

# Journal of **Sociology, Psychology & Religious Studies**



## **The Role Played by Women in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and Reconstruction in Molo Sub-County of Nakuru County, Kenya**

**Mariana Mwikali Muia & Murenga Hadija**

**ISSN NO: 2706-6622**

# The Role Played by Women in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and Reconstruction in Molo Sub-County of Nakuru County, Kenya

\*<sup>1</sup> Mariana Mwikali Muia & <sup>2</sup>Murenga Hadija

<sup>1</sup>Department of Peace, Security, and Social Studies, Egerton Njoro, Kenya

<sup>2</sup>Egerton University, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), Department of Peace, Security, and Social Studies, Egerton Njoro, Kenya

\*Email of the Corresponding Author: [marianamuia2013@gmail.com](mailto:marianamuia2013@gmail.com) / [muiamm@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:muiamm@yahoo.co.uk)

*How to cite this article:* Muia, M. M. & Hadija, M. (2025). The Role Played by Women in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and Reconstruction in Molo Sub-County of Nakuru County, Kenya, *Journal of Sociology, Psychology & Religious Studies*, Vol 7(3) pp. 110-127. <https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t4367>

## Abstract

Women play a critical role in preserving order and normalcy during and after violent conflicts, yet they remain largely excluded from formal peacebuilding and reconstruction processes. This study examined the roles of women in post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction in Molo Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya, an area affected by 18 years of recurring ethnic conflicts. Guided by Rational Choice Theory and Social Exchange Theory, the study employed an ex post facto research design with a sample of 384 respondents selected through a multi-stage sampling process. Data were collected using interview schedules and analysed using SPSS. Findings reveal that 86% of women actively participate in grassroots community peacebuilding initiatives, demonstrating strong engagement in peace efforts. However, their representation in formal decision-making remains critically low, with over 80% reporting participation of 0-10% in political leadership and decision-making bodies, and 77% reporting complete exclusion from formal peace negotiations. Major barriers identified include marital and occupational status (70%), low education levels, restrictive cultural norms, and inadequate training opportunities. The study recommends legally mandating women's inclusion in local peace committees, implementing UNSCR 1325 at the county level, and developing targeted capacity-building programs to enhance women's agency in reconstruction processes. These interventions are essential for achieving sustainable peace and inclusive post-conflict recovery in the region.

**Keywords:** *Women's participation, post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, gender inclusion, decision-making, UNSCR 1325, Molo Sub-County, Kenya*

## 1.0 Introduction

The aftermath of conflict presents a unique opportunity for societal transformation and reconstruction. However, the experiences and needs of women in post-conflict scenarios are often marginalised, leading to an incomplete and ineffective peacebuilding process. Historically, women have played significant roles during conflicts, yet their contributions and potential in the post-conflict phase have received insufficient attention. This oversight has

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significant implications for the sustainability of peace and the overall development of societies emerging from conflict. In developed countries, the integration of women into post-conflict processes is often more robust, supported by strong institutional frameworks. In countries such as Norway and Sweden, extensive policies and programs exist to ensure women's active participation in peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts, reflecting an awareness of the unique challenges women face and their crucial roles as stabilisers in post-conflict societies (Söderström, 2020; WILPF, 2019).

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, adopted on October 31, 2000, is a pivotal framework that addresses the critical role of women in conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and post-conflict reconstruction. This resolution recognises the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and emphasises their unique contributions to peace and security efforts (United Nations Security Council, 2000). UNSCR 1325 outlines key provisions for enhancing women's participation in peace negotiations and decision-making processes, advocating for their representation at all levels of governance (United Nations Security Council, 2000; UN Women, 2015). The resolution emphasises the need to ensure that women's perspectives and experiences are included in peace and security frameworks, as well as the importance of involving women in political processes to promote sustainable peace (Todorova, 2019). Furthermore, it calls on all member states to increase women's participation in disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) programs and highlights the necessity of gender-sensitive approaches in peacekeeping operations (Vastapuu, 2021).

Conversely, in developing countries, including many in Africa, the situation is markedly different. Amid various socio-economic challenges, women often remain underrepresented in peace negotiations and post-conflict activities. Efforts to rebuild society after conflict—termed post-conflict reconstruction focus on restoring community infrastructure and social cohesion in the aftermath of war or strife. In these contexts, survivors, especially women, may require prolonged medical treatment, rehabilitation services, and support to regain functionality and adapt to a changed environment (Jain et al., 2020). Women can be pivotal as cultural custodians and family nurturers, yet their role in peacebuilding is often overlooked, resulting in missed opportunities for sustainable community recovery (Ochieng, 2019).

At the continental level, the significance of women in post-conflict reconstruction becomes even more evident across African countries, where ethnic conflicts, frequently fuelled by historical grievances and resource competition, continue to afflict many societies. Scholars like Kasozi (1999) highlight how colonialism created arbitrary boundaries that exacerbated ethnic divisions, leading to ongoing conflicts. For instance, many conflicts in Africa are tied not only to the legacy of colonial boundaries but also to political institutions that concentrated power in the hands of a few ethnic groups, suppressing political pluralism and inciting inter-ethnic tensions (Annan, 1998). Post-conflict reconstruction in African nations thus requires a holistic approach that includes women's participation at all levels, as they have been integral in managing community needs during such crises.

Regionally, in East African countries, the dynamics of ethnic conflict have also shown a recurring pattern, particularly during electoral periods where political leaders manipulate ethnic identities for electoral gains. This was starkly illustrated during the 2007 general elections in Kenya, which resulted in significant violence and displacement, particularly affecting areas like Molo Sub-County (Oyugi, 2000). The culture surrounding this violence demonstrated how land ownership, coupled with the manipulation of ethnic loyalty, became a lethal combination for instability. In these circumstances, women's roles are further complicated, as they frequently bear the brunt of conflict's repercussions yet also often emerge as leaders and peacekeepers within their communities (Jonjo, 2002; Oucho, 2002).

