
Women Participation in Religious Peace building Processes: A Case of United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) Eastlea (2013 – 2020)

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Abstract

The study explored the barriers that women are confronted by in participating in religious peace building processes and recommendations were made to enhance their participation. Using an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, and a case of UCCSA (Eastlea) church, in Harare, Zimbabwe, the study involved a sample group of 33 participants. The study employed a mixed method approach combining a Likert type scale questionnaire survey and semi-structured interview. Data were gathered and analysed using the SPSS 11.5 software and Microsoft Excel and the responses confirmed that in spite of women being the majority at the church, there were low levels of women participation in their religious formal peace processes. The study's findings revealed that women played roles as counsellors and advisors more than leadership roles within the dialogue, mediation and healing session religious peace building processes, with women still found absent within the negotiation processes. This was linked to the major barriers that manifested which included the lack of support of other women, lack of self-confidence found in the women, male domination of leadership roles and some church doctrines prohibiting them to participate fully. The study recommended that religious institutions create an environment that encourages women participation in peace processes by involving female youth members to also participate in religious peace building processes and together with the manyano (women's fellowship), female reverends and women congregants to be trained regularly on peace building skills.

Key Words: *Women, Peacebuilding, Religion, Culture, and Tradition*

Introduction

While there is awareness that shows the importance of both women and religious institutions in formal peace processes, little has been written on religious women regarding the obstacles that confront them from participating their religious works in peace building processes. A report by Mcgrory, (2008) and case studies carried out by Ogega, (2014) in Kenya and by George, (2016) in Fiji documented the peace building works done by women, focusing mainly on the roles and importance of women inclusion in religious peace processes. They each recognised religious women as agents in peace building who through their faith and religion, contribute a different perspective to peace building. They identified how religious faith in peace

building is used as a source of identity, motivator, empowerment and a resource to a woman (Mcgrory, 2008, p.17 and Ogega, 2014, p.201). In turn it also showed how religious faith helps women through their strong advocacy skills, to be able to create alliances while connecting and bringing different groups together and paying special attention to psychosocial and spiritual support that needs to be raised in peace agendas and finally fostering development in the community (Hayward and Marshall, 2015, p.19-22).

Hayward and Marshall (2015) have offered a much comprehensive publication in the field of women, religion and peace building. In their published work, *Women, Religion, and Peacebuilding: Illuminating the Unseen*, it examines the obstacles and opportunities that religious women face in peace building processes. However, they strongly highlight to the power dynamics found in religious institutions or patriarchal structures as an obstacle that becomes a barrier on women participation in peace building. They report that despite most women being motivated by their faith and beliefs (p.2), the same beliefs within these institutions create undeniable barriers for women in peace building as women are being marginalised due to religious teachings and understandings (p.13). They also further recognised that in high-level peace building initiatives, male religious leaders would often represent the religious communities and where women would participate, they would not be regarded as equal to their male counterparts (p.14-15).

Other scholars like Karam (2016) and Smit, Van der Ven, Van der Liden and Karam, (2019), further explain that the different roles women and religious male leaders play affect the participation of women in religious peace building processes. This results in men being viewed as prominent and key religious actors in peace building processes, while the women become invisible in the processes due to accepting the cultural norms and roles shaped and interpreted by men (New Tactics, 2011). Such defined roles may lead women of faith to be greatly excluded in religious peace building processes forcing most attention and recognition to be given more to the male religious leaders or religious institutions, while in turn causing a low participation by women (Hayward and Marshall, 2015).

The problem

Despite the advocacy's work for women's participation to be in formal religious peace processes, mindset change has been slow. Peace processes carried out by religious women is so exclusive in religious peace building at grassroots level, that women often face discrimination and few opportunities to be recognized as active participants in religious peace building processes. As shown in the case of the Afghan religious peace builders network in Afghanistan, where as few as a quarter of women participate within this peace process (Fabra-Mata and Jalal, 2018). Another example is the Alexandria Process where among the religious leaders that were active in the dialogue process where were only male orthodox rabbis, bishops, and imams and no women were involved (Hayward and Marshall, 2015). What most religious institutions do not

realise is that failure to recognize participation by religious women within their peace building processes affects the legitimacy and the longevity of peace building initiatives. This coincides with USAID, (2007) that reported that where women are not active participants, the views, needs and interests of half of the population are misrepresented and the interventions placed to resolve any conflict will not be as appropriate or enduring. Although women's participation in religious institutions and religious peace processes is often regarded as of utmost importance, some attention should also be given to the major obstacles in relation to the effects it has on the participation levels by women in these religious peace processes.

Research objectives

The research objectives which guided the study were to:

- Establish the role UCCSA church women play in religious peace building processes in building peace in a community.
- Identify the type of religious peace building processes UCCSA church women participate mostly in when building peace in a community.
- Identify the factors that influence UCCSA church women's low participation in religious peace building processes.
- Develop possible strategies that can be used to encourage UCCSA women to participate more in religious peace building processes.

This study was delimited to UCCSA Eastlea Church located in Harare, Zimbabwe. The research focused on the participation of women in religious peace building processes between the period of 2013 and 2020. The research consisted of both men and women who were full members of the church as well as some who had been engaged in peace building efforts. These individuals were considered in order to assess the barriers that led to low level participation of women in religious peace building processes.

