of the feminist theory; the representation and participation of women in post-conflict peacebuilding must be ensured. By disputing the women-as-victim narrative feminist theorists opened the space for legitimizing women's active participation in peace processes. Noting that women are victims as well as participants in war provide a locus point for ensuring that women constitute part of the peace process. Yet, this has been a difficult task to achieve, especially in the African context that this research is focused on. Following the passing of UNSCR 1325 and other subsequent resolutions, there have been considerable changes in the inclusion of women in formal peace processes. But in Africa the number of women participating in formal peace processes are still quite low.

This phenomenon, peculiar to third world countries, gave rise to the variation of women's experiences in different contexts and the need to understand these experiences. In understanding the low participation of women in the public sphere in Africa, radical feminists identified patriarchy as the bane to the actualization of women's agency as participants in the decision-making sphere. With Galtung's argument that not all violence aims to shorten people's lives, some hinder the quality of life and optimal maximization of one's potential. This explains the predicament of women in West Africa who find it hard to participate in the public sphere and formal peacebuilding, specifically. The feminist theory that relates to this research is making women visible in the public sphere.

2.8.5 African feminist ethics of care

Research on women in peacebuilding was discussed in Section 2.7 and focused on the marginalization of women, but this section deviates from that as it uses the feminist ethics of care to theorize the informal work women in Sierra Leone are doing to foster peace in their

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communities. Women's participation in peace processes is not a new phenomenon; they have been participating in peacebuilding since pre-colonial Africa. Women in pre-colonial Africa were involved in fostering peace in their communities based on their status as mothers, which has prompted certain African feminists to call for the development of an African feminist theory based on the ethics of care. The ethics of care became known with Giligan's 'In a Different Voice' (1993). The work responds to an assertion which presupposes that the personal and moral development of females are slower than males, making them inferior. She argues that women are not slow in their personal or moral development, they are just different, and asserts that women are focused on creating connections among people and exhibiting a sense of care rather than justice as espoused by men. Giligan, (1993: 30) narrates that women exhibits the central tenets of non-violent "conflict resolution; reflects a belief in restorative activity of care; and sees the actors in the dilemma not as opponents in a contest of rights but as members of a network of relationships on whose continuation they all depend". The stages of ethics of care as explained by Giligan (1993) are responsibility to others, self-sacrifice, empathy, and non-violence. These are traits often found in women. The ethics of care argument posits that on the basis of their natural traits, women are naturally predisposed to be loving, peaceful, and caring, which they often espouse in their day-day interaction with others. When the ethics of care model became popular with Giligan's work, scholars of African studies, such as Amadiume 1997, Diop 1987, argued that the ethics of care is not novel as women in pre-colonial Africa used it to create a peaceful society. Most pre-colonial African societies used a matriarchal system premised on the nature of motherhood. Amadiume (1997:101) states that "authentic African matriarchy had a very clear message about social and economic justice as it was couched in a very powerful goddess-based religion, a strong ideology of motherhood, and a general moral principle of love". Rackozy (2006:202) asserts that one of her respondents said that "the Zulu women's ability to stop fighting in this way may be due to respect for women as the persons who bring children, the life givers". Isike (2009:103) argues that "women's existence and power in pre-colonial African societies were premised on an ethics of care that was rooted in their motherhood and their nature, which was tolerant of differences, collaborative and non-violent, and as such peaceful". Women's involvement in peace work in post-colonial Africa is just an affirmation of the argument of ethics of care and the African feminists. This is not to say that women were born to only be peacebuilders, sparking a gender informed dichotomy of men as violent or women as peaceful. But women have as much right to be involved in peace work as men, if not on the basis that

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they are more affected by war, then on the basis that they are human, are participants in war and also exhibit more peaceful traits than men.

2.9 Conclusion

This theoretical framework provided a lens with which the subject of women in peacebuilding can be viewed while legitimizing the involvement of women in informal peacebuilding. The radical feminist theory approach to peacebuilding is consistent with the task of ensuring increased women's representation and participation in peace processes. This helps to make visible the work women are doing to foster peace in their communities at all levels, as the theory sought to establish women as agents in peace processes rather than just victims. A theory that is focused on advocating for the rights of women to be represented in the decision-making sphere opens the space for more discussions concerning post-conflict peacebuilding, which will promote and encourage increased women's participation and representation. Through the opening of the space, the realties and challenges that hinder women's participation in peace processes and their marginalization and exclusion in the public sphere become part of the discourse.

A radical feminist theory to peacebuilding is consistent with the overarching feminist theory that sought increased representation of women in both the public and private sphere. The specificity of the radical feminist theory is embedded in outlining patriarchy as the reason for the low participation of women in the public sphere using Galtung's 1969 structural and cultural violence theory. Not only does it explain the reason for the exclusion, it also helps to legitimize women's involvement in post-conflict peacebuilding, both at formal and informal levels. The feminist perspective of peacebuilding, which is rooted in advocating for women's representation and participation in peace processes, is consistent with the feminist ethics of care that argues that women make good peacebuilders based on their natural traits of being peaceful and caring. It ties with the arguments made by African studies scholars that pre-colonial African women have always been involved in war and engendering peace in their society based on their matriarchal status. Accordingly, it is safe to argue that the agency of women during post-conflict peacebuilding should not be limited to victims, as they embody multiple agencies during war, which should be reflected in post-conflict peacebuilding. This enables them to be represented in peacebuilding, not as victims but as active participants. More so, women can be involved in peace processes based on the ethics of care which is premised on the natural trait of women to be non-violent, empathetic, and peaceful. The

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radical feminist theory has helped to investigate the agency of women in peacebuilding particularly as it clarifies the reason for the exclusion of women in peace processes. Disputing the women-as-victim only narrative in conflict and post-conflict helped to provide theoretical grounding to the debates around agency of women. At the same time, using the ethic of care argument in tandem with the theory helps to establish women as agents of change, which is the central focus of this study. The theory legitimizes the investigation into the work women in Sierra Leone are doing in peacebuilding, because it seeks to make more apparent women as active participants in the society, especially in peacebuilding.

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CHAPTER 3

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESSES IN PRE-COLONIAL AFRICA

3.1 Introduction

The participation of women in the decision-making sphere in pre-colonial Africa was different from what it has been in post-colonial Africa. Scholars studying women's participation in the public sphere in post-colonial Africa contend that African women are often not present in decision-making spheres (Onyenwere 2017). The patriarchal culture of most societies is most often used to explain women's absence from decision-making spheres. Tyler (1971:119) explains the "gender relations among the Zulus and argues that African women are intellectually inferior to the men; he blames this on the drudgery imposed on them". The portrayal of African women as weak and inferior are because of insufficient knowledge on the workings of pre-colonial African societies. The trajectory of pre-colonial African societies not obtainable presently as a result of the break in the flow of African history. Africa had a distinct social system before the advent of slavery and colonialism that was different from the current patrilineal ordering. Diop (1987) contests the claims that women's marginalization is a result of African patriarchies because these assumptions do not take African pre-colonial social history into consideration and ignores the socio-cultural and ideological proof of matriarchy as a distinct social system. The inability to acknowledge the workings of social systems in pre-colonial Africa creates misconceptions on the role of women in pre- and post-colonial Africa, distorting the reality of African societies.

This chapter will present evidence of women's participation in the public sphere in both patriarchal and matriarchal systems in African societies and will argue that Africa was not ordered on a patrilineal system. This will be done to provide a starting point for women's participation in peacebuilding in pre-colonial African society and to have all the facts, rather than misconceptions, as background to the study. Moreover, this is not an attempt to embark on an anthropological journey of pre-colonial Africa society but to provide context to women's participation in peace processes by connecting the broken strands of history related to African women's place in society. This chapter will specifically curate evidence of women's participation in peace processes by looking at history and pointing out the various leadership and peacebuilding roles women occupied in pre-colonial Africa. It will also

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examine gender relationships in a bid to understand the interplay of peace roles in pre-colonial African societies compared to post-colonial societies. The chapter will further touch on women's participation in peace processes in post-colonial Africa to understand the point of convergence with the pre-colonial. While much literature has argued that women's participation in peacebuilding is low in post-colonial Africa, this section will attempt to provide a counter argument to that. The chapter will conclude by asserting that women in West Africa, and Africa at large, have from time immemorial been at the forefront of engendering peace in their societies and that it is still happening in post-colonial Africa. Although they are victims during times of war, they are also agents and active participants during post-conflict peacebuilding.

3.2 Women in Leadership in Pre-Colonial African Societies

The matrilineal ordering of some societies could be attributed to the fluidity of gender during the pre-colonial times. Oyewunmi (2004) argues that rigid gender distinctions were not present in pre-colonial Africa, which made kinship roles, particularly in the Yoruba kingdom, non-gendered. The flexibility of gender in pre-colonial Africa allowed women to assume positions and exercise power and authority based on an entrenched system of matriarchy that enabled a unique dual-sex political system (Isike 2009). Furthermore, "African women have a long history of conscious public participation that predates colonialism and nationalism politics on the continent" (Isike 2009:41). Indigenous African women played an important role in the social, economic, and cultural life of their societies. For instance, Machakanja (2015) contends that in the ancient Egyptian kingdom, social positions were not based on gender, but on social class and women could take public positions. She stated further that the positions of women in Egyptian society was unique because they enjoyed much of the same legal and economic rights as men. Terborg-Penn and Rushing (1996:123) posits that the matrilineal and matrifocal culture of the Akan-speaking people of Ghana showed the powerful role of the Queen Mother, the economic power of the market women and the political leverage it gave them. Steady (2011:28) asserts that women and men were able to express political authority through the positions they occupied, such as chiefs and paramount chiefs, in both matrilineal and patrilineal African societies. Because of the non-gendered distinction in some societies, gender was a flexible concept that often transcended into leadership and social roles. Achebe (2005) disputes the claim that Igbo women were not active in governance, claiming that there were female kings in Northern Igboland who also served as warriors. The "strategic

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place of the female principle" afforded them "access to spiritual and secular" authority, and these women had important roles of power and influence (cited in Steady 2011:29). Confirming this, Isike (2009) asserts that "by forming groups such as the *Umuada*, Igbo women constituted a socio-political base of power and played regulatory roles such as checks on the abuse of power by the council of elders". Before colonialism, African women occupied positions of influence in the society or mobilised and organised themselves to impact the society and its political structures (Machakanja, 2015). Cheater (1986) argues that even though women in pre-colonial Zimbabwe were systematically excluded from formal authority, they exerted their authority in other aspects such as the allocation of land. In the face of female exclusion from political authority in pre-colonial Zimbabwe, the headwomen in Manicaland and Makonde, the Nehoreka chiefship in the Muoko district, were exceptions. Through the various groups and associations, they belonged to, women were able to maintain their autonomy in the societies (Amadiume 1997:100). The primary responsibility of being a mother and a wife bestowed certain authority on women that afforded them the agency to make important decisions in their clans and communities (Isike 2009). These examples refute the claim that African women were dormant, subjugated and only made to perform their natural responsibilities of childbearing. Isike (2009:38) argues that "pre-colonial African patriarchies provided spaces for women to participate in the public arena", which is quite different to post-colonial Africa where they are restricted from participating in the decision-making sphere.