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In Kenya, the marginalisation of women in peacebuilding processes is pronounced, especially in light of the ethnic conflicts that have plagued the nation. The violent events surrounding the 2007 elections highlighted the fragility of peace in Kenya, particularly in regions such as Molo, where the aftermath had a profound impact on the community's social fabric (Karanja & Ngoya, 2021). Women, traditionally seen as victims within conflict narratives, have the potential to be powerful agents of change in the reconstruction process. Despite cultural stigma and barriers to participation, women's unique insights and experiences equip them to engage effectively in rebuilding efforts (Kibera, 2019). As community leaders, they can foster dialogue, promote healing, and influence the reconstruction of livelihoods (Nyaundi & Khamala, 2020). Thus, acknowledging and empowering women in this context not only enhances the post-conflict reconstruction process but also lays a foundation for lasting peace and resilience in the face of future challenges (González & Nuwagira, 2022). Furthermore, women perpetuate the culture of war by participating in ritual validations of fighting, offering blessings to fighters, and by the values they promote as they raise and educate their children. Women, therefore, occupy the positions of both victims of conflicts and perpetrators of the same; a situation that makes them even more effective players in post-conflict efforts.

Studies on women and conflict have primarily focused on women as victims of conflicts, which also shows that women can contribute to the escalation of war and become perpetrators themselves. This puts women in a complex position, as they can be both the primary civilian victims of conflicts and contributors to the conflicts themselves. It is clear that women are not only major stakeholders in conflict due to the consequences they face during and after conflicts, but also due to the roles they play during conflicts. However, the focus of previous studies on women and conflict has primarily been on their victimisation and perpetration. As a result, the role of women in post-conflict situations, particularly in post-conflict reconstruction, has not received sufficient attention. The UN Beijing Platform of Action in 1995 first proposed involving women in post-conflict reconstruction efforts. However, subsequent research in this area has been limited; thus, there has been little focus on women's participation in conflict and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and Reconstruction, particularly their roles, levels, extents, and the obstacles they face. Therefore, the current study seeks to fill this gap by examining the role of women in the post-conflict reconstruction process in Molo Sub-County.

## 2.0 Literature Review

The role women play in post-conflict reconstruction has gained increasing recognition as a vital component of sustainable peacebuilding efforts (UN Women, 2020). Women are not only affected by the war but are also powerful agents of positive change in their communities (Puechguirbal, 2016). A study by UN Women (2018) highlights that when women participate in peacebuilding initiatives, they bring unique perspectives and skills, which help foster a more comprehensive understanding of the needs of their communities. This participation often leads to improved governance and accountability in reconstruction processes, as evidenced in post-conflict contexts like Rwanda and Liberia, where women have been instrumental in promoting peace and reconciliation (Mansaray, 2021).

The existing literature highlights that women's participation in post-conflict reconstruction is crucial for sustainable peace and development. Studies emphasise their roles as both victims and agents of change, and evidence from countries like Rwanda and Liberia demonstrates their positive impact on governance and reconciliation. However, a significant gap remained in understanding the specific dynamics of women's involvement at the local community level within Kenya, particularly in Molo Municipality, where most research focused on national or regional contexts. This study aimed to fill that gap by examining the extent and nature of women's participation in grassroots peacebuilding efforts, with the intention of providing

insights that could inform tailored interventions to effectively harness women's contributions to peace and reconstruction in Kenya.

In the aftermath of conflict, women often take on new leadership roles that challenge traditional norms and empower them to advocate for the interests of their communities (Fisher, 2019). For instance, in the Philippines, women have successfully advocated for policy reforms and played key roles in local governance following years of conflict (Santos, 2017). Similarly, the involvement of women in the 2011 revolution in Tunisia demonstrated how women can mobilise around issues relevant to national healing and democratic processes. Their activism was crucial in ensuring gender equality measures were embedded in Tunisia's new Constitution (Mammoudi, 2018). These examples underscore that women's participation in post-conflict governance can counterbalance the often male-dominated political landscape and lead to more inclusive decision-making processes.

Women's roles in post-conflict reconstruction extend into economic recovery. Studies indicate that women's economic empowerment is a fundamental aspect of sustainable peace (UNDP, 2015). Women often engage in informal markets, small businesses, and community services that not only provide livelihoods for themselves and their families but also contribute to overall economic revitalisation in their communities (Kirkby, 2020). Programs aimed at supporting women's entrepreneurship post-conflict, such as those implemented in Morocco and Gaza, have shown remarkable success in restoring economic stability while empowering women to take leading roles in the reconstruction processes (Khoury, 2019). These initiatives highlight the indispensable contribution of women to rebuilding both economies and communities after conflict.

Nevertheless, women are often sidelined during formal reconstruction efforts despite their critical roles. While resolutions such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) acknowledge the importance of women in peace and security, their actual implementation remains inconsistent. A recent report by the International Crisis Group (2021) notes that even when women are present in peace processes, they are frequently marginalised in decision-making roles, leading to reconstruction efforts that fail to address their specific needs. This gap presents a significant challenge to achieving lasting peace and stability, as efforts designed without women's insight may overlook critical socio-economic and developmental issues.

The pivotal role of women in post-conflict reconstruction has garnered significant recognition in both developed and developing countries, highlighting their crucial contributions to sustainable peacebuilding efforts (Klein, 2021; Oxfam, 2022). In developed countries such as Norway and Sweden, legislative frameworks have been established that actively promote women's participation in governance and decision-making processes post-conflict (Kofman, 2021). These frameworks have enabled a significant number of women to play influential roles in reconstruction efforts, leading to improved societal outcomes. For example, in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, women have been instrumental in advocating for policy changes that prioritise gender-sensitive recovery, demonstrating how women's involvement can contribute to more equitable post-war societies (Graham & Smith, 2015). Moreover, the societal perceptions of women often limit their participation in post-conflict settings. Cultural norms and patriarchal structures can create barriers that discourage or prevent women from participating in leadership and decision-making roles (Ball, 2020). For example, in South Sudan, despite women's substantial contributions to peace processes at the community level, they continue to face discrimination that hinders their representation in formal peace negotiations (Jok, 2018). Addressing these cultural inhibitions and promoting a narrative that elevates women's roles in peacebuilding is essential to fostering an environment where women can contribute effectively to post-conflict reconstruction.

