



# Gendered dimensions of emerging security threats: Exploring the nexus of climate change, violent extremism, and digital governance under the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in Africa

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the gendered dimensions of emerging security threats in Africa by analyzing the interconnected impacts of climate change, violent extremism, and digital insecurity within the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. Despite normative advances under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and the African Union Continental Results Framework (2020–2030), implementation gaps persist due to structural inequalities, governance deficits, and widening digital divides. Guided by Structural Violence Theory, Intersectional Feminist perspectives, and Digital Governance Theory, the study investigates how environmental stress, extremist violence, and digital exclusion interact to shape women’s insecurity and constrain their participation in peace-building processes. A qualitative comparative approach is employed, drawing on document analysis and regional synthesis from the Sahel, Horn of Africa, and Great Lakes regions. Findings show that climate-induced displacement, resource scarcity, violent extremism, and digital harms such as online harassment and misinformation disproportionately affect women and girls, reinforcing economic marginalization, gender-based violence, and political exclusion. The study further finds that these dynamics are mutually reinforcing, producing a systemic pattern of structural violence across regions. The study recommends the integration of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms into WPS frameworks, the strengthening of gender-responsive digital governance, the mainstreaming of climate security into WPS National Action Plans, and expanded investments in women’s digital inclusion, capacity building, and inter-sectoral coordination. The study concludes that addressing women’s insecurity in Africa requires an integrated, intersectional, and multi-sectoral approach that links climate governance, countering violent extremism, and digital inclusion within a strengthened WPS agenda.

**Keywords:** Africa, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Climate Change, Digital Governance, Gender, Peace and Security, Violent Extremism, Women

## I. INTRODUCTION

The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000 marked a significant shift in international peace and security. It recognized the participation of women as being an essential component of conflict prevention, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and post-conflict recovery (United Nations, 2000). Across Africa, this commitment has been reinforced through the African Union Continental Results Framework (2020–2030), Regional Economic Communities, and National Action Plans adopted in countries including Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Africa (African Union, 2020). Collectively, these frameworks have strengthened the normative foundation for integrating gender perspectives into peace and security governance. Nevertheless, translating these commitments into practice remains challenging as the nature of insecurity across the continent continues to evolve.

Much of the early implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda was designed around conventional armed conflict and post-conflict reconstruction (Antoniјеvić, 2022). While these priorities remain important, they do not fully capture the complex and interconnected security challenges confronting many African societies today. Climate change, violent extremism, and digital insecurity increasingly interact to shape patterns of conflict, displacement, governance, and social exclusion (Kingdon & Gray, 2022). Examining these issues in isolation risks overlooking how they reinforce one another and produce new forms of insecurity, particularly for women living in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

Climate change illustrates this changing security landscape. Across the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and parts of the Great Lakes region, prolonged droughts, floods, and environmental degradation have disrupted livelihoods and intensified competition over increasingly scarce natural resources. In northern Kenya, for example, recurrent drought



has contributed to disputes over grazing land and water, while in the Lake Chad Basin environmental decline has compounded existing economic and security pressures. These environmental changes affect entire communities but often place disproportionate burdens on women because of their central roles in food production, water collection, household care, and informal economic activities (Kingdon & Gray, 2022). Climate-induced displacement further exposes women and girls to gender-based violence, trafficking, and exploitation, particularly where public institutions and protection mechanisms are weak.

Violent extremism has compounded these vulnerabilities in several African regions. Armed groups such as Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) continue to exploit weak governance, economic marginalization, youth unemployment, and local grievances to expand their influence. Existing research demonstrates that women experience these conflicts in gender-specific ways through abduction, forced marriage, sexual violence, displacement, and economic deprivation (UN Women, 2022). At the same time, portraying women solely as victims overlooks their diverse roles within conflict environments. Women frequently act as community mediators, peace advocates, humanitarian actors, and local negotiators, while some are coerced into supporting extremist organizations as couriers, informants, or providers of logistical support (Krause, 2015). These varied experiences demonstrate the need for more nuanced analyses of women's agency within contexts of insecurity.

Digital transformation has added another layer to Africa's evolving security environment. Expanding access to mobile technologies and digital platforms has created new opportunities for civic participation, early warning systems, and peacebuilding initiatives. However, these technologies have also generated new risks. Women activists, journalists, and peacebuilders increasingly encounter cyber harassment, coordinated disinformation campaigns, online surveillance, and gender-based digital violence that discourage their participation in public decision-making (Gurumurthy & Chami, 2019). Moreover, unequal access to digital infrastructure, affordable connectivity, and digital literacy continues to limit women's ability to benefit from emerging technologies, particularly in rural and conflict-affected communities. As a result, digital exclusion has become an increasingly important dimension of gender inequality and insecurity.

These developments should not be understood as separate policy challenges. Environmental stress can intensify economic hardship and displacement, creating conditions that extremist organizations exploit for recruitment and local influence. Digital platforms may then facilitate the spread of extremist narratives, misinformation, and gendered harassment, reinforcing exclusion from political and peacebuilding processes. Taken together, these interconnected dynamics generate forms of structural violence that extend beyond conventional understandings of armed conflict (Loadenthal, 2018). They reveal how environmental, political, economic, and technological factors simultaneously shape women's security and participation in peacebuilding.

Although the WPS Agenda has made important normative advances, its implementation has not kept pace with these evolving realities. Much of the existing scholarship examines climate security, violent extremism, and digital insecurity as distinct areas of research, resulting in fragmented policy responses. Consequently, limited attention has been given to how these threats interact to influence women's experiences across different conflict settings in Africa. In addition, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms including indigenous mediation practices, women-led peace initiatives, and community-based conflict resolution systems remain insufficiently integrated into WPS implementation, climate governance, and digital security strategies despite growing evidence of their contribution to locally legitimate and sustainable peace (Langa, 2026).

This study addresses these gaps by examining how climate change, violent extremism, and digital insecurity collectively influence women's vulnerabilities and participation in peacebuilding across the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes region. It also investigates how ADR mechanisms can strengthen inclusive and gender-responsive approaches to peace and security governance by complementing formal institutional responses. Drawing on Structural Violence Theory, Intersectional Feminist Theory, and Digital Governance Theory, the study develops an integrated analytical framework for understanding the interconnected drivers of insecurity affecting women in contemporary Africa. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to ongoing debates on strengthening the WPS Agenda in response to emerging and overlapping security challenges

### 1.1 Research Objectives

- i. To examine how climate change, violent extremism, and digital insecurity intersect to shape women's vulnerabilities and participation in peace and security processes in Africa.
- ii. To analyze how structural inequalities and digital governance gaps reinforce gendered insecurity within the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda.
- iii. To assess the role of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms in promoting inclusive, community-based, and gender-responsive peace-building in selected African regions.



## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is grounded in Structural Violence Theory, Intersectional Feminism, and Digital Governance Theory. The three perspectives are used in a complementary rather than competing manner: Structural Violence Theory explains the systemic production of insecurity; Intersectional Feminism explains why insecurity is experienced differently among women; and Digital Governance Theory explains how contemporary digital systems can reproduce or mitigate those inequalities.

#### 2.1.1 Structural Violence Theory

Structural Violence Theory, developed by Johan Galtung (1969), broadens the understanding of violence beyond direct physical harm to include the social, political, and economic arrangements that systematically deny individuals the opportunity to meet their basic needs. Rather than viewing insecurity solely as the result of armed conflict, the theory emphasizes that unequal institutions and power relations can generate persistent forms of harm by limiting access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making. This perspective is particularly relevant to contemporary security challenges, where structural inequalities often shape who is most exposed to risk long before violence becomes visible.

Within the context of this study, structural violence is witnessed in persistent inequalities affecting women to access to land, education, political representation, financial resources, and digital technologies (True, 2012). These forms of exclusion reduce the capacity of women to respond to climate-induced shocks. In turn, this increases their vulnerability during periods of violent conflict, and constrains their participation in peace building processes. For example, women without secure land tenure or access to climate-resilient resources are less able to adapt to prolonged droughts or environmental degradation, while limited digital access restricts their ability to obtain information, participate in governance, or access early warning systems.

The theory is especially useful because it explains how climate change, violent extremism, and digital insecurity reinforce existing inequalities rather than creating entirely new forms of vulnerability. Environmental stress often magnifies economic disadvantage, extremist violence exploits communities already weakened by social exclusion, and unequal digital access reproduces existing power imbalances through algorithmic bias, surveillance, and online harassment (Eubanks, 2018). Recent evidence indicates that climate change continues to deepen gendered poverty across many African countries, while persistent disparities in digital infrastructure and digital literacy remain significant barriers to women's participation in public life (UN Women, 2025; GSMA, 2024). Structural Violence Theory therefore provides a useful lens for explaining why women's insecurity is unevenly experienced and why formal commitments under the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda have not consistently translated into substantive equality or meaningful participation.

#### 2.1.2 Intersectional Feminist Perspective

The intersectional feminist perspective emerged as critique of approaches that treated women as a single, homogeneous category. Crenshaw argued that experiences of discrimination are shaped by the interaction of multiple social identities, including gender, ethnicity, class, age, disability, and geographic location (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Consequently, vulnerability and access to power cannot be understood through gender alone but must be examined within broader systems of inequality.

This perspective is particularly relevant to African peace and security contexts because women experience climate change, violent extremism, and digital exclusion in diverse ways. Rural women affected by drought may face different challenges from urban women experiencing digital harassment, while displaced women living in conflict zones often confront additional barriers associated with poverty, ethnicity, or disability (Gurumurthy & Chami, 2019). Treating women as a uniform group risks overlooking these differences and may lead to policy responses that benefit some groups while excluding others.

Intersectionality therefore strengthens this study by highlighting how multiple forms of marginalization interact to influence women's participation in peacebuilding and governance. It demonstrates that barriers to participation are produced not only through patriarchal norms but also through economic inequality, ethnic discrimination, geographic isolation, and unequal access to digital technologies (Muigua, 2023). Applying this perspective enables the study to examine whose voices are represented within peace processes, whose experiences remain marginalized, and how more inclusive approaches to mediation, climate governance, and digital policy can be developed.



### 2.1.3 Digital Governance Theory

Digital Governance Theory examines how digital technologies, institutions, and regulatory frameworks influence political participation, access to information, and the distribution of power in increasingly digital societies (Bannister & Connolly, 2014). Rather than treating technology as politically neutral, the theory argues that digital systems reflect the social and institutional environments within which they operate. As a result, digital platforms can either promote inclusion and democratic participation or reinforce existing inequalities.

This perspective has become increasingly relevant as digital technologies assume a greater role in conflict prevention, humanitarian response, governance, and peacebuilding across Africa. Mobile communication, social media, and digital early warning systems have expanded opportunities for civic engagement and community mobilization. At the same time, unequal internet access, weak regulatory frameworks, algorithmic discrimination, and cyber violence continue to restrict women's participation in digital spaces.

Women activists, journalists, mediators, and peacebuilders are frequently subjected to online harassment, coordinated disinformation campaigns, and digital surveillance that discourage public engagement and undermine their influence in governance processes (Fuchs, 2020). Digital Governance Theory therefore complements Structural Violence Theory by demonstrating how technological systems reproduce broader social inequalities within online environments. It also aligns with feminist approaches to digital justice by emphasizing equitable access to technology, safe online participation, and accountable digital governance. These principles directly support the participation and protection pillars of the WPS Agenda while extending them into emerging digital security contexts.

### 2.1.4 Theoretical Synthesis

Individually, each theoretical perspective explains a different dimension of women's insecurity; collectively, they provide a more comprehensive framework for analysing the complex security environment examined in this study. Bringing these theories together addresses an important limitation in existing scholarship, which often examines environmental insecurity, violent extremism, or digital governance as separate policy domains. An integrated framework makes it possible to analyse how these challenges interact and reinforce one another within women's everyday experiences. It also provides a stronger basis for examining the role of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms in strengthening inclusive peacebuilding and governance.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

### 2.2.1 Climate Change, Violent Extremism, and Digital Insecurity as Intersecting Drivers of Women's Vulnerability and Participation in Peace and Security

Climate change is widely understood as a "threat multiplier" that intensifies existing social and political vulnerabilities rather than acting as a direct cause of conflict (UNDP, 2023). In regions such as the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes, climate variability has heightened competition over land and water, thereby exacerbating underlying inequalities (UNDP, 2023). However, much of the climate-security literature remains gender-blind or reductionist, portraying women primarily as victims rather than as political actors and agents of adaptation (Dankelman, 2010). Gendered divisions of labor place women at the front-line of climate stress while simultaneously excluding them from formal adaptation and resource-governance structures (Djouidi & Brockhaus, 2011). Empirical studies show that women contribute significantly to community-based adaptation and local resource negotiation, yet these contributions remain informal and under-recognized in formal governance systems (Agarwal, 2010; Djouidi et al., 2016). The literature therefore fails to adequately connect climate insecurity with broader systems of violence, exclusion, and governance that shape women's security experiences.

Research on violent extremism in Africa has traditionally focused on security threats, counter-terrorism strategies, and state fragility (UNDP, 2021; Bello-Schünemann et al., 2018). This dominant framing often obscures the gendered political economy that enables extremist expansion. Groups such as Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, JNIM, and ISGS operate within contexts characterized by structural inequality, weak governance, and social exclusion (UNDP, 2021). Women experience these conflicts in complex ways: they are subjected to abduction, forced marriage, and sexual violence, but may also be mobilized as recruiters, logistical actors, and symbolic resources within extremist networks (UN Women, 2022). This challenges binary portrayals of women as either passive victims or empowered agents. Extremist recruitment is closely linked to socio-economic marginalization, youth unemployment, educational exclusion, and political disenfranchisement (World Bank, 2022). The literature rarely examines how these structural conditions intersect with climate stress and digital exclusion to create compounded vulnerabilities for women.