3.3   Women in Peacebuilding in Pre-Colonial Africa

As with leadership, African women have always been involved in fostering peace in their communities. "Women in different pre-colonial African societies had traditional peace-making and peacebuilding roles to mediate and prevent conflict within and between societies" (Isike & Okeke-Uzodike 2011:41). Motherhood in pre-colonial Africa was often used to symbolise compassion and peace, which women had to uphold. Thus qualities such as tolerance, patience, humility were perceived as fundamentally female characteristics that were reproduced through societal norms that encouraged women as wives, mothers and arbitrators of conflict (UNESCO 2003:8) Women participated at family, clan and community level in dispute resolution and mediation and served as a spiritual channel through which the gods communicated with the people in times of conflict. By being peaceful, women often received

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respect in their families and immediate clans. Within the family, they played an advisory role to their husbands when conflict arose within the extended family.

Machakanja (2015) asserts that women played an advisory role when there was a likelihood of conflict to prevent it from escalating, such as counselling her friends when the matter involved women or through their husbands when the conflict were between couples. For instance, Ntahobari and Ndayiziga (2003) in (Machakanja 2015:210) narrated that in Burundi, "there was a group of experienced, respected and wise women known as *Inararibonye"*, literally meaning "those who have seen many things", and these women intervened whenever conflicts arose among women in the community. These "women were selected for their leadership qualities and integrity". In Somali, women represented symbols of peace in rituals practised when there were a lot of casualties in war (Machakanja 2015). Marriages were used as a symbol of peace between conflicting parties, and the objective of the marriage was to heal the wound and to cement the peace settlement. Isike & Okeke-Uzodike (2011:33) asserts that "women have always been at the centre of peace processes across different pre-colonial African societies, and their peace agency were in their socio-cultural and political roles as well as their contributions to the well-being of the society". Isike and Okeke-Uzodike (2011:41) write that women were "symbolized as paragons of morality, sacredness, goodness and tenderness", which are features needed to serve as peace makers. Mohammed (2003) narrated that during times of war in Somali, young unmarried girls (Heerin) would visit the clan of the warring faction without the approval of their parents as a means of establishing peace. The girls would announce to the people that they were unmarried, and the Heerin would be welcomed and marriage proceedings would take place as this was an accepted tradition. The act of these ladies "immediately stabilised the situation and set in motion a peace process that eventually resolved the conflict". Through "positive childcare, responsible mothering and nurturing of children", women often engaged in peacebuilding as it socializes them into peaceful coexistence (Mohammed 2003:103). In Cameroon, the "Mangissa and the Eton has what was known as *Mbabi*, a purification rite" that was an initiative by women for the restoration of peace in the land (Nzongo-Mbede 2003:27). The author argues further that because women were the main actors of peacebuilding, "peace was equated with freshness, health, well-being, harmony, calm and tranquillity". Girls' education was based on peace, which enabled them to consolidate the roles their mothers played in mediations and dispute resolutions. The first wife (called *Dada Sare* among the Fulbe) in a polygamous marriage took

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on the role of the chief conflict mediator in the family. Her role was to restore peace and calmness in situations where there was tension between one of the wives and the husband. Sometimes, the *Dada Sare* was invited to sit and discuss with the men in the assemblies on matters pertaining to conflict resolution and mediation (Nzongo-Mbede, 2003:29). Isike (2009:40) asserts that "U*utoni* in Northern Namibia was similar to the practice of *Mbabi*, and women performed cleaning passage on soldiers returning from war. It was done to rid them of the adverse effects and guilt of spilling blood, which if not adhered to, could mar the social harmony, peace, and stability in their communities". In Central African societies, Mathey et al (2003) observed that elderly women in the Zande clan were greatly respected and when war broke out within the clan, the oldest women would meet with the opposing clan and intervene to resolve the conflict. When this failed, the women would threaten to bare themselves or kneel as a way of symbolizing a curse on those who intend to destabilize the clan, and because of the respect the clan had for these women, the warring faction would surrender (Mathey et al 2003:41). In the pre-colonial Yoruba kingdom, the Osun priestess served as the link between the Osun goddess and the people. She often advised them on which wars to fight and were particularly involved in peace-making. The priestess often wore a white cloth symbolizing peace and were saddled with finding ways to institute and maintain peace within the kingdom (Awe 1977).

The intent of this narration was to establish that women in pre-colonial Africa used different ways to ensure peace, such as mediation, conflict resolution and advisory roles. Thus, to argue that the idea of women in peacebuilding is novel to African societies is false. The false assumptions are a function of the low participation of women in peacebuilding in post-colonial Africa, which hinges on a certain factor. While patriarchy can be accused of causing the problem, the culture and traditions of African societies at large cannot be cited. Africa is not a monolithic entity with homogenous culture, language and people, and the diversity of people reflects the indigenous cultures, norms, and practices. The same can be said of West Africa. Just because the region is comprised of closely bordered countries, does not mean it has similar cultures and traditions. It then begs the question, considering the rich history of African women in peacebuilding in pre-colonial Africa, why is there low participation by women in post-colonial Africa?

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3.4 Distortion in History: Women in Peacebuilding in Africa

The reality of women's participation in peace processes in post-colonial Africa has been obscured by the need to align the patriarchal culture in some African societies as the reason for their low participation. While the argument might be true to some extent, it does not provide an accurate explanation for the phenomenon. Post-colonial African patriarchies are different from the pre-colonial, which spurred scholars like Amadiume, Diop and Isike to try to understand the gap. The depiction of African patriarchies as the reason for the low participation of women in peacebuilding does not take into consideration the nature of African patriarchies in the pre-colonial period. Isike (2009:41) argues that the power and influence of women in "most pre-colonial societies were evident in both the socio-economic and political spheres, which is contrary to Eurocentric and materialist account of African women". Specifically, Amadiume (1987) states that to argue that African patriarchies are subjugating is to undermine the matriarchal history of some African societies. This break was caused by the colonial invasion of Africa by the Europeans. Colonialism eroded African socio-cultural values by weakening the perspectives of the Africans. With the integration of Africa into the global capitalist system, the fluid gender roles that were present in pre-colonial times became rigid because of the Euro-American standards of gender relations. Isike (2009) asserts that capitalism and economic exploitation rely on gender and ethnicity for its consolidation and maintenance with severe effects on gender. Similarly, a "cultural persecution of Africa's traditional value systems and beliefs was a logical strategy the colonialists used to impose and perpetuate their own worldviews" (Fanon 1967 cited in Isike 2009: 54).

Nzegwu wrote:

> To read the formal history of states, kings and chiefs in West Africa as well as the treatises of political scientists, one would think that women did not participate in governance, existed only in shadowy spheres, and meekly accepted whatever their male lords and masers directed. These official treatises do not make it clear that a large part of women's present political and judicial powerlessness is not rooted in the culture but in the encroaching modern male privileging policies and programmes unleashed since colonization (Nzegwu, 2000).

Oyewunmi (2004) explains that rigid gender roles emerged from Western values and argues that gender was the most fundamental organising principle of the Euro-American society where the man/husband is regarded as the head of the family, while the woman is subordinate

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to the man. This rigid gender distinction permeated into the roles ascribed to each gender, where the woman being a wife preceded any other status she held in the society, and this was used to understand her role in the society. Thus, the categorization of roles based on gender is an invention of the Euro-American society that trickled down to Africa through colonialism and imperialism. Isike (2009) states that new conceptions of accurate social roles for women were delimited by the colonial administrators and missionaries, which changed the position of women in the socio-economic sphere by limiting them to playing roles that subordinated them.

The new social roles introduced by the colonialists were different from the traditional roles played by women in the different African societies. Amadiume (1987: 119–143) contends that colonialism eroded the power of women as it fostered "the suppression of indigenous institutions and the subsequent imposition of novel gender relations that ushered in the introduction of masculinized Christianity". Amadiume (1997) further argues that Western education made women invisible by teaching that women are meant to help and support men. The spread of Western values through colonialism affected the status of women and their rights to political participation. The exclusion of women from positions of influence in the economic and socio-political sphere laid the groundwork for the marginalization of women in post-colonial Africa. Isike writes:

> By excluding women from the economy through legislation that confined them to the private sphere of domestic work and childbearing, the colonial state altered the pre-colonial social position of women which laid the basis for their further marginalization in post-colonial Africa (Isike, 2009:56).

Colonialism not only disrupted the traditional political system in Africa, it also disrupted the parallel gender relationships between men and women by creating a hierarchy of genders that informed the roles associated with them. The implication of this is the creation of new African patriarchies that was a totally different from the old African patriarchies. In explaining how new patriarchies affected Africa, Isike (2009:38) writes that Zulu men are opposed to the subject of gender equity as they posit "that in their culture women are inferior to men and must never contest with men in politics". Sadiki (2001:445–446) opines that "the perpetuation of violence against women in the Great Lakes region" and Africa at large is a product of modernity: "A new phenomenon that is both a novelty and serious contradiction of the values linked to respect for human life and for women, who were seen as the provider of life in pre-

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colonial African societies". Colonialism ushered in gender inequality that was not prevalent in traditional African societies "where both men and women had different roles they played in families and society" (Machakanja 2015:202).

Hunter states:

> Since the era of colonialism women have been placed on the lower rungs of the proverbial ladder by the dominant forces of capitalism and now globalization, which emphasizes the need for power, superiority and compartmentalization of roles and responsibilities with different values attached to them (1973:93).