Women and Peace building

For a long time, women have been excluded in peace building processes but efforts are constantly being developed to reverse this discrimination behavior. The international community attempted to end the discrimination of women in peace processes in 1949 by first establishing the international instrument titled "*The Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War...*" This instrument aimed at not only to end the discrimination of women in formal processes but to also protect women from rape within the prison during world war II, however, the discrimination and rape did not stop (Murray, Phenicle and Theidon, 2011). This led to the formation of the CEDAW convention in 1976 which was signed by 189 countries (Trujillo-Gómez, 2013). This was meant to be a major legal step in ending women's discrimination but it persisted, leading to the establishment of the BPA in 1996. Although it meant to also create necessary actions

and strategies to include women in peace processes, the segregation of women continued (Trujillo-Gómez, 2013).

It is only when the UNSC established Resolution 1325 in the year 2000 that this challenge to include women was finally addressed. Resolution 1325 is a landmark resolution for women, in peace and security because it recognized the importance of including women in peace building processes and all decision-making processes. This resolution addressed what “*The Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*” aimed to achieve which was to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, in particular rape and sexual abuse in situations of armed conflict. It further helped to broaden the scope of the application of CEDAW and in turn CEDAW provided resolution 1325 with concrete strategic guidance.

The resolution was widely recognised and this escalated its implementation. Authors like Chinkin and Charlesworth, (2006, p.937) and El-Bushra (2012) credited the resolution as a tool that ensures the inclusion of women in peace building. Chinkin and Charlesworth, (2006)’s analysis of the resolution showed that women need to be given support during ongoing conflicts and must be included in peace and security processes (Chinkin & Charlesworth, 2006, p.938). In addition El-Bushra, (2012) also highlighted that the resolution is a tool that empowers women and mobilizes women as a resource that renders peace processes to be more effective.

Besides the resolutions discussed above, the inclusivity norm concept also has been a guide in the peace building field in encouraging participation of a diversity of actors. This concept according to Donnais and McCandless, (2017) shapes peace building in the context of defining what peace building is and how it should be practiced. They revealed that the policy agreement, *The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States*, influenced key actors of peace processes to start recognising that peace building is a participatory process. This coincides with the statistical studies done by scholars such as Nilsson during the years 1989-2004 on the 83 peace agreements and Wanis-St. John and Kew during 1992-2006 on the 25 peace negotiation processes, on the effect of the inclusivity norm as a concept that makes peace building a participatory process (Steffansson, 2018).

Through the adaptation of this concept, religious actors became involved more in peace building. This gained them much recognition by the UN and their participation has led to publications of their contributions in important summits. For example religious actors contributed towards the UN Millennium World Peace Summit in 2000 that resulted in the creation of the World Council of Religious Leaders (Hertog, 2010).

Zimbabwe adopted the MDGs (2000), the UNSCR 1325 (2000) and the SDGs (2015) to, among other issues, improve the status of women where they can participate in politics as well as peace building and

other developmental initiatives. This has been important for the country to adopt these additional frameworks to support women due to the many protracted social conflicts that have affected women and girls the most in Zimbabwe. The term protracted social conflict is an on-going conflict that appears to be insolvable and happen for a long period of time between ethnic groups (Azar, 1990) and in Zimbabwe, these conflicts are characterised by political and socio-economic violent contestations (Makwerere, 2017). The country's election-related violence such as the Gukurahundi massacres (1983) that left more than 20,000 dead, Operation Murambatsvina (2005) that displaced over 700,000 people, and the post-election violence in 2008 that forced opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai to withdraw from the presidential race impacted women to a great extent as they faced violent acts and human rights abuses, including sexual assault, torture and displacement during election time (Nhengu, 2013).

Zimbabwe has managed to do that by adopting the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) Act and has adopted a gender approach to this act that aims to increase women's participation in Zimbabwe's national healing and reconciliation processes. In carrying out its constitutional mandate, the NPRC is required to make all its programmes gender responsive (Tsuma, 2018). However, a major challenge women seem to face as these policies are implemented is the perception that they do not hold the skills, knowledge or social status that can foster change in post-conflict environments (Kumalo, 2015). Their participation in peace building seemingly is largely determined by the socio-cultural norms that govern gender relations (Nhengu, 2015).

Furthermore, their engagement is often recognized in activities of healing and reconciliation at grassroots level where it is rarely referred to as peace building in Zimbabwe (Olofsson, 2018), yet women's participation in peace processes at any level results in more durable and stable peace.

Women's participation increases the probability of a peace agreement lasting at least two years by 20 percent, and by 35 percent the probability of a peace agreement lasting 15 years. Analysis of 40 peace processes since the end of the Cold War shows that, in cases where women were able to exercise a strong influence on the negotiation process, there was a much higher chance that an agreement would be reached than when women's groups exercised weak or no influence. In cases of strong influence of women an agreement was almost always reached. (UN Women, 2015)