Digital transformation has reshaped governance, activism, and security across Africa, yet access and participation remain deeply unequal (Bannister & Connolly, 2014; UNESCO, 2022). Women continue to face significant barriers related to affordability, infrastructure, digital literacy, and social norms (GSMA, 2023). These disparities constitute a contemporary form of structural violence because they restrict access to information, economic opportunities, and political participation (Eubanks, 2018). Beyond access, digital spaces have become sites of



intensified gendered harm. Women activists, journalists, and peace-builders frequently encounter cyber harassment, disinformation campaigns, and coordinated online attacks that undermine civic participation and psychological safety (Gurumurthy & Chami, 2019). The concept of "cyber patriarchy" has emerged to describe how platform governance and algorithmic systems reproduce male-dominated participation and visibility (Fuchs, 2020). Despite these developments, digital insecurity is still often treated as a technological issue rather than a core peace and security concern.

### **2.2.2 Structural Inequalities, Digital Governance, and the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in Africa**

Structural inequalities remain central to women's insecurity across many African contexts. Poverty, unequal land ownership, limited access to education, political exclusion, and patriarchal norms continue to shape women's vulnerability to conflict, climate stress, and economic shocks (True, 2012). These inequalities are not merely social outcomes; they are embedded in institutions, laws, and governance systems, making them forms of structural violence. Within WPS implementation, this means that participation cannot be understood solely in terms of numerical representation. Women may occupy formal spaces while still lacking meaningful influence over resource allocation, security policy, and conflict-resolution processes. The literature therefore suggests that WPS frameworks risk emphasizing participation indicators without sufficiently addressing the structural conditions that limit substantive agency.

Digital governance concerns the rules, institutions, and power relations that shape digital participation and rights. In many African states, regulatory frameworks remain uneven, cybersecurity protections are weak, and platform governance is often externally driven. These governance gaps disproportionately affect women because they intersect with existing socio-economic inequalities. Women who lack affordable internet access, digital literacy, or legal protection against online abuse face barriers to participation in digital governance, civic activism, and peace-building initiatives. Moreover, algorithmic bias and platform moderation practices can amplify existing social hierarchies (Fuchs, 2020). Consequently, digital governance is not a neutral administrative issue; it is a political arena where inclusion, representation, and security are contested.

Recent scholarship on feminist digital governance emphasizes the importance of digital rights, online safety, data justice, and equitable access (Gurumurthy & Chami, 2019). From a WPS perspective, digital inclusion is increasingly necessary for meaningful participation in peace processes, early-warning systems, mediation networks, and civic engagement. However, current WPS implementation frameworks rarely integrate digital rights and digital safety into their core indicators. This omission creates a gap between the realities of contemporary political participation and the institutional tools used to measure women's inclusion. Without gender-responsive digital governance, online spaces can reproduce the same exclusions that WPS seeks to overcome.

### **2.2.3 Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Mechanisms and Gender-Responsive Community Peace-building in Africa**

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms rooted in African indigenous governance systems have long played important roles in mediation, reconciliation, and restorative justice (Muigua, 2023). These mechanisms include elder councils, customary courts, women-led mediation groups, and community dialogue platforms. Their strength lies in accessibility, cultural legitimacy, and the ability to address localized disputes over land, resources, and social relations. Women frequently contribute to these processes through community reconciliation, care-giving, and social cohesion work, although such contributions are often informal and insufficiently recognized within formal peace architectures (El-Bushra, 2018). This reflects a broader hierarchy between state-centric governance systems and indigenous peace infrastructures.

Evidence from multiple African contexts shows that women participate actively in local mediation and community dialogue processes, particularly in resolving disputes related to land, family relations, and communal violence (UN Women, 2015; El-Bushra, 2018). Despite these contributions, formal peace processes often privilege political elites, military actors, and state institutions over community-based mediators, resulting in women's peace-building roles remaining under-documented and undervalued (UN Women, 2015). From an intersectional perspective, women's participation in ADR is shaped by class, ethnicity, age, geography, and social status, producing diverse experiences of inclusion and exclusion within customary governance systems (El-Bushra, J., & Gardner, J. (2016). While some women are excluded from traditional decision-making structures, others exercise considerable informal influence through community networks, social legitimacy, and grassroots mediation practices (El-Bushra, 2018). This variation underscores the need for gender-sensitive approaches that recognize both the opportunities and limitations inherent within indigenous peace and dispute-resolution systems. This variation highlights the need for gender-sensitive approaches that recognize both opportunities and limitations within indigenous systems.



## 2.3 Empirical Gaps and Theoretical Synthesis

The literature reviewed reveals several interconnected gaps. First, research on climate change, violent extremism, and digital insecurity remains largely fragmented, treating these issues as separate sectors rather than as mutually reinforcing systems of insecurity. This fragmentation limits understanding of how women experience compounded vulnerabilities across environmental, security, and digital domains (Hendricks, 2021; Confortini & Kirby, 2020).

Second, WPS implementation studies continue to emphasize participation and representation while paying insufficient attention to structural inequalities and digital governance deficits that shape women's actual capacity to participate meaningfully. Third, although ADR is recognized within conflict resolution scholarship, its role in responding to contemporary hybrid insecurities remains under-researched.

Theoretically, existing scholarship often privileges either structural, identity-based, or technological explanations in isolation. Few studies integrate Structural Violence Theory, Intersectional Feminism, and Digital Governance Theory into a single analytical framework capable of explaining how environmental stress, extremist violence, and digital exclusion interact to shape women's security experiences and participation within the WPS Agenda. This study addresses that gap by adopting an integrated Conceptual Framework illustrated in figure I which connects structural, intersectional, and digital dimensions of gendered insecurity and peace-building in Africa.

## III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a PRISMA-informed qualitative systematic review and synthesis approach to examine the intersection of climate change, violent extremism, and digital insecurity within the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) framework in Africa. The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework guided the systematic identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of relevant literature and policy documents, ensuring transparency, replicability, and methodological rigor (Page et al., 2021). The approach was appropriate for synthesizing heterogeneous qualitative evidence across security, governance, and development domains where empirical comparability is limited but conceptual convergence is critical.

### 3.1 Research Design

The study employed an exploratory–explanatory qualitative design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is exploratory in its investigation of under-theorized and emerging intersections between climate change, violent extremism, and digital insecurity within Women, Peace and Security (WPS) implementation in Africa. It is explanatory in its focus on how structural violence, intersectional inequalities, and digital governance deficits collectively shape differentiated experiences of insecurity and participation among women.

