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29 The Nexus between Religion, Gender, and Peace Building in Zimbabwe

Francis Machingura & Matthew Mare

Abstract

The intersections between religion, gender and peace building are apparent in Zimbabwe. Hence, the three interlinked concepts' influence on each other when it comes to how people interact with their environment is obvious. Religion influences gender relations as well as wealth generation in Zimbabwe. It is notable and unfortunate that gender equality is still a topical issue in Zimbabwe. Whilst gender is a broad concept this study zeroes in on the discussion on the nexus between religion, gender and peace building. Christianity in particular falling far short when it comes to gender sensitivity, empowerment and peace building even though there are notable efforts to attain the same. Zimbabwe is still a patriarchal society whose spaces (private and public) are undoubtedly gendered. Religion and culture in Zimbabwe are both a negative and positive contributor to gender equality, inclusivity, and peace building. It also influences peace, wealth creation, equality and equity. Such discussions are worth examining with a view of making religion contribute positively to gender and peace building. Ultimately in light of UN Resolution 1325, any peace building efforts in Zimbabwe cannot succeed without a vehement consideration of gender issues and the position of religion in society. While females in Zimbabwe are fighting to break free from the claws of patriarchy, they however continue to face an equal measure if not greater force of resistance and violence from religion and culture in whose foundation we find patriarchy being heavily entrenched. Such a status quo warrants negative forces against peace building efforts in which religious and cultural perceptions of gender are not only challenged but transformed. The above forms the essence of this chapter's discussion. The study formulated X Model theory to try and find a solution to the identified problem since there is no theory that has yet collaborated gender, peacebuilding and religion in the Zimbabwean context.

Keywords: Peace building, women, patriarchy, religion, nexus

Introduction

In the 21st century, the issue of women's involvement in peace building remains topical and a front-page item globally. The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 of 2000 is an important document which formally recognizes the role of women in peace building initiatives. Pertinently, UNSCR 1325 left an academic notch regarding the intersection between religion, gender, and peace building. The importance of religion and its role in gender and peace building has been overlooked in most of the discourses. Researchers, scholars, political analysts, and politicians tend to focus much on gender and peace building excluding the role and influence of religion in those areas. Religion defines and characterises how people socialise thereby defining the environment that people live in. We cannot talk of peace without looking at the place of religion in gender and peace building discourses. To achieve this important goal, the nexus between religion, gender and peace building has triggered academic debates and interests. The 2022 Census report of 2022 stated that, women are quantitatively above 52% of the entire population, and are failing to use their quantitative advantage to enforce behaviour change (Zimbabwe 2022 Population and Housing Census Report, Volume 1, 2022). Gender is socially constructed hence it can equally be deconstructed through engaging in academic discourse where topics such as the nexus between religion, gender and peace building are systematically articulated. The nexus aspect looks at the web, interaction, synergy, relationship, and interdependence between and among the three variables. The topic comes at the backdrop where it already assumes that there is lack of or there is dependability of religion, gender, and peace building and that, the gendered negative force on religion impedes women from being active agents of peace building. This is not to overlook the notable efforts being done in the religious sphere where some Christian denominations and religions are beginning to try and reform their religious belief systems to be gender sensitive.

The pre, during and post independent African states have institutionalized patriarchy. African Traditional Religion, hereinafter ATR, has also been found wanting or playing accomplice in the entrenchment of patriarchy. When Christianity came with its patriarchal values to Zimbabwe, it easily linked up. Thus, colonisation maintained the patriarchal status quo, hence women remained not emancipated. Women do not have access to development because of gender discrimination. To date, in most churches

women are not emancipated and yet religion is considered the fourth estate. It is religion that, should monitor and make the government account for its actions. Hence, the call for gender revolution within the religious sphere to enable women in religion access to development and regain a voice. The right to self-determination being a topical issue.