Conceptual Framework for women and religious peace building

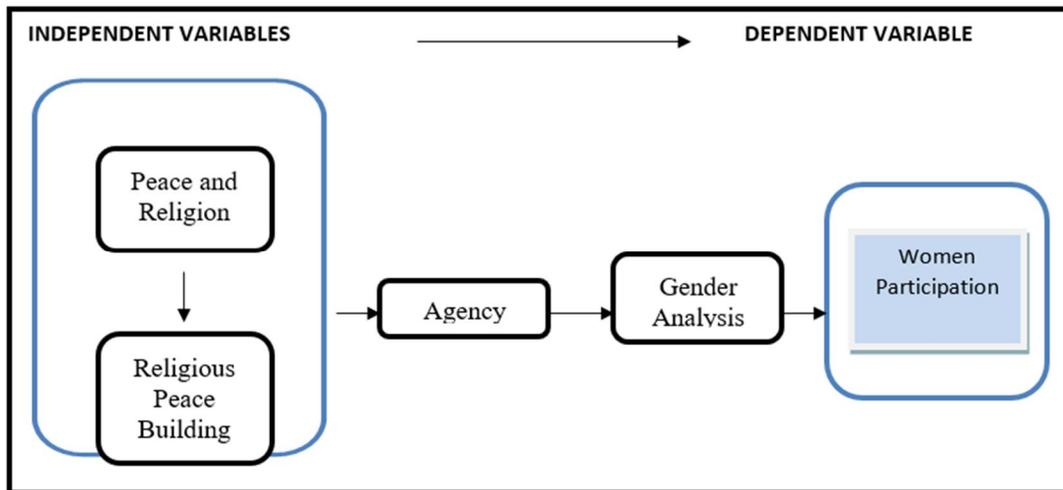


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for women and religious peace building

Source: Primary data, (2020)

The study explored the concepts shown in figure one above to enable a more informed understanding of the relationship between religious peace building and gender roles. These concepts seek to achieve the study's aim in highlighting how women can vastly contribute to the religious peace building process.

Peace and Religion

To understand the insights and work of women in religious peace building, there is need to understand and recognize the intangible components, which is peace and religion that supports peace building processes. Studies on Christianity contributions done by Sampson and Lederach, (2000) and Appleby, (2000), as well as Islamic contributions by Abu-nimer and Yilmaz, (2015) and non-Western religions studies done by Neumaier, (2004) and Galtung and MacQueen, (2008) show the extent of how peace and religion is often credited with driving peace building and reconciliation.

Johan Galtung, the father of peace studies, explored the potential that peace has on all religions and what factors make them prone to violence or to build peace. In a lecture that he delivered, he described the insights of religions, ranging from Judaism to African indigenous religions, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Polynesian religions, as well as humanism and referred to them as a "tool box" in the search for peace (Galtung, 2012). This means that religion is a valuable source that can promote understanding and reconciliation, and at the same time can provide a basis for peace building efforts (Abu-Nimer, 2001). In addition, all of the world's major religions emphasizes on peace (Coward and Smith, 2004).

According to Abu-nimer and Yilmaz, (2015) many scholars made a solid theological case on the Islamic religion that incorporated the concepts of Muslim values of peace such as *ihsan* (perfect goodness,

healing, reconciliation), *samah* (forgiveness), *sabr* (patience), *adl* (justice), *taqwa* (piety), *aml al-khayr* (good deed), and a collective sense of communal peacemaking and human solidarity, *ummah*, into their religious peace building frameworks.

The church, serve as panaceas during peace processes and the church has the responsibility to promote sustainable peace by communicating the pre-eminence of Christ as the Lord of peace (Colossians 1:20). Shoko, (2016) highlights the application of the Christian teachings of peacemaking on building peace in Zimbabwe, for example, the role the church played by facilitating the dialogue between Robert Mugabe, Morgan Tsvangirai and their respective parties as well as preaching healing and forgiveness, holding peace rallies in different provinces, and calling upon members to be actively involved in fostering peace in the country.

Religious peacebuilding

Religious peace building is not a new phenomenon especially at grassroots levels. It began to emerge in the international conflict resolution efforts more in the 1990s (Hayward and Marshall, 2015) and has been imperative in conflict situations such as the Iranian revolution of 1979, the Darnish Cartoon controversy and also the 9/11 attacks to mention a few. This phenomenon has led religious institutions to become key stakeholders in peace building efforts in the secular realm so much that religious actors are now vital when seeking reconciliation through interfaith dialogue. This is because peace is acquired through both a moral discourse that is from a secular point of view (for example peace building efforts by the United Nations), and a moral discourse stemming from a religious point of view, whereby religious actors can influence the peace processes using their faith (Gopin, 2002).

As discussed in the concept of peace and religion, there is a concern that religious beliefs can play a role in exacerbating violent conflict. However, societies stand to get peace through religious beliefs during and after war or conflict. Gopin, (2002) agrees with Smock, (2006) as he states that peace can be secured through religious beliefs in a society because the religious beliefs of a society allows for the mediator to understand the spiritual language that is used by the conflicting groups as they express their frustration. An interview by Manal Omar also share the same sentiments with Gopin, as he highlights that to foster peace at grassroots and to grow numbers for a cause, there is need to use a religious framework so as to understand and recruit people (Hayward and Marshall, 2015). Therefore, religion should not be ignored in peace work, as this leads to actors that have ties to faith be excluded and their contributions muted.

Although their roles have been acknowledged as vital, a wide variety of religion's role in conflict resolution is often through a male perspective. There is acknowledgement of women who partake in religious

peace building activities especially in grassroots settings (Olofsson, 2018) but not much of the importance of women as spiritual peace builders in peace processes.

Theoretical framework: Lederach's peace building pyramid

This research study adopted John Paul Lederach's theory about the three levels of peace building actors known as the leadership levels. It was first published in 1997 in his book *Building Peace* and the three levels of peace building is known as "the Pyramid" that consists of the top-level leadership (top-down approach), middle-level leadership (middle-out approach) and grassroots-level leadership (bottom-up approach).

