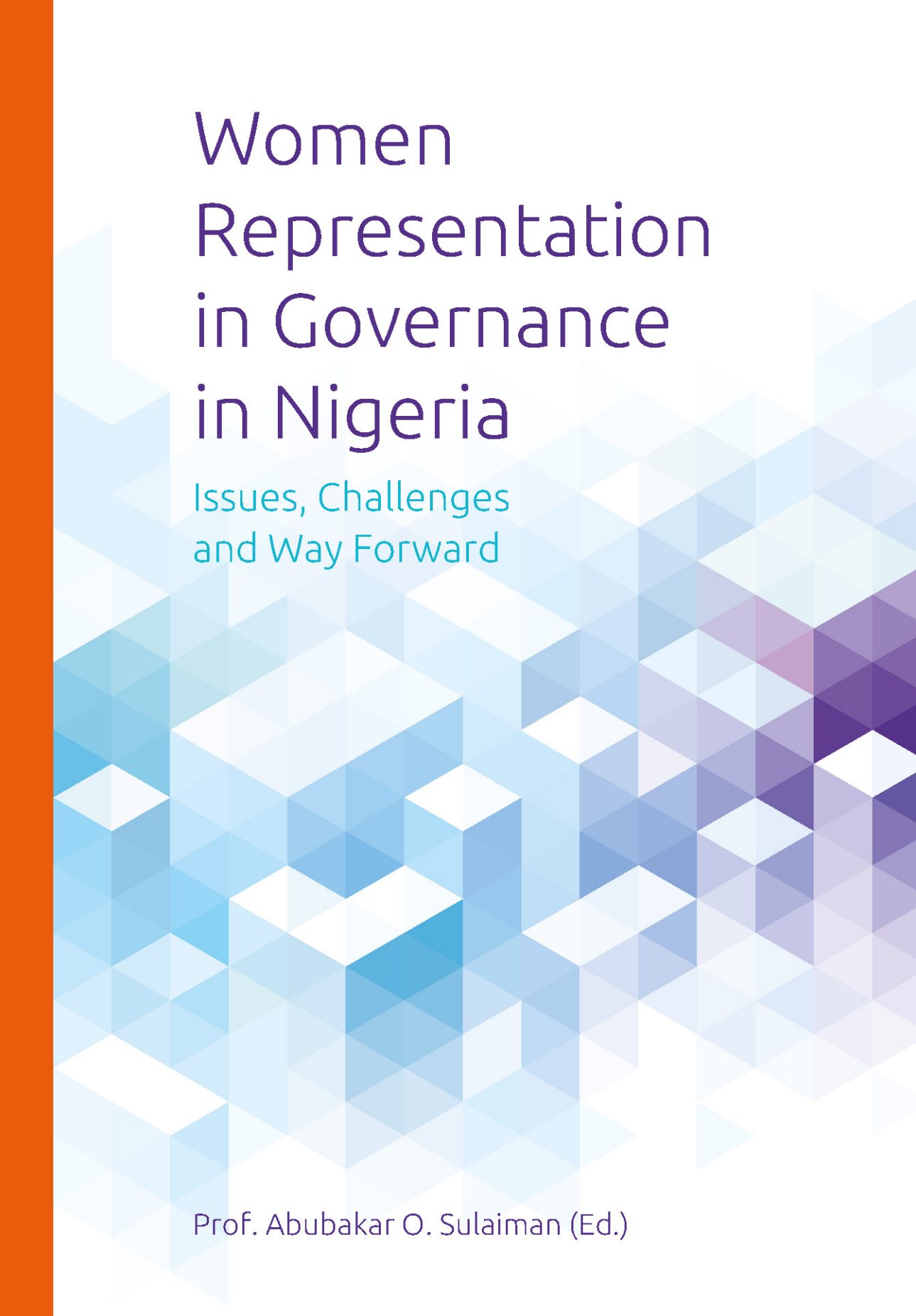




Women Representation in Governance in Nigeria

Issues, Challenges
and Way Forward

Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman (Ed.)



Women Representation in Governance in Nigeria

Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman



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Preface

It is a great pleasure to have been invited to write the preface for this book. The book, which is the latest knowledge product of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), is a culmination of high quality well-researched papers on issues related to women socio-economic and political developments in Nigeria. As the Alternate Chairman of the Governing Council of NILDS, I have insider knowledge of the capacity of NILDS and the deep research efforts that went into the book. The 2023 Women in Governance international Conference provided the foundation for this book and the exchanges at the conference is reflected in its coverage and depth. It is exciting to see the rich proposals and scholarly discourse at the conference collated into this book.

Women empowerment and representation in governance has been a major issue in Nigeria's public space, filled with misconceptions and limited evidence-based analysis. Although scholars have been researching on the issue of women in governance in Nigeria, there is lack of synthesized knowledge on women socio-economic and political participation. This book fills an important gap in this respect by providing well-researched, data-backed and synthesized analysis about women in Nigeria's social, economic and political landscape. It also provides practical recommendations to improve the socio-economic and political conditions of women. One of the most interesting approaches in the book is the plethora of empirical research with localised experiences and recommendations. It jettisons the usual fall back of blindly adopting foreign solutions to local challenges. While the book may not have answered all the questions related to gender and women representation in governance in Nigeria, it has answered some of the often-ignored but very key questions and have laid the foundation for further exploration of the issues. The chapters stimulate further debates about women empowerment and gender development and representation in Nigeria.

The book examines the various dimensions of socio-economic and political challenges facing women in Nigeria as well as how to address them. It is pragmatic and practical as it draws from NILDS' engagement and experiences working with development partners and civil society organisations, including the United Nations Women. The experiences of the authors in engaging at the highest level on the subject matter and in the policy making process make the book a primer on women in governance in Nigeria. The cross-country experiences written by experts from other countries add

rich analysis and international perspectives to the book. This makes the book not only a reader on women in governance in Nigeria, but also an interesting material for those interested in understanding how Nigeria compares with other African countries.

The information in this book is worth noting for anyone interested in updating their knowledge on women's socio-economic and political challenges and development in Nigeria. With creditable pedigree as one of the top think tanks in the country, NILDS is well-positioned to champion this book. Edited by seasoned scholars, their years and wealth of research and policy experience in the fields of political science and international relations, economics, development and law was brought to bear on the book. The chapters contain well-researched information written by subject matter academics, researchers, and policy experts drawn from different facets of human endeavour. They are peer-reviewed in line with international publishing standards.

This book is an essential educational and policy material on women's socio-economic and political empowerment in Nigeria. Relevant stakeholders, including legislators, policy makers, politicians, educators, students and members of the public will find it invaluable. I therefore encourage you to read it.

Rt. Hon. Abbass Tajudeen, Ph.D. GCON
Honourable Speaker, House of Representatives
Federal Republic of Nigeria

Foreword

The National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) was established in 2011 by an Act of parliament with the responsibility of supporting and strengthening the National Assembly, as well as other democratic institutions through research, training and other forms of technical support in order to improve legislative practices and democratic governance in Nigeria. To this end, NILDS has been instrumental in shaping the legislative and democratic landscape, as well as influencing public policies in Nigeria since its establishment. In recent times, there have been growing concerns globally about the gross under-representation of women in governance and decision making, which has led to a burgeoning discourse and activism around the issue.

Arising from the foregoing, NILDS organised the 2023 International Conference on Women in Governance themed “Women Representation in Governance in Nigeria: Issues, Challenges, and Way Forward”, which brought together scholars, legislators, policy makers, gender activists, development experts, and gender advocates from across the continent of Africa to brainstorm on several high-quality research papers presented on issues of under-representation of women while isolating various cutting edge measures that could be put in place to address the continuous decline of women’s representation and participation in governance in Nigeria.

Reflecting on the 2023 general elections, the results unmistakably highlighted the glaring challenges of women under-representation in Nigeria’s political sphere. The result of the election in relation to the number of seats won by women was basically the same for all the 36 states of the federation. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of gender equality, women continue to be significantly under-represented in both elective and appointive positions. The inability of the 9th National Assembly to pass key gender-related bills during the 5th Alteration/Amendments to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria further heightened the issue. The inability to enact these critical amendments underscored the urgent need to address the deep-seated gender imbalance in Nigeria’s governance structures.

As President of the 10th Senate of the National Assembly, I am committed to reversing this trend. As a matter of fact, I am known for catalysing “uncommon” results in governance. In the 10th National Assembly, my tenure will be marked by a steadfast dedication to creating a legislative framework that will foster gender equality and ensure that women

are not only represented but also empowered in decision-making processes. Under my leadership, the 10th Senate will tirelessly strive to amplify the voices of women and girls and vigorously protect their rights. We are determined to build a Nigeria where gender inclusivity is not just a goal but a reality.

The contributions compiled in this book are a direct result of the rich discourse and experts analyses that took place during the conference. It is our hope that these contributions will serve as a catalyst for the legislative policy reforms necessary to achieve gender representation in governance. By addressing the systemic challenges that women face, we can unlock their full potentials, leading to a more inclusive and effective governance. The benefits of increased women's representation are manifold. A more inclusive government will bring diverse perspectives to the table, leading to more comprehensive and gender responsive policies that cater to the needs of all Nigerians. This, in turn, will drive sustainable economic growth, enhance social development, and strengthen our democracy.

I believe that there is no better edited book than this, where issues patterning to gender inclusion and governance are discussed, and NILDS, with its wealth of expertise and policy experiences, is a credible platform to produce the book. Therefore, by the honor and power bestowed on me as the Chairman of the Governing Council of NILDS and as the President of the Senate. I wholeheartedly endorse and recommend this book for your reading pleasure.

God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Distinguished Senator Godswill Obot Akpabio, GCON

President of the Senate
Federal Republic of Nigeria

Acknowledgement

I wish to sincerely acknowledge and appreciate the efforts and dedication of individuals, and organizations that have made this research project a reality. Their efforts and dedication, right from the idea formation, conceptualization, proposal, and review stage, have resulted in the production of this compendium of scientific, evidence-based reader on women's political participation/representation in governance in Nigeria and Africa.

It is worthy of note that the focus of this research project concretized from the growing concerns in the public space about the under-representation of women in governance, which was overwhelmingly evident in the 2023 general elections in which a less than 5% of the elected representatives in the National Assembly were women. It was in this respect that the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies' (NILDS) under the guidance of the Governing Council, organized an international conference on women's representation in governance in line with its mandate to foster intellectual discussions and engagements on issues related to democratic development in Nigeria.

Thus this book is a contribution of NILDS to knowledge and literature on women's political participation and representation and to the development of democracy in Nigeria and Africa in general. The Institute is conscious of the importance of women's representation in governance and therefore advances scholarly works directed towards understanding the dynamics of women's representation in governance across Africa. I wish to acknowledge the inputs, and dedication of authors and contributors and not forgetting the collaborative efforts of the various committees that worked so hard to produce this scientific reader. I am also grateful to the staff and management of NILDS for their support and cooperation. More importantly, my deepest and sincere appreciation goes to the leadership and management of the National Assembly for their unwavering support to the attainment of the Institute's mandate in promoting evidence-based policy making and good governance in Nigeria.

Prof Abubakar O. Sulaiman
Director General, NILDS

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2. Prof Tinuade Adekunbi Ojo is an Associate Professor, Department of Politics and International Relations and she is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Pan-African Thought and Conversation (IPATC), University of Johannesburg. She leads the Pan-African Women Studies unit at the Institute, where her interdisciplinary work bridges multiple fields to address complex issues related to women and gender. With a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Pretoria and a Master's and Honours in Development Studies from Unisa, she integrates perspectives from political science, economics, sociology, and environmental studies in her research. Additionally, Tinuade has held and still holds various administrative portfolios, including tutor, supervisor, usher, mentor, and administrator for postgraduate students. She is an Associate Editor for the African Journal for Political Science (AJPS), and BRICS Journal and Managing Editor and Researcher for the Digital Policy Studies Unit (4DPRU) at the University of Johannesburg. Tinuade is a member of international and local associates, CAAS, IPSA, AAPS, ASA, DSA, UNASA UP, SACE, SAAPS, and others

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5. Adesote Samson Adesola is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Osun State University, Osogbo, Nigeria. He is currently the Sub-Dean, Postgraduate, Faculty of Humanities of the University. He was formerly a lecturer in the Department of History and International Studies, McPherson University, Seriki-Sotayo, Ogun State. He has his Nigerian Certificate in Education (Economics / History) from Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo; B.A. Ed. History from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; M.A. and Ph.D. History from the University of Ibadan. He is a budding historian and a prolific writer. He has served twice as resource person to the Nigerian Army on the compilation of compendium on Nigerian Army Intervention in Liberia and Sierra Leone under the auspices of ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group), 1990-2000 and Nigerian Army and Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, 2009-2021. He has made significant contributions to historical scholarship in the areas of his research interests which are the Economic and Social History of Nigeria, with a major emphasis on Migration, Conflict, Diaspora and Security Studies, and Political History. He has over 50 publications both in print and online, that have gained much attention from researchers and scholars both nationally and internationally, which can be seen in the daily increase in the number of his citations on Google Scholar and ResearchGate. He is an active member of professional bodies such as the Historical Society of Nigeria and African Economic History Network.

6. Rosemary E. Akpan obtained her bachelor's degree (B.A. Hons.) in History and International Studies from Evangel University Akaeze, Ebonyi State, Nigeria and is currently studying for her M.A. in Conflict, Governance, and Global Development at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, U.K. under the sponsorship of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission. She has research interests in African studies, gender, migration, peace, and conflict studies. Her current research looks at women's portrayal in the Nigeria-Biafra

War and the development of interventions that aim to aid peacebuilding in post-war Nigeria. Using archival sources, it does so by first analysing and articulating how different actors in print and electronic media during the Nigeria-Biafra War portrayed women and how that shapes the effects of resulting interventions. Secondly, by exploring how these depictions can aid in understanding and navigating gender norms in everyday life.

7. Dr Muhammad Auwal Sulaiman is a Chief Lecturer and currently the Dean of the School of General Studies at Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic, Bauchi. He holds a Ph.D. in Islamic Studies from Nasarawa State University, an M.A. in Islamic Studies from the University of Jos, and a B.A. in Islamic Studies from the University of Maiduguri, amongst other qualifications. He has an extensive academic and professional background, having served in various capacities such as a teacher, examination officer, registrar, and resource person at various institutions. He has actively participated in numerous national and international conferences, workshops, and training programmes related to Islamic studies, education, and other fields. With over 32 publications in reputed journals, conference proceedings, and books to his credit, Dr Auwal is a prolific writer and scholar. He has supervised and examined numerous research projects and has held various administrative positions at Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic and other institutions. Dr Auwal has been actively involved in youth organisations, serving as a leader and advisor in various capacities. He has participated in several workshops and seminars related to youth development, agriculture, and health. Currently, Dr Auwal serves as the Public Relations Officer of the National Association of Arabic and Islamic Studies Teachers, Bauchi State chapter. He is married with five children and enjoys scholarly pursuits, reading, jogging, and bird watching.

8. Bethel Uzoma IHUGBA (LLB, LLM, Ph.D., BL) is a Deputy Director and the Head, of the Legal Research Division in the Department of Legislative Support Services of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies. He is a lecturer in the NILDS / University of Benin postgraduate programme. He developed the Legal Research Methods and Legal Writing curriculum for the NILDS / University of Benin postgraduate law programme. Dr Ihugba leads a team of legal scholars whose roles include impact-oriented legal research, writing Bill analysis reports on legislative Bills, conducting training for legislators and legislative aides, facilitating law reform and review exercises, writing impactful issue and policy briefs and analysis on national / constitutional questions and other research activities to assist legislators and democratic institutions. Dr Ihugba was the lead facilitator and rapporteur for two years for the review of the Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (a compendium of extant Nigerian Federal Laws as at 2016),

with over 300 laws identified and reviewed for reform. He was a member of the high-powered Federal Committee for the review of the Consolidated Insurance Bill 2013 in 2016 and Tax Laws of the Federation in 2018/2019. He has an extensive array of expertise and publications on Constitutional Law, Corporate Governance, Corporate Social Responsibility, Cybersecurity Law and Forensics, Extractive Industry, International Business Law, Legal Research Methodology, Legislative Drafting and Lawmaking, Public Law and Development, and Renewable Energy Law. He has facilitated training in these areas at national and international workshops, seminars and conferences. He is well-published in national and international peer-reviewed scholarly journals and books. He contributes as reviewer and editorial board member of several national and international scholarly journals and is the author of the seminal work on legal research methodology, *Introduction to Legal Research Method and Legal Writing*. Dr Ihugba is currently working on a book on *Project Development and Renewable Energy Law in Nigeria*.

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10. Olamide OJOGBEDE is a Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Ekiti State University Ado Ekiti. She attained her first degree in Political Science from the University of Ilorin in 2008. This was followed in 2013 by a Master's degree in Political Science from the same institution. She concluded her doctoral study at the Department of Political Science, Ekiti State University Ado Ekiti. Her research interests are in mainstream Political Science and span across inter- and multi-disciplinary studies relating to Political Science. Her current research areas are political behaviour, feminism, democracy, and governance. She has written a number of papers published in both local and international journals and has attended a number of conferences on contemporary issues in Africa

11. For over 20 years, **Dr Okungbowa** has been at the forefront of shaping policy in Nigeria, focusing on the intersection of health, gender, financial inclusion, literacy, and governance. He is currently a Research Fellow 1 and Head, Social Sector Division, in the Department of Economic and Social Research, National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), National Assembly, Nigeria. He was previously the Ag. Head, Department of Economics, Wellspring University, Benin City, Nigeria, where he taught economics at both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Dr Okungbowa was a manager at United Bank for Africa Plc, arguably the biggest bank in Africa, where he provided financial inclusion solutions to over 10,000 underserved women, and other vulnerable populations. In addition to holding a doctoral degree in economics from the University of Benin, Benin City, Dr Okungbowa has obtained multiple certificates from capacity-building courses offered by the Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford, Harvard University, Georgetown University, London School of Economics and Political Science, amongst others. Dr Okungbowa has participated in several conferences, and his research has been published in national and international journals of repute. He is a member of several professional bodies, including the Nigerian Economic Society (NES), the Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM) Chartered, the WHO-Health Financing Technical Network (HFTN – Hope for the Nations – Main Community); Health of Mother Earth Foundation, the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Co-Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, and the Nigeria UHC (Universal Health Coverage) Forum, a think tank civil society organisation galvanising advocacy for health reform in Nigeria.

12. Dr Timothy Ogieva Ogbebor is a seasoned economist and banking expert with over 30 years of experience in commercial and microfinance banking. He is currently the Managing Director of Okada Microfinance Bank Limited, and Associate Lecturer, Igbinedion University Okada. He holds a B.Sc., M.Sc., MBA, and Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Benin, Nigeria, where he was a Tony Elumelu Foundation (TEF) Scholar and the best graduating M.Sc. Economics student in 2013. Dr Ogbebor is an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Bankers (ACIB), a Microfinance Certified Banker (MCIB), and a Certified Microfinance Practitioner (CMP) in the UK. He specialises in credit appraisal, MSME loans, and financial inclusion strategies. As a passionate trainer and adjunct lecturer, he focuses on reducing non-performing loans and enhancing financial inclusion. Dr Ogbebor has contributed extensively to scholarly journals, with research interests in economics, financial inclusion, and banking.

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14. Abubakar Olanrewaju Sulaiman is a professor of political science and international relations who, from a humble beginning, has contributed over the last thirty years to the socio-political development of Nigeria both in academics and in public service. He has had a distinguished career in academia having served as a lecturer since 1997 and became a professor in 2014 at the University of Abuja. During his 22-years at the University, he was known for his utmost dedication, commitment and resilience, catering to the academic needs of the many students he taught. Professor Sulaiman supervised over 500 students at undergraduate, master's and doctoral levels. It is to his credit that some of his students and mentees has risen to prominent positions in the country. His enviable records at the university appeared to have set the stage for several other accomplishments that dotted his path in life.

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman has contributed to numerous academic papers, authored and co-authored six books on issues of both national and global significance, participated in several conferences locally and internationally. Remarkably, he is an alumnus of the prestigious Harvard University School of Executive Education and an awardee of the Harvard Public Leadership Certificate. As a minister for National planning between July 2014 and May 2015, Abubakar Sulaiman left an indelible mark in the ministry and the country by ensuring, amongst other notable achievements, the formulation of the National Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan [NIIMP], crafting a comprehensive Overseas Development Assistant [ODA] policy for Nigeria which was endorsed by the then Federal Executive Council; served meritoriously as the Deputy Chairman of the Nigeria Economic Council and Chairman, Transition Technical sub-committee on handover and transfer of power in 2015 from president Goodluck Jonathan to president Muhammadu Buhari, amongst several other accomplishments.

The immense capacity, capability and resourcefulness of Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman however, only caught the attention of most Nigerians when he became the Director General, National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies [NILDS] in May 2019, where in the space of five years, turned the institute 360 degrees to an enviable and foremost centre of learning and research in legislative and democratic governance. For instance, the NILDS, under his leadership and over this period, has not only trained thousands of parliamentarians of the various State Assemblies and National

Assembly, as well as those from the ECOWAS Parliament and parliaments of member countries, but has also established several postgraduate programmes in the areas of Legislative studies, Legislative Drafting, Party Politics and so on.

In his quest for inclusiveness, Prof. Sulaiman established the Gender and Inclusivity Unit, under his office to coordinate and interface with relevant domestic and international partners on research, programmes, and advocacies geared towards advancing women, youth and persons living with disabilities inclusion in governance. It is a testament of his commitment that the International Conference on Women in Governance was organised in August 2023, leading to this publication and several other legislative engagements in promoting gender equality in Nigeria.

The numerous achievements of Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman earned him the Public Servant of the Year Award by the federal government in 2023 and he has clearly demonstrated that this vintage professor can indeed, put theory to practice and walk the talk beyond the classroom.

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Acronyms

AAUW	American Association of University Women
ABU	Ahmadu Bello University
AC	audit committee
ACEWATER	African Centre of Excellence in Water Research
ACHPR	African Charter on Human and People's Rights
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
ACT	Alliance for Change and Transparency
AD	Alliance for Democracy
ADR	alternative dispute resolution
AfDB	Africa Development Bank
AFRAB	African Abolitionism: The Rise and Transformations of Anti-Slavery in Africa
AFRC	Armed Forces Ruling Council
AG	action group
AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
APC	All Progressives Congress
APGA	<i>All Progressives Grand Alliance</i>
APM	Allied Peoples' Movement
APP	All People's Party
ARUA	African Research Universities Alliance
ASA	African Studies Association
ASEAn	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASSEREN	Association of Educational Researchers and Evaluators of Nigeria
AWDF	African Women's Development Fund
AWLN	African Women Leaders Network
AWU	Abeokuta Women's Union

Women Representation in Governance in Nigeria

AWWDI	Advocacy for Women with Disabilities Initiative
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBOG	Bring Back Our Girls
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BLPRW	Better Life Programme for Rural Women
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CAWEE	Centre for African Women Economic Empowerment
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
CBOs	community-based organisations
CCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
CCTV	closed-circuit television
CDC	Constitution Drafting Committee
CDD	Centre for Democracy and Development
CDP	Carbon Disclosure Project
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEOs	chief executive officers
CESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights CFRN Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
CGE	computable general equilibrium
CITAD	Centre for Information Technology and Development
CJID	Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development
COG	Commonwealth Observer Group
CON	Commander of the Order of the Niger
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CPDS	continuing professional development
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CREB	Central Region Economic Bloc

Acronyms

CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol
CSOs	civil society organisations
CSR	corporate social responsibility
DGD	Democratic Governance for Development
DMBs	deposit money banks
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
DRR	disaster risk reduction
ECC	emergency communications centre
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
EHP	equity health plan
ESG	environmental, social and governance
ESJ	European Scientific Journal
EU	European Union
FCDC	Frontier Counties Development Council
FCS	Federal Civil Service
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FEMCo	Feminist Coalition
FGD	focus group discussion
FGM	female genital mutilation
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
FHP	formal health plan
FJDP	Foundation for Justice, Development and Peace
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí Para la Liberación Nacional
FRWP	Forum for Rwandan Women Parliamentarian
FT	Feminist Theory
GAJE	Global Alliance for Justice Education
GBD	Global Burden of Disease
GDI	Gender Development Index

Women Representation in Governance in Nigeria

GEAE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
GEEP	Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme
GEOB	Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GHG	greenhouse gas
GIU	Gender and Inclusivity Unit
GMO	Gender Monitoring office
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
HDI	Human Development Index
HERPNET	Higher Education Research and Policy Network
HFTN	Hope for the Nations
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HLI	higher learning institutions
HND	Higher National Diploma
HRCRC	Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Centre
HSN	Historical Society of Nigeria
HWS	History and War Studies
ICLARS	International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies
ICPC	Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission
ICT	information and communication technology
IDEA	<i>Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance</i>
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDPs	internally displaced persons
IEA	<i>International Energy Agency</i>
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IFIDA	International Federation of Women Lawyers
IGP	<i>Inspector General of Police</i>
IHP	informal health plan
ILO	International Labour Organization

Acronyms

INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
ING	Interim National Government
IPATC	Institute of Pan African Thought and Conversation
IPU	Inter Parliamentary Union
IT	information technology
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JCorp	Johor Corporation
JHM	St John's Hospital Mary
JONAPWD	Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities
KAPF	Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation
KASU	Kaduna State University
KIIs	key informant interviews
KP	KOWA Party
KWSHIS	Kwara State Health Insurance Scheme
LEDAP	Legal Defence and Assistance Project
LFT	Liberal Feminist Theory
LGA	local government areas
LMWA	Lagos Market Women's Association
LP	Labour Party
LPG	liquefied petroleum gas
LREB	Lake Region Economic Bloc
MESUPG	Men's Support for Women's Participation in Governance
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MGFP	Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion
MoU	memorandum of understanding
MPs	members of parliament
MSMEs	micro, small and medium enterprises
MWASD	Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development
NA	Native Authority

Women Representation in Governance in Nigeria

NAF	Nigerian Armed Forces
NAKAEB	Narok-Kajiado Economic Bloc
NALT	Nigerian Association of Law Teachers
NAPTIP	National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons
NAREP	Natural Resource, Extractives and Climate Change Programme
NASA	Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Practitioners Association
NBA	Nigerian Bar Association
NBS's	National Bureau of Statistics
NCCPRS	National Climate Change Policy Response and Strategy
NCE	Nigeria Certificate in Education
NCNC	National Council of the Nigerian Citizens
NCPWD	National Commission for Persons with Disabilities
NCWD	National Centre for Women Development
NCWS	National Council of Women's Societies
NDA	Nigerian Defence Academy
NDHS	Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NELCCI	New-Life Community Care Initiative
NEPU	Northern Elements Progressive Union
NES	Nigerian Economic Society
NESREA	National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency
NFIS	National Financial Inclusion Strategy
NGC	National Gender Cluster
NGMP	Nigerian Gas Master Plan
NGOs	non-governmental organisations
NGP	National Gender Policy
NGP	National Gas Policy
NICARB	Nigerian Institute of Chartered Arbitrators

Acronyms

NILDS	National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies
NIM	Nigerian Institute of Management
NISER	Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research
NLC	Nigerian Labour Congress
NLSS	National Living Standard Survey
NOREB	North Rift Economic Bloc
NPAC	National Plan of Action
NPC	Northern People's Congress
NPN	National Party of Nigeria
NREEEP	National Renewable, Energy, and Energy Efficiency Policy
NTS	National Transformation Strategies
NUT	Nigerian Union of Journalists
NWC	National Women Council
NWTF	Nigerian Women Trust Fund
NWU	Nigerian Women's Union
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLS	ordinary least squares
OND	Ordinary National Diploma
OON	Officer of the Order of the Niger
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
ORCID	Open Researcher and Contributor ID
ORGL	Office of Research, Grants and Linkages
OWSD	Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World
PAC	Political Action Committee
PBUH	Praise Be Unto Him
PDE	Professional Designation Examination
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PLAC	Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre
PLD	people living with disabilities

Women Representation in Governance in Nigeria

PR	Proportional Representative
PVC	permanent voter card
PwDs	people with disabilities
QDDR	Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Reviews
RA	Radiya Allahu anhu
REC	Resident Electoral Commissioner
REC	Regional Economic Communities
RNC	Royal Niger Company
ROA	return on assets
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SARS	Special Anti-Robbery Squad
SAW	sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEC	Security and Exchange Commission
SEKEB	South-Eastern Kenya Economic Bloc
SHA	State House of Assembly
SMC	Supreme Military Council
SPSP	Society for Peace Studies and Practice
SSCE	Senior Secondary Certificate Examination
SSD	Secure School’s Declaration
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
STER	Stand-To-End Rape Initiative
TA	thematic analysis
TSMs	temporary special measures
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UK	United Kingdom
UNDHR	United Nations Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Acronyms

UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNIBEN	University of Benin
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UPN	Unity Party of Nigeria
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNDP	<i>United Nations Development Programme</i>
UNEPA	United Nations Environment Program Agency
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Resolution
US	United States (of America)
USAID	United States Agency for International development
UK	United Kingdom
VAC	violence against children
VAWP	violence against women in politics
WACOL	WomenAid Collective
WANCorp	Waqaf An-Nur Corporation Berhad
WEI	Women Enabled International
WHO	World Health Organization
W4M	Women for Men
WIPF	Women in Politics Forum
WLDs	women living with disabilities
WLI	Women's Leadership Institute
WORDOC	Women's Research and Documentation Centre
WRAPA	Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative
WWD	women with disabilities
YPP	Young Progressives Party

Part I

Conceptualisation and Theoretical Context

Chapter 1

Introduction: Rationale and Context of Women's Representation in Governance

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Introduction

Gender equality is important for inclusive and sustainable development. Despite this recognition, limited progress has been made in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Nigeria in line with the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015). The Gender Development Index (GDI) declined from 0.881 in 2019 to 0.863 in 2021, reflecting a worsening situation of gender equality in Nigeria. The Human Development Index (HDI) of Nigerian men (0.574) is also significantly higher than that of women (0.495). Men have higher gross national income per capita (\$5,800) than women (\$3,759); higher average years of schooling (8.2 years versus 6.1 years); and average labour force participation rate (64% versus 49%). Furthermore, women constitute over 60% of the 83 million poor Nigerians, according to the National Bureau of Statistics' (NBS) Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria Report 2019 (NBS, 2019). The huge gap in the development outcomes for men and women in Nigeria shows the prevalence of high gender inequality and is a challenge to the attainment of poverty reduction and the SDGs.

The poor development outcomes of women relative to that of men is partly attributable to a number of factors, including low participation of women in politics and governance. Although women account for 49.47% of the Nigerian population, they are under-represented in governance at the national, state and local levels. Despite the extant legal framework that recommends 35% affirmative action of women's participation and concerted efforts made by government agencies, non-governmental organisations

(NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), women's groups, donor agencies and international partners towards ensuring increased participation and representation of women in politics and governance, available data reveals that women's representation in governance since the advent of democratic rule in 1999 is less than 7% on average. The outcomes of the 2023 General Elections, where less than 5% of female candidates won their elections, further accentuate the declining performance of women in governance in Nigeria, which could undermine the concerns and interests of women in public policy and decision-making, undercut women's empowerment, and ultimately deter inclusive political, socio-economic and human development.

Against this background, the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), in line with its mandate to foster intellectual discussions and engagements on issues related to democratic development in Nigeria, and with the support of the leadership of the National Assembly, organised the International Women in Governance Conference themed "Women Representation in Governance in Nigeria: Issues, Challenges and Way Forward". The conference provided a platform for experts, government officials, policymakers and other relevant stakeholders to critically discuss, analyse and interrogate the challenges facing women's political representation in governance and provided evidence-based policy interventions.

The Conference was held at the NAF (Nigerian Armed Forces) Conference Centre, Kado, Abuja, Federal Capital City, Nigeria between 23 and 24 August 2023. Notable dignitaries at the event include the President of the Senate and Chairman of the NILDS Governing Council, Distinguished Senator Godswill Akpabio, CON (Commander of the Order of the Niger); and Deputy President of the Senate, Distinguished Senator Barau Jibrin. Also present was the Speaker of the House of Representatives and Alternate Chairman of the NILDS Governing Council, Rt. Hon. Tajudeen Abbas who was represented by Hon. Adewunmi Oriyomi Onanuga. Others included Hon. Minister of Women Affairs, Barr. Uju Ohaneye, and Hon. Minister for State, Labour and Employment, Hon. Nkiruka Onyejiocha. Also in attendance were female parliamentarians from Uganda, South Africa and Kenya, the former First Lady of Ekiti State, Mrs Bisi Fayemi, and Programme Manager, Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), Ms Nkiru Uzodi, Hon. Beni Lar, Senator Biodun Olujimi, Senator Norah Daadut; and the Royal Father of the day, His Royal Highness, the Emir of Keffi, Dr Shehu Chindo Yamusa III.

The conference's call for papers attracted over 250 abstracts, of which 157 were selected for the submission of full papers. After a thorough review by experts and professors from well-recognised universities in the country, a total of 107 papers met the deadline for submission, of which 65 were

accepted, representing a 61% acceptance rate. Of the papers submitted, male-authored submissions accounted for 55%, while female-authored papers had a proportion of 45%. The gender distribution of the accepted papers showed that male-authored papers accounted for a proportion of 52%, while female-led papers had a proportion of 48%.

The Structure of the book

This book is a compendium on women in Governance in Nigeria. It encompasses 37 chapters, which are structured into eight different parts: Conceptualisation and Theoretical Context; Party Politics, Electoral Systems and Their Influence on Women's Representation in Governance; Policies and Legal Framework for the Representation of Women in Governance; Disabilities, Political Exclusion and Women's Representation in Governance; Access to Education, Health, Technology and Women's Representation in Governance; and Conflict, Development, Climate Change and Women's Representation in Governance. This was aimed at providing possible linkages or interconnections amongst the broad issues relating to women's representation in the political space in Nigeria and Africa. It is important to note that the highlights of the chapters presented in the introduction chapter are based on chronological order as they appear in the book and not in the order of relevance to give a summary of the chapter presentations in the book.

Part 1: Conceptualisation and theoretical context

The first part of the book provides an overview and critically historicises the representation of Nigerian women in governance under three major historical phases, namely: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. These historical phases reveal changes and continuity in women's representation in governance. Raji and Adeniyi carefully pointed out the role of the persistence of traditional gender norms and socio-cultural practices in various aspects of Nigerian society, which manifests in expectations related to household responsibilities, family decision-making, and the division of labour between men and women. Adesote focuses on the nature and dynamics of women's representation in democratic governance since the commencement of the Nigerian Fourth Republic in 1999. According to him, despite the level of this development, Nigerian women had continued to remain under-represented at all levels of democratic governance since 1999, especially with reference to the United Nations Economic and Social Council Resolution of 1990 which recommends 30% minimum proportion of women in leadership positions in governance (UN, 1990).

In Chapter six, Akpan brings to light that women are the invisible hands that swing the pendulum of the political clock in Nigeria, through rallies, voting, sensitisation, and campaigns during elections. Though women's involvement in these activities precede election voting day, the norms and practices of society do not recognise their fundamental preliminary roles in making elections successful. Rather, they face setbacks when it comes to electing women to leadership positions, especially with the current trend of women's representation in governance, which falls below 5% on average.

The last two chapters focus on the Barriers to Women's Representation in Governance in Nigeria. Okedele (2020) discovered an intrinsic method used by the political parties to manage their political activities, which are not women-friendly but are also a limiting factor to women's participation in governance. From another angle, Okungbowa and Ogbabor, using the Hegemonic Masculinity Theory as a theoretical guide, explain the relegation of women holding high political and/or appointive positions and responsibilities as a misperception of cultural, religious and gender issues. Accordingly, the lack of success in enacting a law by the 8th and 9th assemblies on Gender Equal Opportunity Bill is because the process has been thwarted by the male dominated parliament (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2021).

Arguably, women in Nigeria have the potential and are capable of meeting citizens' expectations and delivering better governance dividends but are denied such opportunities by several limiting factors highlighted in this section. Male dominance of the political space, religion and cultural practices; inadequate funding and lack of economic empowerment are highlighted as major barriers to women's involvement in the decision-making process in Nigeria. Particularly, the nature and design of laws emasculate women from accessing opportunities in politics, as seen by the lack of advocacy-support from their male counterparts, which resulted in the refusal of the consideration of the Gender Equality Bill for implementation by lawmakers.

Part 2: Party politics, electoral systems and their influence on women's representation in governance

This part focuses on the experiences of women in politics and the implications for democracy in a developing economy like Nigeria. It navigates around the issues, challenges and opportunities of political parties, intra-party democracy, social media and political participation, and the influence of the electoral system on women's representation in elections and highlights recommendations for gender mainstreaming in Nigeria. Exploring the role of political parties and women's participation, Sulaiman and Dass discovered

that despite the role of political parties as engine rooms that produce leaders and promote citizens' participation in politics, plus the recent measures of slashing the cost of obtaining party nomination forms, the representation of women in positions of decision-making remains low.

Further emphasis on the constraints to women's representation in governance in Nigeria, highlights the exorbitant costs required to run for elective offices in order to advance to political leadership positions, which makes it almost impossible for women to fully participate in politics because of the lack of access to funds. Sometimes, being nominated by a political party requires the payment of huge amounts of money to obtain the nomination form. Some of the political parties make nomination forms free for women. However, they still have to pay for expression of interest forms and have to run expensive campaigns whose cost does not respect gender boundaries. In some cases, one is expected to campaign, hire campaign staff, pay for campaign materials, and so on. Given the gender income inequality in the country, most female politicians do not have the resources to meet these challenges.

There is also the issue of disparity in women's representation across the six regions in Nigeria. Gana revealed that the Southern states far outperformed the Northern states in terms of representation and suggested the need for policies that critically address the underlying causes of disparity and encourage focused initiatives to boost equitable chances for women to participate in politics. Sakariyau also explains the factors impeding women's representation while emphasising the disparity in women's representation at the different levels of government. Though gender mainstreaming remains a global phenomenon, it has been effective amongst sovereign states in becoming more conscious of policy inclusiveness. Thus, the issue of gender affirmative should no longer be a theoretical paradigm but a reality that must be upheld with adequate legislation in Nigeria.

In Chapter thirteen, Hungbo provides evidence that established low participation and low visibility as major characteristics of female users of social media in public life in South West Nigeria. Low participation or visibility can be attributed to factors both within and outside the control of the womenfolk, which falls within the larger society where the women operate. Therefore, digital stress experiences, online harassment and other anti-social media behaviour could reinforce male dominance of the public space and could inhibit women in the political space.

The final chapter in part two brings to the fore the need to review the electoral system within political parties to be more gender-sensitive and to provide equal access to leadership positions. It is well understood that

political parties provide the framework for organised political engagement and participation under the laws of our country. They open the political space to competitive democracy and serve as a platform for a power contest. Political parties also help to entrench diversity in the polity in such a manner that all manner of social categories, including, especially, disadvantaged groups, are given a voice in politics. Therefore, when political parties nominate women as representatives in elections, it opens up opportunities for women to be elected to office. Conversely, when they fail to bring up women during nominations, the women are automatically cut off. For instance, it remains a truism that most of the leadership positions in the major political parties are dominated by men, and the only position reserved for women is mostly that of the Women Leader. These are some of the issues that must be discussed and considered in the review of their electoral system to ensure that leadership positions are open to all, including women.

Part 3: Policies and legal framework for women's representation in governance

A gender mainstreaming policy framework is a document that outlines the gender-sensitive perspective of all government activities and programmes, which helps government make better policy decisions. Although the Nigerian government has signed various relevant international instruments, treaties and conventions that emphasise the need for member nations to ensure equality for all, men and women, studies have shown that most policy documents in Nigeria are gender-neutral. For example, Ihugba examined the effects of language used in laws and policy documents on women's representation and participation in governance. A detailed analysis of the Constitution and other policy documents shows that Nigerian laws and policies are replete with gender-excluding, subordinating, and subjugating languages against the female gender (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). According to him, the impact of language is recognised by the gender-neutral language practice being promoted in legislative drafting. However, the international instruments did not factor in the nuanced cultural bias in Nigerian languages and its impact on the laws and policy documents. Thus, the language used in laws and policy documents should be deliberate and circumspect to ensure that they do not project traditional excluding concepts skewed against women. Policy documents should go beyond gender-neutrality and be reengineered to promote gender equality by emphasising capacity rather than socially constrained and socially constructed roles.

The role played by religious laws is discussed by Amoloye-Adebayo in Chapter 16. The chapter interrogates the relationship between Islamic Law and women's political representation in Nigeria and found that Islam was not

against women's participation in public spaces but rather the socio-cultural norms and the patriarchal system in Nigeria hindered women's participation in politics. Changing the current situation of poor women's representation would require efforts by the legislature to make provision in the Electoral Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2022) that includes a gender quota which stipulates the number and/or percentage of women to be included in a candidate's list; or the number of seats to be allocated to women in a legislature, change cultural norms through media campaigns, empowerment programmes and education for women on political participation. Sulyman also examined the effectiveness of affirmative action policies in promoting girls' education in Kwara State, Nigeria. He presents peculiar issues of female children in vulnerable communities in accessing education, which was caused by the cultural, religious and perceptive views of some parents. He argued that though international and regional convention benchmarks stipulate education for all, and a multitude of programmes and projects to ensure access to quality primary and secondary schooling for all children to improve girl children's education, the implementation had a major source of concern. According to him, religion and culture did not constitute bottlenecks to accessing education, but the non-availability of secondary and higher schools in vulnerable communities, lack of information and early child marriage are major issues that must be considered.

In Chapter 18, Abdulkadir Salaudeen argues that even though the Nigerian Government have established the National Gender Policy (NGP) to allot 35% to women in all appointments in consonance with international treaties, women are still being marginalised from occupying leadership positions because of cultural beliefs. He pointed out that constitutional barriers make it difficult for the domestication and implementation of affirmative actions. It is, therefore, imperative that constitutional reforms are carried out to recognise and facilitate the implementation of affirmative actions in Nigeria.

In Chapter 19, Ganiat Mobolaji Olatokun and Mariam Abdulaheem-Mustapha examine the prominence of Liberal Feminist Theory (LFT) in Nigeria and Rwanda. They argue that Liberal feminism stood for equal access to 'everything' and the need for recognition of LFT in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), just as it has been recognised in the Constitution of Rwanda. The authors link the functionality of Liberal feminism in Rwanda to gender sensitivity in the Constitution, and the gender institutions where there is a 30% minimum women's representation; 24 seats are reserved for women in parliament, and proposes the same to be replicated or adopted by the Nigerian government to drive gender equality.

Part 4: Disabilities, political exclusion and women's representation in governance

This part focuses mainly on the socio-economic and political exclusion of women living with disabilities (WLDs). It further interrogates the educational displacement of WLDs, the societal perception and the implications for policy in Nigeria. This part delves into issues and challenges, and the gaps in the implementation of established laws that hinder persons living with disabilities (PwDs) from full participation and representation. Aluko and Osakuni bring to the fore the provisions from the Constitution that discourage discrimination (Section 42), as well as Sections 12, 54 and 84 of the Electoral Act that provide for equal opportunity for all persons to become registered and to vote. Despite the provisions, ample evidence, and reality show that women living with disabilities are largely marginalised. Though political parties open up the political space to competitive democracy and serve as a platform for a power contest, entrench diversity in the polity in such a manner that all manner of social categories, including, especially, disadvantaged groups, are given a voice in politics, Osakuni highlights that most of the political parties failed to make provisions for PwDs in their constitutions, which had further weakened participation.

Exploring the aspect of education and WLDs' visibility in governance, Bayero-Jimoh notes that women are mostly invisible in the political space because of a lack of proper educational training and experience. Ensuring girls' and WLDs' access to education helps them acquire life skills and competencies to be more active in politics and implementing such policies that promote and encourage the education of women, especially WLDs, enhances their visibility in governance. Iyoho contributes that the lack of access to basic things such as education and health further makes women more vulnerable to other challenges of life. Thus, gender equality throughout the education system in relation to access and content, teaching is a fundamental human right that should be adhered to by relevant stakeholders. The authors assert that the narrative of women living with disabilities in Nigeria needs to be carefully addressed by specifically addressing all forms of discrimination to effectively increase women's access to economic, technological, and political participation.

Part 5: Access to education, health and technology and women's representation in governance

The fifth part consists of five chapters which bring the dimension of women having access to education, health and technology to explain political representation. The chapters highlight the interconnectedness of safety,

security, and schoolgirls, specifically the strategies that could be implemented to ensure a safe and conducive teaching and learning environment for women. Focusing on the impact of the environment and women, Akani uses the Ecofeminist Philosophical Theory to explain the connection between women, environment and nature, reflecting on the series of abduction and sexual abuses of schoolgirls, particularly in Northern Nigeria. The essence of the study was to examine the application of ecofeminists in ensuring eradication of all forms of patriarchy and abuse of women, replacing them with an ethic of care, a morality based on women's caring and nurturing qualities especially in guaranteeing girl child safety within and outside the school environment. The importance of school safety to the girl child cannot be overemphasised as it helps to promote their academic excellence, emotional stability, progress and development. An unsafe school environment would breed abuse and oppression of girls through kidnap, rape and under-aged / forced marriages. Despite the Nigerian government's useful intentions in enacting various rules aimed at ensuring school safety and security, particularly in the North, there are still gaps in implementation. The heightened violence against school children and the environmental factors affecting learning in terms of location of the school, lack of accessible roads to schools continues to impede the girl child in access to education. The author recommends that the environment in which the schoolgirls learn should not be toxic; hence, the planning and implementation of policy on education at all levels should evolve as every child should be given the right education.

Relating enrolment and completion rate amongst females in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) postgraduate programmes in universities in Nigeria, Isunueo, notes in Chapter 25 that the experience in Nigeria and other countries in Africa, females in both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, tend to be fully represented in school enrolment especially in disciplines such as Arts, Education, Management, and so on., but fewer students enrolled in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics courses. The study highlights some of the challenges associated with the females in postgraduate STEM programmes to include issues on the home front, such as lack of funds, no sponsorship, and so on. The author recommends programmes such as full sponsorship or grants for female students at the postgraduate level in STEM faculties, both the Federal and State governments, as well as deliberate mentorship programmes geared at supporting and encouraging females in postgraduate programmes in Nigerian universities.

Focusing on the viable sources of financing of healthcare services for women, Isa Olawale Solahudeen links the issue of poverty to access to healthcare services and women's participation in the political space. He

stated that cash *waqf* could be explored as a viable mechanism to empower women and provide them with sustainable access to healthcare in Ilorin–West, Kwara State through an effective legal framework sanctioning a cash *waqf* institution in the State. Explaining cash *waqf* as the act of dedicating a property for the benefit of those in need of the same, the author states that the cash *waqf* could be used as a viable means to provide healthcare services for vulnerable people in society. Therefore, other viable sources of financing may be considered and included in legislation to help improve access to financing for vulnerable groups.

Part 6: Conflict, development, climate change and women's empowerment in governance

In Chapter 28, Onu, Jokotola and Adewuyi examine the effect of women's representation and participation in effective climate change governance in Nigeria and contend that women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change because of the lack of financial security, as they have had fewer opportunities to advance their education and careers, develop their skills, or enter the workforce. More so, women and children have become increasingly vulnerable to human trafficking, child marriages, and other forms of abuse, as well as sexual violence associated with climate change-induced conflicts. The vulnerability of women has also been because of the lack of access to health services, thereby making maternal and child health issues rampant because of climate change and natural disasters. They conclude that even though women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change and play a central role in mitigating such effects, women are not actively involved in climate change decision-making at local and rural levels because of patriarchy, cultural biases, equalities and economic limitations. This narrative could have been addressed by specifically addressing all forms of gender inequality to effectively increase women's access to economic, technological and political participation.

Exploring the linkages and the implications of women's representation in climate change governance, Issa and Alabi examine the important roles that women in governance play in environmental sustainability in Nigeria. Their study expatiates on gender diversity in top management teams and the adoption of environmental sustainability policies to improve women's representation. Given the extant research that suggests that women are more inclined towards sustainability initiatives and disclosure strategies, there are increasing pressures from diverse stakeholders for women's representation in top positions. While the country is amongst the major environmental polluting nations worldwide and has been rated amongst the world's highest gas flaring nations, recent global debates on the role of

women in climate change proffer evidence to support the need to improve the capacity development for women engaged in the climate change space. In Chapter 30 Issa and Alabi analyse the impact of patriarchy on economic activities of women in Eastern Nigeria, as well as the male factor in women's development in the region. They explain that patriarchy is the manifestation and institutionalisation of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general and posit that patriarchy has been entrenched and the present generation and has been confronting it. Expatriating on the effects of patriarchal practices on development, the authors explain that if women have been seen as equal partners in the family, their developmental role would have reflected on society. This is because development can occur at the individual level, and it would have manifested and affected societal development.

Part 7: Women's representation in governance: Cross-country experience

In this part, women's representation in governance as perceived from the different parts of Africa is presented to enhance and strengthen the contributions of the book as a lead reader. Olatokun and Abdullaheem-Mustapha delve into Constitutional provision and Liberal Feminist Theory using lessons from Rwanda to support their findings. The chapter explores the domestication of the Liberal Feminist Theory and lessons for Nigeria to accomplish the set objectives and advance that the poor adoption of the Liberal Feminist Theory in the Nigerian Constitution accounts for low women's political participation and representation. Kajiru and Mziray provide lessons for Nigerians while analysing the legal and practical challenges in the realisation of transformative governance in Tanzania. Noting that though progress has been made in terms of education in Tanzania, this has not completely translated into active representation, thus the need to implement pertinent legal instruments and discard prejudices against women under the guise of culture. Given that the mere inclusion of the provisions that recognise women's representation in governance alone is not enough, there is a need to reform some laws and ensure transformation of the societal perspectives towards enhancing women's participation in governance in all spheres.

The concluding chapter focuses on policy recommendations in enhancing women's representation in governance in Nigeria.

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Chapter 2

Gender Norms and Socio-Cultural Practices in Nigeria

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Abstract

Gender inequality and the persistence of socio-cultural practices that promote it continue to be major challenges in many parts of the world, especially in Africa. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with over 200 million people, and is located in West Africa. Nigeria has a diverse ethnic and linguistic population, with over 250 ethnic groups, each with their unique cultural practices and norms. Despite numerous efforts to promote gender equality, gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria remain deeply ingrained in society. Gender norms are the expectations and standards that society holds for individuals, based on their gender, while socio-cultural practices are the actions, behaviours, and customs that reflect and reinforce these norms. These norms and practices can be both formal and informal and can shape a wide range of social interactions, from interpersonal relationships to economic opportunities and political participation. Understanding gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria is crucial for achieving gender equality and promoting social, economic, and political development. Gender inequality in Nigeria has significant consequences, including limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, as well as increased vulnerability to violence and poverty. This chapter offers a comprehensive examination of gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria, exploring their impact on gender

equality and development. The chapter identifies challenges in eradicating these norms and practices within the complex socio-cultural context and proposes solutions and recommendations, emphasising the need for policy and programme development to promote gender equality in Nigeria.

Keywords: Challenges, Gender Inequality, Gender Norms, Nigeria, Socio-Cultural Practices

Introduction

In order to understand the socio-cultural and gender-normative landscape of Nigeria, there is a need to examine its geographical, demographic and historical dimensions. Nigeria has a rich historical background, dating back to ancient civilisations and empires (Bondarenko & Roese, 1999). Nigeria is a country located in West Africa and is the most populous in Africa, with over 200 million people (Reed & Mberu, 2014). It covers an area of about 923,768 square kilometres and shares borders with several countries, including Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon (Nosiri & Ohazurike, 2016). Nigeria is a culturally diverse nation with over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own set of unique cultural practices and norms. Nigeria is geographically diverse, with a landscape that includes coastal plains, savannahs, plateaus, and mountains (Adedini et al., 2015). Nigeria's historical background is deeply interwoven with its present socio-cultural landscape. Historical events, civilisations, and interactions with other cultures have significantly shaped the norms and practices seen today. For example, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Nigeria was colonised by the British Government. The imposition of British rule brought about a radical transformation in societal norms, governance structures, and cultural practices (Cormier, 2017). In terms of demographics, Nigeria has a young population, with a median age of around 18 years (Okoli et al., 2022).¹ The foregoing dimensions are essential to comprehend variations in gender norms and cultural practices across different segments of Nigerian society. They provide a holistic picture of the interplay of historical, geographical, and demographic factors that shape gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria.²

Building upon the foregoing, gender norms are the social expectations and standards that society holds for individuals based on their gender

1 The population is distributed across urban and rural areas, with major cities like Lagos, Abuja, and Kano experiencing rapid urbanisation.

2 The country has witnessed the rise and fall of various kingdoms and city-states, such as the Nok culture, the Benin Empire, and the Sokoto Caliphate. The arrival of European colonial powers in the 19th century led to the establishment of the British protectorate of Nigeria. Nigeria eventually gained independence in 1960.

(Cislaghi & Heise, 2020). These norms dictate the roles, behaviours, and responsibilities that are considered appropriate for men and women. They are deeply ingrained in social, cultural, and religious beliefs and influence various aspects of life, including family dynamics, education, employment, and political participation (Blackstone, 2003). Socio-cultural practices, on the other hand, are the actions, behaviours, and customs that reflect and reinforce gender norms (Mochache et al., 2020). These practices encompass a wide range of activities and rituals that are prevalent in Nigerian society, shaping the daily lives and interactions of individuals.

Gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria play a significant role in shaping the lives of individuals and communities. These norms and practices are deeply rooted in cultural, religious, and traditional beliefs and are often influenced by patriarchal structures. They define the roles, responsibilities, and expectations assigned to individuals based on their gender (Ugwu & de Kok, 2015). Gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria manifest in various ways, impacting different aspects of life, including education, family dynamics, marriage, employment, politics, and access to resources (Makama, 2013). Understanding these norms and practices is essential for addressing gender inequality, promoting women's rights, and achieving social, economic, and political development in Nigeria.

This chapter seeks to offer an in-depth examination of gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria, encompassing various theoretical perspectives. It aims to shed light on the prevalent forms of these practices and their implications for gender equality and development. The study explores the diversity of gender norms and socio-cultural practices across different regions and ethnic groups in Nigeria, providing insights into the variations and commonalities. Furthermore, it will delve into the challenges faced in eliminating these norms and practices, considering the complex socio-cultural context. Finally, the chapter will propose potential solutions and recommendations to address these challenges, emphasising the importance of policy and programme development for fostering gender equality in Nigeria.

Statement of problem

Gender inequality in Nigeria represents a deep-rooted and alarming societal malaise, which is perpetuated by deeply ingrained gender norms and socio-cultural practices (Olonade et al., 2021). Benebo et al. (2018) posit that the reality is stark, as Nigerian women and girls face widespread discrimination, limited access to education, constrained economic opportunities, and significantly reduced participation in decision-making processes. The

traditional expectations of distinct roles and responsibilities based on gender further entrench these disparities, relegating women to subservient positions within the family, community, and the nation (Akinola, 2018). The extent of this problem is deplorable, with practices such as female genital mutilation, early forced marriages, nutritional disparities, and mortuary indignities systematically robbing women of their agency, dignity, and fundamental human rights (Ajayi et al., 2022). Gender-based violence, both within households and in public spaces, further entrenches this cycle of discrimination and oppression (Osezua & Agholor, 2019). The overarching issue is clear: the prevailing gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria systematically marginalise women, hindering social, economic, and political progress, and demand urgent, comprehensive examination and intervention. This study delves into the depths of this pervasive problem, unravelling its intricacies, and proposing concrete solutions to dismantle the discriminatory structures that continue to plague the nation.

Objectives of the study

The study aims to investigate the gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria. This involves identifying the expectations, roles, responsibilities, and behaviour ascribed to individuals based on their gender, and comprehending the cultural customs and rituals that uphold these norms. The study also examines the implications of gender norms and socio-cultural practices on gender equality and overall development in Nigeria, especially regarding access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and political participation for different genders. Additionally, it aims to analyse how these norms perpetuate gender-based violence and discrimination, hindering societal progress. The study aims to identify the barriers that impede the transformation of these gender norms and socio-cultural practices.

Ultimately, the research aims to propose tangible solutions and policy recommendations based on the research findings.

Methodology

This study employed a doctrinal research methodology, particularly centred on the analysis of social norms in Nigeria concerning gender practices. The focus was on understanding the complex interplay of gender norms and socio-cultural practices across diverse regions and ethnic groups in Nigeria. The analysis was underpinned by theoretical frameworks such as feminist theories, Social Constructionist Theory, and intersectionality, allowing for a deeper understanding of how social constructs shape and reinforce gender

norms in the Nigerian context. The research design involved a systematic review and synthesis of existing literature to elucidate the prevailing gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria. The synthesis encompassed a qualitative analysis of research findings, policy documents, and scholarly literature, which allow for a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural factors influencing gender dynamics.

Theoretical perspectives on gender norms and socio-cultural practices

Gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria can be analysed and understood through various theoretical perspectives. This section explores three key theoretical frameworks: feminist theories, social constructionist theories, and intersectionality.

Feminist theories

Offiong et al. (2021) posit that feminist theories provide valuable insights into understanding gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria, shedding light on the power dynamics, gender inequality, and the ways in which patriarchal systems perpetuate discrimination and oppression against women. One prominent strand of Feminist Theory is Liberal feminism. The main proponents of this theory include Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Betty Friedan and Rebecca Walker. This theory seeks to achieve gender equality through legal and political reforms. According to Enyew and Mihrete (2018), Liberal feminism argues for equal rights and opportunities for women, advocating for changes in laws and policies that restrict women's access to education, employment, and political participation. In the context of Nigeria, Liberal feminism has been instrumental in pushing for legal reforms and policies that promote women's rights and gender equality. For instance, the passage of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act in 2015 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015) aimed to address gender-based violence and protect the rights of women. This legislation was enacted with the intention of providing comprehensive legal protection for women against various forms of violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and harmful traditional practices (Arowolo, 2020). By criminalising these acts and establishing legal mechanisms for reporting, prosecuting, and punishing offenders, the Act aims to create a safer environment for women and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions (Onyemelukwe, 2016). Furthermore, the Act recognises the importance of providing support services and rehabilitation for survivors of gender-based violence, emphasising the need for holistic approaches to addressing this pervasive issue (Arowolo, 2020).

Another significant strand within Feminist Theory is radical feminism, which takes a more transformative approach to addressing gender inequality. The major figures of this wave of feminism include Shulamith Firestone, Carol Hanisch and Robin Morgan. Radical feminists argue that gender oppression is deeply rooted in patriarchal structures and call for fundamental societal changes to dismantle these structures (Burrell & Flood, 2019). They critique the idea of gender as a social construct and emphasise the need to challenge and redefine traditional gender norms and roles. In the Nigerian context, radical feminism provides a critical lens through which to analyse and challenge the socio-cultural practices that perpetuate gender inequality. This includes practices such as child marriage, female genital mutilation, and restrictive gender roles that limit women's agency and autonomy (Shibles, 1989).

Social Constructionist Theory

To Burr and Dick (2017), Social Constructionist Theory views gender norms and socio-cultural practices as social constructs rather than innate or fixed attributes. The theory of social constructionism was propounded by Thomas Luckman and Peter L. Berger in 1966. The theory posits that gender is not determined by biology but is rather shaped by social processes, cultural beliefs, and institutional practices (Burr, 2015). At the core of Social Constructionist Theory is the recognition that gender is a product of social interactions, language, and discourse. It emphasises that individuals learn and internalise gender norms and roles through socialisation processes. In Nigeria, these processes occur within families, schools, religious institutions, and broader cultural contexts. Social constructionist theories highlight the ways in which gender is constantly negotiated and expressed in everyday interactions, shaping individuals' understanding of themselves and their place in society (Ward & Grower, 2020).

Language plays a crucial role in the social construction of gender. Words, terms, and linguistic conventions associated with gender create and reinforce societal expectations and stereotypes. For example, the use of gender-specific pronouns or the assignment of certain qualities to masculinity or femininity reflects and perpetuates gender norms. Social Constructionist Theory also emphasises the agency and resistance of individuals in challenging and reshaping gender norms (Nicholas, 2018). It recognises that individuals have the power to contest, renegotiate, and subvert societal expectations. In the Nigerian context, individuals and groups challenge gender norms through various forms of activism, advocacy, and artistic expression. By highlighting these acts of resistance, social constructionist theories provide a framework for understanding the

transformative potential of individuals and communities in promoting more inclusive and equitable gender norms.

Moreover, social constructionist perspectives draw attention to the role of institutions and systems in shaping and reinforcing gender norms (Geppert, 2022). Institutions such as education, media, and the legal system play a significant role in socialising individuals into specific gender roles and perpetuating societal expectations. For instance, the education system may reinforce traditional gender roles by promoting gendered subjects and career choices. By recognising the influence of institutions, social constructionist theories call for critical examination and reform of these systems to promote more equitable and inclusive gender norms.

Intersectionality Theory

This theory was propounded by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Intersectionality Theory recognises that gender cannot be examined in isolation from other social categories (Collins et al., 2021). This theoretical perspective acknowledges that individuals' experiences of gender are influenced by intersecting identities such as race, class, ethnicity, religion, and geography (Veenstra, 2011). In the context of Nigeria, Intersectionality Theory allows for a more nuanced exploration of how various social categories intersect with gender to produce unique experiences and challenges (Gueta, 2020). For example, gender expectations and opportunities may vary depending on factors such as ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status. Intersectional Theory underscores the need to consider the diverse experiences of individuals who belong to multiple marginalised groups and the ways in which their intersecting identities interact to shape their lived realities.

Intersectionality Theory uncovers the ways in which multiple systems of power and oppression intersect to produce specific forms of discrimination and inequality (Bešić, 2020). For instance, the experiences of a woman from a marginalised ethnic group may differ significantly from those of a woman from a dominant ethnic group because of the intersecting influences of gender and ethnicity. Intersectional analysis allows the understanding of the unique challenges faced by individuals at the intersections of multiple marginalised identities and to develop more targeted and inclusive approaches to addressing gender inequality.