The major problem with the colonial states is that, they left a colonial legacy of both the state and the religion that do not recognise women. The purported colonial policies of assimilation seem not to have yielded any significant impact especially with regard to gender issues and the role of women in peace building. According to Ranger (1995) Zimbabwe's greatest threat is the colonial legacy. A comparison between Britain and Zimbabwe as its colony clearly show that, there is stark divergent values system and yet Britain governed Zimbabwe for hundred years. The colonial government did nothing to challenge patriarchy despite the fact that the colonisers who were their former colonies realised the devastating effects of patriachism and now advocating for a gender-blind environment where gender is now a choice that a natural phenomenon. Whilst those who brought patriarchy to African made this important realisation, Africa continues to perpetuate this archaic colonial legacy. Chitando (2002) believe that, the AICs were against the colonial authority and advocated for the emancipation of the black people from the colonial religious bondage. It is unfortunate that, upon attaining independence the AICs are now colonizers and they continue to suppress women especially the girl child.

According to Phimister (1988), the colonial states missed the opportunity to transform their colonies in respect to gender issues. It was unwise to wait to be booted out before starting to advocate for women's recognition from outside when it had over hundred years in power though as a colony. The colonial government would have done much to outlaw patriarchy and reform religion to ensure it is gender sensitive. According to Mutua (2016) discussed how the colonial authorities sought to suppress AICs by viewing them as a threat to their control. In addition, Bhebhe (1999) the Rhodesian government restricted the activities of AICs who view them as a threat to their control. The colonial government institutionalised patriarchy in Zimbabwe hence Zimbabwe is being affected by a colonial legacy. The state is now struggling to reform the AICs to make them gender sensitive despite the fact that women were among the founders of the AICs and Mai Chaza of Guta RaJehova is a classic example (Chavhunduka, 1997). Infact in the post-colonial Zimbabwe, both the AICs and Western mainline churches became one in how they view gender issues. Thus, the

Western mainline churches and the AICs remain patriarchal to date, with a clear-cut gender disparity between a nun and a priest, for example (Machingura, 2005). The religious sphere has never considered women with gender-just lenses despite operating in a global world where issues of gender underwent major transformations.

The issue of the intersection between religion, gender and peace building is a recent discourse at the instigation of rise in feminism and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. According to Okechi (2011), the UNSCR1325 made it clear that, no more peace building strategy that is without women at the centre. The UNSCR 1325 was promulgated after several success stories where women involvement in peace initiatives yielded sustainable peace. The role played by women during the Gacaca peace process in Rwanda clearly demonstrated that, given a chance, women are capable leaders and peace negotiators against the popular patriarchal belief that, women are incapable human beings (Amata, 2017). In order for any peace building process to be recognized by the United Nations post the UNSCR 1325 it must have women at the centre, hence the nexus between religion, gender and peace building becomes imperative academic discourse that leads to the sustainable peace and development. Developmentalists are of the opinion that, peace and being gender sensitive are the cornerstones of the development agenda (Ogbobu, 2019; Williamson, 2020). Thus, they ascribe underdevelopment to patriarchal tenets hence the question regarding gender, religion and peace is central. Peace is an important ingredient for sustainable growth in any society and Zimbabwe is not an exception. The agenda pushes for religion to play a positive role towards gender and peace building. Thus, roping religion to be an active agent of gender and development.

Central to peace building is the full involvement and equal participation of women in conflict resolution and subsequent peace building. To achieve this goal, religion has been identified as one of the impediments to gender equality and as a result, women in religion are being hampered from peace building processes or initiatives. The Security Council adopted resolution (S/RES/1325) on women, peace and security on 31 October 2000 (UNSC, 2000) (Ogbobu, 2019). The resolution reaffirms the important role played by women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the mainte-

nance and promotion of peace and security. Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts (CSW, 2004). It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. The resolution provides several important operational mandates, with implications for Member States and the entities of the United Nations system.