This pyramid model seeks to rebuild relationships that have been destroyed by focusing on reconciliation and strengthening the society's long-term peace-building efforts (Paffenholz, 2013). Lederach states that the relationship aspect is essential in peace building because conflicts arise from a breakdown of a relationship and reconciliation is in turn found within the potential of the relationship in transforming the conflict (Isike and Okeke-Uzodike, 2010, p.687). To him, peace building is the transformation from a conflicted system to a peace system. To achieve a peace system, he states that changes must be done from a personal, structural, relational and cultural aspect over a short, medium and long term period (Miall, 2004, p.6). Thus, this theory provides a framework that addresses the need for a holistic approach that is strategic to transform deep rooted conflicts into positive peace through reconciliation facilitated at three levels of leadership. Peace, according to Lederach's diagram must not only be facilitated from a top-down and bottom-up approach but also at middle-out process (*Building Peace*, p 45).

Religious institutions being closer to grassroots level and women being active members of these institutions are known to participate in peace-building processes at local and grassroots level more. Lederach's theory can be applied to argue for the inclusion of women in peace building processes at grassroots level. This theory asserts that to establish lasting peace, society needs to be made aware of the unique perspective each individual or group can contribute towards peace building. These unique perspectives are usually shaped and informed by the gendering experiences of direct, structural, and cultural violence encountered by individuals and groups.

Research Approach

The research used the explanatory sequential mixed methods design. A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design starts with a quantitative study phase then follows up with a qualitative study phase (Creswell, 2014, p.274).

The UCCSA Eastlea Church consisted of 75 congregants who included one ordained minister who is in the top leadership, nine deacons (including the minister) comprising of middle and junior leadership as

well as a church secretary and 65 ordinary members of the church. The target population included all the members of the church to allow for a considerable diversity in participants’ experiences, observations, beliefs and feelings that will ensure fair responses that are not biased in favour of one gender.

UCCSA Eastlea Church had 75 congregants and out of the 75, 38 congregants were full members who were 18 years and above. Therefore, as shown below in figure two, the results generated that the appropriate sample size was 35 congregants. However, the researcher worked with all the 38 congregants who were full members as the study’s sample size. 38 congregants have 0 margin error and a 100% confidence level as shown below in figure two which creates room for accuracy. Thus, 38 congregants took up the questionnaire survey. Of the 38 questionnaires distributed, 33 were correctly filled in and returned.

For the purposes of this study, the researchers used a 4-point Likert type scale questionnaire of agreement with options ranging from strongly disagree & agree, and semi structured interview guide as the main methods of data collection. A Likert scale is a psychometric rating scale questionnaire used to represent people's opinions and attitudes to a subject matter (Sullivan and Artino, 2013). A 4-point Likert scale is known as a forced Likert scale because it forces the respondent to form an opinion, allowing for the researcher to get specific responses on the research study. Therefore, the 4-point Likert type scale questionnaire was used for this study because the research findings depended on the respondent’s specific opinion on how they viewed women in the church’s religious peace building processes.

Demographic Information of research participants

Table 1 below outlines the demographic information of the questionnaire respondents of the research study.

DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURE	CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENT PARTICIPANTS
GENDER	MALE	12	36.4%
	FEMALE	21	63.6%
AGE	20-39 years old	15	45.5%
	40-59 years old	14	42.4%
	60+ years old	4	12.1%
CHURCH ORGAN	Youth Fellowship	11	33.3%
	Women's Fellowship	14	42.4%
	Men's Fellowship	8	24.2%
FULLMEMBER DURATION	1-5 years	5	15.2%
	6-10 years	7	21.2%
	11-20 years	9	27.3%
	>21 years	12	36.4%

Table 1: Demographic Information of Questionnaire Participants

Source: Primary data (2020)

Based on gender, the study sampled both male and female, where 12 respondents were representing 36.4% males and 21 respondents were accounting for 63.6% females. All respondents were of age, from 20-60+ years old. Respondents between the ages of 20-39 years old constituted 45.5% of the sample size whilst 40-59 years old was 42.4% whereas 60+ years old was 12.1%. On the church organ feature, 33.3% belonged to the Youth Fellowship, 42.4% were in the Women’s Fellowship and 24.2% were in the Men’s Fellowship. Finally, the duration of respondents as full members of UCCSA church noted 15.2% had stayed for 1-5 years, 21.2% had stayed for 6-10 years, and 27.3% had stayed for 11-20 years while 36.4% stayed for above 21 years.

Quantitative Data Analysis

This section of the questionnaire was critical as it directly deals with the main matter of the research study. The findings are summarised below and subsequently discussed after the table.