Moreover, Intersectionality Theory emphasises the importance of considering both structural and interpersonal dimensions of power. It recognises that gender norms and socio-cultural practices are not solely shaped by individual experiences but are also influenced by broader social structures and systems of oppression (Veenstra, 2011). Veenstra

(2011) believes that in relation to the socio-cultural landscape of Nigeria, Intersectionality Theory helps critically examine the ways in which gender norms intersect with other social categories to produce differential access to resources, opportunities, and rights. Maroto et al. (2018) advance that the understanding of these intersecting dynamics ordinarily helps policymakers, activists, and scholars to develop more comprehensive strategies to address gender inequality that take into account the diverse experiences and challenges faced by individuals at various intersections of identity.

Furthermore, Intersectionality Theory encourages an inclusive and intersectional approach to feminist activism and advocacy (Woods et al., 2022). It calls for recognising and centring the experiences and voices of marginalised groups, including women who may face intersecting forms of discrimination. By adopting an intersectional lens, feminist movements in Nigeria can work towards a more inclusive and equitable society that recognises and addresses the intersecting systems of oppression that perpetuate gender inequality.

Gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria

Gender norms in Nigeria often prescribe distinct roles and responsibilities for men and women. These roles are often centred around the division of labour, where men are typically assigned tasks related to income-generation and public life, while women are expected to take care of domestic chores and child-rearing (Olonade et al., 2021). This division can be observed in various spheres, including the household, workplace, and community. Men are typically encouraged to pursue careers and assume positions of authority, while women are often socialised to prioritise nurturing and caretaking roles. The Social Constructionist Theory is the most apposite theory that supports this societal arrangement. The theory posits that gender roles are shaped by social processes as well as cultural beliefs (Burr, 2015). Thus, the roles and expectations assigned to each gender are often reflections of customary beliefs and norms.

Gender norms in Nigeria have far-reaching implications for women's access to and control over resources (Benebo et al., 2018). In many instances, women encounter significant barriers when it comes to obtaining land, securing financial resources, and attaining decision-making power (Akinola, 2018).³ These challenges not only restrict their economic opportunities but

3 Traditionally, land is often passed down through male lineage, leading to limited land ownership rights for women. Cultural and customary practices reinforce this gender bias, resulting in women being excluded from land ownership and control. As a consequence, women may face difficulties in starting businesses, securing loans, or using land as collateral for economic

also perpetuate gender inequality within society. Moreover, the limited access to education and healthcare that women experience further exacerbates gender disparities in these critical areas. This view is reinforced by the Intersectionality Theory, which states that gender norms intersect with other social categories to produce differential access to resources, opportunities, and rights (Veenstra, 2011).

In Nigeria, socio-cultural practices, deeply rooted in traditions and customs, play a significant role in shaping gender norms (Ajayi et al., 2022). These practices can vary across ethnic groups and regions but often include rituals, ceremonies, and rites of passage that reinforce gender roles and expectations. For instance, certain cultural practices limit women's mobility, restrict their participation in public spaces, and subject them to harmful traditional norms, such as female genital mutilation (Makama, 2013). These practices were notably more prevalent in the South Eastern and South Western regions of Nigeria (Omoniyi, 2020). In the Northern region of Nigeria, child marriage is most common, with approximately 52% of women aged 20 to 24 married off before the age of 18 (NBS, 2022). Religion can be linked as a supportive framework that validates this enduring cultural practice. Religious leaders argue, based on Islamic teachings, that a girl's readiness for marriage is gauged by physical attributes and menstruation (NBS, 2022). This reasoning underlies some of the highest rates of child marriages in Kano State, where sharia law permits such unions based on religious and traditional justifications, linking adulthood to puberty (NBS, 2022). Similarly, in Imo State under Christian influence, societal pressure leads to the coerced marriage of girls who have children out of wedlock, deeming it dishonourable within the community (NBS, 2022). However, over the years, because of concerted efforts of governments and NGOs aimed at combatting and reducing the prevalence of these practices, there has been a noticeable decline in the prevalence of these practices.

Despite this progress, remnants of these harmful practices still persist in various communities. For instance, according to a recent analysis by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), while some regions have seen a reduction in the prevalence of female genital mutilation, such as the South-South (25.8% to 17.7%), South West (47.5% to 30%), and South East (49% to 35%), other regions have witnessed an increase, notably the North East (2.9% to 6.1%) (UNFPA & UNICEF, 2021). The South East currently maintains the highest prevalence (Omoniyi, 2020). This backdrop indicates that there is still more work to be performed to make a positive

activities. Their ability to make independent decisions regarding land use, investment, and property ownership is constrained, limiting their economic empowerment and perpetuating gender inequality.

impact, thereby underscoring the radical feminist position that there is a need to challenge gender disparities through a transformative approach. This could involve collaboration of NGOs with government bodies and community leaders for intensified efforts. The collaboration can include culturally sensitive educational programmes, community dialogues, and advocacy campaigns to dispel myths and misconceptions surrounding FGM (female genital mutilation). Additionally, engaging traditional healers, birth attendants, and community members as agents of change is crucial, as they often play a significant role in propagating these harmful practices.

Furthermore, Eke (2023) opines that patriarchy is a pervasive dimension of gender norms in Nigeria. Patriarchy is the social system in which men hold primary power and authority, leading to the subordination of women. Patriarchal power structures manifest in various forms, such as male dominance in decision-making processes, limited representation of women in political positions, and unequal distribution of resources and opportunities.

Gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria contribute to the prevalence of gender-based violence (Mensah, 2023). This includes various forms of violence, such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, and harmful traditional practices like child marriage and dowry-related violence. These practices not only violate the rights of women but also perpetuate a cycle of violence and reinforce unequal power dynamics.

Gender norms in Nigeria dictate specific behavioural expectations and norms for men and women. These expectations encompass areas such as appearance, dress, communication styles, and emotional expression (Onyeizugbo, 2003). For instance, men are often expected to demonstrate strength, assertiveness, and emotional restraint, while women may be expected to conform to ideals of modesty, nurturance, and obedience (Cislaghi et al., 2022). The Social Constructivist Theory is the most apposite in this regard.

Ultimately, these norms, rooted in historical, cultural, and patriarchal foundations, significantly influence roles, opportunities, and experiences of men and women across various domains. The prevalence of harmful practices, albeit showing signs of decline because of targeted interventions, remains a persistent concern (Omoniyi, 2020). Therefore, efforts to challenge and transform these norms are imperative to foster a more equitable society, eradicate gender-based violence, and promote inclusive environments where individuals can transcend restrictive gender expectations.

Forms of Gender Norms and Socio-Cultural Practices in Nigeria

Gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria encompass a wide range of traditions and expectations that significantly influence the roles that individuals are expected to assume based on their gender. These traditions and expectations include traditional occupational roles, family dynamics, female genital mutilation, early forced marriage and nutritional practices. These practices have implications beyond healthcare and impact various aspects of society. The following are identified as major amongst the forms of gender norms and socio-cultural practices prevalent in Nigeria and their broader effects on individuals and communities (Ugwu & de Kok, 2015; Offiong et al., 2021).

Gender norms

Traditional occupational roles

Historically, Nigeria has been influenced by traditional gender roles that assign distinct career paths based on gender (Offiong et al., 2021). Men have traditionally been directed towards careers perceived as requiring physical strength, technical skills, and assertiveness, aligning with societal expectations of masculinity (Ugwu & de Kok, 2015). Sectors such as engineering, technology, and leadership positions have traditionally been viewed as suitable for men, reflecting the prevailing gender biases. The delineation of roles for men and women in specific career paths reflects socially constructed gender norms and expectations concerning masculinity and femininity.

On the other hand, women in Nigeria have often faced societal pressure to pursue professions that are perceived as nurturing or caregiving in nature, aligning with traditional roles as caregivers and homemakers (Offiong et al., 2021). Education, healthcare, and administrative roles have historically been seen as more suitable for women because of assumptions about their nurturing abilities and attention to detail. These traditional occupational roles have significantly contributed to the perpetuation of gender disparities in various professional spheres (Ajayi & Omosule, 2017). The restrictions imposed by these gendered vocational expectations limit individuals' opportunities to explore diverse career paths and break free from traditional moulds. The differential opportunities and limitations faced by men and women in career paths intersect with social, economic, and cultural factors, showing the challenges that individuals face based on their gender and other social categories.

Marital expectations

Marital expectations are significantly influenced by entrenched gender norms that prescribe specific roles and responsibilities for men and women within the family structure. These norms perpetuate traditional gender roles, shaping the dynamics of marriage and family life. Women in Nigeria often face societal expectations that prioritise family responsibilities above personal and professional aspirations (Adedini et al., 2014). Traditional gender norms dictate that a woman's primary role revolves around caregiving, household chores, and nurturing children. Consequently, women are encouraged to prioritise their family's needs over their individual pursuits, including education, career advancement, and personal growth.

Dress codes and appearance

In Nigeria, dress codes and appearance standards are heavily influenced by societal expectations based on gender (Ozor & Onuoha, 2018). Men are frequently expected to maintain a 'strong and stoic' image through their choice of clothing. This often translates to attire that emphasises physical strength or professional stature, reinforcing societal expectations regarding what is considered 'masculine.' Conversely, women are encouraged to adhere to ideals of 'modesty and grace' in their dress and appearance (Ikegbu et al., 2019). This usually entails clothing that covers more of the body and is deemed as modest, reflecting traditional perceptions of femininity. These gendered dress codes and appearance standards further perpetuate gender norms and stereotypes within Nigerian society (Omoniyi, 2020).

Expression of emotions

Societal norms in Nigeria often dictate the acceptable expression of emotions based on gender (Onyeizugbo, 2003). This expectation aligns with traditional ideals of masculinity, associating emotional resilience and stoicism with strength. Men feel compelled to hide feelings of sadness, fear, or emotional struggles, fearing that expressing such emotions may be seen as a sign of weakness. On the other hand, women are encouraged to express a broader range of emotions, especially those associated with nurturing roles such as empathy, kindness, and compassion (Onyeizugbo, 2003). Societal expectations dictate that women should openly exhibit their feelings, showcasing empathy and understanding in various situations. For men, the pressure to suppress vulnerability and emotions may lead to emotional suppression or bottling up feelings, potentially resulting in stress, anxiety, or depression (Levant & Richmond, 2008). The reluctance to seek emotional support because of societal expectations can further exacerbate mental health issues.

Socio-cultural practices

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

One prominent socio-cultural practice in Nigeria is female genital mutilation, which involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia. Nigeria has one of the highest rates of FGM in the world. According to UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) (2020), approximately 20% of women aged 15 to 49 in Nigeria have undergone FGM. However, the prevalence varies across different regions within the country. States such as Osun, Ebonyi, Ekiti, and Oyo have reported higher rates of FGM, while states like Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, and Cross River have lower prevalence rates (Okeke et al., 2012). FGM in Nigeria is often justified based on cultural beliefs surrounding purity, modesty, and marriageability. Some communities view FGM as a rite of passage into womanhood and a way to ensure virginity and fidelity. It is believed to promote cultural identity, enhance marriage prospects, and maintain social acceptance within the community. FGM encompasses various procedures, ranging from partial to total removal of the external female genitalia (WHO, 2023).⁴

FGM has severe physical and psychological health consequences for women and girls (Knipscheer et al., 2015). Immediate risks include severe pain, bleeding, infections, urinary problems, and even death. Long-term complications can include difficulties during childbirth, sexual dysfunction, psychological trauma, and increased vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections. While the consequences of FGM on women's health are severe, it is essential to recognise that this practice extends beyond healthcare. FGM is deeply rooted in cultural norms and taboos that perpetuate gender inequality and restrict women's autonomy and bodily integrity (Khosla et al., 2017).

Nutritional practices and gender disparities

Socio-cultural norms regarding food distribution and dietary practices also contribute to gender disparities in Nigeria. In many Nigerian communities, gender-based preferences and biases shape food distribution within households (Ashagidigbi et al., 2022). Men and male children are often given preferential treatment, receiving larger portions and priority access

4 The World Health Organization (WHO) categorises FGM into four types: a. Type I: Clitoridectomy - Partial or total removal of the clitoris. b. Type II: Excision - Partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora. c. Type III: Infibulation - Narrowing of the vaginal opening by creating a seal, often by cutting and repositioning the labia majora. d. Type IV: Other harmful procedures - This includes pricking, piercing, incising, scraping, or cauterising the genital area.

to nutritious food (Okoli, 2001). This practice stems from traditional gender roles and beliefs that prioritise the nutritional needs of men over women. Consequently, women and girls are left with limited access to essential nutrients, leading to inadequate nutrition and potential health implications.

The nutritional disparities resulting from gendered food distribution can have significant health consequences for women and girls in Nigeria. Insufficient intake of vital nutrients such as proteins, vitamins, and minerals can lead to malnutrition, weakened immune systems, and increased susceptibility to illnesses (Foolchand et al., 2022). This can further contribute to complications during pregnancy, poor maternal health outcomes, and hindered child development. Over time, these disparities perpetuate a cycle of poor health and reinforce gender inequalities.

Cultural beliefs and norms also influence dietary practices in Nigeria. Some communities hold traditional beliefs that certain foods are ‘male-oriented’ or ‘female-oriented’. For instance, in some cultural distributions in the South Eastern region of Nigeria, it is believed that yam, which is considered a staple crop, is associated with masculinity and is often regarded as a male-oriented food. On the other hand, certain leafy greens like *ugu* (fluted pumpkin) and bitter leaf are considered female-oriented foods (Kaedi Africa, 2018). Women and girls may be discouraged from consuming protein-rich foods or specific nutrient-dense foods, especially during reproductive phases, because of cultural taboos. These restrictions further exacerbate the nutritional disparities faced by women and contribute to their overall health vulnerabilities.

Mortuary indignities and widowhood practices

Widowhood practices in Nigeria, influenced by socio-cultural beliefs, have significant detrimental effects on women’s health and overall well-being. Widows face multiple challenges, including extreme poverty, violence, homelessness, and discrimination. These hardships can have profound physical and mental health consequences for widows, exacerbating their vulnerability and leading to increased rates of illness and mortality. Moreover, during the mourning period, widows are subjected to dehumanising rituals and seclusion, denying them access to essential resources such as personal hygiene, proper nutrition, and healthcare services (Wuraola, 2016). This lack of access to basic necessities further compounds their health risks and hinders their ability to seek necessary healthcare during a period when support is crucial.

Mortuary indignities and widowhood practices in Nigeria constitute a violation of fundamental human rights and dignity. These especially

contravene the rights to dignity and human persons, liberty and freedom from discrimination, as enshrined in Sections 34, 35 and 42 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, as amended (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). These practices deny widows their autonomy, infringe upon their bodily integrity, and perpetuate gender-based discrimination (Okoye, 1995). Widowhood practices that include degrading rituals, physical and psychological abuses, and enforced isolation disregard the rights of widows to live free from violence, discrimination, and inhumane treatment. Such practices contribute to the marginalisation and stigmatisation of widows within society, hindering their access to healthcare and exacerbating their health vulnerabilities (Babalola, 1997).

Instances of mortuary indignities and widowhood practices can be found across Nigeria, spanning different regions, ethnic groups, and religions. For example, in some communities in Northern Nigeria, widows experience 'purification rites' that involve wearing black attire, shaving their hair, and observing a prolonged period of seclusion (Akinyemi, 2018). In South Eastern Nigeria, widows face practices such as being ostracised from their communities, forced eviction from their homes, or being denied inheritance rights (Akinyemi, 2018). These practices persist because of deeply entrenched cultural and traditional beliefs that perpetuate gender inequality and restrict widows' rights and freedoms. In some parts of Southern and Western Nigeria, widows also experience mortuary indignities in the form of being compelled to consume the water utilised to cleanse the deceased's body as a means to demonstrate her innocence (Eteng, 2022). Alternatively, a widow might be coerced to swim beneath the boat carrying her husband's remains, submerged in a river, or forcibly thrown over her late husband's coffin to test if her legs make contact with it (Eteng, 2022). Another practice involves taking an oath by walking across the deceased's body (Iheanacho, 2006). These actions are imposed upon grieving widows, adding to their distress and suffering, all in the name of verifying their innocence (Eteng, 2022).

Early forced marriage

Adeyemi, Gidado and Adeyemi (2023) hold that early forced marriage is a socio-cultural practice prevalent in Nigeria and it disproportionately impacts girls and poses significant health hazards. When girls are married off at a young age, they often face limited educational opportunities, which can impede their ability to make informed decisions regarding their health.

Early marriage also increases girls' vulnerability to various health risks, including early pregnancy, complications during childbirth, and limited access to reproductive healthcare. Girls who marry early often experience physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, leading to adverse mental

health outcomes (Nour, 2009). Early forced marriage presents several health challenges for girls in Nigeria. Girls who marry at a young age are at higher risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth, including obstetric fistula, maternal mortality, and adverse birth outcomes. They may also face challenges in accessing appropriate reproductive healthcare services, such as family planning and antenatal care. Limited decision-making power and lack of autonomy in healthcare choices further contribute to inadequate medical care for young couples. Moreover, traditional beliefs and practices may influence treatment choices, resulting in suboptimal healthcare for young couples (Aduradola, 2013). Additionally, early marriage disrupts girls' educational opportunities, which is crucial for their overall development, including health literacy and awareness of their reproductive rights.

Implications of gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria

The foregoing gender norms and socio-cultural practices extend their reach into crucial domains of Nigerian society such as education, healthcare, employment and political engagement. These deeply rooted practices have profound implications that shape opportunities, health outcomes, economic participation, and political representation in several ways. Understanding and analysing these practices can provide valuable insights into the specific areas where discriminatory practices occur and enable the design of targeted interventions to address them. This section will elaborate on the implications of gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria in relation to education, healthcare, employment, and political participation.

In the context of education, gender norms and socio-cultural practices can create barriers to girls' access to education and limit their educational opportunities (Kainuwa & Yusuf, 2013). Traditional beliefs and gender roles often prioritise boys' education over girls', leading to lower enrolment rates and higher dropout rates amongst girls. This perpetuates gender disparities in education and hampers the overall development of girls and women. It is therefore crucial to recognise that education for girls transcends mere access to school. Instead, it is about creating an enabling environment where girls feel safe in classrooms and are supported in the subjects and careers that they choose to pursue, even those in which they are often under-represented. Investing in girls' education transforms and strengthens economies, reduces inequality, and benefits not just individuals but communities, countries, and the entire world. Girls who receive an education are less likely to marry young and are more likely to lead healthy, productive lives. They earn higher incomes, participate in the decisions that most affect them, and build better futures for themselves and their families.

Gender norms and socio-cultural practices also significantly influence women's access to healthcare services (Nour, 2009). Discriminatory practices restrict women's access to essential reproductive healthcare, including family planning, antenatal care, and safe childbirth. This lack of access can result in adverse health outcomes for women and hinder their overall well-being. In addressing this issue, it becomes imperative not only to focus on healthcare provision but also to challenge and transform the societal norms and practices that perpetuate gender disparities in accessing essential healthcare services. Investing in overcoming these barriers contributes to healthier societies and a more equitable world, where every woman can access the healthcare that she needs for a prosperous and fulfilling life.

In the realm of employment, gender norms and socio-cultural practices often create barriers that limit women's access to economic opportunities and financial independence (Ugwu & de Kok, 2015). Traditional gender roles and expectations confine women to certain occupations or sectors and perpetuate gender-based occupational segregation. These practices not only contribute to the persistent gender wage gap but also obstruct women's complete and meaningful economic participation (Ugwu & de Kok, 2015). Overcoming these barriers is integral to challenging gender norms and promoting inclusivity within the workforce, where women have equal access to diverse economic opportunities, enabling them to thrive and contribute meaningfully to their communities and economies. A concerted effort towards dismantling these barriers is fundamental for a more equitable society and robust economic growth.

In the political sphere, gender norms and socio-cultural practices play a significant role in hindering women's participation and representation in decision-making processes (Okafor & Akokuwebe, 2015). Discriminatory practices, such as limited political rights and biases against women in politics undermine democratic principles and impede the inclusive governance of a nation. Thus, concerted efforts by the governments and relevant stakeholders in addressing these systemic biases, fostering a more gender-equitable political environment, and amplifying women's voices and roles in politics are crucial steps towards realising a democratic society that embraces diversity and effectively addresses the needs and concerns of all its citizens.

Gender norms and socio-cultural practices vis-à-vis gender equality in Nigeria

Gender norms and socio-cultural practices play a significant role in shaping the status and experiences of women in Nigeria, and their implications for gender equality are of paramount importance. Nigeria, like many other countries, has deep-rooted societal expectations, beliefs, and behaviours

that contribute to the perpetuation of gender disparities. In Nigeria, traditional gender norms often prescribe distinct roles and responsibilities for men and women, perpetuating inequalities and limiting opportunities for women's advancement in various spheres of life. For instance, women are often expected to prioritise their roles as wives and mothers, while men are expected to be the primary providers for their families (Olonade et al., 2021). These expectations are deeply entrenched in societal structures and influence various aspects of individuals' lives, from education and employment to access to resources and decision-making power.

Socio-cultural practices in Nigeria further reinforce gender norms and contribute to the marginalisation of women. Practices such as early marriage, female genital mutilation, and limited access to education for girls are prevalent in many parts of the country. Early marriage, in particular, remains a significant challenge, with a considerable number of girls being married off before the age of 18 (Adeyemi et al., 2023). Data from the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) in 2013 reported that 58.2% of Nigerian girls are married before they turn 18 years old (NPC & ICF International, 2014). According to a projection by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Nigeria is expected to have 29 million underage brides by the year 2050 (UNFPA & UNICEF, 2021). This practice hampers girls' educational opportunities, perpetuates cycles of poverty, and contributes to high rates of maternal mortality and complications because of early childbirth.

Moreover, women in Nigeria face gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape, which are deeply rooted in socio-cultural practices and norms (Ekpe et al., 2014). These practices not only violate women's rights but also perpetuate a culture of silence and impunity, making it difficult for survivors to seek justice and support. Gender-based violence not only affects individual women but also has broader societal implications, inhibiting their participation in public life and hindering progress towards gender equality.

The implications of gender norms and socio-cultural practices on gender equality in Nigeria are profound and multifaceted. Gender inequality limits women's access to education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and participation in decision-making processes. Limited educational opportunities for girls perpetuate a cycle of poverty and hinder their socio-economic advancement. Unequal access to healthcare services, including reproductive health, exacerbates health disparities and increases vulnerability to maternal mortality and morbidity. Gender-based occupational segregation and the gender pay gap restrict women's economic empowerment and limit their contributions to the formal economy.

Furthermore, gender inequality in Nigeria perpetuates power imbalances, leading to limited representation of women in political and leadership positions (Msuva, 2019). Women's voices and perspectives are often marginalised or excluded from decision-making processes, undermining the democratic principles of inclusivity and equitable governance. The proportion of women's involvement in political roles in Nigeria stands at a national average of 6.7%, a figure significantly below the global average of 22.5% (Oluyemi, 2016). This percentage also falls short of the regional averages, with Africa at 23.4% and West Africa at 15% (Olaboopo, 2022). A concrete example of this disparity is evident in the 2015 ministerial appointments, where out of 36 confirmations, only six individuals, or 16.7%, were women (Oluyemi, 2016). In the National Assembly, the representation of women is even lower, constituting 5.6% of members in the House of Representatives and 6.5% in the Senate (Olaboopo, 2022). Despite twenty-three years of uninterrupted democratic governance (1999–2023), Nigeria has yet to witness a female governor in any of its 36 states. By upholding patriarchal norms and practices, Nigeria not only denies women their rights but also hampers social progress and sustainable development. These traditional norms, rooted in historical and cultural biases, maintain a rigid power structure that systematically marginalises women, restricting their access to opportunities and decision-making roles in both the public and private spheres. This imbalance of power not only adversely affects women but also impedes the advancement of society as a whole, stunting its potential for inclusive growth and equitable development.

Challenges in eliminating gender norms and socio-cultural practices perpetuating gender inequity in Nigeria

One of the primary challenges in eliminating gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria are the deeply rooted cultural beliefs that support and perpetuate gender inequality. Many of these practices are justified based on traditional values, religious interpretations, and the preservation of cultural identity (Farina et al., 2022). Challenging these beliefs requires a comprehensive and sustained effort to engage with communities, religious leaders, and opinion-shapers to promote alternative narratives that prioritise gender equity and women's rights. However, such processes are complex and time-consuming, requiring extensive dialogue, education, and cultural sensitivity.

In Nigeria, the prevalence of harmful gender norms and socio-cultural practices is exacerbated by a significant lack of awareness and education about gender equality and women's rights, a challenge particularly pronounced in rural areas because of limited access to formal

education and information (Neuman, 2016). This knowledge gap allows these harmful practices to persist, perpetuating gender inequality and discrimination (Galbiati et al., 2021). Efforts by NGOs, CBOs (community-based organisations), and donor agencies are instrumental in addressing this gap by conducting awareness campaigns and educational programmes, especially in rural regions, to enlighten individuals about gender equality and women's rights. However, challenges such as logistical limitations and cultural resistance still impede their comprehensive reach. This backdrop necessitates a continual enhancement of strategies to ensure broader impact and contribute to the overall goal of achieving gender equity in Nigeria. Without effective awareness and education, the cycle of gender inequality will persist and continue to impede social, economic, and political development for individuals, communities, and the nation. Resistance by gatekeepers to change is a significant hurdle in eliminating gender norms and socio-cultural practices in Nigeria (Okoli, 2007). Gatekeepers are individuals or entities within a community or society who hold influence, power, or authority over the maintenance and continuation of established norms and practices (Koloi-Keaikitse et al., 2021). They play a role in maintaining the status quo by upholding traditional practices that reinforce gender disparities. Their influence extends to decision-making processes, including those related to marriage, education, healthcare, and participation in public life. Resistance to change often stems from the fear of losing control, power, or influence that these gatekeepers possess within the existing social structures. They view attempts to challenge traditional norms as a threat to their authority and the stability of the community (Adamu, 2019). Consequently, they actively resist change, sometimes employing persuasive rhetoric, sanctions, or shaming to discourage individuals from deviating from established gender norms. While Nigeria has laws and policies that aim to protect women's rights and promote gender equality, the enforcement and implementation of these laws remain a challenge. In some cases, legal frameworks may not adequately address specific gender-based practices or may lack sufficient mechanisms for enforcement. For instance, Nigeria has the National Gender Policy, which was revised in 2021. Nigeria is also a signatory to several international conventions related to gender equality. These represent a critical foundation for advancing gender equity. However, the challenge lies in effectively translating these policies into tangible actions that result in substantive change within Nigerian society. The gap between policy and practice arises from various factors, including limited resources, capacity constraints, and a lack of political will. Additionally, while being signatories to international conventions is a significant step, compliance and enforcement within the domestic context require concerted efforts and alignment with national laws and customs. Another example of Nigeria's law on gender equality is Section

17 of the Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), which establishes the fundamental objective of the state as freedom, equality, and justice, and prohibits discrimination based on gender. However, this provision is in Chapter II of the Constitution. By virtue of Section 6(6)(c) of the Constitution, Chapter II has been rendered non-justiciable. In other words, the lofty provision of Section 17 on gender equality cannot be enforced in the court of law because the jurisdiction of the court to entertain cases on the provision has been ousted. Additionally, societal attitudes and cultural norms often undermine the effectiveness of legal measures. For instance, the strong inclination to resolve disputes within the community through elders and gatekeepers rather than resorting to formal legal mechanisms like courts, act as significant impediments to the enforcement and efficacy of legal measures in addressing gender-based violence and harmful cultural practices.

Socio-economic factors also contribute to the persistence of gender norms and practices in Nigeria. Poverty, limited access to resources, and economic disparities disproportionately affect women and perpetuate gender inequality (Gruneau, 2022). In 2019, the national poverty headcount ratio at the national poverty line was estimated to be 40.1% (World Bank, 2020). According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021, Nigeria ranked 136 out of 156 countries in terms of gender parity in economic participation and opportunity (World Economic Forum, 2021). Women are disproportionately affected by poverty, and they often experience higher rates of poverty compared to men (World Bank, 2020). This economic vulnerability limits their ability to challenge traditional gender norms and practices that perpetuate gender inequalities. Addressing gender inequity requires comprehensive poverty alleviation strategies, access to quality education and healthcare, and economic empowerment initiatives that specifically target women.

Findings

The multifaceted dimensions of gender inequality are deeply ingrained in Nigerian society. The study revealed a pervasive patriarchal system that perpetuates and reinforces discriminatory gender norms. These norms dictate distinct roles, responsibilities, and behaviours for men and women, resulting in imbalanced power dynamics and limited agency for women. Moreover, the research has indicated the prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM), and child marriage, particularly in the South Eastern and South Western regions of Nigeria. FGM, in particular, emerged as a critical concern, affecting a significant percentage of women and girls in the country, subjecting them to severe physical and psychological consequences.

The research also shed light on the compounding effect of intersectionality, where gender norms intersect with other social categories such as ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status, creating unique experiences of discrimination and inequality. The study supports the need for a more inclusive and intersectional approach to addressing gender inequality. Additionally, the study found a correlation between gender norms and limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for women. These barriers hinder progress towards achieving gender equality and overall development in Nigeria (Ashagidigbi et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the research revealed that despite efforts to promote gender equality and enact legislation to protect women's rights, the deeply entrenched gender norms and socio-cultural practices continue to persist. Society's overall reluctance or resistance to change these norms underscores the necessity for a more comprehensive and sustained approach to challenge and transform the existing gender paradigm. The findings underscore the urgency for targeted interventions, policy reforms, and educational campaigns to challenge and change these norms, thereby fostering a more equitable society for all.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion highlights the complex and interconnected factors that perpetuate gender inequity. Deeply rooted cultural beliefs, limited awareness and education, resistance to change, legal and enforcement gaps, and socio-economic factors all contribute to the persistence of harmful practices and gender disparities. To address these challenges, a comprehensive and multi-sectorial approach is needed. This includes promoting gender-responsive healthcare, institutionalising gender mainstreaming, collecting gender-disaggregated data, engaging media and communication channels, and strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can move towards dismantling harmful gender norms, empowering women, and fostering a more equitable and inclusive society.

Recommendations

Integrating gender education into the curriculum is crucial for promoting gender equality in Nigeria. Comprehensive gender education programmes should be introduced in schools at all levels, addressing topics such as gender equality, women's rights, and the harmful effects of gender norms and practices. Additionally, community-based awareness campaigns should be conducted to reach areas with limited formal education. Utilising traditional

and digital media platforms to disseminate information and promote positive gender norms will help raise awareness and foster understanding.

In the same vein, it is important to address the socio-economic factors that contribute to gender inequity. Policies and programmes should be implemented to facilitate women's access to economic resources such as credit, land ownership, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Supporting vocational training and skills development programmes will enhance women's economic empowerment. Additionally, social protection programmes should be established to provide support to vulnerable women, including widows, survivors of gender-based violence, and those living in poverty. Access to healthcare services, legal aid, and counselling support should be integral components of these programmes.

Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is essential to track progress, identify gaps, and make informed decisions regarding interventions addressing gender inequity. Regular monitoring and evaluation should be conducted to assess the effectiveness and impact of policies, programmes, and initiatives. This involves setting clear indicators, collecting relevant data, and analysing the outcomes. Findings from monitoring and evaluation exercises should inform policy adjustments and programme improvements to ensure continuous learning and improvement in addressing gender norms and practices.

To ensure sustainable progress in addressing gender norms and practices, gender mainstreaming⁵ should be institutionalised across all sectors of society (Archibong et al., 2018). Government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and institutions should develop gender mainstreaming policies and guidelines that prioritise gender equity and women's empowerment. This involves integrating gender considerations into policy development, programme design, budget allocation, and monitoring and evaluation processes. Establishing gender focal points within organisations and promoting gender-responsive governance structures will help facilitate the implementation of gender mainstreaming initiatives.

Improving access to gender-responsive healthcare services is crucial for addressing gender norms and socio-cultural practices that perpetuate gender inequity. Healthcare providers should be trained to deliver services that are sensitive to the unique health needs and challenges faced by women. This includes addressing reproductive health, maternal healthcare, and addressing the consequences of harmful practices such as female genital

5 Gender mainstreaming is the process of integrating a gender perspective into all policies, programmes, and activities to promote gender equality and address gender disparities.

mutilation. Health education programmes should also be developed to empower women with knowledge about their rights, sexual and reproductive health, and available healthcare services. Furthermore, efforts should be made to reduce barriers to healthcare access, such as distance, cost, and cultural stigmas, through the establishment of more healthcare facilities and outreach programmes in underserved areas.

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Chapter 2

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Chapter 3

The Endangered Species: Women's Participation in Politics and Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract

A state's drive for socioeconomic and political development is contingent on how well it harnesses its available resources. One such resource is human capital which consists of the men and women in the state. The neglect or disregard of a particular group could prove counter-productive or serve as a drawback or hindrance to the development strides in the state. In Nigeria, women make up over 49% of the entire population; hence, non-involvement of women in decision-making and state-building amounts to a significant underutilisation of the human capital resource of the state. Nigeria has the least number of women parliamentarians in sub-Saharan Africa and is ranked 133rd worldwide for female political representation. Despite this, the few who participate in the governance process pass through some harrowing experiences. This chapter aims to examine the challenges of women's participation in politics in Nigeria. The qualitative research design was adopted to assess the level of women's representation in governance. Secondary data was provided to support the argument of the threat and the inherent dangers women in Nigeria encounter in the collective decision-making process. The chapter concludes by proffering possible solutions for protecting women to improve their political representation.

Keywords: Endangered, Politics, Representation. Violence, Women

Introduction

The 'Women Question' is one of the nagging issues in citizenship discourse, especially regarding gender distinction, which is encapsulated in the

discrimination against women in the affairs of the state or society. Situations where women are not accorded full and equal participation or opportunities to exploit their full potential and contribute their quota to state-building; rob society of the prospects of rapid social, economic, political and cultural development.

In exercising the fundamental human rights to participate in governance and politics, several barriers and obstacles, mostly society-based, stand in the way of women from being able to exercise such rights fully (Para-Mallam, 2015). In Africa, the issue of gender distinction is peculiar because of the cultural and traditional heritage that people (particularly men) still tenaciously hold on to as a tool for the deprivation and exclusion of the female gender. In Nigeria, the case is particularly problematic as women's representation in Nigerian governance and politics falls far below expectations when compared to women's representation in other countries in Africa and beyond.

According to Isike and Uzodike (2011), "women are in the majority in most countries, yet they have retained the minority status in the world be it socially, economically and politically." In Nigeria, women constitute over 49% of the entire population (Ogbonna, 2016). Nigeria has the lowest number of female lawmakers in sub-Saharan Africa and is ranked 133 in the world in terms of female political representation (Ogbonna, 2016). Of Africa's 54 countries, Nigeria ranks 54 and in terms of female representation, is the lowest with 5.4% (Okafor & Ileyemi, 2023). Together with the poor female representation in Nigeria is the trend of victimisation, humiliation, threat of political violence, to actual violence and possible assassination against women. For Isike and Uzodike (2011), marginalisation of women beyond the economic level is also carried through to the visible aspect of state politics, where their participation is restricted, and to some extent, non-existent.

The 'Women Question' in political representation in Nigeria is deeply entrenched in the historiography of the country. It however started to gain prominence in the political agenda of Nigeria in the latter part of the 1980s. The Federal Military Government of Gen. Ibrahim officially attempted to address this question (Abdullah, 1993). This was encapsulated in the framework instituted by Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, where reforms were introduced that appeared to give recognition to gender issues in the country. The Political Bureau that was set up to address the 'Women Question' was the first to propose the reservation of 5% of legislative seats to women at all levels of government (Abdullah, 1993). The government, however, rejected this recommendation, and since then, Nigeria has continued to experience a very low representation of women in politics and the governance process.

Dominant discourse on gender studies tend to focus on women's marginalisation, representation and under-representation in the politics and governance of the state (Chuku, 2009; Isike & Uzodike, 2011). Some other strands of literature have focused on violence against women (Ojigho, 2009), gender injustice (Uche, 2002) and the discriminatory practices that women encounter in society.

Although Nigeria has experienced uninterrupted democratic rule for over two decades, female political participation remains problematic. Even though the struggle for women's right to political participation resulted in the signing of several agreements on the rights of women to participate in the governance of their country (Kaniye, 2005) and the United Nations Convention on the Political Rights of Women 1954 (UN, 1954) as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1979 (UN, 1979), women have not been able to measure up to the men in the development process in the country.

This chapter examines women's participation in Nigeria's politics and governance. It interrogates the inequalities resulting from women engaging in the socio-political process and the challenges that they face in the political space through subjugation, intimidation, humiliation, threats and violence. The study adopted the qualitative research design and used secondary data sources. Documented evidence was used to support the arguments of the threats and inherent dangers that women in Nigeria encounter in the exercise of their franchise in the collective decision-making process of the country. The chapter is organised as follows: After the introduction is a section that clarifies the basic concepts of the chapter. The third section examines the subjugation of women through masculinisation of the political space in Nigeria and the horizontal inequalities that exist between men and women in political representation. The fourth section examines the dangers that women in politics are exposed to in an attempt to engage the political process. The fifth section makes a case for women's representation in Nigeria. The chapter concludes by suggesting ways that women's representation in Nigeria can be improved.

Conceptual clarification

To avoid any form of ambiguity, some concepts which are key to this chapter are clarified and explained within the context that they were used.

Governance

Governance can be defined as the process through which power is deployed to achieve the noble end of the state. It is the manner in which power is exercised

in the management of a state's economic, social and human resources for development (Agwu, 2011). According to Ogundiya (2010), governance is the process of allocating resources through the instrumentality of the state for the attainment of public good. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines governance as the exercise of administrative, economic and political authority for managing the affairs of a country at all levels (UNDP, 1997).

In this chapter, women in governance and politics refers to the extent to which women take part in the collective decision-making process in the state; and the role they play in the exercise of power and authority in managing the resources of the state to bring about the common good for the citizens.

The endangered species

The phrase 'The Endangered Species' in the context of this chapter refers to female folk who suffer various forms of violence in the political process, that deepens their systematic and systemic elimination from actual political representation and decision-making processes. Such manipulative forms of violence endanger women and repel them from mainstream politics and representation. Apart from the fact that these repeated attacks and the concomitant effect on the emotions and psychology of women, it makes politics unattractive to them and diminishes their representation in the democratic process. This accounts for the reason why there seems to be a downward trend in women's representation in elective positions in general and the 2023 General Elections in particular. It is on this premise that the valid indicator is derived, to the effect in political representation and governance, women appear to be the endangered species. In other words, women are considered the endangered species because of the violent attacks they encounter in politics that creates trauma capable of reducing their interest and participation in politics.

Horizontal inequalities and women's subjugation in Nigeria

The cultural dispositions of many African states place women as a support system to men, particularly on the domestic front, and as such, they are seen as a second fiddle to men. This social construction has penetrated the social, economic and political fabric of society to the extent that a gender structure has emerged which tends to place men above women almost all the time. This is why Hassim (1993) contends that the pre-colonial African traditional culture is inherently oppressive of women, and they are cut-off from decision-making and defined out of mainstream politics.

The deprivation and discrimination against women resulting from uneven distribution or access to opportunities in the public space where men are privileged, give rise to horizontal inequality. Horizontal inequality as a concept draws attention to inequalities amongst groups as opposed to individuals or households that reflect vertical inequality (Onwuzuruigbo, 2011; Nnabuihe, 2019). Whereas vertical inequality focuses on distribution of income, horizontal inequality focuses on the distribution of opportunities. This horizontal inequality is what accounts for conflicts amongst groups in many countries of the world (Stewart, 2002; Langer, 2005; Onwuzuruigbo, 2011; Nnabuihe, 2019). In the case of gender distinction in Nigeria, the horizontal inequalities find expression in the discrimination against women and the uneven and/or unequal access to political power and resources. One idea used to sustain this practice of discrimination is what Loury (2015) referred to as collective reputation.

According to Loury (2015), collective reputation is an attempt to either treat or securitise a population or group of people by collectively categorising them as negative. For example, saying that all women or the place of women in society is in the home or kitchen. With this, it would be easy and convenient to deny them of position(s) or opportunities in the public space. This collective reputation has a way of sustaining horizontal inequality (Nnabuihe, 2019). In Nigeria, collective reputation forms part of politics. It is used as a form of stereotyping that aids or sustains certain practices particularly discriminating against women by classifying them as a second fiddle or as people who can only be seen but not heard. This stereotyping has given men an edge over women especially in the public space; consequently, projecting horizontal inequality even more.

Studies on horizontal inequalities have focused more on measuring inequality amongst ethnic, racial, religious, social and political groups that arise from deprivation, discrimination and denial of resources and/or access to state wealth, and how such inequalities have resulted in conflicts. Although the horizontal inequality that exists between men and women in society has not resulted in any physical or violent conflict, there is however, what can be referred to as a 'cold conflict' between men and women in the political settings of the state, where opposing ideas on political representation of women have conduced into subjugation of women in the Nigerian political space.

The rejection of the recommendation of the Political Bureau for the reservation of 5% of legislative seats to women at all levels of government (for which no particular reason was adduced) which was meant to address the disadvantaged position of women, tends to reverberate the quest for male dominance and further stretches the horizontal inequality between men and

women. The sustained dominance of men in the politics and governance of Nigeria gives the impression that the female gender is inferior to the male (Kaniye, 2005).

Statistically, in Nigeria, men have occupied a dominant position in the politics and governance of the country. For example, Chuku (2009) argues that women in politics and governance are subdued rather than are active in the drive for development and growth and in the visibility of governance in Nigeria. She opined that since the decolonisation process in Nigeria, women's representation in governance has largely been complementary. She further argued that the subjugation of women and the masculinisation of the public space in Nigeria have their root in colonialism; where the British imposition of the infamous indirect rule to govern the country was executed largely through male authorities, thus, formalising male institutions. From thence, the female subjugation grew with time into the post-independence era and continued to date. In the transition to independent Nigeria for example, the 1959 General Elections were heavily dominated by men. Although a few women in Southern Nigeria contested in the federal election, none of them was elected into office (Chuku, 2009).

The institutional framework for women's representation in the decision-making process in Nigeria is a half-way house from reality. In the administration of Muhammadu Buhari for instance, women made up only 16% of his cabinet (Okafor & Ileyemi, 2023). In contrast, Rwanda for example, has 49% female parliamentarians (Kaniye, 2005). In the drafting of the Constitutions of Rwanda and Uganda, women were part of the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), unlike Nigeria, where the committee that drafted the 1999 Constitution was made up of 29 persons and none was a woman (Kaniye, 2005). Even the CDC for the transition to civil rule in 1975 that was composed of 50 persons did not have a single female representative (Chuku, 2009).

Between 1999 and 2003, out of a total of 11,881 electable positions nationwide, women occupied only 191 places, representing 1.6% (Kaniye, 2005). In parliament, out of 360 members of the House of Representatives, only 12 (3.3%) were women, while the Senate had just 2 women (1.8%) out of 109 senators (Women Right Watch, 2002). In the 8th and 9th Assemblies, that is, 2015 to 2019, and 2019 to 2023, the Senate had only 7 female senators (6.4%) while the House of Representatives had 22 female members (6.1%) in the 8th Assembly and just 11 female members (3.1%) in the 9th Assembly (Eke, 2022). This represents a marginal increase in female representation from the period when Nigeria's democracy was referred to as nascent.

At the state level, the trend is no different. For instance, no woman was elected in 15 out of Nigeria's 36 states Houses of Assembly (Kano, Abia, Katsina, Imo, Jigawa, Rivers, Osun, Niger, Borno, Kebbi, Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe, Sokoto and Zamfara) following the elections in March 2023 (PLAC, 2023). Between 1999 and 2003, there was only one female in the Kogi State House of Assembly; and none between 2003 and 2023 (Kolawole, 2004; Labaran, 2023). The implication is that for about two decades, women in Kogi State had no say in decisions and policies that affected their lives. Also, apart from Virginia Etiaba, who served as Governor momentarily for only three months following the controversial impeachment of the then Governor of Anambra State, Peter Obi, no other woman in Nigeria has ever been elected Governor (Udodiong, 2019). There is no gainsaying that the leadership of the State Houses of Assembly is mostly dominated by men.

In 2011, women made up 6.9% and 7.2% of the Houses of Assembly and Representatives respectively but by 2019, the figures reduced to 4.4% and 3.6% (Nimisire, 2022). In the presidential election of February 2023, only one woman in the entire country stood as candidate, while for the governorship election there was only one woman (Adamawa State) who stood as candidate in all the states that were due for elections (Jimoh, 2023). At the federal level, that is, the Presidency, the male dominance of the Chief Executive's position in Nigeria is usually upheld at the party level where women rarely hold strategic positions. But what is usually obtainable is that men occupy major party position in the decisions-making process.

Table 1 shows that there was a decrease in female representation in the Senate. Whereas the Senate in 2019 had 7 women Senators, the 2023 elections produced just 3 after the parliamentary polls that were held on 25 February. This represents a decline in numbers, and it reinforces the male dominance of the parliament in Nigeria.

The uneven distribution of political power and resources and the discriminatory practices against women in Nigerian politics contravenes the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Political Rights of Women. The Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill which was presented to the Senate was rejected twice. Apparently, the seven female Senators did not have the numerical strength to match the male Senators (Eke, 2022). This reinforces the issue of horizontal inequality and subjugation of women in public space in Nigeria.

Table 1: Women's Representation in Public Office from 1999–2023

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011		2015		2019		2023	
	Seat	Women (%)	Seat	Women (%)	Seat	Women (%)	Seat	Women (%)	Seat	Women (%)	Seat	Women (%)	Seat	Women (%)
President	1	0 (0.0%)	1	0 (0.0%)	1	0 (0.0%)	1	0 (0.0%)	1	0 (0.0%)	1	0 (0.0%)	1	0 (0.0%)
Senate	109	3 (2.8%)	109	4 (3.7%)	109	9 (8.3%)	109	7 (6.4%)	109	8 (7.3%)	109	7 (6.4%)	109	3 (2.7%)
House of Representatives	360	7 (1.9%)	360	21 (5.8%)	360	27 (7.5%)	360	25 (6.9%)	360	22 (6.1%)	360	11 (3.1%)	360	14 (3.8%)
Governor	36	0 (0.0%)	36	0 (0.0%)	36	0 (0.0%)	36	0 (0.0%)	36	0 (0.0%)	36	0 (0.0%)	0	36 (100%)
State House of Assembly	990	24 (2.4%)	990	40 (3.9%)	990	57 (5.8%)	990	68 (6.9%)	990	ND	993	45 (4.5%)	993	48 (4.8%)
LGA Chairperson	710	13 (1.8%)	774	15 (1.9%)	740	27 (3.6%)	740	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
LGA Councillors	6368	69 (1.1%)	6368	267 (4.2%)	6368	235 (3.7%)	6368	ND	6368	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND

Source: Adopted from Okonkwo (2016)

ND: Data Unavailable

The Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2010) aims at giving effect to certain provisions of the 1999 Constitution (as amended). In the event that it becomes a law, it would give effect to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. The Bill is meant to promote equality, development and advancement of all persons, especially young women, through the provision of special measures that would eliminate discrimination and increase women's participation in the public and private spheres (Eke, 2022). Besides this, the Bill is also meant to prohibit all forms of violence against women in public and private places and eradicate harmful socio-cultural practices by public, private and traditional institutions, with a view to eliminating gender stereotyping, prejudices and some barbaric customary practices (Eke, 2022).

Women in politics in Nigeria: The endangered species

The Nigerian State is a party to various treaties that protect the rights of women and has ratified these treaties. By these ratifications, Nigeria is duty- and morally bound not to carry out any action that contravenes the provisions of these treaties. Despite the fact that the horizontal inequality that exists between men and women in the public space results from the actions and inactions of state and non-state actors, and has conducted into women's subjugation that has impinged on their right to political participation, there is the more critical problem of violence against women in politics (VAWP) in Nigeria that threatens the continued presence or participation of women in the decision-making and governance process in the country.

VAWP is any act or threat of physical, sexual or psychological violence that prevents women from exercising and realising their political rights and a range of human rights; and it manifests in assassination, kidnapping, beating, verbal abuse, humiliating, dehumanising and so on, often with the intention of forcing or causing women to give up their rights or quest for political life (Stand To End Rape Initiative [STER], 2022). It is a widespread scourge that marginalises women in public life and is used as a tool to discourage women from participating in elections as candidates, voters or as administrators (Safir & Alam, 2015; Para-Mallam, 2015).

However, this trend is not unique to Nigeria. For instance, in 2018, Marielle Franco, a Brazilian activist and politician was killed in Rio De Janeiro. There is the case of Diane Abbott, a female Member of the British Parliament, who in the build-up to the parliamentary elections, received over 8,000 abusive tweets just to humiliate and intimidate her. Also, Jo Cox, a Labour Party Member of the British Parliament, was murdered in 2016. In the same vein, in 2015, Angiza Shinwari, a Provincial Councillor in East Afghanistan

and advocate for women's rights was killed by a targeted bomb attack (Spinks et al., 2024). What is unique in the case of Nigeria is that in spite of the very low and troubling women's representation in the country, women have become targets for political and electoral violence.

The dangers that women face in Nigerian politics with respect to political violence cannot be overstated. According to the coalition of civil society organisations with the support of UN Women and UNDP's Democratic Governance for Development (DGD), the majority of the attacks or political violence against women occurred during campaigns or rallies, while others took place at political party events, primarily by party supporters and their agents (Ede et al., n.d.). The rampant nature of intimidation, harassment and physical attacks on women politicians as well as female voters, points glaringly at electoral gender-based violence (Olawuyi, 2023). In the electoral process, women are often at the receiving end of political thugs and miscreants who inflict bodily harm on them. This action has far-reaching implications for democracy, human security, gender equality, human rights and political posterity in the country. The attacks have increased human rights violations and raised the wave of discrimination and political violence which has been weaponised against women (Abdullahi, 2022).

In Osun State for example, STER (2022) reported that about 50% of women identified as active and direct participants said that they have often been inflicted with injuries as a result of their participation in the election process. Some have had to trade sexual favours as active and direct participants in the political space (STER, 2022; Jimoh, 2023). The issue of sexual violence is one reason that many women are disengaged from politics and governance in Nigeria. For some, it is the fear and shame attached to it (sexual violence) while for others, their husbands and families dissuade them from participating (Para-Mallam, 2015).

In some cases, the violence results in the death of women. In 2019, in Kogi State for instance, the leader of the women in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Ochadamu Local Government Area was burnt to death by political party thugs (Ogaziechi, 2021). Similarly, a woman leader of the Labour Party (one of the political parties in Nigeria) in Kaura Local Government Area of Kaduna State was killed by unknown gunmen on 28 November 2022 (Abdullahi, 2022). There was also a case of a woman who was beaten and almost stripped naked for supporting a political party (Ajanaku, 2015). According to Fadare (2023), violence against women sometimes takes the form of online violence that manifests in cyber-trolling, name-calling, manipulations of their picture and sexualisation.

Some women have endured humiliation in their political and public life. For example, Patricia Etteh, the only woman in the political history of Nigeria who managed to be elected Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives, was subjected to abuses, humiliated and forced to resign after spending only five months as Speaker to avoid being impeached. She was greeted with jeers and boos as she walked out of the Assembly Complex (Ogunmade, 2007). Also, women who are (were) appointees of governments are not spared in the political violence. Arunma Oteh, who was hired in 2010 to head the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC), was tagged a 'reformer' and was honoured with the national award of the Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON) in 2011 for her role in transforming the Nigerian Capital Market; was embarrassed and humiliated and accused of several allegations and was recommended for removal by both Houses of the male-dominated National Assembly (African Business, 2012). She was later exonerated and cleared of any criminal breaches and was recalled to complete her tenure in office (Olanihun, 2012).

In 2009 in Ekiti State, the Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) was forced to resign in the course of the elections and went into hiding because of pressure from politicians and threats on her life (Alli, 2013).

Another tool of political violence used to threaten and frustrate women is deprivation and denial. Women are sometimes denied access to vital information and locations that can enhance their political participation. In Kogi State for example, female aspirants have sometimes been physically denied access to venues for primary elections or from attending party meetings (Para-Mallam, 2015).

The various challenges that women face and encounter in the political process in the country raise concerns for the future regarding women's representation in politics, and as such their existence in governance and politics seems endangered.

Women in politics and governance in Nigeria

With improved women's representation in African countries - like Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, and Liberia - Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, should not be seen to be lagging in this regard especially as it is party to various treaties on the rights of women in political representation. Over 49% of Nigeria's population consists of women, with a sex ratio of 102.78 males per 100 females (Ogbonna, 2016). Therefore, the importance and/or significance of their role in state-building cannot be overemphasised, especially within the context of the logic of the 'wealth in people,' as advanced by Mitchell (2012). In other words, denying or depriving women their roles in the collective decision-making process only robs the state of the prospects of

rapid development. According to Barack Obama, “no country can achieve its full potentials unless it draws on the talent of its entire people, and that must include half of the population who are women and girls” (Obama, as cited by Ajanaku, 2015).

Greater representation of women in governance and engagement in the decision-making process can lead to the formulation of policies that promote the reproduction of social life, which is the ultimate goal of the state. Women, who by nature are managers, managing the home by engaging in unpaid care and work, would see and take society as an extension of the home front; and the general well-being of the populace as their primary concern just the way they attend to and care for their children in the home. In Rwanda for example, the increase in female parliamentarians to over 50% (in the lower house) led to a rise in healthcare spending for citizens (Norville, 2011). In Malawi, women’s involvement in discussion groups and community meetings without the presence of men resulted in increased access to mental healthcare and reduced waiting time at community clinics and government health centres (Nazneen & Olivares, 2021).

In Nigeria, some Bills sponsored by female parliamentarians and passed into law by the National Assembly helped to improve efficiency in governance and demonstrated a form of concern for the plight of citizens. For example, the Bill for the Compulsory Treatment of Critical Condition Victims sponsored by Hon. Sunmonu Monsurat in 2016 and signed into law in 2017 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2017), mandated public hospitals and medical institutions to treat accident and gunshot victims immediately. The law also helped to eliminate the bureaucratic bottlenecks of police reports and receipts of payment of medical expenses before treatment (Eke, 2022).

With the growing concern for accountability, transparency and openness in government, particularly when it comes to how public resources are allocated and expended, women in governance have demonstrated a strong will for promoting public accountability. For instance, in 2015, Senator Abiodun Olujimi sponsored the Whistleblowers Protection Bill meant to, amongst other things, facilitate the protection of persons directly or indirectly involved in making disclosures for the public interest and for persons who may suffer reprisals in relation to these disclosures (Sahara Reporters, 2017). The bill was passed into law in 2017 and has been relevant in fighting corruption in Nigeria.

When women become more involved in politics, a system of holding public officials to account regarding public service delivery, thus improving the performance of political and public institutions, can evolve. Their attendance in public hearings, community scorecard meetings, participatory

budgeting, and public expenditure improves the quality of governance in the state (Nazneen & Olivares, 2021). In Nigeria, despite the very limited number of female parliamentarians, the women in the National Assembly have been able to sponsor some important Bills on social issues like health, education and environment. In education for instance, Hon. Sunmonu Monsurat sponsored the Bill on Tertiary Education Grant. This Bill was designed to provide better and increased access to grants in federal government tertiary institutions to encourage Nigerians to study courses and gain skills needed to thrive in focus sectors of the economy (Eke, 2022).

For Allah-Mensah (2004), a state operating a democratic system where the collective decision-making process is not gender-sensitive does not pass as a democracy, neither is it seen as representing virtues of credibility and equality which are integral parts of the democratic process. The good governance concept which is central to the third wave of globalisation advances the issue of women and human rights that attract global interest in Africa (Fatile et al., 2012). And for Nigeria to prove that it has overcome the effects of the many years of military rule and dictatorial regimes that envisioned no role for women in governance, women should be included in matters that pertain to state- and nation-building.

For a country like Nigeria, with a vibrant population of knowledgeable, strong, enterprising and competent women, it would amount to gross under-utilisation of human capital development capacity if a significant number of citizens are denied representation in the political process, as is the case at the moment. Historically, the pre-colonial period in Nigeria for example, is replete with cases of exploits of women in the social and political order such as Emotan of Benin, Moremi of Ile-Ife, Efunsetan of Ibadan, Queen Amina of Zazzau and so on. (Ajayi, 2007; Oluoh, 2023). In the colonial period, women were politically active in the state. For example, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, led women in Abeokuta in a protest against the unfair taxation imposed on women in Egbaland by the colonial administration (Johnson-Odim & Mba, 1997). Also, Hajiya Gambo Sawaba in Northern Nigeria, who became active in politics as early as 17 years old and was a member of the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) (Mohammed, 2023). She was vibrant in the campaign against child marriage, forced and unpaid labour and discriminatory taxes. Her political activism and vociferous nature earned her many arrests and imprisonment. In an article by *Aljazeera*, she was labelled “the most jailed Nigerian female politician” (Agunbiade, 2021).

In the present Fourth Republic, women occupy positions of authority and have displayed very high levels of knowledge, capacity, competency, and dexterity. Women like Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Arunma Oteh, the late Dora Akunyili, Obiageli Ezekwesili and a host of others.

No doubt, there are clear evidences that women in Nigeria possess the capacity to hold public offices and they can be very active in the political processes of society, as seen from the antecedence of women in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial state in Nigeria. The limiting of the public space for women, even with a democratic order is reflective of the ideological orientation of the political system. In spite of this, the passion and strength that women in governance have shown with the sponsoring and eventual passage of critical and important Bills, that have helped to improve the standard of living of Nigerians, clearly reveals that an increased participation of women in politics can improve efficiency in governance.

Conclusion

The 'Women Question' in Nigeria has lingered for decades. Although women played a dominant role in the pre-colonial period in structuring society and contributing to social order, such exploits have not been transmitted to the contemporary political setting in the country today. The subjugation of women and the gender-based horizontal inequalities that exist in the system clearly justify the above assertion. Again, though evidences have shown that the horizontal inequalities amongst groups result in conflicts in society, the same cannot be said about men and women in the political space. However, there is the possibility of an eruption of gender crisis or conflicts, as the case may be, if the issue of the over-masculinisation of the public space in Nigeria is not satisfactorily addressed. This is because of the existence of the radical feminists who think that societal patriarchy can be defeated if women recognise their own value and strength, establish a sisterhood of trust with other women, confront oppression critically and form female-based separatist networks in the private and public sphere (Srivastava et al., 2017).

The harrowing experiences that women in the political space have endured and have encountered are capable of keeping them out of public life. Some who have encountered such violence have not been seen in the political arena since then.

The outcome of the 2023 General Elections in the country did not record any significant improvement in women's representation. In fact, in certain critical areas like the parliamentary elections, in the Senate in particular, women's representation witnessed a decline by about 4.2%. This is an indication that women's representation in Nigeria is a half-way house from reality and the principles of democracy which the Nigerian State claims to be operating.

Recommendations

To further improve female representation in governance in Nigeria, the following suggestions are recommended:

1. The place of a legal framework on the improvement of women's political representation cannot be overemphasised. In the light of this, the government of Nigeria should set machinery in motion to amend the Constitution and make provision for the reservation of a certain number of seats in parliament as is the case in Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda. This would help in overcoming some cultural and social barriers that stand in the way of women in the quest for political representation.
2. It was observed that the patriarchal nature of the political space in Nigeria has been made possible by party structure. Therefore, political parties in the country should see it as a moral duty that they owe the nation to ensure that women occupy strategic positions in the party hierarchy. This would make women more active in the political process and in the decision-making of the party. Their presence should be reflected in meetings and caucuses and even in the elective processes for public offices.
3. Women should be encouraged as much as possible to begin their political quest from the local level so that they build their recognition, acceptance and network before aspiring to the national level. This can be accomplished by coordinating and organising women through advocacy groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and grassroots women's associations. This would help to improve their popularity and make them more marketable.
4. The Electoral Act should treat the issue of electoral violence as a severe offence and violators should be descended upon with the full weight of the law to serve as deterrence to violators in future elections and electoral activities. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should be a stakeholder and first responder in this regard and must possess the will and capacity to push and prosecute cases of electoral violence.
5. The nocturnal nature of political and party meetings should be discouraged. Party and political meetings should be held as much as possible early during the day-time to avoid stretching deep into the night; where many women fear for their lives and fear for failing to attend to fulfil domestic responsibilities in their homes.

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Chapter 4

The Historiography of Women's Participation in Nigerian Politics: Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract

Gender equity in elective and appointive offices in Nigeria remains a tall dream, despite the vigorous campaign efforts aimed at bridging the gap between men and women. Therefore, Nigerian democracy is partially representative, because a significant part of the country's population is not actively involved in governance / decision-making. It is appalling to note that women's representation in Nigeria's government remains below 10%; a figure that is far below the 35% recommendation. On this backdrop, this chapter analyses the historiography of women's participation in Nigerian politics, because the present becomes fully intelligible only in the light of the past. The study finds out that the domination of Nigerian women in governance has been a constant in Nigeria's political history. Consequently, they have only been able to play a marginal role in Nigeria's national life. This has greatly undermined Nigeria's path to achieving sustainable economic development. Although scholars have rightly identified patriarchy, cultural, and religious factors as the root causes of the political cleavage, the chapter presents a more holistic and robust approach to the problem. Firstly, it argues the need for constitutional and party frameworks for adequate female representation in Nigeria. Secondly, it argues that women need to look inward and remain consistent in their struggle for political equity through greater unity and solidarity amongst themselves, while making it crystal clear that they do not seek to take the place of men. The study employs the historical research method, which primarily involves the collection and analysis of primary and secondary data.

Keywords: Challenges, Gender-Equality, Historiography, Nigerian Politics, Prospects, Women's Representation

Introduction

Gender equality in governance is central to the realisation of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 (UN, 2015). Yet, women remain under-represented at all levels of government in the world. According to a UN report in January 2023, women represent only 22.8% of executive positions in the world. Furthermore, only 13 out of the 195 countries in the world have women occupying 50% or more in the cabinet where policies are formulated and implemented (IPU, 2023). A similar situation has been reported in the legislatures of countries of the world. In a comparative study in 2021, Rwandan women enjoyed the highest representation in parliaments across Africa. The female gender in Rwanda accounted for 61.3% and 38.5% in the Lower and Upper Houses respectively (Mbonu, 2022).