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In addition to leadership and economic activities, women often play crucial roles in fostering social cohesion in post-conflict societies. They engage in community dialogue processes, conflict resolution mechanisms, and grassroots initiatives aimed at mending relationships strained by conflict (Dola et al., 2019). For instance, during the civil war in Sierra Leone, women's groups played a pivotal role in leading local peace initiatives and negotiating ceasefires (Dudley, 2020). These efforts not only highlight the capabilities of women as peacemakers but also indicate that their participation can lead to the establishment of more resilient societal structures post-conflict.

In post-conflict settings, women have demonstrated their capacity as leaders, peacebuilders, and policymakers, making significant contributions to the reconstruction process. Globally, women's participation in peacebuilding has shifted from being primarily viewed through the lens of victimisation to being recognised as an essential element for achieving sustainable solutions (UN Women, 2020). Women are often the backbone of community resilience, engaging in restorative justice efforts, facilitating dialogues between conflicting parties, and ensuring that women's voices and needs are articulated in peace agreements (Dawson, 2021). The impact of their contributions has been documented in various post-conflict regions. For example, in Colombia, women-led organisations have played pivotal roles in negotiating peace agreements and advocating for the inclusion of gender perspectives in post-conflict policies (Bennett, 2018).

Conversely, in developing countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq, women's roles in post-conflict reconstruction face systemic challenges. Despite considerable contributions during conflict, studies indicate that women often find themselves excluded from formal processes in post-war governance (Friedman, 2020). For instance, in Afghanistan, the Taliban's return to power suppressed women's rights further, underscoring how delicate the gains in women's participation can be (Heinemann-Grüder et al., 2020). This systemic exclusion necessitates targeted interventions to address the myriad barriers that hinder women's full engagement in peacebuilding and reconstruction.

In developed countries, women's roles in post-conflict reconstruction have also gained attention. For instance, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, post-war reconstruction efforts have highlighted women's contributions to community rebuilding, economic development, and advocacy for women's rights (Graham & Smith, 2015). Despite these advancements, women still face numerous challenges, including societal expectations and institutional barriers that limit their full participation in decision-making processes (UNDP, 2020). The relatively low representation of women in positions of power and authority post-conflict is often compounded by socio-cultural norms that favour male leadership, leading to women's voices being sidelined in recovery efforts (Swaine, 2019). This literature review illustrates how women's contributions to post-conflict reconstruction are recognised globally yet often hindered by societal and institutional barriers, emphasising the need to examine their specific roles in Molo Sub-County's peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts.

In the African context, studies highlight the crucial role women play in facilitating reconciliation and rebuilding communities following conflicts. For instance, in Rwanda, the significant presence of women in parliament—over 60% since the 2008 elections—has led to increased gender-sensitive policies that address issues related not only to women but also to the wider community, thereby promoting a more inclusive post-conflict recovery (Karame, 2004). Similarly, in Liberia, women's organisations, such as the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, have mobilised grassroots movements that led to the cessation of civil war and have emphasised the necessity of including women's voices in peacebuilding processes (Stevenson, 2019).

In East Africa, the dynamics of women's engagement in post-conflict reconstruction reveal both challenges and opportunities. Kenya, for instance, has seen women emerge as significant agents in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 post-election violence. Women organised community dialogues aimed at fostering trust across ethnic divides (Wise, Forster, & Bell, 2019). However, women's representation in official decision-making bodies remains disproportionately low, with reports indicating they comprise less than 30% of national peacebuilding committees (Maupeu & Kingoo, 2019). In Uganda and Tanzania, women's organisations have played a pivotal role in advocating for policy reforms that promote gender equality in post-conflict recovery frameworks (Graham & Smith, 2015). Yet, similar to Kenya, deep-rooted patriarchal norms often impede women's pathways to participation, necessitating targeted strategies to enhance their contributions effectively. This literature review highlights the vital yet often constrained roles women have played in post-conflict reconciliation and rebuilding across Africa, reinforcing the importance of investigating their specific contributions in Molo Sub-County to understand both opportunities and persistent challenges in the local context.

In Kenya, women have also emerged as vital actors in the post-election reconciliation and rebuilding processes following the 2007/2008 post-election violence. Despite being disproportionately affected by the violent events, women have taken up leadership roles in community dialogue forums aimed at restoring trust across ethnic divides (Wise, Forster, & Bell, 2019). Women's involvement in these peace initiatives has often extended to participating in local governance structures, advocating for holistic approaches to rehabilitation that include education, healthcare, and economic empowerment, thus ensuring comprehensive community recovery (USAID, 2013). Furthermore, a crucial aspect of women's contributions in post-conflict environments is their role in addressing trauma and healing experiences that arise from conflict. Women frequently lead trauma support initiatives, providing psychosocial support to victims of violence and facilitating community healing processes (UNICEF, 2005). This aspect of women's participation is critical, given the profound psychological impact of violent conflicts on families and communities, particularly in cases where traditional support systems have broken down (Dahir, 2011).