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Women play the leadership role in religious peace building processes	5	21	7	-
2. Women act as counsellors in religious peace building processes	1	13	19	-
3. Women act as advisors in religious peace building processes	1	9	22	1
4. Women participate in the dialogue process		7	26	
5. Women participate in the mediation process		11	21	1
6. Women participate in the negotiation process	19	4	5	5
7. Women participate in the healing sessions process		10	23	
8. I believe the church doctrine segregates women from participating in the religious peace building process	2	20	9	2
9. I believe male leadership roles segregates women participation in the religious peace building process		17	16	
10. Women fail to support one another in positions of leadership and religious peace building activities		6	19	8
11. Women lack self confidence in their ability to contribute towards religious peace building processes		15	15	3
12. The church to adopt an inclusive approach to religious peace building processes	11	9	13	
13. Women to be trained on peace building and conflict transformation skills		4	24	5
14. Women groups to start designing peace building programs	1	7	24	1

Table 2: Questionnaire results on women participation in religious peace building

Source: Primary data, (2020)

Responses to Statements 1- 3

Role's women play in religious peace building processes at UCCSA

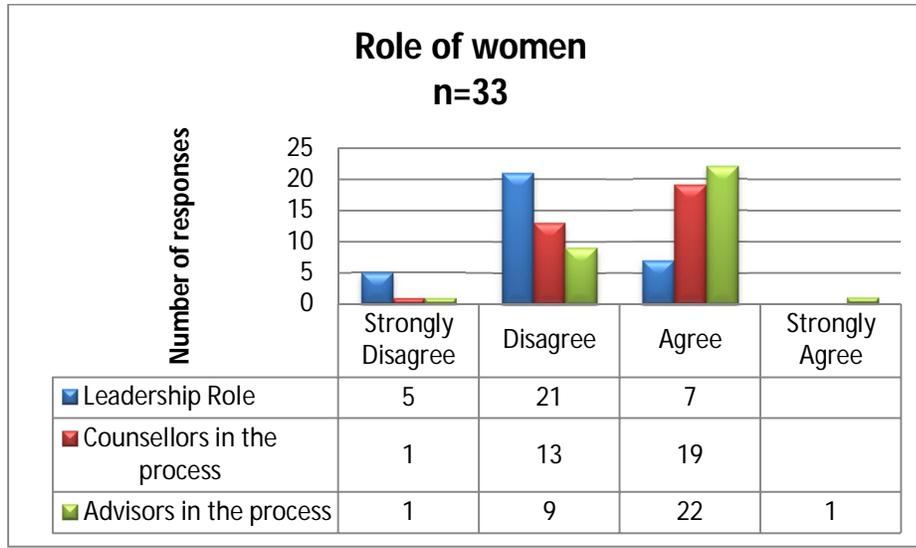


Figure 2: Roles of women in religious peace building processes

Source: Primary data, (2020)

Figure four indicates that the frequent responses were women playing the role of counselors and advisors more than they play any leadership roles in religious peace building processes. As shown in Figure four, 19 respondents agree that women play the role of counselors whereas 22 respondents agreed alongside one respondent who strongly agreed that women were playing the role of advisors within these processes. The finding resonates with Anderson, (2017) who concur that women are often encouraged to act as advisors and counsellors as they have the ability to advise, counsel, and sympathize with those who are going through trials and problems as well as bring relief to the church pastor’s burden.

Furthermore, as the results show, 21 respondents who disagree alongside five respondents who strongly disagree that women play roles of leadership in religious peace building, which seven respondents agreed to, indicates the low levels of participation by women in leading religious peace processes. This finding is similar to the injunction issued by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:33-36. This religious text reveals the small role women tend to have when it comes to religious leadership and the ongoing controversy of whether women should participate in church public activities such as religious peace building processes (Ademiluka, 2017). As Hayward and Marshall, (2015) cited earlier, the findings seem to highlight the marginalisation of

women in formal religious spaces in the religious traditions which result in most leadership roles being dominated by men through the reference of religious texts that govern religious institutions.

Responses to statements 4-7

Women participation in religious peace building processes at UCCSA

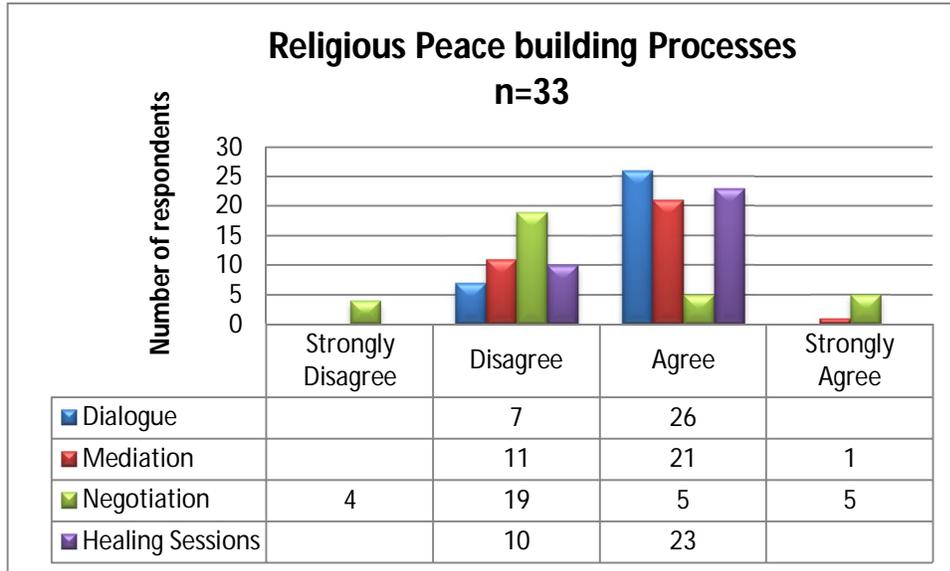


Figure 3: Women participation in peace processes

Source: Primary data, (2020)

The above graph reflected and confirmed that women are involved and participated in religious peace building processes carried out by the church. Of the four peace building processes that UCCSA church practices, the frequent responses were those of women participating in dialogue, mediation and healing sessions. 26 respondents agreed that women participate in dialogue processes whereas seven disagreed. In addition, mediation with 21 respondents in agreement with one strongly agreeing and healing session represented by 23 respondents agreeing received high rankings on the women actively participating in these processes as well. However, the negotiation process highlighted that only five agreed and five strongly agreed to women’s participation leaving 19 respondents to disagree alongside four respondents who strongly disagreed.