One of the major pitfalls of Nigeria's drive towards socio-economic development is the under-representation of women in governance (IPU, 2023). The implication has been the vast continued waste of human resources needed for development. This contravenes the Nigerian National Gender Policy (NGP) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2023), which aims at building a just society that is free from discrimination, in order to harness the full potential of all citizens. Despite president Buhari's continuous claims of being committed to having more women in governance because of their role in his victory at the 2015 polls, his appointments suggest otherwise. Women's representation in both elective and appointive offices was way below the approved 30% by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN Women, 2015) and the 35% that the Nigerian NGP has endorsed. In the 9th Assembly, for instance, women had only 8 (7.3%) representatives in the Senate and 13 (3.6%) in the Federal House of Representatives; women's representation in both houses stood at 4.5% (PLAC, 2023). President Buhari's dismissal of his wife's contribution to the debate on the effectiveness of his leadership in 2016 is not only unfortunate, but also, reflective of the general perception of women in Nigerian politics. In the words of the leader of the giant of Africa, during a state visit to Germany, "I don't know which party my wife belongs to, but she belongs to my kitchen, my living room and the other room" (BBC News, 2016). This provocative gender prejudice succinctly encapsulates the gamut of what women in Nigeria have been faced with in the political processes and outcomes of their country.

The outcome of the 2023 General Elections made no difference. The 10th Assembly has only 3 women (2.7%) in the Senate and 17 (4.7%) in the House of

Representatives, representing only 4.2% of women in both chambers (PLAC, 2023). It is not surprising that legislation in favour of gender balance, seldom passes through in the National Assembly. The failed Gender Equality Bills of 2015 and 2021 are good examples (Obadare, 2022). The marginalisation of women in governance violates not only the country's constitution but also its ratified gender policy and commitment to international norms and conventions.

The historiography of women's participation in the governance of Nigeria has raised contentious debates in the intellectual community. This is because the sustained effort towards securing greater roles for women in governance since 1999 has not yielded the much-needed outcome. The debates centre on the origins of discriminatory practices against women as well as the socio-cultural, economic and religious bases upon which they thrive. Other issues often raised are strategies capable of liberating women from the artificial limitations placed on them, and the likely benefits of increased women's participation in democratic governance (Mirza & Strobel, 1989; Ajaebili, 2015). This chapter is a contribution to the debates in historical perspective. It provides a detailed account of the status of women in distinct epochs of Nigerian history, the challenges they had undergone, their successes and recommendations on the way forward.

Women in governance in the precolonial era

The major focus of African historians at independence was empire-building and the process of governance in pre-colonial Nigeria. Their findings revealed that African countries had developed considerably and had the major paraphernalia of state institutions before contact with Europeans (Ajaebili, 2015). However, the historiography of women's participation in precolonial patriarchal societies suffered the consequences of gendering history. Early historical accounts focused almost entirely on politico-military aspects of societies, which was dominated by men (Mirza & Strobel, 1989). Consequently, the achievements of men were celebrated, popularised and exaggerated, while those of women were glossed over. The male-centric historical approach of traditional African societies gave the notion that women either made no historical contributions or were simply passive. Conversely, they were as active as their male counterparts, despite the cultural and religious limitations placed on them.

The dominant perspectives on the nature of women's role in pre-colonial governance and economy may be categorised into two. While the first argues that their roles were complementary, the second is class-based and contends that women were victims of male oppression and exploitation

in their social relations with their male counterparts (Parpart, 1986; Ogbomo & Ogbomo, 1993). But, narrowing down the social relations of males and females in this period to the later school is spurious, because there were traces of cordial relations that were complementary in nature. Although precolonial Nigerian societies were male-dominated and largely kingship-based, it was flexible enough to accommodate women of abilities and great talents (Parpart, 1986). Therefore, the roles of women were complementary and at the same time subordinate to those of men. It was within their subordinated roles that exploitation and oppression manifested.

Governance in pre-colonial Nigeria may be categorised into two broad groups; centralised and decentralised states. Some of the centralised states were the kingdoms and empires built by the peoples of Yoruba, Hausa, Kanuri, Edo, Jukun etc. According to Iweriebor (1982), they were characterised by hereditary rights and the monopolisation of state powers by individuals who enjoyed the loyalty of their lieutenants and subjects. On the other hand, were the states that were decentralised in nature and had powers shared amongst the various institutions of government and operated on the principles of democracy and republicanism (Iweriebor, 1982). The Igbo, Urhobo, Tiv, Idoma and Western Ijo precolonial systems were good examples. These broad groups can be further divided into constitutional (democratic) monarchy (Oyo Empire), autocratic monarchy (Kanem-Borno and Hausa states) and gerontocratic democracy (Igbo societies) (Afigbo, 1972). Although women were under-represented in the political affairs of these states, variations existed on the bases of their politico-administrative structures, customs, traditions, and religious leanings. For instance, the roles of women were more pronounced in societies where democratic principles guided governance. Constitutional monarchies and gerontocratic democracies fall under this category. In the case of Hausa states and Borno, increased Islamisation diminished the roles of women, who were subjected to the will of their fathers, and later, those of their husbands (Personal Communication with S. Wada, June 20, 2023).

Afigbo (1972) has categorised pre-colonial Igbo societies into two; the constitutional monarchies of the Western Igbo, where kingship institutions existed and the democratic village republics that were devoid of hereditary rights. Hence, the societies were greatly decentralised and lacked a uniform structure of governance. Decisions were made after deliberations dominated by males, who represented divergent interests. Nevertheless, the roles of women and women's societies were pivotal in the decision-making process. Their opinions were communicated to the council of elders through their representatives at various levels. Similarly, the village assembly, one of the most influential social-political institutions of the Igbos and equally

dominated by men, occasionally had women's groups in attendance (Taiwo, 2010). The assembly performed legislative, executive and judicial functions, which means that Igbo women took part in making laws, formulation of policies and programmes and the settlement of disputes between families and even kindred.

The *Isi Ada* (oldest daughter of a particular lineage) and *Omu* (mother of society) were some of the most influential women in the pre-colonial politics of Igbo societies. While the activities of the former sometimes led to collective actions by women and checked male political leaders, the latter was in charge of markets and exercised considerable religious and political influence (Chuku, 2009). For instance, the *Omu* of Onitsha was a signatory to one of the treaties signed with the British in 1884. Similarly, wives of chiefs wielded powers that were on a par with those of male elders. Also, there were cases in which women were monarchs or regents for kings who were under-aged. The roles played by women were determined by the fact that several Igbo societies accommodated dual sex political structures, in which women exercised political authority in well-defined areas (Chuku, 2009). There were many other powerful women and women's associations that also exercised political power and authority in Igbo societies during the precolonial period. Historical evidences have shown that these roles of women in Igbo societies also featured prominently in other decentralised states before the 20th century (Chuku, 2009).

Amongst the Yoruba people, the *Iyalode* was one of the most powerful chiefs in the precolonial period (Sudarkasa, 1986). She was assisted by subordinate female chiefs and personal servants and enjoyed the loyalty of all the women of the kingdom, who considered her the mother of all women (*Eiyelobinrin*) because she helped to aggregate all their concerns and grievances and conveyed them to the king. The position was popularly earned through election and had the backing of the laws of the land. The occupant of the office was usually wealthy, acted in the capacity of a queen and coordinated all women-related activities in the land (Awe, 1979). The *Iyalode* presided over a court, where she settled disputes amongst women. She also assembled and articulated the views of women whenever the kingdom mulled the declaration of war (Parpart, 1986). These roles gave her access to power within the kingdom, alongside her male counterparts. In the economy of the kingdom, markets were under her control and her influence was felt by all traders. There were also historical evidences that alluded to a female *Ooni* and four *Alaafins* of Oyo in the pre-colonial era (Oluyemi, 2016).

In the Kanem-Borno Empire, women had roles in the background and influenced decisions through their men. The Queen Mother (*Magira*) controlled all the domestic arrangements of the royal court. Some of them

became so powerful and occasionally vetoed the decisions of the *Mais* (kings) of Borno by virtue of mother-son relationships (Arnett, 1910). The eldest wife of the king (*Gumsu*) also wielded considerable powers in the empire. In Hausa land between the 15th and 16th centuries, the phenomenal warrior Queen Amina made history as the first to rule in the male-dominated Northern Nigeria. Her place in the history of Hausa land was the result of her heroic military campaigns, which expanded the influence of Zaria to as far as *Kwararafa*, around the Benue River Valley and the Nupe kingdom (Hogben, 1966). Her administration of Zaria brought about economic prosperity and created a lasting impression on the minds of feminists, who consider it replicable in modern times, if women are given a chance to maximise their potential (Parpart, 1986).

Her historical footprints are all over Zaria, especially on the wall she built called *ganuwar* Amina (Amina's wall) and ruins referred to as Amina's palace (Personal Communication with A. Sani, May 29, 2023). In addition, her name appeared on the Kano Chronicle, which provided the list of Kano kings and the periods of their reign because Kano was once a vassal state to Zaria under her leadership (Arnett, 1910). Disappointingly, her name was not included in a local chronicle of Zaria published in 1912 (Arnett, 1910). However, Abdullahi Smith (1970) has maintained that she did exist and her reign over Zaria most likely began after 1576; a gap which was evident in the local chronicle. Gender prejudice of a predominantly patriarchal and Islamised society, in which women were subjected to subservient roles, probably explained the rigging of Zaria's history in her disfavour. This may just be one amongst many others, which historians are yet to uncover. Even the legend of Bayajidda spoke of the existence of female kingship in the early history of Daura, the 'ancestral home' of the Hausa people (Smith, 1970).

It is eminently important to note that there is a consensus amongst scholars that women dominated economic activities such as agriculture, trade, crafts and so on, in Southern Nigeria. According to Samuel Johnson (1969), women appeared to be far more industrious than their men who had leisure hours and work-free days. They were involved in local and long-distance trade because they sold most of the foodstuffs required in the markets. However, this did not take the place of farming as the major occupation of women. In fact, other economic activities were secondary and prioritised only after farming seasons. Therefore, women were not alien to governance in pre-colonial Nigerian societies; a handful of them had authority, issued orders and secured obedience from both males and females. There were also categories of women who exercised informal authority through the kingly offices of their husbands. Although they were outmatched by men in the exercise of political power, they dominated several economic

tasks and influenced certain group decisions that imparted their societies positively. These roles were in addition to taking care of their husbands and children as well as the preservation of their society's cultural heritage, which they helped pass on to future generations.

The diminished roles of women: The colonial era in view

The conquest and occupation of the states that make up Nigeria during the late 19th and early 20th centuries by the British, signalled a new dawn in the political history of Nigeria. Although pockets of resistance against British rule continued up to 1914, France and Germany had come to terms with the fact that Nigeria was a possession of the British Crown. During the early phase of British rule, attention was focused on consolidating the gains made in Nigeria since 1861. Thus, the Southern and Northern protectorates were amalgamated to ensure smooth colonial administration. Similarly, the Native Authority (NA) system was imposed for the maintenance of 'law and order.' Furthermore, colonial policies on land, labour, transport, taxation and agricultural production were formulated and enforced in order to strengthen their grip on Nigeria (Aloko, 2022). These policies created a conducive atmosphere for the exploitation of Nigeria's human and natural resources and disrupted the historical process in action before colonialism.

The imposition of colonial economy on Nigeria created economic opportunities through modern transportation systems, banking, monetary systems and rapid urbanisation. Although the economy was dominated by expatriate European trading companies, it did benefit a handful of the colonised people. For instance, the discrimination against Nigerian businessmen in the provision of credit facilities led to the establishment of indigenous banks during the 1930s (Aloko, 2022). A good example was the establishment of the National Bank in 1934 to support local businessmen, who were determined to break the monopoly of European trading firms (Aloko, 2022). Nevertheless, women faced greater marginalisation because the foundation of their involvement in governance during the pre-colonial period was tremendously eroded. They were relegated to an abysmal background and had the majority of their socio-political and economic privileges yanked off (Parpart, 1986). This was because colonisation systematically altered the pre-existing social relations of production, reinforced patriarchy and gave impetus to social inequality on gender lines.

The dominant explanation on the setbacks suffered by women in the colonial period is that the British introduced their patriarchal ideology which considered the home the most suitable for women (Chuku, 2009; Awe, 1979). It is instructive to note that the visibility of women in the British public space

was one of the aftermaths of the First World War. As more men were mobilised for the war effort, women gradually began to take up positions in industries and other key sectors of the economy (National War Museum and Memorial, 2024). This explanation, is however, secondary to the British perception of the customs and traditions as well as the organisation of the people and society that they had conquered. Their assumption was that it was completely patriarchal and devoid of women's participation in governance. This partly informed the decision of the British to introduce the NA (the Indirect Rule system), which was a male affair, in order to preserve the perceived existing customs and traditions of the people. However, the British only preserved the pre-existing structures in the emirates but imposed what they felt would work in favour of their economic interest in Southern Nigeria. The respect for the customs and traditions of the emirates was based on the agreement that its leaders reached with the British; they committed themselves to serving the British as long as the Islamic faith was not tampered with, while the British limited the access of the Christian missions to the emirates (Bourne, 2015).

In Southern Nigeria and the Christian-dominated parts of the north, the history, customs and traditions of the people were flagrantly disrespected. Their precolonial democratic and republican traditions were ignored. For instance, taxes which were alien to them were imposed. In Igbo land, the tradition of selecting leaders was quashed and warrant chiefs imposed on the people to ensure the centralisation of power and the generation of revenue to sustain colonial rule in the region (Afigbo, 1972). Therefore, the pre-capitalist economies of pre-colonial societies were transformed by the British and their agents in the private sector, to serve the objectives of colonial capitalism. According to Aina (1993), the British only preserved the pre-capitalist subsidiary systems, especially the patriarchal mode of production because it supported the new capitalist mode of production. The strategy conferred on the British a measure of legitimacy in societies where women's participation in governance was considered inappropriate.

Another factor that led to the diminished roles of women in the period was the nature of Western education. It was almost exclusively targeted at the male gender in the light of the colonialist's ill conceptualisation of Nigeria's socio-political and economic formations. It is pertinent to note that economic opportunities, social mobility and participation in governance during the colonial period became inextricably tied to access to Western education. This explains why in spite of the resistance to Western education in the emirates for fear of Christianisation, the children of the elite were educated. The privileged few such as Ahmadu Bello, Tafawa Balewa etc. who were educated, rose to eminence within the colonial state and played major roles at independence (Ampadu et al., 2018). Nigerian women became

almost entirely confined to the homes in the services of their husbands and the upbringing of children. The colonial authority equally ignored them in appointments to chieftaincy and scholarships. Not only were pre-colonial institutions destroyed, but the male Obi was made a salaried staff member while his female counterparts were unsalaried (Ampadu et al., 2018). Female access to land gradually diminished because the British thought that all farmers and producers were male. Thus, while female farmers were considered subsistent food crop producers, male farmers, thought to be at the heart of farming, were offered technical assistance and agricultural extension services to enable them expand cash crop production to meet the industrial needs of Britain (Parpart, 1986). Consequently, male farmers dominated the rural areas and accumulated surplus; a development which widened their advantage over women. The loss of access to land, economic opportunities and political power and authority crippled a large number of women throughout the period and laid a faulty foundation for them at independence.

In addition, women were disenfranchised until the mid-1950s for Southern Women and 1979 for women in the North (Aina, 1993). Hence, they had no say in government, even in matters that affected them directly. From the foregoing, women's limited access to Western education impacted negatively on their ability to compete favourably with their male counterparts in the colonial civil service, the central legislative council and regional assemblies throughout the country. The widened gender divide engendered by colonialism was the reason behind Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti's mobilisation of women's movement during the decolonisation struggle (Mba, 1982). Her movement advocated changes in the political economy of colonialism and gender relations. Therefore, the struggle for gender equality and equity predates the postcolonial period.

The unpleasant experiences that women suffered was demoralising but failed to stop them. They demonstrated resilience in the face of dehumanising treatment and socio-economic and political quagmire. Interestingly, they remained active in the informal sector of the economy, primarily to mitigate the effects of colonial economy on their families. The major features of the sector were small-scale businesses, low income, intense labour requirements and low rates of growth. Women equally played incredible roles in the anti-colonial struggles that culminated in the attainment of independence for Nigeria in 1960. The first of their vibrant activism was the Aba women's riot of 1929. It was precipitated by the British provocative appointment of warrant chiefs to constitute the NA, where kingship did not exist and prominent local leaders were lacking. The licensed chiefs became oppressive, high-handed, imposed draconian regulations, seized poor people's properties and imprisoned those who openly challenged their delegated powers (Van

Allen, 1976). Furthermore, plans for the introduction of special taxes capable of driving them out of market and disrupting the supply of food, especially non-perishable goods to the colonised people, were announced (Ogbomo & Ogbomo, 1993).

Women, not men, confronted the colonial state and their internal collaborators, the warrant chiefs. The rioting women burnt colonial buildings, broke into the NA prisons and released as many prisoners as they could (Parpart, 1986). Despite the deployment of the military to stop the women, they fought on – 50 women were left dead and many wounded (Van Allen, 1976). Being the first major challenge to British rule in West Africa, the colonial governor on the directive of the Secretary of States for Colonies, set up a commission of inquiry, chaired by Akintoye Ajasa and Eric Moore to chart the way forward. The aftermath of the commission's finding brought respite to both men and women, as the NA system in the east was re-organised to reflect the customs and traditions of the people. Similarly, the powers of the warrant chiefs were hewn down and the proposed tax hike abandoned (O'Barr, 1975). A number of women were also incorporated into the NA, where they served in native courts. This was particularly important because the only known women to have served in the NA amongst the Igbos before 1929 were Madam Okwei and Ahebi Ugbabe. Okwei rose to eminence because of her role as an agent of the Royal Niger Company (RNC), which afforded her the opportunity to import European goods and distribute them to both wholesalers and retailers and also assumed a critical role in the colonial transport industry (Okejiuba, 1967). On her part, Ugbabe was reported to have provided critical information which aided the British conquest of Enugu-Ezike. She later became the Eze (King) of Ogrute until her passing in 1948 (Chuku, 2009).

Igbo women's achievements in Nigeria's independence struggle was replicated in the Western region. The first women's resistance to colonial marginalisation in the region was spearheaded by the Lagos Market Women's Association (LMWA). The pressure group closely and consistently examined colonial policies and their impacts on women's interests. Under the distinguished leadership of Alimotu Pelewura, the LMWA opposed colonial price control mechanisms between 1940 and 1944 until they were removed (Parpart, 1986). There was also the influential Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU) which had a membership of about 100,000 (Wipper, 1982). Its principal objective between 1946 and 1948 was to challenge the non-participation of women in the NA system, which had an oppressive leader, the Alake of Abeokuta. The AWU boycotted the payment of taxes, organised numerous protests and sent a delegation to London under the distinguished leadership of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti to tender their case before the

Colonial Secretary of States (Wipper, 1985). Some of their demands were granted. For instance, the Alake of Abeokuta was forced to resign, female taxation was put on hold and women were enlisted in the interim council constituted before a substantive government was formed (Taiwo, 2010). During the last decade of colonisation, the Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies formed in 1953 (formerly the Nigerian Women's Union (NWU) in 1949) under Mrs Ransome-Kuti, Mrs Janet Okala and Mrs G.I. Okoye as its vice presidents in the east, championed the Nigerian women's struggle for independence and representation in governance (Chuku, 2009). As a result of the enfranchisement of Southern women in the 1950s, women such as Mrs Ransome-Kuti, Margaret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu were appointed into the Western and Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs respectively (Oluyemi, 2016).

The question that naturally arises is, where were the men who considered themselves superior to women in all of these struggles against the illegitimate authority exercised by the British? It may be safe to argue that they colluded with the colonisers to subdue women in order to preserve patriarchy, which had long served their interest, but was gradually being challenged before the imposition of colonial rule. In the emirates, however, there was no women's uprising because women had already been subdued by age-long male-centric traditions and reinforced by the tenets of Islam. It should be noted that the women who confronted the dreaded colonial authorities were all financially independent and had acquired Western education. This brings to the fore the role of educational and economic empowerment in the liberation of women. Little wonder why in 1959, the National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS), a national society for all women's organisations, was established to improve the economic standards and welfare of Nigerian women and also to enhance their access to Western education (Oluyemi, 2016).

Postcolonial governance and women: Progress and setbacks

Governance in post-colonial Nigeria has reflected the trajectories of colonialism. Women remained subdued, largely confined to the home and scarcely found in the corridors of power, despite their salient and praiseworthy roles in the nationalist struggles that gained independence for Nigeria. The under-representation of women in the first republic (between 1960/63 and 1966) poignantly supports our assertion. The federal parliament had only two women out of a total of 365 members in the upper and lower chambers. They were Wuraola Esan and Kerry Bernice (Oluyemi, 2016). At the regional assemblies, only Chief (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo, Mrs Janet N. Mokelu and Miss Ekpo A. Young were elected into the Eastern Regional House of Assembly (Osiruemu, 2004). In the North, the prominent politician, Hajia Gambo

Sawaba could not make it because of the long-standing disenfranchisement of women (Osiruemu, 2004). Again, educational backwardness, perception of women based on patriarchy, financial dependence on men and cultural / religious stereotypes hindered women from bringing to bare their full potential.

The regime of Ironsi Aguiyi was short-lived and left no record of women's representation in governance. The *Yakubu Gowon's* regime between 1966 and 1975 did not make much difference because of the nature of military dictatorship and the composition of the military, which was male-dominated. An example could be seen in the fact that until 2011, admission for female cadets into the regular combatant course of the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) was non-existent (Yobolisa, 2011). This unfortunate reality limited women's access to the highest echelon of military hierarchy. For instance, despite the presence of a few female officers in the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF), the Supreme Military Council (SMC), the then highest decision-making body at the centre, had no female representatives (Ogwuda, 2011). In fact, Josephine Okwuekeleke Tolefe, the first female commissioned military officer in Nigeria in 1961, and the first to attain the rank of an Army Captain in 1963, voluntarily exited the military in 1967. This decision was influenced by gender biases and discrimination experienced by her and other female personnel of the NAF (Ogwuda, 2011). However, female commissioners were appointed in states such as the defunct North Eastern, East Central and Lagos states (Osiruemu, 2004). The Murtala / Obasanjo military dictatorship followed suit. More disturbing was the fact that no woman was part of the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) that produced the 1979 Constitution for the Second Republic (Obasanjo, 2018).

Nevertheless, the Constitution granted franchise to all citizens. By implication, women all over Nigeria gained the right to vote and to be voted for. This constitutional provision increased women's participation in the politics of Nigeria but did very little to increase their involvement in governance. This is because only a few Nigerian women won elections into the Federal House of Representatives and States House of Assemblies. Also, Mrs Janet Akinrinade and Mrs Adenike Oyagbola were the only cabinet members at the centre during the Second Republic (1979-1983). This was in addition to a few women who had the same status at the state levels by virtue of being appointed commissioners (Oluyemi, 2016). It is interesting to note that Ms Franca Afegbua made history as the first elected female senator in 1983 despite the antagonistic stands of the National Party of Nigeria's (NPN) male members, who felt they were more qualified (Okoye, 2000). Her victory was however cut short by the military junta on the eve of 1984, which truncated

Nigeria's second attempt at democratic governance. Therefore, the Second Republic was largely a male affair, despite the enfranchisement of all women.

Surprisingly, the return to military dictatorship in 1984 introduced Nigeria's first institutional quota system for female representation in the executive arm of government. General Buhari ordered the 19 states of the federation to appoint at least one woman into their executive councils (Ngara & Ayabam, 2013). It is important to note that some states had up to three female members in their cabinet. Buhari's directive may not be unconnected to the women-centred events on the world stage. The period between 1975 and 1985 was the United Nations' (UN) Decade for Women (Philips, 1993). The initial objective of the declaration was to work towards increasing women's participation in the governance of their country. As a result of the discovery of the wide disparity in power relations between males and females, the declaration was refocused to address the marginalisation of women, especially in Africa, where patriarchy and socio-economic factors had impeded on women's prospects of fair power-sharing with their male counterparts. The Nigerian government participated in the process and even became a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985 (Taiwo, 2010). The international community backed up its action plan with sensitisation and awareness campaigns for women all over the world. The aim was to imbue in them the fact that political decisions have consequences on all citizens, both participants and non-participants. This was necessary because a large number of women had become politically apathetic because of the political and economic discrimination that they had suffered in the governance of their own country. They were made to realise that their involvement was necessary to ameliorate their suffering and was critical in paving the way for a better Nigeria.

The enlightenment campaign paid off considerably as it spurred women's interest in both elective and appointive offices between 1985 and 1993. The period witnessed a dramatic turnaround in women's involvement in Nigeria's political processes. Women contested and won elections at all levels of government viz. federal, states and local governments during the transition programmes of the abortive Third Republic (Osiruemu, 2004). Although their number in the machinery of government remained far below expectation and incommensurate to their level of involvement in the electoral process, it rekindles their interest and gave them assurances of greater heights in the future. The Ibrahim Babangida administration was also influenced by the climate of thought occasioned by the UN's mission of the 1980s, geared towards uplifting the status of women. For example, after the appointments of female professors Jadesola Akande and Grace

Alele-Williams as Vice Chancellors of the Universities of Lagos and Benin respectively, Babangida averred that his decision was a silent revolution designed to incorporate women in the governance of the country and in the administration of Nigerian universities (Osiruemu, 2004:4). The president's assertion was an admittance of the marginalisation of women in Nigeria's national life since independence and a commitment to the reversal of the scourge. He went on to appoint Latifat Okunu and Pamela Sadauki as deputy governors of Lagos and Kaduna States respectively. Furthermore, a handful of women were elected councillors and one a chairperson of a local government in the 1992 transition elections (Oluyemi, 2016). The uninspiring representation in Table 2 of women in the Federal Civil Service (FCS) from 1975 to 1988 may help to shed more light on the extent of the marginalisation.

Table 2: Gender Division of Federal Civil Service Staff between 1975 and 1988

Year	Total No.	Male		Female	
		Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total
1975	111,941	110,108	98.36	1,833	1.64
1976	135,247	122,299	90.43	12,948	9.57
1977	124,503	112,890	90.67	11,613	9.33
1978	187,677	165,567	88.22	22,110	11.78
1979	195,919	174,204	88.92	21,715	11.09
1980	231,752	202,740	87.48	29,012	12.52
1981	256,334	224,431	87.52	31,993	12.48
1982	266,345	232,374	87.25	33,971	12.75
1983	292,985	253,396	86.49	39,589	13.51
1984	302,424	262,752	86.88	39,672	13.12
1985	255,892	233,343	87.28	32,549	12.72
1986	254,786	222,293	87.25	32,493	12.75
1987	254,737	222,211	87.23	32,526	12.77
1988	259,219	225,614	87.04	33,605	12.96

Source: Constructed from FCS Records between 1975 and 1988

The table shows a significant surge in the number of women in the FCS between 1975 and 1976. However, since 1976, growth in women's representation has been sluggish and at the same time fluctuating.

The Better Life Programme for Rural Women (BLPRW), championed by the wife of the military president also contributed to women's greater

participation in the politics of Nigeria. The BLPRW was well-coordinated at all levels of government by the wife of the president, wives of the governors and chairmen of the local governments (Philips, 1993). The programme empowered women financially, boosted their literacy levels, increased their awareness of their rights and responsibilities to the state, and mobilised them towards seeking leadership roles in government. However, there was no female member of the cabinet and the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC), the highest decision-making body of the administration. Similarly, there were no female governors at the helm of state affairs (Gberevbie & Oviasogie, 2013). Only Sinatu Ojikutu and Cecilia Ekpenyong of Lagos and Cross River States respectively were elected deputy governors (Gberevbie & Oviasogie, 2013), with little or no executive powers to effect changes that benefit women. Equally disappointing was the fact that only Kofo B. Akerele won a seat in the Senate and very few, such as Florence I. Giwa of Cross River State made it to the Federal House of Representatives (Olabode, 2013). The Ernest Shonekan-led Interim National Government, the Sani Abacha and Abdulsalam Abubakar Regimes between 1993 and 1999 made no difference to the status of women in governance.

Therefore, women's hope of a new beginning in Nigeria's uninterrupted democracy has been dashed. The regime of using women as grassroots mobilisers for men seeking elective office continued unabated because women are easy to mobilise and are also very loyal. The male chauvinistic conceptualisation of women as political misfits in governance is predicated on the ill-conceived notion that women are better as supporters in the background rather than taking centre stage. The result is that Nigerian women have failed to realise the 30% target of the Beijing action plan (UN Women, 2015) and the 35% of the country's NGP (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2023). They have been continuously used and dumped by men in the contest for power. Table 3 presents a graphic picture of the under-representation of women in elective offices between 1999 and 2015.

Table 3 shows that both executive and legislative functions were comprehensively dominated by men in spite of the growing number of educated women in urban centres, who enjoy access to economic opportunities that make them financially stable and independent. There was not much difference in appointive offices for women within the period. In 2011, however, the Goodluck Jonathan administration had 28.6% of women as ministers (12 of 42) and 4 out of 20 special advisers (Ngara & Ayabam, 2013). Women's representation in the Buhari administration between 2015 and 2023 suffered a downward slide despite their pivotal role in his emergence as the 15th president of Nigeria. The Tinubu presidency has also dashed the hopes of women, as women constitute only 19% of his cabinet (Bailey, 2023). This also falls short of the 35% inclusion of women in cabinet, as he had promised.

Table 3: Women in Elective Office (1999–2015)

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011		2015	
	Seats Available	Women	Seats Available	Women	Seats Available	Women	Seats Available	Women	Seats Available	Women
President	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Vice President	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Senate	109	3 (2.8%)	109	4 (3.7%)	109	8 (7.3%)	109	7 (6.4%)	109	8 (7.3%)
House of Reps	360	12 (3.3%)	360	21 (5.8%)	360	23 (6.4%)	360	26 (7.2%)	360	19 (5.3%)
Governor	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
Deputy Governor	36	1 (2.8%)	36	2 (5.5%)	36	6 (16.7%)	36	3 (8.3%)	36	4 (9%)
State House of Assembly	990	12 (1.2%)	990	38 (3.8%)	990	52 (5.3%)	990	62 (6.3%)		
SHA Committee Chairperson	829	18 (2.2%)	881	32 (3.6%)	887	52 (5.9%)	887			
LGA Chairpersons	710	9 (1.2%)	774	15 (1.9%)	740	27 (3.6%)	740			
Councillors	8,810	143 (0.02%)	6,368	267 (4.2%)	6,368	235 (3.7%)	6,368			

Source: Nigeria Centenary Country Report on Women, December, 2013, cited in Oluyemi (2016)

Prospects and challenges

Nevertheless, the prospect of women in the governance of Nigeria is bright. The realisation of the fact that they have a role to play in rescuing themselves from male domination has made women, especially in urban centres, increasingly conscious of themselves and determined to become visible in Nigeria's political landscape. Also, women have come to terms with the fact that men will not give up on their age-long favourable gender relations through mere demands, without constructive, political engagements, strategies and action plans. This is because power is not given. It is earned through negotiations and effective mobilisation of people. In the course of their participation at national, regional, continental and international summits on women's status in governance and the economies of their respective countries, it has become crystal clear that greater effort is needed to mobilise women towards increased participation in governance. Therefore, women must work towards transcending relevance in the struggle for power while being side-lined in the distribution of power. With 47.5% of voters on the 2023 voters register but just 10% contestants (INEC, 2023), women need to encourage more women to seek elective offices and rally round them. In fact, unless women make up their minds to use their numbers to bring about a change for themselves, adequate representation in government will continue to elude them. A victory for them or a tight race against their male counterparts could lead to negotiations and concessions capable of fostering a balance in Nigeria's power equation.

This prospect has however been impeded by a number of critical factors, which need to be urgently tackled. Religious, regional, ethnic and social class are the most conspicuous factors inhibiting women's solidarity towards greater roles in the government of Nigeria. Achieving unity and common objectives amongst the predominantly Christian South and Muslim North have been a tall dream given their different religious orientations and inclinations to politics (Parpart, 1986). The result is that politics amongst the Nigerian women has been reduced to a Christian-Muslim competition for power, and the continued attempt by adherents of the two faiths to dominate each other (Personal Communication with K. Mohammed, June 20, 2023). This has been a major setback to women's attempts at bridging the gender gap. Similarly, while women in the Southern part of the country find it much easier to participate in politics and governance, it has been very difficult for Northern women. The rise of charismatic Christianity since the 1980s has brought much freedom to women who now take leadership roles in churches and in the larger society. This has been enhanced by the proliferation of statutory marriages, supported by several churches, which protects women and guarantees their right to inheritance (Personal Communication with

Pastor K. Dapo, June 10, 2023). These major developments have emboldened women in their relationship with men. Men have become afraid of risking divorce because of the financial implications that result from it.

For women in the North, the reverse has been the case. The Islamic religion and the purdah system associated with it has continued to limit women's access to public life. For instance, despite their enfranchisement in 1979, they voted only at night so their faces would not be seen by men (Vogts, cited in Osiruemu, 2004:3). More disturbing is the fact that their involvement in public life requires the approval of their men, who often consider it a threat to their leadership roles in the home (Personal Communication with H. Abdullahi, June 15, 2023). Only a few men have been gracious enough to allow their wives to take leadership roles. Many of their well-to-do men would rather have them stay at home and provide all their needs than let them participate in governance. The biggest challenge to the involvement of Northern women in politics lies in the fact that going against the teachings of their faith makes them rebels and they are consequently ostracised (Personal Communication with H. Musa, 31 May, 2023). Thus, the needed solidarity and synergy amongst Nigerian women for greater roles in governance has been undermined by the religious divide. Similarly, separate interests on regional and ethnic lines have frustrated several attempts at forging a united front in the struggle.

Furthermore, class division amongst women has slowed down their ability to reach their goals in the shortest time possible (Parpart, 1986). The fact that women are known to be highly class-conscious makes it very likely that those who rise to positions of authority will pursue an agenda that serves only the interest of women of their class, while ignoring the poor majority, mostly in the rural areas. Consequently, rural women have not been adequately mobilised, let alone carried along in the struggle for gender equality in the country (Personal Communication with R. Ekundare, May 31, 2023). It has also been observed that a good number of women tend to be more comfortable with being led by men because of the widely held notion amongst women that men are more considerate in the workplace (Personal Communication with M. Balarabe, June 10, 2023). Women's overdependence on men has undermined their drive towards gender parity as it has made them susceptible to control, manipulation, intimidation, oppression and exploitation both in the home and in the wider society. In order to maximise their chances in governance, women would have to love and treat each other fairly and also build trust in themselves, irrespective of class distinctions. The neglect of low class and poor rural women also needs to be quickly halted as they are also major stakeholders, given their numbers. In addition, elitist urban women should consider influencing or partnering with the government

to provide basic education and financial empowerment to female children at the grassroots level, so that their access to economic opportunities and leadership roles can be expanded.

It is important to note that their drive towards liberation from male domination and for fair representation in government, needs to be approached in a way that does not give men the impression that they seek to overthrow them in the home and in the public space. This is because of the ill-conceived notion in Africa that the goal of feminism is not egalitarianism but a drive towards new socio-economic and political formations that put women on top. This explains the stiff resistance that has emanated from men who are determined to preserve their advantaged position in society. The capacity of women to withstand such resistance is greatly in doubt because of the factors of patriarchy, financial impediments, cultural and religious limitations. Besides, the payment of a bride price by men, which women are not yet ready to part ways with, because of the legitimacy and respect it confers on them in marriage, is militating, because it gives men a measure of control over them.

Most importantly, a legal framework is indispensable to the realisation of equal representation in governance in Nigeria, as the case of the Republic of South Africa has shown (Hills, 2015). In this light, the constitution of Nigeria, and those of political parties, should stipulate a binding and non-negotiable percentage of seats for women in the National Assembly, State Assemblies and in the federal executive councils across the federation. This way, the political rights of women can be safeguarded. Similarly, all forms of discrimination, biases, and stereotypes based on gender can be eliminated, towards a more inclusive and equitable society. In addition, women should not relent in their efforts towards the passage of the Gender Equality Bill in the senate. In this regard, female members of the parliament need to intensify their lobbying of their male counterparts and perhaps, their spouses, to get the Bill passed into law. A combination of these legal frameworks hold the potential of increasing women's participation in decision-making, addressing gender-based violence, ameliorating unfavourable socio-cultural norms and tackling discrimination in the workplace.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that the under-representation of Nigerian women in governance has been consistent in all the periods of Nigerian history. In other words, participation without fair representation has been the major feature of women's participation in governance in Nigeria. However, the treatment of women in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Nigeria was not the same. Women enjoyed greater roles in the socio-political and

economic organisations of Nigeria during the pre-colonial period. Some of the opportunities they had were greater access to land and economic opportunities in general. Although there were women who exercised real political powers in the North, West and East of the country, women's authority in the period was largely based on the positions occupied by their husbands. During the colonial period, the British patriarchal orientations and leanings colluded with Nigeria's well-established patriarchal traditions to reduce women to the lowest ebb. Although they fought back and gained the attention of the colonial authority which made few concessions, the colonialists transferred power to the men, which they considered fit for the task ahead, while abandoning women in spite of their role in anti-colonial struggles. Post-colonial Nigeria remains a male preserve, despite the constitutional provision of political and economic equality for all the sexes since 1979. Therefore, women have reaped only a few benefits of democracy and have remained dependent on men in an independent country. In response to their challenges, they have developed a number of strategies to cope, some of which include withdrawal from politics (accepting their fate), speaking out against male hostile behaviours and demanding fair representation in governance, to enable them to influence legislations that favour women. The chapter concludes that the conspicuous determination of women to achieve fairness in representation in governance gives them hope of greater possibilities and opportunities in future. However, it is incumbent that they unite and overcome all the obstacles to the realisation of their political objectives, which also require the backing of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Failure to do so, through a constitutional means, would mean that Nigeria would continue to be a male preserve.

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Chapter 5

Historicising Women's Representation in Democratic Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, 1999–2023

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Abstract

The main thrust of this chapter is to critically historicise the nature and dynamics of women's representation in democratic governance since the birth of Nigeria's Fourth Republic in 1999. It argues that though the representation of Nigerian women in political governance pre-dated the birth of the Fourth Republic, the participation of women in party politics had witnessed major transformation as attested to by their representation in different political leadership either as appointees or elected officers at the federal, state and local levels. The chapter equally argues that in spite of this development, Nigerian women were under-represented at all levels of democratic governance since the birth of the republic, especially with reference to the United Nations Economic and Social Council Resolution of 1990 which recommended 30% minimum proportion of women in leadership positions. It explains that the under-representation of women in governance since the birth of the republic was caused by a combination of factors, amongst which were the nature of party politics, widespread prejudices and biases about women as political leaders, women's lack of interest in politics, women's lack of economic base and so on. Although there are existing studies on the participation of women in political governance in Nigeria, there is no specific work that interrogates the nature and dynamics

of women's representation in democratic governance during the twenty-four years of the existence of the Fourth Republic (1999–2023) from the historical perspective. This is a major gap that this current research intends to fill in the historiography of women's representation in governance in Nigeria. However, this chapter is a complement to the existing literature on the history of women's representation in governance in Nigeria. This study is very timely because the terminal year of the study, which is 2023, was when the seventh general elections in the republic were conducted. This would enable the researchers to critically make comparative and historical analysis of women's representation in governance between 1999 (when the first general elections were conducted) and 2023. It concludes that the need to increase the level of women's representation in democratic governance is critical to the attainment of the Goal 5 (Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls) of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The methodology adopted in this study is historical, analytical and multidisciplinary, utilising materials from both primary and secondary sources of data collection.

Keywords: Democracy, Governance, Nigeria, Representation, Women

Introduction

There is no doubt about the fact that there is a wide gender gap in political representation in democratic governance between men and women in Nigeria since the return to civil rule in 1999. Although the challenge of gender equality in democratic governance is a general phenomenon, a number of countries had made and are still making appreciable progress towards the attainment of Goal 5 (Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls) of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). Extant studies revealed that since the birth of the new millennium, there was an impressive rise in women's political representation around the world, with the global average in the share of women in national parliaments in particular, and all regions of the world, are making substantial progress towards the implementation of the 30% affirmative action for elective and appointive positions for women, as recommended by the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (UN Women, 2015; Eke, 2022). While other countries of the world are making appreciable progress towards the implementation of this recommendation, since the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999, Nigeria has continued to record a major decline and instability. For instance, according to Okafor and Ileyemi, in 2022, Nigeria was ranked the lowest amongst the 54 independent African countries regarding percentage of female representation in democratic governance, securing 54th position with

a 5.45% female representation, while Rwanda was ranked first with 47.95% (Okafor & Ileyemi, 2023).

It is imperative to point out here that the history of political marginalisation of women in Nigerian politics is not a recent phenomenon. Its evolution could be traced to the colonial period, which was facilitated by the British colonial policy of administration. While the men were given limited access to political representation in governance by the colonial government, the women were not. The native administration was mainly male-dominated. This was quite different from the pre-colonial experience in which women participated actively in mainstream political activities with relatively few restrictions (Adjepong, 2015:28). As argued by Fields and others, women formed an important component of the host of officials in most of the pre-colonial West African states, kingdoms and empires, serving as founders, rulers, political advisers, lawmakers, regents, chiefs and so on. Thus, the liberation of women from political domination by their male counterparts in the politics of Nigeria during the colonial period was as a result of the brevity of women themselves, occasioned by continued colonial emasculation through the heavy economic burden of taxation (Anyia, 2003:60). In other words, the women took the bull by the horns through fighting for their political right and emancipation. This political trend which was laid during the colonial period was further consolidated in the postcolonial period.

It is against this background that this study intends to historicise women's representation in democratic governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic between 1999 and 2023. This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section is the introduction and the methodology used. The second section focuses on conceptual clarifications. The third part deals with historicising women's representation in governance up to 1999. The fourth section centres on the Fourth Republic and women's representation in democratic governance from 1999 to 2023. The last section is the concluding remarks. The methodology adopted in this study is historical, analytical and multidisciplinary, utilising materials from both primary and secondary sources of data collection.

Conceptual clarifications

Governance

Governance is an important concept which scholars have viewed from different perspectives. As argued by Arisi and Ukadike (2013), governance is a relationship between rulers and the ruled, the state and society, the governors and the governed. Coleman sees governance as the process of decision making

and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented (Arisi & Ukadike, 2013:121). According to the UN Human Development Report, governance has two faces. First, the leadership which has responsibilities derived from the principles of effective governmental organisations. Secondly, the governed, that is the citizens, who are responsible for making relevant inputs to the socio-economic and political affairs of their society (UNDP, 2004). In all, governance involves a relationship between the leaders and the followers as well as how rules are made in society by the leaders, which are to be accepted by the followers as legitimate in order to enhance values with society. This form of governance is mainly possible in a democratic society.

Democratic Governance

Democratic governance is a system of governance that allows and promotes active and popular participation of citizens of a state in decision-making processes through democratically elected structures such as the formation of political parties. According to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), democratic governance is a system of government where institutions function according to democratic processes and norms, both internally and in their interaction with other institutions (OSCE, n.d.). In democratic governance, leadership recruitment into various political offices is not only based on strict adherence to the ideal's principles of democracy, but also on the principle of equality for all.

Women's Representation

The word representation simply refers to the act of speaking or acting on behalf of someone in place, either informally or formally. With specific reference to governance, representation entails the process by which someone voluntarily submits themselves or is nominated for political position or is either appointed or elected to represent a section or a group of people's interests in the administration of a state or country. Therefore, our concept of representation in this chapter is limited to political representation of women in the administration of Nigeria since 1999. Women's representation in democratic governance in Nigeria in this chapter entails the following: voluntary submission to contest for an elective position, nomination by a political party for an elective position and appointment into various public offices both at the federal and state levels.

Historicising women's representation in governance in Nigeria up to 1999

Historically, the history of women's representation in governance in Nigeria generally spanned through three distinct historical phases, namely pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. Each phase was marked by its own distinctive characteristics. The first phase of representation of women in governance in Nigeria began in the pre-colonial period. In other words, existing literature revealed different roles that women played in the pre-colonial political administrations in different parts of Nigeria. During this phase, the women served in varying capacities amongst which were founders or rulers, regents, political advisers, lawmakers, queens, queen mothers and chiefs of some empires, kingdoms and states. For instance, while Queen Amina became a ruler of Zaria by right of succession and took over the throne of the state through popular consent in 1576 (Ikpe, 1997:250), Pupupu was the founder of the Ondo dynasty and became the first Osemawe of Ondo Kingdom (Omojeje, 2015:115). Also, Queen Kambasa was one of the founders of the state of Bonny and ruled the state around the 1500s (Alagoa, 1992:25). In South Western Nigeria, there were evidences of the emergence of females as rulers of some kingdoms in places like Ondo, Sabe, Oyo and so (Ikpe, 1997:250). In Ibadan and Egba societies, there was the institution of the Iyalode who represented women's interests in the courts. A good example was Madam Tinubu who was behind the installation of Oyekan as the Alake of Egba in 1878. There were women amongst the Ilaris (travelling agents / emissaries) of the kings, who reported happenings in the outlying territories to the courts in some Yoruba kingdoms (Ikpe, 1997:251). Highest political offices aside, women were involved in administrative positions most especially in the palaces, where they served as advisers and lawmakers. For example, in the Kanem-Bornu Empire, the Queen Mother (known as *Magira*) did influence certain decisions of the Mai (Adjepong, 2015:29). In Benin Kingdom, Ogbomo argues that women were amongst the thirty-one Ogiso (paramount chiefs) who ruled the kingdom during the Ogiso dynasty (Ogbomo, 2005:357).

During the colonial period, the representation of women in modern political governance was restricted by the British colonial policy of administration. In other words, the indirect rule system did not give women the opportunity to serve their people, unlike during the pre-colonial period. Prior to the introduction of the elective principle which granted franchise to the citizens, the British made use of traditional rulers, who were all males, as sole native authorities. In a society where a centralised system administration did not exist, like amongst the Igbo, the British made use of some chiefs who were designated as 'warrant chiefs' (Falola et al., 1991:189-190). Following the introduction of the elective principle through the Clifford Constitution

of 1922, only a few educated men were granted the opportunity to be represented in political governance of their country. The elective principle was restricted to Lagos and Calabar (Akinyele, 1997:290). Even the franchise that was introduced was a restricted one. It not only excluded the women, but also did not grant an opportunity of the right to vote to all men. According to the 1922 Constitution, four Nigerians were to be elected on an income qualification of £100 per annum—three from Lagos and one from Calabar (Akinyele, 1997:290). As argued by Ikpe (1997) and Mba (1982), colonialism was unfavourable to the women. Colonial rule was mainly carried out by male chauvinists. For instance, while Mba explains that women under colonialism felt victimised and deprived (Mba, 1982:67), Ikpe posits that the basis of women's political actions that culminated in various women's protest movements which were prevalent in both Southern and Northern Nigeria, was as a result of their political marginalisation and economic exploitation (Ikpe, 1997:258).

In order to free themselves from colonial exploitation and political marginalisation, the women staged several protests. For example, there was the Aba Riot of 1929 (Women's War) in Eastern Nigeria, which led to the breakdown or demise of the warrant chief system. Also, Mrs Obasa formed the Lagos Women's League (a pressure group) for better sanitary conditions and women's education. Lady Abayomi formed the Women's Party in 1944. The party agitated for welfare issues and the equality of sexes. Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti formed the Abeokuta Ladies Club, which metamorphosed into the Abeokuta Women's Union in 1946 and later the Nigerian Women's Union in 1949 (in order to extend its scope). Through this political platform, she fought for women's political freedom. For example, through the AWU, Mrs Funmilayo led a protest against a tax on women in Abeokuta, which led to the temporary abdication of the then Alake of Egba in 1949 (Awe, 1992:3-6).

During the decolonisation process, women were actively involved in the establishment and growth of some major political parties that dominated Nigerian politics from 1951 until political independence in 1960. These parties were the Northern People's Congress (NPC), the Action Group (AG), the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). Through the women's wing of the parties, women could mobilise grassroots women for their parties. However, very few women were privileged to be admitted into the upper echelons of the parties. Many such women included the wives of the leaders of the parties. However, a few women were able to distinguish themselves. One of these was Margaret Ekpo of the NCNC. She was a veteran politician who won election on her own merit into the Eastern House of Assembly in 1953/1954 and attended constitutional

conferences. Other prominent women Nigerian politicians during this period were Lady Abayomi, Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Miss Young, Hajiya Gambo and Mrs Femi-Pearse (Ikpe, 1997:260). For instance, Hajiya Gambo Sawaba, a Northern female Nigerian politician, nationalist, women's rights activist, and philanthropist was a strong member of the NEPU in Zaria. Through the influence of Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti on her, she embarked on door-to-door meetings with women who were not allowed to attend political activities because of their gender and purdah practice. She openly campaigned against the marriage of underage girls, unfair taxes, the use of forced labour, canvassed for jobs for women and advocated for Western education for girls and full voting rights for women in the North. In 1956, Gambo and her supporters marched to the office of the regional premier, Sir Ahmadu Bello, in Kaduna, to demand the franchise for women in the North in future parliamentary elections. This protest was informed by the granting of a limited franchise to women in Southern Nigeria in 1951 (Agunbiade, 2021).

In the post-colonial period, which spanned from 1960 to 1999, the representation of women in governance could be examined under two different systems of administration, namely civilian and military. The representation of women during this period could be both in appointive and elective positions. In the build-up to the independence of Nigeria in 1960, elections were conducted in 1958 and 1959. Some women, most especially from Southern Nigeria, participated in these elections. For example, through active involvement in the modern politics of Nigeria, Wurola Adepeju Esan of the AG in the 1958 elections was appointed as the first female member in the Senate of 36 members. She was nominated as a senator from Ibadan West of the Western Region. No woman was elected into the 312-member House of Representatives and none was in the federal cabinet. During the First Republic, 1960 to 1966, there were only four female legislators in the whole of the country, both at the federal and regional levels (Samuel & Segun, 2012:4). They were Senator Wurola Adepeju Esan and Senator Bernice Kerry in the National Parliament; and Mrs Margaret Ekpo and Mrs Janet Muokelu in the Eastern House of Assembly (Anyia, 2003:62). There were no female Ministers in the Federal Cabinet. The development continued until the demise of the First Republic in 1966, occasioned by the 15 January 1966 coup led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu.

The collapse of the First Republic resulted in the emergence of military rule. Generally, there were two major phases of military rule: namely, the first phase, 1966 to 1979, and the second phase from 1983 to 1999. During the first phase, which lasted for thirteen years, Nigeria was governed by four successive military rulers, namely Major General JTG Aguiyi Ironsi, General Yakubu Gowon, General Murtala Mohammed and General Olusegun Obasanjo.

During this first phase, there was neither a female military head of state nor a female military governor. This development could be attributed to the nature, character and disposition of the military to women. Prior to this time, women were not expected to belong to the combative force of the military, which translated into not playing any role in military administrations. The marginalisation of women by successive military regimes in governance was manifested with the use of male civilian counterparts in political administration, like Chief Obafemi Awolowo as the Federal Minister of Finance during Gowon regime. The situation continued until the return to democratic rule in 1979, leading to the birth of the Second Republic, where the hope of the Nigerian women in terms of their participation in the governance of their country was rekindled. During the republic, which lasted between 1979 and 1983, women participated actively in the politics of Nigeria. Few women were represented in the ruling bodies of any of the parties. This affected their representation in both executive and legislative positions at the Federal and State levels. As argued by Ikpe, women during this republic were pushed to the women's wings of the political parties to continue as voter-catchers (Ikpe, 1997:264), rather than major players. However, some women were presented in governance during this republic. For example, Mrs Oyibo Odinamadu was elected as the first National Vice-President of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). In the Second Republic - 1979 to 1983 - there was 1 female Senator out of 95, 11 female House of Representative Members out of 450 and 3 Women Ministers in the Federal Cabinet. There were only a few women in the States Houses of Assembly while there was no Woman Chairman (chairperson) of Local Government (Anya, 2003:64).

The Second Republic collapsed in December 1983 as a result of the overthrow of Alhaji Shehu Shagari's government by Major General Muhammadu Buhari. This led to the emergence of the second phase of military rule, which lasted until 1999. Although women suffered political neglect during this phase of military rule, they, however, enjoyed limited political rights during General Ibrahim Babangida's rule, who made an attempt to give Nigerian women a chance in the politics of Nigeria through the creation of the Office of the First Lady that initiated some programmes. Some women ambassadors were appointed by his regime. He also directed all military governors to appoint at least one woman into their cabinets (Ikpe, 1997:265). In his transition programme, which later became an aborted Third Republic, the women participated actively in the political process of that era. During this period, women were able to obtain both elective and appointive positions, namely two females out of 19 Political Bureau members, two Female Military Deputy Governors (Mrs Pamela Sadauki and Alhaja Lateefat Okunnu), two Female Civilian Deputy Governors (Chief Mrs Sinatu Aderoju Ojikutu and Mrs Cecilia Ekpeyong), three females out of 591 Chairmen

(Chairpersons) in the 1991 LGA elections, 27 females out of 1,172 State Houses of Assembly Members, 14 females out of 589 House of Representative Members, one female out of 91 Senators, eight female Presidential aspirants in 1991 and one female Presidential aspirant in 1993 (Anya, 2003:65). The annulment of the 12 June 1993 Presidential election made the transition programme unsuccessful.

Following the annulment of the Presidential election, General Babangida stepped aside and inaugurated an Interim National Government (ING), with Chief Ernest Shonekan as the Chairman in August 1993. The ING, which was short-lived, had three women as Secretaries. The ING was overthrown by General Sani Abacha in November 1993. Although the new military regime initiated a transition programme, it was not brought into logical conclusion as a result of the sudden death of General Sani Abacha in June 1998. He was later succeeded by a new head of State, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, who eventually returned Nigeria to civil rule in 1999, marking the birth of the Fourth Republic.

The fourth republic and women's representation in democratic governance, 1999–2023

Here, attempts will be made to identify and critically analyse the participation of women in the successive general elections held between 1999 and 2023 as well as their eventual election and appointment into various political offices both at the federal and state levels during this period. In analysing the representation of women in democratic governance during this republic, both chronological and thematic approaches have been adopted in this section. It is important to point out here that the level of participation of women in the politics of Nigeria during this republic was critical to their eventual representation in democratic governance. However, before interrogating this, it is imperative to have a glimpse of the circumstances that culminated in the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999.

The birth of the Fourth Republic on 29 May 1999 was traced to the military regime of General Abdulsalam Abubakar, the eighth military Head of State of Nigeria. Although the process of transition to democratic administration was started by General Sani Abacha, it was truncated as a result of his sudden death on 8 June 1998. General Abdulsalam, who took over the reins of power, had a transition programme as part of his agenda for the country. Thus, in his broadcast to the nation, he publicly announced that he would hand over power to a democratically elected president on 29 May 1999. In the pursuit of this political programme, he dissolved the five political parties registered by the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria

under the Abacha regime and set up a new electoral commission known as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (with Justice Ephraim Akpata as the pioneer Chairman), which later began the process of the registration of new political parties. Initially, the INEC wanted to grant provisional registration to nine political parties, with the condition that after the local government elections, political parties that had 10% votes and above in at least 24 states of the federation would qualify to contest the state and federal elections (Dode, 2010:190). However, the INEC succeeded in registering only three political parties which participated in the first general elections that were conducted in the republic. These political parties were the Alliance for Democracy (AD), the All People's Party (APP) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Following the success of the presidential election of February 1999, which was contested by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP and Chief Olu Falae of the AD/APP on 29 May 1999, General Abdulsalam handed over power to Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who was declared the winner by the INEC. This development marked the genesis of the Fourth Republic.

Having provided a brief background of the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999, our main focus now is to critically interrogate women's representation in democratic governance within the twenty-four years of the birth of the republic (1999-2023). In analysing this, we shall restrict ourselves to the representation of women at both federal and state levels, with a major emphasis on elective and appointive positions both in the executive and legislative arms of government. Between 1999 and 2023, seven successive general elections were conducted by the INEC, in which democratic governance was consolidated both at the federal and state levels. Within this period, the participation of women in the politics of Nigeria at these two governmental levels witnessed major transformations. Significantly, evidences from the extant literature revealed that the level of involvement of women in the politics of Nigeria during this period varied across the thirty-six states of the federation, including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, as well as in the six geo-political zones of the federation. It was shown that no state or geo-political zone was left out regarding women's representation in democratic governance either at the state or federal level, whether as elected candidates or appointees of the government. Also, the percentage of women's representation in democratic governance during this period both at the state and federal levels varied and depended on the political dispensation that emerged. The major transformations that occurred with respect to the representation of women in democratic governance between 1999 and 2023 will be critically analysed here.

a. Women's representation at the federal level: Executive and legislative positions

The representation of women in democratic governance at the federal level will be examined in terms of participation as candidates in the general elections as well as appointees both in the executive and legislative arms of government. In the executive arm of government, there were records of women who contested as Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates in the general elections between 1999 and 2023. Although the number of women who vied for the Presidential and Vice-Presidential positions in the general elections during this period was very low, there was little increase in the number of women who showed interest in these positions. In the first four general elections conducted between 1999 and 2011, there was no record of any woman who vied for either the Presidential or Vice-Presidential position.

The active participation of women in these two positions began during the 2015 general elections. In the 2015 general elections, of the fourteen Presidential candidates who participated in the election, only one was female, known as Professor Oluremi Sonaya. She contested under a minority political party, the KOWA Party (KP). Also, in the election of the fourteen Vice-Presidential candidates, four were female. In the 2019 general elections, of the seventy-three Presidential candidates who participated in the elections, six were women, with twenty-two female Vice-Presidential candidates, and they all contested under minority political parties (Opejobi, 2019). There was a small increase in the number of women who vied for these positions, from one in 2015 to six and four to twenty-two in 2019. However, in the 2023 general election, the number of women who participated in the election as Presidential candidates dropped to one, with no female Presidential candidate. The representation of women in terms of contest for elective Presidential and Vice-Presidential positions between 1999 and 2023, though changed, it was generally low. All the women who contested for these elective positions during this period were candidates of minority political parties. None of the major political parties, namely Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) between 1999 and 2023 and All Progressives Congress (APC) between 2015 and 2023, presented women as their candidates for the two executive elective positions.

In terms of appointive positions, women served in the cabinet of successive democratic governments as ministers, ambassadors, advisers between 1999 and 2023. Evidences from the literature revealed that women served in the government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007); Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2007–2010); Dr Goodluck Jonathan (2010–2015) and Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023), though in varying numbers. Tables 4 to 8 show names and ministries of some of the women who served in different

successive democratic administrations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic between 1999 and 2023.

Table 4: List of Some Female Ministers during Chief Olusegun Obasanjo Administration, 1999–2007

#	Name	Ministry	Period
1	Kema Chikwe	Transport Aviation	1999–2001 2001–2003
2	Aisha Ismail	Women Affairs and Youth Development	1999–2003
3	Rita Akpan	Women Affairs	2003–2005
4	Mobolaji Osomo	Housing, Land and Urban Development	2003–2005
5	Funke Adedoyin	State for Health	2003–2005
6		State for Education	2003–2005
7	Maryam Ciroma	Women Affairs	2005–2007
8	Obiageli Ezekwesili	Solid Minerals Education	2005–2007 2006–2007
9	Halima Tayo-Alao	State for Education State for Health	2005–2006 2006–2007
10	Helen Esuene	State for Health Environment	2005–2006 2006–2007
11	Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala	Finance Foreign Affairs	2003–2006 2006
12	Nenadi Esther Usman	State for Finance Finance	2003–2006 2006–2007
13	Joy Ogwu	Foreign Affairs	2006–2007
14	Leslye Obiora	Solid Minerals	2007

Source: Personal compilation from various media sources and newspapers online

Table 5: List of Some Female Ministers during Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's Administration, 2007–2010

#	Name	Ministry	Period
1	Adenike Grange	Health	2007–2008
2	Halima Tayo-Alao	Environment & Housing	2007–2008
3	Diezani Alison-Madueke	Transport Mines & Steel Development	2007–2008 2008–2010
4	Grace Ekpiwhre	Science & Technology	2007–2008
5	Saudatu Bungudu	Women Affairs & Social Development	2007–2008
6	Dora Akuyili	Information & Communication	2008–2010
7	Salamat Hussaini Suleiman	Women Affairs & Social Development	2008–2010
8	Fatima Balarabe Ibrahim	State for Energy (Power)	2007
9	Fidelia Njeze	State for Defence State for Agriculture & Water Resources	2007–2008 2008–2010

Source: Personal compilation from various media sources and newspapers online

Table 6: List of Some Female Ministers during Dr Goodluck Jonathan's Administration, 2010–2015

#	Name	Ministry	Period
1	Fidelia Njeze	Aviation	2010–2011
2	Dora Akuyili	Information and Communication	2010–2015
3	Ruquayyah Ahmed Rufai	Education	2010–2015
4	Diezani Alison-Madueke	Petroleum	2010–2015
5	Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala	Finance	2010–2015
6	Josephine Anenih	Women Affairs & Social Development	2010
7	Stella Oduah	Aviation	2011–2015
8	Erelu Olusola Obada	State for Defence	2011–2015
9	Olajumoke Akinjide	State for FCT	2011–2015
10	Viola Onwuliri	State for Foreign Affairs	2011–2015
11	Mobolaji Johnson	Communication Technology	2011–2015
12	Zainab Ibrahim Kudi	State for Niger Delta Affairs	2011–2015
13	Zainab Maina	Women Affairs & Social Development	2011–2015

Source: Personal compilation from various media sources and newspapers online

Table 7: List of Some Female Ministers during Muhammadu Buhari's Administration, 2015–2023

#	Name	Ministry	Period
1	Zainab Ahmed	State for Budget & Planning Finance Finance, Budget & National Planning	2015–2018 2018–2019 2019–2023
2	Amina Mohammed	Environment	2015–2018
3	Kemi Adeosun	Finance	2015–2018
4	Khadija Bukar Abba Ibrahim	State for Foreign Affairs	2015–2018
5	Aisha Abubakar	State for Industry, Trade & Investment	2015–2019
6	Aisha Alhasan	Women Affairs & Social Development	2015–2018
7	Aisha Abubakar	Women Affairs & Social Development	2018–2019
8	Sharon Ikeazor	State for Environment State for Niger Delta Affairs	2019–2022 2022–2023
9	Ramatu Tijani Aliyu	State for FCT	2019–2023
10	Sadiya Umar Farouq	Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster & Social Development	2019–2023
11	Mariam Yalwaji Katagum	Industry, Trade and Investment	2019–2023
12	Gbemisola Saraki	State for Transport State for Mines & Steel Development	2019–2022 2022–2023
13	Pauline Tallen	Women Affairs & Social Development	2019–2023

Source: Personal compilation from various media sources and newspapers online

Table 8: List of Female Ministers under Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Administration 2023

#	Name	Ministry	Period
1	Barr. Hannatu Musawa	Art, Culture and Creative Economy	2023
2	Dr Betta Edu	Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation	2023
3	Hon. Nkeiruka Onyejocha	State for Labour and Employment	2023
4	Mrs Lola Ade-John	Tourism	2023
5	Hon. Uju Kennedy Ohaneyeye	Women Affairs	2023
6	Mrs Iman Suleiman Ibrahim	State for Police Affairs	2023
7	Dr Doris Aniche	Industry, Trade and Investment	2023

Source: Personal compilation from various media sources and newspapers online

Tables 4 to 8 reveal a list of some female ministers who served five different democratic administrations in the country between 1999 and 2023. From the tables, women were represented in the federal executive council of each government, though in varying numbers. In fact, some women served in two to three ministries under an administration, while some served under two different administrations. With the exception of the second term of President Olusegun Obasanjo, in which 30% of women were ministers, in the others the percentage of women in the cabinet ranged between 14% and 25%. While during Yar'Adua's administration, it was 18%, during Goodluck Jonathan's administration, it was 25%. Also, during Buhari's administration, women's representation was 14% during his first term and 16% during his second term. Of the 45 ministers appointed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, 7 (representing 16%) were female.