According to Chitando (2017) religion can play a key role in both gender and peace building. Religion is a way of life which determines and shapes behaviour as well as the worldviews of people. Whilst the UNSCR1325 states that, women be given a central role to play; religion can become an obstacle to women's inclusion. The meaningful involvement of women in peace building may be determined by the nexus between religion and gender, for example, in most AICs a woman has no right to stand before men and address them on whatever discourse (Mouton, 2019). The same is with Islam and Judaism where Leviticus 15 verse 20 restrict and control women in the public sphere. The religious sphere is thus not gender-blind hence negative peace usually exists due to women exclusion from the mainstream economy.

X Model

The X model is a theory mooted by this study, since there is no theory in Zimbabwe that has yet looked into the nexus between religion, gender, and peacebuilding. The X represent the unknown facts that, there is a nexus between religion, gender and peace building after the contemporary studied identified the untapped talent that women possess. The theory derives its mandate from the UNSCR 1325 which affirmed the role of women in gender and peacebuilding. The theory looks at religion as the fourth estate in Zimbabwe to foster peacebuilding and gender issues. There are latent and direct violence cases in the religious sphere in Zimbabwe. These latent and direct violence theological cases emanate from the conflicting and diverge theological standpoints. There are both latent and direct violence cases in Anglican, AICs mainly Masowe, Paul Mwa-zha, Anglican, Catholic church, African Faith Mission (AFM), Methodist church and in the secular world among other. These issues need to be addressed and women based on the UNSCR 1325 scientific study findings

noted that, women play a key role in peace building and for years this talent remained untapped.

According to John Galtung (1996) in any society crisis has three stages namely, pre, during and post conflict phases. In the pre-crisis phase is where the efforts are meant to prevent the conflict from manifesting as direct violence. This is done by identifying the latent issues and addressing all the frozen conflicts in the society. Women play a key role in identifying all the threats to the society's insecurity because they are usually most affected by any form conflict due to their central role in the society. All the conflicts in both the church and the secular world in Zimbabwe points to unresolved grievances at the pre-conflict stages. According to Ndlovu (2020) the women can play an important role interms of providing early warning, mechanism to respond the salient issues and peace building in order to help the society to retain its pre-crisis stage. In the crisis phase women assumes the role of peace negotiators in order to de-escalate the conflict. Women are the most qualified to play this role effectively because they are the worst affected by the devastating effects of war and women in religion are grounded in peace teachings by the churches. The post conflict where peace building is located, women intervene to restore the relations of the warring parties to be where it was before the conflict (Gudyanga, 2017). The X model demand that women be meaningfully included in the three phases of the conflict if peace building is set to be a lived reality.

According to Bratton (2017) Zimbabwe is one such country that is highly polarised with the majority of citizens experiencing a surge mentality, violence, rural societies are marginalisation and women are not fully included and recognised in term of decision making. We are dealing with Africa where women under patriarchal bondage with limited hope for full and meaningful inclusion of women in peace, religion and gender issues. The UNSCR of 2022 stated that, the world might perhaps require additional 286 years for women to be full recognised and this is a sad digression from the vision 2030 it has previously set (Burton, 2020). This means the efforts to empower women continues to hit a snag as gender issues require a deep analysis and early warning mechanisms to try and account for the variables that might work against the full attainment of women inclusion in the nexus between religion, Gender, and Peace Building in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular.

It is a fact that as long as religion and gender issues fail to be gender sensitive the UNSCR 1325 will remain a hoax in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. The problem with religion in the modern society is that, it has mastered the art of supporting the status quo forcing the government to turn a blind eye on how women in religion can play a key role in peace education. Women naturally play a central role when it comes to socialisation and peace education is one of the major tools of fostering behaviour change in any society. Karl Marx defined religion as an opium of the people having noted how power the sector is in behaviour change and women in religion if empowered by removing the gender obstacles can be the major source of peace building (Carver, 2018). People have a natural respect for their religion more than they have allegiance to their own government and Zimbabwe with more than 85 percent being Christians and the majority of the congregants being women, there is greater opportunity to make use of these women to transform the society. The colonizers even felt the power of religion and hence their decision it destroy this key social fabric that John Mbiti (1997) stated that, Africans are notoriously religious. Thus, Africans cannot be easily moved from their religious standpoint hence the need to look at the nexus between religion, gender and peace building.