These findings concur with the data reported by the Council on Foreign Relations, (2020) which shows that there are low levels of women negotiators in peace processes since 1992 to 2020. This tallies with the next low rank represented by 11 respondents disagreeing that woman do not actively participate in mediation processes.

Responses to 8-11

Challenges faced by women in religious peace building processes at UCCSA

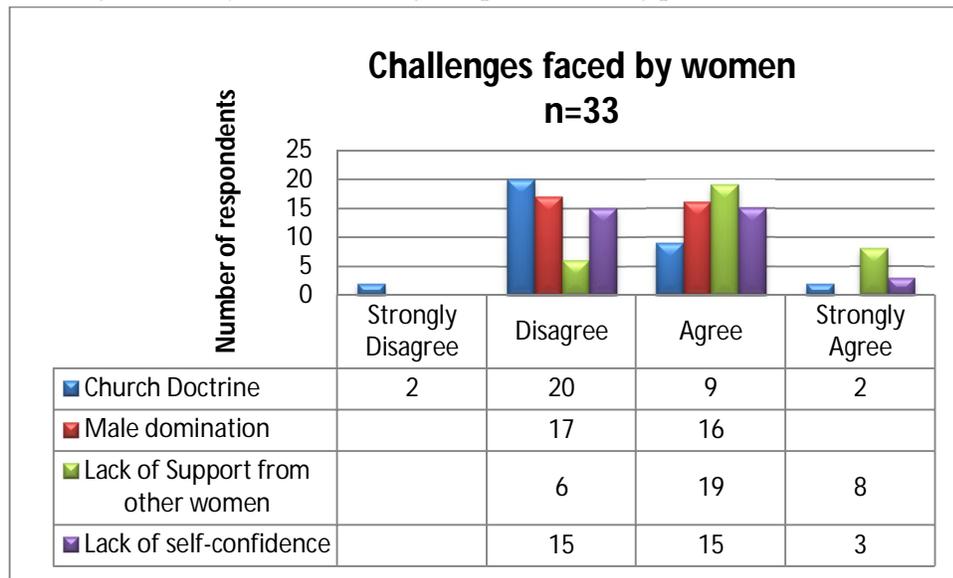


Figure 4: Challenges women face in peace processes

Source: Primary data, (2020)

The subsequent responses highlighted that indeed women faced challenges in participating more in religious peace building. This agrees with the observation that Chitando (2007) noted about the numerous challenges women do face in their quest to participate more in peace processes.

Of the factors that contribute to the challenges women might face, the most significant challenge noted was the lack of support from other women which ranked the highest with 19 respondents in agreement with eight respondents who strongly agreed to this view, whilst six respondents disagreed. This factor seemed to tie together with the second highest ranked as another observed challenge of self-confidence found among women being a barrier to participating in religious peace building. 15 respondents agreed to this factor as well as three respondents who strongly agreed whilst 15 other respondents disagreed with this factor. These factors displayed the assertion that women sometimes self-sabotage themselves and this concurs with Mutsagondo, (2015)’s findings on women being their own enemies.

The above graph also indicated that 20 respondents disagreed alongside two respondents who strongly disagreed that church doctrines are a challenge to women participating. While nine respondents agreed and two other respondents strongly agreed that it contributes to the challenges women face in participating in religious peace building processes. These findings indicate that church doctrines to a certain extent do inform the participation level in religious peace building processes. This somewhat tallies with the

male domination factor whereby 17 respondents disagreed that it impact women participation compared to 16 respondents who agreed that it is a challenge women face. These findings confirm that women to some extent are affected by the male domination found in religious peace building processes which is consistent with the observations by Hayward and Marshall, (2015). However, the degree of male domination at UCCSA peace building activities is not very significant as revealed by the survey statistical data. These results showed that this situation was the direct opposite to Health (2011)'s findings that posited that religious institutions position men to have a greater say on defining activities and roles carried out by both men and women.