The gender-fluid traditional African society changed face after contact with capitalist-induced colonialism, which hindered the liberty enjoyed by women and heralded various vices. Through the limiting laws, customs, religion and attitudes, women began to suffer oppression from men and took on an inferior status.

3.5   Women in Peacebuilding in Post-Colonial Africa

The distortion of the rich history of women's participation in the public sphere left a huge gap in the understanding of the status of women in post-colonial Africa. Machakanja (2015) argues that the lives and status of women were degraded because of the totalitarian features of colonialism that ruled every aspect of women's lives. Harris (1987:23) contends that as colonialists tightened control over indigenous people, women were subjected to all forms of violence and corruption, as cruelty informed all aspects of colonial rule. The oppression of women during the colonial period affected the status and freedom they enjoyed as significant beings in society. This led to the present marginalization of women from political office, peace processes and other relevant societal affairs. This marginalization did not happen overnight, it is the response of the African society to the continued perpetuation of discriminatory colonial policies against women. Dimandja (2004:4) accounts that through a variety of legal, economic, agricultural, religious, and medical policies during colonialism, Massai women were devalued, subjugated, and removed from their equal and valued position in society.

The already exploitative relationship Africa had with the colonialists birthed gender inequality, as there existed little or no significant gender inequality in traditional African societies. What existed was women's complementary roles to men, devoid of rigid gender hierarchy. In post-colonial Africa, the fluid gender relations and the complementary roles of women no longer exists, but the subjugation of women by men and gender inequality is at its

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peak. There is massive difference in the participation of women in peace processes during the pre-colonial era and the post-colonial era.

As discussed above, Africa's integration into the global capitalist system through colonialism damaged the societal arrangement that afforded women the space and liberty to be active in societal affairs. Post-colonial Africa was left with a system that needed hierarchy to thrive, reflecting the global power arrangement, and it affected women greatly. The colonialization of Africa, which brought with it the "Western version of Christianity, eroded" the countervailing systems of the "village community as elite African men manipulated the new borrowed patriarchies to forge a most formidable masculine imperialism in Africa" (Campbell 2003:283).

Women are often absent from the political scene in post-colonial Africa as they have been unable to soar above the new patriarchy ushered in by colonialism. In 1960, only 1% of African legislators were women. Africa had its first elected female head of state in 2006 (Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia) and the second in 2012 (Joyce Banda of Malawi). Out of the 54 countries in Africa today, only nine women have served as presidents or head of states since the 1990s; five of who served in acting or interim capacity for a short period (AU 2016). These figures show that women's participation in decision-making sphere has deteriorated compared to the pre-colonial era. Women's participation in peace processes prior to the Beijing Conference of 1995, where the seed of UNSRC 1325 was sown, was quite low. Following the passing of the resolution, slow but considerable changes were made. Between 1992 and 2011, 16 peace agreements were signed in Africa, and 0.63% of the signatories, 5.5% of the witnesses and 9.3% of the negotiators were women. Of the 16 countries that have signed peace agreements, only the Democratic Republic of Congo had women as both signatories (5%) and mediators (20%). Sierra Leone had women as witnesses (20%), and Kenya had women as lead mediators (33%). These figures illustrate that the number of women participating in peace processes in a variety of official roles are very low or non-existent (AU 2016).

Women's place in post-colonial Africa has been reduced to the primordial space where they only oversee family and raise children. The challenges women face goes beyond not being able to participate in politics, it includes their exclusion from peace processes which does not consider the great injustice they suffer during conflict. The bodies of women have become canvasses on which several acts of violence are drawn during conflicts, and this reflects the sorry state women have been relegated to in post-colonialism. Domestic violence, sexual

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violence, child marriages, and limited to access to properties and land ownership are some of the problems women are faced with that limits their self-actualization in society. Just as the sphere of politics has become sacred to women, peacebuilding is much higher up for women to aspire to. The end of conflict does not guarantee the inclusion of women in peace processes, as relatively few women manage to get involved in the formal, national peace processes. These processes tend to remain male-dominated, high-level activities where women are typically under-represented in the negotiation teams, representing the warring factions and in any other institution that is party to the peace processes. Because of this, few women have managed to gain access to formal peace politics.

3.6 Women in Peacebuilding in West Africa

The participation of women in peace processes in West Africa is subject to the dichotomy between formal and informal peacebuilding. Several conflicts have been fought in West Africa since the late 1980s, which have made the region a hotbed for violent conflicts. Sierra Leone, Liberia, Senegal, Togo, Nigeria, and Guinea Bissau have been prone to armed conflicts between rebel/militia groups and state governments or other forms of violent conflict. The nature of these conflicts has necessitated a wide strategy of intervention that includes state and non-state actors, spurring collaboration between several stakeholders at all levels. This collaboration has taken three approaches, namely military intervention, diplomatic intervention, and state intervention. The common underlying trait of these approaches is the under-representation of women.

Alaga (2010:3) states that "in the context of the male-dominated and highly patriarchal socio-cultural order in West Africa", participation in peace processes remain a "highly gendered activity that is the preserve of men". For example, in Senegal, Burkina Faso and Mali, there are no women in the national armies and women are barred from peacekeeping operations involving national armies. Women often find it hard to debut into formal peacebuilding at national or regional level, which hinders their representation in this sphere. As women are continuously marginalized from formal peacebuilding, they have started to work through local networks, cooperative groups, and religious groups to protect their families and communities. Due to their lack of presence in the formal sphere, women became more involved in grassroot level engagements to push their peace activism.

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Tracing from the pre-colonial era, women have always had a role in peacebuilding in West Africa; however, "as the trends of wars in West Africa changed, women became victims of violence as a tactic of war" (Alaga 2010:2). The involvement of women in grassroot level peacebuilding is not a novel idea, and the primary roles of women as wives and mothers are the first example of women as informal peacebuilders. Within the family and the larger society, women settle disputes, mediate conflicts, and advise their husbands on important family matters. Unlike pre-colonial West Africa where the involvement of women in peace processes was a substantive issue, their participation in informal peacebuilding in the post-colonial era is a function of their exclusion from formal peacebuilding. Just like women in other regions of Africa, West African women are often viewed as victims rather than agents of change, which impedes their inclusion into formal peace processes. Since women have carved a niche for themselves in the informal aspects of peacebuilding, it is imperative to shift the lens to this sphere to capture their work. Alaga narrates that.

> women have established efficient information networks to spread information of attacks and safe routes, thus saving lives and reducing the impact of the violence. They have used their status as mothers, wives, and sisters of the rebel forces to obtain information that they used to protect their communities (Alaga, 2010:5).

3.7 Conclusion

This section extensively delved into women's agency in peacebuilding from the pre-colonial era to the post-colonial. The marginalization of women from formal peace processes in post-colonial Africa is a consequence of the new African patriarchies that ushered in rigid social roles based on gender. The new African patriarchy is due to Europe's colonialization of Africa that disrupted the social-cultural arrangement of the traditional African society. The new system relegated women to inferior status and perpetuated various acts of violence leading to the subjugation of women in the society and their absence from the decision-making sphere. What the new system destroyed is the rich history of women's participation in leadership and peace processes in traditional African societies, which by implication transcended into post-colonial Africa. Women in post-colonial are suffering from the dire effects of the new form of patriarchy that thrives on women's subjugation and oppression, creating gender inequality. And particularly, their marginalization and exclusion from participating in the peacebuilding sphere, which cuts across every region in Africa.

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With the exclusion of women from formal peacebuilding, their involvement in the informal sphere increased in West Africa and other parts of the continent. There is a need to revisit the agency of women in the pre-colonial era to correct the sorry state of women's status in the present day. As Isike (2009) posits, a deconstruction of the new African patriarchies and the negative effects on women's agency is important to create a new understanding that will form the basis for reinventing the disrupted socio-cultural arrangements that afforded women the liberty to participate in decision-making sphere. The essence of this is to ensure that women are not marginalized or excluded based on the rigid social roles that limit their self-actualization. And that they have the option to participate in both formal and informal peacebuilding without having to involve themselves only in informal peace processes.

The empowerment of women really represents the revival of traditional African values, which enabled societal harmony, peace, and development of Africa before the modern contact with Europe. The obstacles facing African women in their participation in peacebuilding include their marginalization emanating from cultural factors, limited access to or lack of formal education and training and masculine oppression. This can be resolved if there is a reconciliation of genuine traditional African ethos with our present realities.

The section also shed light on the misconception that women's under-representation in peacebuilding is because of the indigenous African customs and traditions that does not regard women. Finally, it provided a brief on women's participation in peacebuilding in West Africa, and it argued that because of the male domination of formal peace processes, women have ventured into the informal spaces to foster peace in their communities. Their participation in informal peacebuilding is a consolidation of their primary role as mothers and wives and importantly as agents of change in their societies.

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CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will undertake an overview of the armed conflict in Sierra Leone, also known as the Sierra Leone civil war, which involved armed confrontations between the Sierra Leone government and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Underlying this conflict were the problems of corruption, bad leadership, redistribution of resources and need for development, which were major threats to the continued existence of Sierra Leone. It will thematically present the findings on the informal roles women played to foster peace in Sierra Leone. The chapter will specifically address the following research questions:

- Which informal roles did women in Sierra Leone play to advance peacebuilding processes?
- What was the role of the AU in fostering women's participation in peace processes in Sierra Leone?

The analysis of the study on these questions will be done considering the review of literature and the theoretical framework.

4.2 Overview of the Sierra Leone Civil War

Sierra Leone is in the western part of Africa, covering 71,740 km, "it borders Guinea in the north and northeast and Liberia in the east and southeast. The country is divided into the Northern, Southern and Eastern provinces and one territory in the western area where the capital Freetown is located. There are over 20 ethnic groups, speaking more than 24 languages. The population is 78% Muslim and 21% Christian" (Acaps 2013:1). Before colonialization there were several "successful political entities and communities in the area with a well-known tradition of women holding executive power among the Mende and Sherbro ethnic groups" Steady, 2011: 90). This rich history was distorted after contact with European colonialists and the arrival of Christianity and Islam, which destabilized this socio-cultural arrangement. Colonization started in the 18th century with the British colonialists through trading companies establishing settlements and officially making Freetown a Crown Colony in 1808.