This design was appropriate for analyzing complex, multi-causal, and interdependent phenomena where relationships are non-linear and embedded within structural and institutional contexts. The study was explicitly guided by Structural Violence Theory (Galtung, 1969), Intersectional Feminist Theory (Crenshaw, 1989), and Digital Governance Theory (Bannister & Connolly, 2014), which together form the analytical foundation for data extraction, coding, and synthesis.

The methodological process was directly structured around the three research objectives:

Objective 1 guided the identification and synthesis of literature examining the intersections between climate change, violent extremism, and digital insecurity as drivers of gendered insecurity.

Objective 2 informed analytical focus on structural inequalities and digital governance deficits shaping Women, Peace and Security (WPS) implementation outcomes.

Objective 3 guided the extraction and analysis of literature on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms in relation to community-based, gender-responsive peace-building.

This objective-driven structure ensured coherence between the research questions, data collection, and analytical framework.

#### 3.1.1 Data Sources and Search Strategy

A comprehensive systematic search was conducted across academic databases and institutional repositories including Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, Web of Science, UN digital libraries, African Union publications, and reports from UN Women, UNDP, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), and the World Bank.

Search strings combined keywords such as: “Women, Peace and Security Africa,” “climate security gender,” “violent extremism women Africa,” “digital governance gender,” “gendered insecurity,” and “alternative dispute resolution peace-building Africa.” The search was limited to publications between 2010 and 2025 to capture contemporary developments in climate-security, counter-extremism, digital governance, and WPS implementation.



### 3.1.2 PRISMA Screening Process

The study followed four PRISMA phases: Identification – retrieval of academic, policy, and institutional records; Screening – removal of duplicates and title/abstract relevance filtering; Eligibility – full-text review against inclusion/exclusion criteria and Inclusion – final corpus selected for thematic synthesis. Studies were included if they were peer-reviewed or produced by recognized institutions (UN, AU, World Bank, NGOs with methodological transparency), addressed at least one of the three core domains: climate change, violent extremism, or digital governance, included gendered, WPS, or peace-building dimensions and provided empirical, theoretical, or policy-relevant analysis. However, studies were excluded if they lacked methodological clarity or empirical grounding, were opinion-based without analytical evidence, focused exclusively on non-African contexts without transferable theoretical value and addressed purely technical cybersecurity or biomedical climate science without governance relevance.

### 3.2 Data Sources and Case Selection

This study relies exclusively on secondary qualitative data drawn from peer-reviewed literature, policy documents, institutional reports, and regional governance assessments. A purposive comparative case selection strategy was employed to enable analytical depth and cross-regional comparison rather than statistical generalization. The selected regions include: Sahel (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso), Horn of Africa (Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya) and, Great Lakes region (Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi)

These regions were selected because they represent distinct yet interconnected manifestations of contemporary insecurity in Africa. The Sahel illustrates the interaction between climate stress and violent extremism. The Horn of Africa reflects the convergence of climate-induced displacement, violent extremism, and expanding digital governance systems. The Great Lakes region provides insight into post-conflict governance, peace-building transitions, and community-based dispute resolution systems. This comparative design enhances analytical robustness by enabling cross-regional examination of gendered insecurity within the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) framework.

#### 3.2.1 Quality Assessment of Included Studies

A structured quality appraisal process was applied to ensure credibility, reliability, and analytical consistency of the evidence base. Included studies were assessed based on methodological transparency, empirical grounding, and relevance to the research objectives. Priority was given to peer-reviewed academic publications, Institutional reports from UN agencies, African Union, World Bank, and ISS and Policy documents with clearly defined analytical or methodological frameworks. Studies lacking methodological rigor, empirical substantiation, or relevance to WPS, climate security, violent extremism, or digital governance were excluded. This process enhanced the trustworthiness and validity of synthesized findings (Munn, Z., et al., 2018).

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify, interpret, and synthesize recurring patterns across diverse qualitative sources (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis enabled the systematic integration of multi-sectoral evidence while preserving contextual depth across regions and policy domains. The analysis combined deductive and interpretive coding approaches, allowing themes to be identified in relation to the study's theoretical framework while remaining sensitive to emergent patterns within the literature. Consistent with Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis approach, themes were iteratively refined through repeated engagement with the data to ensure coherence, analytical depth, and alignment with the study objectives.

A deductive–abductive coding framework was applied. Deductive coding was guided by: Structural Violence Theory (Galtung, 1969), Intersectional Feminist Theory (Crenshaw, 1989) and, Digital Governance Theory (Bannister & Connolly, 2014)

These frameworks informed the identification of structural inequalities and institutional exclusions, intersectional dimensions of vulnerability, digital governance gaps and technological exclusion, patterns of gendered insecurity across climate and conflict systems. An abductive layer of analysis allowed for the emergence of cross-cutting relationships between climate change, violent extremism, and digital insecurity, reflecting the study's focus on their interconnected nature. Three primary analytical categories were developed in alignment with the research objectives and a fourth cross-cutting analytical lens examined the climate–extremism–digital insecurity nexus, capturing their mutually reinforcing dynamics.

#### 3.3.1 Triangulation and Rigor

Methodological triangulation was applied across multiple data sources, including peer-reviewed literature, policy documents, and institutional datasets, to strengthen the credibility and robustness of the findings (Patton, 1999;



Carter et al., 2014). Cross-source verification enabled the identification of convergent and divergent patterns while reducing potential bias associated with single-source dependency. Trustworthiness was further enhanced through systematic documentation of search strategies, inclusion and exclusion criteria, coding procedures, and thematic development processes. Dependability, transparency, and analytical consistency were maintained through adherence to PRISMA-informed review procedures and established standards for qualitative evidence synthesis (Page et al., 2021; Nowell et al., 2017).

### **3.4 Ethical Considerations and Methodological Limitations**

As a secondary qualitative synthesis, this study did not involve human participants and therefore posed minimal direct ethical risk. However, ethical considerations were observed in relation to accurate representation, contextual sensitivity, and responsible synthesis of conflict-related and gender-sensitive literature. The study is limited by reliance on secondary data, which may reflect reporting bias, uneven regional coverage, and gaps in conflict-affected contexts. Additionally, variations in data availability across African regions may affect comparability. However, these limitations are mitigated through systematic PRISMA procedures, quality appraisal, triangulation, and theory-driven analysis, which collectively strengthen the validity and analytical depth of findings.