This study concurs with the advocates of the insider mediation concept where the societies affected must be given a fair platform to dialogue their problems with a view to find a shared goal on how best to resolve their problem. The idea is to ensure that religion empowers women so that they are able to be useful in peace building initiatives. Their participation in the Gacaca in Rwanda clearly demonstrated their capability as peace builders. This force a shift in how women are viewed and place in terms of peace building and the UNSCR 1325 has its roots in Africa having noted that, African women are endowed with a key attribute of peace building (Ticker, 2019). The women's capabilities to be strategic peace builders emanates from the fact that, they are disempowered by patriarchy and religion resulting in them having limited access to development and being given little space in peacebuilding initiatives. Whilst the UNSCR 1325 pushes for women to take up active role in peace building if failed to come up with strategies on how to tame their key barrier that is religion and gender. Religion and gender continue to undermine such efforts and there is no religion in Zimbabwe that fully recognised women as equals to men.

The theory acknowledges that women as mothers they have aspects that can be exploited towards peacebuilding and gender. Religious feminism can be an important step towards ensuring that, religion is gender sensitive and play an important role towards peacebuilding initiatives. Religion has platforms which can be exploited to push for sustainable peace. In Christianity women have Thursdays known as *china* in Shona where women gather to discuss issues affecting them. Thus, in religion there are provisions for women empowerment even though the absoluteness of the empowerment is the bone of contention by scholarship. These isolated facts identified confirm the intersection that exists between religion, gender, and peace building.

The X factor model looks at the nexus between peacebuilding, religion, and gender sensitivity as intertwined in ways that demand both men and women should play various complementary roles. This model pushes for religion to take a leading role as the guarantor of peace building and gender initiatives. The nexus between the three variables seeks to empower women to regain their lost position to patriarchy. The position seeks to ensure that women in the religious spheres are empowered, as they play various gender and peace building initiatives. Despite women being denied equal opportunity, the aunties in their inferior social roles in ATR play a major conflict resolution role within the family set ups. It is painstaking to note that, all major domestic family conflicts are usually resolved by the patriarchy and only petty family situations are the ones referred to women. The theory seeks to recover lost history where powerful women emerged from the purely patriarchal society and defied the odds. Mbuya Nehanda was a stateswoman, peace mediator and custodian of African values, an indication that women are capable peacebuilders if given equal opportunity and support. The same applies to the king's wife whose roles were those of mediators and peace builders. In day-to-day life, mothers are centres of socialisation hence the Shona idiom *musha mukadzi* meaning a family is given its character by the woman. Whilst these important attributes are there at traditional level, the role of indigenous knowledge systems has not been institutionalised.

The theory also posits that, religion in its current state in Zimbabwe is antithesis to UNSCR 1325 which demands full empowerment and participation of women. The churches in Zimbabwe do not have peace education in their theologies and neither did Section 60 of the Constitution talks of women's roles in religion. Section 60 of the constitution is the only legal provision in the Constitution which talks of religion in Zimbabwe.

The failure by this section of the Constitution to talk of the nexus between gender, religion and peace building shows that, there is no political and statutory will to implement the provisions of the UNSCR 1325. The UNSCR 1325 clearly states that, demand that states must domesticate the provisions contained in the Resolution 1325. The oversight by both the UNSCR 1325 and Section 60 of the Constitution is an antithesis to full exploitation of the potential women have as peace educators and peace builders.

The theory is against the discrimination, objectification, economic inequality, gender role and stereotypes in pursuit of equality for men and women. Generally, most religions block and hinder women from full participation in peace building initiatives. In the context of Zimbabwe, the state has the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) whose mandate is to address all forms of violence and to foster peace building wherein the UNSCR 1325 and the Constitution are the primary documents that direct how the process must be done. However, since its formation in 2013 it has been speaking on behalf of women without their full and meaningful inclusion. In addition, women in religion have not been meaningfully involved by the NPRC and this means the state failed to realise the important nexus between religion, gender and peace building. The NPRC's failure to adopt a holistic approach, is against the UNSCR 1325 which is demanding that there can be no peace building initiative without women's involvement. This position puts religion as one of the components that need to be reformed since its theologies and practices are hinged on extreme patriarchy.

