

Perspectives and Experiences of Women Involved in Peacebuilding Processes in Kenya

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate experiences of women involved in peacebuilding processes in Kenya. The driving factor for the study was political instability and ethnic conflicts have plagued Kenya, especially since the post-election violence in 2007 and 2008, which claimed the lives of over a thousand people and displaced over 600,000. Many women have been subjected to sexual abuse, been forced to flee their homes, and lost loved ones as a result of these wars. Despite these setbacks, women in Kenya have participated in peacemaking initiatives. Their contributions to community building and healing have been invaluable. Women have played an important role in many aspects of peacebuilding, including but not limited to conflict resolution, mediation, negotiations, and the promotion of social cohesion and community development. The Women's Peace Caravan is an outstanding instance of women's participation in peacebuilding in Kenya. In 2008, a group of women who had been impacted by the violence that followed an election launched this effort. The Ladies' Peace Caravan was a group of ladies from all over the country who set out on a journey to spread messages of peace and unity. The caravan went to the locations where the violence had taken place and hosted seminars and discussions on fostering peace. Through non-governmental groups, women have also contributed to fostering peace. For instance, the Kenyan Women's Peace Network (KEWOPA) is a network of organizations led by women that advocate for national stability. Conflict resolution, mediation, and promoting women's rights in peacebuilding are all areas in which KEWOPA has participated. Women peacebuilders in Kenya, however, encounter significant obstacles. In peacebuilding efforts, women frequently experience a lack of access to resources and prejudice because of their gender. Women rarely have a voice in formal peace talks and are routinely left out of decision-making procedures. The role of women in fostering peace is also underappreciated. The study findings revealed that Kenyan women participate in local peace committees, civil society groups, and community-based organizations to build peace. Women's perspectives and engagement in addressing the root causes of conflicts and fostering inclusive, long-term peace need to be highlighted. The study established that Kenyan women confront several peacebuilding challenges such as discrimination, marginalization, gender-based violence, and exclusion from decision-making which cause setbacks. If these trends continue, women's engagement may reduce violence and conflict, increase democracy, and improve social cohesion and reconciliation. The study recommends the need to involve Kenyan women in peacebuilding outreach and support for women's organizations and civil society groups, training and capacity-building, and efforts to remove systemic impediments to women's participation in decision-making.

Key Words: Perspectives, Experiences, Women & Peacebuilding Processes

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Introduction

In recent years, there has been a rise in the acknowledgement of the importance of women's engagement in the processes of establishing peace. This is due to the fact that research has proven that women's participation in peace processes leads to a more effective and lasting peace. Women have been actively involved in peacebuilding initiatives in Kenya, playing a crucial role in bringing communities together and encouraging reconciliation. These efforts have been supported by the Kenyan government. The perspectives and experiences of women who are participating in peacebuilding processes in Kenya remain underexplored, despite the contributions they have made to such efforts. The purpose of this study was to fill this vacuum by investigating the experiences and points of view of women who have participated in the process of peacebuilding in Kenya. This included an examination of the women's contributions, obstacles, and ideas for improving the engagement of women in peacebuilding efforts. The findings of this study will lead to a greater understanding of the significance of women's engagement in peace processes as well as the important role that women play in the process of peacebuilding in Kenya. These findings provide vital insights into the role that women play in peacebuilding in Kenya.

Assumptions

1. Women have had meaningful and impactful involvement in peacebuilding efforts.
2. Women face significant challenges in their participation in peacebuilding.
3. The perspectives and experiences of women involved in peacebuilding in Kenya may be different from those of men and that exploring these perspectives can provide insights into the unique role of women in promoting peace and reconciliation.

Objectives

The study was guided by objectives that:

1. Explore the contributions of women in peacebuilding efforts in Kenya and highlight their unique perspectives and experiences.
2. Identify the challenges faced by women in their involvement in peacebuilding processes in Kenya.
3. Examine the impact of women's participation in peacebuilding efforts on promoting sustainable and effective peace in Kenya.