The struggle for liberation against the colonialists started when "Isaac Wallace-Johnson led the West African Youth League" championing for independence. The country gained

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independence in 1961 and was governed by the appointed chief minister "Dr Milton Margai of the Sierra Leone People's Party" (Steady 2006:38). General elections took place in 1967, and the All Peoples Congress led by Siaka Stevens won. Because of the plague that swept across West Africa, a military coup dislodged the newly elected government. The military formed the National Reformation Council through which it governed the state but was ousted by another coup. The country became a theatre of military coups until it became a republic in 1971. The first civil war took place in 1991. Like any other West African country, there were inherent contradictions that bedevilled it: There was ethnic favouritism by the colonialists, which created ethnic tensions among the different groups in the country, and political instability that led to six general elections and five military coups post-independence; all of which culminated in the outbreak of the war.

The civil war started gradually with an anti-government campaign championed by Foday Sankoh, a former army corporal turned leader of the rebel group (RUF) and backed by Charles Taylor of Liberia. The political agenda of rebel forces was embedded in its manifesto, *Footpaths to Democracy*:

> We can no longer leave the destiny of our country in the hands of a generation of crooked politicians and military adventurists. It is our right and duty to change the present political system in the name of national salvation and liberation. This task is the historical responsibility of every patriot, we must be prepared to struggle until the decadent, backward and oppressive regime is thrown into the dustbin of history. We call for a national democratic revolution involving the total mobilization of all progressive forces. The secret behind the survival of the existing system is our lack of organisation what we need is organised challenge and resistance. The strategy and tactics of this resistance will be determined by the reaction of the enemy forces, force will be met with force, reasoning with reasoning and dialogue with dialogue (Basic document of RUF/SL adapted from Coulter 2009:40).

The political ideology that was supposed to serve as a compass for the rebel forces was discarded during the war, considering the many atrocities they committed. The RUF started its rebel operations by capturing towns at the border with Liberia and challenging President Momoh's government with claims of corruption. Coulter writes:

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> Foday Sankoh and a force consisting of hundred crossed the Liberian border into Sierra Leone on March 23, 1991, none would have the guessed the impact and the extent of violence this group would symbolize in the war to come (2009:45)

Many citizens were already dissatisfied with the way the All Peoples Congress-led government ran the country and voiced their grievances about the political and economic situation in the country, though they did not support the rebel forces. The citizens' opinion of the RUF was divided: Some saw them as a good movement and others considered them as "mercenary bands of ruffians who should be hunted down and exterminated as a threat to the very notion of society" (Gberie 2005:72).

In April 1992, President Momoh was ousted in a military coup under the leadership of Captain Valentine Strasser because of his inability to quell the rebel forces (Steady 2011:164). This move was celebrated across the country with the hope that Strasser would defeat the rebel forces with the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) through which he governed the country (Coulter 2009:46). The military government went in hard against the rebel forces (who initially supported the NPRC) to silence claims among the people that they were working together (Keen 2005:94). In order to recover from the major losses suffered at the hands of the NPRC, the rebel forces changed their strategy by withdrawing into the bush to train new recruits (Coulter 2009:46). The RUF launched the second phase of their war, which was characterised by guerrilla warfare, and this period was marred by massive violations and abuses by the rebel forces. On the other hand, the military government was pressured at home and from abroad to conduct democratic elections and hand over power. Strasser gave in and announced plans to hold multiparty elections (Steady 2011:164). However, Capt. Strasser wanted to postpone the elections and was ousted in a military coup in 1996 by his deputy and chief of armed forces Captain Julius Maada Bio (Keen 2005:155).

In March 1996, legislative and executive elections were held, and Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone People's Party, won with a 60% majority. The transition to civilian rule did not deter the rebel forces from intensifying the fight in the hinterland, and peace remained elusive as there were a lot of inconsistencies in the national army, which led the new government to side with the Civil Defence Forces made up of "ethnically organised traditional hunters" (Alie 2005 in Coulter 2009:48).

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In November 1996, President Kabbah and the rebel forces signed the first peace agreement in Abidjan, signalling the end of the war. Unfortunately, as the Civil Defence Forces were not party to or subject to the demands of the peace agreement, the ceasefire agreement was not observed by either the RUF or the Civil Defence Forces (Keen 2005:197). The UN, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the British Commonwealth and other international groups played a key role in ending of the war (Hoffman 2004:74). Foday Sankoh was arrested by authorities during a visit to Nigeria in February 1997, but this did not affect the operations of the RUF, and they intensified the conflict.

The government of Kabbah was overthrown in a military coup in May 1997 by a group of former Sierra Leone army officers under the banner of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The AFRC invited the RUF to join the new regime. This led to the massive displacement of people as refugees; the capital came to a standstill; people refused to go to work; and acts of civil disobedience were perpetuated by members of the society (keen, 2005:154).

The Nigerian-led ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) suppressed the ARFC/RUF fighters, restored order to the capital, and reinstated the elected President Ahmed Kabbah. In July 1999, another peace agreement was signed in Lomé, capital of Togo. Keen argues that the agreement was "between the warring leaders, with a marked lack of participation from civil society or even young combatants" (Keen 2005:257). This agreement failed to signal the end of the war as some fighters from the RUF violated the agreement by killing demonstrators and holding the peacekeeping soldiers hostage (Keen 2005:264). Two subsequent peace agreements (Abuja I on November 2000, and Abuja II on May 2001) were signed to consolidate the peace process, and President Kabbah officially declared the war over in January 2000 (Coulter 2009:50). The disarmament of the rebel forces followed, with the UN mission claiming to have disarmed 45,000 fighters (Steady, 2006).

It is important to briefly discuss the role of women in violence to shed light on the wide range of roles they played in the civil war as well as their experiences during the conflict. Women played variety of roles during the civil war, notable are as fighters for rebel forces, bush wives, supporting roles etc. Coulter (2009) argue that women made up approximately 10-30% of the fighters in the civil war in Sierra Leone. Most of them were in junior positions while some were part of the high-ranking officials in the rebel and armed forces. We can argue on the reasons for their joining the rebel forces, on the one hand, women's participation as rebel

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forces was not of their voluntary conviction, as abductions were part of the RUF's strategy to gain members. While on the other hand, some women were reported to have joined the struggle voluntarily because of ideological reasons which includes supporting the fight against the government (Coulter 2009:10). Women were taken by the RUF forces to serve as 'bush wives' to the rebel fighters which in this case came with no choice. These women who were forced to become bush wives are subjected to gender- based violence, sexual-based violence, rape, and gang rape at the hands of the rebel forces (Mazurana 2004). This abuse sheds light to women's role as victims during the civil war. Even though they were bush wives, women were still subjected to levels of abuse, maltreatment by the rebel forces including the other categories of women that were not bush wives. Lastly, women engaged in supportive roles for the rebel and armed forces during the war, these roles are based on traditional female roles such as cooking, cleaning, and serving the male fighters (Mazurana and McKay 2004). While women were fighters in the war, they were also victims of the war as they suffer mostly during times of war and as evidenced during the civil war in Sierra Leone.

4.2.1 The Peacebuilding Processes

The civil war that started in 1991 and ended in 2002 involved many actors, both local and international, in its peacebuilding processes and post-conflict peacebuilding. Some of the major actors were ECOWAS and its monitoring group (ECOMOG) and the UN Assistance Mission to Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). The first step towards peace was in November 1996, when a peace agreement was signed between the RUF and President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah in Abidjan. The UN played an important role in the Abidjan peace accord as it sent a UN special envoy and a joint international observer group in 1995. Steady (2006: 39) asserts that "the Organisation of African Unity, ECOWAS and the British Commonwealth also engaged in negotiations and fact-finding missions".

Following the collapse of the first official peace agreement and the ousting of the elected president, ECOWAS monitoring group (ECOMOG) forces led by Nigeria intervened with the "mandate to restore peace and reinstate the Kabbah government" (Coulter 2009:49). The UN did not actively intervene in the war until October 1999, when the UN Security Council allowed for the creation of the UNAMSIL. The ECOMOG forces along with the Sierra Leone Army continued to fight the rebel forces, taking over the strongholds of the RUF. Another landmark in the peace process was the signing of the Lomé peace accord in 1999 between the warring leaders. This agreement was inept, with a lot of problems. Keen (2005:251) argues

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that women's organisations were excluded from the negotiations despite their role in making it happen, and the RUF leader was given the title of vice president as power sharing was the most viable solution to the conflict. The accord granted blanket amnesty to all RUF fighters, which left many Sierra Leoneans dissatisfied with the process (Squire 2000:63). UNAMSIL deployed troops to Sierra Leone to ensure adherence to the signed peace accord and lend support to the DDR process. The peace accord failed as fighters from all factions, RUF, AFRC and Sierra Leone Army, flouted the agreement by holding peacekeepers hostage and killing of demonstrators (Coulter 2009:50). The two peace agreements signed in Abuja in 2000 and 2001 facilitated the end of war and signalled the start of the post-conflict peacebuilding in which UNAMSIL, ECOWAS, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission actively took part in.

The contributions of these actors are usually documented and recognised as they largely fall under the formal aspect of peacebuilding, post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction. However, the contributions women made to aid the peacebuilding process often goes undocumented because of the nature of the process. As women mostly engage in the informal aspect of building peace, their efforts usually do not get recognised, which is the crux of the next section. The next section will extensively look at the various ways women participated and contributed to the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone. The section is specifically intended to discuss the informal roles women played to advance peace by organising them based on themes extracted from the data and theory.

4.3   Women's Informal Peacebuilding Roles in Sierra Leone.

The contributions women made to the peace process began during the conflict, with the mobilization of women from the community level right up to the national level. Notable groups were Mano River Union Women Peace Network, Women for a Morally Enlightened Nation, Young Christian Women Association, Forum for African Women Educationalists, Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace and Progressive Women Association. Some of these groups came together under the umbrella of the Women's Forum enabling them to contribute incredibly to the transition to democratic rule and the peace process (Steady 2006).

Some prominent figures among the women who actively participated through personal and group lobby in the fight for peace are Jusu-Sheriff (former president of MARWOPNET), Zainab Hawa Bangura (chairperson and cofounder of the Movement for Progress Party, Sierra

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Leone), Amy Smythe ("former president of Young Christian Women Association Sierra Leone") and Kadie Sesay (former chairperson of the Commission for Democracy and Human Rights) (Amedzrator 2014:10). The roles women played in fostering peace is divided into two periods and five themes for this study. The first period is the period of the conflict that lasted from 1991 to 2002, while the second period is after the end of the war. The themes generated from the data set are in alignment with a certain period within which the action was carried out. The themes during conflict are mobilization and advocacy, lobbying, mass action and traditional mediation, and the post-conflict theme is reintegration. The themes will be discussed in relation to the research question using various examples for illustration.