At the level of National Assembly, which comprises two houses of legislature (Senate-Upper House and House of Representatives-Lower House), women were represented between 1999 and 2023. Although the number of women's representation in the National Assembly varied across the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, there was no election year in which at least one woman would not be elected into either the Senate (which made up 109 members) or House of Representatives (which made up 360 members). Table 9 shows the computed number of seats won by women vis-à-vis men between 1999 and 2023 in the two houses of legislature.

Table 9: Number of Women Elected into the Senate, 1999–2023

Year	Total No of Seats and Percentages				
	No of Seats	Men	%	Women	%
1999	109	106	97.2	3	1.8
2003	109	105	95.8	4	4.2
2007	109	101	91.92	8	8.08
2011	109	102	92.86	7	6.4
2015	109	102	92.86	7	7.14
2019	109	102	92.86	7	7.14
2023	109	106	97.25	3	2.75

Source: Eke (2022:51) and information from various newspapers

Table 9 shows the number and percentage of women versus men elected into the Senate between 1999 and 2023. From the table, there was an increase in the number of women who were elected into this upper house of legislature between 1999 and 2007. It started declining and remained static between 2011 and 2019, and dropped drastically in 2023. Within this period, women recorded their highest numbers in the Senate in 2007, with the total number of 8.

With respect to the elected principal officers in the Senate during this period, there was equally women's representation, though not encouraging. Between the 4th and the 10th Assemblies (1999–2023), no woman was elected as either Senate President or Deputy Senate President. However, in the 4th Assembly, which was inaugurated in 1999, Senator Stella Unuezi Omu of the PDP from the Delta South Senatorial District of Delta State was elected as the Chief Whip. Also, in the 8th Assembly a female senator was elected as Deputy Minority Whip. Aside from being elected as principal officers, the majority of the female senators who were elected into the Senate during this period, were appointed as Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of various Senate Committees.

Table 10 shows the number and percentage of women versus men elected into the House of Representatives between 1999 and 2023. From the table, there was an increase in the number of women who were elected into this upper house of legislature between 1999 and 2007. It declined in 2011 and increased in 2015. It equally dropped drastically in 2019 and increased in 2023. Within this period, women recorded their highest numbers in the Senate in 2007, with a total number of 25. Generally, the representation of women in the House of Representatives was not stable.

Table 10: Number of Women Elected into the House of Representatives, 1999–2023

Year	Total No of Seats and Percentages				
	No of Seats	Men	%	Women	%
1999	360	347	96.4	13	3.6
2003	360	339	94.17	21	5.83
2007	360	335	93.06	25	6.94
2011	360	345	92.78	15	3.7
2015	360	338	93.89	22	6.11
2019	360	349	95.65	11	3.05
2023	360	345	92.78	15	3.7

Source: Eke (2022:51) and information from various newspapers

With respect to the elected principal officers in the House of Representatives during this period, there was equally women's representation in some of the principal officers of the House during this period. The representation of women in the principal officers of the House of Representatives between 1999 and 2023 was very encouraging, unlike in the Senate. For instance, in the 6th Assembly, which was inaugurated in 2007, a woman, known as Rt. Hon. Olubunmi Patricia Etteh (who represented Ayedaade / Isokan / Irewole constituency in Osun State), was elected as the Speaker of the House. She was the first female Speaker in the history of Nigeria's House of Representatives. However, she barely spent five months before was impeached on allegation of corruption, which has yet to be proved. In the 7th Assembly, which was inaugurated in 2011, Hon. Mulikat Akande Adeola of the PDP (who represented Ogbomoso North, South and Orire Federal Constituency in Oyo State) contested for the position of Speaker, but later stepped down for Hon. Aminu Tambuwal. She was later elected as the Majority Leader of the House, becoming the first woman to hold that position. In the 8th Assembly, which was inaugurated in 2015, Hon. Fatima Binta Bello of the PDP (who represented Kaltungo/Shongom Federal Constituency in Gombe State), was elected as the Deputy Minority Whip of the House. In the 9th Assembly, which was inaugurated in 2019, Hon. Nkeiruka Chiduben Onyejeocha of the APC (who represented Isuikwuato / Umunneochi Federal Constituency of Abia State), contested for the position of Speaker of the House against Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila. She later stepped down and was elected as the Deputy Chief Whip. In the 10th Assembly, which was inaugurated in 2023, Hon. Adewunmi Oriyomi Onanuga of the APC (who represented Ikenne/Sagamu Remo North Federal Constituency), was elected as Deputy Chief Whip of the House. Apart

from being elected as principal officers of the House, the majority of the female lawmakers who were elected into the House during this period were appointed as Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of various House Committees such as Trade and Investment, Health, Women Affairs and so on.

b. Women's representation at the state level: Executive and legislative positions

Generally, at the state level, women's representation can be seen both at the executive (serving as governor, deputy-governors, commissioners and special advisers) and legislative positions (serving as speakers and deputy speakers). At the executive position level, our discussion would be restricted only to the governorship and deputy governorship positions. First, at the executive position level, no woman had been elected as the Governor of any state in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023. However, following the impeachment of the then incumbent Governor of Anambra State by the Anambra State House of Assembly under the Hon. Mike Balonwu as the Speaker in November 2007, Mrs Dame Virginia Etiaba, who was then the Deputy Governor, was sworn in as the first female governor of Anambra state in particular, and Nigeria in general. She barely ruled for three months (November to February), when Mr Peter Obi was returned as the governor by the judiciary. Between the 1999 and 2011 general elections, there was no active participation of women in terms of standing in as governorship candidates of either major or minor political parties. However, during the 2015, 2019 and 2023 governorship elections, there were evidences of women's active representation as governorship candidates of both majority and minority political parties. In the 2015 governorship election, twenty-four out of three hundred and eighty candidates were women (representing just 6%); in the 2019 governorship election, eighty out of one thousand and sixty-six were women (representing 8%).

There was just a 2% increase in the number of women who vied for governorship seats between 2015 and 2019. In the 2023 governorship election, the number of female contestants dropped to 24 out of 420 contestants. One major development with respect to the representation of women in elective positions especially during the 2015 and 2023 general elections was that for the first time in political history of the Fourth Republic, women emerged as governorship candidates of one of the major political parties in Nigeria; that is, All Progressives Congress (APC). In the 2015 governorship election, of the 24 women who were candidates, one, known as Senator Aisha Jummai Al-Hassan (popularly known as Mama Taraba), was from the major political party (APC), others were from the minority political parties. Senator Aisha participated in the gubernatorial primary election, defeated other candidates

and emerged as APC candidate in Taraba State. In the main governorship election, she contested against the then incumbent Governor of the State, Alhaji **Darius Ishaku of the PDP. The election was initially declared inconclusive. In the rerun election, Senator Aisha was defeated.**

In the 2023 governorship election, Senator Aishatu Dahiru Ahmed (popularly known as Binani) emerged as the APC gubernatorial candidate in Adamawa State. She did not just emerge as the governorship candidate of the APC through consensus arrangement, but through a competitive and keenly contested primary election that involved prominent figures such as former Governor of Adamawa State, Muhammadu Jibrilla Bindow, pioneer Executive Chairman Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nuhu Ribadu, and influential Federal legislator and chairman of the House Committee on Army, Abdurazaq Namdas. She defeated the three major male candidates by securing 430 votes with the runner-up, Nuhu Ribadu, receiving 288 votes (Zagi et al., 2023). In the main governorship election, Senator Dahiru contested against the incumbent governor, Alhaji Ahmadu Fintiri of the PDP. The election was equally declared inconclusive. In the re-run election, Fintiri was later declared winner of the election by the INEC. Besides Senator Aishatu Dahiru, there were other twenty-two women who contested as governorship candidates during the 2023 general elections but under minority political parties such as the Social Democratic Party, the Peoples Redemption Party, the Action Alliance Party, the Action Democratic Party, the Zenith Labour Party, the Labour Party, the Allied People's Movement, the All People's Party, the Action Alliance, the Boot Party, the National Rescue Movement, the All Progressives Grand Alliance and the Young Progressives Party.

Another major development with respect to the representation of women in elective executive positions at the state level was in the deputy governorship position. Without doubt, between 1999 and 2023, women have done fairly well. Although the representation of women in this leadership position during this period varied across the 36 states and six geo-political zones of the federation, no single geo-political zone was left. While the South West (with Lagos and Ogun States with highest number of female deputy governors: three times each) recorded the highest number of female deputy governors since the birth of the Fourth Republic (eight), the North East had the least with only one (Adamawa State). Table 11 shows the current and previous names and states of female deputy governors in Nigeria.

Table 11: List of Female Deputy Governors in Nigeria, 1999–2023

#	Name	State	Party	Period
1	Mrs Kofoworola Akerele-Bucknor	Lagos	AD	1999–2003
2	Mrs Cecilia Eyo Ekpenyong	Cross River	PDP	1999–2003
3	Mrs Salimot Badru	Ogun	PDP	2003–2007 2007–2011
4	Dame Virginia Etiaba	Anambra	APGA	2007–2010
5	Mrs Sarah Adebisi Sosan	Lagos	CAN	2007–2011
6	Mrs Pauline Tallen	Plateau	PDP	2007–2011
7	Chief Titiloyo Laoye-Tomori	Osun	CAN/APC	2010–2014 2014–2018
8	Mrs Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire	Lagos	CAN	2011–2015
9	Lady Valerie Ebe	Akwa Ibom	PDP	2012–2015 2015–2019
10	Mrs Yetunde Onanuga	Ogun	APC	2015–2019
11	Mrs Cecilia Ezeilo	Enugu	PDP	2015–2019 2019–2023
12	Dr Ipalibo Gogo Banigo	Rivers	PDP	2015–2019 2019–2023
13	Dr Hadiza Balarabe	Kaduna	APC	2019–2023 2023–
14	Mrs Naimot Salako Ayodele	Ogun	APC	2019–2023 2023–
15	Mrs Monisade Afuye	Ekiti	APC	2022–
16	Prof Ngozi Nma Odi	Rivers	PDP	2023–
17	Dr Akon Enyakenyi	Akwa Ibom	PDP	2023–
18	Mrs Josephine Piyo	Plateau	PDP	2023–
19	Mrs Patricia Obila	Ebonyi	APC	2023–
20	Prof Kaletapwa Farauta	Adamawa	PDP	2023–

Source: Personal compilation from different media sources and newspapers online

Table 11 shows the list of female deputy governors in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023. It reveals that women were represented in the deputy position at the executive council at the state level. It could be seen from the table that out of the 36 states of the federation, only 13 states have been able to give females the opportunity to be represented in the governorship position level. Also

from the table, Lagos State tops the list of the 36 states that had produced the highest number female deputy governors in Nigeria (securing three). Lagos State was followed by Ogun, Plateau, Rivers and Akwa Ibom, which each produced two. The other eight states (namely Ekiti, Osun, Kaduna, Cross River, Enugu, Ebonyi, Anambra and Adamawa) produced one each. The table also reveals that while some female deputy governors served two consecutive terms in some states (such as Ogun, Akwa Ibom, Enugu, Rivers, Osun and Kaduna), others served just one term.

At legislative level, women's representation could be seen in various State Houses of Assembly that emerged in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023. Although the number of female parliamentarians varied across the 36 State Houses of Assembly, women were represented in both the highest and lowest positions in the state parliament. Table 12 shows the computed number of seats won by women between 1999 and 2023.

Table 12: State Houses of Assembly

Year	Total No of Seats and Percentages				
	No of Seats	Men	%	Women	%
1999	978	966	98.8	12	1.2
2003	951	912	96.0	39	4.0
2007	900	843	94.2	57	5.8
2011	900	832	93.1	68	6.9
2015	979	900	91.9	79	8.1
2019	991	946	95.59	45	4.41
2023	988	940	95.15	48	4.85

Source: Eke (2022:51) and information from various newspapers.

Table 12 shows the total number of female lawmakers in the 36 States of the federation between 1999 and 2023. From the table, there was a steady increase in the number of female lawmakers between 1999 and 2015. The number declined during the 2019 general elections, and later increased by three seats in the 2023 general elections. With specific reference to the 2023 general elections, of the 36 states, women were represented in only 21 states (namely Anambra, Kaduna, Bayelsa, Benue, Cross River, Delta, Ekiti, Oyo, Taraba, Nasarawa, Plateau, Kogi, Kwara, Akwa Ibom, Ogun, Lagos, Adamawa, Ondo, Enugu and Ebonyi States), though with a varying number of seats in the State House of Assembly. In terms of geo-political statistical analysis, while the South West had the highest number of female lawmakers (with 16 seats), the North West had the least with just two female lawmakers (and

only from Kaduna State). Other geo-political zones included North Central – 12, South-South – 10, South East – 5 and North East – 3.

Apart from the emergence of the female lawmakers in the various states Houses of Assembly, their representation in various leadership positions in the state legislature equally deserve interrogation. Between 1999 and 2023, a number of female lawmakers had been represented in some top leadership positions in the States Houses of Assembly amongst which were Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Leader of the House, Deputy Leader of the House, Chief Whip, Deputy Chief, Clerk of the House and so on. We will restrict ourselves to just Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the House. Tables 13 and 14 show the names of Female Speakers and Deputy Speakers of some States Houses of Assembly in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023.

Table 13: List of Female Speakers of States Houses of Assembly in Nigeria, 1999-2023

#	Name	State	Period
1	Hon. Margaret Icheen	Benue	1999-2003
2	Hon. Titi Oseni-Gomez	Ogun	2003-2008
3	Hon. Eucharua Azodo	Anambra	2003-2011
4	Hon. Chinwe Nwaebili	Anambra	2011-2015
5	Hon. Monsuratu Jumoke Sunmonu	Oyo	2011
6	Hon. Rita Mmaduagwu	Anambra	2015-2019
7	Hon. Jumoke Akinjide	Ondo	2014-2017
8	Hon. Olubunmi Adelugba	Ekiti	2023-

Source: Personal compilation from various media sources/newspapers online

Table 13 shows the total number of female speakers who have emerged since the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999 across the 36 States of the federation. From the table, one can vividly see that out of the 36 states, female speakers have emerged in only six states. Of these six states, four from the South West, and only one from each of South East and North Central. The other three geo-political zones, namely South-South, North East and North West have not produced any female speakers. Also, of the six states that have produced female speakers since 1999, Anambra has the highest (with three); the other five states produced one each. In all, eight female speakers have emerged in the States Houses of Assembly in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023.

Table 14: List of Female Deputy Speakers of States Houses of Assembly in Nigeria, 1999–2023

#	Name	State	Period
1	Hon. Mrs Adefunmilayo Tejuosho	Lagos	2007–2009
2	Hon. Felicia Bassey	Akwa Ibom	2019–2023
3	Hon. Latifat Ajayi	Ogun	2023
4	Hon. Lami Danladi	Benue	2023
5	Hon. Afiniki Dauda	Niger	2023

Source: Personal compilation from various media sources/newspapers online

Table 14 shows the total number of female Deputy Speakers who have emerged since the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999 across the 36 States of the federation. From the table, one can vividly see that out of the 36 states, female Deputy Speakers have emerged in only five states. Of these five states, two from the South West (Lagos and Ogun), two from North Central (Benue and Niger) and one from the South-South (Akwa Ibom). The other three geo-political zones, namely South East, North East and North West have not produced any female Deputy Speaker.

Conclusion and recommendations

The foregoing has critically historicised the representation of Nigerian women in governance under three major historical phases, namely pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. These historical phases revealed the change and continuity in the representation of women in governance. With special reference to the Fourth Republic, the chapter examined the representation of women in both elective and appointive positions at the federal and state levels between 1999 and 2023. It argued that though women were represented in both levels of governments especially in the executive and legislative arms during this period, the percentage of their representation vis-à-vis men was very infinitesimal. In other words, the representation of women in democratic governance between 1999 and 2023 was way below the recommendation of the United Nations Economic and Social Council Resolution of 1990 which recommended a 30% minimum proportion of women in leadership positions (UN, 1990). Evidences from the statistics of women's representation in both elective and appointive positions at federal and state levels revealed that the percentage of women in both positions in democratic governance since 1999 had not reached 10%, let alone the 30% affirmation. In comparison with the 54 African countries, Nigeria was ranked the lowest, securing 54th position with a 5.45% female representation, while

Rwanda was ranked first with 47.95% (which was even more than the UN recommendation. Other worse-performing countries in Africa with poor female representation in democratic governance were Algeria (second with 6.2%), Benin Republic (with 7.4%), the Gambia with 8.6%) and Liberia (with 11.0%). Aside from these five countries, including Nigeria, no other country in Africa had below 30% affirmation regarding women's representation in democratic governance.

The low representation of women in democratic governance both as elected political officers and appointees of the government during this Fourth Republic was hindered by a combination of factors amongst which were the nature of party politics, widespread prejudices and biases about women as political leaders, women's lack of interest in politics, women's lack of economic base, cultural factors, inept political leadership of some women politicians and so on. For instance, the nature of party politics of the majority of political parties did not favour women. This starts with the composition of the National Working Committee of the political parties. Besides the position of National Women Leader, which naturally is to be headed by a woman, other positions such as National Chairman, Deputy Chairman, National Secretary, National Treasurer, National Legal Adviser, amongst others, are mainly dominated by men. This is the major body that determines who will emerge as the standard-bearer of the party in the general elections, both at the federal and state levels. Ikpe describes this challenge as the personality dominated and paternalistic nature of political parties (Ikpe, 1997:263).

Another major challenge of low representation of women in democratic governance is finance. This challenge could be seen in the cost of purchasing mandatory expression of interest and nomination forms as well as the cost of prosecuting both primary and general elections. For instance, while the APC pecked the cost of expression of interest and nomination forms for President, Governorship, Senate, House of Representatives and State House of Assembly as follows: N100 million, N50 million, N20 million, N10 million and N2 million respectively, the PDP pecked their own as follows: N40 million, N21 million, N3.5 million, N2.5 million and N600,000. The implication of this high cost of mandatory expression of interest and nomination forms is to discourage those who are not financially buoyant from contesting.

Religious/Traditional Beliefs and Practices equally hinder active participation of Nigerian women in politics. In many of the societies in Nigeria, religious and traditional practices often determine the role that women play. Evidence from the literature has shown that because of adopted religious and some traditional practices, women are not supposed to be at the helm of affairs where men are concerned. Anya argues that the greatest danger to this practice is the internalisation of these belief systems, which

make women see politics as something out of their sphere (Anya, 2003:67). This particular challenge majorly affects women in the Northern part of Nigeria. The resultant effect of this can be seen in the low rate of women's representation in elective positions from Northern Nigeria between 1999 and 2023. There are several states in the North West and North East in particular, where no woman has been elected into either the State House of Assembly or the National Assembly.

More so, widespread prejudices and biases about women as political leaders combined with inept political leadership of some women who had been given political positions in the past were contributory factors to the low representation of women in democratic governance. Although there were some women politicians who had distinguished themselves well in administration, there were some who did not do well. There is general saying that the first impression lasts longer. The inept political leadership of some women politicians has led to why some major political parties failed to support female candidacy for some positions such as President, Vice-President, Governorship, Senate President and Speaker of the House of Representatives. These elective positions are seen to be very critical to committing into the hands of female politicians.

The chapter concludes that within the twenty-four years of the birth of the Fourth Republic, women have not done badly in democratic administration as elective officers or appointees of the government. Despite the fact that some women politicians did not do well, leading either to their impeachment or forceful resignation from elective positions, this inept political leadership was not limited to female politicians alone. The male politicians were equally culprits of this challenge. It submits that the need to increase the level of women's representation in democratic governance is critical to the attainment of Goal 5 (Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls) of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 (UN, 2015). Thus, political parties should develop policies that would make it mandatory for a certain number of seats (a minimum of 35%) at both the executive and legislative arms of government, to be reserved for women, as being practiced in some countries such as Kenya and Uganda. This should equally be given a legislative backing. It advocated for political doggedness of Nigerian women in the face of intimidation by and electoral competition against their male counterparts.

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Chapter 6

Women as the Invisible Hands that Swing the Pendulum of the Political Clock in Nigeria

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Abstract

Women, who constitute 49.5% of the population of Nigeria, are noted for being crucial in a variety of tasks, including those of mother, time manager, community organiser, and socio-political activist. Despite the significant roles that women play and their numbers, society has not acknowledged the discrimination that women face, particularly when it comes to the political process of electing or selecting party flag-bearers and decision-making. This treatment has made women in Nigeria unable to maximise their potential for meaningful contributions to society. Consequently, this is one instance of marginalisation, where most of them are not easily allowed to participate fully in the political decision-making process. With the benefit of hindsight, women make up more than 50% of the electorate in every election. Yet, the political class seldom involves them in decision-making and the process of governance in Nigeria. The study sought to exchange knowledge and research-related insights that will help guide and enhance the creation of new studies in gender history and women's studies. The study employed an interdisciplinary approach. Data for this study was obtained from primary sources, such as focus group discussions, and corroborated with secondary sources. The study contended that women are the invisible hands that swing the pendulum of the political clock in Nigeria. The study concluded that the necessary motivation for tackling the women's issue in Nigeria is the institutionalisation and enforcement of affirmative actions on gender equity and women's empowerment in governance and decision-making.

Keywords: Decision-making, Democracy, Gender Equity, Governance, Marginalisation



Introduction

Despite women making up 49.5 per cent of Nigeria's population, their political engagement has not received attention because of the enormous roles they play in our socio-economic and political activities. These roles go beyond simple home duties and cross over into leadership positions, in which women yearn for fair representation in the public arena and in decision-making processes that have an impact on them as members of a community.

Nigeria experienced 29 years of military rule before regaining full democracy in 1999. Every four years, general elections have become inseparable from the characteristics of Nigeria's democratic system. The fact that Nigeria uses a system in which adults from the age of 18 are eligible to vote and become elected regardless of gender, proves beyond a shadow of scepticism that the Constitution does not impose any limitations on any candidates based on gender. Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, the topic of women's unfair representation in politics has dominated political discourse. Samuel and Segun (2012) noted that only four women served as lawmakers in Nigeria during the first republic, and that this was insufficient representation. There was minimal improvement in women's engagement when it came to making decisions in politics during the second and third republics. They added that women never held more than 3.1% of seats in the national parliament and 5% of the Federal Executive Council's seats before 1999 (Samuel & Segun, 2012).

Because gender inequality is such a pervasive problem, it can be difficult for women to participate in democratic politics. Few women have ever held the highest levels of political positions worldwide in history. A major issue faced by women in the political domain across the world is gender inequality. In the Nigerian political scene, which appears patriarchal in nature and outlook, there are minimal opportunities for women to participate in politics (Ojo, 2018). Women have been discouraged from entering or engaging in politics because of an antagonistic imbalance and the political chauvinism of Nigerian society. Those who engage in politics are to a large extent involved at a peripheral level and are often hindered by some factors from participating at a higher political level. Traditional and socio-political patriarchal traditions to some extent devalue the role of women in politics and advocate for male dominance in Nigeria's democratic politics. Cultural underpinnings and traditions of the political environment in Nigeria mostly restrict women's ability to engage in democratic politics.

This chapter contends that women are the invisible hands that swing the pendulum of the political clock in Nigeria. Considering this reality, they are not properly integrated into the act of governance and decision-making.

It is argued that the necessary motivation for tackling the women's issue in Nigeria is the institutionalisation and implementation of affirmative actions for women's empowerment and gender equity in acts of governance and decision-making.

The objectives of this research are:

1. to identify the significant and valuable roles that women play in contributing to political involvement and to examine the extent to which the roles are merely recognised.
2. to find out the obstacles preventing women from participating in Nigeria's decision-making; and
3. to proffer recommendations on how gender disparity in Nigerian politics could be stopped.

Theoretical framework

Liberal Feminist Theory

According to Giddens (2006), the Liberal Feminist Theory asserts that women's limited access to civil rights and certain social resources like education and work is the root cause of gender inequality. To discover solutions and ensure that people's rights are safeguarded, liberal feminists frequently turn to modifying the law. According to Samkange (2015:1175), liberal feminism entails "gradual improvements through advocating for equal rights for all, as well as legislation and policies that promote equality." This demonstrates that women have the same right as men to take part in politics, run for office without worrying about negative consequences, and make politically significant decisions for society. This is because equal rights for men and women are appropriate. Therefore, women should not be prevented from actively participating in societal activities because of their education or culture.

Because of widespread support for cultural behaviours that encourage subordination, traditional beliefs about women's inferiority to men still hold sway in some parts of Nigeria. Men still predominate in terms of social, political, economic, and religious issues. Rarely are women's political efforts, successes, and societal accomplishments recognised. To obtain the status, obligations, and rights to which they are legally entitled, considering these conditions, women must actively engage in political decision-making (Okafor & Akokuwebe, 2015). In Nigeria, women still face fewer favourable circumstances than men in terms of labour force participation, political participation, income, and the percentage of seats in the legislature (Tama &

Maiwuya, 2022). Liberal feminism needs to be given more attention if women in Nigeria are to realise their right to equity.

To account for the low performance of gender gerrymandering, this theory expresses that education has a significant impact on women's health, economic opportunities, and political participation. However, women still face significant barriers to accessing education, particularly in developing countries. Women's access to education is a critical factor in their empowerment. Education enables women to acquire knowledge and skills, improve their economic and social status, and promote gender equality. Despite significant progress in recent years, there are still significant disparities in access to education between men and women, particularly in Nigeria.

In some parts of Nigerian society, we find fewer women dominating in all areas of life because of the erroneous notion that women are inherently less intelligent and are physically incapable than men (Raji, 2023). As a result, women frequently face discrimination in society. The supposition that women are subordinated stems from a system of social and legal prohibitions that keep them out of the so-called public sphere and hinder their success. Since 1999, political parties in the country have not frequently nominated women for party offices and elected positions like those up for election to the National Assembly. However, they benefited from every step taken to increase the representation of men in Parliament (Raji, 2023).

The timing of political events, which typically take place after work hours when women are taking care of domestic duties at home, and the country's political violence, which disproportionately impacts women because of their sensitivity, are instances. There is an assumption that women's needs and interests are not adequately reflected or represented in the democratic self-determination processes. This leads to discrimination against women holding elective or appointed positions in Nigeria, where laws and policies affecting them are made. Legislation that might help Nigerian women does not pass because of the low representation of women in the National Assembly. The assumption that there should be more women in the National Assembly lends credence to this pattern.

Analysis of women's political involvement in the electoral process between 1999 and 2023

Since men and women both exist in society, it stands to reason that both should take an almost equal part in politics. The democratic goal, which emphasises the equal representation of all interest groups in politics, lends weight to this supposition. Okeke (2015) and Dahl (1971) identified a crucial

characteristic of democracy as the government's ongoing response to the needs of its constituents, who are treated as political equals. The low percentage of women in politics in Nigeria, a supposed democratic system, is seen as a violation of this idea. Oluyemi (2016) asserts that the restoration of democracy on 29 May 1999, gave rise to optimism for a fresh start in the struggle for greater gender equity in Nigerian politics. Statistics and statistical data collected from 1999 to the present clearly demonstrate that women's involvement in Nigerian politics and decision-making is minimal, despite the democratic transition having created opportunities that permit fair participation. Nigeria has had seven different administrations since it returned to democracy in 1999.

In comparison to the majority of other African countries, including Uganda (35%), South Africa (46%), Ethiopia (39%), Cameroon (34%), Rwanda (61%), Namibia (44%), Senegal (43%), Mozambique (42%), and Tanzania (37%). Nigerian women's representation in the national legislature is roughly the lowest, at 8.9% (International Idea, 2021).

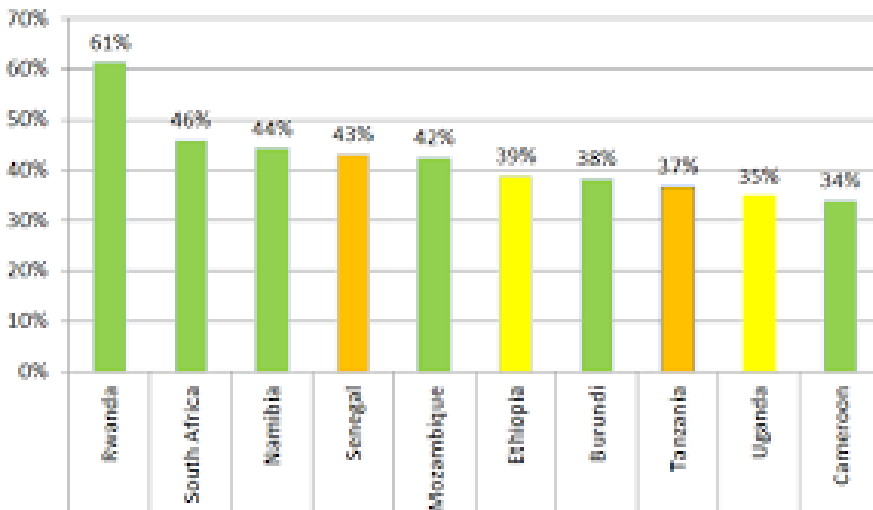


Figure 1: Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2021

Source: International Idea (2021)

Omolaro (2015) states that women in Nigeria have attempted to run for elective posts at various levels to reach positions of political decision-making since the return to democratic rule in 1999, but their efforts have not been very effective based on the results of elections held since 1999. Accordingly, she looks at the participation of women in general elections, where women continue to be disproportionately sidelined since there are fewer women

than men in positions of leadership and decision-making. For instance, no woman has ever been elected vice president or president in the political history of Nigeria. The tenure of President Obasanjo, from 1999 to 2007, could be compared to the interval between the return to democracy and the protracted period of military government. In 2007, President Umaru Musa Yar'adua succeeded him as president, and after Yar'adua's death in 2010, President Goodluck Jonathan took over. Jonathan held on to his position until 2015. President Muhammadu Buhari remained in office following the 2019 elections. He initially took office in 2015. The recent general elections of 2023, which brought President Bola Tinubu into power, are likely going to yield the same result.

In Nigeria, the position of vice president adopts the same style as that of the president, in which women are exclusive. The position has been held by five individuals, none of whom are women, since democracy was reinstated in 1999. A woman has never been elected governor in Nigeria's history. Mrs Virginia Etiaba, who became the governor of Anambra State in 2006 after Peter Obi was ousted, is the nation's first and only female governor by chance. She was only in charge for three months. Additionally, men have dominated the National Assembly. For instance, out of the 109 senators in the Senate in 1999, just three were female. By 2007, that number had risen to four, and by 2011, it had reached nine, seven, and seven by 2015 (Ohaja et al., 2022). Out of the 360 members of the House of Representatives in 1999, 12 were women. According to Ohaja et al. (2022), there were 23 additions in 2003, followed by 26 in 2007, 26 in 2011, and 11 in 2019. Furthermore, the 2023 Adamawa State gubernatorial election, which was hoped to turn out in favour of a female (Mrs Aisha Dahiru), was later declared null and void by the INEC.

Women are under-represented in elected posts at all levels of government, from the federal to the local. The number of women who were elected to public office from 1999 to 2023 is shown in Table 15.

In West Africa, the sub-regional average for female representation in elected and appointed positions is 15%, whereas the national average is approximately 6%. Nigeria was placed 149th out of 155 nations in the 2021 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2021) for political empowerment because of the 10.3% representation of women in ministerial positions (three out of 29) and 5.8% amongst parliamentarians. Out of 35 sub-Saharan African nations, Nigeria comes in 32nd place, only ahead of Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chad (WEF, 2022)

Table 15: Number of women in elected positions from 1999–2023

Office	Seat Available	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019	2023
President	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vice-President	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Senate	109	3	4	9	7	7	7	8
House of Reps	360	12	23	27	26	20	11	13
Governor	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dep. Governor	36	1	2	6	3	6	4	6
State HA	990	12	38	54	62	–	40	48

Source: Adapted from Oyuru (2023)

Table 16: Global gender gap – Nigerian political empowerment index

	Global Ranking	Global Average Score	Nigerian Score*	Female	Male	F/M
Political empowerment index	149	0.218	0.047			
Women in parliament, %	147	0.312		5.8	94.2	0.06
Women in ministerial positions, %	123	0.235	0.115	10.3	89.7	0.11
Years with female/male head of state (last 50)	76	0.144	0.0	0.0	50	0.0

* on a scale of 0–1, where 1 = gender parity

Source: WEF (2021).

Nigeria is ranked 139th out of 156 nations in the overall global gender gap index for 2021 (with a gender gap of 63%) based on the average scores of the following indicators: political empowerment (0.047), economic engagement and opportunity (0.687), health and survival (0.967), and educational attainment (0.806).

According to Afolabi and Arogundade (2013), access, involvement, representation, and transformation are four approaches to examining the difficulties of women's political representation and participation in politics and administration. First, access to and involvement in political institutions, including authority within such institutions and quantitative and qualitative representation, will ultimately result in a social and political transformation of the polity. To increase the political empowerment of women, these four

conditions must be met. Politics is an important context for decision-making. It is up to people holding official positions in the government to decide how to distribute scarce resources, such as tax money. Politicians often make decisions that favour certain people to the detriment of others. Second, political influence is a useful resource, and politics is one social institution that is impacted by the family. Third, having power is required to participate in politics (Paxton, 2020).

Women in leadership and executive roles can enhance the lives of other women by influencing the decisions that affect them. Political engagement is the level and nature of public participation in political institutions and organisations connected to them, such as those that deal with the economy and culture (Adu, 2008). It entails casting a ballot, participating in political debates and campaigns, attending party caucuses, or planning meetings, vying for office, and holding elective office (Adu, 2008). All organisations, including those of women, have influence over the distribution of power as one of their primary motivations for participating in politics. It is interesting to note that even though women are regarded as voters in a democratic system, they nevertheless struggle to be accepted into power structures and hold positions of decision-making authority because they are viewed as not being qualified.

This explains why women's access to leadership positions does not necessarily result in improved coordination of women's interests all around. It also clarifies how women's true needs are disregarded in favour of those who are determined by their race, financial status, or upbringing (Adu, 2008). The goals of 'feminising the political agenda,' or the voicing of women's concerns and ideas in public discourse, as well as the desire for public policies to take into consideration how they affect women, can be promoted by female legislators (Adedeji, 2010). Most gender issues in a male-dominated legislature are either neglected or are treated largely from a male perspective. Most of the time, female lawmakers must convince their male counterparts that a certain gender-related policy should be approved.

One of the main factors limiting and impeding women's participation in politics today is the issue of finances. According to Stacey (1993), some people who are against women running for office think it is wrong for women to work extra hard to lobby others. Most certainly, she might as well abandon her plans to run for office right away (Stacey, 1993). According to Stacey (1993), "The Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development" addressed the issue of women's empowerment and bemoaned women's marginalisation in Nigeria's political system, blaming it on the unfavourable political climate in the country. She also ascribed the issue to the violence and male chauvinism that have taken over Nigerian political contexts, as

well as a lack of finance, as some of the factors prohibiting Nigerian women from competing in elections, because of which there are not many women in public office.

Furthermore, unlike other countries where things are not frequently performed poorly, Nigeria is a complex state. If caution is not used right away, 35% of positive activity could turn out to be a phantom. The truth is that no level of administration demonstrated any sincerity in working towards the 35% affirmation of women's involvement in active government. Esidene & Abdul (2013) assert that there was little representation of women in the zoning plan in Goodluck Jonathan's administration. Twelve men and seven women were elected to the House of Representatives, seven to the Senate, and one woman was a deputy governor during the general elections conducted in 2011 (Esidene & Abdul, 2013).

In addition, figures show that in the 2011 elections, 218 women ran for the House of Representatives seats and 88 women ran for Senate seats. Only five women across the country ran for governor in the elections, while some male candidates also had female running mates (Afolabi & Arogundade, 2013). Comparatively, these figures also demonstrate a decline in women's success following the restoration of democracy in Nigeria in 1999. Out of 631 women who were vying for more than 1,900 open positions in the 1999 elections, only 181 individuals were selected to hold office. The year 2011 saw a decrease in the number and proportion of women elected to office when compared to 2007 and 2003. Despite winning 660 party primaries, only 93 women nationwide were elected to office in the 2007 elections (Afolabi & Arogundade, 2013).

The Jonathan administration had pledged during electioneering to have 35% women's representation in his administration. His commitment to this pledge was reaffirmed on 3 May during the Mentorship Summit for African Women, which was hosted in Abuja by the Centre for African Women Leaders Think-Thank. However, Odebode (2011) argued that his government's pledge of 35% affirmative women's participation was not fully met. In a similar vein, party statistics showed that out of over 40 positions, the only one reserved for women was the women's leader, despite suggestions that women should be given 20% representation in the formation of political parties, not in elective positions or in any specific positions. For instance, it was proposed that the PDP allocate 20% of executive seats to women, but it was turned down (Abubakar & Ahmad, 2014).

In the most recent general elections, which were conducted in 2023, women received 17 out of the 423 seats on the Senate and Representative List. While this represents 3.5%, the men received 408 seats, which represent

96.5% of the 423 seats (Raji, 2023). Three females won in the Senate and 14 in the House of Representatives, making a total of 17 women in the 10th National Assembly (Sule, 2023). Even after about 25 females contested to be Governors of their respective states, none eventually emerged as Governor (*ThisDayLive*, 2023). Out of 24 female deputy governorship candidates in 15 states, six of the Governors who chose these female Deputy Governors as running mates were elected (Zagi et al., 2023). As a result, this calls for great concern because of the noticeable disparity in male and female percentages in governance. For things to return to normal and for gender parity to be attained in the country, women need to hold 35% of the positions in the political sphere.

Factors hampering women's participation in the political process and decision-making in Nigeria.

Women's engagement in the political sphere is constrained by several obstacles. These obstacles include, amongst others, cultural, economic, and legal ones. This study will concentrate on a few variations of these barriers. However, these factors may not be unique to only Nigeria. The reason is that African countries such as Kuwait, Qatar and Maldives with similar characteristics of poor women's political representation have enacted legislations that have reported some measure of success.

Party flag-bearing

With the current political system or orientation in Nigeria, political and sometimes economic decision-making is determined or in the hands of government officials who were campaigned for and rallied for by citizens, of whom the majority were women.

Women are rarely selected, nominated, or elected as the party's flag-bearers. Consequent upon this, women most often only remain as mere voters. Where the fault line is to ensure that they should be elected or selected to present their parties, in the case where this cannot be fully achieved, at least they should meet up to 30% of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 (UN, 1995). This will help break male dominance in politics and advocate gender equity.

Social and cultural influences of religion

Religion actively supports the social, political, and economic limitations that these groups must face, and it also strives to advance gender stereotypes that are harmful to women. Religion makes sure that most women are prohibited from participating in economic and political processes, such as voting and running for office (Luka, 2016). Islamic edicts are commonly

used as justification for behaviour like the state's policy of confining women in 'purdah,' giving girls away in early marriages, forbidding them from receiving an education, and restricting their capacity to participate effectively in politics in general, especially when political parties are choosing their choice of candidates. For example, the majority of Muslim-dominated states in the North practice 'purdah,' which entails keeping women out of public view. When women are under purdah, they are not allowed to leave their houses without their husbands' consent and must always have a male companion with them. The need for Muslim women to cover their faces in public further limits the versatility of clothing for those who observe purdah. There is a cultural assumption that women are detestable when they mislead males and that they are incapable of leading themselves. Religious and cultural ideas that oppose gender equity and equal employment opportunities for men and women prevent many women from being found in high-hierarchy positions (Abdu, 2018).

Threats and violence

In Nigeria, political violence is another factor that reduces women's political decision-making. Most often, politics in Nigeria is typically out of the question for women, because of election-related gang activity before, during, and after the elections (Afolabi & Arogundade, 2013) and the accompanying insecurity, which results in the loss of lives and property. For instance, Dorathy Nyone, a female candidate, recounted her personal experience by saying, "A ward chairman was shot dead; all the women and most of the males fled the scene. I was picked up and driven home by my partner. Only men who were well-prepared for the bloodbath were left behind to decide the winners manually; therefore, I was scared" (Luka, 2016). Consequently, because of the recent wave of political murders, continued political intimidation, and other violent acts, many women now fear politics, even though this story traditionally depicts electoral violence in Nigeria.

Discriminatory laws and practices

Many contemporary nations have discriminatory laws and customs because they devalue women and treat them as the property of men. Because of gender stereotypes in culture, conventions, and behaviours, women usually feel inferior to men and are at a disadvantage in socio-political environments, even in urban areas. Women overemphasise their 'femininity' because they accept their status as 'the weaker sex,' overemphasise the sensitive part of their sex, and associate good performance with men as a result of these socially built norms and stereotype roles. For instance, most traditions give the boy more importance than the girl by sending the male child to school

and leaving the girl to look after the siblings or find a husband. There are a few more illiterate women than there used to be, which makes it harder for women to compete with men in politics (Agbalajobi, 2010).

Women's perspective on politics

There is a consensus that high political virility is the basis of Nigerian politics. Political virility refers to a person's ability to compete in an unstable environment, take something by force when necessary, and match violence with violence. Men are usually perceived as more resilient, powerful, autonomous, and willing to fight in political endeavours, but women are viewed as being too passive to participate in politics and administration. The societal norms and ideologies that through socialisation, created different gender roles according to biological distinctions also have an impact on this consensus. Women are further removed from traditional politics because of their view of it as a nasty game and their fear of violence. According to Nkoyo (2017), there does not appear to be a critical awareness in Nigeria of the distinction between a visible agenda for women and an agenda that affects women. Even though the significance of women's numbers has been emphasised over time, it has been challenging for women to achieve leadership roles since, in contrast to men, they are perceived as 'supporter clubs, squads of cheerleaders, and clappers.' The majority of female politicians think that in order to be successful, they must act like men; they run for office thinking that they are special. Additionally, women's modesty is of little assistance to them in the political debate and murky political environment (Agbalajobi, 2010).

Women's lack of interest

Most women are not particularly interested in becoming involved in politics. Sometimes, women's disinterest in politics can be attributed to a variety of social factors, including their socialisation, the notion that politics and leadership are not for them, their disinterest in competing with men in politics in any party, social stigma, socio-cultural issues, and religious beliefs, amongst others. According to Abdu (2018), if there was justice in the world, most women would prioritise their efforts by marrying, having children, and focusing completely on domestic tasks rather than participating in politics.

Methodology

An interdisciplinary approach was used in the study. Focus group interviews were used to collect primary data for this study, which was then verified by

secondary sources. In four out of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria – the North Central, South East, South West, and South-South – we conducted group interviews with a variety of female politicians and male allies in various cities. Travel to the North East and North West zones was prohibited because of security concerns. Participants were chosen using the snowballing process, depending on their prominence in the media, standing within their political parties (such as contenders for elective office), and other factors. The women and some of their allies were political party members of the PDP and the APC, as well as other smaller political groups. Semi-structured interviews were used to examine the experiences of female politicians at various political levels. This strategy was most effective since it allowed the researcher to elicit answers and encourage participants to go into further detail. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews, as noted by Lune and Berg (2016:27), enables researchers to explore topics and ideas proposed by the participants. The study also interviewed women who for a very long had been time engaged in politics as voters and mobilisers in their various communities.

According to Lune and Berg (2016:33), this can yield “a much more textured set of accounts from participants than would have resulted had only scheduled questions been asked.” Most of the discussion in this chapter is based on the comments of 25 women and 10 male allies who were questioned. All the women, except for two, have run for office at different levels of government. The two ladies were ardent party members and campaigners despite never having run for public office. The subjects chose the locations for interviews, which included businesses, homes, and meeting rooms at hotels. Between 45 and 60 minutes were allotted for each interview. Each interview was recorded on tape, transcriptions were made, and codes were applied for analysis. All the respondents, apart from one, gave their approval for their names to be used, but we did so with caution in the text.

For the study, a thematic approach was also used, using quotes from interviews to highlight similarities and discrepancies in the individuals' stories. We gave the politicians room to develop their stories in a way that put them at the centre of the investigation. We have included verbatim quotes from a few of the research participants, in keeping with one of the objectives of this study (namely, to give voice to the politically disenfranchised).

The same set of structured questions was asked of each participant regarding the difficulties faced by female politicians because of their gender. Although the specifics and individual situations varied, all the female respondents agreed that there were four significant obstacles to their political careers. These include ‘politics of insult,’ budgetary constraints, the patriarchal nature of party structures, and bullying and intimidation. According to the research participants, the political party system is a

significant barrier to women's participation in decision-making. Women are frequently at a disadvantage when election candidates are recruited by a small group of gatekeepers who make arbitrary and undemocratic decisions, especially because the selection methods are opaque.

Findings

The chapter brings out two main arguments. The first is the visibility of women in the political process, and the second is the invisibility of women in decision-making.

The Political process

Women are very useful in elections when it comes to rallies, voting, sensitisation, campaigns, and so on. Sadly, despite the important role that women play in the political process, as soon as the election is over, they are no longer needed in the act of governance. For democracy to be viable, two key ideas – political emancipation and political participation must be understood and practiced. Both elements are interconnected because the greater the level of political participation amongst women, as measured by their freedom and the removal of barriers to exercising their political rights, the more positive the impact this will have on the survival and growth of democracies.

Decision-making

Women are not even given up to 30% of the space as proposed by the 1995 Beijing Declaration (UN, 1995) in the political process and decision-making. Aside from being very powerful at the formative level of the political process, politicians only use women in the campaign, sensitisation, rallies, and voting on election day. Despite these horrific disadvantages, women still contribute a larger percentage to voter registration and political awareness. Regrettably, when it comes to selecting or electing political or party flag-bearers, women are nowhere to be found or are not involved. They are almost completely cut off after voting. Only a few governors have tried to choose women as their deputy; hence, this is not up to the 30% of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN, 1995).

Women experience difficulties just because they are women, based on the knowledge that politics in Nigeria is masculinised in an environment where masculinity is valued. But in addition to gender, Nigeria's low representation of women in politics is also a result of the interaction between several economic and socio-cultural variables, as well as the patriarchal nature of the nation's political structure. Most cultural and societal norms in Nigeria legalise male domination and female subjugation, promoting

women's subordination as a positive trait. The two main religions of the nation, Islam and Christianity, both place a strong emphasis on submission. This is especially so in the Islamic religion. Women are thus trained into passive political positions, which discourages them from participating in politics. As a result, Nigeria's predominantly male political culture and election system are strengthened by the relative lack of women in positions of power.

Nigeria continues to have the lowest rate of female engagement in government on the entire globe, at just 7% (Onyegbula, 2013). Over time, women's involvement in politics and decision-making in Nigeria has not usually been favourable. The political scene in the country is dynamic in the sense that every day, more people announce their intention to run for office in the general election. Women mobilise themselves for rallies, electoral campaigns, and political meetings more than a percentage of men can. However, despite women being used as a mobilisation tool or mechanism during election periods, they are neglected in the aspect of decision-making.

Similar to this, Danjuma (2015) asserted that women's under-representation in political and decision-making structures is because of a failure to acknowledge that the democratic process should be inclusive thanks to the gender component of democracy. Women have been actively engaged in the political process for a very long time by attending political meetings and rallies as well as voting in every election. However, in the aspect of decision-making, it appears as if it is becoming the norm for Nigerian women to be politically marginalised. This treatment has made women in Nigeria unable to maximise their potential for meaningful contributions to society. We must acknowledge and comprehend the fact that women play a crucial role in the fabric of our society and the governance structure for the socio-economic and political advancements of the Nigerian nation.

The percentage of women in political and decision-making positions in Nigeria is still far lower than the 35% global standard for affirmative action (Ngara & Ayabam, 2013). This largely explained why women are under-represented in public life and have their concerns ignored by the government most of the time. The lack of female participation in party politics severely harms Nigeria's electoral and political systems because their near-exclusion has limited their ability to make contributions, become involved, and have an impact on party politics and the Nigerian political system. Nigerian women encounter marginalisation in party politics and the political process.

Instead of a lack of interest or drive, societal marginalisation typically explains why women have historically had low political representation. Women dominate roughly 55% of the electorate but they are bereft of the

same privileges as men, who dominate politics and hold the vast majority of the country's decision-making positions (Ogbogu, 2012).

Since Nigerian democracy was restored in 1999, men have held a lopsided majority in the National Assembly. There is an assumed patriarchal framework in our political and economic lives, and according to Ojo (2020), it restricts the participation of women in politics in favour of their male counterparts, leading to an imbalance in political participation and representation. Ojo (2020) continued by stating that Nigeria still has a relatively low percentage of female representation in the country's parliament, which is extremely concerning despite the need for gender balance in legislatures around the world.

Nigeria has ratified a number of international accords that forbid gender discrimination and promote equal access for men and women in institutions of power. One of them is the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (UN, 1948), which states that everyone has the right to vote, and that men and women should have equal rights. Others include the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UN, 1966a), the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (UN, 1966b), and the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UN, 1979), which the Nigerian government ratified in 1985 without any reservations. Nevertheless, the gender gap in the National Assembly and other political circles is still quite wide. Despite the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (as amended in Section 12) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) stating that an international treaty must be domesticated before it could be applicable to a particular domain, the majority of these instruments have not been heeded (Ojo, 2020).

To make matters worse, both Chambers of the National Assembly rejected a measure submitted by Senator Biodun Olujimi in 2016 that sought to domesticate and incorporate these instruments on the second reading (Eniola, 2018, as cited in Okechukwu, 2022). A person must also be chosen by a political party in that party's primary election, according to the Nigerian Constitution of 1999, in order to serve in the National Assembly. According to Nda (2003), political parties are important institutions that support candidates in elections in representative democracies. Researchers often overlook the role of party politics in maintaining gender disparity in Nigerian politics because they frequently focus on the patriarchal, cultural, religious, economic, and educational aspects of low women's representation in Nigeria's representative democracy. (Nda, 2003).

Conclusion and recommendations

Women's political participation in Nigeria is a significant issue. Despite the enormous effort made by the government and non-governmental organisations in the wake of the Declaration made at the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women (UN, 1995), which favoured placing 30% of women in decision-making positions, women have been consigned to the background despite the existence of the 35% affirmative action of the National Gender Policy (NGP) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2023) for a more inclusive representation of women in elective and appointed positions. It is important to mention that because of the nation's natural leadership style; Nigerian women have continued to face marginalisation. Despite the difficulties that women face, there is a lot of positive momentum behind women's activity and advocacy, the education of women, and the willingness of succeeding governments to support women's empowerment.

It was also interesting to find that without women, the Nigerian form of politics, which involves a series of different stages before the election voting day, cannot thrive. This is because women are very useful in elections when it comes to rallies, voting, sensitisation, campaigns, and so on. All these activities precede election voting day, yet society does not recognise the fundamental preliminary roles that they play in making elections successful. This means that they will not participate in the decision-making process because their powers only end at elections or the voting booth. The question arises: does this mean that women can only vote but cannot be voted for? Does this mean that their roles should merely end with voting? Where the real deal is (decision-making), they are invisible and cannot be found because they only feature in bringing the real policymakers to power while being the real hands that swing the pendulum of the political clock in Nigeria.

Even though women often perform at the highest levels in both the public and private spheres, a vicious cycle of impediments frequently prevents them from taking the reins of leadership. Both internal and external barriers, such as patriarchy, societal preconceptions, the difficulty of balancing parental and professional obligations, and a lack of networking, have severely hindered this group's effectiveness as leaders.

The following recommendations are offered in light of the study's findings:

Reduce to the barest minimum damaging socio-cultural norms, sexism, religion, and gender bias against women serving in government requires more than just a mental shift. Women should be encouraged and supported to pursue leadership roles in both the public and commercial sectors.

To address these challenges of access to education, policies and programmes must be designed to be inclusive and to address the specific needs of women. This may include providing scholarships for girls, creating safe transportation options, and working with communities to challenge cultural norms that limit women's access to education. For instance, parents, particularly those in rural regions, should be urged to enrol their female children in school to decrease illiteracy and prepare girls for future leadership responsibilities.

The government should create a network of female leaders so that they can share their leadership experiences, triumphs, and struggles to motivate other women who aspire to be leaders. The government should also examine the current policy on women's empowerment to reflect reality. Female executives should be encouraged to overcome self-doubt by making difficult decisions, speak up, or step outside of their comfort zone.

Women should come together and support a common cause to succeed. To fulfil their 'dream of gender equity,' they must support and help one another.

To boost women's representation and engagement, it is crucial to advocate for quotas rather than waiting for social change. When the next election approaches and each political party should plan its strategies for victory, the practice of internal democracy should be the first step towards making gender parity a reality. Women will immediately have an easier time getting into any political positions they want as party flag-bearers at all levels, if gender parity is achieved at the party level. It ought to be included in the platforms of the main political parties.

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Chapter 7

Conceptualising Women for Men (W4M) in Political Participation in Nigeria

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Abstract

The gains recorded in female political participation in Nigeria in the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1999 has steadily declined. Increasing from 6.2% of women legislators in 1999 to a high of 15.2% in 2007, there has been a steady decline in female representation in Nigeria's parliaments to a dismal 10% in 2019. In the same vein, female participation in electoral politics has declined both in general voter participation and in elective positions in the 2023 elections. Although the global average for women in parliament is the same as that of sub-Saharan Africa at 19.2%, women's representation in Nigeria is at an all-time low of 7% at the national level and 5.5% at the state level. Legislative and judicial efforts at affirmative action for 35% of women's representation have met stiff opposition from politicians. Using key informant interviews (KIIs) of male and female leaders, policymakers and female advocates, this chapter conceptualises the subordination of women's political participation into subordinate supporting roles as Women for Men (W4M) political participation. We explored participants' perspectives on women's political participation, their beliefs about gender roles and expectations and factors that influence their views on female political participation. The study used thematic analysis. The study's findings reveal that men's conceptualisation of women's participation in politics is influenced by their socialisation and beliefs about gender roles

and expectations. However, the study also found that men's perspectives on women's political participation are sometimes positively influenced by women's achievements and successes in politics and by female role-models. The participants noted that the presence of women in leadership positions can challenge gender stereotypes and serve as role models for other women. This lends credence to the need for temporary special measures (TSMs) and affirmative actions.

Keywords: Female Participation, Gender Equity, Gender Norms, Temporary Special Measures (TSMs), Women for Men (W4M)

Introduction

Normative prescriptions of democracy require equal participation of men and women. Societies that have inclusive and participatory political institutions tend to be more peaceful and resilient (UNDP, 2021). On the other hand, societies that practice exclusion are more likely to be vulnerable to fragility and conflict. Gender exclusion is specifically highlighted as having significant implications in this regard. Baranyi and Powell (2005) argue that understanding gender roles and relations is essential for comprehending both the opportunities for and the threats to state-building. They assert that gender inclusion plays a central role in a country's pursuit of peace. This assertion further emphasises that many states, particularly those in Africa, rely on a development framework that fails to recognise the importance of women, their skills, and competences (Miller & Razavi, 1995; Bullough et al., 2012).

While there have been some improvements in female political participation globally and in some parts of Africa such as Rwanda and South Africa, the rate and pattern of political participation of females in Nigeria has declined. The extant patriarchal political structures and processes lead to unequal outcomes. Although gender inequalities in political participation can both mirror and reinforce gender-based social hierarchies within society since political participation is crucial for democracy and promoting equality (Lister, 2007; Verba et al., 1997), how structural and normative factors reify gender inequalities in political participation is not as clear.

The state of female political participation

The rate of female political participation in Nigeria has steadily declined since the commencement of the Fourth Republic in 1999. From an increase from 6.2% of women legislators in 1999 to a high of 15.2% in 2007, there has been a steady decline in female representation in Nigeria's parliaments to a dismal 10% in 2019 (Invictus Africa, 2023). In the same vein, female participation

in electoral politics has declined both in general voter participation and in elective positions. Although the global average for women in parliament is the same as that of sub-Saharan Africa at 19.2%, according to the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2019), women's representation in Nigeria is at an all-time low of 7.3% in the Nigerian Senate, and 3.6% in the House of Representatives, at the national level in the ninth assembly from 2019 to 2023. Women's representation in the state assemblies are at a dismal 5.5% (Amata, 2023).

In the 2023 General Elections, amongst the 92 individuals who vied for the 109 senatorial positions, constituting 8.4% of the total, only 3 women emerged victorious. The successful candidates include Ireti Kingibe, representing the Labour Party (LP) and hailing from the FCT; Idiat Adebule, affiliated with the All Progressives Congress (APC) and elected from the Lagos West District; and Ipalibo Harry Banigo, who belongs to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and secured the position in the Rivers West District. Out of the 288 women who ran for House of Representatives' seats, a mere 15 emerged as winners. Amongst them, eight were affiliated with the APC, four with the PDP, while one candidate each represented the LP, the APGA, and the YPP (*Premium Times*, 2023).

Empirical studies of female political participation have emphasised the role of socio-economic factors as determinants of female political participation in Nigeria. For instance, Dim and Asamoah (2019), using *Afrobarometer* surveys, found that older women in rural areas with a few years of education participated more actively as voters than younger, educated women living in urban areas. Whereas educated women living in urban areas are more likely to have the resources to stand for elections in Nigeria, self-employed and privately employed women participate more actively than unemployed and formally employed women. This is peculiar to African countries.

While there is a marked decline of institutional forms of female political participation such as voting and standing for elections, activist-styled forms of participation such as the female-led #BringBackOurGirls (BBOG) campaign (#BringBackOurGirls, 2024) and the #EndSARS movement (Uwazuruike, 2021) reveal that it is the pattern of participation that is ignored in the discussion of female political participation in Nigeria. Women have been actively involved in various forms of civic action, particularly through the BBOG and the #EndSARS movements. The BBOG movement utilised diverse media platforms and civic strategies to demand the government's intervention in rescuing more than 200 school girls who were kidnapped by Boko Haram terrorists in 2014 (Oladapo & Ojebode, 2018). Through social media activism, protests, rallies, and daily sit-ins, the BBOG movement

raised public awareness and garnered support locally and internationally, aiming to hold the government accountable for the safe release of the abducted Chibok schoolgirls (Aina et al., 2019).

The #EndSARS movement in Nigeria on the other hand was a widespread protest movement that emerged in October 2020. It called for the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigerian Police Force that had been accused of human rights abuses, extortion, and brutality against citizens, particularly in urban centres. The epicentres of the protests were urban areas in Southern states such as Abeokuta in Ogun and Ibadan in Oyo State. In Lekki, Lagos, it was largely coordinated by a feminist coalition. The movement gained momentum through social media platforms, particularly Twitter, where the hashtag #EndSARS was widely shared (Nwakanma, 2022).

The movement was largely decentralised, with no central leadership or single figurehead. Instead, it was driven by a collective of young Nigerians, activists, celebrities, and civil society organisations who were united in their demand for police reform and an end to police brutality. The movement attracted widespread support and participation both within Nigeria and across the Diaspora, with protests and demonstrations taking place in various cities in Nigeria and solidarity protests held in several countries around the world.

The #EndSARS movement not only focused on disbanding SARS but also called for wider police reform, accountability for officers involved in human rights abuses, and an end to impunity within the Nigerian Police Force. Despite facing significant challenges, including harassment, violence, and a crackdown by security forces, the movement succeeded in drawing global attention to the issue of police brutality in Nigeria and sparked conversations about systemic change and accountability within law enforcement.

Coffé and Bolzendahl (2010) have outlined the gendered pathways to female political participation in Western societies, finding differences between private forms of female political participation different from a direct form of male political participation. According to Townley (2019), the factors that influence women's political participation in European, American, and sub-Saharan African countries are likely to differ because of contextual variations between these regions. Unlike Western societies, where more education for females positively correlated with more active forms of political participation in Nigeria, while no education discourages political participation, fewer years of post-secondary education is positively correlated with more active forms of participation such as joining political parties and voting (Dim & Asamoah, 2019).

While little to no formal education is bad for female political participation, more years of schooling has mixed results. Economic indicators suggest that the effects of discretionary time and agency on female political participation particularly the differences noted in urban and rural women's political participation in Nigeria. While the cost in time utility of joining political parties is less for rural, less-educated women and informally employed women in urban centres, the cost in time utility is more for educated and formally employed women in urban centres. This often skews female political participation in party politics to women with more time and less agency to contest party executive positions.