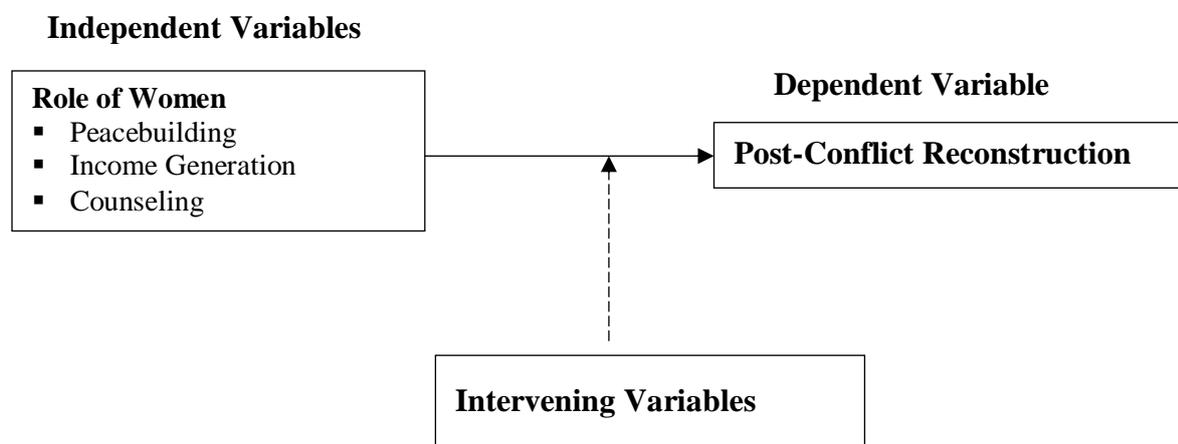
Despite the growing body of literature emphasising women's roles in post-conflict reconstruction, notable research gaps persist. The literature reviewed lacks in-depth studies focusing on the socio-cultural barriers experienced by women in specific local contexts, such as Molo. Factors such as patriarchal norms, educational disparities, and economic dependency often serve as significant obstacles that are poorly understood in the existing literature (Aseka, 2021). Previous studies have also not examined men's perceptions of women's roles in peacebuilding. If examined, it could yield insights into how to foster more collaborative environments, as inclusive strategies must also address the views and engagement of men in supporting women's participation (Dawson, 2021). Despite the evident importance of women's contributions to peacebuilding and reconstruction, persistent barriers hinder their full participation. These include entrenched societal norms that view women primarily as caregivers rather than decision-makers (Nduku, 2022).

Additionally, there exist gaps in the formal recognition of women's roles; often, local women's groups are not adequately integrated into official peace processes, which limits their ability to influence policies that affect their lives (Jeannette, 2000). Overall, ensuring women's meaningful participation in post-conflict reconstruction necessitates both recognising their existing contributions and actively dismantling the barriers they face in achieving equality in both decision-making and community rebuilding efforts. De Watteville (2002) argues that the number of ongoing post-election violence-related cases in Kenyan courts remains unclear in the current study. Generally, there has been a lack of willingness on the part of the state to pursue justice for victims of post-election violence. This, however, does not prohibit

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individuals, including women, from pursuing justice on behalf of the victims of post-election violence. It should be remembered that Kenya has numerous women's organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, ostensibly established to fight for the rights of women. It was in the interest of the current study to develop the role of women in fighting for criminal prosecution of the perpetrators of post-election violence in Molo.

Women's participation in post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction is explained through Rational Choice Theory and Social Exchange Theory. Rational Choice Theory shows that women weigh interest, capacity, and commitment when deciding whether to engage, with barriers like low education, limited resources, and socio-economic constraints shaping their choices. Social Exchange Theory highlights how interactions among women, government, and victims operate as exchanges of rewards and costs, often driven by self-interest rather than pure altruism. Trust and reciprocity are central, as their absence marginalises women and weakens reconstruction, while their presence strengthens inclusion and outcomes. Together, these theories reveal how individual agency and relational dynamics intersect with structural barriers to influence women's roles in peacebuilding. Figure 1 presents the study's conceptual framework.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

### 3.0 Methodology

This study employed an ex post facto research design to examine relationships between women's participation in post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction and mental health outcomes in Molo Municipality, Nakuru County, Kenya. The study area was selected due to its 18-year history of recurring violent ethnic conflicts. From a target population of 542,103 residents in Molo Sub-County, a sample of 384 respondents (193 males, 191 females) was calculated using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula. A two-stage sampling approach was employed: first, a purposive selection of the study site, followed by a proportionate distribution of respondents using cluster, stratified, and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected through structured and semi-structured interview schedules administered by the researcher. A pilot study involving 38 participants (10% of the sample size) was conducted in Njoro sub-county to test instrument validity and reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient ( $\alpha \geq 0.7$ ) was used to assess internal consistency. Content and face validity were established through expert review and consultations with supervisors. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 27, employing descriptive statistics presented through frequency tables, percentages, and graphs. Ethical approval was obtained from Egerton University and NACOSTI. Informed

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consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly maintained throughout the study.

#### 4.0 Results

The study examined the role played by women in post-conflict Peacebuilding and reconstruction in Molo Sub-County of Nakuru County, Kenya. The role of women in conflict and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and Reconstruction was measured by their participation in any community peacebuilding initiatives since the last conflict, the nature of involvement, types of peacebuilding activities involved in, the impact of women's contributions on peacebuilding in their community, and the significance of women's roles in post-conflict reconstruction.

#### 4.1 Women's Participation in Community Peacebuilding Initiatives Since the Last Conflict

The involvement of women in peacebuilding efforts plays a critical role in fostering sustainable peace and social cohesion within communities. Data was collected and analysed to gauge women's engagement in community peacebuilding activities. The results, summarised in Table 1, reveal that a significant proportion of women have actively participated in these initiatives, highlighting their vital contribution to peace efforts at the community level.