4.3.1   Mobilization and advocacy

Following the outbreak of the war, women realized the grave effects the war would have on the society, and they took action by forming groups in traditional societies, professional settings, religious spaces, and political spaces. Several groups were formed to cater for a specific section of the country such as the Young Christian Women Association for the Christian religious sect and the MARWOPNET, an association for women in the Mano River Union consisting of activists. The Sierra Leone Association of University Women comprised of women within the university system. These groupings were instrumental in the execution of the women's actions in fostering peace. All these groups convened under the umbrella of the Women's Forum, which enabled them to speak with one voice, giving force to their demands.

After these groups were formed, they created vertical and horizontal links to reach the provinces and spread their outreach to other women in the hinterlands to ensure the widespread mobilization of women for the next phase. The next phase was advocacy. with the foundation already laid for a unified voice woman started advocating for peace through different means. The most notable was setting up peace talks within communities to educate people on the importance of ending the conflict and instituting peace. An important part of this was raising awareness about the need for elections, setting up workshops to educate the citizens about the electoral process, and enjoining the people to participate in the elections. By forming a base of solidarity with which they could voice their opinion, they initiated a bottom-up, inclusive system where everyone was informed about the realities of the war and the need for peace. This strategy was effective as it helped them get buy-in from the people and aid in the campaign for democratic elections. The unified voice women projected worked

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in twofold: It sent a message to the rebels that they were a force to be reckoned with and simultaneously influenced government decisions.

To illustrate these themes, here are some data extracts.

In mid-1994, women advocating for peace under the auspice of the Women's Forum and Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace agreed to take "collective action about the impact of the war on women and raise awareness on women's role in resolving the conflict" (Coulter, 2009:43).Jusu-Sheriff (2000:48) asserts that "the Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace adopted an assertive political strategy of marches, discussions, Muslim and Christian prayer meetings, and also mobilized women from varied backgrounds to join the movement".

Steady (2006) writes that;

> The Women's Movement for Peace was formed as a subsidiary of the Women's Forum to resolve conflicts through peaceful negotiations and to work for peace. This involved consultations with the NPRC, that had ousted the All Peoples Congress government in a coup in 1992. They made good use of the media to widely publicize their activities nationally and internationally. The Women's Forum's strategy was to build alliances horizontally through a consultative and democratic process with women's associations and the women's wings of political parties. This enhanced their base of solidarity and strengthened their" "position as a pressure group and a women's movement for peace and development (2006:43)

Steady (2011) narrates that;

> MARWOPNET held two-day peace talks with women in refugee camps in the Kissidougou district of Guinea to express solidarity and to ask for their full involvement in efforts to restore peace. They attended the Mano River summit in Guinea in May 2000 and made a presentation to the heads of state emphasizing the importance of involving women in the peace processes (2011:42).

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Mazurana & Carlson (2004) states that;

> The Young Christian Women Association, as a founding member of the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone, played a leading role in the negotiations that ushered in the signing of the Lomé peace accord in 1999. Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace undertook a successful sensitization campaign and opened branches across all accessible parts of the country. They used these provincial links to share information, coordinate marches and to identify and contact provincial participants when conferences were organised. In preparation for the election, the women's groups educated civilians on the electoral proceedings, recruited, and trained observers, and implored the military government to respect the outcome of the election (2004:15).

Gizelis (2011) on women's advocacy for peace;

> In 1994, the Sierra Leone Association of University Women invited women's organisations to coordinate and expand their networks in preparation for the Beijing Conference on Women. Other groups such as the Women's Forum and Femmes Africa Solidarite provided space for open dialogue on freedom and democracy. The reality of the civil war compelled the women groups to focus on the domestic political situation (2011:527).

Jusu-Sheriif who actively took part in the peace process recounts that;

> In 1995, Patricia Sharpe of the United States Information Service organised a series of discussions affording Sierra Leonean women, many of whom were members of Women Forum, to learn about the initiatives taken by other third world women in times of war. Women for a Morally Enlightened Nation, whose main objective were the promotion of a democratic culture and active participation of women in politics and governance, proposed that the Women's Forum take up the government's half-hearted offer of civilian rule. They believed that a democratic Sierra Leone

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would provide equality, opportunity and access for all citizens, the absence of which has been among the root causes of the war. It was agreed that peace would be best pursued through return to democratic civilian rule after debate on the viability of the elections ending the war (2000:48).

4.3.2 Lobbying

With a mass base established, women channelled their voice towards the international community, the government, and the rebel forces through several means. At the broad level, they influenced the international community to focus on the war through their many press conferences and participation at the Beijing conference for women. The Women's Forum, as the umbrella body, moved beyond lobbying to mount pressure on the government to conduct elections, and when talks of the postponement of the election got out, they used a media campaign to influence the government to keeping its promise. They engaged with the rebel forces by persistently writing letters to get the RUF to the negotiating table. Most of the peace talks between the government and the rebel forces would not have been possible if women did not continuously call for them. They were able to use this strategy to get the government to hold democratic elections as promised and convince the rebel forces to negotiate with the government. To push their peace agenda, they attended the two national consultative conferences in order to bring to fore the need for peace. The lobbying strategy of the women yielded positive results; the most significant were getting the parties to sign the 1996 Abidjan peace accord, the democratic election, and ensuring the parties keep to the ceasefire agreement.

Steady (2006) writes;

> Women's groups participated in the two national consultative conferences, known as Bintumani I and Bintumani II, in 1996 to hold the government accountable to its promise to hold general elections. Prior to the conference, only three of the 60 delegates were women, which was met with protest by the Women's Forum, leading to an increase in the number of female delegates to 16. They presented a unified position that included the urgency for peace, ensuring fairness in the electoral process and in women's representation, and regulating the army in the electoral process. They won the vote at the conference and their demands were met

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as the elections took place. Through this, the Women's Forum demonstrated its ability to mobilize women through its many links to many associations and by its process of consultation and discussion (2006:50).

Women's participation in these two conferences signalled an important point in the electoral process and a negotiated settlement of the conflict. Fearing that the military government might postpone the elections, the Women's Forum issue the following press statement on March 11, 1996 stating that;

The Women's Forum, a network of women NGOs and groups has been moved to call on the head of state, Brigadier-General Julius Maada Bio and the NPRC government to provide the entire citizenry of Sierra Leone with adequate security for the process leading to and during the run-off for the presidential elections (Steady 2006:48).

The "press conference was held to advance their agenda and to bring public attention to the importance of women's contributions to the peace process. The main aim was to prevent conflict and influence the peace process" (Steady 2006:48).

The movement pressured the international community to take the war seriously, while also mounting pressure on the government to conduct elections and hand over power to a democratically elected government.

Jusu-Sheriff (2000) writes that;

The Women's Forum called a widely reported press conference as the rebel forces intensified attacks and the election date drew nearer. They stressed the need for candidates to address women's issues such as illiteracy, healthcare, women entrepreneurship to reduce poverty, and laws that were detrimental to women. They also reaffirmed their commitment to peace and demanded the elections go as planned, as it signified an essential and fundamental part of the peace process, and that women make up

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50% of any formal peace negotiation delegation" (Jusu-Sheriff 2000:49).

Dyfan (2003) states that;

> By 1995, the Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace initiated a debate on peace, arguing that the crisis had" "become too fatal to be left to the military government and that women were natural peacemakers who could bring unique skills and needed to be involved in the peace process. High-ranking rebel women used their positions as commanders to protect abducted women and girls and to help them escape; the efforts of these women manifested when they supported the negotiated settlement (2003:3–4).

4.3.3 Mass action

This is the most important contributions women made to fostering peace during the conflict. Beginning right after the women's groups formed, women organised peace marches, rallies and protests to get the government to come to a negotiated settlement with the rebels. They used this same strategy to fight against the rebel forces and to delegitimize the RUF. The constant message of the rallies was to end the war through the institution of peace. They enjoined the rebels to lay down their arms and allow negotiations to take place. As women occupied the streets to cry for peace, they were able to get other members of society to join in the protests, which garnered more momentum. This momentum helped in the actualization of the aim of the marches, which was getting the government to negotiate with the rebels.

Here as some examples of the mass actions.

Jusu-Sheriff (2000) narrates that

> A peace march was organised in January by Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace led by Fatmatta Boie-Kamara in the form of joyous carnival. Female professionals "danced through central Freetown linking arms with female soldiers and student nurses, while chanting the message of the demonstration: "Try peace to end this senseless war". This peace march was replicated in other places such as Bo, Kenema, Makeni and Kabala, all major cities, and towns (2000:29).

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Lavalie (2011) states that;

> A mass rally was organised in the area where the war was concentrated to call on the rebels to lay down their arms and to allow negotiations to begin. Women in the urban and rural centres mobilized to protest the atrocities committed by the rebel forces while simultaneously calling for peace. In 1995, women from Freetown and Pujehun in the Eastern Province attempted to negotiate with the leaders of the RUF. This delegation was led by Elizabeth Lavalie. It was a total failure as the women were murdered and abducted by the rebel forces cited in (Amedzrator 2014:11).

Mazurana and Carlson (2004) narrates an important action that led to the deciding protest in the peace process

> In May 2000, with the RUF flouting the 1999 Lomé accord, a group of elderly women came together and demanded a meeting with the RUF leader, Sankoh. Upon arrival at the RUF compound, they were mistreated and insulted. Frustrated, the women tried a different tactic. They collectively hitched up their skirts, bent over and bared themselves to Sankoh and his forces. This action symbolized the worst curse that can be placed on someone in Sierra Leone. The news had a galvanizing effect on the people who took up the obligation to uphold the honour of the elderly women and activate the curse. The action of the women annoyed the already dissatisfied populace and gave them the courage to confront the rebel forces (2004:4).