Statement of Problem

Kenyan women face significant challenges when it comes to their engagement in the processes of peacebuilding. These challenges include limited access to resources, gender-based discrimination, and cultural barriers. They are unable to participate fully and effectively in attempts to construct peace as a result of these impediments, which, in the end, weakens not only

the feasibility of these initiatives but also their overall level of achievement. The issue that this study sought to investigate and address was the limited participation of women in the processes of peacebuilding in Kenya, as well as the challenges that women face when attempting to participate in those processes. This was the issue that the study investigated and addressed. Women are usually excluded from the decision-making processes, and the significance of their contributions is sometimes underestimated, despite the fact that women play a crucial role in the promotion of peace and reconciliation. For this reason, it was necessary to conduct the study on the perspectives and experiences of women who have been actively involved in the processes of peacebuilding in Kenya and to determine the most effective methods for encouraging the meaningful participation of these women in the decision-making processes. In addition, it is necessary to investigate the perspectives and experiences of women who have been actively involved in the processes of peacebuilding in Kenya. The finding of this study contribute to a better understanding of the significance of women's engagement in the processes of peacebuilding, and informs policy and practice with the goals of achieving greater gender equality and inclusivity in peacebuilding efforts.

Review of Related Literature

The Contributions of Women in Peacebuilding Efforts and their Unique Perspectives and Experiences

Women have been actively participating in peacebuilding efforts for a prolonged amount of time and have made major contributions to the advancement of long-term peace in a variety of conflict-affected countries. Research has demonstrated that the participation of women in peace processes increases the likelihood that those procedures will result in peace that is sustainable (UN Women, 2018). Women add distinctive perspectives and experiences to the processes of peacebuilding, frequently placing a higher priority on the requirements of their families and communities and advocating for a peacebuilding strategy that is more inclusive and comprehensive (UN Women, 2018). In addition, women are often able to access and connect with community members who may be less open to the presence of male peacebuilders due to cultural or religious conventions (UN Women, 2018). This makes it easier for women to create relationships with community members.

After the end of the military struggle that occurred within Peru's borders, it was the women of the country who were at the forefront of efforts to promote peace and reconciliation. According to Passmore (2017), the acknowledgement of victims' rights, as well as the pursuit of justice and restitution, have been significantly aided by the efforts of women's organizations and movements. In addition, women have participated in community-based mediation and conflict resolution activities, which are examples of local initiatives aimed at creating local peace. For instance, women in the region of Ayacucho have been instrumental in resolving local conflicts and fostering reconciliation through intercultural discussion and the development of community-led peacebuilding projects (Vapnek & Boaz, 2017). These activities have been carried out in order to address local conflicts.

Women who participate in attempts to promote peace in Peru suffer considerable obstacles, despite the fact that they make important contributions on peacebuilding matters. According to Passmore (2017), gender-based violence and discrimination are pervasive, and women's participation in the decision-making process is restricted. In addition, women may

encounter additional problems due to factors such as their race, socioeconomic background, or geographic location (Vapnek & Boaz, 2017). These factors can all play a role.

In order to foster more gender inclusion in the processes of peacebuilding in Peru, there have been efforts made to promote it. According to Gunitsky (2017), for instance, both the Law on Victims from 2008 and the National Plan for Reparations from 2015 acknowledge the particular requirements and rights of women who were victims of the conflict. According to Gunitsky (2017), the government has also formed the National Council for Reparations and Reconciliation (Consejo Nacional para las Reparaciones y la Reconciliación) to monitor the execution of reparations and recognition measures for victims.

Women in Kashmir have made major contributions to peacebuilding efforts, particularly in light of the ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan over the contentious territory. This is especially true when considering the background of the conflict. According to Sharp & Stibbe (2017), women's organizations and activists have been actively involved in the promotion of peace, the advocacy for human rights, and the provision of humanitarian assistance to those who have been affected by the violence. Women have also played an important part in community-level activities to promote peace, such as those involving mediation, conversation, and reconciliation. These efforts have been led by women. According to Kumar (2019), initiatives led by women have been beneficial in reducing levels of violence and creating peace in places that have been impacted by the conflict.

However, women who are participating in efforts to construct peace in Kashmir confront a number of obstacles, including violence based on gender, discrimination, and limitations on their movement and ability to take part in decision-making processes (Kumar, 2019). According to Ba & Bhopal (2017), women have experienced tremendous psychological and physical trauma as a result of the conflict, yet their perspectives and experiences are frequently disregarded in the procedures and discussions that are intended to bring about peace. There have been efforts made to encourage greater gender inclusivity in the peacebuilding processes that are taking place in Kashmir. Women's organizations have been actively involved in campaigning for gender-sensitive peacebuilding techniques, which has led to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security being included into the local policy framework (Giscard d'Estaing, 2017).