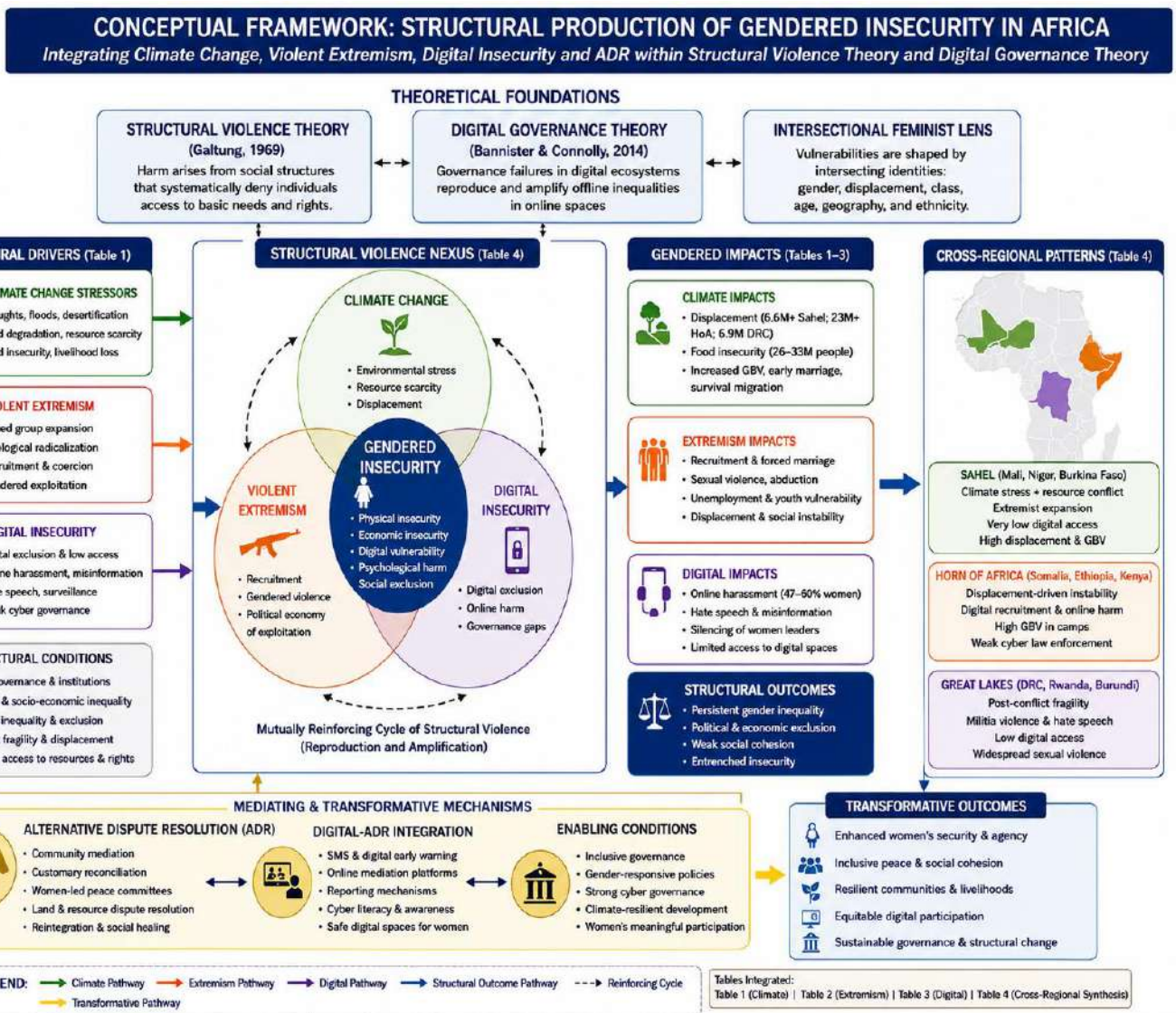
## **IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Intersections of Climate Change, Violent Extremism, and Digital Insecurity in Shaping Gendered Insecurity**

#### **4.1.1 Reaffirming the Structural Violence Nexus**

The findings provide strong empirical confirmation that climate change, violent extremism, and digital insecurity do not operate as discrete domains of risk but rather constitute an integrated and mutually reinforcing system of structural violence. This directly validates Galtung's (1969) Structural Violence Theory, which conceptualizes insecurity as being produced through embedded institutional inequalities rather than isolated acts of direct violence.

However, the findings extend this theoretical foundation in a significant way. As illustrated in the Conceptual Framework (Figure 2), structural violence in the African context is no longer confined to physical institutions or governance systems; it is simultaneously environmentally induced and digitally mediated. Climate stress restructures resource access, violent extremism exploits governance vacuums, and digital systems amplify exclusion and harm. This triadic interaction produces what can be analytically understood as a multi-layered structural violence ecosystem, which is not fully captured in classical security or even early feminist security scholarship (Confortini & Kirby, 2020; UNDP, 2021).



**Figure 1**  
*Conceptual Framework redefined*

The interplay of climate stress, violent extremism, and digital insecurity forms a reinforcing cycle that deepens women’s vulnerabilities within structurally unequal systems. Climate stress, through droughts, floods, and resource scarcity, triggers conflicts over land and livelihoods, which in turn create conditions conducive to extremist recruitment and exploitation, particularly of marginalized women and youth. Violent extremism, manifesting both physically and ideologically, intensifies insecurity and restricts women’s participation in governance and decision-making. Concurrently, digital insecurity such as online harassment, misinformation, and extremist propaganda which amplifies exclusion and reinforces systemic barriers to women’s civic and political engagement.

These three threats are mutually reinforcing: vulnerabilities in one domain exacerbate risks in the others, producing a cyclical feedback loop of structural violence. An intersectional lens highlights that age, ethnicity, displacement, and socioeconomic status shape women’s differential exposure, emphasizing the need for integrated, context-sensitive interventions. Within this nexus, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) functions as a mediating mechanism that mitigates these compounded vulnerabilities. ADR strategies including community dialogue, mediation, reintegration, and digital tools for reporting and knowledge-sharing, bridge local and formal peace-building processes. When supported by institutional frameworks, formal policy integration, and alignment with digital governance, ADR enables women to actively participate in shaping resilient, gender-inclusive peace and security outcomes.

**4.1.2 Climate Change as an Entry Point into the Insecurity System**

Consistent with the literature (UNDP, 2023; FAO et al., 2023), the findings reaffirm that climate change does not directly cause conflict. Instead, it functions as a structural “entry point variable” that reshapes access to survival



resources within already unequal governance systems. However, Table 1 demonstrates that climate stress does more than intensify vulnerability; it actively re-configures governance authority in fragile spaces.

In the Sahel, Horn of Africa, and Great Lakes regions, climate shocks systematically destabilize livelihoods, prompting displacement and intensifying competition over land and water. This creates governance vacuums that are not neutral but actively filled by alternative actors, including informal authorities and extremist groups. This finding extends the widely accepted “threat multiplier” thesis by demonstrating that climate change also functions as a ***governance reallocation mechanism***, a dimension under-explored in existing literature.