Responses to statement 12-14

Cost effective methods to enhance women participation

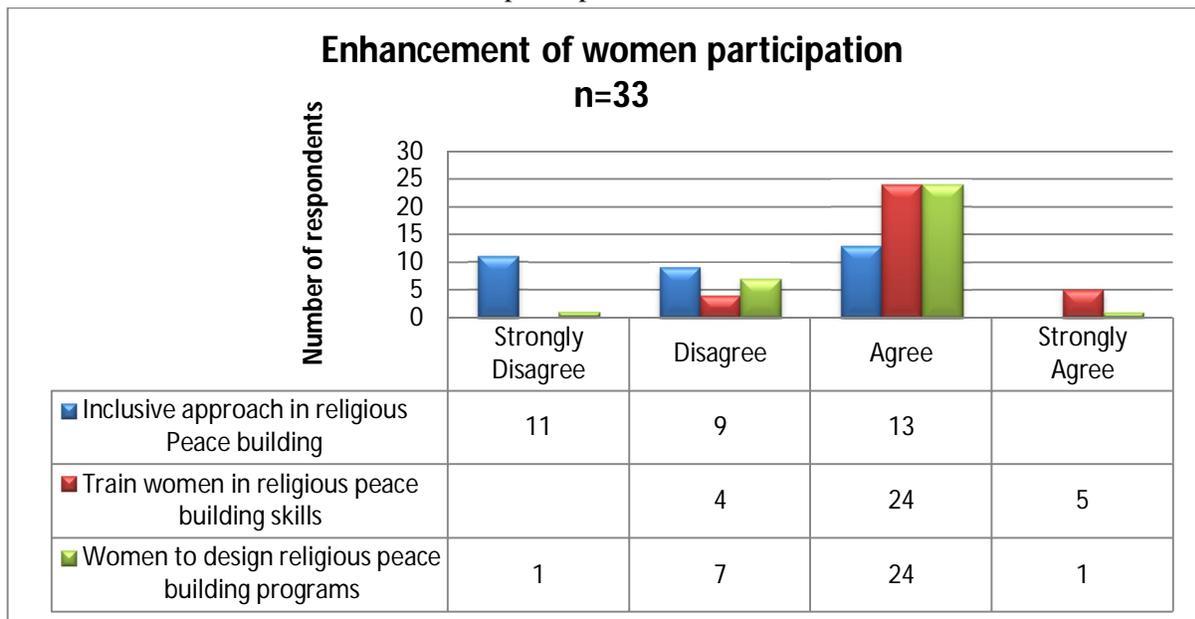


Figure 5: Cost effective methods to eradicate barriers

Source: Primary data, (2020)

The graph displays the respondent's views on ways to enhance women participation in religious peace building with majority expressing that woman should be trained more in religious peace building skills and be encouraged to design more of the programs. 24 respondents agreed alongside five respondents who strongly agreed that women should have workshops to enhance the skills needed during peace processes, whilst four respondents disagreed with this view point. Furthermore, 24 respondents who agreed with one respondent who strongly agreed highlighted that woman must be included in the designing of religious peace building programs. This concurs with Agbajobi, (2010) who stated that to encourage and assist women in developing their role in peace building activities, women should play a key role in designing and implementing peace building activities.

11 respondents strongly disagreed along with nine respondents who disagreed that religious peace building should be inclusive to enhance women participation whereas 13 respondents agreed to this view. The findings concur with Lederach, (2003) who stated that women understand peace building in a more broader and holistic way, hence, an inclusive approach is needed in peace building. However Porter, (2003) argues that gender issues are often linked to women issues, causing for men’s perspectives to not be considered. Thus an inclusive approach might not be a beneficial approach to peace building. This means an all-inclusive peace building process has its benefits but also can be misunderstood and causing for an imbalance within peace building processes.

Qualitative Data analysis

n=4			
Themes that emerged during the interviews	Number of respondents who mentioned the same	Gender	
		Male n=2	Female n=2
Women constitute the majority in the church but do not hold any leadership positions in formal processes	4	2	2
Women play the role of counsellor and advisors in religious peace building	3	1	2
There is low participation by women in religious peace building processes	4	2	2
Women lack self-confidence within religious peace building processes	4	2	2
Women lack support from other women within religious institutions	4	2	2
Training women in conflict management and peace building skills is essential	4	2	2

Table 3: Qualitative data results

Source: Primary data, (2020)

The table above shows the various themes that emerged as the researcher interviewed the respondents. All the respondents shared the same view by stating that women are the majority not only in the church but in the country and worldwide; yet do not hold most of the leadership positions. The findings found that women play a more active role in counselling and being an advisor in these processes which one male respondent and two female respondents mentioned during the interviews. The other male respondent however expressed that woman do not play any significant role within these peace processes worth noting. This tallies

with Kumalo, (2015)'s observation that most women occupy less seats in senior positions which causes their contributions to not be visible or valued.

Another theme that emerged was that there is low participation in religious peace building processes in which all respondents mentioned was a concern during their interviews. This was linked to lack of self-confidence found in women and lack of support of other women. This view is supported by the findings that were reported by Jenkins, (2012) who observed that women would fail to support each other to the extent of resenting the advancement of their female counterparts. Furthermore, Kurebwa, (2013) in his study noted that lack of confidence is a barrier that affects the efficient performance carried out by women. All respondents strongly believed women should be trained to enhance their conflict management peace building skills as a way to encourage them to actively participate in peace building.

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

The findings confirm that most respondents agreed that women do participate in religious peace building processes. This was an indication that congregants were aware of women's contribution and the roles they play in these processes. One of the major findings was that the church was a female-dominated church with women being the majority of congregants and this coincides with the majority of women also being found in the women's fellowship and youth fellowship. This holds true to studies that have shown that there are more female congregants than male congregants in churches Powell, (2017).

The findings acknowledged the participation of women in peace processes, and results showed that women were mostly present in the dialogue, mediation, negotiation and healing session processes but recorded low participation in negotiation processes. This confirming that women do not participate fully and actively in the negotiation processes (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020).