Over the course of Africa's history, women have been instrumental in the reconstruction of peace, particularly in the wake of violent conflict. Through their engagement in peace negotiations, campaigning, and grassroots mobilization, women's groups and movements have been vital in fostering peace, reconciliation, and social justice (Kinyanjui, 2016). Women's organizations and movements have also played an important role in advancing gender equality. Women have also been actively involved in community-based conflict resolution, mediation, and conversation as part of efforts aimed at creating peace at the grassroots level. According to Kakande (2019), programs led by women have proven to be effective in fostering reconciliation, reducing violence, and constructing social cohesiveness in communities that have been devastated by conflict.

Kinyanjui (2016) notes that women who participate in efforts to create peace in Africa confront a number of obstacles, including limited participation in decision-making processes, gender-based violence, and discrimination. In addition, women may face extra hurdles due to their ethnicity, socioeconomic level, or geographic location, which may limit their ability to

participate and have an influence in the processes of peacebuilding (Kakande, 2019). There have been efforts made to encourage greater gender inclusivity in the peacebuilding processes that are taking place across Africa. According to Kinyanjui (2016), the Women, Peace, and Security agenda of the African Union and Resolution 1325 of the United Nations Security Council have acknowledged the significant role that women play in the process of peacebuilding and the significance of their participation in the decision-making processes.

In the setting of Kenya, women have been actively involved in peacebuilding efforts, playing a crucial role in bringing communities together and encouraging reconciliation. This has resulted in women playing a pivotal role in the country. For instance, during the post-election violence that occurred in 2007-2008, women's groups played a significant role in fostering peace and reconciliation and as a result of their work, the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) was established (Karambu, 2017). Women's groups have also been involved in resolving conflicts amongst pastoralist communities and fostering interfaith dialogue to address the root causes of conflicts (Karambu, 2017). This has been done in an effort to address the root causes of conflicts.

However, despite the substantial contributions they make, women who are engaged in efforts to establish peace frequently confront significant hurdles. For instance, women may have restricted access to resources and may be subject to discrimination based on their gender, both of which may inhibit their capacity to engage fully in the process of decision-making (UN Women, 2018). According to UN Women (2018), women may also encounter cultural obstacles that prohibit them from participating in public life or from being regarded seriously in their role as peacebuilders.

Challenges Faced by Women in their Involvement in Peacebuilding Processes

Women who are actively participating in the processes of peacebuilding around the world encounter a myriad of hurdles that restrict their ability to contribute meaningfully and exert influence in the decision-making processes. These obstacles prevent women from actively participating in the processes of peacebuilding. Women who take part in attempts to promote peace are commonly the targets of gender-based violence, which can take a variety of forms, including sexual violence, intimidation, and harassment. This type of violence can also take place against women. According to Karim & Beardsley (2017), these acts of violence have the ability to threaten the safety and security of women, restrict their mobility, and discourage their participation in activities aimed at peacebuilding. Karim & Beardsley further state that these acts of violence have the capacity to discourage women from participating in activities aimed at peacebuilding.

During the processes of negotiating for peace and making decisions, it is normal practice for the viewpoints and experiences of women to be ignored or rejected in situations that are predominantly dominated by men. This occurs in situations where it is common practice for men. It is possible for women to endure discrimination based on their ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, or other characteristics, which further hinders their ability to participate in and have an influence on attempts to achieve peace (Kumar, 2019). Women may also encounter prejudice based on other factors.

The ability of women to actively participate in the processes of peacebuilding may be hampered by the fact that they may have restricted access to resources such as educational

opportunities, training, and financial support. This may make it more difficult for women to actively participate in the processes of peacebuilding. According to Eagly & Carli (2018), women may face additional obstacles while striving to get access to decision-making venues as well as opportunities for leadership and influence. These obstacles can include sexism and discrimination.