This chapter agrees with Bourque and Grossholtz (1974) that the prescriptivist definition of terms of political science leads to erroneous conclusions, as for example in the description of political behaviour such as political participation; that women do not participate less, but rather differently (Parry et al., 1992; Harrison & Munn, 2007). It also draws on Buchanan's (2008) argument that the varying levels of success amongst different political communities in achieving commonly shared objectives may primarily stem from the combination of elements within the fundamental structure of rules rather than the differences between the political actors involved.

Political participation may be defined as "those activities of citizens that attempt to influence the structure of government, the selection of government authorities, or the policies of government" (Conway 2001).

Political participation, broadly defined, are "those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take" (Verba & Nie, 1972). While there have been several criticisms of this definition, the emphasis on two distinct parts of the definition we suggest are sufficient to capture the whole gamut of political participation: first, activities aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel; second, activities aimed at influencing the actions that the personnel take. Partisan or political participation in party politics is selecting government personnel. This is often performed through voting and standing for elections, influencing policies and nudging government to take one course of action or the other is influencing the actions that the personnel of government should take. Sometimes, these two activities may be mutually enforcing.

How do socio-economic factors reify normative and structural determinants of political participation to explain the decline of female political participation in Nigeria? This chapter conceptualises 'Women for Men' (W4M) political participation as political activities of women often in

subordinate, private and shadowy roles that undermine their participation in more effective, consequential roles.

Patterns of ‘women for men’ female political participation

Electoral systems and female political participation

While the gender distribution of registered voters is reflective of the national population, leadership positions in elective positions do not reflect this. In 2023, 49.5 million out of a total population of 107 million men, and 44.4 million out of a total of 105 million women registered to vote (INEC, 2023; NBS, 2023).

The behaviour of political parties is influenced by the rules and procedures inherent in political systems, as discussed by scholars such as Norris (1997), Caul Kittilson (2006), and Macaulay (2006). Specifically, the electoral system establishes the overall framework within which parties compete and choose their candidates. It exerts an impact on political parties by providing incentives and limitations for the inclusion of women in electoral lists. There is a consensus amongst scholars that the electoral system plays a crucial role in determining the representation of women in public office, as highlighted by Rule (1987) and Norris (1985). Andersson (2020) suggests that proportional representative (PR) electoral systems favour better gender representation more than majoritarian electoral system.

Duverger’s (1954) Law is a political theory that suggests a relationship between electoral systems and party systems. Proposed by French sociologist Maurice Duverger, the law posits that plurality / majority electoral systems tend to lead to the formation of two-party systems, while proportional representation systems tend to encourage the presence of multiple parties.

When examining the relationship between Duverger’s Law and female political representation in Africa, it becomes evident that the electoral system can significantly impact women’s political participation and representation. While Duverger’s Law primarily focuses on party systems, its implications for gender dynamics within those systems are noteworthy.

In African countries, the adoption of electoral systems heavily influences the opportunities for women to enter politics and gain representation. Majority-plurality systems, commonly used in several African nations, tend to favour larger, established political parties and incumbents. These systems often present significant barriers for women, as they perpetuate the dominance of male elites and make it more challenging for new or marginalised groups, including women, to enter the political arena.

Countries such as Rwanda and South Africa have achieved notable success in promoting female political representation through the implementation of gender quotas and PR systems. Rwanda, in particular, has made remarkable strides, surpassing many countries globally in terms of women's parliamentary representation. This achievement can be attributed to both the adoption of PR and the establishment of a gender quota, which reserves at least 30% of parliamentary seats for women.

The winner-takes-all nature of majority-plurality systems creates a highly competitive environment, where women face considerable challenges in securing nominations and winning elections. These systems tend to prioritise male candidates who benefit from established party structures, financial resources, and networks of support. Consequently, female political representation in African countries with majority-plurality systems often remains low.

On the other hand, PR systems offer more opportunities for women's political representation. PR systems aim to allocate legislative seats in proportion to the overall vote share that each political party receives. This type of system promotes the presence of multiple parties and encourages political inclusivity. African countries with PR systems tend to exhibit higher levels of female political representation compared to those with majority-plurality systems (Bunwaree, 2006; Rosen, 2013). The proportional allocation of seats allows for greater diversity in party representation, enabling women to secure more positions in legislative bodies.

While gender quotas have played a significant role in promoting women's political representation in Africa, it has not in itself increased female political participation (Bauer & Burnet, 2013; Belschner & Garcia de Paredes, 2021) and may not decrease gender bias against female political participation (Clayton, 2018). Gender quotas are measures that mandate a minimum percentage of seats or candidate nominations to be reserved for women. In a majoritarian electoral system such as Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) can include a clause in the electoral bylaws to mandate political parties to have reserved seats for females in every election.

In majoritarian electoral systems such as Nigeria where all the mandate is claimed by the victorious party, political parties have little motivation to put female candidates up for election. Although major Nigerian political parties often give discounts for forms to female candidates, they often do not get to be ticket-bearers as the stakes for losing are much higher in electoral systems where the singular candidate who wins the elections claims the mandate. Countries that lead in better gender representation in Africa often

have a proportional electoral system, as the risk of losing a singular mandate with a female flag-bearer is mitigated by sharing of the seats in parliament according to percentages.

The Nigerian majoritarian electoral system subsumes all forms of women's political participation in one decisive moment of the electoral contest.

Employment and education

Although literature suggests that participation in paid employment and access to income are considered crucial factors that motivate women to actively engage in politics – particularly standing for elective office (Hern, 2020), Hern notes that African women who are involved in formal employment often acquire skills that contribute to their political participation. Isaksson (2014) however, notes that considering that political participation can be demanding and necessitates individual resources, it is even more so in Africa where citizens in young developing democracies face higher participation costs and possess fewer individual resources compared to citizens in more established democracies. In contrast to Western democracies, empirical evidence based on recent data from 20 emerging African democracies, encompassing over 27,000 respondents, indicates a weak explanatory power of the resource perspective (Gottlieb et al., 2018). Surprisingly, individuals with relatively limited resources tend to participate more extensively than those with greater resource endowments. While women with access to more economic resources may participate in party contests because of the level of economic resources required, they do not have the time to participate in the quotidian participation in political party organisation (NBS, 2021; Gottlieb et al., 2018; Olarinmoye, A. Personal Communication, August 24, 2023).

Data from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, Afrobarometer surveys on gender differences in political participations and interviews from female political aspirants are insightful (NBS, 2021; Gottlieb, Grossman & Robinson, 2018; Olarinmoye, A. Personal Communication, August 24, 2023). Women who are self-employed have an agency of time to participate in political party activities, and can combine that with the required resources to stand for office. On the other hand, educated women in paid employment often do not have the time to engage in party activities and have to sacrifice their careers to be seen and be heard. This comes at great cost to them which leaves the path of executive appointments an easier route to political participation. Those who dare are often seen as upstarts by those who have been engaged in the activities of the political party before election season (Olarinmoye, A. Personal Communication, August 24, 2023). The control that women exert over their

income from paid employment is as vital as the economic resources and skills it offers, enabling them to engage in political participation.

We found that having access to formal employment and career pathways is a positive factor that influences voting behaviour for women in both the Northern and Southern regions. However, Southern women tend to have more employment opportunities because of improved access to formal education. Surprisingly, the level of education itself presents a more complex situation. In our study, we found that for Southern women, higher education is associated with a decreased likelihood of voting in an election, and for Northern women, a decreased likelihood of working for a candidate. These findings indicate that in Southern Nigeria, women with lower levels of education are more likely to engage in political participation through voting (Datzberger & Le Mat, 2019; Isaksson, 2014; Oladapo et al., 2021) and more likely to participate in campaign rallies and party primaries. While women with higher levels of education are more likely to stand for elections in urban centres, women with some education who are self-employed are much more likely to contest elections.

Gender norms and political participation

The 2023 gubernatorial elections in Lagos state highlighted the pernicious hold of gender norms in political participation for aspirants. Abdul-Azeez Olajide Oladiran of the Peoples Democratic Party and his running mate, TV star, Funke Akindele were derided for their marital status in political campaign rallies (GboahTV, 2023). The song illustrates how gender roles and marital status can be politicised.

The marital status of women in Nigeria reifies existing gender norms and stands against political participation of women. In Nigeria, women face obstacles in their active political participation because of their marital status because they have to be either related to their father or their husband. This affects their ability to run for elective positions or be selected for political roles. To address this, the House of Representatives amended the Federal Character Commission Establishment Act in 2010 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2010), allowing married women to choose either their fathers' or husbands' states or local governments of origin when implementing the Federal Character formulae at the national or state level. This amendment aims to promote the fair distribution of public offices and resources. However, it fails to recognise Nigerian women as equal citizens with equal rights of citizenship as their male counterparts.

Female political aspirants usually have to retain their father's name or return to their father's state of origin to stand for elections and may

not be able to contest for elections in their primary place of residence and occupation. This often limits the chances of educated, formally employed women who may have to leave where they are popular for constituencies where their maiden name is more popular than their presence.

On the one hand, according to research conducted by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), there are gender disparities in political knowledge, discussion, and participation in Nigeria (Casserly, 2016). The study reveals that there is a 13% gender gap in political knowledge – individuals' self-reported understanding of political processes, institutions, rights, governance issues, and current affairs; a 5% gender gap in political discussion – political discussion is defined as individuals' self-reported engagement in conversations about local or national politics or governance issues with other people; and a 16% gender gap in political participation – individuals' self-reported involvement in organised efforts to address problems, contacting local or national officials, reaching out to traditional leaders, participating in marches or demonstrations, participating in local meetings, and voting.

On the other hand, the active involvement of women in peacebuilding initiatives and market exchange serves as proof of their ability to engage in governance on a wider scale. Research has demonstrated that women who lead organisations focused on countering violent extremism have contributed to positive outcomes in terms of women's inclusion and gender equality in politics and society (Nwangwu & Ezeibe, 2019; Nwakanma, 2023). The effective utilisation of social power by young urban women led by the Feminist Coalition (FEMCo) to protest police brutality lends credence to this. The FEMCo is a women's advocacy group that was established in July 2020. Its primary goal is to promote equality for women in Nigerian society, focusing on education, financial freedom, and representation in public office (Feminist Coalition, 2023). The coalition was formed by a diverse group of fourteen women with professional backgrounds in various sectors such as technology, media, grassroots community organising, public health, finance, gender advocacy, and the non-profit sector (Nwakanma, 2023).

The initial project undertaken by FEMCo was to provide support to the #EndSARS movement. They utilised crowdfunding to gather donations for peaceful #EndSARS protests, specifically focusing on necessities like water, food, legal assistance, and medical aid. These forms of political participation mutated and contributed to the loss of the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Party (APC) in the presidential polls to the third-party maverick presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Peter Obi.

Organisational contributions of women in political parties and female engagement in social movements often do not translate to more effective mobilisation for more female participation, because paradoxically, demographics that make female leaders effective in utilising their social power stands in their way of more open political participation. Leaders of women-led social movements are often urban and educated and have significant social power and resources. However, the lack of organisational structure that serves as support structures for contesting political offices are often lacking in the leadership of the social movements and the deployment of their social power. While leaders of male-led organisations such as previous presidents of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUT) and the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) have been able to convert their social capital to holding political offices respectively as Governors and Senators, their female counterparts have not been as successful.

These forms of political participation in professional organisations are reflective of the same barriers to women's larger political participation. The President of the National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives, which is a trade union whose members are mostly female, is a man. By deploying their social power to single-issue, social movement causes, female political contributions are subsumed into subservient roles.

Conclusion

The gender distribution of registered voters in Nigeria reflects the national population, but the representation of women in elective leadership positions does not. The electoral system plays a crucial role in shaping gender dynamics within political systems. Majoritarian electoral systems, common in African countries, tend to favour larger political parties and incumbents, making it more challenging for women to enter politics and gain representation where gender quotas are not enshrined. On the other hand, proportional representation systems offer more opportunities for women's political representation by promoting the presence of multiple parties and encouraging political inclusivity.

Gender norms and socio-economic indicators also significantly influence women's political participation. Traditional gender roles and marital status norms can act as barriers, limiting women's involvement in politics. Socio-economic factors such as employment and education play a complex role. While access to formal employment and career pathways can motivate women's political participation, higher levels of education

can sometimes decrease their likelihood of engaging in certain forms of participation.

Gender quotas have been instrumental in promoting women's political representation in Africa, but they alone may not increase female political participation or address gender bias against women in politics. The majoritarian electoral system in Nigeria poses challenges for female political aspirants, as political parties have little incentive to field female candidates because of the winner-takes-all nature of the system. Access to economic resources and control over income can enable women to engage in political participation, but time constraints and societal expectations can create trade-offs for women with higher education and paid employment.

The active involvement of women in peacebuilding initiatives, market exchange, and social movements demonstrates their capacity to engage in governance and effect positive change. Organisations like the Feminist Coalition have showcased the mobilisation and impact of women-led advocacy groups in challenging societal norms and advocating for equality.

To enhance women's political participation in Nigeria, it is essential to address the barriers created by traditional gender norms, improve access to education, promote economic empowerment, and implement electoral reforms. While adopting a proportional representation system may not be feasible as this may require constitutional reforms, implementing gender quotas by the electoral body can create a more inclusive political landscape that allows for greater female representation. Additionally, creating supportive structures within political parties and organisations can help to harness the social power of women leaders and facilitate their transition into formal political roles.

Ultimately, achieving gender equality in political participation requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses systemic barriers, challenges gender norms, and fosters an enabling environment for women's active involvement in governance. By promoting women's political participation, Nigeria can benefit from diverse perspectives, improved decision-making, and a more inclusive democracy.

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Chapter 8

Women's Perceptions of the Political Candidacy of Females in Nigeria

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Abstract

Despite the advocacy for the increased representation of women which has been ongoing for more than two decades in Nigeria, the statistics of women in governance has not been impressive. After the 2023 elections in the country, three women emerged as senators and 14 were elected to the House of Representatives, putting women's representation in the 10th Assembly at 3.62%. No woman won a gubernatorial seat. Admittedly, the meagre figures of women's representation in government are not unconnected to the insignificant number of female candidates fielded for the elections. However, with more women than men having their Permanent Voters Cards prior to the elections, the assumption would be that they would use their numerical strength to vote the fielded women candidates into office. In this study, a mixed methods approach was adopted to assess how women in Nigeria evaluate the political candidacy of females, relative to that of men. Findings reveal a bias against women candidates, even by women. The implication of this is that gender considerations affect the selection and voting of candidates into political offices. This reflects the subtle biases that go into the selection of women candidates by political parties and other democratic institutions. In addition to the several efforts to close gender gaps in political spaces and harness the potentials of women in governance, this study is insightful because it draws attention to the traditional gender socialisation process, and what needs to be done to influence greater representation of women.

Keywords: Elections, Gender Socialisation, Nigeria, Political Candidates, Women's Representation

Introduction

An important index for the evaluation of democratic practice is the extent to which men and women participate and are represented in the political system. In Nigeria, the return to democratic rule in 1999 ushered in great hopes that all citizens – men and women – would be eligible to seek political offices. Despite the heightened hopes for twenty-four years, women have remained under-represented in the political sphere in the country. Their unbalanced access in comparison with their male counterparts has been a source of concern, leading to clamour for greater women's representation. Although increased participation and representation of women in politics have been regarded as catalysts for democracy, sustainable development, peace, equality influencing public perception of women's political participation and breaking gender stereotypes (Fayomi et al., 2022; Ogbogu, 2012; Ojo, 2022; Okedele, 2020), women continue to experience significant challenges.

Available statistics on the representation of women in parliament in Nigeria from 1999 show that in the House of Representatives, women have only occupied between 3.4% and 7% of the seats and between 2.8% to 8.3% of the seats in the Senate (IPU, 2018; 2020). In the 2023 elections, only three women won Senatorial seats and 14 in the House of Representatives, putting women's representation in the 10th Assembly at 3.62%, which is far below the global average of 26.5% (IPU, 2023). The figures of women's representation in the legislature in Nigeria is one of the lowest in the world. The only female presidential candidate in the 2023 elections, Chichi Ojei, contested on the party platform of the Allied Peoples' Movement (APM) but was only able to garner about 10% of the overall votes. History would have been made if Aishat Dahiru *Binani* emerged as governor as initially declared by Hudu Ari, the Resident Electoral Commissioner of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), in Adamawa State. Controversy, however, trailed the announcement, which was nullified and declared illegal, with the incumbent Ahmadu Fintiri declared as governor, thereby terminating Dahiru's emergence as the first elected female governor in the country.

Over time, different measures to enhance women's political participation and close the gender gaps have been put in place, but they have not yielded the desired results. There are continuous advocacy efforts to open up decision-making positions for women in Nigeria, especially through political parties, recruiting and fielding them for office, so as to stimulate gender inclusiveness. A substantial body of research documents that political parties as gatekeepers to power continue to select and support few women candidates for decision-making positions in Nigeria (Pogoso, 2012; Nwabunkeonye, 2014; Abba & Babalola, 2017; Ugwu & Okoye, 2022; Oshewolo & Adedire, 2019; Omenma et al., 2016; Ngara & Ayabam, 2013).

The male dominance of party structures undoubtedly depicts a bias for female candidates, and this is not unconnected to the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society. Bearing in mind women's numerical strength, which is almost on a par with that of men, in a society that ascribes leadership to men, it is important to understand what women think of politics and their perceptions about females seeking political leadership positions. This chapter therefore investigates women's attitudes and interests in politics, their voting preferences, and perceptions of female political candidates in Nigeria, especially as it has to do with the 2023 general elections.

Brief literature review

Evidence from the literature draws attention to the existence of gender gaps in political ambition, and as a result, women are less likely than men to be interested in politics or seek political office (Fox & Lawless, 2014; Pate & Fox, 2018; Fraile & Sánchez-Vitores, 2020). Scholarship on political ambition has shown that women are not as ambitious as men, hence, they are less likely to aspire for political office. Reasons for the gender gap in political ambition include disparities in the way that from childhood, women and men are traditionally socialised, where the former tilts towards the private domain and the latter towards the public domain, the slimmer chances of women being encouraged to contest elections than men, greater costs of career advancements for women which may dissuade them from political contests, and the tendencies that women have to doubt their qualification for office than men (McAllister, 2018; Bauer & Darkwah, 2020a; Fox & Lawless, 2004).

Additionally, studies have shown that women are less favourably disposed to competition than men (Niederle & Vesterlund, 2007; Preece & Stoddard, 2015; Fox & Pate, 2023). Hence, the competitive nature of politics from the pre-election to post-election periods, at inter- and intra-party levels discourages women, unlike men, who are less averse to it. Voting is a significant part of political participation, as it is a legitimate means of choosing representatives in a democracy, thereby allowing citizens to have a voice. To be eligible to vote, registration takes place before the elections. Evidence has shown that in some countries, there have been instances where more women than men registered as voters for elections (Webster, 2000; File & Crissey, 2012). Research conducted on voting patterns reveals that gender gaps exist between women and men. Although most studies agree that because men are more interested in politics, their voting turnout is higher than that of women (Solijonov, 2016; Dassonneville & Kostelka, 2021; Stockemer & Sundstrom, 2021) data from some countries have shown instances where more women voted than men (Reingold & Harell, 2010; MacManus, 2018). Some studies have even shown that the gender gap in

voters' turnout is gradually closing (Córdova & Rangel, 2017). In countries where the turnout of female voters is lower, electoral violence, political apathy, belief of their votes not counting, doubts about the credibility of the elections, dissatisfaction with the political system and lack of spousal support are some of the factors that account for it (Alacevich & Zejcirovic, 2020; Ojo, 2022; Cheema et al., 2023). Low turnout of women voters has an impact on political engagement and undermines prospects for gender equality. Scholarship on candidate preference has shown that people vote either on the basis of gender affinity or party support.

In a US study, Badas and Stauffer (2019) averred that during elections, people are likely to vote along party lines, rather than on the basis of the candidate's gender. Research has also shown the likelihood of women jettisoning party support for gender affinity, and voting for female political aspirants (McDermott, 1998; Ladam et al., 2018). However, the chances of women voting for female candidates are higher in contexts where many women are fielded (Marien et al., 2017). Drawing from existing literature, there are cases where women choose not to vote for female candidates. For instance, studies have shown that at times, women do not vote for female candidates for a variety of reasons including a lack of confidence in their leadership skills, the belief that politics is a male domain that women should avoid, preference for a particular class of women candidates, personal biases, amongst others (Nwabunkeonye, 2014; Ngagara & Ayabam, 2013). To a large extent, how women evaluate female candidates determines the support that they give them, or otherwise.

Theoretical framework

This chapter is premised on the gendered political socialisation theoretical framework. The nexus between gender socialisation and political socialisation as theorised by Bos et al. (2022) is referred to as gendered political socialisation. This theoretical framework gives insights on how people view gender in politics and how these views influence their political interests and ambitions which are often imbibed from childhood. Although they may change over time, the formation of ideas, beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and perceptions about politics and political leadership starts at childhood (Reifen-Tagar & Cimpian, 2022; Dawson & Prewitt, 1969).

Development of political values, beliefs, knowledge, ideas and behaviour are often through agents of socialisation. Traditionally, agents of socialisation include the family, the school, the peer group and the media. These four agents are significant forces in the political socialisation process. Given that the family is the first major contact that most people have with

the world, the behaviour; including the political, is shaped first from the family. When a person receives a formal education, especially in a school, the exposition to certain values about politics through the learning of subjects like civic education, history and government, is inevitable. Through social interactions with people of same or close age brackets, peer groups are formed. In the course of interaction with peer groups, people become politically socialised, and they form ideas and develop behaviours, inherent amongst those whom they interact with. The print and electronic media are other potent agents of political socialisation. Political issues are discussed in newspapers, magazines, on television and on radio, and these significantly influence the views of people. In recent years, the social media has become a powerful tool that shapes the values, beliefs and attitudes of people on politics. In the Nigerian context, evidence from existing literature is replete with the impact of political socialisation on political participation (Sule et al., 2017; Olasupo, 2015; Asadu & Nwobi, 2018; Othman et al., 2018; Oladejo & Oni, 2017; Mustapha & Omar, 2020; Owoeye, 2021). The gender socialisation process to a large extent influences what is deemed as suitable traits for males and females, and it has effects on how people are politically socialised. It is the process through which males and females internalise values, beliefs and attitudes that shape their behaviour. Through gender socialisation, roles and expectations that are gender-specific are created and maintained. The effect of the gendered political socialisation process on girls is that they show a lesser interest and ambition in politics than boys, and as they grow older, the gap widens (Bos et al., 2022).

Women's political candidacy in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria

For the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, evidence from the Independent National Electoral Commission's website shows that 18 political parties nominated candidates for political offices (INEC, 2022). These political offices include one seat each for the presidential and vice-presidential constituencies, 109 senatorial districts and 360 federal constituencies. Table 17 gives a breakdown of the figures of male and female candidates for the various political offices.

Table 17: Candidates for Political Offices in the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria

Office	No. of Seats	No. of Candidates	No. of Males	No. of Females
President	1	18	17	1
Vice-President	1	18	18	0
Gubernatorial	28	419	394	25
Senate	109	1,101	1,009	92
House of Representatives	360	3,122	2,832	288

Source: INEC (2022); European Union Election Observation Mission (2023)

Only one of the 18 candidates who vied for the presidential seat was a woman; the same applied for the vice presidency. The number of female candidates for the Senate and House of Representatives was also meagre when compared with those of male candidates. In the gubernatorial race, the election took place in 28 out of 36 states in Nigeria. In these states, only 25 were women out of the 419 gubernatorial aspirants, representing just about 6%. These figures of women's representation are alarmingly low and one of the lowest across the globe. Although 44.4 million out of 93.5 million voters in the 2023 elections were women, as declared by the INEC, Thomas-Odia (2023) observes that female candidates fielded by political parties constituted only 10.1%. Since Nigeria returned to democratic governance 24 years ago, no woman has emerged as President, Vice President or Governor in any of the elections held so far.

The under-representation of women in political offices is not unconnected with the subtle biases that go into the selection of female candidates by political parties and other democratic institutions. Despite the country's international commitments to eradicate discrimination against women, the internal mechanisms of political parties disempower the political candidacy of females. An examination of the constitutions of the three major political parties; the All Progressives Congress (APC) which is the ruling party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), which is the leading opposition party and the Labour Party (LP), which became popular towards the 2023 elections show that strategic offices were not assigned to women. Women were assigned 'woman leader' positions in the National Executive, National Working, Zonal Executive, State Executive, State Working, Senatorial District, Local Government Area Executive, Ward Executive and Polling Unit Committees, as well as Local Government Area / Area Council and State caucuses of the political parties (APC, 2019; PDP, 2019; LP, 2022a) The distinguishing factor between the LP and the two other parties, besides

the Woman Leader position, is that its constitution stipulates the creation of offices for six deputy national women leaders representing each of the geo-political zones in Nigeria in the National Executive Council and National Working Committee (LP, 2022a). It also provides for offices of three deputy state women leaders in the State Executive and State Working Committees. In addition, out of the four positions for a vice chairman in the Local Government Area Executive Council and its Working Committee, one must be a female. At the Ward Executive Council, of the two vice chairmen, one is expected to be a female. It is, however, important to mention that despite the offices created, the woman leader position is not strategic as it does not significantly increase the engagement of women as leaders in political decision-making positions in Nigeria. The growing recognition of the need for internal reforms for the promotion of gender equality between men and women within the party structure of the APC necessitated amendments to the party's constitution. The amended constitution recommended a women's wing, the inclusion of a deputy national woman leader in its National Working Committee and a gender and affirmative action clause (APC, 2022). Only two women are members of the National Working Committee for the APC and the LP, while for the PDP, only the woman leader is a member (Akpan, 2022; Banjo, 2021; LP, 2022b). These are clear pointers that these parties still have a long way to go in ensuring gender parity as offices assigned to women are mere tokenism.

Besides the issue of allocating quotas for women in party constitutions, another important factor for women's political engagement is the availability of financial resources. Scholars have asserted that being a woman and not having access to adequate financial resources jeopardises a woman's chances of political recruitment (Bauer & Darkwah, 2020b). Financial resources are necessary for funding political campaigns; hence, the high costs associated with them limit women.

Table 18 shows the cost of nomination forms for various political offices. Although the cost of the forms was on the high side, female aspirants on the platform of the APC were exempt from payment while those contesting on the platform of the PDP received a 50% reduction in cost (Itodo, 2022; Iniobong, 2022). This exemption did not transcend into any meaningful increase in the number of female contestants as Iniobong added that the APC had 103 female candidates while the PDP had 72 female candidates. The low statistics of women political contestants is not unconnected to the high cost of running for political office.

Table 18: Cost of Nomination Forms by Major Political Parties in the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria

Party	Presidential Aspirants	Governorship Aspirants	Senatorial Aspirants	House of Representative Aspirants	State House of Assembly Aspirants
APC	N100 million	N50 million	N20 million	N10 million	N2 million
PDP	N40 million	N21 million	N3.5 million	N2.5 million	N600,000
LP	N/A	N15 million	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: Compiled from Bakare (2022); Ufuoma (2022); Akubo (2023)

Beyond the procurement of nomination forms, other factors that limited the political candidacy of women in Nigeria in the 2023 general elections, just like the previous ones, include: the outrageous costs of political campaigns that come with competing in elections, which many women cannot afford; sexual assault; gender-related electoral violence; competing demands on the use of time between the domestic and public spaces; late night political meetings; discriminatory religious and cultural norms; gender stereotypes that ascribe leadership to men; cases of women who married outside their places of birth being considered as non-indigenes and not qualified to run for political office, amongst others (Anyia, 2003; Arowolo & Aluko, 2010; Nwauzor, 2016; Osori, 2017; Olayinka, 2021).

From the foregoing, the insignificant number of female political candidates which resulted in a meagre women's representation in the 2023 elections is a growing concern; hence, subsequent sections of the chapter focus on interests of women in Nigeria in politics and how they evaluate the political candidacy of females, relative to that of men.

Research methodology

Methods

To assess how women in Nigeria evaluate the political candidacy of females, relative to that of men, data was obtained using a mixed methods approach. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed. The quantitative research method used was an online survey. The online survey was completed by 194 women residing in Abuja and across 15 other states in Nigeria. The survey was in three parts. The first part was designed to elicit data on the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. The second part obtained data on the voting attitudes, preferences of respondents and issues surrounding women's political candidacy during the 2023 general

elections in Nigeria, while the third part had closed-ended questions on their interest in politics. The online link to access the survey was shared on social media platforms, especially through WhatsApp and Telegram. The data obtained from the online survey is presented in clustered bar charts for simplicity and easy comprehension.

Qualitative data was obtained through the use of a focus group discussion (FGD) with nine women. The discussion was held on Zoom for convenience, given that the participants reside in different locations in Ogun, Kwara, Cross River, Adamawa, Kaduna and Enugu states. The participants who were purposively selected are women with a minimum of a Master's degree, in order to gain insights into their thoughts on the political candidacy of women in Nigeria. Data obtained from the FGD was transcribed and analysed into relevant themes for the study, in addition to using verbatim quotes for explanations to corroborate the data from the online survey, where necessary.

Results

Socio-demographic characteristics of online survey respondents

As shown in Table 19, 44.8% of the respondents are aged between 18 and 30, 44.3% are between ages 31 and 50, 8.8% are aged between 50 and 70, and 2.1% are 70 years old and above. The educational qualifications of the respondents differ. Respondents who possess either of the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) or the Ordinary Level (O level) certificates were 15 (7.7%), 26 (13.4%) of them have any of NCE / OND / HND certificates, 79 (40.8%) of them have Bachelor's degree, 26 (13.4%) have a Ph.D. and eight (4.1%) of them have other qualifications.

From Table 19, the 194 respondents of the online survey cut across states including Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Osun, Rivers, Kaduna, Cross River, Benue, Ekiti, Kwara, Imo, Nasarawa, Kogi, Ebonyi and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The majority of the respondents are from Ogun state, while the lowest number of respondents are from Kaduna, Benue, Nasarawa, Kogi and Ebonyi states.

Table 19: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Online Survey Respondents

Characteristics	Respondents	Percentage
AGE		
18-30	87	44.8
31-50	86	44.3
50-70	17	8.8
70 and above	4	2.1
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL		
SSCE / O Level	15	7.7
NCE / OND / HND	26	13.4
B.Sc / B.Ed	79	40.8
M.Sc / M. Ed	40	20.6
Ph.D.	26	13.4
Other	8	4.1
STATE OF RESIDENCE		
Ogun	83	42.8
Ondo	2	1
Oyo	13	6.7
Osun	2	1
Rivers	2	1
Kaduna	1	0.5
Cross River	2	1
Benue	1	0.5
Ekiti	4	2.1
Kwara	4	2.1
Imo	2	1
Lagos	68	35.1
Nasarawa	1	0.5
Kogi	1	0.5
Ebonyi	1	0.5
FCT	7	3.7

Source: Researchers' own

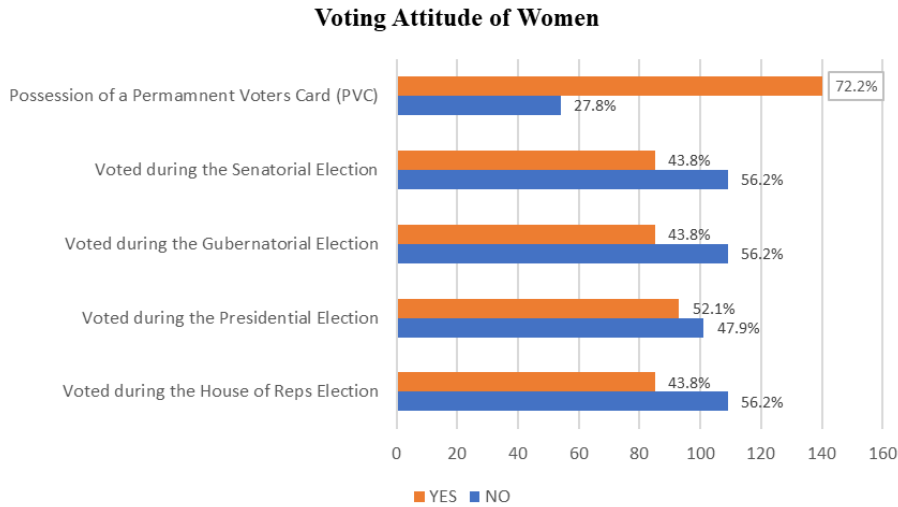


Figure 2: Voting Attitude of Women in the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria

Source: Researchers' own

Figure 2 shows the voting attitude of women in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. While 140 (72.2%) of the women have PVCs (permanent voter cards), 54 (27.8%) do not have. Out of the 140 women who have PVCs, 85 (43.7%) admitted to casting votes for senatorial, gubernatorial and house of representatives' candidates, while 109 (56.2%) did not vote. For the presidential elections, 93 (47.9%) women voted, while 101 (52.1%) did not vote. The implication of these statistics is that although 72% of the respondents had PVCs which made them eligible to vote, the majority of them did not vote during the 2023 general elections. The highest turnout of the respondents was during the presidential election.

During the focus group discussion, although the nine discussants said that they all had their PVCs, only four of them voted for the various offices during the 2023 elections. The reasons given by the five who did not vote included the belief that ultimately their votes would not count, the fear of electoral violence, the use of the voting period for domestic work and rest, and disinterest in voting.

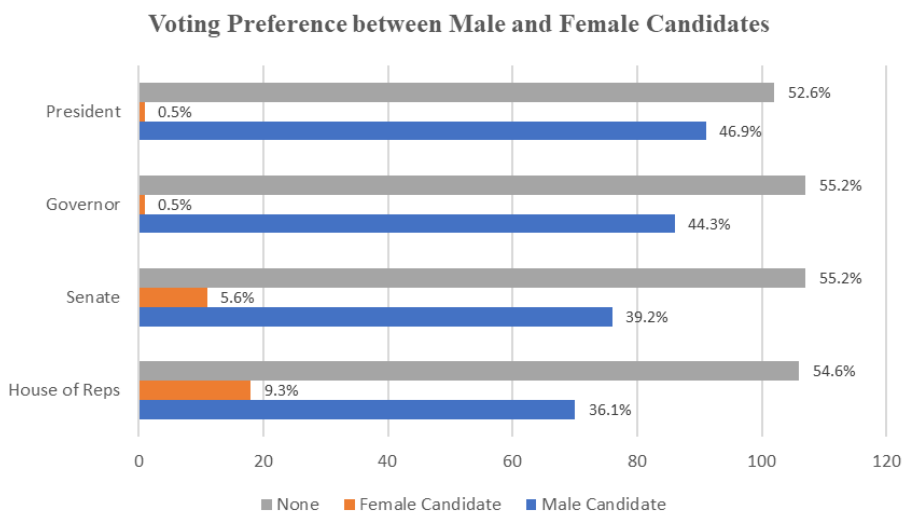


Figure 3: Voting Preference between Male and Female Candidates in the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria

Source: Researchers' own

Figure 3 presents the statistics of the voting preference of the respondents, differentiated between male and female candidates in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. Data from the online survey shows that 91 respondents (46.9%) voted for a male presidential candidate, while 1 (0.5%) voted for a female presidential candidate; 86 (44.3%) voted for a male gubernatorial candidate, while only 1 (0.5%) voted for a female gubernatorial candidate; 76 (39.2%) voted for male senatorial candidates, while 11 (5.6%) voted for female senatorial candidates: and 70 (36.1%) voted for male house of representatives candidates, while 18 (9.3%) voted for female house of representatives candidates. From the survey, the majority of the respondents did not vote for either male or female candidates in the 2023 general elections and this is not unconnected to the statistics shown in Figure 2, which shows that despite having their PVCs, most of the respondents did not vote. For those who voted, most of the responses, as shown in Figure 3 reveal that they voted more for male political candidates across the various offices, than they did for female political candidates. It was discovered during the focus group discussion that four discussants admitted that they cast their votes for male political candidates. As to why they voted for male and not female political aspirants, they gave reasons including not knowing the female political candidates seeking presidential and gubernatorial offices and that the few women contestants who they knew, were fielded by minority political parties.

Speaking on women being fielded by minority political parties, one of the discussants stated that:

“Not many women contested, so I had no option than to cast my votes for male candidates. The few women that I saw their campaign posters and perhaps I would have voted for were candidates of the unknown parties that I was sure stood no chance of winning. So, instead of wasting my votes, I voted for male candidates of a major political party”.

Another reason given for voting for male instead of female aspirants, as stated by one of the respondents, was that she considered some of the women incapable enough for the positions that they were seeking. After probing to know what she meant, she explained that the few women who contested were new faces with no political experience, unlike most of the men who had been in politics at some point in time or the other and were already ‘familiar faces’.

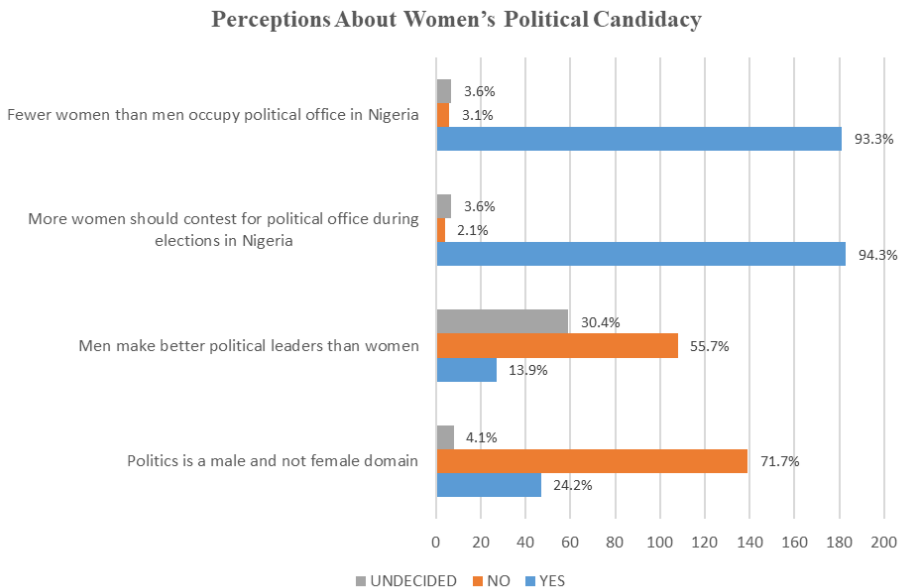


Figure 4: Perceptions about Women’s Political Candidacy

Source: Researchers’ own

As shown in Figure 4, while 6 (3.1%) and 7 (3.6%) did not agree and were undecided respectively, the majority of the respondents; that is, 181 (93.3%) agreed that there are fewer women than men occupying political offices in Nigeria. While 183 (94.3%) of the respondents admitted that more women should be allowed to contest elections in Nigeria, 4 (2.1%) were of the

opinion that more women should not be allowed, and 7 (3.6%) of them were undecided. On the notion of men making better political leaders than women, while 108 (55.7%) of the respondents disagreed with the assertion, 27 (13.9%) agreed that men make better political leaders than women, and 59 (30.4%) were undecided. Statistics from Figure 4 also indicate that 47 (24.2%) of the respondents opined that politics is a male and not female domain; 139 (71.7%) of the respondents did not subscribe to this opinion, while 8 (4.1%) were undecided.

All nine respondents in the focus group discussion agreed that the figures of women in political office in Nigeria were meagre in comparison to those of men, in addition to alluding that more women should vie for elections. They all, however, disagreed with the notion that men make better political leaders than women and they also disputed politics as being an exclusive domain for men. When asked why they think that there are fewer women than men in government in Nigeria, they identified factors including the high cost of nomination forms by political parties, the dominance of patriarchal values that assign leadership to men, the belief that politics is a dirty game that women will not want to become involved with, late night political meetings that women cannot attend, societal biases against women political candidates, the competitive nature of politics and lack of family support for women to contest elections. When the respondents were asked to shed light on why they do not think that men make better political leaders than women, one of them said:

“Women have the ability to lead just as men can. However, if you look at our society, so many things are limiting women. Look at the family setting for example, see the way women manage the home. I believe that a woman that can manage affairs at the home front, with support and a good political atmosphere can manage a political constituency. Instead of saying men make better political leaders, I feel that it’s better to say both genders have skills for political leadership. The problem is that many factors limit women’s political leadership, unlike that of men. Also related to it is the belief by most people in our society that politics is a male and not a female domain. That’s not true! Politics can be played by women and men, just that there are more men than women in politics in Nigeria.”

Another discussant added that the reason why some people believe that men make better political leaders than women is because of the limited number of women who seek elective offices. She added that this belief is not likely to change significantly until gender parity is achieved in political office in Nigeria.

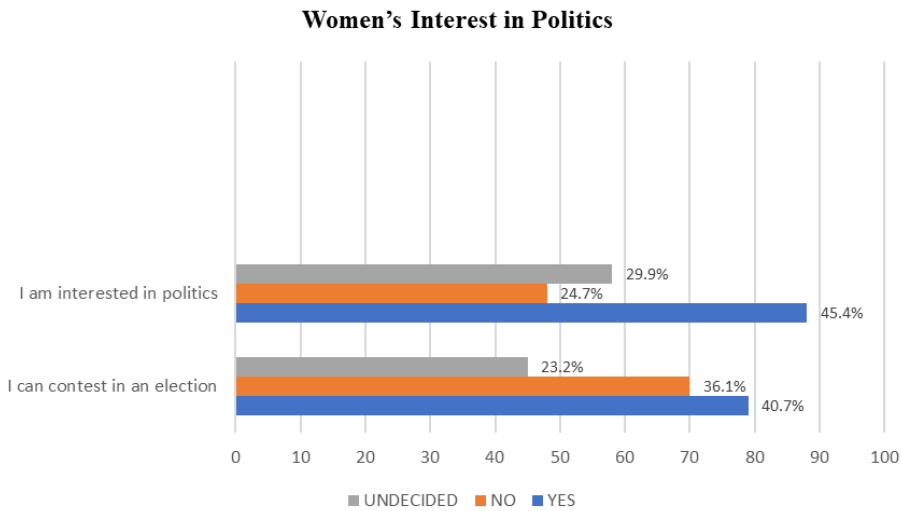


Figure 5: Interest in Politics

Source: Researchers' own

As depicted in Figure 5, 88 (45.4%) of the respondents are interested in politics, 48 (24.7%) are not interested, while 58 (29.9%) are undecided. While 79 (40.7%) of the respondents indicated that they can contest in elections, 70 (36.1%) specified that they cannot, and 45 (23.2%) were undecided. The online survey had an open-ended question that probed why respondents could not contest in elections. Data from the focus group discussion showed that the participants were all interested in politics, although with varying degrees of interest which spanned across engagement in political discussions, listening to news on political issues, attending political rallies and meetings, campaigning for their preferred political candidates and voting in elections. Only one of the discussants, however, stated that she could contest in an election, while the other eight said that they could not. Reasons given by respondents from the online survey and focus group discussion for their unwillingness to contest elections in Nigeria included disinterest, self-doubt, the belief that their efforts would be futile as a result of discrimination against female political contestants, political corruption, the severities of political contests in the country, the notion that their chances of being picked as candidates by political parties is slimmer in comparison to those of men, fear of being victims of electoral violence, competing family and professional obligations that would not give them time to run for political office, fear of not receiving sufficient support, the existence of political caucuses that they do not belong to and fear of losing and wasting money for political campaigns.

Discussion of findings

Voting attitude

Data from the study showed that despite about 72% of the respondents having their PVCs, which was a mode of identification to participate in the elections, the majority of them did not vote during the 2023 general elections. The highest turnout was during the presidential elections and just about 48% of the respondents voted. These statistics are in consonance with the findings of previous studies (Dassonneville & Kostelka, 2021; Stockemer & Sundstrom, 2021) that show that in some countries, the turnout of female voters is lower than that of men.

Candidate preference

For the presidential, gubernatorial and legislative offices, the majority of the respondents who voted in this study cast their votes for male candidates. The lowest preference for female candidates was expressed at the Presidential and Governorship positions. However, this may be as a result of the meagre figures of female candidates for both offices. About 6% of the votes of the respondents went to female candidates for Senatorial positions and 9% for the House of Representatives. The highest preference for female candidates was expressed for the House of Representatives positions and this is not unconnected with the fact that there were 288 women contestants for the office, unlike other positions that had lesser numbers of females. An explanation for this can be drawn from Marien et al.'s (2017) study that posited that the chances of placing more women into political office increases when there are more female contestants. As to why some of the respondents did not vote for female candidates, the reasons they gave are in agreement with studies carried out by Badas and Stauffer (2019), Nwabunkeonye (2014), and Ngra and Ayabam (2013).

Perceptions about women's political candidacy

From the study, over 90% of the respondents agreed that fewer women than men in Nigeria occupy political offices (some of the factors responsible for this are discussed by Okedele, 2020; Nwauzor, 2016; Osori, 2017; Olayinka, 2021) and that more women should contest elections to attain these positions. About 56% of the respondents disagreed with the notion that men make better political leaders than women do. In addition, while about 24% of the respondents think that politics is a male domain, 72% of the respondents do not subscribe to this. The implication of these findings is that women know that just like their male counterparts, females have the skills for leadership

and that their under-representation in political spaces is a democratic deficit that needs to be addressed. However, concrete steps towards the actualisation of gender parity in politics, such as greater participation, that one would expect that women will take are not being pursued, as evidenced by the data for this study.

Interest in politics

To gauge the respondents' interest in politics, this study found out that 45% of the respondents stated that they were interested in politics, while the remaining 55% were either not interested or undecided. In response to the question on whether they could vie for political office, while 41% of the respondents answered in the affirmative, the remaining 59% were either undecided or not interested. A close examination of the statistics shows that a large number of women in Nigeria are not interested in politics as a result of a number of reasons explained in the existing scholarship (Alacevich & Zejcirovic, 2020; Ojo, 2022; Cheema et al., 2023). In essence, these statistics are a pointer that the majority of the respondents are not politically ambitious.

Conclusion

The under-representation of women in political offices has links with the male dominance of party structures and paltry figures of female candidates fielded. Moreover, the disinterest of the majority of women in politics and their unwillingness to undergo the rigours of political contest will continue to widen the gender gap in politics. To a large extent, these are as a result of the traditional gender socialisation process which influences perceptions about the eligibility of candidates. Although the advocacy for greater participation of women has heightened over the years, the socialisation process that assigns the private sphere to women and the public sphere to men still subtly upholds gender inequality. Biases on the grounds of gender differences go into candidates' selection for parties and voting by the populace. Even women have unconsciously internalised these prejudices, doubting their own abilities and qualifications to vie for political office and not giving the expected level of support to other women who seek political office. It therefore becomes very important to challenge the traditional gender socialisation process that ascribes different roles to men and women by engaging in continuous advocacy for a just political landscape that allows for the recruitment of more women. Arrogating traits like leadership, bravery, courage and strength solely with masculinity should be discouraged. Vigorous campaigns to dispel the negative stereotypes surrounding women's political leadership should be accentuated, especially through the use of the media and in schools, even

as they permeate into the family and amongst peer groups. Since most of the ideas, beliefs and perceptions about politics are formed from childhood, it is important to design the school curriculum from the nursery level to focus on topics including gender equality, leadership, political participation of men and women, amongst others. It is also important that women encourage men to join in the campaign for encouraging more women candidates to run for office. Efforts geared towards encouraging more women to run for office will influence perceptions about female candidates and increase their chances of electoral success, whilst ultimately allowing them to use their views, experiences and potentials to influence greater representation of women.

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Chapter 9

Barriers to Women's Representation in Governance: Evidence from Thematic Analysis of Legislative Debates in Nigeria

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Abstract

Target 5.5 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal aims at “ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life by 2030”. Given the level of patriarchy in Nigeria, it is believed that legislation is a potential lever to protect women’s rights to political leadership. However, the push for the passage of the Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill (GEOB) did not pass Second Reading in the 9th National Assembly. This chapter examines the underlying sentiments of why the Bill was deemed negative by the male-dominated National Assembly. The study was anchored on Connell’s (1987) Hegemonic Masculinity Theory, and data were sourced from the Hansard of the GEOB in the 9th Senate. We adopted the qualitative case study approach and utilised the thematic analysis technique to analyse the data. The findings showed that the vociferous opposition to the Bill centred on: (i) constitutionality of the Bill; (ii) granting advantages to women over men conflicts with extant laws; (iii) conflicts with customs, tradition and religion; and (iv) inadequate consultations with the legislators. The findings suggest that the male-dominated Senate spared no effort to defend and preserve the patriarchal hegemony. Notwithstanding, outlier senators supported the Bill, indicating a potential linchpin to galvanise a groundswell of support for future passage. Overall, the study argued that leveraging ‘development bargain’ holds promise to change the narrative.



Keywords: Development Bargain, Hegemonic Masculinity, Legislative Debates, Thematic Analysis, Women's Representation in Government

Introduction

Nigeria gained her independence from Britain in 1960, and practices representative democracy. Amid episodes of military juntas, and after a 16-year hiatus, the country returned to democratic rule in 1999, and adopted the current Constitution¹. Nigeria is a federation of 36 autonomous states and the Federal Capital Territory. It comprises over 500 languages and 300 ethnic groups, thus making her the most populous, largest democracy, and culturally diverse country in Africa (AfDB, 2022; World Bank, 2023; Green, 2023). The country's democratic system is modelled after that of the United States; however, patriarchy is one of the numerous concerns that underlie her political culture (Diamond, 1993). Since 1999, despite maintaining an unprecedented 24 years of democratic governance, accompanied by 7 electoral cycles—a development that lends credence to her democratic milestone (Diamond & Morlino, 2005), women occupy very few seats in the legislature. In essence, legislature is the cornerstone of democracy, and one of its core elements is the participation in the democratic process by diverse groups including the representation of women in government (Diamond & Morlino, 2005). Despite the fact that women account for 49.3% of the 218.54 million population (World Bank, 2022) and represent about 47% of the registered voters (INEC, 2023), women occupy a lacklustre 4.47% of the 469-member seats in the National Assembly compared to the global and African averages at 22.5% and 23.4% respectively (IPU, 2023a).

As shown in Table 20, at the dawn of democratisation in 1999, only 24 women, representing 2.4%, were elected out of the 993 combined seats in the 36 States Houses of Assembly. Also, 12 women, representing 3.3%, and 3 women, representing 2.8%, were elected in the 360-member House of Representatives and 109-member Senate respectively. After two election cycles (that is, 2007–2011) the number of elected women representatives increased to an all-time high of 68, 26 and 9 in the States Assembly, House of Representatives, and Senate respectively. However, in the latest election cycle, women's representation slumped to 57, 17 and 3, in the States Assembly, House of Representatives, and Senate respectively. Consequently, scholars and policymakers are interested in understanding why men have historically held more political power than women in Nigeria. As things stand, the male-dominated National Assembly comprises the 109-member Senate and the 360-member House of Representatives, and 993 seats in the 36 State

1 The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN), 1999, has been altered five times.

Houses of Assembly. In essence, the inclusion of women in governance is a democratic ideal because it not only underpins democratic governance but also reinforces the stability and legitimacy of government (UN, 1998; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999; Ette & Akpan-Obong, 2022).

Table 20: Trend of seats occupied by women in Nigeria's Legislature (%) of total (1999–2023)

Election cycle	House of Representatives		House of Senate		Combined 36 States Houses of Assembly	
	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%
1999–2003	12	3.3	3	2.8	24	2.4
2003–2007	21	5.8	4	3.7	40	4.0
2007–2011	25	6.9	9	8.3	57	5.7
2011–2015	26	7.2	7	6.4	68	6.8
2015–2019	22	6.1	7	6.4	51	5.1
2019–2023	13	3.6	7	6.4	45	4.5
2023–2027	17	4.7	3	2.8	57	5.7

Sources: INEC (2023), IPU (2023b), PLAC (2023)

To ensure that women are not left behind, Target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG-5) (UN, 2015) aims at *ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life by 2030*". What is concerning in the Nigerian context is that the male-dominated legislature often stands in the way of expanding access to decision-making arenas. For instance, the push for the passage of the Gender Equality and Opportunity Bill (GEOB) in the 9th Assembly was thwarted by the male-dominated National Assembly. Amongst other things, the Bill provides for the domestication of the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UN, 1979), as well as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (AU, 2023). It is believed that the refusal to pass the Bill was informed by sentiments that fuel political dominance by men (Omotola, 2007; Jega, 2001). Thus, the focus of this study is to examine the underlying sentiments by the Senators to frustrate the passage of the GEOB in the 9th Assembly. The study is structured into six sections. Following the introduction section, Section 2 reviews the existing body of literature on women's under-representation in Nigeria and in other jurisdictions. Section 3 addresses the theoretical framework and methodology adopted for the study. Here, the research technique adopted is

discussed, and its adoption justified. Section 4 presents the data and analysis of the themes extracted from the data items. Section 5 presents the discussion of the results and Section 6 concludes the study.

Literature review

Many authors have researched the under-representation of women in Nigeria. Surprisingly, some of these studies were initiated by the Nigerian government. However, the government's passive stance has resulted in little progress. For instance, in 1986, the Babangida-led military government established a Political Bureau to promote the inclusion of women in government. The Bureau recommended that 5% of legislative seats should be allocated to women at all levels of government, stating that it would help to defend women's interests in society (Abdullah, 1993). Unfortunately, the government soon went back on its promise and rejected the Bureau's recommendation. In a similar fashion, albeit a democratic setting, the lack of commitment by the political class to women's political rights is often manifest in the non-domestication of treaties, conventions and so on. (PLAC, 2018). For instance, despite ratifying several United Nations and Africa Union Conventions including: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) (UN, 1966a); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) (UN, 1966b); the Maputo Protocol (AU, 2023); the CEDAW (UN, 1979), amongst others, they have not been domesticated. Though Section 42 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (hereafter the Constitution) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) provides that no person (male or female) should be subjected to discrimination by reason only that he is such a person, however there is no provision that reserves quotas for women.

This development contrasts markedly with Rwanda's sterling performance whose achievement of 63.8% of women's representation in government made her the top-performing country in the world on women's representation in government. Scholars such as Bush (2011) note that Rwanda achieved this feat on the wings of the political actors' commitment to promoting gender equality and with the accompanying gender-responsive legislation. In another recent study of how Rwanda overcame male dominance of the political arena, Zaborszky (2017) points out that the domestication of women's political rights in the Rwandan Constitution, 2003, guaranteed gender-responsive legislations, thus putting women's political empowerment at the forefront of the government agenda. The Rwandan piece of legislations provides for a minimum of 30% of women in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate. The Rwandan experience dovetails with Dercon's (2022) recent treatise titled *Gambling on Development*, which offers some

prescription by detailing how incentivisation of the political class can make significant progress in development including the representation of women in government. In essence, affirmative action for female political representation is anchored on the theories of formal, descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation of women (Hughes & Paxton, 2018; Franceschet et al., 2018). Based on this theory, a number of European countries also adopted legislative quota rules for women's representation. For instance, Balafoutas et al. (2016) note that legislation or political party quota systems impose a percentage of women's representation in Belgium, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Italy and Austria, amongst others. Women's representation in government is an ideal that is enshrined in the various African Union and United Nations Conventions. Specifically, the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN, 1995); the CEDAW (UN, 1979) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (AU, 2023), put the representation of women in government at the forefront of policy agenda. For example, Article 7 of the CEDAW (UN, 1979), states that:

State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right: (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government; (c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

In the same vein, Chapter 3, paragraph 1 of the Beijing Declaration (UN, 1995) provides that:

The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and should not be seen in isolation as a women's issue. They are the only way to build a sustainable, just and developed society. Empowerment of women and equality between women and men are prerequisites for achieving political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security amongst all peoples.

Generally, these rights underscore the goal of the United Nations Charter which is "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women" (UN, 1945). Despite the compelling objectives of these Conventions and Charters, there is

less than a groundswell support by the male-dominated legislature in Nigeria. Obviously, the disproportionate representation of women in government in Nigeria runs afoul of the ratified UN Conventions (Onomrerhinor, 2016). Again, and disappointingly so, though these Conventions have been ratified, it is not justiciable in Nigeria because they have not been domesticated by the National Assembly. In the same vein, the National Gender Policy underscores the place of women in democratic governance by advocating for 35% affirmative action for women's representation in government (IEC, 2021). However, it lacks the force of law because it was not passed by the National Assembly. Suffice that Sections 4(3) and 12 of the Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) empower the National Assembly to make laws for the good governance of the country. As noted by Okoronkwo-Chukwu, (2013) and Jega (2001), the lacklustre commitment of government to the 35% affirmative action as documented in the National Gender Policy belies its overly avowed position on gender responsiveness.

Authors such as Pogoso (2012), Arowolo and Aluko (2010) and Okeosi-Simbine (2012) identify socio-economic and cultural norms as major factors responsible for women's under-representation in government in Nigeria. Ette and Akpan-Obong (2022) echo this notion by asserting that 'women, especially those without wealthy godfathers and supporters, have a more arduous path to the political arena in a race where winners are determined by superior economic resources and privilege rather than political ideologies or vision'. In the light of the overarching importance of access to economic power and opportunity, the United Nations Women (2022) advocates that investing in women's economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth. However, the literature documents men's generalised dread of women's empowerment. This notion is based on the castration anxiety, which is man's fear that the empowerment of women will take away his strength, infect him with their femininity, and reveal him to be a weakling (Michealson, 2013). Freud (1918) explored this slant and theorised that men have historically displayed "a generalized dread of women" through taboos, customs, and traditions. In a related study, MacPherson et al. (2015) utilised the qualitative research methodology to explore female fish traders' experiences of accessing microfinance in fishing communities in southern Malawi. The findings revealed gendered power dynamics that predisposed women to transactional sex by their male lenders, thereby infecting them with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). In a study carried out in Uganda, Wyrod (2008) found that attempts to reconfigure gender power relations, such as changing marriage laws or the division of household labour were considered excessive. In addition, Boyd (2013) found that anxieties about women's rights stemmed from the perception that unconstrained freedoms would threaten

the normative hierarchy of society, thus allowing immoral Western values to weaken traditions, customs and so on.

Some writers have argued that women's representation in the political arena is not only a human rights issue but also has a catalytic effect on inclusive socio-economic development (Diamond & Morlino, 2005; O'Neil & Domingo, 2016). This view was reaffirmed in a recent study by Newiak (2018), which noted that closing the gender gap in Nigeria would lead to higher growth and productivity and ultimately enhance greater economic stability. In the same vein, Burnet (2011) posits that the presence of women in the public policy arena has a symbolic value, which has contributed towards increasing respect for women and giving them a more powerful voice in the family and community. Ette (2017) argues that not only are women politicians marginalised as subjects of news but also as sources of news. Thus, the limited visibility is normatively problematic because it reinforces a patriarchal understanding of politics and women's political participation. Studies on the policy outcome of mainstreaming women in government abound in several jurisdictions. For example, Tøraasen (2019) studied the adoption of Gender Parity Law in Senegal. The author utilised the qualitative method of research by conducting semi-structured interviews with 20 respondents. Thirteen of the respondents were former and current legislators, and the rest of the respondents were drawn from academia, women's groups and bureaucracy who gave an account of the process that led to the adoption of the legislation. Results showed that affirmative action by women's groups in the country and executive-legislative relations were the factors that led to the passage of the law. This result is consistent with the findings of Bush (2011) and Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) that expanding access in the legislative process is a critical pathway to firming up women's representation in government.

Acosta et al. (2020) investigated the inaction of the Ugandan Government to mainstream women in its climate change policy. The study was based on the qualitative method, examining the respondents by 30 semi-standard interviews and excerpts from ten stakeholder meetings on themes of climate change, agriculture, rural livelihoods and gender in Uganda. The results revealed resistance to gender mainstreaming in policy discussions. Theoretically, the pattern of men's political dominance of women in Nigeria mirrors Connell's (1987) Hegemonic Masculinity Theory. The theory conceptualises how unequal power relations are legitimated. Given the patriarchal sociocultural structures in Nigeria, it is believed that legislation is a potential lever to mainstreaming women in governance (Zaborszky, 2017). To this end, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, needs to be altered by making specific provisions for women's representation. Despite

several efforts to realise this objective, the male-dominated legislature often stands in the way of passing this legislation.

The GEOB was first introduced in the 8th Assembly. The Bill sought to incorporate and enforce certain provisions of the CEDAW (UN, 1979) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (UN, 2023), and other matters connected therewith. However, the Bill did not see the light of day as it was rejected by the male-dominated National Assembly. Recently, the push for the passage of the same Bill in the 9th National Assembly also suffered a setback. At this time, the objective was modified as follows: *“to make provisions for the empowerment of women and gender equality to establish a legislative framework for the empowerment of women; to align all aspects of laws and implementation of laws relating to women’s empowerment, and the appointment and representation of women in decision making positions and structures; and to provide for matters connected therewith”*. Thus, the study seeks to shed light on the underlying sentiments of why the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill, 2016 and 2021, were negated in the 8th and 9th National Assembly. The study focuses on the men-dominated National Assembly because their seemingly patriarchal gender norms not only challenge a core principle shared by all democracies but also underscore the need to engage male political leaders as transformative agents of change for gender equality (NDI, 2021; 2022). The chapter builds on the existing studies and contributes to the literature and sheds fresh insight on the sentiments expressed by the male-dominated National Assembly.

Theoretical framework and methodology

The study is built on the framework of Connell's (1987) Hegemonic Masculinity Theory. As noted by Messerschmidt (2019), Connell's conceptualisation of masculinity has become ubiquitous, serving as the principal touchstone for most research. The theory provides an explanation for the pattern of practices that allow men's dominance over women to linger. The emphasis on hegemony in gender relations underscored the achievement of hegemonic masculinity largely through cultural ascendancy – discursive persuasion – encouraging all to consent to, coalesce around, and embody such unequal gender relations between men and women. Contextually, the trend of dominance by men over women in Nigeria's political arena lends credence to the adoption of the Hegemonic Masculinity Theory for the study.