4.3.4 Traditional mediation

In traditional African societies, women engaged in dispute resolution and mediated conflict within families and clan. Women in Sierra Leone used this strategy to deal with both the government and the rebel forces. The process of mediation started with the women trying to get both parties to come together to resolve their differences and agree on a settlement. Their message was clear in the various letters women sent to the RUF leader to relay the desire of the general public, which was peace. Mediation works when a third party can get two

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conflicting parties to come to an agreement. Not only was this used by women groups, some elderly women used this means to get the rebel leaders to not renege on the peace agreement. They served as middlemen between leaders of the Mano River Union, between the families, and importantly, between the conflicting parties. While this might not have yielded direct result, the overall role women played in the fostering of peace during the Sierra Leonean war was as mediators. They were able to get the two parties to come to an agreement through their efforts.

Lavalie (2011) states that;

> The women used any opportunity to engage with the rebels, such as writing letters to the rebels. The women would leave letters where they believed the rebels would find them, and fortunately the rebels replied to the messages. Through the letter-writing process, the women realized there was a possibility that the rebels would agree to a dialogue with the government. Eventually, after several tries by the women, they were able to get the two parties to speak and start negotiations (2014:11).

The case of the elderly women explained in 4.3.3 (mass action) also fits into traditional mediation, as they took up the task of ensuring the rebel leader adhered to the peace agreement which was instrumental to ending the conflict.

4.3.5   Reintegration

The aftermath of war is often devastating as many lives have been lost, properties have been destroyed and post-conflict reconstruction is needed. Part of peacebuilding is the DDR process that deals with disarming the combatants, demobilizing them as a group, and then integrating them back into society. This process is often carried out by mostly international NGOs, the UN, and other formalized organisations, which are often not broad-based as they only focus on the obvious areas they can reach. This is where women played an important role and represented the grassroot level of DDR. Women were instrumental in the reintegration of many child soldiers. The uniqueness of the programme was that they did not limit the scope of the programme to only child soldiers, they catered for bush wives, victims, and other affected persons. Though the programme was not as structured as those carried out by formal organisations, it was effective. Women in different communities that were part of the stronghold of the rebel forces were able to get the child soldiers to lay down their arms and

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helped them function like regular members of society. At the broad level, the women's groups and NGOs operated rehabilitation programmes for ex-combatants, girls that were abducted and married to rebel soldiers. The created skills and training centres to aid in post-conflict reconstruction by providing financial and social assistance to persons affected by the war. At the local level, women in small groups adopted and provided food, shelter, and counselling to former child soldiers as their contribution to keeping the community safe. They helped individuals recover from the loss of their loved ones.

Here as some examples of the roles women played in reintegration.

Mazurana & Carlson (2004) writes that;

> Locally based non-government organisation Caritas-Makeni, comprising of mostly nuns and female social workers, "instituted programmes that allowed girl-mothers to bring their children to skills training or to care for them while their mothers attended school. They provided a room and mat for the child to sleep and food for the mother and child during the day. This helped increase the mothers' retention rates in the programme and prevented their involvement in prostitution. They also offered a programme on alternative income generation for those who have entered the sex trade and reproductive health and safety education (2004: 23).

They narrated further that;

> Forum for African Women Educationalists began the rape victims' programme in March 1999. Their projects included radio programming, visits with school children, counselling, and referrals to team doctors. Female survivors who became pregnant were given pre- and post-natal care by the organisation. Forum for African Women Educationalists and Progressive Women's Association operated skills training centres that included education for young women and girls in basic literacy. They offered a range of training programmes to girls and young women ex-combatants that included tailoring, carpentry, tie dying and masonry. They also rebuilt schools and community centres that were destroyed, and in some areas, constructed and opened schools for girls. Some of its programme centres catered for girl

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mothers and other vulnerable girl populations with the aim of increasing literacy and education. They were the only organisation to accept pregnant girls in the classroom (Mazurana & Carlson 2004:24).

Womankind (2011) observed that;

women peace movement located abducted children, provided financial and medical assistance, and helped women become independent. When the parents of the abducted children could not be found or their relatives shunned them, members of Women Peace Movement adopted them. In the Bo district in southern central Sierra Leone, a group of women decided to take back children and youths between the ages of 6 and 25 from the fighting forces. The women claimed that this was their contribution to upholding peace. Women in Makeni (Bambali, northern central Sierra Leone) organised themselves to care for children coming out of the fighting forces (Womankind 2011:18).

Despite knowing that these child soldiers had committed horrific atrocities; the women were willing to play pivotal role in their reintegration. Davies notes that;

The women claimed that if the peace so far achieved is to prove meaningful and sustainable then society must take up the responsibility of caring for its children. They further argued that if those children were left uncared for now that peace has been achieved, they would easily revert to their" "old ways; that if the children were left abandoned, they will have nothing positive to do or think and will threaten the fragile peace in existence (in Mazurana & Carlson, 2004: 23).

4.4   Discussion: Linking the Themes to the Theory

The informal role women played to foster peace in Sierra Leone and the feminist theory links on three levels: The multiple agencies women embodied, particularly as participants in the peace process; the predisposition of women to agitate for peace at all levels relating to the ethics of care; and the exclusion of women from the formal peace process as a manifestation

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of patriarchy, additionally, it will point out some of the unintended consequences of women's peace activism to highlights that their peace agitation was not entirely met with acceptance.

4.4.1 Women embodying multi-agency

Women's contribution to the peace process in Sierra Leone can be summed up into three areas: Getting the two conflicting parties to sign a peace agreement, strengthening the electoral process; and the reintegration of former child soldiers and victims into society. Their efforts towards the actualization of peace in Sierra Leone were a grassroot approach to peacebuilding because they used local networks and an inclusive strategy to achieve their mandate (Lederach 1997). Radical feminist theory posits that women are more than victims during peacebuilding, and that women must be established as participants and agents of change in peacebuilding. Using the above explanation of what women did to advance peace in Sierra Leone, it is safe to argue that the very assumption that women are only victims in war is false, as there were women fighters in the rebel forces and as well as the Sierra Leone armed forces (Coulter 2009). Importantly, women embodied multi-agency during and after the civil war; they were, among others, combatants, relief workers, lobbyists, and peace activists. All of which aided in the successful implementation of peace in Sierra Leone. This consolidates the feminist emancipation of women from the victim-only status to participants. By actively engaging in the overall process, women were able to contribute as participants in the peace process, thus changing their status from victims to participants. Rightfully, they not only showed their capability in building peace in their communities, they were a formidable force that influenced the system.

4.4.2 Women's exclusion from the formal peace process

Women worked hard to initiate the whole peace process but were not incorporated into the official peacebuilding (Jusu-Sheriff 2000). This relates to the radical feminist theory that argues that the oppression of women is a manifestation of the effects of patriarchy, which plays out in all scopes. Women could only actualize their potential in the informal space even though this sphere is also subject to the whims of the patriarchal system. It would be disingenuous to argue that their participation in the informal sphere was not frowned upon considering that Sierra Leone is a patriarchal society. Their peace activism was met with protests by some members of the male community who saw it as being over-bearing because they believe such roles are reserved for men. Their absence from the formal peace process is

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a manifestation of the oppressive patriarchal system prevalent in most West African states. The patriarchal system limits the representation and participation of women in the decision-making sphere and does not see women as an independent being. The contribution of women in the grassroot building of peace did not translate to commensurate result when they contested for elections in 1996. Jusu-Sheriff (2000:49) says "that women believed that their hard work in the democratisation process would be rewarded by places at the negotiating table, but politicians recognised that the ideas and attitudes of the women's movement would destabilize traditional politics, and so they discouraged further participation by women in leadership".

4.4.3 Predisposition to agitate for peace

The participation of Sierra Leonean women in the peace process is a re-enactment of the feminist ethics of care that argues that women are naturally peace-loving. Most women that contributed to the peace movement could have chosen to be spectators and waited on the government to resolve the conflict. Rather, they actively took on the role of peacemakers in their communities and the country at large. Women catering to former child soldiers, helping the victims of war, and adopting displaced children are an affirmation of their status as mothers, life-givers, and compassionate beings. All of which the feminist theory advocates for.

Steady (2006: 39) asserts that "the participation of women in advancing peace in Sierra Leone is an advocacy for women's inclusion in peace processes, politics and other public decision-making spheres". Importantly, it was an agitation against the oppressive system of patriarchy that hindered their involvement in societal affairs, and by so doing, they were able to make a statement that they are active participants in the peace process rather than just victims. Finally, they re-evoked the traditional African system where women played a pivotal role in the socio-political space.

4.5 African Union in Facilitating Women's Participation in Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone

This section will discuss the efforts of the AU through APSA to facilitate women's participation in peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. It will provide an overview of the AU APSA, broadly discussing its efforts in encouraging women in peacebuilding in Africa, and finally, in Sierra Leone. This is in a bid to answer the last question on ways through which women's informal peacebuilding roles can be fostered.

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4.5.1 About the African Union Peace and Security Architecture

The AU is the apex organ that coordinates the inter-governmental affairs of African states. It assumed this role following the rebranding of the defunct Organisation of African Unity in the early 2000s. With the establishment of the AU, a broader responsibility was placed on its shoulders in terms of regional peace and security because of the considerable change in the conflict climate in Africa. The "transition from Organisation of African Union to AU was clearly intended to transform the institutional framework to realize the Pan-African vision from what some critics regarded as mere talking shop into an action-oriented forum" (Lisk 2012:1). APSA was established to live up to its mandate of ensuring adequate stability and security in Africa.

The metamorphosis of the AU in 2000 coincided with the passing of the UNSRC 1325 that seeks increased women's participation in peace processes and a more gendered perspective in peace and security. The APSA are on a larger scale meant to help "address the many peace and security challenges that the continent faces and also to proffer African solutions to African problems" (Lisk 2012:2). The new APSA took a different structure than its predecessor and is built on two pillars: The "common African defence and security policy" and the "Peace and Security Council" (PSC). The "council is a standing decision-making organ responsible for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, including post-conflict reconstruction. Specifically, the PSC was created to promote and implement peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction activities" (Juma 2005:3). AU (2015) asserts that the PSC has three branches to carry out these tasks: "The Panel of the Wise, the Continental Early Warning System and the African Standby Force". These three branches, the Peace Fund that finances the missions and activities related to peace and security, and the regional mechanisms, which are the regional economic communities, for conflict prevention, management and resolution make up the APSA. Hence, the APSA is the organ of the AU that is saddled with the responsibility of maintaining peace and security in Africa. Each organ of the APSA has specific functions that aids with the larger aim of ensuring regional peace and security.