**Table 1**  
*Synthesis of Climate-Induced Gendered Insecurity*

Region	Climate Stressors /Evidence	Displacement (Quantitative)	Poverty / Food Insecurity	Gendered Impacts (GBV, Social Outcomes)	Structural Violence Indicators	Role of ADR / Local Mediation	Data Sources
Sahel (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso)	Desertification, droughts, land degradation	6.6M+ displaced (IDMC, 2023)	>33M food insecure; poverty >40%	High GBV prevalence; child marriage >60% (Niger); early marriage, survival migration	Exclusion from land rights, climate finance, weak state protection	Mediation council women’s peace, Committees negotiate grazing rights, land access, solve disputes	UN Women (2021); IDMC (2023); FAO et al. (2023)
Horn of Africa (Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya)	Droughts, floods, locust invasions	23M+ displaced (IOM, 2022)	30M+ food insecure	GBV in camps (30–40%+); 45% lifetime GBV in Kenya	Gender-blind adaptation systems; limited land tenure	Women-led mediation groups and dialogues resolve pastoralists and displacement-related disputes	UN Women (2021); IOM (2021); World Bank (2022)
Great Lakes (DRC, Rwanda, Burundi)	Floods, deforestation, land degradation	6.9M IDPs (DRC)	26M food insecure	52% lifetime IPV (DRC); conflict-related sexual violence	Weak land governance; exclusion from adaptation systems	Local reconciliation forums and customary mediation address post-conflict resource tensions	UN Women (2021); IOM (2021); World Bank (2023)

In the Sahel, environmental decline worsens insecurity in places already struggling with weak governance. Desertification and less productive farming have increased competition for land and water between herders and farmers. Women often bear a heavier burden, facing more unpaid care work, fewer ways to earn a living, and the risk of migration just to survive or being forced into early marriage. When extremist groups expand into areas with little government presence, they exploit economic hardship and local grudges, leaving women more exposed to danger.

The Horn of Africa faces similar challenges. Repeated droughts and floods there have caused widespread displacement and food shortages. Climate shocks, conflict, and weak institutions leave displaced women very vulnerable to sexual violence, exploitation, and losing their livelihoods. Unemployment, tied to climate change and social unrest, also makes people more susceptible to recruitment by armed groups like Al-Shabaab. A deeper, structural problem is that women are often shut out of climate planning, land systems, or early warning efforts. This limits how effectively they can respond to environmental shocks.

The Great Lakes region also experiences environmental decline and land shortages, which worsen ethnic tensions and displacement. Especially in eastern DRC, resource fights combine with armed conflict, poor governance, and deep-seated gender inequality. Women face widespread conflict-related sexual violence and are kept out of land management and peace talks. This breaks down community ties and heightens insecurity. A common thread across these regions is that climate change doesn't directly cause violence. Instead, it changes how people get essential resources within systems that are already unequal for men and women. When livelihoods suffer, women end up taking



on a much heavier load of social and economic tasks (a kind of "feminized crisis labor") to keep their households and communities going in increasingly tough times.

Against this backdrop, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) becomes a vital local way to handle climate-related tensions. Community mediation, traditional reconciliation, and women-led peace committees can help negotiate access.

### 4.1.3 Violent Extremism as an Adaptive Governance Substitute

The findings strongly confirm the critique in the literature that violent extremism in Africa cannot be understood purely through ideological or security-centric lenses (UNDP, 2021; World Bank, 2023). However, they go further by demonstrating that extremist groups operate as adaptive governance substitutes in structurally abandoned regions. As evidenced in Table 2, groups such as JNIM, ISGS, Boko Haram, and Al-Shabaab do not merely exploit instability; they actively regulate social order by controlling resource access, enforcing local norms, and embedding themselves within informal economies. This re-positions violent extremism as a governance function within structurally weakened states rather than an external disruption to them.

**Table 2**  
*Synthesis of Violent Extremism and Gendered Political Economy*

Region	Extremism Dynamics (Evidence)	Women's Roles	Gendered Impacts	Structural Drivers	Governance Conditions	ADR Mechanisms	Mediation	Data Sources
Sahel	47% global terrorism deaths (GTI, 2023); JNIM, ISGS, Boko Haram	Forced marriage, recruitment under coercion	Abduction, sexual slavery, displacement	Poverty, land scarcity, climate stress	Weak state presence, border insecurity	Women-led councils land/resource disputes, reintegrate and provide resolution	ADR mediate conflict	GTI (2023); UNDP (2021)
Horn of Africa	1,300+ Al-Shabaab attacks (ACLEDA, 2023)	Logistics, caregiving, digital recruitment roles	GBV in displacement; radicalization risk	Youth unemployment, displacement	Weak institutions, fragmented governance	ADR initiatives facilitate reintegrate combatants, and early-warning reporting	dialogue, female and conflict	ACLEDA (2023); UNDP (2021)
Great Lakes	120+ armed groups in eastern DRC	Informal mediation roles; forced recruitment	Sexual violence, militia exposure	Resource conflict, fragility	Weak governance, post-conflict instability	Women-led forums restore community cohesion, integrate gender-sensitive ADR mechanisms into local governance and peace processes	mediation restore cohesion, ADR	WHO (2021)

This finding significantly extends Structural Violence Theory by showing that violence is not only a consequence of governance failure but can itself become a functional governance mechanism, particularly in marginalized borderlands and conflict-prone regions. In the Sahel, violent extremism is strongly linked to environmental degradation and competition over land and water resources, which intensify communal tensions and create fertile conditions for recruitment by groups such as Boko Haram, JNIM, and ISGS (GTI, 2023; UNDP, 2021). Women experience heightened vulnerability through abduction, forced marriage, and exploitation, yet their engagement with armed groups cannot be reduced to victimhood alone. In many cases, participation is shaped by coercion, survival strategies, and lack of viable livelihood alternatives in contexts of state absence and chronic insecurity (UNICEF, 2021). This reflects a broader political economy in which extremism substitutes for governance in marginalized areas.

In the Horn of Africa, violent extremist networks increasingly integrate digital platforms, ideological narratives, and decentralized recruitment strategies (ACLEDA, 2023). Al-Shabaab's use of women in logistical, caregiving, and online mobilization roles demonstrates the gendered diversification of extremist labor (UNDP, 2021). At the same time, displacement, unemployment, and GBV create layered vulnerabilities that extend beyond physical violence to include economic and psychological coercion (UNFPA, 2020). Digital exclusion further deepens marginalization, limiting women's access to counter-narratives and protection mechanisms.