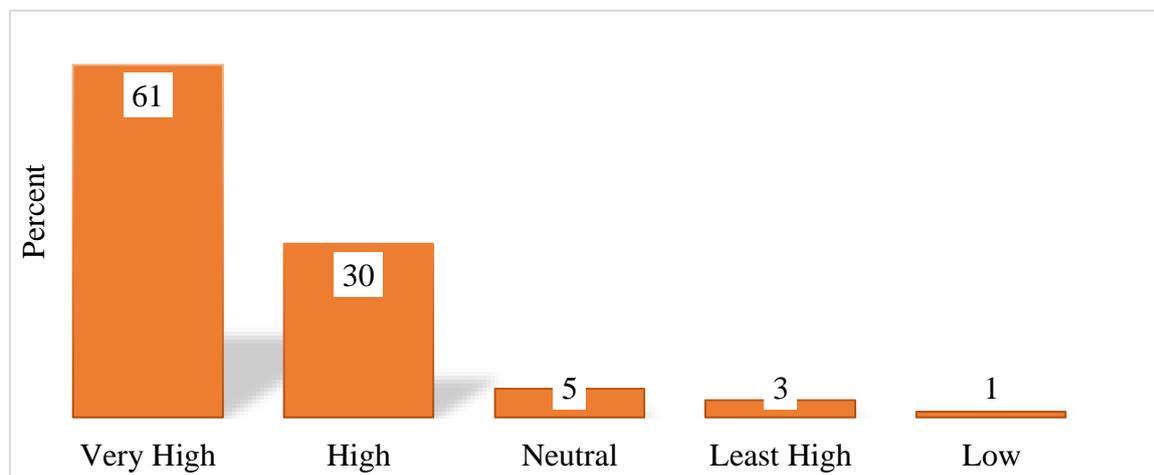
**Table 1: Participation in Community Peacebuilding Initiatives Since the Last Conflict**

Participation in Community Peacebuilding Initiatives	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	330	86
No	54	14
Total	384	100

Table 1 shows that the 330 respondents who participated in community peacebuilding initiatives since the last conflict represented 86% of the total sample. In contrast, 54 respondents, accounting for 14%, indicated that they had not participated in such initiatives. The total sample size is 384. The results provide a clear insight into the involvement of individuals in community peacebuilding initiatives following the last conflict. With 330 respondents indicating participation, which represents a significant 86% of the total sample, this demonstrates strong community engagement and a collective effort towards rebuilding and fostering peace within the community.

#### 4.2 Women's Perception of the Current Level of Inter-Ethnic Rivalry

Understanding women's perceptions of inter-ethnic rivalry provides valuable insights into the social dynamics and tensions within communities following the recent conflict. To explore these perceptions, data were gathered, analysed and presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Women's Perception of the Current Level of Inter-Ethnic Rivalry**

Figure 2 shows the distribution of respondents' answers to the question about the perceived current level of rivalry. 61% of the respondents said it was very high, 30% said it was high, 5% were neutral, 3% said it was low, and 1% said it was deficient. The results presented in Figure 5 illustrate a concerning landscape regarding inter-ethnic rivalry within the surveyed population. A significant majority, 61%, perceive the current level of rivalry as "very high," while an additional 30% classify it as "high." This indicates that a staggering 91% of respondents are experiencing substantial levels of rivalry, suggesting a prevalent and entrenched tension among different ethnic groups in the community. Further, 61% (234) of women perceive the current level of inter-ethnic rivalry to be very high, while an additional 30% (115) perceive it as high. Only a small proportion of women view the rivalry as neutral (5%), least high (3%), or low (1%).

### 4.3 Frequency of Meetings Organised by Women on Inter-Ethnic Bonding

The extent to which women actively organise and participate in meetings aimed at fostering inter-ethnic bonding is a critical factor influencing community reconciliation processes. To assess the level of engagement by women in such activities, data were collected on the frequency of meetings organised. The findings are summarised in Table 2.

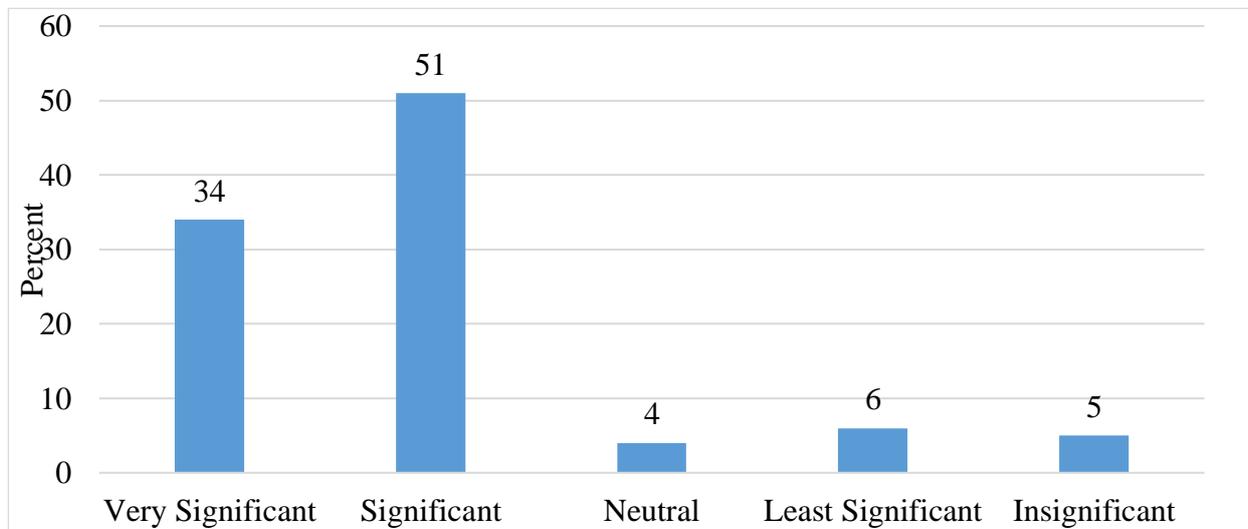
**Table 2: Frequency of Meetings Organised by Women on Inter-Ethnic Bonding**

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	185	48
Rarely	125	33
Often	38	10
Very Often	28	7
Occasionally	8	2
Total	384	100

The results presented in Table 2 reveal the frequency with which women organise meetings aimed at fostering inter-ethnic bonding. A significant proportion of respondents, 48%, reported that women never organise such meetings, while 33% indicated that these meetings are rarely organised. Conversely, only a small percentage of respondents reported more frequent engagement, with 10% stating that meetings are often organised, 7% indicating that they are very often, and just 2% mentioning that they are occasionally organised.

#### 4.4 Women's Contribution to Livelihood Reconstruction

This sub-topic explores the role women play in the process of rebuilding and revitalising livelihoods within their communities, particularly in contexts affected by conflict, disaster, or socio-economic upheaval. Women's contribution to livelihood reconstruction. In Molo Sub-County, the results were analysed and presented in Figure 3.