Following the categorisation of studies by Bryman (2016), and Braun and Clarke (2013), the nature of the present research is a critical study because it seeks to 'go beneath the surface' in understanding why women are

under-represented in government in Nigeria. The text data for the study is sourced from the legislative debates on the Gender Equality and Opportunity Bill (GEOB) in the 9th Senate of the National Assembly. It suffices that legislative debates provide insights to information concerning the opinions, positions, policy preferences and so on of the legislators. Thus, it is safe to infer that these opinions, positions, preferences, and so on, approximate the sentiments of the legislators who informed the decision on the GEOB. In analysing the text data, we adopted the qualitative research method and utilised the thematic analysis (TA) technique as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013). It suffices to note that authors such as Clarke et al. (2005) and Farvid and Braun (2006) have utilised TA in similar studies. TA has become an increasingly popular way of engaging with qualitative data, especially for critical studies. It is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes). As Terry and Hayfield (2021) note, the appeal of TA is that it is theoretically flexible while ensuring rigour and guidance that give researchers with a broad range of experience and expertise value.

Following Braun and Clark (2006), the dataset refers to the legislative debates, while the data items and the data extract refer to the senators and themes / subthemes respectively. Suffice to say that the data extract is the coded chunk of data that dovetails with the themes for analyses. Aided by a fitting thematic map, we explore the sentiments expressed by the legislators by categorising the commonalities into themes in accordance with some criteria (Patton, 1990; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes constitute the unit of analysis of the study which we analyse by drawing excerpts to illustrate the legislators' expressed sentiment (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Frederick, 2013). Overall, we follow the six-phase processes of TA as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to conduct the research in line with ethical considerations.

Results and analyses

In this section we present the results and analysis.

As shown in Figure 6, we developed a thematic map showing four main themes: (i) the Constitutionality of the Bill; (ii) customs, tradition and religion; (iii) granting women extra privileges over men conflicts with extant laws; and (iv) inadequate consultations with the legislators. The subthemes feed into the main themes, thus reflecting the nuanced dispositions of the legislators to kill the Bill. We proceed with the analyses of these themes and draw excerpts from the textual data to illustrate the legislators' expressed sentiments (Braun & Clark, 2006; Frederick, 2013).

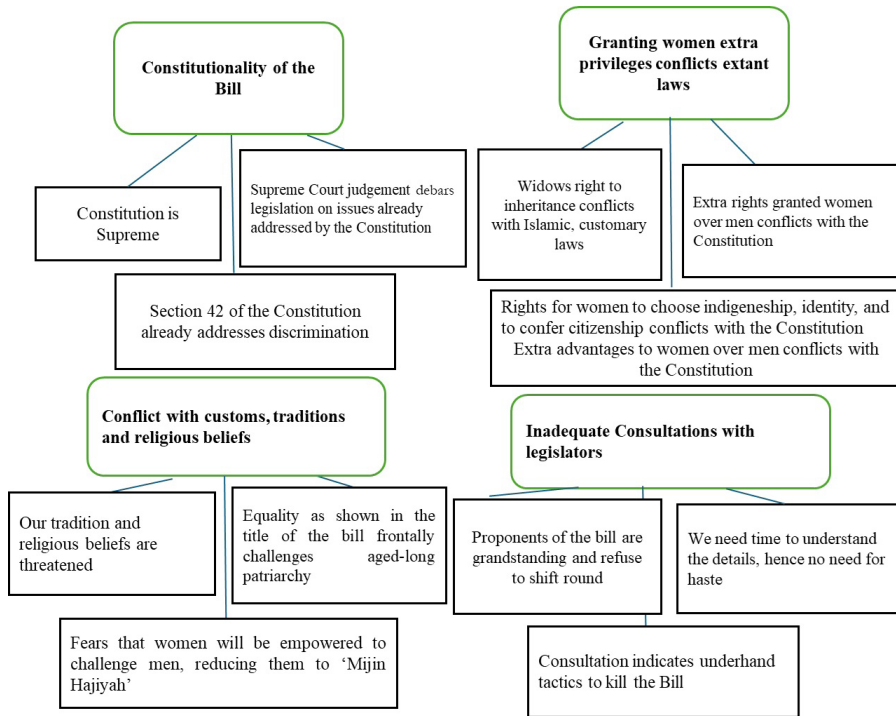


Figure 6: Thematic map showing themes and subthemes

Source: Legislative debates on the Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill in the 9th Assembly

The constitutionality of the bill

Arguments centred on the constitutionality of the Bill in relation to the powers of the National Assembly to pass legislations on the Bill. The reservations stemmed from the subthemes: (i) the subsisting Supreme Court judgement debars legislation on issues already addressed by the Constitution; (ii) the supremacy of the Constitution; and the provision of Section 42 of the Constitution. Citing the subsisting Supreme Court judgement, the legislators questioned the power of the National Assembly to legislate on the Bill. Some legislators who detailed the limitations of their powers to make laws on an issue already provided for in the constitution:

I just want us to be mindful of the fact that there is Supreme Court decision that says that when something is already provided for in the Constitution, that you do not repeat it in a legislation. Any matter that is in the Constitution, we should not make law on it. If you find out that the Constitutional issue on Gender Inequality and Discrimination, already our

Constitution has mentioned that. There is no way we are going to bring it as a Bill to be passed by this House. This is because any Convention from outside to the extent that it is against our Constitution, we cannot even domesticate it.

(Senator 1)

One male legislator noted that since the Bill speaks to the same issue of discrimination as provided in Section 42 of the Constitution, there is no need for the National Assembly to make any further legislation on the matter:

It is clear and it is a Supreme Court decision and the discrimination against women is already provided for in Section 42 or there about of our Constitution. In fact, the Bill talks about it, the Bill quotes the Constitution. If we are to go by what the Supreme Court had said, that this becomes redundant and it really should not have gotten to this stage. I owe it a duty to bring the Supreme Court decision to the knowledge of the House.

(Senator 2)

Another male legislator reminded the House about the supremacy of a subsisting Supreme Court judgement:

Also, more than that the Supreme Court, which is the highest Court of the Land has made a pronouncement on this. We have separation of powers and once the Supreme Court has made a decision that you cannot do this, I think it is wrong for another arm of government to say; Yes, we are aware of what the Supreme Court has said but we can do it and would go back to the supreme court or to the Court for interpretation, which I think is wrong.

(Senator 3)

A striking revelation is that the commonality of these sentiments sheds light on the intentions of the male-dominated National Assembly. They seem to hide under the cloak of the Constitution to kill the GEOB. Suffice to say that though Section 42 of the Constitution provides that no person should be subjected to discrimination by reason only that he is such a person, however, legislations that reserves quotas for women in legislature will significantly advance women's representation in government.

Granting advantages to women over men conflict with extant laws

Members of the National Assembly expressed their concern pertaining to the provisions of the Bill that grant privileges to women. The reservations centred

on widows' right to inherit their late husbands' property, rights for women to choose indigeneship, identity, and to confer citizenship. They contended that the proposed privileges not only conflict with the Constitution but also run afoul of the exiting religious and cultural practices. Clause 5 of the Bill provides for the modification of certain cultural practices against women especially degrading treatment, against widows and other practices. In the same vein, Clauses 6-14 provide for the elimination of discrimination in various aspects of social life:

After going through the Bill, I found that Section 5 of this Bill specifically on modification of sociocultural practices are directly in conflict with the Nigerian Constitution, because the Nigerian Constitution is very clear, it scrutinises the customs and practices of all Nigerians, especially in relation to their religious right as guarantee by Constitution. Where she also says a widow shall have the right to an equitable share in the heritance of property of her husband, this is also in conflict with Nigerian Constitution. Section 17, women and men shall have the right to inherit in equitable shares their parent properties; this is also in conflict with Nigerian's Constitution.

(Senator 4)

A male legislator from the Northern part of Nigeria underscored the conflict of the Bill with common, sharia and customary laws as applicable to suit the peculiarity of each section of the country:

For Christianity, we have Common Law and for Muslims, we have Sharia Law as recognised by the Constitution. For customs, those who believe in their customs and traditions also have Customary Laws. For the Bill to provide that a Widow shall automatically become the guidance and custodian of her children is in conflict with Nigerian Constitution. An existing law is already in place which has already been taken care of by our provision. For example, the issue of guidance and custody of children vary from one community to another and those of us who are lawyers will equally know that when these laws were received, it says: Where there are inconsistent with local circumstances, the law prevailing in the local circumstances should take effect.

(Senator 5)

Then, if you look at this Bill, it seeks to give women extra advantages which are against this Constitution. Let us look at Section 14 (11), which says: Eliminate discrimination and social economic ground (12) the right to choose the indigene ship and identity (13) right to confer citizenship all on women. These are special privileges and rights, which this Constitution has

envisaged. I therefore, suggest that we suspend this Debate and look at this thing critically.

(Senator 6)

Conflict with custom, tradition and religion.

The provisions of Clause 5, which deals with modification of cultural practices was a concern to some members of the National Assembly. The debate at this point drew strong sentiments touching on modification of culture and religious beliefs:

There are some provisions of this Bill that are conflicting with the dictates in Islam when it comes to the sociocultural practice which is part of our religion. In the 8th Senate, this Bill was debated. If they are talking of equity, it is alright but equality is no. For this reason, I do not support the second reading of this Bill.

(Senator 7)

The argument by one male legislator signals a fresh insight to the reason for 'killing' the Bill. His argument touched on the nation's patriarchal cultural heritage. It also sheds light on the unequal power relations in marriage and society. The legislators' position and narrative dovetail with the definition of patriarchy by Connell (1987): patriarchy is a social system in which the role of the father is central to social organisation, and where fathers hold authority over women, children and property. However, the sentiments expressed by the legislators indicate that the empowerment of women is a frontal attack on society's cultural heritage. He also expressed fears that the empowerment of women will embolden women to challenge men's authority, and ultimately reduce men to 'Mijin Hajiya' which connotes weak man / husband:

Now, Christianity preaches salvation to the sacredness of the institution of the marriage. In the Lead Debate, page 3 and 4 state thus: My highly respected Colleagues, the Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill seek to provide For Women's Empowerment in the following areas. That Women Freedom of Movement continues to be legally restricted in some part of this country. This restriction is often because of marriage laws which mostly and largely are informed by religious believe that a Woman can do whatever she likes. This will give rise to a situation wherein our Northerner language that said, Mijin Hajiya; you will become Mijin Hajiya at the end of the day, where your woman can move around, and interact any how under your watch.

(Senator, 8)

A legislator expressed reservations about the issue of equality as contained in the title of the Bill. According to him equality challenges existing tradition where men are superior to women. He sees the provisions as apostasy and heresy that smacks of immorality:

This is heresy and we must not encourage this kind of law in this Chamber. As long as we live as Parliamentarians, we must come out with laws that encourage morality, after all, our laws supposed to be a product of moral course. That was the original essence of law even in the old Elizabethan England. Therefore, we must not join the multitude in the world to do things the way the world do. We must be conscious of our morality. We must stand firm and ensure that our society remains clean and transparent morally.
(Senator 9)

In response to these reservations especially on the title of the Bill, the sponsor of the Bill agreed to tweak it by replacing equality with equity:

However, if the problem is the title, 'equal opportunities' that they do not want, then we can change the title and make it Gender Equity Bill rather than the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill which is offensive to them.

Furthermore, the legislators laid emphasis on the infringement of the provisions of the Bill on religious beliefs. These arguments are utterly riveting as it shows the perceptions of the legislators vis-à-vis the provisions of the Bill:

However, from an Islamic perspective which is the social cultural practice of Muslims, equal opportunities actually infringe on the provision of the Qur'an and also the Bible. For me, I will not support the passage of this unless the word 'equal' is removed. We will have debate on the gender opportunities Bill but when you bring equality into it, it infringes into the practise of Islamic religion. That is where the conflict is and because of this inconsistency, I will not support the passage of this Bill for second reading.
(Senator 9)

Following the analysis of the argument of the legislators, it is clear that they have the notion that the provisions of the Bill are diametrically opposed to the existing religious and socio-cultural belief. Rather than considering the merits of the Bill, the legislators are committed to defend the hegemonic patriarchal religious and cultural belief.

Inadequate consultations with legislators and other stakeholders

In the course of the debate, some legislators stressed the need for further engagement with the sponsor of the Bill in order to fully understand its provisions. In response to these reservations, the sponsor of the Bill noted the wide consultations with the legislators and other stakeholders across the country. She stressed the overwhelming support the Bill had received both within and outside the National Assembly. She noted the high level of engagements that galvanised a groundswell of support for the Bill. Having gone that far, she was hopeful that the Bill will pass Second Reading, however, she expressed disappointment and was surprised to hear a new twist of non-consultation:

The Sultanate arranged an outreach where every Muslim cleric including the MURIC Chairman were present and they gave a clean Bill of health to the Bill. We have also done that with the Christian clerics and they have also given it a clean Bill of health.

(Senator 10)

One senator remarked that it is the legislators who make laws and thus the need for consultations with them cannot be overemphasised:

It is not an Islamic scholar out there or any conglomeration of NGOs that you invite to public hearing that make the laws of this country. The laws of this country are made here. Whatever anybody is going to say outside there, if we do not get our Colleagues to buy into them, it will not go; we are the ones elected by Nigerian people to make the laws of this country. Therefore, any nebulous attempt by anyone of us who is sponsoring a Bill to say that he is not going to consult with members is going on slippery ground. We are all equal in this Chamber, there is no one here that is greater than the other.

(Senator 11)

In the same vein, one Senator encouraged the Sponsor of the Bill to engage the legislators. He noted that her engagement does not belittle her:

You do not lose any face by consulting with other Colleagues so that we can take informed position. You are not being belittled by asking you to consult further with Colleagues because once we have proper consultation and every one of us agrees, you have less problem.

(Senator 12)

Surprisingly, a male senator rose to acknowledge the extensive consultation by the sponsor of the Bill:

I am happy that the sponsor has taken the pains to carry out detailed consultation with some of our leaders in this sector to try and address some of the fears and concerns. But from the feelers I am getting today in this Chamber, it does appear maybe that has not gone far enough, we still have the residue of these fears. I want to plead that this Bill not be killed here, it should be allowed to go for public hearing so that whatever concerns the sponsor and others were not able to address in the course of their consultation, and they could be addressed in the public hearing.

(Senator 13)

In a dramatic twist of narrative, some legislators claimed that they have not seen copies of the draft Bill:

Mr President, we have not seen the main body of the draft Bill, ordinarily, we should have seen it. We do not have the draft Bill before us; I do not just want to change the title only to conflict with the body. My suggestion is, let her re-present it again together with the draft Bill so that we know whether the Bill is consistent with the title.

(Senator 14)

The Sponsor of the Bill swiftly responded and narrated how she had circulated the Bill to all members. She also mentioned the enthusiasm and willingness of some of the male senators to co-sponsor the Bill:

Mr. President, about two or three months ago, I circulated copies of the Bill and some people even wrote letters to say they will be co-sponsors of the same Bill. I have a list of 62 members of this Chamber who said they will co-sponsor it.

(Senator 10)

The Senate President stressed the need to convince all legislators in order to secure their buy-in:

It is good to make efforts to reach out to stakeholders outside but when a Bill comes here, the clean Bill of health somebody outside gives to it does not make it healthy enough when it comes to the Floor because Senators' decisions may be informed by so many other considerations. So, I believe

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that what we need to do is to come to an understanding of how this Bill can be accepted as all the interests are addressed.

(Senator 15)

In a swift response, the Sponsor asserted that contrary to the claim of non-consultation, every legislator was engaged:

Mr President, I am sorry to say to you that most of the Senators were engaged, even the Christian Senators were engaged and everybody was made to understand. In fact, we got Professor Mustapha who reduced everything to verses in the Qur'an and it was not until we have finished all of this and put everything together that we came. So, if you still want us to engage after that, it means we will engage for the next six months and then where do we go from here. But the ball is in your court, your Excellency.

(Senator 10)

However, the Senate President stressed that it is not in his powers to kill Bills nor give life to it. He noted that every parliamentarian must be carried along:

The ball is not in my court, the engagement I am talking about is, we lobby ourselves here as parliamentarians. If I have a Bill and someone says he does not understand it, there is nothing wrong in talking to that person. If at this point, we are divided, this Bill is not likely to survive even outside. What is wrong in engaging our colleagues? But if you feel you do not need to engage anyone, it is alright.

(Legislator 15)

A male senator stressed the need for further consultation, noting the need to tread cautiously. He alluded to the position of the sponsor of the Bill as grandstanding, and that the world will not collapse if the Bill is killed.

There is nothing wrong in re-presenting a Bill but we must be very careful, this grandstanding will not pay. We may be doing ourselves and the country for whom we are making these laws a lot of justice if we do some further consultations to take care of those sensitive issues which seem to bother some Members of this Chamber and the outer population of our great country that we are making these laws for. I see nothing wrong in the advice. We are humans; this idea that it has to happen or the world will collapse is a fallacy. I advise that my very dear Colleague should consider deeply the idea of withdrawing this Bill for now and re-present it after the consultation is made.

(Senator 16)

The Sponsor pleaded with the National Assembly member to consider the objectives of the Bill and what the nation stood to benefit. The Bill was subsequently withdrawn by the sponsor, albeit forlornly:

The Bill is not about me, it is not about anybody, it is about Nigeria, about our future, about children and about tomorrow. So, if we pass the Bill, it is to our credit that we are making tomorrow better for 60% of the population. However, I believe the way to go is to step it down and see if we can convince the two or three people who are against certain aspects of the Bill and then we will come back at a later date. Thank you.

(Legislator 10)

These sentiments expressed by the senators about the Bill are quite revealing. For one, the clamour for continuous consultation indicates underhand tactics to frustrate the passage of the Bill. This shows why the push for the passage of gender-related Bills suffer setback in legislature. The male-dominated legislature is committed to preserve the patriarchal hegemony leaving women in the periphery of political arena.

Discussion

In this section, we discussed the results (the themes) of the research findings, contextualising them within the existing literature whilst highlighting fresh issues. Suffice to say that the study set out to find out why the push for the passage of the GEOB in the 9th Assembly was negated by the male-dominated National Assembly. To begin with, the findings are quite revealing as they shed fresh insight on Nigeria's patriarchy and political culture (Diamond, 1993). It also highlights the implications for framing policy responses to the problem of under-representation of women in government. Specifically, the opposition to the Bill centred on the following themes: (i) the constitutionality of the Bill; (ii) granting some advantages to women over men conflict with extant laws; (iii) conflict with customs, tradition and religion; and (iv) inadequate consultations with the legislators.

The constitutionality of the bill

Arising from the subthemes: (i) the subsisting Supreme Court judgement debars legislation on issues already addressed by the Constitution, (ii) the supremacy of the Constitution; and (iii) the provision of Section 42 of the Constitution, it is safe to infer that the legislators used these reasons as alibi to 'kill the Bill'. Citing the subsisting Supreme Court judgement may not have any material implication on the passage of the GEOB. For all intents and purposes, the provisions of the Bill embody women's bill of

rights documented in the United Nations and Africa Union Charters and Conventions that have been ratified by Nigeria (UN, 1945). Also, the allusion to the supremacy and provisions of Section 12 of the Constitution may pass for fallacy of reification. As pointed out by Pogson (2012), opponents of gender-related legislation in Nigeria fall victim to the fallacy of reification by treating gender roles as unchangeable. They argue that preserving traditional gender norms is essential for societal stability, wrongly equating them with immutable laws of nature. This fallacy ignores the need for progress and perpetuates discrimination against women, hindering their empowerment and equal rights. Thus, the findings have far-reaching implications when it comes to the amount of advocacy, coalition-building, stakeholder engagement, etc. required to persuade the male-dominated legislators who control access to the political sphere. For instance, Legislator 12's argument which says, "It starts and ends here, not any other person outside" indicate the magnitude of the groundswell of support required to get the buy-in of the legislators. To corroborate this, Legislator 12's assertion that "any nebulous attempt by anyone of us who is sponsoring a Bill to say that he/she is not going to consult with members is going on slippery ground". Thus, peering through these sentiments underscores the imperative of devising pragmatic strategies to securing the buy-ins of the male-dominated parliament. Perhaps, and deservedly so, the most compelling relevance of these findings points to where we may find the answers to the problem of under-representation of women in government. Consequently, Dercon's (2022) conceptualisation of "elite bargain" offers policy alternatives to be explored. Dercon (2022) argues that the answer to move the needle regarding paving access to political decision-making bodies lies in 'development bargain', whereby a country's elites - including powerful influential legislators, shift from protecting their own positions to gambling on a development-based future. Yet, how these political elites see the future and the requisite trade-off in the development bargain matrix remains to be explored.

Inadequate consultations with the legislators and granting advantages to women over men conflict with extant laws

Another finding that stands out from the results is that whilst some legislators denied not to have been consulted nor seen copies of the Bill, evidence suggests otherwise. Evidence revealed that copies of the Bill were not only circulated but also, nearly 57% of the 109-member senate had expressed willingness to co-sponsor the Bill. Thus, the clamour for continuous consultation indicates underhand tactics to frustrate the passage of the Bill. This shows why the push for the passage of gender-related Bills suffers setbacks in legislature. The male-dominated legislature is committed

to preserve the patriarchal hegemony leaving women in the periphery of political arena.

The results reflect those of Messerschmidt (2019) and Acosta et al. (2020), who found the same pattern of practices that perpetuate the dominance of men in society. These findings are consistent with Ette and Akpan-Obong (2022), who stress women's arduous path to the political arena. It also aligns with the findings of Michealson (2013), which highlights men's resistance to women's empowerment, and dovetails with the recommendations of MacPherson et al. (2015), which stresses various approaches to women's empowerment. Regarding the insufficient consultations with the legislators, it may be inferred that the male-dominated legislature is committed to preserve the patriarchal hegemony irrespective of the assurances to support the Bill during consultations. As mentioned in the literature review, the vociferous common cause to 'kill the Bill' points to the patriarchal and sociocultural structures in Nigeria (Omotola, 2007; Jega, 2001) and the institutions that support it. For instance, the recognition of the common, sharia and customary laws by the Constitution to suit the religious and cultural peculiarity of different parts of the country is a major setback to crystallise the passage of the GEOB. This implies that the legislators tend to justify their opposition to the Bill based on its infringement on existing laws. **Again**, the clamour for continuous consultation signposts underhand tactics to frustrate the passage of the Bill. This inference dovetails with Connell's (1987) Hegemonic Masculinity Theory, which provides some explanation as to why women are under-represented in government in Nigeria.

Conflict with customs, tradition and religion

Some of the issues emerging from this finding relate specifically to the notion that women's access to the decision-making arena threatens traditional and religious belief. These results reflect those of Arowolo and Aluko (2010) and Okoosi-Simbine (2012), who also found that socio-economic and cultural norms are major factors responsible for women's under-representation in government in Nigeria. This result is consistent with Hughes and Paxton's (2018) views and provides some explanation as to why women are left on the periphery of the political space. The findings raise intriguing questions regarding the nature and extent of the gender norms in relation to women's access to the political sphere and their empowerment. For instance, the sentiments expressed by Legislator 8 suggest that the empowerment of women is a frontal attack on religion, traditions and customs. Most striking was the fears that the empowerment of women will embolden women to challenge men's authority, and ultimately reduce men to 'Mijin Hajiyah'. As he put it "This will give rise to a situation wherein our Northerner language

that said, *Mijin Hajiya*; you will become *Mijin Hajiya* at the end of the day, where your woman can move around, and interact any how under your watch”. To clarify terms, *Mijin Hajiya* is a Hausa language that connotes a weak man. These fears are consistent with the findings by Boyd (2013) and Wyrod (2008), where attempts to reconfigure gender power relations were considered excessive and were resisted. The implication of these findings points to the need to deepen advocacy that allays these fears and connotations. In other words, the advocacy that focuses on the empowerment of women as economic agents contributing to national development and not as objects to be subjugated should be deepened. Despite the appeal of the adopted theoretical framework – Connell’s Hegemonic Masculinity Theory, our findings show that the male dominance in governance in Nigeria is a product of the underlying four themes. In essence, it is safe to infer that religion, culture, male-dominated state institutions such as the supreme court, legislature (caused by poor education of women), and so on, have constructed patriarchal society. This implies that women’s political-oriented legislations hold promise to deconstruct patriarchy in Nigeria. For instance, Rwanda surmounts the problem of male dominance in government on the wings of the political actors’ commitment to promoting gender equality and with the accompanying gender responsive legislation. This argument aligns with the view of Zaborszky (2017), who shed light on how Rwanda overcame male dominance of the political arena, pointing out that the domestication of women’s political rights in the Rwandan Constitution, 2003, guaranteed gender-responsive legislation, thus putting women’s political empowerment at the forefront of the government agenda.

Conclusion

The study has critically examined why women are under-represented in government in Nigeria, and the strengths of the study included the in-depth analysis of the problem. The results presented fresh insights signifying that the male-dominated National Assembly spared no effort to defend and preserve the patriarchal hegemony. However, these findings cannot be extrapolated to suggest that all men in the male-dominated National Assembly ‘killed the Bill’. The evidence of the genuine support of the Bill by a few men – considered outliers, signposts a promising future support for the Bill and ultimately increase women’s representation in government in Nigeria. This implies that advocacy groups may leverage the support of these outlier groups of men to deepen the conversation about the merits of the Bill. Further studies which take these variables into account, may need to be undertaken. In addition, the findings suggest that the allusion to inadequate consultation with the legislators indicates underhand tactics

to frustrate the passage of the Bill. Notably, the study shows that Dercon's (2022) conceptualisation of 'elite bargain' offers policy alternatives to be explored. Overall, the findings of the study add to the literature, presenting a broadened understanding of women's under-representation in government and underscoring the requisite framing of policies and approaches to addressing it.

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Chapter 10

Beyond Women's Representation and Good Governance in Nigeria: Interrogating the Role of Religion and Corruption

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Abstract

Women constituted more than 50% of the Nigerian voting population, yet they are hardly represented in elective and leadership positions. Women's representation in leadership and decision-making positions has seen significant progress globally. However, numerous barriers continue to hinder women's representation in Nigeria which hinder full gender parity. Amongst these barriers, religion and corruption emerge as pivotal factors. Religion, with its profound influence on cultural and societal norms, can either empower or restrict women. Corruption, on the other hand, undermines democratic processes and often marginalises those already disadvantaged, including women. This chapter therefore explores the intricate relationship between representation, good governance, religion and corruption in Nigeria using documentary sources. It was revealed that the roles of religion and corruption in shaping women's representation are complex and multifaceted. While both can pose significant challenges, they also present opportunities for positive change. By addressing these factors through targeted policies, public awareness and anti-corruption institutional reforms, it is possible to enhance women's representation and move towards greater gender equality. The chapter concludes that with greater awareness, an enabling environment, better political commitment and policies, women's political participation in Nigeria will improve remarkably.

Keywords: Corruption, Governance, Institutional Reforms, Policy Reform, Religion, Women's Representation

Introduction

Gender inclusion is important for inclusive and sustainable development. Despite this recognition, limited progress has been made in promoting gender inclusion and women's empowerment in Nigeria in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015). The outcomes of the 2023 Nigerian General Elections, where less than 5% of female candidates won their elections, further accentuate the poor state of women's representation in governance in Nigeria. Such a decline could undermine the concerns and interests of women in public policy and decision-making, undercut women's empowerment, and ultimately deter inclusive political, socio-economic and human development. However, it should be noted that the problem of under-representation of women in governance is not peculiar with Nigeria as many advanced democracies such as the United States continue to grapple with this issue (Ramos & Da Silva, 2020).

In spite of this global under-representation of women in governance, it should be noted that women's representation varies from country to country and larger representation is witnessed in the legislative arm of government than in the executive arm (Goetz, 2003). Established liberal democracies such as the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK) and Canada have recorded a general increase in women's political representation in recent years (Wineinger & Nugent 2020). For instance, in 2014, an increase in the number of women in the US's congress and state legislatures saw them occupy 19% and 24% of the seats respectively. Similarly, some of Africa's democracies made giant strides in increasing women's political representation. For instance, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, Mozambique, South Africa and Namibia have all recorded an increase in the number of women in their parliaments in recent years (Townley, 2019). Based on data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2020), current figures for women's representation in these countries as of 2020 are: Rwanda (61.3% lower house, 38.46% upper house), South Africa (46.58% upper house, 37.74% lower house), Namibia (43.27% lower house, 19.05% upper house), Mozambique (41.2%), Ethiopia (38.8% lower house, 32% upper house), and Uganda (34.9% lower house)

Paradoxically, from the statistics above of African countries, it appears that some of the African countries are relatively politically empowered when measured by the percentage of women in parliament, in ministerial positions, and the number of years that a country has had a female head of state in the last 50 years (Hausmann et al., 2006). For instance, while there has never been a female president in the US, arguably the most advanced democracy in the world, Liberia produced Africa's first elected female president, Ellen Sirleaf Johnson, in 2005. Two women have been elected president of African

countries since then: Ameenah Gurib-Fakim of Mauritius in 2015 and Sahle-Work Zewde of Ethiopia in 2018 (Ohemeng, 2019).

Even though some African countries have excelled at improving women's representation in governance, the socio-cultural contexts and entrenched patriarchal institutions in developing countries including Nigeria complicate the problem of women's under-representation in governance to a greater extent than in the Western countries. In specific terms, since 1999, the number of women (that is, above 50% of the population) in politics and decision-making bodies today does not reflect their numerical strength (Mohamed et al., 2015). This is noticeable as the national average of women's political participation in Nigeria has remained at 6.7% in elective and appointive positions, which is far below the global average of 22.5%; the Africa regional average of 23.4%, and West African sub-regional average of 15%. For instance, out of the 36 recently confirmed ministerial appointments by the administration now in power, only six are women, representing 16.7%. In the National Assembly, women constitute 5.6% of members of the House of Representatives and 6.5% of the Senators. Also, with the fifteen years of uninterrupted democratic governance (1999–2015), Nigeria is yet to produce a female governor in any of the 36 states of the Federation (Agbalajobi, 2010). This shows that Nigeria has not attained 30% affirmative action, as prescribed by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN, 1995). At the legislative arm, eight women were elected senators in 2007; the number dropped to seven in 2011, and rose back to eight in 2015, with eight being the highest number of female senators ever recorded in the country since 1999. The situation is not any different in the 360-member Federal House of Representatives, which recorded its highest female representation in 2011 with a total of 26 women elected (7.2%).

Over time, researchers have argued that the gender gap in governance in Nigeria is responsible for the slow pace of development, as excruciating poverty exists side by side with obscene opulence. For instance, according to the National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) (NPC, 2013), the maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity in Nigeria is one of the highest in the world, with an estimated 545 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births. 158 of every 1,000 children younger than five years of age die of preventable diseases yearly (Orude, 2014). Almost 70% of the population lives on less than \$2.15 per day while life expectancy stands at 52 years. According to the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), Nigeria has the largest number of out of school children (10.5 million) in the world (Orude, 2014).

Understandably, for development of any kind to be successful, a vantage position should be accorded to the women, as they constitute 49.5% of the population. In this regard, they should not be left out on the issues

of decision-making that could have effects on their lives. Their presence in decision-making at all levels of governance could enhance equal allocation and sharing of important resources between the sexes. The World Bank, the United Nations and many international organisations recognise that women's representation and voices in decision-making bodies can contribute to changes in laws, policies, service delivery, cultural perceptions, and social norms that over time will improve and enhance women's agency (World Bank, 2012). Therefore, when women are empowered as political leaders, countries experience higher standards of living, positive developments can be seen in education, infrastructure and health, and concrete steps are taken to help make democracy deliver (NDI, 2007).

The thrust of this chapter is that while countries like Malawi, Kenya, South Africa, France, Finland, Norway and Spain have introduced quota systems to address gender inequality in both elective and appointive positions (Klettner et al., 2016), in Nigeria, policymakers, traditional and religious leaders have not taken decisive actions to address gender concerns, hence the rejection of the Gender and Equal Opportunity (GEO) Bill by the Senate on the grounds of religion and cultural inclinations (Makinde et al., 2017). Further accentuating this situation of women's representations are the lack of effective government action; lower levels of female employment and education; sexist attitudes, sometimes but not always deriving from religious or traditional practices; a corrupt and patronage-based political system (Kelly, 2019). However, this study seeks to interrogate the role of religion and corruption in undermining effective women's representation in governance in Nigeria as this will further contribute to developing the existing knowledge on the issue.

Conceptual exploration

Exploring the concept of women's political participation and representation

Awofeso and Odeyemi (2014), in their study titled *Gender and political participation in Nigeria: a cultural perspective*, defined political participation as; a voluntary act which encompasses a wide range of political activities, including voting in elections, contesting for political and party offices, attending political rallies, joining political parties etc. Ezedikachi (2016) gave a similar conception that political participation is the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs, and the opportunity to register as a candidate to campaign, to be elected and to hold office at all levels of government. More so, Kelly (2019) observed that political participation includes voting, work

on election campaigns, engagement in the community, and contact with political leaders and attendance at demonstrations.

Above the activities of political participation are considered to be a 'free zone' to all qualified citizens, especially in liberal democracies irrespective of disparities in wealth, education and gender. Experiences in African countries generally, and in Nigeria in particular, show that certain cultural values have systematically over the years impeded the female gender from participating in politics, at least to a certain degree tend to re-define the tenets of participatory democracy. In this regard, Tamunosaki and Emmanuel (2019), quoting Roberts and Edwards (1991), opines that political representation could be said to be a process in which one person or group has the capacity usually formally established, to speak and act on behalf of a larger number of other persons or groups.

The idea of what constitutes political participation and how it relates to political representation is made succinct by the submission of Milbrath (1965), who classified political participation activities into three, namely, gladiatorial activities, transitional activities and spectator activities. Political activities such as holding public or party offices, canvassing for party funds, contesting at elections, etc. are classified under gladiatorial activities. Transitional activities include activities such as attending political meetings or political rallies, making monetary contributions to political parties, and so on. Spectator activities on the other hand include political activities such as wearing of party badges, caps, uniforms or emblems, running errands for political leaders, voting at elections, etc. In Milbrath's classification, political participation and political representation constitute the highest category of political participation - the gladiatorial activities. These activities had always favoured the male gender in Nigeria from independence to date. Available statistics on gender representation in public offices, especially, at the highest decision-making levels such as the offices of the president, state governor and local government chairperson, reveal that female representation was almost at zero frequency. Except in a few instances where women were elected as local government chairpersons, no women have ever in the history of Nigerian elections been elected as chief executive either at the national or state levels. Similarly, a summary of gender representation in the National Assembly during the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections, added together, shows that women were ridiculously under-represented by 5% in each of the two Houses of Assembly. Besides, no woman has ever ascended to the office of the Senate President, while the only female, Patricia Etteh, who was elected as Speaker of the House of Representatives in 2007, was impeached by a male-dominated House before the end of her tenure (Awofeso & Odeyemi, 2014).

Good governance: Definition and indicators

Governance is the process of organising and mobilising people and resources to achieve a common goal. It is the process of motivating people to participate actively in dreaming dreams and seeing the vision of a possible future, encouraging them to own the vision and use their energies, resources and possibilities to work cooperatively together to realise the virtues, dreams and possibilities (Asobie, 2012). Governance can be good or bad. In other words, there is good governance and bad governance (Odeh, 2015).

Good governance encompasses certain standard principles: accountability, transparency, civil participation, achievement of results and impact. Bad governance is featured by corruption, exclusiveness, opacity and focus on output rather than outcome (Akhakpe, 2014). Corruption therefore is a component of governance, notwithstanding bad governance or negation of good governance (Asobie, 2012). In like manner, good governance has been defined as the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs, and the complex mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens' groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations and mediate their differences. Accountability, transparency, participation and legitimacy are the core elements of good governance. Gender responsiveness is essential to all of these and is a measure of good governance. Analysis and action on gender issues, the participation of women as well as men in governance processes at all levels, and the recognition by institutions of women's rights and needs, are central to good governance as to poverty reduction (Aina & Olayode, 2011).

Good governance, amongst other things, must be participatory, transparent, accountable, effective, and equitable, as well as promote the rule of law. In upholding the rule of law, good governance must ensure the effective and equitable distribution of the state's resources amongst citizens and operate within the confines of well-articulated objectives of the government (Riman et al., 2023). In general, good governance symbolises a strong partnership between the state and society and amongst its citizens, linking transparency, the rule of law, and accountability (Al-Faryan & Shil, 2023). To this end, Akhakpe (2014) added that some characteristics of good governance include that: it is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimised, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society (Downer, 2000).

Contributing to the discussion of good governance, Anazodo et al. (2015) conceived the term from two perspectives; political and economic. Politically, Anazodo et al. (2015) describe good governance as the establishment of a representative and accountable form of government; which requires a strong and pluralistic civil society, where there is freedom of expression and association; sets of rules governing the actions of individuals and organisations and the negotiation of differences between them; and requires the primacy of the rule of law, maintained through an impartial and effective legal system; and finally requires a high degree of transparency and accountability in public and corporate processes. Economically, Anazodo et al. (2015) maintained that good governance requires policies to promote broad-based economic growth, a dynamic private sector and social policies that will lead to poverty reduction through policies and institutions that improve access to quality education, health and other services that underpin a country's human resource base.

Similarly, according to Alam (2009), good governance can only be accomplished in a system virtually free from abuse and corruption, and a system that gives due regard to the enthronement of rule of law. On this note, Kefela (2011) added that good governance is an essential precondition for any country to achieve income equality, full democratisation and sustainable economic development. The definitions of Alam (2009) and Kefela (2011) align with the World Bank's (1994) submission that good governance is "how power is exercised in managing a country's economic and social resources for development". As nations grow and integrate into the world order, there has been an outcry for good governance. Studies have shown that there exist six dimensions of governance: voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, the rule of law, and control of corruption (Lee et al., 2018).

It could be inferred from the above that good governance promotes inclusivity and elimination of all cleavages that undermine the effective participation of any member of society as a precondition for the attainment of sustainable development. Therefore, the idea of women's under-representation is an aberration of the tenets of good governance and responsible for the slow pace of development in most African countries, including Nigeria. This is because, as Cheng (2014) asserts, women possess a different method of governance from men; the former's method helps to achieve results through cooperation, empathy and concern for the less privileged. This represents a sense of team spirit towards achieving progress.

The role of religion on women's representation

This section explores the complex relationship between religion and politics in Nigeria. It will discuss how religious beliefs and institutions influence political decisions and governance, and the dual role of religion in either promoting or hindering women's participation in governance. This is because religion and patriarchal values seem to be instruments of women's domination and exclusion in most African countries, including Nigeria. This was rightly noted years back by Aina (1998) that with patriarchal values and the infusion of religion into politics, the Nigerian political setting has often promoted men's dominance in politics and political leadership, which aid the suppression of women's political aspirations and ambitions with differing experiences from the regions of the country. In this regard, the British Council Nigeria's (2012) report noted that Northern and rural regions see lower levels of female representation (British Council Nigeria, 2012). Kelly (2019) believes that while some commentators point to religion as a factor inhibiting women's representation and being responsible for the regional differences, it is clear that a number of socio-economic, cultural and geographical causes are at play. Data from the state level reveal regional variations in women's representation. Findings from a study titled *Can women break through? Women in municipalities: Lebanon in comparative perspective?* by Kassem (2012), revealed that gender inequality is a pervasive global phenomenon, especially in political circles. This is an indication that the issue of females' low representation is not peculiar to Nigeria.

The religious system in Nigeria is expected to advocate for women's liberation, freedom and more participation in decision-making. It is apparently that the status of the study of women in religion also reflects the status of women in society as a whole (Sibani, 2017). Religion plays a vital role in the cultural life of different spaces; it is deeply rooted in peoples' experiences and influences the socio-economic and political direction of society. Akindele & Dunmade (2020), therefore, believe that religion in Nigeria has encouraged certain women who have risen to significant positions and that there was no statistically significant difference between Christianity, Islam and other religion in their participation in the decision-making process. Adeogun (2016) therefore, maintains that different challenges have been identified in various studies on women and politics as inhibiting women's political participation. Some of these are vulnerability, fear of internal ostracism, and male dominance, stigmatisation, low level of education, meeting schedules, financing, political violence, religious and cultural barriers.

Contributing to the discussion of religion and women's representation, Para-Mallam, (2006) opines that women are negatively affected by the

religious values, norms and laws that are imposed on them, legitimising male dominance and leading to the marginalisation of women. This is even as everyone in Nigeria is granted equality under Nigeria's statutory and common laws, Para-Mallam maintained that this is merely in principle. In practice, the lives of many Nigerians are ruled by customary and sharia law. Merging religion with native customs affects women at all levels of society – grassroots and elite levels of society who, according to the patriarchal view, are not seen as complete human beings until they are married (Para-Mallam, 2006). This is further worsened by the fact that girls and women, through their religious education, are taught their beliefs regarding gender roles. Women then become conflicted. This is after being taught to accept their social roles and interests by the patriarchal religious societies. It becomes difficult for them to accept a feminist scheme that removes obstacles to women's abilities to function as human beings, and thus advance gender equality (Para-Mallam, 2006) hierarchies that exist in both Christian and Muslim laws that make it more difficult for women to seek gender equality.

In contrast to the submission of Akindele and Dunmade (2020) above, a study of several African countries by Isaksson et al. (2014) revealed that religious and traditional gender norms inhibit women's participation in some contexts. Kelly (2019) reports that in Nigeria, religious and traditional norms reinforce practices which inhibit women's political participation. Therefore, Orji et al. (2018) observe that some Nigerian political parties build their functionalities around religious and cultural norms, thereby enshrining some forms of gender roles. By doing this, these parties restrict women to ceremonial and support roles, excluding them from core political issues and decisions. Swamy et al. (2020) examined the effect of women's representation in parliament on corruption, using a micro-data set from 350 selected firms in Georgia. The study concluded that countries with cultural and religious bias have lower women's representation in parliaments, hence this increases the probability of corruption. Riman et al. (2023) had a similar finding that; "cultural practices and the country's religious inclination also play a huge role in determining women's involvement in democratic governance, especially in male chauvinistic society".

Similarly, Dim and Asomah (2019) found that a Christian religious affiliation significantly enhances Nigerian women's political participation. However, cultures and religions moderated by patriarchy usually privilege men in leadership positions over women (Orji et al., 2018). Within such patriarchal contexts, like in most Nigerian societies, women's representation in elective public office is negatively affected (Pyeatt & Yanus, 2017). In a culture that considers women as primarily home makers, the political participation opportunities that could have arisen from women's

participation in paid employment are often neutralised by the burden of homemaking (Orji et al., 2018). This is just as it was discovered by Samuel and Segun (2012), that male domination of political leadership in society is entrenched through the patriarchy system and religious orthodoxy are cultural factors that affect women's political participation.

Furthermore, the study conducted by Akindele and Dunmade (2020) titled *The role of gender and religion on women participation in decision-making process in Nigeria*, revealed that the relationship between religion and gender equality can be explained by the assertion that society with higher religiosity accepts the authority of religious teachers, who advocate a patriarchal organisation of society. It is obvious that those women, who adhere to the dominant religions, might also not be inclined to take part in their society's public life, because of their upbringing and social tradition surrounding them. The assertion of Akindele and Dunmade (2020) is in line with submissions of researchers on the two dominant religions, Islam and Christianity. For instance, Ejumudo (2013) discovered that though protestant religion is beginning to encourage women's prominence in public life, religious orthodoxy continues to place restrictions on the extent of females featuring in political activities. The instrument of sex segregation and purdah are found to restrict women's empowerment by limiting their exposure to interact with male and female constituents and to attend public meetings. These factors have consigned women to be subordinate to men and has created women's inferiority complex.

From the other religious perspective, Fahm's (2021) study titled *Muslim Women and the Nigerian Party Politics* revealed that the involvement of Muslim women in party politics in Nigeria was impeded by cultural and religious bottlenecks and not lack of participation. It concluded that emphasis should be placed on the complementarity roles between men and women in order to suppress the intolerance often encountered by Muslim women in Nigerian party politics. Hence, there is a need for the existing political parties and most especially the ruling party to take advantage of the complementary differences in order to create balance in political decision-making. On a similar note, some scholars searched for answers within societies' religious, cultural, and political systems. They argue that patriarchal practices and understandings, especially those based on religious teachings, are seen as serious hindrances to women's access to political power. Matland and Günemurat (2011), in their study titled *Women as Candidates: An Experimental Study in Turkey*, added that this obstacle is often seen as huge in countries where Islam is the dominant religion. This reinforces the earlier findings of Amusan et al. (2017), titled *Patriarchy, religion and women's political participation in Kwara State, Nigeria* confirms the influence of religion on women's representation in Nigeria.

The study discovered that patriarchy permeates religion through the skewed interpretation of religious text (Qur'an and Hadith) in ways that advance the entrenchment of male dominance in social life in the study area, and by extension, Kwara State.

Amusan et al. (2017) add that although politics has traditionally been masculine in nature, women have found their attempts at breaking the barriers largely unwelcoming by society especially in the context of hostile religious and patriarchal values. While this study affirms that there is a significant relationship between religion and women's participation in politics, it is important to reiterate that religious texts (in particular the Qur'an) did not contain any categorical pronouncements barring women from political participation in particular and social life of their community in general. This study examines the linkage between patriarchy and religion (Islam) and how both impact on women's participation in politics in Kwara State. The study finds that patriarchy permeates religion through the skewed interpretation of religious text (Qur'an and Hadith) in ways that advance the entrenchment of male dominance in political and social life, not just in the study area, but across most of Northern Nigeria. However, it is important to note that neither Islam nor Christianity disallows women's active participation in politics inclusive of contesting for important political positions. Rather what has been the practice is the use of misinterpretation of religious text (Qur'an and Hadith) to reinforce patriarchal stereotypes that women are not suitable to occupy important leadership positions on the basis of gender categorisation.

The above finding by Amusan et al. (2017) is in line with the findings of Doumato and Posusney (2003); Al-Khateeb (1998); Jarallah (1996); and Gazali (1990), who all argue that Islam views a woman as playing an integral role in all aspects of society. Thus, the use of texts of the Qur'an or Hadith to support the position that Islam is against women's participation in politics represents a dis-ingenuous way of advancing patriarchal values and entrenching a male dominant position in political and social life. This is particularly the case in Muslim-dominated Northern Nigeria, wherein politics is seen as men's exclusive preserve because of cultural factors that a dis-ingenuous interpretation of texts of the Qur'an and Hadith were deployed to reinforce and give legitimacy by religious leaders (Ekundayo & Ama, 2014).

Olubela (2023), Omotola (2007) and Udoh et al. (2020) confirm the influence of religion on women's representation. For Olubela (2023), in a study titled *Nigerian Women's Participation in Politics: Historical and Social Acceptance Issues*, revealed that the low participation of women in politics was fostered by marginalisation, discrimination, ethnicity, religion, and the nature of post-colonial politics. Government should eliminate structural and

legal obstacles that hinder women's participation in politics and decision-making and hold those obstructing them accountable. Omotola (2007) gives particular importance to the salience of the traditional belief and value system and how religious beliefs, values and practices reinforce tradition to entrench male dominance in social life and by corollary political participation and representation. On the part of Udoh et al. (2020), in their study titled *The influence of religion and culture on women's rights to property in Nigeria*, give a balanced view of the influence of religion on women's representation that culturally, women are viewed as inferior to men, and a male child is generally celebrated and allotted higher portions of properties. However, the tenets of both Islam and Christianity do not disregard the woman in terms of property rights and that the prevailing discrimination against women has no religious backing, but a misguided exploitation of the low educational status of women in Nigeria. This chapter therefore agrees with this submission of Udoh et al. (2020) and conform the assumption of Ukachukwu (2018) that the intersecting factors of gender, religion and culture put severe pressures on women, which tend to have a negative impact on their work-life balance.

The role of corruption on women's representation

An in-depth analysis of the nature and scope of corruption in Nigeria will be provided here. The section will examine how corruption undermines good governance especially as it relates to women's representation and whether women, when in positions of power, face unique challenges related to corruption or exhibit different behaviours compared to their male counterparts.

Generally, one of the selling points of the advocacy for women's participation in governance is driven from the argument that women appointed into administrative or political positions are less corrupt (Esarey & Schwindt-Bayer, 2017). This is because mainstreaming gender in governance is presumed to be a panacea against corruption. Said et al. (2016) present this argument in the following manner: "gender balance is achieved when women and men, boys and girls, have equal rights and opportunities to contribute to governance and contribute to society's development. Women and children are more adversely affected by the practice of corruption than men in society because of their vulnerability and dependence on men for daily upkeep. Thus, women are not readily exposed to/having much access to funds required to spend on corrupt officials or persons holding political power". Hence, it suffices to say that studies that attempt to justify the inclusion of women in governance have been based on the premise that women are more risk-averse than men. Since corruption is a criminal offence that attracts punishment, women are more afraid of being punished publicly (a disgrace that most

women would not want to face). Thus, women seek accountability while in public office and would work assiduously to promote good governance and reduce corruption in public office. What then is corruption, its implications and how does it impact on women's representation?

The United Nations (UN) Convention Against Corruption (UN, 2004) defined corruption as the "abuse of power for private gain". However, a clearer and more focused definition was offered by Transparency International (2016), that corruption is; "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain". Dialoke et al. (2020) add that corruption can be viewed as a change from the laws or general accepted rules for personal or selfish gain which is found in every organisation, be it a political, economic or social organisation, and it is an abuse, whereby public rules and processes are upturned by private agents who offer for personal or individual benefit and profit. On a similar note, Merkle et al. (2021) define corruption as an abuse of power for private gain, and its impacts are far-reaching in terms of stalling economic growth, diverting funds from essential infrastructure and undermining public confidence.

The above is an indication that corruption has no universal definitions about what specific sorts of conduct should be included or excluded. The complex nature of corruption and the many ways in which it operates in practice make the act of developing a universal index a complicated task. However, it should be noted that corruption takes various forms as highlighted in Table 21.

In a similar manner, in Nigeria, the official working definition of corruption, as provided by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) anti-corruption law includes bribery, fraudulent acquisition of property, fraudulent receipt of property, the use of pecuniary advantage, gratification, influence peddling, insincerity in advice with a view to gaining advantage, less than a full day's work for a full day's pay, tardiness and laziness. It also includes failure to report any case of inducement to the appropriate authorities (Akanbi, 2004).

Table 21: Categories of corruption

Categories of corruption	Description
Bribery	The act of dishonestly persuading someone to act in one's favour by a payment or other inducement. Inducements can take the form of gifts, loans, fees, rewards or other advantages (taxes, services, donations, etc.). The use of bribes can lead to collusion (e.g. inspectors under-reporting offences in exchange for bribes) and/or extortion (e.g. bribes extracted against the threat of over-reporting).
Embezzlement	To steal, misdirect or misappropriate funds or assets placed in one's trust or under one's control. From a legal point of view, embezzlement need not necessarily be or involve corruption
Facilitation payment	A small payment, also called a "speed" or "grease" payment, made to secure or expedite the performance of a routine or necessary action to which the payer has legal or other entitlement.
Fraud	The act of intentionally and dishonestly deceiving someone in order to gain an unfair or illegal advantage (financial, political or otherwise).
Collusion	An arrangement between two or more parties designed to achieve an improper purpose, including influencing improperly the actions of another party.
Extortion	The act of impairing or harming, or threatening to impair or harm, directly or indirectly, any party or the property of the party to influence improperly the actions of a party.
Patronage, clientelism, nepotism	Patronage at its core means the support given by a patron. In government, it refers to the practice of appointing people directly

Sources: Adapted from Johnson (2014), and World Bank (2012).

In relation to gender, corruption, which drains public resources and takes much-needed funds away from national economic development or social services, disproportionately affects women and the poor, who are most dependent on them. Women may also be in less powerful positions to challenge corruption when it occurs. Alternatively, they may face gendered forms of corruption such as the demand for sex in return for particular services or resources (Aina & Olayode, 2011). More so, an analysis of country-level data indicated that higher levels of women's participation in public life are associated with lower levels of corruption (Taiye, 2008). This assertion is

corroborated by the World Bank report (2012) that society is less corrupt and has high economic development when there is more equality between men and women (Campbell & Frederick, 2005). With reference to a study carried out by Cheng (2014), who opines that women leaders are less corrupt than their male counterparts, the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) (2020a) aver that the prevalence of bribery amongst men is 35.2%, compared with 23.9% amongst women. Although the prevalence of bribery decreased for both sexes from 2016 to 2019, the decrease was more marked amongst women than amongst men. This suggests that women may be more receptive to anti-corruption policies and awareness campaigns. There are various reasons why gender differences exist in bribe-paying. One could be related to the different role played by men and women within the household. The data suggest that the disproportionate exposure of men to bribery may be the result of the bribery transactions carried out on behalf of the household or other family members.

Several studies conducted support the above argument of gender dimension to the incidences of corruption. For instance, in a study by the UNODC (2020b) titled *Gender and Corruption in Nigeria*, it was revealed that in Nigeria, male public officials are 36% more likely than female public officials to make a direct bribe request, whereas female public officials are much more likely to receive an unsolicited bribe. While female officers are significantly less involved in corrupt practices than their male colleagues, this difference could be partially because of the fact that women are under-represented in decision-making positions where they can engage in such activities. In addition, the study revealed that male police officers are five times more likely to take a bribe than their female colleagues. More so, the study revealed that the differences are less marked for doctors and teachers or lecturers (the two public sector occupations with the largest share of women): where male teachers or lecturers are only 1½ times more likely to take a bribe than their female colleagues; male doctors are twice as likely to do so. The prevalence of bribery in relation to these occupations is also amongst the lowest in the public sector.

Tor and Terkula (2011) opine that the system of corruption that has infiltrated the Nigerian system has practically put women on edge and everything seems to be working against them in favour of men. Women generally appear to have little or no financial backing. They are, by nature, sympathetic, caring and think largely towards homebuilding, and hence, aspiring for public offices to enrich themselves is very rare. However, men who are virtually blank, have little sympathy for the suffering masses, in the event that they are in charge of public coffers, steal massively to build their political empires in the future. This scenario is evident in the many cases

of corruption scandals witnessed in Nigeria amongst top bureaucrats and politicians in recent times. In a related development, the study by Jha and Sarangi (2018), titled *Women and corruption: what positions must they hold to make a difference?* revealed a strong correlation between higher levels of women's political participation and lower levels of corruption.

Although, the study by the UNODC (2020b) and Tor and Terkula (2011) reflect the situation in Nigeria, corruption and gender issues are global phenomena, hence the plethora of other studies in this regard. For instance, the study by Stensöta et al. (2015) titled *Gender and Corruption: The Mediating Power of Institutional Logics* reveals that when analysing European Commission data from 30 European countries, there is no relationship between the number of women in public administration and levels of corruption; however, in the same study they do find that the higher the number of women in parliament, the lower the perceived level of corruption. A recent study by Bauhr and Charron (2021) titled *Will Women Executives Reduce Corruption? Marginalization and Network Inclusion*, shows that women, when they are newly elected as mayors, reduce corruption risks; however, when they are re-elected, the effect disappears. What these studies clearly show is that the "link between women's representation and lower-level corruption is context-dependent, and the effects of women representatives may therefore differ depending on the positions and platforms that women gain access to, and thereby potentially also vary over time.

Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer (2017) have demonstrated through the use of cross-sectional data that females elected into assemblies and parliaments have reduced incidences of corruption. More so, Dumont (2017) undertook a comparative study of women's participation in government using data from Rwanda and Bolivia. These two countries' choice arose from the fact that both countries have similar institutions with over 30% of female representation in the Lower House and have different levels of corruption. The study utilised quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques to show that corruption had significantly reduced when women were integrated into governance. The study demonstrated that increasing female participation in politics could reduce corruption, strengthen democratic governance, and institutionalise accountability.

Debski and Jetter (2015) examined the relationship between gender and corruption while controlling for country-specific heterogeneity using a panel framework. While applying a no-country-fixed panel effect, the study confirmed that women's involvement in governance reduces corruption. In specific terms, the study revealed that an increase in female participation in the employee workforce leads to a reduction in the level of corruption by 2½ index points. Swamy et al. (2020), cited in Riman et al.

(2023), examined the effect of women's representation in parliament on corruption using a micro-data set from 350 selected firms in Georgia. The study concluded that countries with cultural and religious bias have lower women's representation in parliaments, hence increases the probability of corruption and furthermore, corruption is less severe where women hold a larger share of parliamentary seats and senior positions in the government bureaucracy. The recent study by Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer (2017) titled *Women's Representation, Accountability and Corruption in Democracies* reveals that the empirical relationship between greater women's representation and lower perceived corruption will be strongest in democracies with high electoral accountability, specifically: (1) where corruption is not the norm, (2) where press freedom is respected, (3) in parliamentary systems and (4) under personalistic electoral rules.

Conversely, there are opposing views to the above submissions criticising the gender-responsive arguments as an antidote against corruption. One of such is Goetz (2003), who questioned the notion that women in governance will result in lower levels of corruption. Similarly, Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer (2017) opine that increasing the number of women in parliament has not been found to have a consistent effect on corruption. Alhassan-Alolo's (2007) study titled *Gender and Corruption: Testing the New Consensus*, added that male and female public servants in Ghana have similar attitudes towards corruption and are equally likely to engage in it. More so, Alatas et al. (2009), in their study *Gender, Culture, and Corruption: Insights from an Experimental Analysis*, came to similar conclusions that in India and Indonesia, there are no significant gender differences in attitudes towards corruption. Similarly, Vijayalakshmi's (2015) study on *Rent-Seeking and Gender in Local Governance* found that there is no difference in rent-seeking attitudes or actual levels of corruption between male and female elected representatives in India.

Bauhr et al. (2019) investigated the effect of women's representation in parliament in reducing petty and grand corruption using sub-national-level data for up to 182 regions in 20 European Union countries and found that the inclusion of women in locally elected assemblies is strongly negatively associated with the prevalence of both petty and grand forms of corruption. That is, there is no significant relationship between the number of women in parliament and lower levels of corruption. The study however, observed that women who seek political offices do so for two reasons: (a) the improvement of public service delivery, particularly the care-oriented services that benefit traditionally female-oriented sectors, such as education and healthcare, and (b) the breakup of male-dominated clienteles' networks, but not necessarily to reduce the incidences of corruption. In this regard, Esarey and Chirillo,

cited in Merkle (2022), revealed that this was confirmed in a 2013 study that showed that women's participation only affected corruption levels when the country already had strong political institutions. On a similar note, Alhassan-Alolo (2007) added that the reason for gender differential in corruption is that women might simply have less access to corrupt opportunities. Other researchers hold that women have less access to corrupt opportunities as they are excluded from many positions of power and networks. When more women gain access to political office, they can break up existing networks, which leads to reductions in corruption or at the same time, it might be the case that even with higher numbers of women representatives, the corrupt networks continue to exist, or include more women in those networks once they have achieved positions of power (Esarey & Schwindt-Bayer, 2017).

Even though there are back-and-forth arguments on whether or not increasing women's participation in governance helps to lower the incidences of corruption, what is certain is that the incidences of corruption affect the number of women elected or appointed to political positions. For instance, a study by Norris (2019) titled *Silver or lead? Why violence and corruption limit women's representation*, confirms that high levels of political corruption and political violence lead to a lower number of women elected to parliament. She finds that where corruption is common, women constitute roughly 3.9% of the legislatures, while when no corruption is present, the number of women in parliament rise to 13.6%. Many researchers find that electoral systems have an impact on the political participation of women (Matland & Brown, 1992; Norris, 2019) and corruption can be an additional barrier for women seeking to actually run for and be elected into public office, when, for example, illicit funds are used in elections (Norris, 2019).

Merkle's 2022 study titled *Anti-corruption and gender: the role of women's political participation* revealed that Kenya reflects similar problems with high levels of corruption and low levels of women's political participation. The study shows that corruption in the country not only hinders the participation of women, but also that of young people. Male-dominated patronage networks still dominate the political sphere, and while the number of women in politics has slowly been increasing, they seem not to have succeeded in breaking up these networks, as parties often include opportunistic women and exclude those who want to bring about change. The results of the studies by Dollar et al. (2001) and Swamy et al. (2001) reveal a similar finding: that the higher numbers of women in national parliaments seem to be linked to lower levels of corruption, and that there is a correlation between women's political participation and corruption.

Supporting the foregoing argument, Bauhr et al. (2019), in their study *Exclusion or Interests? Why Females in Elected Office Reduce Petty and Grand*

Corruption, corroborated the findings that analysing data from different parts of the world has found that higher levels of female representation in political leadership positions are linked to lower levels of both types of corruption. In an earlier study by Norris (1993), titled *Conclusions: Comparing Legislative Recruitment*, she opined that political parties are considered to be gatekeepers for women politicians and party structures play an important role in deciding women's chances for office. Kunovich and Paxton (2005) argue that women have to pass two filters to become public officials: first, they must be selected to run by the parties and then they must be favoured by the electorate. For the selection within the parties, however, research shows that corruption can severely hinder women's access to political office.

From the foregoing, Merkle (2022) maintains that the cross-country outlook also shows a link between women's representation and corruption. For instance, over the last decades a clear pattern occurred, indicating that there is a strong link between corruption and the political participation of women, even though the link might not always be straightforward. Taking a closer look at the data in Ukraine shows that the two large anticorruption elections have also resulted in higher numbers of women MPs (members of parliament). In particular, the 2019 election, which was won largely on an anti-corruption platform, has almost doubled the number of women in parliament. While it still remains to be seen if the increased number of women leads to lower levels of corruption, when looking at the current situation, certain elements can be highlighted that influence the role that women play in anti-corruption. He added that Indonesia showcased a similar scenario: "women's participation in politics is low, while corruption is continuing to be a major problem in Indonesia. This is in line with the existing research which shows that higher levels of women's participation are clearly linked to lower levels of corruption". Berenschot (2018) adds that Indonesia is dominated by rent-seeking patronage networks.

Studies within Nigeria confirm the findings from the cross-country experience. For instance, the study by Riman et al. (2023) titled *Does women participation in governance reduce corruption and income inequality? Empirical investigation from Nigeria*. The study observed that corruption harmed governance efficiency given the limited participation of women in parliament. The study further observed that increasing women's participation in governance has the remote effect of reducing the level of corruption in Nigeria as well as reducing income disparity in the economy. The study concludes that increasing women's participation in parliament should not only be encouraged for the sake of obtaining gender equality in parliament but because such participation has positive externalities such as

enhancing governance efficiency, increasing per capita income, and reducing the negative impact of corruption on the economy.