The gender conventions and prejudices that are still prevalent in today's society can make it more difficult for women to participate in the process of constructing peace. As a direct consequence of their participation, women who engage in activities that have historically been regarded as being predominately carried out by men, such as the resolution of disputes and the conduct of negotiations, may be subjected to opposition or public stigma (Kumar, 2019).

The Impact of Women's Participation in Peacebuilding Efforts on Promoting Sustainable and Effective Peace

The importance of women's participation in peacebuilding efforts has been highlighted in a number of studies carried out in various regions of the world. These studies have highlighted the potential positive impact that women's participation in peacebuilding efforts may have on the development of a peaceful environment that is both stable and fruitful. It is possible for women's participation in efforts to build peace to help to the development of trust and to the promotion of social cohesion among different groups. Women may have higher interactions with other members of their communities and may be in a better position to address social tensions and disputes, according to UN Women's (2015) findings.

Participation of women in efforts to establish peace can be beneficial in addressing the basic reasons of conflict, such as gender inequality and socio-economic inequalities, both of which can lead to armed conflict. Women's participation in these efforts can be helpful in addressing these core causes of conflict. Women may bring distinct perspectives and experiences to the table during peace discussions and decision-making processes, which can help to ensure that the needs and interests of all segments of society are met (Sandler & Goetz, 2020).

According to the findings of a number of studies, peace accords that include articles relating to gender equality have a greater probability of being successful and enduring than those that do not include such measures. Women's participation in peace negotiation processes can help to ensure that gender equity is prioritized in peace agreements and that the needs and perspectives of women are respected (UN Women, 2015). This can be accomplished by ensuring that women's participation in the peace negotiation process. Taking steps to ensure the participation of women in peace discussions is one way to get this goal realized.

The participation of women in efforts to create peace can be advantageous to the development of inclusive governance and decision-making processes, which can be beneficial to the advancement of inclusive governance and decision-making procedures. It is easier for women to advocate for policies and programs that advance gender equality and satisfy the requirements of groups that have been marginalized if they are represented in locations where decisions are made (Sandler & Goetz, 2020). This is because women who are represented in these places have a voice.

Practices for Promoting Women's Participation in Peacebuilding Efforts and Ensuring Meaningful Involvement in Decision-Making Processes

Promoting women's participation in peacebuilding efforts and ensuring their meaningful involvement in decision-making processes requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the barriers that limit women's participation and promotes greater gender inclusivity. A growing body of literature from across the world has identified practices for promoting women's participation in peacebuilding efforts and ensuring their meaningful involvement in decision-making processes. Through creating supportive legal frameworks, governments and other stakeholders promote gender equality and protect women's rights. These frameworks can include provisions related to women's participation in decision-making processes, such as quotas or targets for women's representation (UN Women, 2015).

Studies have revealed that it is possible to undertake efforts to strengthen women's leadership capacities and to provide them with the skills and information they necessary to effectively participate in the process of peacebuilding. These efforts are achievable because it is possible to make efforts. This can be accomplished through the use of activities such as building professional networks, participating in training programs, or gaining knowledge from mentors (Sandler & Goetz, 2020).

Experiences from elsewhere have shown that it is feasible for men and boys to play the role of allies in the movement to encourage women's participation in the process of peacebuilding. This movement's goal is to encourage women to participate in the process of peacebuilding. This can involve promoting good masculinity, encouraging men to support women in leadership roles, and combating harmful gender norms and stereotypes (UN Women, 2015).

Stakeholders often opine that it is absolutely necessary for steps to be taken in order to ensure the psychological and physiological well-being of the women who participate in efforts to advance peace. This may require taking safety procedures such as ensuring secure transportation, in addition to addressing concerns relating to sexual and gender-based violence (Sandler & Goetz, 2020).

Building coalitions and partnerships between women's organizations, civil society groups, and other stakeholders can be helpful in boosting women's participation in efforts to build peace and assuring their meaningful involvement in decision-making processes. This can be accomplished by bringing together women's organizations, civil society groups, and other stakeholders. This objective is attainable via the collaboration of many women's organizations. These relationships have the ability to act as a platform for advocacy and to elevate the voices of women, as stated by UN Women (2015).