The theory emphasizes cooperation and respect for women inclusion over hierarchy (Aqleem, 2020). Thus, to provide women with ethical identities and spiritual positions that create spaces for women to practice their own agency and forms of power. The viewpoint opined that, religion is a positive source of motivation and mobilisation in struggles for gender equality and non-discrimination. Women as active agents of change, play a key role in peace building initiatives. Participation of women in peace building initiatives increases equality, expands human choices, eliminates gender stratification, promotes sexual freedom and ends sexual violence. In Pentecostal churches, women can assume important religious positions like preaching, teaching, and missionary roles. Women raise and teach children, maintain a Godly household, and maintain social groups in church (Mason, 2016). Thus, women must be allowed positions of power. The theory calls for gender sensitivity and inclusivity in Zimbabwe and

inter alia. In conjecture viewpoint women are generally the majority hence they can bring meaningful change in terms of peacebuilding and fostering gender inclusivity.

In a perspective brought forward by Mare in his thesis, women are at times their own oppressors and the study cited how nuns are trained in the Roman Catholic church (Mare, 2020). The study noted with concern the level of abuse (emotional and physical), deceit, conspiracy theories, hate, tribal and racial speech in the formation houses. A lot of nuns have withdrawn and some commit suicide as a result of the abuse by fellow senior nuns in the formation houses. In the same vein, the study also cited Johanne Marange Apostolic church, where older women are conduits to child marriages and other nefarious oppressive tenets to fellow women. In this result the call for gender sensitivity, peacebuilding and religion must be looked at in a holistic manner. All forms of barrier to women must be eradicated regardless of cause to enable full participation of women.

Gender and Religion

Religion had never been systematically studied before the 19th century's age of reasoning and was full of dogma. One of the dogmas is that men and women are not equal and as such a woman enjoys limited rights. Prior to that religion was sacrosanct hence it was heresy to subject religion to systematic study. The failure to study religion systematically has resulted in its theologies immune to academic interrogation. It is in the recent years when researchers began to re-read the bible using the gender-blind lenses (Mohanty, 2013). The Bible stories which denigrate women and exalt men shaped Christian theology. Theology became patriarchal and the catholic doctrine of papal infallibility also became a stumbling block. Martin Luther wrote his 95-thesis challenging the catholic dogma with limited success because churches are unwilling to adjust their theological standpoint (Wenger, 2015). Church dogmas are since a cause of concern since the era of Martin Luther. To this contemporary world in the Catholic Church the Pope is infallible and openly advances patriarchy resulting in a priest being more important than a despite the fact that, both have same sacrament of celibacy. The available peace building platform in the Catholic church, the Catholic Commission on Justice and Peace (CCJP) lack gender balance in its composition. The important wing in the

Catholic church is failing to advocate for the full recognition of women as equal partners and to include the dimension in its rank and file to allow women to play an active role in peace building.

To date, women in religion remain oppressed and this is not to overlook the attempts by some churches to recognise women as not only equals but also as having a key role in peacebuilding and gender issues. The papal bull, known as the 1962 Vatican II made an important stride towards recognising black women to be nuns and catechists but has not been much useful in making them advocates of peace building initiatives (Okolo, 2017). Since 1962 there has not been any significant shift towards women inclusion in peace building despite the global call for realignment of policies and theologies towards gender sensitive theologies. To note, the Catholic Church has a special wing, the Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace (CCJP) to foster peacebuilding and women's rights (Gioia, 2017). Unfortunately, structurally, there are few if any women in its structures as the organ is clogged with Catholic priests and bishops. This clearly demonstrates that, whilst women have an important role to play in religion and peacebuilding, patriarchy remains a structural barrier.