In the Great Lakes region, particularly eastern DRC, violent extremism is embedded within protracted armed conflict characterized by resource extraction, weak governance, and territorial fragmentation (UN Group of Experts,

2022). Women are disproportionately affected by sexual violence and exclusion from peace processes despite their central role in household survival and informal reconciliation structures (WHO, 2021). This demonstrates how insecurity is sustained not only by armed actors but also by exclusionary governance systems that normalize gender inequality.

Across all regions, the evidence shows that violent extremism functions less as an ideological phenomenon and more as a structural outcome of deprivation and inequality. Armed groups strategically exploit unemployment, weak institutions, and fragmented social relations to embed themselves within local economies and communities (World Bank, 2023). Women's agency is therefore structurally constrained rather than freely exercised, requiring analytical frameworks that move beyond binary victim–perpetrator classifications. Within this context, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms emerge as critical grassroots governance tools. Women-led mediation structures, community dialogue platforms, and reconciliation forums contribute to preventing radicalization, facilitating reintegration, and addressing grievances that sustain recruitment (FemWise-Africa, 2022). By linking local peace practices with formal governance systems, ADR strengthens social cohesion and positions women not only as stakeholders in peace processes but as active agents in transforming structural conditions of violence.

#### **4.1.4 Digital Insecurity as an Amplifier of Structural Inequality**

Digital Governance Theory (Bannister & Connolly, 2014) is both validated and significantly extended by the findings. While the literature review emphasized the non-neutrality of digital systems (Fuchs, 2020; Gurusurthy & Chami, 2019), the empirical evidence in Table 3 demonstrates a more complex architecture of digital power. Digital systems simultaneously function, first as instruments of exclusion through unequal access; second, instruments of harm through cyber violence, harassment, and misinformation; and third, instruments of governance control through surveillance, algorithmic bias, and platform regulation asymmetries. This trio-functional nature of digital systems is not adequately captured in existing WPS or feminist digital governance literature, which often treats digital insecurity as an emerging or secondary concern. The findings instead position digital governance as a central infrastructure of structural violence, deeply embedded within political and security systems.

#### **4.1.5 Intersectional Reinforcement across Systems**

While Intersectional Feminist Theory (Crenshaw, 1989) is strongly validated, the findings significantly expand its analytical scope. Vulnerability is not only produced through intersecting identities such as gender, class, and geography, but also through intersecting systems of exclusion. As illustrated in the Conceptual Framework (Figure 2), women's insecurity emerges at the intersection of three structural systems: climate governance systems, security systems, and digital governance systems. This represents a shift from identity-based Intersectionality to systems-based Intersectionality, where insecurity is produced through overlapping infrastructures of inequality rather than individual attributes alone.

### **4.2 Structural Inequalities and Digital Governance Gaps in WPS Implementation**

#### **4.2.1 Persistence of Thin Institutional WPS Implementation**

The findings strongly confirm existing critiques that Women, Peace and Security (WPS) implementation in Africa remains largely procedural rather than transformative (True, 2012; Shepherd, 2017). However, the analysis deepens this argument by demonstrating that the core limitation is not only implementation failure but structural misalignment across governance systems. As demonstrated in Tables 1–3, WPS frameworks remain normatively strong but institutionally disconnected from climate governance systems, security architectures, and digital governance regimes. This systemic fragmentation explains why increased representation has not translated into substantive security transformation for women.

#### **4.2.2 Structural Inequality as Embedded Governance Logic**

The findings reinforce Structural Violence Theory but move beyond the notion of exclusion as absence. Instead, inequality is shown to be actively embedded within institutional systems governing land access, climate adaptation financing, security provision, and digital infrastructure. This directly extends (True, 2012) by demonstrating that governance systems do not merely fail to protect women; they often reproduce insecurity through their operational logic. This re-frames the problem from “weak institutions” to *harm-producing institutions*, a critical theoretical advancement.

#### **4.2.3 Digital Governance as a WPS Blind Spot**

A major empirical contribution of the study is the identification of digital governance as a missing pillar within WPS implementation frameworks. While the literature identified this gap conceptually, the findings demonstrate its operational consequences in practice. As evidenced in Table 3, digital exclusion limits women's



access to early warning systems, peace networks, and governance participation platforms, while simultaneously exposing them to cyber violence and misinformation. This confirms that WPS frameworks remain anchored in analog governance systems, despite the digitization of contemporary insecurity.

**Table 3**  
*Synthesis of Digital Insecurity and Gendered Governance Gaps*

Region	Digital Access (Gender Gap)	Digital Insecurity (Evidence)	Governance Gaps	Gendered Outcomes	Security Implications	ADR Mediating Mechanisms	Data Sources
Sahel	<30% internet penetration; women 25–35% less access	60% women report online harassment	<40% cyber strategies	Digital exclusion, limited civic participation	Extremist recruitment via digital platforms	ADR initiatives use SMS-integrate digital awareness and early-warning systems bridging gaps in digital access.	ITU (2022); UNESCO (2021)
Horn of Africa	Kenya 46%; others <25%	47% women politicians face online abuse	Weak enforcement (28% cybercrime prosecution)	Political silencing, cyber GBV	Online radicalization, misinformation	ADR mediates conflicts arising from online harassment and misinformation, integrate cyber-literacy programs and early-warning digital monitoring to prevent escalation of extremist or social conflicts	Amnesty (2019); (FemWise -Africa, 2022).
Great Lakes	DRC/Burundi <20%; Rwanda ~35%	>50% women politicians face harassment	Weak alignment with AU cyber frameworks	Exclusion from digital governance	Hate speech fueling ethnic violence	ADR online mediation on misinformation and hate speech disputes, integrates digital governance advocacy,	IPU (2021); O HCHR HRDs report

#### 4.2.4 The Governance Paradox

A key analytical insight emerging from the findings is the governance paradox. Institutions tasked with promoting women’s inclusion in peace and security processes simultaneously exclude them from the digital infrastructures and resource systems that determine actual security outcomes. This paradox is not sufficiently addressed in existing WPS literature and represents a significant conceptual contribution of this study, highlighting the disconnect between normative inclusion and substantive empowerment.

### 4.3 Role of ADR in Gender-Responsive and Community-Based Peace-building

#### 4.3.1 ADR as Embedded Governance Architecture

While the literature positions Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) as an underutilized indigenous peace mechanism (Muigui, 2023), the findings re-frame ADR as “parallel governance architecture”. As demonstrated in Tables 1 and 2, ADR systems function as de facto governance substitutes in contexts where state institutions are weak, absent, or inaccessible. This re-framing is critical because it positions ADR not merely as a tool for conflict resolution but as an alternative institutional system regulating social order, resource negotiation, and local legitimacy.

#### 4.3.2 Gendered Ambivalence of ADR Systems

The findings confirm that women play central roles in mediation, reconciliation, and community-based peace processes. However, they also reveal a critical limitation insufficiently addressed in the literature: ADR systems are not inherently gender-transformative. As the evidence shows, ADR systems are simultaneously: culturally legitimate yet structurally patriarchal; inclusive in practice yet exclusionary in authority; accessible locally yet informal in governance status. This introduces a more critical feminist reading of indigenous governance systems and challenges overly normative assumptions in parts of the peace-building literature.