4.5.2 APSA's role in women's participation in peacebuilding

The "AU plays a central role in the promotion of gender equality in gender justice in post-conflict societies according to its mandate in article 5(2) of the AU Constitutive Act" (Juma

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2005:3). It adopted the issue of peace and security and gender equality as part of its social transformation agenda and has shown its commitment by creating various structures and adopting legal instruments to push its agenda (Hendricks 2017). The AU's and the APSA's first step towards ensuring women's representation/participation in peacebuilding was the integration of the UNSRC 1325 into the AU's gender related frameworks (Hendricks 2017). This was done to increase women's presence in peace and security, which was followed by the appointment of a special envoy on women in peace and security.

The protocol to the African charter on human and people's rights on the rights of women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) was adopted in 2003. Heyns and Killander (2016:70) states that "article 10 of the Maputo Protocol states that women have a right to a peaceful existence and the right to participate in the promotion of peace". It calls on states to "take appropriate measures to ensure the participation of women in the structures and processes for conflict prevention, management and resolution at local, national, regional, continental and international levels and in all aspects of planning, formulation and implementation of post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation, as well the need for the protection of civilians, including women, in armed conflict" (AU 2015:1).

Subsequent efforts by the AU were the "solemn declaration of gender equality in 2004, which noted the importance of implementing UNSRC 1325; the appointment of women as special envoys and special representatives of the AU; the framework for post-conflict reconstruction and development in 2006 and the AU gender policy in 2008" (AU 2016:7).

In 2014, "the gender, peace and security programme were launched to serve as a continental framework for the AU and the Regional Economic Communities towards the implementation of UNSRC 1325 and its sister resolutions on women peace and security" (Hendricks 2017:81).

AU (2016:7) states that the "2016–2020 APSA roadmap made gender mainstreaming a priority with the AU PSC organising an open session on the role of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In March 2017, the AU PSC created the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa). FemWise-Africa is aimed at strengthening the role of women in conflict prevention and mediation efforts and enhancing the implementation of the commitments for women's inclusion in peace-making in Africa"

The "AU Gender Architecture enshrined in the AU gender policy 2009 included legal instruments and policies that tackle the subject of women, peace and security. This has

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translated into an increase in the number of women in senior level positions within the AU, the nomination of special representatives in countries in conflict or post-conflict; and women mediators and special envoys" (AU 2016:8)

In 2014, Dr Dlamini-Zuma (the first female chairperson of the AU Commission) appointed Ms Benita Diop, the president and "founder of the Femmes Africa Solidarite, as special envoy on Women, Peace and Security" with a specific mandate "to ensure that the voices of women and the vulnerable are heard more clearly in peacebuilding and conflict resolution" (AU, 2016:7). Ms Diop stated upon her appointment that her work would be geared towards galvanizing actions to bring women's voices, experiences, and expertise to the table of peace processes with the vision to silence the guns (AUC 2015:11–12). The special envoy and her team have been on a mission to conflict and post-conflict countries to advocate for women's inclusion in peace processes and to initiate networks and trainings towards this purpose. Some examples are the "Network of Reporters on Women, Peace and Security, the African Women's Mediator's Network and training of women mediators" (Hendricks 2017:82). The PSC enjoined its member states to adopt a National Action Plan for the implementation of the WPS Agenda. In 2017, only 19 African Countries (13 of which are in West Africa) and two regional organisations, Intergovernmental Authority Development, and the ECOWAS, have adopted the national or regional action plans. In a bid to raise awareness concerning the gender perspective on war and peace and particularly the inclusion of women in peace processes, the "AU declared 2010–2020 the African Women's Decade" (AU 2016).

The Peace and Security Department of APSA launched the Gender, Peace and Security Programme (2015–2020) that aims to develop "effective strategies for gender mainstreaming in peace and security" and to consider diverse gender experiences (men and women) and potentialities in building peaceful and sustainable societies (AU 2016:8). The programme focuses on gender mainstreaming in peace and security and aids the facilitation of dialogue around women's effective participation in peace and security. Its aims are:

> Mainstreaming gender in all areas of peace and security including post-conflict and reconstruction through collaboration with regional economic communities and regional civil society platforms, to develop and implement continental and regional strategies for the participation of women in peace and security (AU 2016:8)

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The main components of the programme are:

- "Enhancing the capacities of African institutions working in the areas of peace and security and human rights to mainstream gender into the Continental Peace and Security Agenda;
- Strengthening partnerships and promoting research and dialogue on gender, peace and security;
- Strengthening the role of women in peace and security in Africa; and
- Preventing and responding to women, men and children's vulnerabilities in times of conflict and post-conflict situations and ending impunity"
  (Hendricks 2017:83).

Some of the achievements of the AU in the implementation of the WPS agenda within its structure are as contained in the progress report of AU implementation of WPS agenda are

- "One female as a special envoy on women, peace and security.
- Three of the five members constituting its mediators (Panel of the Wise) are women.
- Through the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre and the Pan-Africa Centre on Gender and Development, the Office of the Special Envoy has trained 35 women leaders in electoral observation and dispute mediation in 2015.
- The African Standby Capacity launched its Roster to facilitate the identification, recruitment, and training of civilian experts in peacebuilding. A pledge was made to have 50% women's representation in the roster selection guidelines in 2015.
- Holding seven annual open sessions of the PSC on women in armed conflict/UNSCR 1325 since 2010" (extracted from AU report on implementation of the WPS agenda 2016:35).

4.5.3 APSA in Sierra Leone

There were no affirmative and direct actions taken by the AU or APSA to facilitate the participation of women in the peace processes in Sierra Leone. There are numerous initiatives and policy documents that seek to achieve this at the continental level so that by the principle of trickle down the effects will be felt in its member states. The closest example of the APSA in Sierra Leone would be the adoption of the "National Action Plan for the implementation of the WPS Agenda". Following its adoption of a National Action Plan in 2010, Sierra Leone is one of the countries that have a considerable presence of women in formal peace processes.

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The foremost example is that of the Mano River Women Peace Network, though it was formed before the WPS agenda, that has been instrumental in the promotion and participation of women in peacebuilding. They established themselves as an important organisation in relation to women's representation and participation in peace processes. Sierra Leone also has the highest number of female police in UN peacekeeping missions in Africa as of 2015. Out of the 78 Sierra Leonean police personnel deployed for UN peacekeeping missions, 48 were women (IPI Peacekeeping Database 2016). Women made up 20% of the witnesses at the signing of the Lomé peace agreement, and 0% of mediators, signatories and negotiating teams. The achievements of Sierra Leone in implementing the UNSRC 1325 along the four pillars of prevention, participation, protection and relief, and recovery are;

- Sierra Leone's affirmative action has facilitated the increased participation of women in the police force.
- There has been an increase in the number of women participating in peacekeeping operations, particularly in the police components.
- Development of rural women's safety network and advocacy for women's inclusion in the security sector framework.
- Ratification of the Maputo Protocol.
- Adoption of localized guidelines for integrating women, peace and security issues into the process of local legislation and development planning in local councils.
- Training on gender and security sector for women at grassroots.

4.6 Conclusion

A thematic analysis of the findings to answer the central research question confirms the conclusions of the literature review and theoretical framework that women are much more than victims and can embody various roles and responsibilities during times of war and peace. By mobilizing, advocating, and protesting, women were able to contribute to the peace process at the foundational stage of the call and institution of peace. This is like diplomacy where a third party enjoins the two conflicting parties to come together to resolve their difference. The very act of using the vast network of women in the agitation for peace is an important strategy that consolidated the subsequent efforts women took in the process. The analysis illustrated that women participated in the peace process informally as activist, relief workers, mediators, and lobbyists. Through these various means, they portrayed themselves as agents and participants in the peace process during the conflict and in the post-conflict reconstruction. In

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the post-conflict reconstruction, they played a pivotal role in reintegrating the former child soldiers back into the society, as they recognised the danger of abandoning them without help. By providing help and feeding the ex-child soldiers, they protected the fragile peace gotten from the signing of the peace agreements and the ceasefire. A major part of peacebuilding deals with disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating former combatants with the sole aim of preventing a relapse of conflict. The participation of women in the informal sphere did not translate into representation and participation in the formal peace proceedings, and women were excluded from the official peace negotiations, peace agreements and other processes. Their exclusion affirms the radical feminist argument that patriarchy manifests itself in the marginalization of women from decision-making spheres. The contributions Sierra Leonean women made to initiating negotiations and the electoral process were largely unrecognised as they did not enjoy public legitimacy when they contested for democratic elections in 1996. The emergent issue continues to be that women are paving the way for representation in public affairs by devising alternative means of participation, but their efforts are being ignored.

The APSA as an independent structure has not taken any direct actions towards women's participation in Sierra Leone. Many policies, legal instruments, workshops, and panels have been initiated at the continental and regional levels, but none has been specifically tailored for Sierra Leone. The country's adoption of a National Action Plan could be attributed to the efforts of the APSA to get its member states to implement the UNSRC 1325 WPS Agenda. The inability of the AU to take direct action in Sierra Leone can be attributed to the old problems of lack of adequate financial resources; lack of a clear-cut plan of the AU to promote women's participation in peacebuilding; and lack of coordinated strategy to implement its numerous policy documents on women, peace and security. Thus, with the many challenges the APSA faces, it would be difficult to facilitate women's participation actively and directly in peacebuilding.

Finally, the chapter was able to provide an overview of the Sierra Leone civil war, the informal roles women played to advance peace in Sierra Leone and an evaluation of the efforts of APSA in enhancing women's participation in peacebuilding in Sierra Leone and Africa in general.

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CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study examined the informal roles women play to advance peacebuilding during conflict and post-conflict in West Africa. It was a thematic study that used Sierra Leone as a case to contextualize the argument for West Africa. It adopted a qualitative method in its approach of enquiry using a case study research design and the radical feminist theory and thematic analysis in its analytical framework and analysis of data.

Chapter 1 introduced the study, its research objectives and questions, methodology and the justification for the study. It did an extensive justification on why Sierra Leone was selected as the case study citing reasons such as specificity of context, need for in-depth study and richness of content.