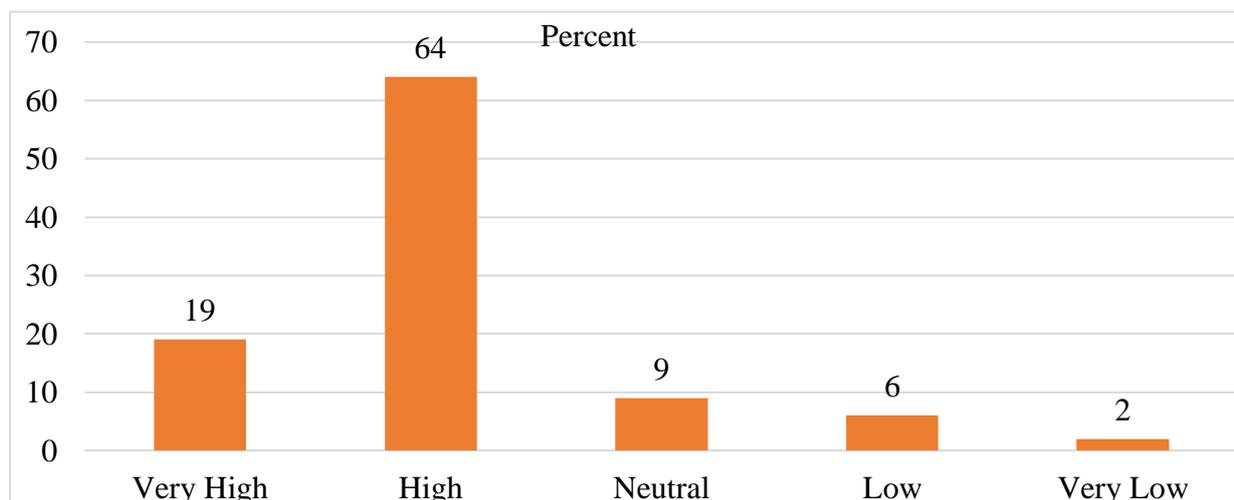
**Figure 3: Women's Contributions to Livelihood Reconstruction**

The results presented in Figure 3 indicate respondents' perceptions of women's contribution to livelihood reconstruction. A majority of respondents, 51%, viewed women's contributions as significant, while 34% considered them very significant. In contrast, smaller proportions perceived these contributions as least significant (6%) and insignificant (5%), with 4% remaining neutral in their assessment.

#### 4.5 Women's Contribution to Family Integration and Reunion

This sub-topic examines the critical role women play in fostering family cohesion and facilitating reunification within communities affected by conflict, displacement, or social disruption. Women often serve as the backbone of family stability, providing emotional support, caregiving, and mediation to bridge gaps caused by separation or upheaval. Their active involvement is essential for restoring trust, re-establishing social bonds, and ensuring the overall well-being of families. Understanding women's contributions in this context highlights the importance of gender-sensitive approaches to reconciliation and community rebuilding efforts, emphasising their vital role in achieving sustainable family and community

integration. Data on family integration and reunion resulting from women's intervention were analysed and the results are displayed in Figure 4.

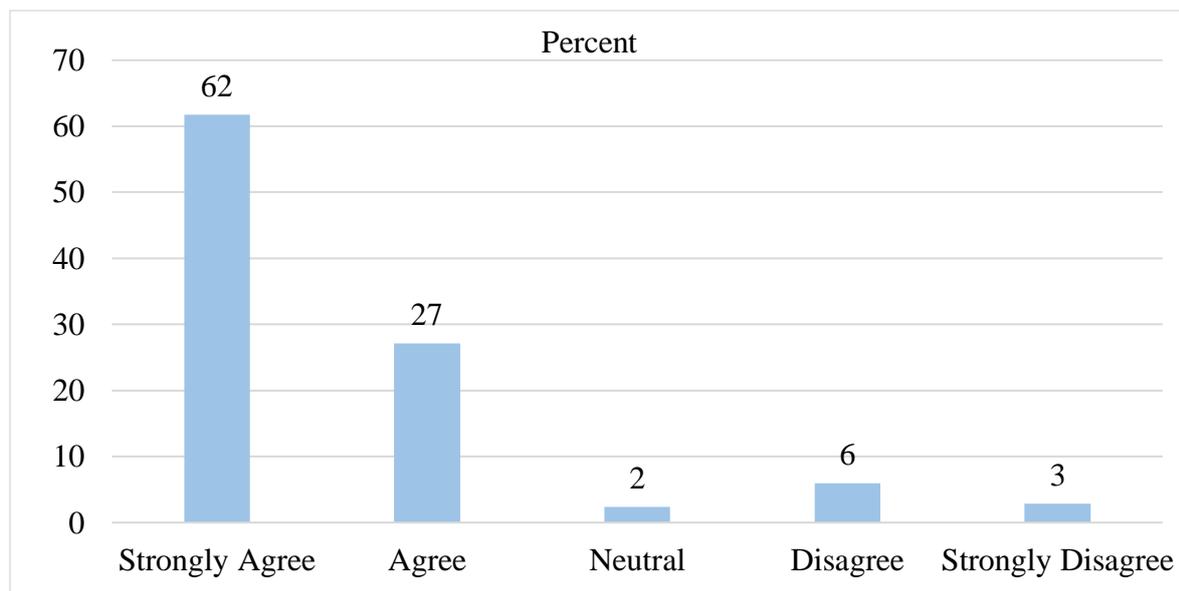


**Figure 4: Level of Family Integration and Reunion**

Figure 4 illustrates the level of integration and reunification of families that were separated by post-election conflicts. 64% said it was high, 19% said it was very high, 9% were neutral, 6% said it was low, and 2% said it was very low. The results reveal a strong perception of successful family integration and reunification among those affected by post-election conflicts. A significant 64% of respondents indicated that the level of integration was "high," and an additional 19% rated it as "very high." This positive outlook reflects a collective view that recovery and social cohesion efforts have been relatively effective in re-establishing familial bonds that were disrupted by post-election violence (PEV).