The debris of colonisation continues to affect women's participation in peacebuilding and religion (Oduyeye). When patriarchal Christianity came to Africa through colonisation, instead of removing elements that undermined women, unfortunately it coexisted with the African Traditional Religion whose belief systems to some extents were patriarchally centred (Dube, 2018). Unfortunately, to date their involvement remains limited due to patriarchal resistance to change. This research advocates for continuous shedding off of oppressive elements which used to and continue to undermine women's rights. The aim is to enhance women participation in religion, peacebuilding and gender in line with contemporary efforts to uplift women by eradicating all forms of barriers.

The complex and complicated subject matter is whether religion is relevant to gender and peace building initiatives. There are scholars who strongly believe that religion is relevant to the nexus between the two variables and there are radical ones who see no evidence of correlation. The answer to the subject matter depends on the academic lenses one is putting on. In the past no women would become a chief but in Zimbabwe we do not have women as chiefs who are the drivers of peace, equality and religious values in their areas of jurisdiction. Religion shapes character hence it promotes the character of peace where both women and men play a significant role.

Religion is a way of life, and it is socially constructed and that of patriarchal Africa was socially constructed by the colonizers (Tamez, 2017). The roles given to men and women in religion are socially constructed. The feminists have noted with concern that, women in religion are oppressed and grossly disempowered. Women do not have independent life hence their life and role in the society is patriarchally defined and determined. Religion has become one of the traditional oppressors of women and has been inhibiting them from full participation to include their roles as peacekeepers. The UNR 1325 saw it fit to demand that women be fully empowered and be included in any peace building initiative (Taylor, 2018).

The nexus between religion, gender and peace building is not linear. Women in religion require to be emancipated from religious patriarchal dominance and suppression. According to Rakoczy (2004), women in religion are experiencing a lot of violence. This scholarly position insinuates that, issues of gender and peace building are needed in religion if there is going to be any transformation. This also means that religion has not been useful in fostering gender sensitivity towards peace building initiatives. The religious feminism and contextual theology endeavours to ensure that religion is gender sensitive as well as an important variable to peace building. Religion in its current state is too toxic due to high levels of systemic patriarchy. The nexus between religion and gender in Africa is an anti-thesis to the participation of women in peace building initiatives. The radical feminists apportion blame on men for their dwindling role in peace building initiatives. The insights from radical feminists are important towards transforming religion to be for the women and subsequently enhance and empower women participation in all spheres of life. Meanwhile, there are several ways in which religion and culture can contribute to the empowerment of women in peace building missions. The question is whether religion is for women or not. The research seeks to ensure that, women play key roles in conflict resolution as aunts, sisters, and mothers in day to day lives of the people. The research also seeks to magnify the role of women at household level. Women as mothers, socialise and resolve conflicts within and among their children and extended families. The research also seeks to remove barriers that inhibit meaningful involvement of women in peacebuilding. An example of a patriarchal practice is where women are excluded in family meetings known as *dare*.

Gender gives roles between men and women and gender stereotypes confine women to the household level. Women's meaningful participation in peacebuilding initiatives continue to be hampered by patriarchy.

Scholars reiterated a gendered approach to peace building and conflict resolution (Speake, 2013). People possess unique set of attributes and experiences during and post conflict hence women concerns are better articulated by women themselves. This includes transforming the religious sphere to be gender sensitive and inclusive so that religion can promote women participation in peace building. Peace building must start and be promoted in the religions themselves. This peace building role by women can be both at formal and informal level. The interaction between key variables religion, gender and peace building determines power dynamics and structural inequalities. Women are instrumental in bringing about sustainable peace than confining them to being mothers and caregivers (Puechguirbal, 2010:177). Denying women access to peace building will perpetuate violence, conflict, and the impoverishment of women. Peace building acknowledges the importance of identifying and building structures which militates against war (Barnett, et al., 2007:37). Gendered peace building approach addresses the root causes of conflicts in families and society. Gender, religion, and conflicts are not exclusive of each other.