Chapter 2 extensively delved into the debates on women's participation and representation in peacebuilding in Africa to provide an understanding of the subject of women in peacebuilding and to answer the first research question. It also built the foundation for the re-examination of some of the debates regarding the agency of women in post-conflict contexts. Chapter 2 argued that African patriarchy is not solely responsible for the lack of women's participation in peacebuilding and that the patriarchy is a consequence of Africa's unequal relationship with Europe. This unequal relationship in the form of colonization disrupted the matrilineal and gender fluid traditional African societies where, even when it was patrilineal, there was no restriction on women's participation in decision making. More so, it argues that the under-representation of women in the peacebuilding sphere is largely because of the under-reporting of the informal ways women are contributing to peace processes, which ties in with the distinction between formal and informal peace processes. The dichotomy between these two processes is informed by the divide between the Western liberal mode of instituting peace in conflict-affected countries that have become the formalized collective peace instrument of the international system and the locally and unorganised means of building peace derived from traditional customs of a specific community. Thus, the formal process often gets recognised and replicated, unlike the informal processes that are tailor-made for a specific society. It also claimed that the misconstrued agency of women during times of war and peace limits women's participation because women are seen as victims rather than active participants. It is

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important to redirect conversations surrounding women as victims-only in order to address their marginalization and under-representation in peace processes.

The second part of Chapter 2 used the radical feminist theory, which is a variation of the feminist theory, to explain women's participation in peacebuilding, and specifically to understand the agency of women in peacebuilding and give theoretical leaning to the debates. The crux of the theoretical argument was that women are much more than victims during conflict and post-conflict peacebuilding, and there is a need to position women as active participants in peacebuilding, which is tandem with the radical feminist perspective of peacebuilding. The argument attempted to understand the exclusion of women from decision-making spheres from a radical feminist lens in order to consolidate the review of literature on the low participation of women in peacebuilding in Africa. The section concludes that the marginalization of women is a manifestation of the structural and cultural violence women are subjected to within the society, and by virtue of the feminist ethics of care, women can be peacebuilders and should be established as participants in peace processes.

Chapter 3 traced the subject of women in peacebuilding in Africa from the pre-colonial times to re-examine the claim that traditional African societies are patriarchal and to provide context for the reinvention of women's role as peacebuilders. It built on the argument in Chapter 2that claimed that patriarchy is the reason for the low participation by women in peacebuilding in Africa, and this chapter argued that the disruption of gender relations in pre-colonial Africa produced a new form of African patriarchy. This new patriarchy has fixed gender roles while in the old socio-cultural arrangement women occupied leadership positions, ruled kingdoms and served on councils. Importantly, women were involved in dispute resolution, mediation between families and clans, and peacebuilding. It raised the question of what is responsible for this distortion of history and the disruption of social and political arrangement in traditional African societies; the answer was the colonization of Africa by the Europeans.

Chapter 4 addressed the following two research questions:

- What are the informal roles women played to advance peace in Sierra Leone?
- What efforts did the AU APSA make to facilitate women's participation in peacebuilding in Sierra Leone? so as to suggest measures to foster women's participation in peacebuilding.

The chapter first provided an overview of the Sierra Leonean civil war, an armed confrontation between the Sierra Leonean government and the RUF, that started in 1991 and ended in 2002. Using a thematic analysis, the chapter examined how women contributed to peacebuilding and the following five themes were extracted from the data sets to illustrate the informal roles women played:

- Mobilization and advocacy: women across all levels formed groups to canvass for peace in Sierra Leone. They raised awareness and did sensitization campaigns to advocate for peace.

- Lobbying: They groups united under the Women's Forum and lobbied the government to conduct democratic elections as a strategy to get the rebel forces to lay down their arms. They also pestered the international community to take an interest in the war and placed pressure on the government to sign a negotiation settlement with the RUF.

- Mass action: The tactic they used most often was to organize peace marches, rallies and protests to get the government and the RUF to come to an agreement and start the peace process.

- Traditional mediation: By virtue of their status as women and mothers, they bestowed on themselves the task of mediating between the two sides. They wanted to make both parties come to the negotiating table to resolve their differences and sign a peace agreement, which they succeeded in doing.

- Reintegration: After the war ended, the women organized programmes and skills and training centres to help affected victims recover from the trauma of the war. They convinced former child soldiers to lay down their arms by providing them with shelter, food, and support. They did this to prevent a relapse into conflict, as they understood that abandoning the former child soldiers would pose a threat to the peace and security in their communities. The efforts of these women in reintegrating ex-combatants, though not large-scale and formalized like those of the UNAMSIL, made a considerable impact.

The second section focused on investigating what the APSA has done to facilitate the participation of women in peacebuilding in order to suggest ways through which women's informal peacebuilding roles can be fostered. The findings revealed that while the AU and its APSA have numerous policy documents and legal instruments in place to support the UNSRC 1325 and the WPS agenda, it did not have any tailor-made plan or strategy for Sierra Leone.

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The AU adopted the UN WPS Agenda and enjoined it member states to ratify the agenda and develop a National Action Plan for its implementation. It appointed a special envoy on the WPS Agenda, yet it did not have its own Action Plan for the implementation of the WPS Agenda that seeks increased participation of women in peacebuilding. Though the efforts of APSA in encouraging women's participation in peacebuilding is limited, Sierra Leone has been able to make considerable achievements with regards to the inclusion of women in peacebuilding. It boasts of the highest women police personnel in the combined UN peacekeeping missions in Africa, the Mano River Union Women Peace Network and the development of a National Action Plan for the implementation of the WPS agenda.

5.2   Conclusion

This study highlights the dichotomy between women's participation in formal and informal peace processes, and its implication for women's representation in peacebuilding in Africa. It argues that the non-recognition of women's informal peacebuilding work largely accounts for their under-representation in formal peacebuilding processes and structures in Sierra Leone and in Africa broadly. In essence, the study embodied the arguments of the radical feminist theory of peacebuilding that women are more than victims during conflict as they are also agents of peace and post-conflict reconstruction. Indeed, the study established women as active participants in formal and informal peacebuilding and concluded that the lens needs to be shifted to the informal level of peacebuilding where women are dominant and yet under-reported. As has been presented, women's efforts towards peacebuilding in Sierra Leone at the informal level include mobilization, advocacy, lobbying, mass action, traditional mediation and reintegration amongst other activities and actions women undertook to ensure that peace prevailed in their communities. Also, apart from being fighters during the civil war in Sierra Leone, women were victims as well. However, they were also predisposed to agitate for peace in during the conflict based on the feminist ethics of care and the various examples on how women in Sierra Leone took it upon themselves to kick-start the negotiation process between the government and the rebel forces exemplify this. Impliedly, even during conflict, women's peacebuilding agency is palpable. Relatedly, the findings from this study showed that peacebuilding is complex and multifaceted as there are numerous and yet interconnected ways to work for peace in a conflict-affected society.

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None of the above however should preclude or obscure the fact that women are still excluded from formal peace processes notwithstanding their contributions in informal peacebuilding. As the Sierra Leone case study shows, even with the tremendous efforts of women to kickstart the formal peacebuilding process, they were not included in the process. This speaks to the status ascribed to women in largely patriarchal societies that views public decision-making as the sole reserve of men. Related to their marginalization in formal peacebuilding is the political marginalization of women. First, their dominant participation in informal peacebuilding did not translate to a similar participation talk less of dominance in politics even if informal. For example, women contested for various elective positions but were not able to win as they were not regarded as fit for the positions. Clearly then, even though women were able to informally agitate for peace during the civil war in Sierra Leone, it did not mean that the society became receptive to the idea of a woman participating in the public sphere. Therefore, women are still very much marginalized and oppressed by corrupted patriarchal values that limits the extent to which they can participate in the public decision-making sphere either for peacebuilding or political participation. This raises questions around the role regional actors, beyond the state, can play to mainstream women into formal peacebuilding and representation in public decision making. In this regard, an examination of the role of the AU in fostering increased women's participation in peacebuilding makes the study to conclude that the organization is not doing enough to encourage women's participation in peacebuilding. For example, it does not have a clear-cut coordinated strategy to pursue the WPS Agenda. Thus, it is imperative to suggest measures both for the AU and Sierra Leone in order to foster increased women's participation in peacebuilding in Sierra Leone and Africa.

5.3   Recommendations

Based on the issues and lessons that emerged from the study and the obstacles raised in the conclusion, the study makes the following recommendations:

- The Sierra Leonean government needs to actively implement its National Action Plan on the WPS Agenda to ensure increased participation of women in peace and security.
- Given the low support given to women in formal peace processes, women need to be encouraged to continue to participate in building peace in their communities through the various alternative ways they contribute to peacebuilding.

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- The African Union and the government of Sierra Leone should recognize and incorporate women's informal contributions as part of the formal peace processes.
- The AU should carry out extensive research into the various ways women foster peace in their communities. This could be done by setting up a task team as well as cooperating with regional organisations such as Economic Community of West African States, Southern Africa Development Community, and Intergovernmental Authority on Development.
- These task teams should organise community forums and workshops where ordinary women can share their experiences as they have been silenced for too long
- The Sierra Leonean government, AU, ECOWAS, and other relevant bodies should provide financial, material, and technical support for the informal peacebuilding work women are doing through the various organisational and political channels.
- The Government of Sierra Leone through its orientation agency should embark on orientating its citizens on the importance of women's informal peacebuilding work and mainstreaming them into public decision-making positions at all level of governance.
- The African Union should enjoin regional organisations and its member countries to embark on gender awareness programmes with respect to women's inclusion in the peace and security sphere.
- AU should direct more actions towards mainstreaming women (such as instituting a quota) in peace negotiations, mediations, and workshops at the national and continental level.
- AU should serve as a body that ensures compliance and adherence on measures that have been recommended to ensure increased women's participation in peacebuilding in Africa.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies About Women's Participation in Peacebuilding

The analysis of the roles women played in informal peacebuilding in Sierra Leone showed that they were excluded from the official peace processes and political leadership. Investigating this goes beyond the scope of this thesis. Further studies can investigate why women were not included in the formal peace processes considering their significant efforts

to kickstart the process and their informal contributions. The research could also look at why women could not win positions during the 1996 general elections in Sierra Leone after they played a big role in making it happen. An in-depth analysis will provide new insight into women's participation in informal peacebuilding to understanding women's potential as political leaders. More research needs to be done on women's involvement in peacebuilding as it is a broad field of study cutting across different issues surrounding women's agency, societal acceptance, and gender relations.

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