Furthermore, within the dialogue, mediation and healing session processes, women were found to be more of counsellors and advisors instead of holding leadership positions in them. Therefore, the findings showed that low levels of participation by women were mostly in leadership roles within peace processes. The respondents of the interviews concur with the findings in the questionnaire and they each expressed their confusion as to "why" that is the case since the church's majority are women and UCCSA church has inducted more women ministers over the recent years. Therefore, "*you tend to wonder why are women not a part of the formal talks in peace processes abafunidisi besifazane bebanengi imanyano ikhona, labomama bebanengi labo abangayenza umehluko*" (you tend to wonder why are women not a part of the formal talks in peace processes when there are now so many female ministers, a present active women's fellowship and many women who can make a difference) said one respondent. This indicates that there are low levels of

participation by women in peace processes but as leaders of the formal processes despite their numbers within the church.

The participation of women as leaders in peace processes agrees with the findings of UN DESA, (2017) who report that despite the existing normative framework such as the resolution 1325 and many solid base evidence on the positive impact women have in peace building, women still do not hold any leadership positions in negotiation processes.

However, the respondents further expressed that through the role of counsellor and advisor, women get to act as intercessors within peace processes, giving them the opportunity to practice their faith while contributing to the peace processes which in turn also empowers women. One of the respondents explained that "*a woman is a church*", that during peace processes, her aim is to foster peace using her faith and empathetic qualities, just like what the church offers. This showed that women do not only focus on building peace in the society but also peace within oneself. This goes along with the study carried out by Mcgrory, (2008) who carried out an extensive study on the role faith plays on women in peace building. She states that faith does provide a sense of identity and belonging while empowering women to act for their own liberation and that of others. This shows the spiritual aspect of the peace building processes done by women.

When asked to identify the challenges that women could face in participating more in religious peace building processes, major challenges identified were lack of self-confidence in women and lack of support from other women whereas challenges of male domination and church doctrine were to a lesser extent. These findings addresses the assumptions that have been mentioned earlier in chapter one of this study by Hayward and Marshall, (2015) who believed that the low levels of participation of women in peace processes is due to male domination and church doctrines. The findings do agree with the authors to a lesser extent that the factors of male domination and church doctrine as a barrier do impact participation. One respondent did mention that the church is somewhat like the African patriarchal culture which causes women to be less accepted by both men and women, in which this view is consistent with Chitando, (2007) view on African societies still being patriarchal but the effect of male domination is not very significant as revealed by the data.

However, the major factors were how women do not support each other and how women do not have self confidence. Women were found to not support other women which displayed what is described as "pull-her down syndrome", where by women do not support each other enough nor celebrate each other's achievements. The respondents of the questionnaires together with those of the interviews shared the same view point and expressed how women especially in leadership were not given enough support. One of the respondents mentioned that constantly, whenever a woman was elected to be in leadership at the Synod

against her male counterparts, results would show that the majority who voted for the male figure were women.

They further said it was the same within peace building processes. Women placed in charge of peace building activities would often find challenges in encouraging other women to participate by showing up for *manyano* meetings, or “*mubatanidzo*” or conferences that have to do with peace building and they would not show up. This was noted that it demoralizes most women to the extent of having women-led peace building activities dissolved before they take off.

Women lacking self-confidence might indicate that women do not participate in religious peace building processes due to factors such as having no education, or having the skills that may be required in certain peace building activities. As there were cases that indeed women lacked self-confidence to contribute their opinions and other cases whereby women were over confident and would come off as arrogant during the processes. He further highlighted that woman would often make decisions based on emotions versus “on the task at hand” prolonging the process of arriving to a decision and as well creating a situation that is difficult for their male counterparts to consider their contributions. Therefore, he believed that this could be one of the reasons that most processes would exclude the women in the Church’s peace processes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This research was conducted to find ways to enhance women’s participation in religious peace building processes. It enabled an understanding on the type of roles religious women play in peace processes and the importance to address the barriers that may affect their level of participation within these peace processes. The study showed that religious women play different roles that are both defined and not defined within peace processes. Their roles do not only impact the peace processes or the community but it also empowers them. Their participation is also vital in each peace process as they have the ability to create sustainable peace. However, the study showed that women constantly face challenges that act as barriers in participating in religious peace processes. These included male domination, church doctrines found in religious institutions, lack of support of other women and lack of self confidence in some women. Cost effective methods were further discussed to eradicate these barriers. The study findings showed training as a tool that will help eradicate these barriers. Women were encouraged to train and acquire conflict resolution skills and peace building skills so as to have them participate more in peace processes. The study also highlighted other approaches such as having more women design and implement peace building programs.

On the basis of the main findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher proposed a number of recommendations. The following recommendations were given:

- The participation of women in religious peace building processes should be encouraged as it was shown that it promotes sustainable peace. Considering that different frameworks such as the Resolution 1325/2000, SDG 5 in collaboration with SDG 16 and the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission Act [Chapter 10:32] has encouraged countries to adopt and implement measures that foster women participation, it is thus imperative that religious institutions also create an environment that will enable women's participation in support of the international and national community's efforts in ensuring women inclusion in peace processes.
- It is recommended that religious institutions should also involve the youth particularly young women in peace building efforts and encourage them to design religious peace building programs.
- Furthermore, to address the challenges associated with lack of self-confidence and support of other women, it is being recommended that the *manyano* together with the female reverends and women congregants as well as the female youth be trained regularly on peace building skills and encourage meetings that deal solely with self-esteem matters.
- To enhance women participation, it is recommended that the church engage more with the ZCC church body that will help ensure that women also occupy religious leadership positions and in turn is in sync with the policies and frameworks formulated to encourage gender equality.

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