### 4.3.3 ADR in Hybrid Insecurity Governance and Missing Bridge in WPS Implementation

A key contribution of the findings is the identification of ADR as a mechanism for managing hybrid insecurity systems produced by the climate–extremism–digital nexus. However, its effectiveness remains conditional. Without integration into formal governance systems, digital infrastructures, and WPS policy frameworks, ADR remains fragmented and localized, limiting its transformative potential. This highlights the need for institutional linkage rather than standalone reliance on community mediation. The findings extend the literature by positioning ADR as the missing operational bridge between grassroots peace systems and formal WPS governance frameworks. This addresses a key gap identified in Chapter 2 regarding the disconnect between indigenous governance systems and institutional peace-building structures.

### 4.4 Cross-Objective Synthesis: Toward a Structural Violence Systems Model

Across all three objectives, the findings converge on a single analytical conclusion: gendered insecurity in Africa is not a sectoral issue but a systemic condition. As illustrated in the **Conceptual Framework (Figure 2)**, insecurity emerges through the interaction of ecological stress, violent governance systems, and digital exclusion within structurally unequal institutions. Table 4 further demonstrates that despite regional variations, the underlying structural logic remains consistent: climate stress initiates vulnerability, extremism exploits governance vacuums, and digital systems amplify exclusion. These processes reinforce one another in a continuous cycle of structural violence that disproportionately affects women.

**Table 4**

*Cross-Regional Structural Violence Synthesis (Integrated Objectives 1–3)*

Analytical Dimension	Sahel	Horn of Africa	Great Lakes	Cross-Regional Synthesis
Primary Driver	Climate stress	Climate + displacement	Post-conflict fragility	Climate acts as structural multiplier
Conflict Pathway	Resource conflict	Displacement-driven instability	Armed group proliferation	<i>Governance failure → insecurity cycle</i>
Extremism Link	Resource-based recruitment	Digital recruitment	Territorial militia control	Extremism adapts to governance gaps
Women’s Vulnerability	Early marriage, migration	GBV in camps + displacement	Conflict sexual violence	Structuralized survival insecurity
Digital Inequality	Very low access	Moderate access	Low–moderate access	Digital exclusion reinforces inequality
Governance Gap	Weak state + climate governance	Weak enforcement systems	Fragmented governance	Systemic governance failure
ADR Role	Land mediation	Hybrid digital mediation	Customary reconciliation	ADR as parallel governance system
Structural Outcome	Displacement + fragility	Hybrid insecurity	Chronic violence	Integrated structural violence system

### 4.5 Theoretical Contribution to Literature

This study makes four key theoretical contributions. First, it extends Structural Violence Theory into climate and digital domains. Second, it re-conceptualizes Intersectionality as systems-based rather than identity-based. Third, it positions digital governance as a core infrastructure of WPS rather than a peripheral concern. Fourth, it re-frames ADR as parallel governance architecture rather than a supplementary conflict resolution tool. The findings ultimately challenge the fragmentation that characterizes dominant WPS, climate-security, and counter-extremism scholarship. Instead, they demonstrate that gendered insecurity in Africa is produced through the interaction of ecological stress, violent governance systems, and digital exclusion within structurally unequal institutions. As such, effective policy responses require a shift from Siloed interventions toward integrated structural transformation across governance, security, and digital systems, as conceptualized in Figure 2.

## V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

This study shows climate change, violent extremism, and digital insecurity aren't isolated security challenges; they're interconnected systems that together create gendered structural violence across Africa. These overlapping dynamics operate through deep structural inequalities in governance, economic systems, and digital infrastructures.



They limit women's access to resources, protection, decision-making, and meaningful participation in peace and security processes.

In the Sahel, Horn of Africa, and Great Lakes regions, the findings show climate change multiplies structural risks. It worsens resource scarcity, displacement, and livelihood insecurity. Violent extremist groups then exploit these conditions, often stepping in as adaptive governance in fragile or underserved territories. At the same time, digital insecurity, showing up as cyber harassment, misinformation, surveillance, and unequal access to digital technologies, amplifies exclusion and undercuts women's civic and political agency.

The study also finds these three domains feed into each other, creating a cycle of insecurity: climate stress destabilizes livelihoods, extremist actors exploit governance gaps, and digital systems amplify exclusion and harm. This reveals that Africa's contemporary insecurity is hybrid, systemic, and self-reinforcing, not confined to just one sector. In this context, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms serve as important local governance structures, facilitating mediation, conflict prevention, and social cohesion. They're less effective, however, when disconnected from formal governance systems, digital infrastructures, and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) frameworks.

The study concludes, then, that sustainable peace-building in Africa requires a shift from fragmented, sector-based interventions. It advocates for integrated, intersectional governance systems that simultaneously address structural inequality, environmental stress, violent conflict, and digital exclusion, with women's leadership at the forefront.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The study proposes strengthening Women, Peace and Security (WPS) frameworks by formally weaving Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms into National Action Plans. This would involve giving institutional recognition and support to women-led mediation councils, customary reconciliation systems, and community-based peace structures, treating them as legitimate parts of the peace infrastructure. Such an approach makes sense because ADR often acts as a parallel governance system in fragile, conflict-affected regions.

Beyond this, digital governance systems need restructuring to tackle gendered insecurity online. This calls for stronger regulatory frameworks against cyber violence, misinformation, and for platform accountability, all while embedding digital rights and safety within WPS implementation. Bridging the digital gender divide also requires specific efforts. That means expanding ICT infrastructure, ensuring affordable internet access, and offering digital literacy programs, especially for women in rural and conflict-affected areas. The study further advocates for fully incorporating climate security into WPS frameworks. This should cover gender-sensitive climate adaptation strategies, early warning systems, and women-inclusive natural resource governance. Such integration is essential, given how climate change multiplies insecurity and displacement.

Capacity-building is also key. Mediators, traditional leaders, and community-based peace actors need stronger skills in gender-sensitive ADR, intersectional analysis, and hybrid security awareness – including climate-related and digital risks. This will make local peace-building systems more effective and inclusive. The study also recommends stronger coordination across government ministries responsible for gender, ICT, environment, and security. This collaboration is important for overcoming fragmented policy responses and ensuring the WPS agenda gets implemented coherently and system-wide, especially as new hybrid threats emerge. The study concludes that addressing women's insecurity in Africa demands a new approach. Instead of siloed policies, an integrated governance strategy is needed. This strategy should tackle structural inequalities, climate stress, violent extremism, and digital exclusion, all while placing women at the center of peace-building, governance, and resilience systems.

## Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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