Gender and religion remain intimately intertwined towards shaping social, political, and economic order leaving women in the discourse on religion, gender and peace building. Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1985:12) argues that most religions degrade women, and this makes it difficult for their emancipation. Nancy Ammerman (1987) bemoaned that most women are being confined to the household sphere. Thus, whilst women in religion are expected to play a central role in peace building, they are being disempowered by religions that is patriarchal.

According to Kimberly Crenshaw (1992), religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to the sacred things which are all social constructs. The scholar went on to introduce the concept of intersexuality between gender with other social identities. This position by Kimberly Crenshaw affirms the sociological view point that gender and religious beliefs are social constructs which are amenable to change through deconstruction and reconstruction. The impetus is now with the religious sphere to be gender sensitive and ensure that there is meaningful involvement of women in peacebuilding.

Religion contributes to the heartbeat of society. It is part of the moral fibre and conscience of society. Religion plays a critical role in bringing peace, love, hope, and faith. Of note, the UNC demand for strategies on the status and empowerment of women in building faith and gender. Religion exerts a tremendous influence on women's and men's identity, behaviour, and beliefs. If women are not invited and employed in peace building initiatives; their importance in developing communities and the nation at large remains unnoticed. Pratt & Richter-Devroe (2011:490) demand for equal participation in peace processes growing. There is a unanimous call for the participation of women in religion, civic organisation, and government. The participation includes taking up leadership positions or decisions.

Religious gender-mainstreaming is an important step towards increasing women's involvement and empowerment. This calls for a genuine transformative gendered approach to peace building and conflict resolution (Onslow & Schoofs, 2010). Meanwhile, religion continues to marginalize women, and fails to promote them to high levels of leadership (Rehn and Johnson, 2002:66). If institutions called of God or associated with the divine leave women out; it creates a crisis. The religious deep-rooted gender inequality is an impediment to women's participation in peace building efforts. This reduces the number of women in peacekeeping efforts. The limited number of women in peace building politics and government goes beyond the religious sphere and in 2008 only about 2% of military personnel in UN peace keeping forces were female (Bertolazzi, 2010:6). Religion influences gender and peace building discourses. If religious spaces are opened to women; it will increase their role in peace-making participation. Development and wealth creation can only happen where peace is and religion has a role to play.

Women and Peace Building

Women are usually victims of religious alienation of women hence they are unable to make meaningful change in the society. In the 21st century, there have been a growing number of scholars and activists who are re-examining religious doctrines and laws by advocating for women's participation in the interpretation of religious doctrines that fuel the alienation of certain people as a result of gender, economic status, sexuality, political affiliation, and disability. In line with this thinking, religious women who

have been adversely affected by patriarchy must be given equal opportunity in peacebuilding and advancement of gender equality and equity.

The primary goal of most initiatives is to ensure that women in religion become an integral voice in the social justice discourses that promote gender equality (Bertolazzi, 2010:6). This creates a conducive environment for religious women to engage in various facets of gender equality and peace building work. New empowering methods of interpretation of religious beliefs and practices support the equality of people as well as meaningful involvement of women in peace building. Collaborative efforts, dialogue and opportunities must be created for women from the various religious spheres to participate in the peace building efforts.

The study recognises that its focus is Zimbabwe, but it cannot be discussed in isolation from events around the globe. The modern world is a global village as states live in a family of nations and regulated by the international law. The study having noted that the subject matter is global since the findings are generalisable, efforts by this study are to push for additional protocol to the UNSCR 1325. The UNSCR 1325 committed the fallacy of bundling, and yet women in various spheres of life have unique experiences towards gender, religion and peacebuilding. The UNSCR 1325 must recognise the nexus that exists between religion, gender, and peace building efforts where women of faith are supported and empowered to participate in peace building initiatives. Currently, the UNSC has not been explicit regarding meaningful involvement of women of faith in peace building initiatives. This study advocates for specific protocol to the existing UNSCR 1325 which would specifically look at religious women and how they contribute to peacebuilding and gender issues. The UN must open the playing field to accommodate and recognise the efforts by religious women in that respect. This involves tailor made training on women of faith, open space for them to speak at United Nations level and render any other relevant support that uplift the women of faith towards peacebuilding and gender.