The foregoing arguments align to the fact that corruption knows no gender and often perpetuated by both genders. Regarding the female gender, Okonkwo (2016) makes a very apt submission that for the fact that corruption is so endemic, the women who are elected are often subjected to the country's patronage system. Resulting from this, the election of women does not, in most cases, lead to any substantive representation (seeking to weigh the influence of women in elected office against their roles according to their legitimacy and authority) for women. He documents numerous examples of corruption amongst female politicians, including 'first ladies project syndrome', whereby expensive projects led by presidents' wives have failed, often because of misappropriate procurement scams or embezzlement.

Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on the Intersectionality Theory developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, published in 1989 (Crenshaw, 1989). The main assumptions of the Intersectionality Theory include:

1. Intersectionality recognises that individuals have multiple social identities, such as gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and more. These identities intersect and interact to shape a person's experiences and opportunities.
2. The theory posits that different forms of oppression (such as sexism, racism, homophobia, amongst others) do not operate independently; rather, they intersect and compound, leading to unique and multifaceted experiences of discrimination and disadvantage. Intersectionality highlights how some aspects of an individual's identity may be highly visible and subject to discrimination (for example, being a woman of colour), while other aspects may be invisible or less salient in certain contexts.
3. It acknowledges that the experiences of individuals at the intersections of multiple identities may differ significantly from those who do not share the same intersecting identities. For example, the experiences of a black woman may differ from those of a white woman or a black man. Intersectionality Theory is rooted in the pursuit of social justice. It emphasises the need to recognise and address the structural and systemic inequalities that result from intersecting forms of discrimination.
4. Moreover, Intersectionality has practical implications for advocacy, policymaking, and social change. It calls for policies and interventions

that take into account the complexity of individuals' identities and experiences to create more equitable and inclusive societies.

Intersectionality Theory is highly relevant in explaining gender and politics in Nigeria. Nigeria, like many other countries, is marked by diverse social identities, cultures, and inequalities, and intersectionality provides a valuable framework to understand how these intersecting factors shape the experiences of women in politics. Nigeria is characterised by a diverse population with multiple ethnic groups and religious affiliations. Intersectionality theory recognises that women from different ethnic and religious backgrounds may face distinct forms of discrimination and varying opportunities in politics (Vasquez, 2016).

Therefore, recognising the intersectionality of identities is crucial for formulating effective policies and interventions. Policies that take into account the multifaceted identities of women in Nigeria can be more targeted and responsive to their specific needs and challenges (Hankivsky et al., 2014). In application, Intersectionality Theory helps shed light on both the challenges and opportunities for women's political engagement. It acknowledges that women's experiences in politics are not uniform and that strategies for advancing gender equality in politics must consider these variations (Nash, 2008). This is because Nigeria's political landscape is characterised by complex power dynamics influenced by ethnicity, religion, and gender. Intersectionality Theory offers insights into how these dynamics interact and affect women's ability to access political power and influence (Hancock, 2016).

Intersectionality Theory therefore, examines how various social identities (such as gender, race, class, religion, corruption) intersect and create unique experiences of oppression and privilege against women and undermine their effective participation in governance, especially the compounded impact of religion and corruption on women, particularly those who belong to other marginalised groups and how multiple forms of discrimination interact to further disadvantage women in the context of political and social representation. This theoretical framework provides a comprehensive lens through which to examine the complex interplay between religion, corruption, and women's representation. By applying these theories, researchers and policymakers can better understand the barriers to women's participation and develop more effective strategies to promote gender equality.

Methodology

This study relied on the documentary design using secondary data since there are a great deal of data resources and data sets available to address the concerns of this research. The following two guidelines are therefore adopted in accordance with the submission of Hagen-Zanker and Mallett (2013):

1. a literature search; and
2. capturing the grey literature, which involved hand-searching various pre-selected institutional websites.

Data presentation and analysis

Table 22: World Bank 2019 selected countries corruption and governance index

Countries	Corruption index	Women in governance	Governance effectiveness	Innovation	Economic decline
Advanced-income countries					
Denmark	87	39.11	1.87	58.40	1.60
Norway	84	40.83	1.89	51.90	1.90
Finland	86	47	1.98	59.8	2.90
Sweden	85	47.28	1.83	63.70	1.50
Low-income countries					
Botswana	61	9.53	0.33	25.40	5.80
Ghana	41	13.09	-0.21	25.30	5.7
Albania	35	29.51	0.11	30.30	6.0
Algeria	35	25.76	-0.44	24.0	6.30
Bangladesh	26	20.63	-0.75	23.3	6.10
Nigeria	26	3.38	-0.12	23.90	7.80

Source: World Bank (2019)

The data in Table 22 reveals the advanced- and low-income countries' corruption and governance index. It shows that Sweden, which is rated as one of the countries with the lowest record of corruption, has 47.28% of women's participation in governance. A further review showed that Sweden has a governance rating of 1.83 and an innovation rate of 63.7%. The possibility of facing severe economic decline is placed at 1.50%. Finland came in close succession to Sweden with a corruption index of 85 and 47% level of women's governance involvement. Finland has a governance efficiency level of 1.98 and

an innovation level of 59.8%. Given the high level of women's participation in governance, Finland has a possibility of 2.9% minimal economic decline.

Conversely, Nigeria presented a gloomy statistic with 3.38% of women's involvement in governance. This low level of participation of women in governance, gives Nigeria a negative value of -0.12 in governance efficiency, with the possibility of experiencing economic decline placed at 7.80%. Ghana seems to have a better outlook than Nigeria with 9.52% women's involvement in governance. With this comparable high level of participation of women in governance, Ghana has a positive value of 0.33 in governance efficiency, with the possibility of experiencing a comparable minimal economic decline of 5.80%. Some of the significant points here are that countries (Sweden, Finland, Norway) with increased women's governance involvement have a high governance efficiency level and a low possibility of economic decline. On the contrary, countries with low participation of women in governance experience a low rate of governance efficiency and a high possibility of experiencing economic decline.

In sum, the above statistics comparatively indicate that Nigeria has a negative value of -1.02 for governance effectiveness. This is the highest amongst the selected low-income countries studied. This figure could be interpreted as indicating that the Nigerian public service is downright perverse, with politicians who wholesomely and collaboratively exert corrupt practices in governance.

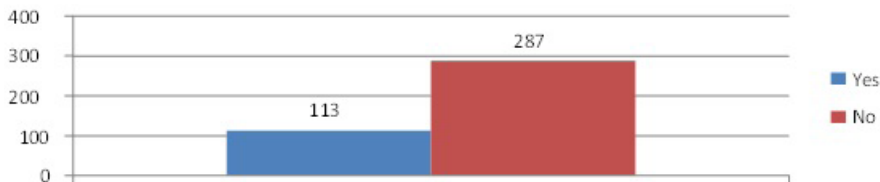


Figure 7: Perception of respondents on whether their religion allows for women's participation in politics

Source: Adopted from the study of Amusan et al. (2017)

An analysis of Table 22 shows that 28.3% of all the respondents believed that their religion and its principles do not expressly prohibit women from participating in politics, while 71.7% of the respondents believed that religion and its principles prohibit women's participation in partisan politics. Thus, the results highlight that a larger percentage of the respondents are of the opinion that religious teaching, principles and values restrict women's participation in politics.

Discussion of findings

From the analysis above, the finding shows that:

1. Corruption and its effects on women's representation can be seen from two perspectives. One, is the perspective that corruption has negatively affected the number of women holding elected positions, as the cost of running for election is exorbitant, with only male candidates having access to corrupt funds and buying their way through. Secondly, increasing representation of women in elected and public offices helps to lower the rate of corruption in a country. This is confirmed by Merkle (2022), that increasing the number of women in political office has the potential impact on reducing corruption at national, regional and local levels.
2. Quotas can be an important tool to increase the number of women, but for anti-corruption initiatives, women who are not part of existing clientelist networks must benefit from these quotas. This is in line with the submission of Kelly (2019) that the reasons easily adduced for low women's representation are lack of effective government action, low level of female employment and education, sexist attitude, a corrupt and patronage-based political system, and violence at elections
3. Thus, the results highlight that a larger percentage of the respondents are of the opinion that religious teaching, principles and values restrict women's participation in politics. This is even as some believed that religious provisions do not specifically prohibit women's political participation; however, some adherents of the major religion often misapplied the provisions of their scripture to undermine the effectiveness of women's under-representation. This is in accordance with the submission of Akindele & Dunmade (2020) that higher levels of religiosity in Nigeria tend to magnify gender inequality; however, every religious doctrine has a slightly different attitude towards the public participation of women
4. Corruption and religious inclinations and practices, though, undermine women's effective participation in politics, it also responsible for poor governance and slow development in the country; hence, the findings of Esarey & Schwindt-Bayer (2017) that increasing female participation in politics could reduce corruption, strengthen democratic governance, and institutionalise accountability as well as promote development.

Conclusion

The study explores the intricate relationship between corruption, religion, good governance and women's representation in Nigeria. It is the contention

of this study that women's representation in governance is an element of good governance that is capable of addressing the incidences of corruption, religious bottlenecks and promotes sustainable development. The study therefore concludes that women's participation in governance should be promoted to engender inclusive democracy, enhance governance efficiency, reducing the negative impact of corruption and religious challenges affecting inclusive governance.

Recommendations

From the findings, the following are recommended in promoting better women's representation by reducing the negative influence of corruption and religious practices undermining their effective participation:

1. Promote a sensitisation and advocacy campaign aimed at promoting religious interpretations and teachings that support gender equality. This is in addition to raising awareness about the detrimental effects of corruption on women's representation to educate voters about the importance of women's participation in politics.
2. Stakeholders, especially women's organisations and government, should create and expand support networks for women in politics, including mentoring programmes to help them navigate political challenges and also collaborate with international organisations and partners to share best practices and resources for advancing gender equality in politics.
3. Government should, through legislation, ensure that political parties implement internal reforms that will promote gender equality, such as inclusive candidate selection processes and holding of leadership positions within the party structure.
4. Policymakers should ensure policy interventions by implementing gender quotas and other affirmative action policies to ensure women's representation in leadership roles. This will also entail the strengthening of anti-corruption frameworks to equalise opportunities for women.
5. Building on the fact that female public officials have a lower propensity to solicit bribes than their male colleagues, arrangements should be explored for officials of both sexes to work jointly in conducting key assignments. For example, the improvement of the gender balance should be promoted amongst law-enforcement teams, which are particularly prone to soliciting bribes.

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PART 2

Party Politics, Electoral Systems and their Influence on Women's Representation in Governance

Chapter 11

Political Financing and the Inclusion of Women in Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract

The interplay between political financing and women's representation maintains an important relationship in the democratic development of Nigeria, a relationship which impacts on inclusive governance. It is premised on the fact that women's representation in politics and governance has remained abysmally low because of the lack of access to political financing. This chapter employs both primary and secondary data, relying on published materials and a modest literature review, as well as the use of questionnaires administered amongst six political parties. The chapter employs a multifaceted analysis, considering legal frameworks, cultural dynamics, and the role of financial support networks. The chapter employs content analysis as well as the use of graphs and tables to analyse the primary data. The findings indicate that amongst factors standing against women's political competitiveness and the ability of women's inclusiveness in governance are the prevalence of patriarchy. These factors also impinge on the overall representation of women in governance. The chapter recommends political parties' gender-specific funding initiatives, as well as regulatory and non-regulatory mechanisms to enhancing women's representation in Nigerian governance.

Keywords: Governance, Patriarchy, Political Financing, Political Parties, Women's Representation

Introduction

Political financing and women's representation in governance are two of the most trending themes in development debates surrounding Nigerian democracy in recent times. The intricate relationship between the two themes

come together in the growing body of literature and thought around gender, democracy and good governance. In interrogating these themes, the role of political parties as necessary gatekeepers of modern democracy and points of entry into politics comes to the fore (International IDEA, 2021). Similarly, political participation as an important tenet of democracy, is powered through the activities of political parties. Political parties provide for the internal party structure system, which allows potential candidates to obtain financial and professional support to be elected into public office. Within this framework, support for women within the party structure as candidates is crucial to enhancing and sustaining women's representation in the electoral process and in decision-making as a whole (Kandawasvika-Nhundu, 2013). Such support may take the form of adopting quotas for women at all levels of government, financial assistance; and promoting women's empowerment through mentorship and capacity-building, amongst others. However, Kandawasvika-Nhundu (2013) observe that more women lose the race at an early stage of primary elections at party level because of a lack of resources in comparison with their male counterparts. Non-accessibility of resources for women to support their political ambitions dissuades them from taking an active role in the electoral process in Nigeria. In recent times, much attention is focused on why women start from a position of inequality to be competitive with their male counterparts. The gender gap in Nigeria represents a major issue to be resolved if the country is to achieve the targets it set in its National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) (CBN, 2012) and for closing the gender gap in governance.

In Nigeria, the labour force participation rate for females is 52.1% and males is 65.5% for 2022, while the life expectancy for men in 2022 was 55.1 years and for women it was 57.2 years (NBS, 2023). In addition, the benchmark for gender global index is one, which signifies parity, however, the Nigeria 2023 global gender gap index was 0.64, showing wide gender disparities in health, empowerment and the labour market. This tends to restrict women's opportunities and freedom, giving them less interaction with others and fewer opportunities for independent behaviour, damaging their self-esteem, self-expression and limiting their autonomy and control over household resources, resulting in low political participation and leadership positions (WHO, 2024). This preposition stimulates the study's interest to examine and analyse the intricacies surrounding political financing and women's representation in governance with a view to identifying the inherent shortcomings and make recommendations that assist in formulating a policy and pragmatic programme of action for adoption in order to achieve the desired reforms in Nigeria. It comes with the assumption that political financing is critical to electoral success and the ability to access political

opportunities, and the backwardness of women in the Nigerian political space is closely related to the poverty of political financing opportunities.

Literature review

Conceptual exploration of political participation in Nigeria

Political participation is “behaviour influencing or attempting to influence the distribution of public goods” (Booth, 1979). According to Deth (2021), “political participation can be loosely defined as citizens’ activities affecting politics”. Supporting this assertion, Okolie (2004) perceives political participation as “freedom of expression, association, right to free flow of communication, right to influence decision process and the right to social justice, health services, better working condition and opportunity for franchise”.

From the above, it is clear that political participation is one of the key ingredients of democracy in its real sense. Especially taking into consideration the conceptualisation of democracy by Diamond et al. (1989), that democracy provides the equal opportunity platform for political participation and fairness (encourages inclusivity of all social strata, men, women, youth, people with disabilities (PwDs) and so on, in meaningful and equal proportion), such that no major (adult) social group is excluded, and a level of civil and political liberties, freedom to form and join organisations sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation are entrenched.

Since democracy does not ordinarily discriminate on the grounds of race, religion or sex, then restrictions experienced by women, youth and PwDs in Nigeria suggests a level of artificiality and human-made imposition. Participation is a development approach, which recognises the need to involve disadvantaged segments of the population in the design and implementation of policies concerning their well-being. The strengthening of women, youths and PwDs in all spheres of life has become a major issue in the development discourses as socio-economic and political development cannot be fully achieved without the active involvement of these groups in the decision-making process in all societies (Parrot, 2017).

Contributing to the discussion, Agbalajobi (2010) suggests that political participation entails several variables of participation but basically voting in elections, contesting elective (public) offices and so on. This, according to him, is different from representation. Representation is essentially the number of elective and appointive positions held as a ratio of the population of respective groups (women, men, youth and PwDs) in society. For instance,

the increase of votes cast by women in elections from 10% to 40% of total votes cast in eight years signifies a form of increase in participation. But when the number of women holding public offices is compared to men, it is relatively low, there is under-representation. That is, there may be an increase in participation of women and yet under-representation of women in politics, or there could be a high representation of women in politics and yet a low level of participation, depending on the standards used to measure participation; however, the former is rather common. The under-representation syndrome has been the discourse in academic circles and the need to address the factors inhibiting the fair and equal representation of women in the scheme of political activities. Interestingly, the 1999 Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) recognises states, rather than gender and other social categories, as the basis for representation in governance.

In a similar manner, Shojaei et al. (2010) conducted a study titled *The Financial obstacles of women political participation Iran*. The findings of their study reveal that inadequate financial resources act as the structural obstacles of Iranian women in top political positions. Barber et al. (2016), in their study titled *Gender Inequalities in Campaign Finance*, reveal that male candidates raise substantially more money than female candidates, as male donors also give more money to male candidates while female donors to political parties give approximately equally to men and women. The combined effects are that there are gender inequalities in campaign finance, but they may not have immediate consequence for women's representation.

This study therefore aligns with the submission of Abdullahi et al. (2019), that for the purpose of inclusivity and appreciating the essence of involvement of all groups in society in the decision-making process, then political participation should be seen as the active involvement and engagement by individuals, including women, men, youths and the PwDs in political processes that affect their lives. The act of active engagement should include voting, standing for office, joining of political parties or to take part in political campaigns of the political parties and to exert influence in the decision-making process through public debate and dialogue with the representatives who they elected or through their capacity to organise themselves; or exercise public power by holding public office at different levels of administrations – local, regional, national and international.

The procedural process of nomination and recruitment in elections

In the majority of cases of democratic jurisprudence, participation and representation in governance involves periodic elections. In Nigeria in particular, there are three-stage processes of election into offices. According

to Nkereuwem (2023), the first stage is for candidates to indicate intention in their respective political parties and nominate themselves. Second, candidates contest in the party primary elections and whoever wins becomes the party's official candidate. Finally, candidates contest for the office election alongside other political parties during the general elections. During these phases, money is spent for both legitimate and illegitimate (clandestine, criminal and immoral) purposes. According to Miruka (2003):

the legitimate items that often feature in the elections budget of any candidate include; nomination fee, transportation (vehicles, fuel, spares, licences, insurance), allowances for agents and campaigners; publicity; hire of security personnel and hire of meeting/campaign venues etc. While the illegitimate expenses which nevertheless occur include; bribery of voters with cash and materials (i.e. vote buying), hiring of thugs to intimidate, sabotage and sometimes physically brutalize opponents, hire of hecklers to disrupt the campaign speeches of opponents, purchase and destruction of voter cards in opponents' strongholds to reduce the latter's chances of winning etc.

The legitimate and illegitimate costs of the above activities are testimonies to the fact that an election is resource-demanding and resource-draining. It is not surprising that the data available confirms that the level of women's participation and representation in Nigerian politics is low, as women have never reached more than 10% at both Senate and House of Representatives since the return to democracy in 1999 (INEC, 2023). This is because women frequently have less access than men to the resources needed to successfully contest for an election (Ballington & Kahane, 2014).

In all the stages of electioneering processes, raising money to gain the party's nomination is one of the greatest challenges that women prospective candidates face, as raising money very early is the initial financing required to launch a campaign for their candidature. The preliminary stage of gaining exposure and building name recognition, travelling and organising a campaign team and ultimately winning the party nomination engulf a lot of resources, which is mostly difficulty to realise by women. This is more so that raising money at this preliminary stage is self-financing as such efforts often come from the candidates. Financial challenges encountered after winning the nomination is another major obstacle for women as party support may increase and greater visibility may attract additional sources of funding (Ballington, 2012).

Instructively, recruitment and nomination of candidates constitute a very important part of the processes for political parties to address in order to promote women's representation in governance in Nigeria. Political parties as

a vital link for achieving equality and inclusive representation in governance need to organise the party structures and integrate women in the politburo (Maimouna, 2020) because they have firm control over the nomination of candidates for elected offices (Ballington, 2012). Section 84(1) of the Electoral Act (2022) empowers political party to nominate its candidate which is done by holding party primaries. A cursory glance at the All Progressives Congress (APC) Constitution in Nigeria distilled in its Article 19(iii) on the “Screening and Selection Committee(s)” where the committee is saddled with the responsibility of “screening of party aspirants for nomination or election” into offices while Article 20 of the APC Constitution enjoins the “Electoral College of delegates to conduct indirect primaries for the purpose of nominating a candidate...”.

Despite a clear and unambiguous provisions in Article 20(IV)(e) of the APC Constitution (APC, 2019) for having rules and regulations that have a gender balance within the constituency covered by the Party, it has been observed in practice that the selection and nomination of candidates are in the hands of a few party leaders, which makes it very difficult for women to compete on equal footing with men as they seem to be typically excluded from the ‘all boys’ networks (Ballington, 2012). Thus, selecting or nominating women at this primary stage is critical and this shows a clear link between them being elected in primary elections and their access to finance. In evidencing this position is the view expressed by Joy Phumaphi (Phumaphi et al., 2020), the Co-Chair of the UN Secretary General’s Independent Accountability Panel for Women, Children and Adolescent health thus:

the current political setup is designed to favour men, recruitment is done by existing leader, who in this case recruit new people into the parties that they are leading- another man. Mentorship will be men to men. Lack of resources for women hinders them to break through the hostile set up under the existing electoral system.

Therefore, there should be clear, transparent and implementable political parties’ guidelines that should be finance-friendly that can incorporate rules guaranteeing women’s participation and representation in governance.

Review of the sources of political financing in Nigeria

Section 225 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, as amended) deals with finances of political parties in Nigeria (Does the section mention women or gender? If not, why not, and if it does, what does it say?). Also note that this provision is not equivalent to giving financial help to aspirants and candidates of the

party, especially women. By the combined effects of Sections 225 and 226 of the 1999 Constitution and Sections 86 and 89 of the Electoral Act, 2022, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is empowered to monitor, inquire into and assess campaign finances, and parties' source of and management of funds. However, it is instructive to note that an election in Nigeria has become an expensive affair. Political aspirants or candidates from the under-represented groups, especially women, find it challenging to secure the substantial sums of money usually required to run a campaign and win an election. This argument has been evident for instance, in the cost of APC forms for the presidential election of 2023 which was N100,000,00,0 while that of governorship was N50,000,000. The Senatorial election form was N20,000,000, the House of Representatives' form was N10,000,000, and the House of Assembly's form was N2,000,000 (ChannelsTV.com, 2023). Beside the above expenses for showing of interest and nomination forms, Section 88(2)-(7) of the Electoral Act, (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2022) stipulated the limits of election expenses, which from all indications show that pursuing any of these elective positions may be difficult to secure by some aspiring women (In both PDP and APC women do not pay for nomination forms at all levels, only for expression of interest).

The limits are aimed at ensuring that the cost of campaigning remains affordable especially for women for the purpose of guaranteeing an effective and efficient electoral participation and representation, thus, discouraging corrupt practices and decreasing the role of money in influencing policymaking. Despite the penalties for contravention of the limits of campaign expenses under Section 88(9) – (11) of the Electoral Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2022), it has been evident that the election expenses of the political parties and candidates overshot the limits in the 2023 general election. The penalties for the contravention of the above provision worsen the situation as the penalties seem to be meagre and not strong enough to serve as a deterrent for any candidate who overshoots the limit of election expenses prescribed in the extant laws.

It is pertinent to address the financial barriers that hinder the representation of women and equalise the situation by reviewing the available sources of finances from which women can tap into to finance their political ambitions and increase their representation in governance across all levels. Unfortunately, leaning on or relying on donations for election has also been limited as the INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission) has been empowered to place a limitation on any amount or assets which can be donated to any party under Section 87 of the Electoral Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2022). This provision is gender-blind as it does not exclude

women aspirants, which should have been a leeway for women aspirants to raise more funds to finance their elections.

Instructively, reviewing the resources available for election for women can be categorised into public, political party and private funding initiatives.

Public Funding

Governments in many countries are using public funding to encourage political parties to nominate candidates from under-represented groups and enable them to become elected by tying the provision of public funding to the enforcement of electoral quotas where they exist. Public funding gives political parties financial incentives to meet the quota target, or penalises them if they fail to meet the agreed proportion of candidates from under-represented groups (Agrawal & Hamada, 2021). Agrawal et al. (2021) add that gender-targeted public funding has two distinct avenues. First, the eligibility of a political party to receive a certain amount of public funding (or all of it) is connected to the level of gender equality between the candidates it puts up for election (or manages to get elected). In the second, a certain proportion of public funding that a political party receives is formally earmarked for gender-related activities, including training and development of female members, developing a gender action plan, or gender-sensitisation within the ranks of the political party.

Because of the importance of public funding for ensuring inclusive democracy, several countries often make provisions for the funding of political parties for three purposes; one to provide incentives to political parties to include more women as electoral candidates; two to improve the capacity of individual women to run successful campaigns for party nomination and winning the election; and thirdly, to undertake strategic work within parties to improve attitudes and support towards gender equality. Experiences from some countries suggest that about 70% of countries provide direct public funding to political parties. However, only 17% of countries have gender-targeted public funding to promote women's political participation (International IDEA, 2020). This is perhaps the gap in public funding and women's political representation.

The first use of gender-targeted public funding is found in Finland, where in 1974, a certain proportion of public funding was earmarked for activities to enhance gender equality (Ohman, 2018). Article 18 of the Colombia Bill 1475 (Congress of Colombia, 2011) affirms that public funding must be earmarked for "effective inclusion of women, youth, and ethnic minorities in a political process." It emphasises that "in any case, parties and movements will allocate in their annual budgets a sum not less than 15% of the State contributions that they were granted to conduct political and

electoral training courses for the effective inclusion of young people, women and ethnic minorities in the political process.” In addition, 5% of state funding for political parties must be distributed as an incentive for those who gain seats for women candidates. Furthermore, as there is a voting threshold that parties must reach in order to obtain seats and maintain their legal status (Casas-Zamora & Falguera, 2016). This means that political parties that failed to meet the minimum women’s representation over time will be deregistered.

Similarly, in Kenya, according to Article 26 of the Political Parties Act 2011 (ORPP, 2011), at least 30% of the direct public funding provided to political parties should be used for “promoting the representation in Parliament and in the county assemblies of women, persons with disabilities, youth, ethnic and other minorities and marginalised communities” (Casas-Zamora & Falguera, 2016). In France, gender-targeted public funding was introduced in 2000. It provides that if the gender gap between all candidates presented by a political party was greater than 2% (in practice, greater than 51% men and 49% women), the public funding received by that party would be reduced. The reduction was originally set at half of that gap, later increased to two-thirds. Since 2014, it has been 1.5 times the gap. This means that if a party nominates 60% men and 40% women (in other words, a gap of 20%), its public funding is reduced by 30%; if it were to nominate no women at all, it would forfeit all public funding that it would otherwise have received (Pacific Women in Politics, 2000). As a result of these provisions, the proportion of female candidates and elected parliamentarians has increased.

Political Party Funding

Political parties are expected to play a vital role in addressing the gender funding gap. Especially in moving beyond legislated measures to adopting their own initiatives to promote equitable participation, also raising funds on behalf of under-represented groups with limited access to political funding. In their study, Khushbu et al. (2021) reveal that political parties are a vital link to achieving equal and inclusive participation of women, as they play a crucial role in not only the candidate selection and nomination process, but also in the administration of political funds, including public funding for political activities.

In some countries, political parties have adopted voluntary initiatives to level the playing field for women candidates, including reducing and waiving nomination fees and establishing fundraising mechanisms (Ballington & Kahane, 2014). In many countries, however, women candidates often receive little or no financial assistance from their political parties. In order to support women in their quest for political office, political parties can help women raise funds for political campaigns by, for example, establishing

fundraising networks, reducing or waiving membership and candidate registration fees, creating funds within the party aimed at supporting women candidates, providing them with subsidies or in-kind contributions such as cost of childcare, support towards transportation, and campaign materials, or setting ceilings on nomination and campaign expenditures.

Wanigasinghe (2022) submits that allocating a certain minimum amount of funds within a political party solely for women to represent the party is one option to overcome the problem of women's political under-representation to a large extent. However, this is not a complete solution to the problem. Introducing regulations on campaign financing such as controls on how much can be spent per campaign is an added measure to ensure that financial limitations do not discourage women's participation.

In the Republic of El Salvador, the Frente Farabundo Martí Para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) party supported women candidates for their campaigns by setting up an electoral committee which raised funds for women candidates by seeking donations and organising fundraising events. The funds went towards promoting women candidates through media exposure, as well as printing of T-shirts and posters with the names of women candidates and training of women for effective engagement at elections (International IDEA, 2021). The experiences from these countries explains how funding from political parties help to bridge the gap in political representation and governance.

Private Funding

Khushbu et al. (2021) state that public funding and party-level initiatives can relieve the financial burden that women candidates face; however, they are often insufficient. As a result, women are increasingly relying on private sources of funding. Unfortunately, even private sources are not easily accessible by women, who can have limited access to the public sphere, including moneyed networks. The absence of women from these networks hampers their ability to raise funds to campaign effectively. In some countries, partisan networks have been raising funds through member contributions to support women candidates.

On a similar note, Cantrell et al. (2020) reveal how politicians rely heavily on private funding in Nepal. Given the costs of campaigning in Nepal, which put a financial strain on all potential candidates, men and women alike are beyond the funds provided by the government and political parties; resort is therefore tailored to raise money for their campaigns either by selling their ancestral properties, taking loans or seeking donations from businesspersons, although these fundraising methods are more accessible to male candidates. More so in Bulgaria, the largest amounts of campaign

funding come from private and business donations (UNDP, 2007). Campaign funding in Colombia can be private or public, and in the 2014 elections for Congress, private funds represented 70% of the total cost of the campaigns (Casas-Zamora & Falguera, 2016).

One of the most celebrated private interventions for funding of women's election expenditure and encouraging women inclusiveness is the EMILYs List (EMILYs List, 2024). The EMILYs list is a US political action committee (PAC) founded in 1985 that helps pro-choice Democratic female candidates become elected to office. It does so by recruiting and training women candidates to run for office at every level across the country, supporting their campaigns through research, communication, fundraising, and mobilising women voters. Comprised of five million members, EMILYs List has raised over \$500 million in the last thirty-five years, becoming one of the largest financial resources for minority women seeking federal office. It has helped elect 116 pro-choice Democratic women to the House, twenty-six to the Senate, sixteen to governors' seats, and over 1,100 women to state and local office (Hamada & Agrawal, 2020). This success indicates the relationship between political financing and the ability of women to be victorious in elections and access governance processes.

Challenges of gender-targeted political financing

"In spite of advances in incorporating women into politics, the gender perspective has not yet penetrated the area of political funding..." (Laura, cited in Griner and Zovatto, 2005). This explains the challenging situation of women in politics in accessing the needed funds for effective participation in electioneering processes leading to their representation. Studies (Shannon, 2007) show that female candidates have more difficulty securing funds for their campaigns. Below are some of the reasons why women find it difficult to access adequate funds for effective political participation:

Incumbency factor

One of the most relevant factors regarding the impediments that women face in accessing funds is incumbency. Because of the fact that most women tend to be newcomers to politics, they must first establish themselves in the political arena, which puts them at a disadvantage against male politicians who are already well-known and have amassed wealth by virtue of the positions they have held over time (Global 50/50 Campaign, 2007). Even when they attain a position of political power, women are usually put in charge of less financially juicy areas like gender and children's policies, healthcare, education, or migration. Their disadvantage is even more prominent when

placed against a person who has already held a position in office and does not need to fight for recognition.

Since the corporate elite is male-dominated, the political gender gap continues to grow. A committee reported headed by Karen (2019) found out that in Canada, incumbent candidates are rarely challenged when seeking re-nomination, and that incumbent candidates tend to receive greater financial resources, support and visibility during an election campaign compared to non-incumbent candidates. According to a representative from the Privy Council Office, “there is an incumbency advantage, and that generally seems to support men.” The research findings further revealed that female incumbents are more ‘precariously placed’ than their male counterparts and are therefore responsible for the availability of more funds to the male counterparts.

According to International IDEA and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, electoral candidates in Colombia enjoy fundraising opportunities if they have the support of a political group or the advantages of incumbency. Emerging female leaders can thus face more complex financial limitations than men already on the inside lane of Colombian politics (Rodríguez & Dával, 2014).

Political affiliation

The nature and size of political parties that women belong to also plays a vital role in their access to political funding. Bigger parties are more likely to attract donations, especially from large corporations, while smaller parties’ candidates must rely more on their political party for support. The political gender gap is thus also affected by party affiliation, with candidates from the small parties to which the majority of women belonged places them at a disadvantaged position in terms of access to funding (Feo et al., 2021).

The role that political financing plays in the under-representation of women or minorities cannot be underscored. Although, some countries are already taking measures to reduce this gap and ensure that political campaigns are fairer; however, no appreciable results have been recorded so far. For instance, Aili and Khabure (2014), in a study titled *Women’s Leadership as a Route to Greater Empowerment: Kenya Case Study*, stated that although political parties in Kenya are expected to use at least 30% of their funds to promote women candidates, this has not been fulfilled. Ohman and Lintari (2016) add that lack of political party support to women candidates disadvantages them more than their male counterparts. Therefore, women who are financially empowered are in a better position to run successful political campaigns and fully participate in politics, as economic constraints

and the ever-increasing costs linked to political campaigns will unfortunately continue to hinder their ability to vie for political offices.

In a study conducted by Miruka (2003), titled *Financing for politics – which way for women in Kenya?*, it was found out that one of the sources of political financing is the political party that one belongs to. Political parties advance some funding to their candidates, perhaps not all candidates, but at least those who are perceived to have a realistic chance of succeeding. One must therefore seek to understand women's standing regarding these and concluded that inchoate women politicians may have a slight disadvantage in this area because of the traditional marginalisation of women from the public domain, especially when political parties provide funding to all their nominated candidates using a graduated scale, which considers incumbency, the acknowledged financial capacity of the candidate and specificity of the requests by candidates.

In a related study titled *The Political Participation of Women in Kenya* conducted by Kenyatta (2023), it was revealed that political parties do offer limited support to their candidates for their political campaigns. Although these parties are eligible for public funding as per the Political Parties Act of 2011 (ORPP, 2011), this framework is structurally discriminatory as it tends to fund large and short-lived parties, while blocking mini and more long-lasting political parties. These mini parties are vital because of the role that they undertake in championing women's participation and as the preferred political vehicles for women who choose to run independently outside the party frames.

Access to Economic Opportunity

Globally, men earn more than women and women occupy a disproportionate number of poorly paid and unprotected jobs, including in the informal sector and migrant labour pools (UNDP, 2007). Amongst others, socio-cultural drivers and gender expectations lead to women having lower levels of income and education than men in Nigeria (CBN, 2019). First, women typically earn less than men, and their incomes are often designated for day-to-day household spending (such as food, clothes, and cooking fuel). This leaves them with little or no disposable income with which they can purchase larger goods, make investments, or save and participate in active electoral governance. Women may therefore encounter barriers over the course of the nomination and election processes that their male counterparts do not (Karen, 2019).

The British Council report on Girls Education in Nigeria, (2015) provides an instructive picture of the situation that poverty, gender norms, and traditional practices, including early marriage, increase the risk of

premature school dropout and unemployment, particularly for women. Such perceptions mean that girls are more often burdened with household chores. This limits their capacity to regularly attend classes or pursue gainful employment outside of the home. Restricted access to education also impedes women's access to high quality, well-paying jobs. As a result, women are more likely than men to be vulnerably employed or unemployed. In fact, their male counterparts are nearly twice as likely to hold wage-earning jobs (World Bank, 2017).

Experiences from some countries portray the effect of lack of access to economic opportunity as instrumental to poor political funding for women's representation. For instance, the Rawal and Agrawal (2016) conducted a study on *Barriers to Women's Land and Property Access and Ownership in Nepal* and found that women's property ownership is below 50% and numbers are even lower amongst women from marginalised groups, with less than 8% of Dalit women owning property. The study also found that despite the increase in women's property ownership, this is not indicative of women's decision-making power over the use of the property, its revenues or major expenses. Therefore, as women continue to face unequal access to property rights, they consequently have less control over the funds generated from property ownership, adversely affecting their access to funds for political activities. Furthermore, Aili et al. (2014) note that women in Kenya generally have less funds and are unlikely to be office holders. Most women in Kenya lack avenues to property entitlement despite the Constitution guaranteeing them this; they legally own 1% of land, while those who own land collectively are 5% to 6% (World Bank, 2004).

Patriarchy

For women aspiring to run for elected office, patriarchal mindsets can be barriers for women aspirants, in addition to lack of access and control of funds. A study conducted by Cantrell et al. (2020) found that several female candidates did not have input on decisions on the use of their families' properties – that is, taking loans against the property or selling property to fund election campaigns – or that they were financially dependent on male family members.

Research by Atem & Lopa (2023) titled *Young Women in Political Institutions in South Sudan: Lessons from Lived Experiences* reveals that politics is capital-intensive. South Sudan is patriarchal; many women depend on their husbands or other male relatives because men own families and communal wealth. "Appointed or elected, political positions are lobbied for," says a young woman politician. To lobby, campaign, and effectively engage or serve your constituency requires material resources that women, young or old,

usually lack. Even within political parties, individual members with resources are deemed worthier. In other words, operating in a male-dominated space where men hold social, political, and economic power, women, especially young women in politics, are vulnerable and prone to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Theoretical framework on women's representation in governance

This study draws upon the Theory of Empowerment. Of all the various perspectives, the social-psychological perspective by Zimmerman (2000) is most relevant. The central argument is the belief that the Social-Psychological Theory emphasised the transformative capacity of empowerment. The goal of such empowerment is to foster change by equipping people with the needed resources to enhance their well-being and enable them to solve their own problems. Consequently, it will mean an intentional ongoing process involving mutual resources, critical reflection, caring and group participation through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources (Cornell Empowerment Group, 1989).

Since the acquisition and retention of political power requires material resources and is of great importance in all political systems with competitive popular elections, which evidently the men have more access to, there must therefore be a deliberate intervention to empower the women to have greater access to and control over money as a means of improving their political participation.

Methodology

The study adopts a survey design to generate the primary data through the use of survey questionnaires. The combined effect of these approaches is that it will help to integrate the opinions of researchers as published in documents and the practitioners (political class) on the issue of political financing and women's representation in Nigeria. The structured questionnaire was administered to sixty-seven respondents comprising the serving and past female legislators with the representatives of six political parties as well as individual women aspirants, candidates, and elected officials. Because of limitations of time, space and resources, the questionnaire was administered to six political parties from their head offices in Abuja. The data collected were analysed using simple percentages.

Some demographic characteristics of the respondents will help. Were they men, women, youths by gender, women leaders, or what category of

respondents? Are the respondents related to the financial decisions of the political parties?

Table 23: Background Information of Sampled Population of Data Collection

Participants	Number of respondents	Location/Study area
APC	10	ABUJA
PDP	10	ABUJA
APGA	10	ABUJA
LP	10	ABUJA
ADC	10	ABUJA
ADP	10	ABUJA
Female Senators of 10 th Assembly	03	ABUJA
Representative Members of 10 th Assembly	04	ABUJA

Source: Author's field survey, 2023

Presentation of results

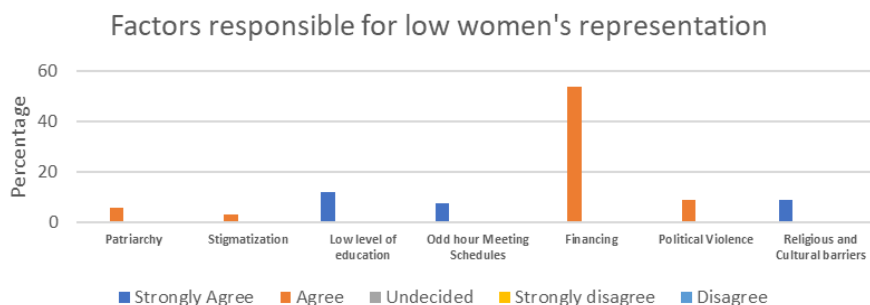


Figure 8: Factors responsible for low women's representation

Source: Author's field survey, 2023

Figure 8 shows that the factors responsible for low women's participation are multi-faceted including low level of education, meeting schedules at odd hours, political violence, religious and cultural barriers, stigmatisation, patriarchy and finance. Of these factors, inadequate finance seems prominent because politics the world-over and particularly in Nigeria involves a lot of money, and since women are not economically empowered compared to their male counterparts, this limits their level of political attainment. Unequal

access to productive resources is a very strong constraint against women's empowerment to political participation. This is sometimes caused by easier access of men to land through inheritance, hence the need to investigate the factors responsible for poor funding of women's representation.

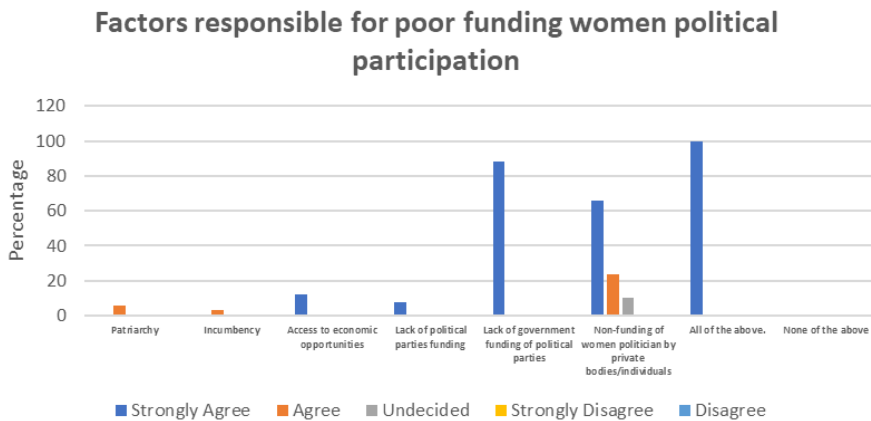


Figure 9: Factors responsible for poor funding of women's political participation

Source: Author's field survey, 2023

Figure 9 reveals that several factors are responsible for poor funding of women's political participation; incumbency, access to economic activities, patriarchy, lack of funding by political parties and government, non-funding of women politicians by private bodies and individuals.

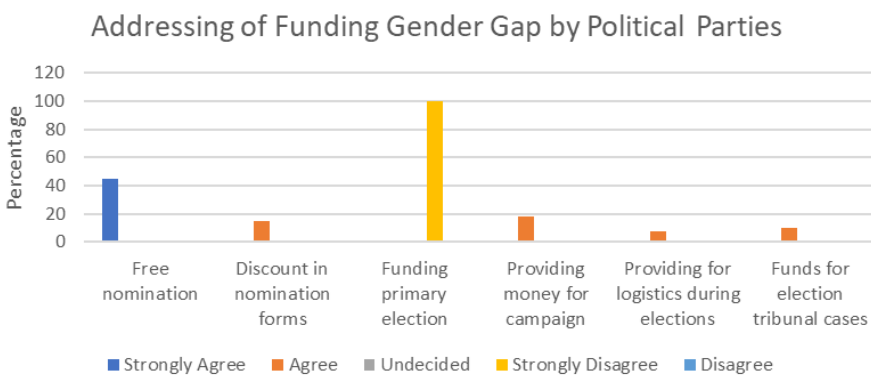


Figure 10: How have political parties addressed the gender funding gap?

Source: Author's field survey, 2023

On the role of political parties in promoting women's representation, it is clear from Figure 10 that free nomination forms is the most popular strategy adopted by political parties in Nigeria to engender more women's participation, while some parties only discounted the cost of the nomination forms. Financing campaigns, providing funds for logistics during elections and pursuing cases at the tribunal after elections are scarcely promoted by political parties. Competing for political positions in Nigeria requires huge finance and most Nigerian women who seek elective positions could not afford meeting the financial obligations therein, despite the wavers giving to women aspirants by some of the political parties. And so, they could do little or nothing to outweigh their male counterparts.

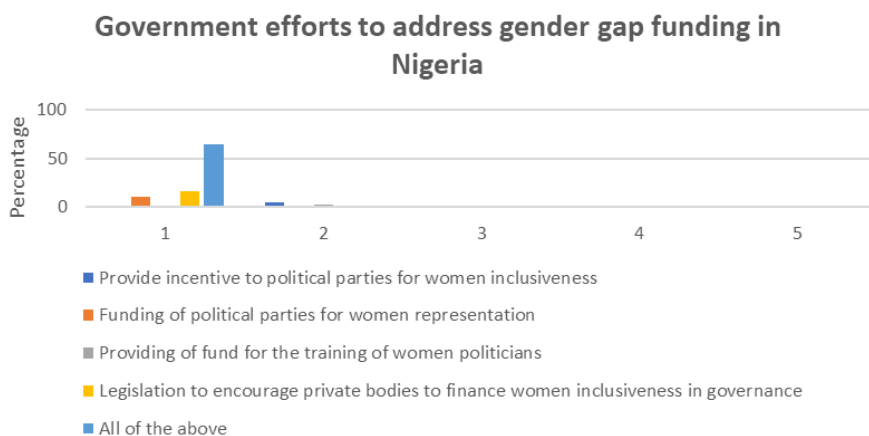


Figure 11: How has government addressed gender gap funding in Nigeria?

Source: Author's field survey, 2023

Figure 11 shows the abysmal role of government in Nigeria in addressing the gender funding gap. Government had over time not taken an appreciable role in bridging the funding gap of women to improve their political participation and representation. It is also obvious that efforts by the government to provide incentives have not been targeted at empowering women; rather a mere provision of incentives to political parties for women's inclusiveness, funding of political parties for women's participation; providing of funds for the training of women politicians and legislation to encourage private bodies to finance women's political participation may be seen as misappropriation of funds without clear directions of such funds.

Discussion of findings

From the data analysed above, the findings show that:

1. The study reveals that the shortage or lack of finance constitutes the major challenge to women's representation in Nigerian political leadership. The inadequacy of funds for women narrows their representation. Other factors are incumbency, access to economic activities, patriarchy, lack of funding by political parties and government as well as non-funding of women politicians by private bodies or individuals. This finding is similar to the submissions of Wanigasinghe (2022), Cantrell et al. (2020) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) (2020), all of which reveal that unequal access to funds for female candidates, reinforced by patriarchal attitudes of political stakeholders, adversely affects their political representation.
2. Political parties in Nigeria, other than the free nomination forms for women vying for elective positions, which have proved not to be inadequate, have failed to develop other strategic policy frameworks for empowering women and promoting their representation, as practiced in other countries. For instance, Colombia requires every party and political movement to allocate at least 15% of the state funding they receive to training activities for increasing political participation amongst women, ethnic groups and young people, while in Kenya, 30% of the public funding to political parties is reserved for women's political representation (Casas-Zamora & Falguera, 2016).
3. Similarly, the study reveals that the Nigerian government has not enunciated policies to address the gender financing gap in Nigeria to improve their political participation and representation. This is at variance with practices in other countries. In France, Kenya, Colombia and others, governments specifically provide funding to political parties and the enjoyment of such funding depends on the gender representation guaranteed by the political parties. Wanigasinghe (2022) and Khushbu et al. (2021), submit that allocating a certain minimum amount of funds within a political party solely for women representing the party is one option to overcome the problem of women's political under-representation to a large extent, and that in almost all countries that have introduced gender-targeted public funding, the number of women in parliament is higher today. However, attributing this increase to financial measures must be made with caution, and only after analysing individual country contexts and other legislative and non-legislative measures introduced at the same time. These include reform of the electoral system, adoption of provisions related to quotas and reserved

seats, changing attitudes and perceptions, and advocacy by interest groups, amongst other factors.

Conclusion

There are several factors responsible for the low women's representation in Nigeria; however, inadequate finance is the most fundamental determinant of women's political success which is relegated to the background by political parties and the government. This is because there are no constitutional provisions or any legal framework that have a specific provision of boosting the financial capacity of women that can serve as salvation to women's political ambitions. The author cannot conclude for sure that access to political funds is the overriding consideration in the inability of women to win an election, however, it can be concluded that women face more obstacles than men in seeking political office and one of these obstacles is the lack of access to funds for political representation in Nigeria. Drawing on global examples, this chapter highlights successful strategies implemented in other contexts to enhance both political financing transparency and women's representation. The countries examined as case studies in this chapter provide practical insights and potential models for adoption in the Nigerian context. The chapter further concludes by reiterating the urgency of addressing both political financing and women's representation as interconnected elements of a more inclusive governance paradigm in Nigeria. It underscores the potential positive impact on democracy, social development, and the overall well-being of the nation.

Recommendations

To improve political participation and representation of under-represented groups, especially women, in Nigeria the following measures are recommended:

1. Government through the legislation by the National Assembly should create financial incentives for all registered parties to nominate more candidates who are women in general elections and by-elections. Such funds should be developed to fund only political parties that have achieved an appreciable number of women's representations of at least the minimum 35% as per the affirmative action targets. If public funding to political parties is introduced, consider introducing a funding scale, whereby political parties adhering to women's representation requirements receive larger amounts than parties that do not.
2. In addition to the 35% affirmation action, the National Assembly should provide legislation that bars the holding of government seats either

- elective or appointive beyond two-thirds of the same gender as practiced in most other countries (e.g. Article 27 (3) of the 2010 Kenya Constitution – Constituent Project (2010)).
3. For effective women's representation, political parties have to adopt a number of measures. First, parties should seek ways to reduce the resources needed for election campaigns by identifying low-cost campaigning approaches and start fundraising early. Second, eliminating all primary election expenditures including nomination fees for talented female candidates who may not have access to independent finances or resources. Third, provide targeted support to potential female candidates to begin fundraising, building support networks for campaigning and working on possible campaign strategies.
 4. The Federal Government should through legislative houses in Nigeria enact laws that will encourage private bodies to specifically fund women's political representation as tax rebate mechanisms for their businesses. This will help to reduce pressure to raise large amounts from personal wealth or having connections to wealthy networks for aspiring candidates, for which women are at a disadvantage. In this regard, civil society can support potential female candidates to start fundraising early to carefully consider low-cost, high-impact approaches such as social media-based outreach and campaign strategies.

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Chapter 12

Women's Experiences in Nigeria's Elections: Challenges, Opportunities, and Implications for Gender Equity and Democracy

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Abstract

Despite Nigeria's progress in promoting gender equality and women's rights, women continue to face significant challenges when participating in the electoral process. This study aims to examine the experiences of women candidates and voters in Nigeria's electoral process, focusing on the challenges that they face, the opportunities available to them, and the implications of their participation for gender equity and democratic governance. Using a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and in-depth interviews, the study will explore the extent to which women are represented in electoral contests and the factors that hinder or facilitate their participation. The study will also examine the experiences of women voters, including their attitudes towards women candidates, their motivations for voting, and the barriers that they face in accessing polling stations. Preliminary findings suggest that despite legal and constitutional provisions that promote women's participation in politics, women in Nigeria face significant barriers to entry and participation in the electoral process. These barriers include cultural and traditional attitudes towards women in politics, limited financial resources, and insufficient support from political parties

and institutions. The study will contribute to the growing body of literature on women's political participation in Nigeria, highlighting the need for more targeted interventions to increase women's representation in politics and improve the overall quality of democratic governance in the country. The study's findings will be of interest to policymakers, civil society, and researchers working on issues of gender equity and democratic governance in Nigeria and beyond.

Keywords: Electoral Process, Gender Equity, Nigeria, Women Candidates, Women Voters

Introduction

Nigeria, as one of the largest democracies in Africa, plays a crucial role in shaping the continent's political landscape (Eghosa, 2018). However, despite its democratic strides, the country still faces challenges in achieving gender equity and inclusive governance. The representation and participation of women as candidates and voters in Nigeria's electoral process have been areas of concern, raising questions about the effectiveness of gender equality measures and democratic governance (Duru, 2020).

Women's participation as candidates and voters in Nigerian elections has long been a topic of interest for researchers, scholars, and policymakers. Previous studies have revealed significant gender disparities and challenges faced by women in the electoral process (Akande & Okoro, 2017). These disparities stem from deeply entrenched societal norms, cultural biases, and structural barriers that limit women's access to political power and decision-making. As a result, women are under-represented in political offices and face significant obstacles when engaging in the electoral process (Duru, 2020).

Research conducted in Nigeria has highlighted several key challenges faced by women candidates. These challenges include limited access to financial resources, lack of support from political parties, cultural stereotypes, and violence and intimidation during campaigns (Amuwo, 2014). The research has also documented the experiences of women voters, shedding light on issues such as voter suppression, limited awareness of political rights, and social pressures that influence their voting choices (Ogunbodede, 2019).

The Nigerian government, civil society organisations, and international partners have recognised the need to address these challenges and promote gender equity in the electoral process. Various policies and initiatives have been implemented to enhance women's political participation. For example, the National Gender Policy in Nigeria provides a framework for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment across various sectors,

including politics (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2006). Additionally, organisations such as the Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) and Women in Politics Forum (WIPF) have been actively advocating for women's political rights and supporting women candidates (WRAPA, 2021; WIPF, n.d.).

Despite these efforts, achieving gender equity in Nigeria's electoral process remains a significant challenge. Women continue to face barriers that limit their participation and representation in political offices. This chapter seeks to delve deeper into the experiences of women candidates and voters in the Nigerian electoral process to understand the underlying factors contributing to these challenges. By examining these experiences, the chapter aims to identify opportunities for enhancing gender equity, strengthening democratic governance, and promoting inclusive political participation. It does this by examining the experiences of women candidates and voters in Nigeria's electoral process. The objectives of the chapter are:

1. To examine the experiences of women candidates in Nigeria's electoral process.
2. To explore the experiences of women voters in Nigerian elections.
3. To identify the challenges and barriers faced by women candidates and voters.
4. To assess the opportunities and strategies for enhancing gender equity in the electoral process.
5. To analyse the implications of women's participation for democratic governance in Nigeria.

The significance of this chapter cannot be overstated. As Amzat and Dahiru (2020) argue, understanding the barriers faced by women candidates and voters is essential for designing effective strategies and policies to address these challenges. Mbeki (2019) similarly argues that promoting gender equity in the electoral process not only ensures the representation of diverse voices but also contributes to the overall development and democratic governance of Nigeria. By examining the experiences of women in the electoral process, this chapter will provide valuable insights and recommendations to inform policymakers, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders working towards gender equality and inclusive democracy.

Nigeria's electoral process is marked by gender disparities and challenges that hinder women's participation as candidates and voters. This essay has provided an overview of the background and context of the study, highlighting existing literature and research on women's experiences in Nigerian elections. It has discussed the gender disparities, challenges faced by women, and relevant policies and initiatives aimed at promoting gender

equity and democratic governance. By examining the experiences of women candidates and voters, this study aims to contribute.

The researcher used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative in-depth interviews, to gather data from women voters and candidates. Surveys provided statistical data on the experiences of a large number of women voters, while in-depth interviews will offer detailed narratives from a smaller number of women candidates. A stratified random sampling strategy ensured diversity in the sample, considering factors like age, education, and income level. Surveys were conducted online, while in-person interviews allowed for more in-depth exploration of experiences. This approach aimed to provide comprehensive insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by women in Nigeria's electoral process. The researcher used statistical analysis to analyse the quantitative data from the surveys. They used thematic analysis to analyse the qualitative data from the in-depth interviews.

Methodology

This research employed a distinct methodology to examine the experiences of women candidates and voters in Nigeria's electoral process, exploring the challenges, opportunities, and implications for gender equity and democratic governance.

The study utilised an online survey distributed via email and social media platforms, allowing for diverse participation across the country. The respondents were self-selected. This means that anyone who was interested in participating in the study and had access to the Internet could complete the survey.

The research analysed both quantitative data obtained from 200 questionnaire respondents and qualitative insights gathered through interviews. The respondents in the study are the voices of women in Nigeria's electoral process. They are the women who have run for office, the women who have voted, and the women who have witnessed the challenges and opportunities that women face in participating in democracy.

The distribution of respondents by type of election or year contested is not specified, but this only serves to highlight the breadth of women's experiences. Whether they have been candidates, voters, or observers, these women have a unique perspective to offer on the state of gender equity in Nigerian elections.

The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics to gain an understanding of women's participation in the electoral process,

including their voter turnout rates, candidacy rates, and elected positions. The qualitative data from the interviews was analysed using a narrative approach to identify common themes and experiences amongst women candidates and voters such as interviews with them. It can be used to understand the individual experiences of women and to identify common themes and challenges.

The distinct methodology of this research allowed for the collection and analysis of rich and nuanced data on the experiences of women in Nigeria's electoral process. This data provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by women, as well as the implications of their experiences for gender equity and democratic governance.

Public awareness and perceptions of gender equality initiatives and policies

Progress in Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Rights in Nigeria

The results indicate that 70% of the respondents were aware of initiatives or policies aimed at promoting gender equality in Nigeria. When asked about the impact of these initiatives, 55% of the respondents believed that they have positively influenced women's rights and gender equality, while 25% felt that the impact was limited, and 20% were unsure or had no opinion.

Experiences of women candidates in Nigeria's electoral process

Cultural and traditional beliefs were identified by 80% of the respondents as influential factors in women's decisions to participate in politics. Financial difficulties were reported by 65% of the respondents, with limited access to campaign resources and funding hindering women candidates. Regarding support from political parties or institutions, 75% of the respondents reported instances where women candidates received limited support. The under-representation of women candidates was perceived by 85% of the respondents as negatively impacting gender equity in political decision-making.

Opportunities for women candidates in Nigeria's electoral process

Awareness of legal and constitutional provisions supporting women's participation in politics was reported by 60% of the respondents. Increasing awareness and support for women candidates amongst the general public was suggested by 70% of the respondents. Women's networks and organisations were recognised as playing a significant role in supporting women candidates by 75% of the respondents.

Experiences of women voters in Nigeria's electoral process

When asked about perceptions of women candidates, 45% of the respondents believed that women candidates were perceived less than their male counterparts. Motivations for voting varied amongst the respondents, with 30% stating a desire for gender equity and women's representation as a key factor. Barriers faced in accessing polling stations were reported by 40% of the respondents, including issues related to transportation, infrastructure, and safety concerns. The engagement of women voters was seen by 65% of the respondents as crucial for achieving gender equity in political representation.

Additional findings

In addition to the main findings, the study revealed specific challenges faced by women in the electoral process. Some respondents mentioned social stigma, gender-based violence, and lack of access to political networks as significant barriers to women's participation.

Discussion

The findings suggest that progress has been made in promoting gender equality and women's rights in Nigeria, with a considerable awareness of initiatives and policies amongst the respondents. However, challenges persist for women candidates in the electoral process, including cultural biases, financial constraints, limited support from political parties, and the under-representation of women in political offices. These challenges contribute to gender disparities in political decision-making and hinder the full participation of women in the democratic process.

The study highlights the importance of addressing cultural and traditional beliefs that discourage women's political participation. Efforts should focus on increasing awareness and support for women candidates, improving access to financial resources, promoting inclusive practices within political parties, and addressing gender-based violence and intimidation. Strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing women's networks and organisations, and adopting international best practices.

Progress in advancing gender equality and women's rights in Nigeria

In recent years, Nigeria has made significant progress in promoting gender equality and women's rights. In 2010, the government passed the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) Act, which prohibits discrimination against women in various areas of life, including education, employment, and healthcare (National Assembly of Nigeria, 2010).

Additionally, the establishment of the National Gender Policy in 2013 further highlights the government's commitment to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2013).

Nigeria's ratification of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, specifically SDG 5, emphasises the country's focus on achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls (UN, 2015).

The rise of women's rights organisations in Nigeria has played a crucial role in advocating for gender equality. These organisations work tirelessly to raise awareness about women's rights, challenge gender stereotypes, and promote the empowerment of women (Amnesty International, 2022). Despite these positive developments, significant challenges remain. Gender-based violence continues to be a pressing issue in Nigeria. High rates of violence against women pose a significant barrier to gender equality and the full realisation of women's rights (United Nations Population Fund, 2021). Additionally, low rates of female education and employment further exacerbate gender disparities. The under-representation of women in government and decision-making bodies hinders their influence and contribution to policy-making processes (International IDEA, 2021). Deep-rooted cultural and religious traditions that perpetuate gender inequality also present significant challenges (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Nevertheless, Nigeria is witnessing a growing movement for gender equality and women's rights. Women's rights organisations, government agencies, and individuals are actively working towards creating a more just and equitable society. To further promote gender equality and women's rights in Nigeria, several actions can be taken.

Challenges and strategies for promoting women's political participation in Nigeria's electoral process

Women's participation in the electoral process in Nigeria continues to be hindered by several persistent challenges. These challenges not only limit women's representation in political offices but also hinder their full participation in the democratic process. This section highlights some of the key challenges faced by women in the electoral process in Nigeria.

Cultural biases and gender stereotypes: pose significant obstacles to women's political participation. Deeply entrenched societal norms often discourage women from seeking political office or engaging in the electoral process. Traditional beliefs that prioritise male leadership and perpetuate gender roles limit the opportunities available to women in politics. Gender stereotypes that portray women as less capable or less suited for political

leadership further marginalise their participation (Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Act, 2010).

Cultural Biases

Are beliefs about the roles and abilities of men and women that are passed down from generation to generation. These biases can be very powerful, and they can discourage women from participating in politics. For example, some cultures believe that women are not as capable as men of making decisions or leading others. This can make women feel like they are not qualified to run for office, and it can discourage them from getting involved in the political process (World Bank, 2020).

Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are beliefs about the characteristics and behaviours that are appropriate for men and women. These stereotypes can be very powerful, and they can marginalise women's participation in politics. For example, some stereotypes portray women as being too emotional or too soft to be effective leaders. This can make voters less likely to support women candidates, and it can make it more difficult for women to be taken seriously in the political arena (Adlin & Basow, 2012).

The Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Bill:

The Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Act (GEWE Bill) is a Nigerian law that was passed by the House of Representatives in 2010. The GEWE Bill prohibits discrimination against women in all areas of life, including politics. The GEWE Bill also provides for the establishment of a National Gender Policy, which outlines the government's commitment to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

The GEWE Bill is an important step towards promoting women's political participation in Nigeria. However, there is still much work to be accomplished to overcome the cultural biases and gender stereotypes that discourage women from participating in politics. By educating people about the importance of gender equality and by challenging stereotypes, we can create a more just and equitable society where all citizens have a voice.

Limited access to financial resources: is another major challenge faced by women in the electoral process. Political campaigns require significant financial investments, including funding for campaign materials, advertisements, and travel expenses. Women candidates often face difficulties in accessing the necessary financial resources to run competitive campaigns. Financial constraints can create a significant disadvantage for

women, limiting their ability to effectively reach voters and convey their messages (World Bank, 2021).