#### 4.6 Women's Role in Counselling Sexual Violence Victims

Figure 5 presents the results on women's contribution to counselling of sexual violence victims. Women often serve as primary caregivers, advocates, and support providers for survivors, playing a crucial role in their emotional healing and social reintegration.



**Figure 5: Women's Contribution to Counselling of Sexual Violence Victims**

The results presented in Figure 5 indicate that a significant majority of respondents perceive women's contributions to the counselling of sexual violence victims positively. Specifically, 62% (237 respondents) strongly agree, and 27% (104 respondents) agree that women make a significant contribution to this counselling process. In contrast, only a small percentage, 6% (23 respondents), disagree, and 3% (11 respondents) strongly disagree, with an additional 2% (9 respondents) remaining neutral. Overall, approximately 89% of respondents hold a favourable view of women's involvement in counselling victims of sexual violence.

## 5.0 Discussion

The significant engagement of women in peacebuilding initiatives is emphasised as pivotal for fostering sustainable peace and resilience in their communities (UN Women, 2020). The findings of this survey align with this perspective, as they reflect a community eager to participate actively in addressing the underlying issues that contributed to the previous conflict. Such active participation can create a more inclusive environment, which is crucial in counterbalancing the male-dominated narratives often present in post-conflict governance, as seen in case studies from Rwanda and Liberia (Mansaray, 2021).

Furthermore, the literature highlights the transformative roles women play as leaders and advocates in post-conflict settings (Fisher, 2019). The 330 respondents who participated in peacebuilding initiatives likely included a considerable representation of women, echoing the findings that women can serve as agents of change. Their involvement not only aids community cohesion but also fosters a more nuanced understanding of community needs, ultimately enhancing governance and accountability in reconstruction efforts (Puechguirbal, 2016). This is further evidenced by examples from global contexts where women's participation has led to advancements in gender equality and policy reform (Santos, 2017; Mammoudi, 2018).

Conversely, the 14% of respondents who did not participate in peacebuilding initiatives reflects important gaps highlighted in the literature regarding barriers to female engagement. As noted by the literature, various socio-cultural and structural barriers continue to inhibit women's full participation in post-conflict settings (Ball, 2020; Jok, 2018). Understanding the reasons for this non-participation is crucial and could provide insights into systemic issues, such as a lack of access to resources, differing perceptions of gender roles, and insufficient support for

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t4367>

women's organisations (Karemi et al., 2021; Njogu, 2022). Addressing these barriers is essential, as literature suggests that sidelining women in formal reconstruction processes can lead to incomplete and ineffective peacebuilding efforts (International Crisis Group, 2021). Dola et al. (2019) and Dudley (2020) show that positive community engagement aligns with the literature that emphasises women's roles in facilitating dialogue and healing in post-conflict societies. The efforts led by female community members to foster trust, advocate for policy reforms, and bridge ethnic divides echo the documented contributions of women in various post-conflict contexts globally, showcasing their importance not only as victims but as integral contributors to peacebuilding and societal reconstruction (UN Women, 2020).

The high perception of inter-ethnic rivalry among women aligns with existing literature emphasising that inter-ethnic tensions often persist even after formal peace agreements. Recent studies have highlighted that community members, especially women who often serve as peacebuilders and mediators, tend to perceive ongoing rivalry as a barrier to sustainable peace (Khan et al., 2020). Women's perceptions are particularly critical because they influence community cohesion and the success of reconciliation processes. The widespread perception of high rivalry levels may also reflect persistent fears, mistrust, and unresolved grievances rooted in the recent conflict, which are consistent with findings that post-conflict societies often exhibit lingering tensions even after formal peace is achieved (Mwangi & Wamai, 2021). These results highlight the importance of incorporating women's perceptions into peacebuilding strategies. This perception of high levels of inter-ethnic rivalry aligns with existing literature on ethnic conflicts, particularly in contexts affected by historical grievances and competition for resources. According to Horowitz (1985), inter-ethnic conflicts often escalate in post-colonial societies where arbitrary boundaries and historical injustices create divisions. The situation in Kenya, especially in areas that have experienced ethnic violence, resonates with these findings. The legacy of colonialism and subsequent political manipulations led to the entrenchment of ethnic identities, often exploited during elections and resource allocation (Oucho, 2002).

Moreover, the findings also reflect the theoretical framework of social identity theory posited by Tajfel and Turner (1979), which suggests that individuals derive part of their identity from the groups to which they belong. As competition intensifies, the sense of 'us versus them' becomes more pronounced, exacerbating inter-ethnic tensions. In the context of Kenya's 2007 elections, the manipulation of ethnic identities by political actors led to significant violence, indicative of how closely tied political power and ethnic identity are (Branch & Cheeseman, 2008). 5% of respondents were neutral. Combined with 4% who rated the rivalry as "low" or "very low, this may reflect segments of the population that either are not directly affected by ethnic conflicts or have found ways to navigate these tensions through personal or community ties that transcend ethnic boundaries. This sentiment echoes the findings by Kivutha (2010), who noted that some communities engage in inter-ethnic collaboration at local levels, promoting peace and shared livelihoods despite broader rivalries. The perception of high inter-ethnic rivalry reported in the survey underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to address underlying issues of inequality and historical grievances. These insights reinforce the need for gender-sensitive approaches in post-conflict recovery, emphasising the role of women in transforming perceptions and promoting social cohesion (Agyemang et al., 2019).

Recent studies have emphasised the importance of women's active participation in inter-ethnic dialogue as a catalyst for social harmony. For instance, Smith and Lee (2021) argue that women often serve as key agents in community building, leveraging their social networks to promote intercultural understanding. However, their research also notes barriers such as societal gender roles and limited organisational support that hinder women's involvement in inter-ethnic initiatives. Similarly, Johnson et al. (2020) highlight that women's participation in such

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activities is often sporadic unless supported by institutional frameworks or community-driven programs. The low frequency of organised meetings in this data set could reflect these barriers, suggesting a need for targeted interventions to empower women as facilitators of inter-ethnic bonding. Increasing women's involvement could enhance social cohesion, as supported by the literature, which emphasises the role of women in community resilience (Kumar & Patel, 2019).