Jaji writes on integrating women's roles in all peace building initiatives and socialisation (Jaji, 2018). Women's normative and active roles in raising children can be capitalised so that peace becomes part of children's values (Fidan and Bui, 2016). The values instilled in the private sphere would complement peace building in the public sphere. Women in Church also play a central role in socialisation hence similarly the gen-

dered dimension of religion can equally enhance the peace building efforts. This shows that women have unique attributes which can be exploited to foster peace building in any family and society.

Nexus between Religion, Gender, and Peace Building

At the core of women's empowerment is the issue of gender balance. Gender relates to roles that society give to men and women. The society, to which religion is part of, is socially constructed and as such it can be deconstructed as the society is moving towards empowering women in all spheres of life. There are gender constructions in religious sphere which are patriarchally centred. Most religion continues to maintain patriarchal structures that women become submissive to and do not have power to question patriarchal orders. Technically, women and men in religious spheres enjoy variable rights. The sustainable developmental goals demand for equal gender rights between men and women. Thus, in this viewpoint religion is a barrier to the supposedly cordial relationship which exists between gender and peace building as enshrined in the UNRC 1325. Some scholars traditionally believe that religion, gender, and peace building are exclusive of each other. They take religion as spiritual by virtue of having metaphysical realities whilst gender and peace building belong to social science studies. This position creates a missing link when analysing the interaction between gender and peace building.

The inclusion of religion in the religious, gender and peace building matrix is a recent development. This was after it was realised that humanity by its very nature is spiritual though the patriarchal nature of religion hampers the operationalisation of the UNRC 1325 which demand that, women in all walks of life be actively involved in peace building initiatives. There are gross patriarchal practices in religion that disempower women. Radical scholars believe that religion has no direct correlation between gender and peace building (Juschka, 2018). This school of thought strongly believes that religion remains part and parcel of one's private life. Gender and peace building are taken as having their own peculiar interaction where religion is a misfit. The primary goal of religion is preparing people for heaven and gender-peace building are mundane aspects. This variation of the worldview makes religion irrelevant to the nexus between gender and peace building. Yet it is clear that religion cannot be removed or shied away from in any peace building initiatives matrix.

Religion in Peace Building Matrix

The nexus between religion and peace building remains a grey area as there is no treaty or convention to define gender and religion in the context of peace building. With how powerful religion is in fostering issues of peace building it is an oversight on the part of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to compel states and non-state actors in peace building initiatives to include religion and women as indispensable variables. Religion is a very powerful institution and its members are loyal to its teachings hence the need to tap into this undermined and neglected sector. The lenses through which the issues of peace building are viewed must change and efforts must be churned towards harnessing gender and religion into peace building initiatives.

The religious sphere creates a narrative that, it is the will of God that women be subordinate to men. This narrative derived from the creation myths that God created men first and woman as an afterthought. As a result, most theologies follow this flawed creation narrative which dehumanise women and deny them space to do peacebuilding work. The logic behind supporting a gendered approach to peace building is that it enhances the efficiency and effective peace building. According to Diaz women's involvement in formal missions and talks remain low (Diaz, 2010:1). Women are generally denied access to the broader agenda of peace building and conflict resolution that leads to sustainable development (Puechguirbal, 2010:177). The assumption advanced by the proponents of the UNSCR 1325 is that women involved in peace building will address gender related concerns since conflicts affect women than men.

Conclusion

There is a need to ensure that, the UN Women create, a platform where religious women's voice is heard and supported. There is also the need to create several platforms in society that encourage women participation in peace building. The UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 talks of partnerships and synergies that create or brings together religious teachings, gender issues, peace building initiatives, universal human rights, national constitution, and the lived realities of people. Peace building should not be limited to the public sphere but promoted in private spaces as well where comprehensive teachings and new models of socialisation

are deliberately promoted to inculcate the culture of peace at home and in public.

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