Methodology

The qualitative research design as recommended by Hennink, Hutter & Bailey (2020) was utilized in this study to collect rich, in-depth data on the experiences and viewpoints of women who were involved in the process of peacebuilding efforts in Kenya. A case study method was utilized, and Nairobi City County was taken into consideration. Particular focus was placed on the experiences of women located in one or more regions of the country.

The research identified Kenyan women who have contributed to the process of peacebuilding through the use of a method called purposive sampling. Specifically, this required

undertaking targeted outreach to women's organizations and civil society groups, as well as identifying important informants through the use of snowball sampling.

The study gathered data on the experiences and viewpoints of women who were active in peacebuilding efforts in Kenya through the use of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and the analysis of relevant documents. Both in-person and remote interviews and focus groups were held, depending on the requirements of the research project's logistics and the interests of the participants.

In the study, major themes and patterns in the data were discovered through the application of thematic analysis. The analysis of the data was carried out with the use of both manual coding and technological applications such as NVivo.

Ethical concerns of informed consent, confidentiality, and the safety of participants were taken into consideration throughout the course of the research. Before beginning the investigation, approval from the appropriate authorities was sought and granted for ethical considerations.

The findings of the study were communicated by means of an academic presentation and engagement with Kenyan stakeholders who were actively participating in attempts to promote peace. In order to ensure that the findings of the study are relevant and beneficial to people working on the ground to promote peace and security in Kenya, the study worked with women's organizations and civil society groups.

Findings

According to the findings of the study, Kenyan women make important contributions to attempts to construct peace, notably through their participation in local peace committees, civil society groups, and community-based organizations. It is possible to highlight the distinctive viewpoints and experiences of women, as well as their involvement in addressing the fundamental factors that contribute to conflicts and building peace that is both inclusive and long-lasting.

The obstacles that women face in the process of peacebuilding are diverse and encompass a wide variety of obstacles in the processes of peacebuilding in Kenya. These difficulties may take the form of restricted access to resources, discrimination and marginalization, gender-based violence, and exclusion from the decision-making process.

According to the findings of the study, the involvement of women in Kenya's attempts to achieve peace has a beneficial effect on the country's ability to maintain an effective and long-lasting peace. There may be a correlation between women's participation and lower rates of violence and conflict, higher participation in democratic processes, and enhanced social cohesion and reconciliation if these trends hold true.

Based on the findings of the study, useful practices for encouraging women's engagement in efforts to establish peace in Kenya were identified. It's possible that they will include targeted outreach and support for women's organizations and civil society groups, the provision of training and capacity-building opportunities, and attempts to address systemic barriers to women's participation and inclusion in decision-making processes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study established that women in Kenya make significant contributions to peacebuilding efforts and that their unique perspectives and experiences are valuable assets in

addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting inclusive and sustainable peace. Challenges Faced by Women in Peacebuilding processes in Kenya, include limited access to resources, discrimination and marginalization, gender-based violence, and exclusion from decision-making processes. Addressing these challenges is critical to promoting women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding efforts.

The study concluded that women's participation in peacebuilding efforts in Kenya has a positive impact on promoting sustainable and effective peace. Women's involvement could be linked to reduced levels of violence and conflict, increased participation in democratic processes, and improved social cohesion and reconciliation. Best Practices for Promoting Women's Participation in peacebuilding efforts in Kenya requires targeted outreach and support for women's organizations and civil society groups, the provision of training and capacity-building opportunities, and efforts to address systemic barriers to women's participation and inclusion in decision-making processes.

Recommendations

The resulting recommendations were as follows: It was suggested that women's views and perspectives be incorporated and appreciated in all stages of peacebuilding processes in Kenya, from planning to implementation and assessment, in order to increase the contributions of women to peacebuilding initiatives.

Awareness-raising, training, and capacity-building initiatives were suggested as solutions to the problems of gender-based violence and discrimination against women that prevent their participation in peacebuilding processes.

Women's increasing participation in peacebuilding efforts and equitable access to decision-making processes was proposed as a means to foster a lasting and stable peace in Kenya.

To ensure that women's needs and perspectives are taken into account in peacebuilding efforts, it was suggested that gender-sensitive policies and practices be put in place to encourage women's participation in these endeavours and to ensure their meaningful involvement in decision-making processes. In addition, initiatives are planned to help women gain the skills they need to become leaders and effective negotiators.

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