Nguyen and Tran (2020) highlight that women often lead income-generating activities, facilitate community mobilisation, and foster social networks essential for recovery. This study emphasises women's crucial roles in livelihood reconstruction, especially in post-conflict or disaster-affected settings. Moreover, Osei-Tutu et al. (2021) argue that empowering women in livelihood initiatives enhances resilience and sustainable development outcomes. The high regard for women's contributions in this study aligns with this body of research, underscoring the need to recognise and support women's agency in livelihood reconstruction efforts. Research highlights that women are not only caregivers but also key economic agents who engage in activities such as trade, agriculture, and small-scale entrepreneurship, which are crucial for recovery (Kabeer, 2003; Heinrich, 2016). This aligns with the results, which show that respondents firmly believe in the effectiveness of women's contributions during reconstruction efforts.

The increased recognition of women's contributions can lead to more inclusive policies and programs aimed at supporting their economic activities, aligning with the findings of Cramer (2010), who argues that empowering women economically is crucial for community resilience and development. This positive perception can have broader implications for community governance and recovery policies. According to UN Women (2015), including women in decision-making processes and prioritising their needs in recovery initiatives leads to greater community stability and a faster return to normalcy. This highlights an opportunity for stakeholders to leverage the recognised significance of women's contributions to incorporate gender perspectives into livelihood reconstruction strategies further.

The high percentages of respondents perceiving strong family integration suggest a resilient community response to the trauma of separation. Literature on post-conflict recovery emphasises the importance of family units in rebuilding social networks and community structures (Fortier, 2015). Studies have shown that when families are reunited, the resulting emotional and social support can bolster community resilience and enhance overall recovery (Mastorillo et al., 2016). The 9% of respondents who were neutral regarding the level of integration may indicate uncertainty or variability in experiences, where some families might have successfully reunited while others continue to face challenges. This sentiment resonates with findings by Arjona and Kalyvas (2008), who noted that while some individuals find ways to reconnect after conflict, others may experience ongoing fragmentation due to unresolved trauma or logistical barriers in reuniting.

The 6% of respondents who described the integration as "low" and the 2% who considered it "very low" highlight that challenges persist for certain families. These could include lingering distrust, psychological scars from the violence experienced, or practical barriers to reunification, such as displacement or lack of resources. Literature supports the notion that even amidst successful reunification efforts, underlying issues such as trauma and altered family dynamics can inhibit full reintegration (Lund, 2018).

A strong societal belief in women's pivotal role in providing psychological support and assistance to sexual violence survivors. The high agreement levels align with existing literature that emphasises women's natural inclination and societal expectations to offer empathetic and nurturing support in such contexts (Johnson et al., 2020; Lee & Kim, 2019). Furthermore, these

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findings underscore the importance of empowering women in counselling roles, which can enhance victims' recovery and resilience. However, the minority who disagree or remain neutral may reflect lingering gender stereotypes or concerns about the adequacy of women's contributions, highlighting the need for continued advocacy for gender-sensitive training and support systems (Smith & Taylor, 2021). Addressing these perceptions can improve the effectiveness and inclusivity of counselling services for sexual violence victims.

A study done by Johnson et al. (2020) noted that women often serve as primary responders in community-based support systems, providing emotional and psychological aid. Similarly, Lee and Kim (2021) emphasised that women's empathetic communication skills significantly influence victims' healing processes. These findings reinforce the highly favourable response observed in the current data, suggesting that societal perceptions align with both academic and practical understandings of women's contributions in this area.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

This study examined the roles of women in post-conflict peacebuilding in Molo Sub-County, revealing a critical paradox between grassroots engagement and formal exclusion. While 86% of women actively participate in community peacebuilding initiatives, making significant contributions to livelihood reconstruction, family reunification, and psychosocial support, over 80% report being underrepresented in decision-making bodies, and 77% face complete exclusion from formal peace negotiations. Key barriers include marital and occupational constraints (70%), low education levels, cultural norms, and inadequate training. These findings validate Rational Choice Theory's explanation of how capacity constraints shape participation, and Social Exchange Theory's emphasis on how eroded trust undermines sustained engagement. The weak local implementation of UNSCR 1325 further marginalises women despite their proven effectiveness. While women in Molo Sub-County are indispensable grassroots peacebuilders, systemic barriers significantly limit their formal influence. Sustainable peace requires targeted interventions, including capacity-building programs, legal mandates for inclusion in peace structures, and the strengthened implementation of gender-responsive frameworks at the county level. Only through addressing these structural constraints can women's full potential in post-conflict reconstruction be realised.

## **7.0 Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

To advance inclusive peacebuilding, it is essential to develop and implement gender-sensitive policies that explicitly recognise and support the diverse roles women play in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. These policies should be reinforced through community-based training programs that equip women with leadership, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills, thereby enabling them to participate meaningfully in peace processes. Local leadership and decision-making bodies should be encouraged to actively include women and ensure their perspectives are integrated into peacebuilding and reconstruction initiatives. Such inclusion fosters more representative, equitable, and sustainable outcomes. To further strengthen women's roles in post-conflict settings, community-based initiatives should be promoted to acknowledge and institutionalise their contributions formally. Civil society organisations, local leaders, and community groups can facilitate awareness campaigns that highlight the significance of women's involvement and encourage their active engagement across all levels of peace processes. Tailored capacity-building programs can provide women with the necessary tools to participate effectively and confidently. Future research should examine the long-term impacts of women's participation at both grassroots and institutional levels, assessing how sustained engagement contributes to peace and community development. Additionally, there is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of current strategies for implementing

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t4367>

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) at the local level, with a focus on identifying best practices and areas for improvement.

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