- **Financial resources:** Political campaigns are expensive. Candidates need to raise money to pay for campaign materials, such as posters, flyers, and yard signs. They also need to pay for advertising, such as television commercials and radio spots. And they need to pay for travel expenses, such as fuel, hotel rooms, and meals. Women candidates often have difficulty raising the same amount of money as men candidates. This is because women are under-represented in leadership positions in the business world and in government. As a result, they have fewer personal networks that they can tap into for campaign contributions (World Bank, 2021).
- **Financial constraints:** Financial constraints can create a significant disadvantage for women candidates. They may not be able to afford to run as many television commercials or radio spots as their male counterparts. They may not be able to afford to travel to as many events or to hire as many staff members. As a result, they may have a harder time reaching voters and getting their message out (World Bank, 2021).
- **Low rates of female education and employment:** In Nigeria, low rates of female education and employment contribute to the problem of limited access to financial resources for women candidates. Women with less education and employment opportunities are more likely to be poor, and they are less likely to have the financial resources to run for office (World Bank, 2021).

The lack of support from political parties: is another barrier to women's political participation. Political parties play a crucial role in candidate selection, campaign support, and resource allocation. However, women often face challenges in securing party nominations and receiving adequate support from party structures. Discrimination within political parties, including biased candidate selection processes and limited inclusion of women in leadership positions, perpetuate gender disparities in political representation (International IDEA, 2021).

- In Nigeria, women hold only 11.6% of seats in the National Assembly, which is significantly lower than the global average of 24.3%. According to a study conducted by the Women's Political Participation and Leadership Project, women in Nigeria face discouragement from running for office, with party officials expressing beliefs that they lack qualifications or chances of winning (Africa Barometer, 2024). Furthermore, the study revealed that women candidates often encounter discrimination within political parties, including denial of resources and

instances of sexual harassment. These findings highlight the significant challenges and barriers faced by women in Nigeria's political landscape.

Gender-based violence and intimidation: during electoral campaigns pose serious threats to women's political participation. Women candidates and their supporters are often subjected to verbal abuse, physical attacks, and threats of violence. These acts of intimidation aim to discourage women from actively participating in politics and undermine their confidence in engaging in the electoral process. Such acts not only violate women's rights but also create a climate of fear that hinders their full political engagement (United Nations Population Fund, 2021).

- A comprehensive body of research highlights the pervasive issue of gender-based violence and intimidation during electoral campaigns, which significantly impacts women's political participation and the overall democratic process. Studies conducted by International IDEA in 2020 and the United Nations in 2021 demonstrate that women are disproportionately subjected to verbal abuse, physical attacks, and threats aimed at deterring their active engagement in politics and undermining their confidence in the electoral process. These acts not only discourage women from running for office but also decrease their campaign success rates and increase the likelihood of their withdrawal from politics entirely.
- Additionally, the World Bank (2019) emphasises how gender-based violence and intimidation limit women's access to essential resources such as education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. These examples showcase the multifaceted impact of gender-based violence and intimidation, not only harming individual women but also eroding the democratic fabric by silencing the voices of half the population. Recognising and addressing these challenges is crucial for fostering inclusive and robust political participation.

Voter suppression is yet another challenge faced by women in the electoral process. Women voters may encounter various barriers that limit their ability to exercise their voting rights. These barriers include limited awareness of their political rights, social pressures, and discriminatory practices at polling stations. Voter suppression tactics, such as voter intimidation and deliberate exclusion of women from the electoral process, undermine women's participation and the overall legitimacy of the democratic process (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2013). **Voter intimidation:** This can include anything from verbal abuse to physical threats to prevent women from voting. For example, women may be threatened

with violence if they try to vote, or they may be called names or harassed at the polls.

- Limited awareness of political rights: Many women are not aware of their right to vote, or they may not know how to register to vote or how to cast a ballot. This can be because of a lack of education, language barriers, or social stigmas.
- Social pressures: Women may face social pressure from their families, friends, or communities to not vote. For example, they may be told that voting is a man's job, or they may be afraid of being ostracised or shamed if they do vote.

These voter suppression tactics can have a significant impact on women's political participation. They can make it more difficult for women to register to vote, to cast a ballot, and to be elected to office. This can undermine women's participation in the democratic process and limit their ability to have a voice in government.

Strategies for promoting women's political participation

To address these persistent challenges and promote women's full participation in the electoral process, a multi-faceted approach is required. Efforts should focus on:

Raising awareness and challenging cultural biases: Education and awareness campaigns can help challenge gender stereotypes and traditional beliefs that hinder women's political participation. These campaigns should target both women and men, promoting the value of women's leadership and the benefits of gender equality in politics.

To promote women's political participation and challenge cultural biases, several approaches can be employed. Educating men and women about gender equality in politics through schools, workplaces, and community organisations is crucial. Awareness campaigns should be launched to highlight the challenges faced by women in politics, utilising various communication channels. Providing role models and showcasing the accomplishments of women in political positions can inspire other women to enter politics. Establishing support networks through women's organisations and political parties can offer guidance and mentorship to aspiring female politicians. By implementing these measures, cultural biases can be confronted, and a more inclusive political environment can be created. Specific examples include campaigns that showcase women's achievements, debunk myths, and encourage women to run for office by providing resources and information. Overall, raising awareness about the challenges faced by

women in politics and promoting the value of women's leadership can lead to a more equitable and representative political landscape.

Enhancing financial support: Initiatives should be developed to provide financial resources and support to women candidates. This can include creating dedicated funding mechanisms, providing training on fundraising and financial management, and encouraging public and private sector sponsorship of women's political campaigns. Here are some ways to enhance financial support for women candidates:

- Create dedicated funding mechanisms: Governments can create dedicated funding mechanisms to provide financial support to women candidates. This could be achieved through public funding, tax breaks, or other measures.
- Provide training on fundraising and financial management: Women candidates often lack the skills and knowledge necessary to raise and manage campaign funds. Training programmes can help women candidates develop the skills they need to be successful fundraisers.
- Encourage public and private sector sponsorship: Public and private sector organisations can sponsor women's political campaigns. This can help to create a more equitable environment for women candidates and give them a chance to compete on an equal footing with their male counterparts.

These are examples of how dedicated funding mechanisms can be used to provide financial support to women candidates:

- A government could create a fund that provides grants to women candidates who meet certain criteria. For example, the fund could provide grants to women candidates who are running for office in competitive races or who are facing financial challenges.
- A government could create a tax break for individuals and businesses who donate to women's political campaigns. This would encourage more people to donate to women's campaigns and would make it easier for women candidates to raise money.

Promoting inclusive party practices: Political parties should adopt measures to ensure fair representation and support for women candidates. This can include implementing gender quotas, establishing transparent candidate selection processes, and providing training and mentorship opportunities for women within party structures.

- Implementing gender quotas: Political parties can implement gender quotas to ensure that a certain percentage of their candidates are women. This can be achieved by requiring that a certain percentage of the party's

candidates be women, or by reserving a certain number of seats in the party's leadership for women.

- Establishing transparent candidate selection processes: Political parties can establish transparent candidate selection processes to ensure that all candidates, regardless of gender, have an equal opportunity to be selected. This can be achieved by publishing the criteria for selecting candidates, by holding open meetings to discuss the selection process, and by allowing all members of the party to participate in the selection process.
- Providing training and mentorship opportunities for women within party structures: Political parties can provide training and mentorship opportunities for women within party structures to help them develop the skills and knowledge that they need to be successful candidates. This can be achieved by providing training on campaign management, fundraising, and public speaking, as well as by providing mentorship from experienced female politicians.

By taking these steps, political parties can help to ensure that women have a fair chance to be elected to office and to participate in the political process.

Here are some specific examples of how political parties can implement gender quotas:

- A political party could require that 50% of its candidates be women. This would ensure that women are equally represented in the party's candidate pool.
- A political party could reserve 30% of its seats in the party's leadership for women. This would ensure that women have a significant voice in the party's decision-making process.

By implementing gender quotas, political parties can help to ensure that women have a fair chance to be elected to office and to participate in the political process.

Here are some specific examples of how political parties can establish transparent candidate selection processes:

- A political party could publish the criteria for selecting candidates. This would ensure that all candidates know what is expected of them and that the selection process is fair.
- A political party could hold open meetings to discuss the selection process. This would allow all members of the party to participate in the process and to provide input on the selection of candidates.

- A political party could allow all members of the party to vote on the selection of candidates. This would ensure that the selection process is democratic and that all members of the party have a voice in the process.

By establishing transparent candidate selection processes, political parties can help to ensure that all candidates, regardless of gender, have an equal opportunity to be selected.

Here are some specific examples of how political parties can provide training and mentorship opportunities for women within party structures:

- A political party could provide training on campaign management. This would help women to develop the skills they need to run a successful campaign.
- A political party could provide training on fundraising. This would help women to raise the money that they need to run a successful campaign.
- A political party could provide training on public speaking. This would help women to communicate their message effectively to voters.
- A political party could provide mentorship from experienced female politicians. This would help women to learn from the experiences of other women who have successfully run for office.

By providing training and mentorship opportunities for women, political parties can help to ensure that women have the skills and knowledge they need to be successful candidates.

Combatting gender-based violence: Strong measures should be taken to prevent and address gender-based violence during electoral campaigns. This includes strengthening laws and enforcement mechanisms, providing security and protection for women candidates, and raising awareness about the consequences of such acts. Here are some ways to combat gender-based violence during electoral campaigns:

- Strengthening laws and enforcement mechanisms: Governments can strengthen laws and enforcement mechanisms to deter and punish gender-based violence. This could include enacting new laws, increasing funding for law enforcement, and training law enforcement officers on how to respond to gender-based violence.
- Providing security and protection for women candidates: Governments and political parties can provide security and protection for women candidates who are at risk of violence. This could include providing bodyguards, installing security cameras, and conducting risk assessments.
- Raising awareness about the consequences of gender-based violence: Governments and civil society organisations can raise awareness about

the consequences of gender-based violence. This could be achieved through public awareness campaigns, educational programmes, and media coverage.

By taking these steps, we can help to create a more secure and safe environment for women candidates.

Here are some specific examples of how governments can strengthen laws and enforcement mechanisms:

- A government could enact a law that makes it a crime to threaten or intimidate a woman candidate. This law could include a provision for stiff penalties, such as jail time or fines.
- A government could increase funding for law enforcement to allow them to investigate and prosecute cases of gender-based violence. This would help to ensure that perpetrators of violence are brought to justice.
- A government could train law enforcement officers on how to respond to gender-based violence. This training would help officers to understand the dynamics of violence and to develop effective responses.

By taking these steps, governments can help to deter and punish gender-based violence. Here are some specific examples of how governments and political parties can provide security and protection for women candidates:

- A government could provide bodyguards for women candidates who are at risk of violence. This would help to protect women candidates from physical harm.
- A government could install security cameras in areas where women candidates are likely to be campaigning. This would help to deter violence and to identify perpetrators.
- A government could conduct risk assessments for women candidates who are at risk of violence. This would help to identify the specific threats that women candidates face and to develop appropriate security measures.

By taking these steps, governments and political parties can help to create a more secure and safe environment for women candidates.

Here are some specific examples of how governments and civil society organisations can raise awareness about the consequences of gender-based violence:

- A government could launch a public awareness campaign about gender-based violence. This campaign could use billboards, television adverts, and social media to raise awareness about the issue.

- A government could work with schools and universities to develop educational programmes about gender-based violence. These programmes could teach students about the dynamics of violence and about how to prevent it.
- A government could work with the media to cover stories about gender-based violence. This coverage could help to raise awareness about the issue and to challenge stereotypes about women.

By taking these steps, governments and civil society organisations can help to create a more just and equitable society for all.

Ensuring equal access to voting: Efforts should be made to eliminate barriers that prevent women from exercising their right to vote. This includes conducting voter education campaigns, addressing social pressures and discriminatory practices at polling stations, and providing accessible and safe voting environments for all (UN, 2015). Here are some ways to ensure equal access to voting for women:

- Conducting voter education campaigns: Governments and civil society organisations can conduct voter education campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of voting and to inform women about the process of voting. These campaigns can be conducted through a variety of channels, such as television, radio, social media, and community events.
- Addressing social pressures and discriminatory practices at polling stations: Governments and civil society organisations can work to address social pressures and discriminatory practices that discourage women from voting. This could include working with communities to challenge stereotypes about women's roles in society and to create a more welcoming environment for women at polling stations.
- Providing accessible and safe voting environments for all: Governments can work to provide accessible and safe voting environments for all voters, including women. This could include providing accessible polling places, making voting materials available in multiple languages, and providing security at polling stations.

By taking these steps, we can help to ensure that all women have equal access to the voting booth and that their voices are heard in government.

Here are some specific examples of how governments and civil society organisations can conduct voter education campaigns:

- A government could produce a television advert that features women talking about why they vote. This advert could be broadcast on national and local television stations.

- A civil society organisation could create a social media campaign that uses hashtags and images to raise awareness about the importance of voting. This campaign could be shared on Twitter (X), Facebook, and other social media platforms.
- A community organisation could hold a voter registration drive at a local grocery store or community centre. This drive could help to register new voters and to inform them about the voting process.

By taking these steps, governments and civil society organisations can help to raise awareness about the importance of voting and to encourage women to vote.

Here are some specific examples of how governments and civil society organisations can address social pressures and discriminatory practices at polling stations:

- A government could work with community leaders to develop a plan to address social pressures and discriminatory practices at polling stations. This plan could include training poll workers on how to handle these situations and could provide resources for women who experience harassment or intimidation at the polls.
- A civil society organisation could create a hotline that women can call if they experience harassment or intimidation at the polls. This hotline could provide support and resources to women who have been harassed or intimidated.
- A community organisation could hold a workshop for women on how to handle harassment and intimidation at the polls. This workshop could teach women how to identify and report harassment and intimidation, and could provide them with strategies for dealing with these situations.

By taking these steps, governments and civil society organisations can help to create a more welcoming environment for women at polling stations.

Here are some specific examples of how governments can provide accessible and safe voting environments for all:

- A government could provide transportation to polling stations for voters who need it. This could be achieved by providing shuttle buses or vans to transport voters to and from the polls.
- A government could make voting materials available in multiple languages. This could be achieved by providing bilingual ballots and voter guides.
- A government could provide security at polling stations. This could be achieved by hiring security guards or by installing security cameras.

By taking these steps, governments can help to ensure that all voters, including women, have access to a safe and accessible voting environment.

Despite the progress made in promoting women's political participation in Nigeria, persistent challenges continue to impede women's full engagement in the electoral process. Addressing cultural biases, improving access to financial resources, promoting inclusive party practices, combatting gender-based violence, and ensuring equal access to voting are essential steps towards creating a more inclusive and democratic political landscape that empowers women and upholds their rights.

Opportunities for women candidates and voters in Nigeria's electoral process

1. **Legal and policy framework:** Nigeria has a legal and policy framework that promotes women's political participation, including the National Gender Policy, which seeks to eliminate discrimination against women and promote their full participation in politics and governance. Additionally, Nigeria has a constitutional provision that mandates the inclusion of women in governance and decision-making processes (UN Women, 2019).
2. **Quotas:** Nigeria has introduced quotas to increase the representation of women in politics, including a 35% affirmative action policy for women's representation in government positions. Although the quota system is not yet fully implemented, it has created opportunities for women to participate in politics and governance (Krook, 2013).
3. **Women's groups and networks:** Women's groups and networks have been instrumental in advocating for women's rights and increasing women's political participation in Nigeria. These groups provide support and resources for women candidates and voters and facilitate networking and collaboration among women (Krook & Restrepo Sanin, 2019).
4. **Women's representation in political parties:** Women's representation in political parties has increased in recent years, creating opportunities for women to participate in decision-making and leadership positions within the parties (Krook & Restrepo Sanin, 2019).
5. **Increased awareness and education:** There has been an increase in awareness and education amongst women regarding their political rights and opportunities. This has led to more women participating in the electoral process as voters and candidates (UN Women, 2019).
6. **Leadership development programmes:** The Women's Leadership Institute (WLI) is a programme in Nigeria that offers leadership training and mentorship for women. The WLI is a joint initiative of the Centre

for African Women Economic Empowerment (CAWEE) and the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF).

7. Women's Caucus: The National Assembly Women's Caucus was established in 2000 and has been active in advocating for women's rights and issues in Nigeria. The caucus has sponsored several bills related to women's rights, including the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Bill (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015).
8. Women's representation in electoral management bodies: The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria has made efforts to increase women's representation in its leadership and management positions. For example, in 2018, Amina Zakari was appointed as the INEC's Acting Chairman, becoming the first woman to hold the position.
9. Social media and digital platforms: Social media and digital platforms have become important tools for political communication and mobilisation in Nigeria. Women candidates and voters can use these platforms to reach a wider audience and connect with potential supporters. The Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD, 2015) found that social media played a significant role in the 2015 Nigerian elections, with candidates and political parties using social media to mobilise supporters and share campaign messages.
10. Supportive allies and networks: Women candidates and voters in Nigeria can benefit from supportive allies and networks, including men who advocate for women's rights and gender equality. The Men's Support for Women's Participation in Governance (MESUPG) is a group in Nigeria that advocates for women's participation in politics and governance. The MESUPG provides resources and support for women candidates and also works to educate men on the importance of gender equity in governance.

Implications for gender equity and democratic governance in Nigeria:

1. Increased representation of women in politics: According to a report by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), *Women's Political Participation in Nigeria: Mapping Progress, Bridging Gaps*, women make up only 6.7% of Nigeria's National Assembly (2015; NDI, 2016).
2. Improved gender equity in governance: Research has shown that when women are represented in politics, they tend to focus on issues that affect women and marginalised groups, leading to improved gender equity in governance (Krook, 2013).
3. Strengthened democracy: Studies have shown that a more inclusive and diverse political system can lead to greater citizen engagement and participation, which is essential for a strong and healthy democracy (Htun & Weldon, 2012).

4. Improved protection of women's rights: According to a report by Amnesty International, women in Nigeria face significant human rights abuses, including sexual violence and discrimination (Amnesty International, 2017).
5. Improved social and economic development: Increasing women's representation in politics can help to address issues that disproportionately affect women, such as gender-based violence, access to education, and economic empowerment. Addressing these issues can contribute to overall social and economic development in Nigeria (Okonta, 2017).
6. Increased public trust and legitimacy: A more inclusive and equitable political system can help to increase public trust and legitimacy in government institutions. When citizens feel that their voices are being heard and that they have a stake in the political process, they are more likely to trust and support their government (Bratton & Mattes, 2003).
7. Enhanced human rights protection: Women's participation in politics can also help to enhance the protection of human rights, particularly women's rights. Women in politics can advocate for policies and programmes that protect women's rights, such as laws against domestic violence and sexual harassment (Ezeilo, 2018).
8. Greater diversity of perspectives: When women are represented in politics, there is a greater diversity of perspectives and experiences that can be brought to bear on policy decisions. This can help to ensure that policies and programmes are designed to meet the needs of all citizens, rather than just a select few (Tripp, 2013).

Therefore, there is a need for greater gender equity and democratic governance in Nigeria. Addressing the challenges faced by women candidates and voters in the electoral process can help to create a more inclusive and equitable political system that promotes greater participation, engagement, and accountability for all citizens, regardless of gender.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter highlights the significant challenges faced by women candidates and voters in Nigeria's electoral process, despite legal and constitutional provisions promoting gender equality and women's political participation. The study recommends the need for targeted interventions, including capacity-building programmes, affirmative action policies, and increased financial support for women candidates. It also emphasises the need for greater support from political parties and institutions, increased awareness and education amongst women voters, and the development of

policies and programmes that address gender-based violence. Ultimately, the implementation of these recommendations can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable political system in Nigeria, promoting greater gender equity and democratic governance in the country and beyond.

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Chapter 13

Constraints to Women's Participation in the Electoral Activities in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: What it means for Democratic Consolidation

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Abstract

Women's engagement in electoral activities is a critical component of every nation's democratic development. This study investigates the various limitations that prevent women from actively participating in election processes in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. It sheds light on the essential consequences of these limits for the country's larger goal of democratic consolidation. The theoretical underpinning of analysis was Social Capital Theory, which was used to investigate how social networks and ties affect individuals' political engagement. It was used to examine how much access women have to political networks and how this affects their electoral participation. Data were mostly gathered from secondary sources before being submitted to qualitative content analysis and used to assess and develop conclusions about the findings. It was shown that Nigeria's electoral system creates significant barriers for women, including concerns with campaign financing, political party structures, and electoral violence. Deeply rooted patriarchal norms and practices frequently marginalise women, making it difficult for them to negotiate the political scene. Furthermore, socioeconomic barriers such as inadequate access to education and economic resources hinder women's political participation and achievement. To address these constraints, the study proposes a multi-pronged approach that includes legal reforms to promote gender equality, targeted efforts to improve women's political education and leadership skills, and the creation of a supportive environment that discourages gender-based violence and discrimination. Nigeria may make considerable gains towards building a

stronger and more consolidated democracy by removing these barriers and encouraging women's active engagement.

Keywords: Democratic Consolidation, Election, Electoral Process, Participation, Women

Introduction

Nigeria has made considerable progress in its democratic path since the establishment of the Fourth Republic in 1999. However, one conspicuous issue persists: women's under-representation in electoral activity. This under-representation not only undermines gender equality principles, but it also has serious ramifications for the country's democratic consolidation. According to Isma'ila (2016) and Fayemi (2000), one of the consequences of 'the Cold War era' between the United States and the Soviet Union was the widespread expansion of democratic governance in numerous African countries, including Nigeria. Citizens' political participation, openness, accountability, respect for human rights, the rule of law, and a government founded on a democratic ethos are all hallmarks of democratic governance.

Women's political representation has increased dramatically over the past 20 years, with all regions making significant strides towards the target of 30% women's representation in decision-making (IPU, 2015). The average proportion of women in the upper house has doubled globally over that time. While Nigeria and other African nations have made relatively modest advancements in women's political representation, some have made significant strides. Nigeria has had seven general elections since its restoration to civil government in 1999 (1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, and 2023), with a mixed record of women's political representation. In some of these elections, Nigeria has experienced a rise in the number of women elected to political office, although overall development has been modest. However, there is still a long way to go before gender parity is achieved in Nigeria's decision-making bodies.

The return to democratic rule in 1999 in Nigeria, heralding the Fourth Republic, aroused considerable euphoria amongst Nigerians. Nigerians perceived the return as a big relief and the end of the country's dictatorial military government. They regarded it as a chance to actively participate in state affairs, which resulted in new political programmes and a successful government (Yusuf, 2018). Despite individuals' expectations surrounding Nigeria's political representation, issues and critiques have persisted. Many Nigerians believe that the country's political representation is still plagued by corruption, nepotism, and a lack of accountability. Furthermore, some believe that political elites are detached from ordinary people's struggles, leading

to rising dissatisfaction with the democratic system. These issues underline the importance of ongoing efforts to develop democratic institutions and provide equal opportunities for meaningful involvement in government for all individuals, especially the women. Given that women appear to be playing a larger role in Nigeria's socioeconomic and cultural landscape, it is surprising that there has not been more advancement in women's political representation. It was anticipated that as women's roles in society grow, so will their participation in politics.

In general, Nigeria appears to have a policy environment that promotes gender parity. To begin with, the bulk of international agreements regarding gender impartiality and women's empowerment have been ratified by the Nigerian government. Second, the nation's successive governments have created a dynamic institutional framework for the creation and application of gender policies. This framework, which is coordinated by the Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs, consists of desk officers for each industry as well as Women Affairs Officers in each government ministry. Third, there appears to be a general understanding of gender issues, since both government and non-governmental groups prioritise gender mainstreaming in their work (Nkwachukwu et al., 2018). Even if the prospects for enhanced female representation in governance in Nigeria appear encouraging, a glance at the data on the political representation of women in Nigeria reveals that the degree of female representation in political leadership has not improved over the past ten years.

Despite formal representation being enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution, women continue to be under-represented in elective offices and political leadership positions, two decades after the country's last military dictatorship. The durability of this ideology after five election cycles necessitates a consideration of the socio-cultural and institutional infrastructure that supports it, as well as the techniques used by 'outliers' to negotiate access to political space. We focus on this group of Nigerians because the low percentage of women's representation in appointive and elective offices or positions calls into question a core principle shared by all democracies: the inclusion of 'women as equal participants in decision-making that affects their lives and communities is both a rights issue and an issue of democratic integrity' (National Democratic Institute, 2021). Understanding the barriers faced by women in accessing political space is crucial for promoting gender equality and strengthening democratic processes. By examining the experiences of Nigerian women in politics, we can identify the specific challenges that they encounter and develop targeted strategies to address them. Additionally, exploring the tactics employed by those who have successfully navigated these obstacles can provide valuable

insights and inspire other women to actively engage in political participation. This motive gave rise to this study to examine the constraints on women's participation in electoral activities in Nigeria's Fourth Republic and what it means for democratic consolidation.

The study is structured in the following way to accomplish the aforementioned goal: introduction, conceptual clarifications, theoretical framework, women's participation in politics, issues that prevent women from participating in electoral activities, conclusion, and recommendations.

Women's participation conceptualised

Many studies have been conducted to better understand the marginalisation of women in political systems, some of which have been spearheaded by the Nigerian government. In 1986, for example, the General Ibrahim Babangida Administration established a Political Bureau to conduct a comprehensive study of Nigeria's political and socioeconomic systems, which recognised a gender imbalance. 'Full involvement of women in politics is one strategy of safeguarding women's interests in society,' it stated (Abdullah, 1993).

Existing scholarship on Nigerian politics has constantly highlighted women's marginalisation while identifying fundamental barriers to their political participation. Previous research has examined how the interplay of socioeconomic and cultural norms places women on the political periphery (Arowolo & Aluko, 2010; Okoosi-Simbine, 2012; Pogason, 2012). In addition to these general problems, there are specific restrictions, such as gender-based violence (Agbalajobi, 2021). Ette (2017) contends that in a study of media visibility of frontline female politicians during the 2015 electoral cycle, the media participated in systemic reinforcement of patriarchal framing of politics, impeding women's engagement. However, Omojola and Morah (2014) ascribe media invisibility to news consumption patterns. They claim that women's issues do not 'fit in the logic of media commercialism, which prioritizes profit and access to those with the means of purchase, who are largely men'. To highlight the invisibility of female politicians in the media, most research on media portrayal of women echo the declaration of symbolic 'annihilation' of women in the news (Tuchman et al., 1978). Other specific issues include: low literacy rates (Orisadare, 2019), which limit women's awareness of their political and democratic rights; the failure of women's organisations to advocate for women's emancipation and liberation (Abdullah, 1993); and political violence (Okoosi-Simbine, 2012).

Though not predominant breadwinners, women play a role as the stewards of society's social, cultural, and fundamental values and are often best suited to bring about lasting change. In fact, full community

development is impossible without their exceptional cooperation and effective participation (Omoruyi et al., as cited in Fiemotongha & Isaac, 2020). Despite the fact that women's participation and contributions to the political and socioeconomic growth of any democratic state are immeasurable, they have not yet achieved equality in Nigeria's politics and national life. Nigerian women have showed skill in managing public affairs and holding leadership roles, even though they have traditionally been homemakers and guardians of family values.

According to Fasugba, cited in Fiemotongha and Isaac (2020), women have kept up competition with men in all areas of human effort ever since they became aware of their rights, even though many women participate in activities and vocations that were formerly regarded to be reserved for men. Women are allowed to participate actively in politics in Nigeria, and some have done so over the years, but their exclusion has become institutionalised and woven into the fabric of the patriarchal political apparatus. This masculinist viewpoint shapes public perceptions of politics in ways that continue to favour men. As a result, men have easy access to public space, whereas women are considered to belong to the domestic realm (Dowler & Sharp, 2001; Pogeson, 2012). In other words, a masculine blueprint continues to shape 'what it means to be a politician, privileging men and offering them greater authority and privilege, particularly during the electoral process' (Williams, 2020). This gender bias in politics has significant consequences for women's representation and participation in decision-making processes. It perpetuates a cycle where women are often marginalised and face barriers when it comes to entering the political arena. Efforts to challenge and dismantle this masculine blueprint are crucial in order to achieve true gender equality in politics.

The issue of women's under-representation in politics is not specific to Nigeria or poor countries in general. Many mature democracies, including the United States, are still grappling with this issue (Ramos & Da Silva, 2020). However, developing countries' socio-cultural environments and entrenched patriarchal institutions aggravate the situation to a greater extent than Western countries. Contrary to popular belief, African women appear to be somewhat politically powerful, at least in a few nations (Tamale, 2000). This empowerment can be linked to a variety of causes, including the adoption of affirmative action measures and quotas designed to expand women's political representation. Furthermore, grassroots movements and women-led organisations have been critical in pushing for gender equality and defying cultural conventions. Despite these advances, genuine gender equity in politics remains a long way off, both in Africa and globally.

Electoral process

Election has been defined as the act or power of choosing a person to hold a position of authority. Today, Nigeria has a multi-party system, which means that there are approximately 91 registered political parties in Nigeria (INEC, 2019). According to the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) published list of candidates, a total of 15,309 persons contested for seats at the national and state levels in 2023, including 14,043 (91.7%) males and 1,266 (8.3%) females. There were 18 presidential candidates, 1,101 Senatorial candidates, 3,122 House of Representatives candidates, 837 gubernatorial candidates, and 10,231 State Houses of Assembly candidates (INEC, 2023). As Nachana'a et al. (2014) claim that the only institutionalised procedure that enables members of society to select office holders is elections. The institutionalised framework for choosing representatives in a fair and competitive election is provided by the electoral process.

Idike (2014) views the election process as a complex process that includes both desirable goals and unfavourable results, particularly in developing democracies where general elections are frequently tainted by culturally specific electoral malpractices. These malpractices can range from voter intimidation and bribery to ballot stuffing and manipulation of results. Despite these challenges, Idike argues that it is crucial for developing democracies to continuously strive towards improving their election processes in order to strengthen democratic institutions and ensure fair representation of the people's will.

As stated by Ademowo (2016) there are three steps to the election process. These include:

Pre-Election Phase: This phase includes delineation, voter registration, political party registration, voter education, and campaign processes, all of which are finished before election day.

Election Phase: This covers the events that happen on election day itself. They consist of moving election materials, monitoring and observing the election, voting, and counting the votes.

The Post-Election Phase: begins after the polls shut on election day and includes all subsequent actions. They consist of results announcements and, in some places, post-election controversies.

Democratic consolidation

Perhaps operationalising the idea of democracy itself is the best place to start when elaborating on the concept of democratic consolidation. Democracy in this study refers to a form of governance that is oriented on the needs of

the populace and includes regular elections where the integrity of the voting process is strictly upheld. The implication of this position is that democracy is nourished by transparency and accountability in public administration, which not only encourages the electorate to participate in the selection of their representatives but also allows for mass participation (Yagboyaju, 2013). This mass participation is essential for democratic consolidation because it ensures that the government remains attentive to the people's interests and desires. Furthermore, transparency and accountability in government help to combat corruption and abuse of power, while also establishing trust between the government and its population.

Therefore, democratic consolidation is about maintaining the current regime and viewing the major political institutions as the only framework for political contestation and adherence to the democratic rules of the game (Ogundiya, cited in Akubo & Yakubu, 2014). As explained by Okeke (2015), democracy strengthens when it protects individual liberties and the integrity of elections. Therefore, democracy is both a form of government and a means of self-defence. It is a strategy for preventing political thugs from seizing the people's power. Democracy protects people's hopes from invasion by various intruders. It ensures that the will of the majority is respected and provides a platform for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Additionally, democracy promotes transparency and accountability, as elected leaders are held responsible for their actions and decisions.

According to Ademola (2011), the consolidation of democracy entails a transition from totalitarian to democratic regimes, which is essential for the establishment of stable institutions and a long-lasting democracy. According to this scholar, the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic system of governance is known as democratic consolidation. In the words of Ovwasa and Abdullahi (2017), democratic consolidation entails more than just making the switch from a totalitarian to a democratic government. Additionally, it entails ensuring that elections are trustworthy, free and fair, as well as that incumbent political leaders accept election outcomes and peacefully hand over power to the opposition when they lose them. This process also involves establishing strong institutions and mechanisms that safeguard the rule of law, protect human rights, and promote transparency and accountability in governance. Furthermore, democratic consolidation requires active citizen participation and engagement in political processes to ensure a vibrant civil society that can hold the government accountable for its actions.

Theoretical framework

The study applied Social Capital Theory as its theoretical foundation of analysis to examine the constraint to women's participation in the electoral activities in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory is a sociological concept that emphasises the value and significance of social networks and ties in numerous facets of life, such as social, economic, and political spheres. Scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam popularised it, and it has received major attention in sociology, economics, and political science. According to Social Capital Theory, the social relationships and networks that individuals and communities develop have concrete benefits and can be viewed as a type of capital, akin to financial or human capital. The importance of social capital in economic advancement and sustainable development has been discovered by researchers (Putnam, 1993; Knack & Keefer, 1997; Sabatini, 2006).

According to the main assumption of Social Capital Theory, social relationships and networks have intrinsic value and can be a valuable resource for individuals and communities. To put it another way, Social Capital Theory maintains that the bonds, connections, and trust that people form within their social networks can be equally as important as other types of capital, such as financial or human capital, in achieving individual and collective goals.

Most economic behaviours, according to Granovetter (1985), are anchored in social networks. Social capital is important for improving access to information, social cohesion, civic engagement, reducing opportunistic behaviour, increasing political participation, increasing government responsiveness and efficiency, lowering transaction costs, providing insurance against risk and uncertainty, and resolving collective action problems (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993; Fukuyama, 1995). Furthermore, social capital has been discovered to be critical in economic development and progress. According to studies, countries with higher levels of social capital have stronger economies because trust and collaboration amongst individuals and institutions enhance trade, investment, and innovation. Social Capital Theory emphasises the relevance of social networks in people's lives. Because of established gender stereotypes and prejudice, women commonly encounter barriers to participating in electoral activities. Women with strong social networks, particularly those connected to important political actors or women's groups, may find it easier to overcome these barriers. Women

can profit from social capital by receiving the contacts and help they need to navigate the complex political landscape.

Social Capital Theory can help women overcome difficulties in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, where gender discrepancies in political participation persist. Women may improve their political participation and contribute to democratic consolidation through building and utilising social networks, fostering trust, and supporting collective action. Furthermore, social capital can serve to influence societal norms in favour of more inclusive and supportive political engagement for women.

Women's participation in electoral activities

Women have always been under-represented in political party positions in Nigeria, whether elected or appointed. Following the Fourth World Conference on Women's Beijing Declaration (UN, 1995), governmental and non-governmental organisations attempted to increase female political participation. Unfortunately, the problem of under-representation persists (Ibizugbe, 2023). Initiatives such as quotas for women's representation in political parties and leadership positions have been used to increase female participation in politics. Despite these attempts, progress has been modest, emphasising the need for additional systemic changes to address the underlying causes of gender disparity in Nigerian politics.

The results of the general elections held on 25 February 2023 have brought to light Nigeria's inability to implement a number of treaties and laws it signed to ensure women's involvement in politics. In the February elections, just 3 of the 92 women who competed for the Senate were elected, and only 15 of the 286 candidates for House of Representatives seats were declared winners, as numerous election petition cases were still ongoing at the electoral tribunals at the time this piece was being written. It is surprising that there has not been much progress made in the representation of women in politics given that their significance in Nigeria's socioeconomic and cultural environment looks to be expanding. The assumption was that as women's influence in society increased, so would their involvement in politics. Nigeria appears to be moving in the wrong direction despite global appeals to boost women's participation in public life. In contrast to 2,665 men (616 senators and 2,041 representatives), just 157 women, 39 senate members, and 119 of the 469 members of the chamber were elected (Ibizugbe, 2023).

According to information from the INEC, 1,552 women contested in the general elections of 2023 in Nigeria (INEC, 2023). The presidency (president / vice-president), governorship / deputy governorship, senate,

house of representatives, and state houses of assembly are a few of the available positions. The list of candidates provided by INEC was used to compile the data. Few Nigerian women participated in politics, as history has demonstrated (Tolu-Kolawole et al., 2022). Further inquiry revealed that 288 women, or 8.35% of the 1,101 Senate candidates, also contested for seats in the House of Representatives, out of a total of 3,122 candidates. An additional state-by-state review of Nigeria's 36 states, including the Federal Capital Territory, reveals that five did not field a single woman as a candidate for the Senate and one did not do so for the House of Representatives.

Smaller political parties appear to have fewer entry hurdles for women in general. According to the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID), 96% of women candidates for federal seats in the 2019 elections came from tiny parties (Nwankwor & Nkereuwem, 2019). Women represented 11% of candidates from small parties on average in the 2023 cycle, with many small parties performing much better than others in terms of women's representation. For major offices such as President, Senate, and House of Representatives, the gender gap was substantially larger in dominant parties (APC and PDP) than in newer or smaller parties (Nkereuwem, 2023). Subnational elections had a smaller gender disparity than national elections, especially for tiny parties. The high expense of obtaining nomination forms for various posts is a significant barrier for women. This is particularly true for larger gatherings. Many political parties claim to make it easier for women to enter the first round by lowering entry restrictions through nomination fee reduction or elimination (Opara, 2023). Despite these initiatives, women continue to face considerable financial barriers when it comes to engaging in politics. Furthermore, the cost of mounting a campaign and engaging in outreach efforts contributes to the gender gap in political representation.

Women's representation varies across Nigeria's six regions, or geopolitical zones, with Southern states far outperforming Northern states. Women made up 9% of the over 4,200 candidates running for federal legislative posts in 2023, representing all eighteen parties. This proportion of representation varied by location and election type. The North West was the worst-performing region for female candidacy, with women constituting only 3% of all candidates competing for seats in the National Assembly. The South East had the greatest proportion of female candidates for federal legislative offices, at 13% (Nkereuwem, 2023). These regional differences in female candidacy underline the importance of focused initiatives to boost female presence in politics, notably in the North West region. It is critical to address the underlying causes of this disparity and to encourage equitable chances for women to participate in politics.

Constraints hindering women's participation in electoral activities

Women in Nigeria have major and specific hurdles throughout the voting cycle, with high attrition rates. In general, studies of election outcomes for female candidates frequently concentrate on the end of the cycle. However, different stages of the political cycle provide unique hurdles for female candidates. As a result, the concerns revealed towards the cycle's end sometimes conflate phase-specific issues, making intervention possibilities harder to detect. Some of the variables directly responsible for some of these challenges are as follows:

Violence: Nigerian elections are a battle of strength, guts, and survival of the fittest. In light of the aforementioned, women frequently find it difficult to negotiate Nigerian politics' turbulent waters. The political parties' midnight caucus meetings, where the majority of crucial decisions are taken and seats that are supposed to be available are divided, are not open to women, especially those who are married. Several incidences of electoral violence were reported in Nigeria during the 2023 election period. Mrs Bina Jennifer Efidi, for example, who was a victim with a swollen face and blood streaming down her right cheek while being accredited to vote in the February 25 presidential and National Assembly elections on Dipolubi Street in Lagos' Surulere area, sent shivers down many Nigerians' spines (Okere, 2023). This incident highlights the alarming level of violence that marred the electoral process in Nigeria and scared many other women to participate in politics.

Financial Weakness: Finances play a significant role in postelection contestations where cases end up at the election tribunal. Many women, having sustained a full political campaign, cannot afford lengthy court cases. For example, the expensive cost of politics discourages women from running for office (Tolu-Kolawole et al., 2022). Women frequently lack the financial means to pay for the requisite expression of interest and nomination papers required by political parties in order to vie for seats on their agendas. Furthermore, election campaign costs are excessive. Women are disproportionately affected by this financial barrier since they have less access to financial resources than males. As a result, the high expense of politics creates an unfair playing field, restricting women's representation in political leadership positions. Furthermore, gender differences in decision-making processes are perpetuated, and existing power imbalances within political institutions are reinforced.

Cultural Discrimination: As a result of gender bias, cultural norms, and behaviours, women feel inferior to men in general and are at a disadvantage in the sociopolitical environment, even in urban areas. However, several of

the women who ran in the elections demonstrated extraordinary drive and endurance, defying all odds to put up a good fight. Ojei's political actions have centred on increasing women's political involvement and fighting for good government. She has also spoken out on the importance of addressing Nigeria's economic difficulties and improving the lives of regular Nigerians. She campaigned on a platform of economic diversification, job development, and social justice in the run-up to the 2023 presidential election. She also promised to combat insecurity and corruption, as well as promote Nigerian unity and peace. Despite being the only female presidential candidate in the campaign, Ojei failed to garner momentum with voters. Bola Tinubu of the All-Progressives Congress (APC) won the election with less than 25,000 votes (Ibizugbe, 2023). Ojei's political efforts have continued despite her electoral failure.

Ojei created the "Women Can Lead" project in 2022 with the goal of mentoring and supporting women interested in running for political office. She has also been an outspoken supporter of gender balance in political positions. She has urged Nigeria's government to implement a quota system to ensure that women make up at least 35% of all political appointees. Ojei's political activity has elicited a range of reactions. Some Nigerians have complimented her for her bravery and commitment in opposing Nigeria's male-dominated political status quo. Others have criticised her inexperience and unrealistic campaign pledges.

Women Ideology on Politics: Women are viewed as being too passive to participate in politics and administration, while men are seen as being more competitive, strong, independent, and willing to fight. The majority of women in rural areas lack the necessary political education to make important decisions on their own, leaving them open to political misfits or susceptible to their husbands' rules.

Conclusion and recommendations

Despite adversity, Nigerian women have made a significant economic and political contribution to the country's advancement. Numerous barriers impede women from participating in politics, which is regarded as an important forum for Nigerian women to meaningfully contribute to national advancement. Women's engagement in electoral activities in Nigeria's Fourth Republic is hampered by societal standards, cultural prejudices, economic inequities, and insufficient political structures. Despite global advancements in women's rights and political representation, Nigerian women face substantial obstacles to fully engaging in the democratic process.

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Pass and implement legislation that encourages gender equity and women's political participation. Quotas for women's representation in legislative bodies and punitive penalties for electoral violence against women are examples of such policies.
2. Women interested in politics should be given specific training and capacity-building programmes. To enhance confidence and competence, these programmes should focus on improving leadership abilities, campaign methods, and policy understanding.
3. Political parties should have internal policies that encourage the inclusion of women in leadership roles and candidate selection processes. They should also commit to party platforms that are gender-aware.
4. Advocate for work-life balance policies such as affordable childcare, maternity leave, and flexible working options. This will allow women to participate in politics without jeopardising their other duties.
5. The Nigerian state should increase its 30% affirmative action rate, even though it has not yet adhered precisely to this standard, in order to maximise women's contributions to national development.

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Chapter 14

Gender Mainstreaming and Nigeria's Women's Partisanship in 2023 General Elections: Exploring beyond Rhetoric

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Abstract

The phenomenon of gender mainstreaming remains a global affair, with different countries conscious of the inclusiveness of both men and women in public policymaking and implementation. Even though Nigeria's population enjoys almost equal proportions of males and females, the gender equality is more of a theoretical paradigm in which its actualisation looks like a mirage. Against this backdrop, this study explores gender mainstreaming and women's participation in Nigeria's 2023 general elections. No doubt, the voting strength of women was laudable during the election period. Elected representatives at the executive and legislative arms recorded male dominance and the popular 35% affirmative is far-fetched. With the adoption of Representation Theory, the study infers that the political pendulum swings largely towards the patriarchy system and as such questions the prospect of gender equality in the country. The study is a conceptual thesis that relies on secondary data collection and analysis. The findings indicate a reduction of women's representativeness as the outcome of the 2023 general elections lower the bar of elected females into various contested offices. In fact, on comparative ground, the 10th National Assembly would assemble fewer women within the range of 3.5% unlike the 9th National Assembly with the composition of 11.2% female legislators. The chapter recommends legislative enactment to improve women's representation in Nigeria's politics and governance. This should be followed up with advocacy and lobbying for effective realisation of gender equality in Nigeria. With this, the societal parochial sentiment towards female politicking can be easily relegated and potentials amongst women would not only be discovered but also contributed to socio-economic and political advancement in the country.

Keywords: Elections, Gender, Mainstreaming, Nigeria, Representation

Introduction

The syndrome of gender inequality is a global trend that has remained a concern to various advocacy groups. However, this phenomenon is more manifested in Africa and Nigeria's situation questions the country's voting patterns since the inception of democratisation in the polity. Despite the strength of women voters during the 2023 general elections, the outcome still maintains male dominance of political powers. In fact, recent statistics reveal that across the 36 legislative houses, men clear 95% of the seats. Beside Ekiti State with 23% of women's representation, states within the North West geo-political zone only recorded 0.46%, while the South-South could only account for 10% female legislators. Cumulatively, women's representation in the state legislative bodies is less than 6% nationwide (Daily Trust, May 25, 2023). The scenario at the executive level is yet to be women-friendly, as no female emerged victorious in either the presidential contests or gubernatorial electioneering.

This sad trend of women's under-representation is well captured in the recently released report of the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) that states low improvement in biases against women. According to the report (UNDP, 2023), half of the people worldwide still have the notion that men are better political officeholders than women. This is believed to be antithetical to a proportionate equality of population for both male and female (Udoji & Sakariyau, 2022). The Nigerian scenario has always recorded a high turn-out of women exercising their legitimate right via balloting, yet there are no positive remarks in terms of political representation as male patronage pushes politicking to be more favourable for the latter.

Put differently, Nigeria assented to the popular affirmative gender mainstreaming of 35% women's representativeness in governance at the Beijing convention (UN, 1995). This milestone is a mirage as a series of political transitions in the country since the beginning of the Fourth Republic fail to implement such a gesture. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UN, 1979) was adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in New York on 3 September 1981 witnessed Nigeria's signatory and assent, its application is yet to be realistic (Sakariyau & Zakuan, 2017). Though it can be argued that international conventions are not binding within the context of international power politics, enhancing better women's representation would not only boost Nigeria's democratic sphere but also downs agitation of lack of equal opportunities for the female counterpart.

Against this background information, this chapter explores gender mainstreaming and Nigeria's women's partisanship in the 2023 general elections. The study is divided into six sections. The first section contains background information on the subject matter. This is followed up by conceptualisations of relevant concepts while the third section looks at the theory supporting the study. The fourth section examines gender mainstreaming and the 2023 general elections. The fifth section examines the stumbling block to women's effective participation in Nigerian politics. The sixth section, which invariably gives concluding remarks, emphasises the role of the legislator as a catalyst to improving gender mainstreaming in Nigerian politics through effective lawmaking. It also gives relevant suggestions on strengthening women's partisanship in Nigeria's politics.

Conceptualising gender mainstreaming

The term 'gender' can be viewed from diverse perspectives, but it has been explained to define different kinds of roles and behaviours between two sexes (Adeosun & Owolabi, 2021; WHO, 2020). However, the inequality experienced in terms of roles and rewards within society justifies the stance of gender mainstreaming. This concept is centred on assessing the implications of gender inequality in any polity. The idea of gender mainstreaming, which was formalised during the Third World Conference on Women in 1985 (UN Women, 1985) and adopted by the United Nations has become a public policy for taming all kinds of gender inequality. For easier conceptualisation, the concept of gender inequality which invariably popularised gender mainstreaming, requires a comprehensive scholarly overview.

It has been observed that giving unequal access to men and women in relation to resources of society is a function of the perception that gender is a natural phenomenon (Nwajiuba, 2011). As submitted by Blackden et.al (2017), gender is an ideological tool that most likely dictates the direction and limits of accumulation, use and maintenance of assets by members of society. However, gender is generally used to refer to being male or female (Adeosun & Owolabi, 2021). In this sense, gender is fixed, as it denotes the biological classification of human beings into different sexes considering the differences in physiological compositions (Alamveabee, 2005).

Nevertheless, inequality explains the socially induced variations that divide an entire population into classes (Muntaner & Lynch, 1999), putting some beneath a defined poverty line (World Bank, 2011; UNDP, 2014). The idea of inequality emphasises economic as well as social segregation (Adeosun & Owolabi, 2021). In addition, inequality is a function of certain socio-economic

barriers or limitations which determine the position of individuals in the share of societal resources on class basis (Kleven & Landais, 2017).

Against this backdrop, gender inequality is a social conception that creates disparity between the male and female gender in society (Adeosun & Owolabi, 2021). Gender inequality is believed to have originated from the patriarchal system of social formations (Makama, 2013). By this system, men are accorded superiority over women in relation to control over developmental phenomena of education, politics and labour market, and so on (Salaam, 2003). The patriarchal conception of men further stresses discrimination against women in society as a symbol of the family lineage continuity as opposed to women who drop family names after marriage (Makama, 2013). This perception is eventually responsible for the experience of low self-esteem and low self-confidence by the female children in their future endeavours (Makama, 2013). It is this discriminatory system that ensures that men occupy virtually all critical positions in the public sphere (Okpe, 2005).

In line with the above narration, Anya (2003) associates relegating the womenfolk to domestic activities with the impression created by society that public engagements such as politics are the prerogative of men. Therefore, women are prevented from featuring in public engagements which could, as culturally assumed, take them away from their socially constructed primary assignments of childbearing and management of other family domestic matters (Obikeze, 2006). The relegation of women to domestic affairs remains a concern towards achieving balance in socio-economic and political dynamism.

In the feminist argument, the marginalisation of women is attributed to the emergence of the capitalist system of social organisation (Silva, 2011). It is believed that women are oppressed in terms of their unfavourable economic positions which can only be changed through radicalisation of demand for their liberation (Pamela, 2005). Gender disparity is evident in the unequal treatment of women in the labour markets, where socially perceived less important jobs are given to them with unattractive rewards compared to their male counterparts (Brilleau, et.al., 2004, cited in Arbache et.al., 2010). In the work of Adebisi et.al. (2017), it is pinpointed that the need to liberate women from the shackles of gender inequality is stressed because discrimination against women further demotivates them to perform their socialisation role effectively. According to Afisi (2010), this contributed to the collapse of societal values that regulate behaviours in society.

In Nigeria, giving womenfolk the right to be recognised in social relations cannot be overemphasised. This view is supported by Ojalami

(2011) who reveals that women in Nigeria are responsible for 70% of the workforce in the agricultural subsector of the economy, accounting for 90% of food production in the country. Although women in Nigeria contribute between 70% and 80% of economic activities in the informal and agricultural sectors, they are yet to receive the kind of accolades that they deserve (Otite & Ogionwo, 2006). This is even though they scored highest in the global rank of the economic rate (Aina, 2012). In another dimension, religion is considered as a critical factor in the persistence of gender inequality in Nigerian society. This argument was pitched against the role that religion plays in almost all spheres of life of the Nigerian people (Sibani, 2017).

Put differently, women in a typical African tribe are socialised into believing that they are dependents throughout their life course (Ene-Obong et al., 2017). As such, they have no equal right with their male counterparts in the process of family inheritance (Agbasiere, 2015; Azuakor, 2017). Nevertheless, it has been reported that for Nigeria to achieve substantive economic growth, gender gaps must be closed (Archibon et al., 2018; Adegbite & Machethe, 2020). This narration concurs with the country's forecast on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015), as the issue of balancing must be addressed in order to follow international trends devoid of sentiment across gender.

In essence, the resurfacing of gender mainstreaming remains a unifying spot to ensure gender sensitivity, equal access and utilisation of services, equal involvement in decision-making and equitable treatment. With this, the uprising and agitation would drastically reduce and concerns often raised by the Human Development Index might reflect improvements in future reports. Within Nigeria's context, gender mainstreaming is not new, as the country ratified practically all international and regional conventions that protect human rights of every citizen. But the snag is, what is the level of implementation particularly on political affairs? This is the literature gap that this study fills, emphasising women's partisanship in the 2023 general elections. As clearly stated earlier, women's partisanship as voters was impressive, but as contestants, proved a sharp difference.

Theoretical underpinning: Exploring the Representation Theory

This study is anchored on the Theory of Representation. Historically, the Representation Theory evolved from the discipline of Mathematics, which focused on how groups act on given structures (Benjamin, 2012). This remains a mathematical theoretical paradigm in explaining sets and other components. However, the Representation Theory was introduced to

political studies after the evolution of indirect democracy. This emanated during the Middle Ages in many parts of Europe (Pitkin, 1969). Political philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke have been described as representation theorists. The rationale and assumption of the theory revolves around the expansion of political space to accommodate various subdivisions within society. Since the paradigm shift from the direct democratic system of the old Greek city, representation became imperative towards an inclusive government.

Considering Hobbes' perspective on Representation Theory, he emphasises on freedom for the people to choose representatives devoid of marginalisation and bias. Though this stance is contested as some analysts believe representativeness does not necessarily require equality of gender, the theory places political liberalism at the fore. However, what makes the theory suitable for this study is its unrestricted political space to ensure freedom of partisanship in politicking and governance. It reflects creating an enabling atmosphere for any interested persons to partake in the policymaking process via joining political race.

But other views of representation seem to be utterly different from popular dimension. One can think of representation not as a way of acting for others but as standing for something absent. It means one person can stand for another and be substituted for that other, provided that they are sufficiently alike based on their resemblance. However, what separates representative legislature from some other collection of people is its accurate part-by-part correspondence to the larger population for which it stands. In this case, if political representation is to be well understood, it seems to depend on the descriptive likeness between representatives and those that they stand for. Representative legislature must reflect an accurate map of the entire polity and portray the various voices. This makes Hannah (1963) emphasise on proportional representation. Such is viewed by interpreting Mathematical Sampling Theory to the concept of representation. To Mill (1993), political representation is the best substitution for direct democracy but with convincing justification. From this stance, one can affirm that representation is expected to be a symbol of inclusiveness. By inclusiveness, it interests this study to explore gender mainstreaming to balance political representation.

No doubt, as part of the assumption of the Representation Theory, the government must project the value of accurate resemblance (Pitkin, 1969). Connecting this to women and politics, the proper resemblance can be well situated in having female counterparts in various political offices. The juxtaposition of Representation Theory in this study remains paramount as gender affirmative is linked to the accurate semblance of

balanced political representation. Unfortunately, despite the submission of the representativeness syndrome, the current political configuration in Nigeria does not resemble what the country claims to stand for amidst its commitment to gender mainstreaming (Sakariyau & Zakuan, 2017). This questions Nigeria's readiness to implement some of its ratification regarding women's rights and advocacy. For instance, the CEDAW convention that was adopted by the UN General Assembly in New York on 3 September 1981, which most of the participant countries, including Nigeria, agreed on 35% gender affirmative, its application is yet to be fulfilled in the country despite ratifying it in 1981.

Finally, the theory dwells on good and effective representative legislature, which is expected to be symbolic. By symbolic representation, political leaders must create charisma, enhance belief, and stimulate irrational and affective reactions in people. This makes symbolic representation different from descriptive representation. Interestingly, achieving a symbolic representation can be undermined with the formation of Nigeria's political atmosphere via jettisoning gender sensitivity. The National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies has a vital role towards advocacy for representative legislature that would be a symbolic and accurate resemblance of gender mainstreaming.

Gender mainstreaming and Nigeria's 2023 general elections: Was there fair play?

Since the inception of Nigeria's Fourth Republic, it is worthy to mention that the stable political transition in the country remains a plus to her democratic journey. The series of general elections conducted from 1999 until 2023 without military incursion in the politics of the country remains a strong atmosphere for the consolidation of Nigeria's democracy. Though the electoral process is not perfect like every other democracy, Nigeria keeps improving its electioneering circle by introducing various innovations that have boosted electoral democracy in the country. According to Sakariyau (2020), Nigeria's democracy combines elements of both liberalism and authoritarianism, which makes it hybrid. This showcases the failure of domestic democracy to suit the socio-cultural peculiarities of Nigeria's heterogeneous statehood. Nevertheless, the period of electioneering exercises in the country has enhanced political stability in the polity. This remains a plus for democratisation in the country. Largely, Nigeria's political transitions have improved tremendously, which invariably widens the democratic sphere in the country.

However, considering the theme of this section, the 2023 general elections had come and gone with certain dynamics. But unlike the expectation for improved women's emergence in elective offices, the signal and percentage recorded by the females is far below the previous output. Before conducting an in-depth analysis regarding women's electoral performance in the 2023 general elections, there is a need to give a prelude assessment of previous exercises.

The scenario of women's under-representations predated the current picture. The Federal Republic of Nigeria's Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) guarantees women's rights in partisan politics, Section 42(1) of the 1999 Constitution explicitly states that: "A citizen of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination". Interestingly, in the last decade, Nigeria has witnessed a tremendous increase of women in political participation in party membership, voting, and vying for political offices (Akpam, 2015). Table 24 shows the number of women representatives in the parliament and the unavailability of women in the Presidency and Gubernatorial positions from 2003 to 2015. However, there is inherently some under-representation compared to their male counterparts. There was a decline in the percentage of women's representation in elective positions. For instance, out of the 747 candidates cleared for Senatorial elections in 2015, only 122 women received clearance from the electoral commission. The swing of the pendulum did not favour women in the House of Representatives when 267 out of 1,774 candidates who were cleared were female contestants (Gabriel, 2015). The scenario of the 2011 general elections was also a disparity dimension in Nigeria's politicking. Going by the database of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), a total of 7,160 candidates (men and women) contested the April 2011 elections. Of this number, only 628 women participated in the 2011 general elections (Makama, 2013).

Table 24: Women's representation in 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 general elections.

Position	Available seats	2003	2007	2011	2015
Presidency	1	0	0	0	0
Senate	109	4 (3.7%)	9 (8.3%)	7 (6.4%)	7 (6.4%)
House of Reps	360	21 (5.8%)	26 (7.2%)	25 (6.9%)	19 (5.2%)
Governorship	36	0	0	0	0

Source: INEC (2015)

The 2019 elections did not record an impressive outlook for women, as the number of female representatives did not increase. In fact, there was a decline compared to previous outings (CDD, 2019). During the preparation for the 2019 elections, 91 political parties were registered, and the popular notion was that women stood a better chance of success. Unfortunately, the outcome of parties' primaries and subsequent general elections outcome exposed a setback for women's politics. From the fact sheet revealed by CDD, a meagre figure of 4.17% of elected women officials was recorded (Ebuka, 2019).

The preparation for the 2023 general elections commenced with strong hope to improve women's partisanship in politics with more focus on electing more females into elective offices. Several gender-based advocacies actually conducted a series of mobilisation and sensitisation campaigns ahead of the 2023 general elections. In fostering women's participation in Nigeria's elections, Diatom Impact Group and ElectHER were formidable non-governmental organisations that championed women's advocacy programmes and political reorientation of the female counterparts together with the males in enhancing the former electoral values in the country. In one of the programmes organised by the ElectHER, the group co-founder, Abosede Geogre-Organ, emphasised on a mission to strengthen gender equality and promote the participation of women in the 2023 general elections. The group was supported by Diatom Impact with grants to pursue women's stride in politics and also sponsored political campaigns of qualified women in various elective positions. As rightly pinpointed by George Organ of the ElectHER,

'Investment in girls and women, especially in politics will offer enormous benefits for the society and build a productive, and healthy community. Women participation in politics will cause greater investments in education, health, good policy making and other aspects. This prompts ElectHER to be focusing on women's political participation in order to bridge inequality gaps in Nigerian politics and under representation of women in elective offices' (Premier Times, November 20, 2022).

Consolidating the effort to place women's partisanship high in the 2023 general elections, the New-Life Community Care Initiative (NELCCI) made moves to ensure effective participation of women in the political process. There was a giant move from NELCCI in partnership with Women Aid Collective (WACOL) and Action Aid Nigeria on voters' education and women's leadership training. The groups organised the sensitisation programme in selected states across geo-political zones. Basically, as stated by Florence Ifeanyi-Aneke:

As the 2023 general elections gathered momentum, the women should be at the forefront of making sure that the right candidates were voted into office. To achieve this, women should obtain their PVC and also be readily available to take part in the political process as a woman is eminently qualified to hold any elective position in Nigeria. So, this time around, the women should be ready to support one of their own as women access to right information was a prelude to financial freedom' (Daily Post, October 19, 2022)

The Nigerian Women Trust Fund (NWTF) also emphasised the need to strengthen women's partisanship via several advocacies and programmes. The body categorically called for women voters to vote for their fellow women. During the organisation's sensitisation visit on women and their participation under NWTF #Balance4her campaign in the 2023 general election, the Chief Executive Officer, Mufuliat Fijabo said:

'Nigeria desperately needs women in government. The country and its political institutions cannot grow when half population is being left behind. The fresh approach to leadership is the one that brings women on board as best hope for improving citizens' quality of life and combating the deep-rooted corruption that has been linked to the nation's leadership. The present Nigeria's democracy has not been geometrically progressing as lack of inclusion of women in decision making affects the country's economy and security issues' (This Day, January 10, 2023)

Despite these, the outcome of the 2023 elections signalled a poor outing for female politicians as the February 25 presidential and National Assembly elections further demystified women's chances in the country's politicking. Out of the 92 women who contested for senatorial seats and the 286 who vied for House of Representatives slots, only 15 women (both Senate and House of Representatives) were appointed. Such an outing contradicts Nigeria's commitment by its ratification of treaties towards boosting women's involvement in politics (Okafor & Ileyemi, 2023). Besides the federal legislators, the performance of women across the State Houses of Assembly elections was not encouraging as statistics indicate less than 6% of female politicians clinched the legislative seats at the component levels nationwide. The North West and North East geo-political zones recorded less than 1% as female representations in their various legislative houses remain scanty (Daily Trust, May 25, 2023).

Put differently, the executive seats within the Nigerian elective contest have always been dominated by men, as no woman has yet to emerge victorious in the presidential and gubernatorial circles. However, there

was a scenario of acting female Governor in Anambra State, Dame Etiaba, from November 2006 to February 2007 when the Governor, Peter Obi was impeached by the State House of Assembly. The court later reinstated the Governor. The 2023 elections witnessed a strong and formidable force from a female gubernatorial candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC), Hajia Aishatu Binani, who challenged the incumbent Governor of Adamawa State, Ahmadu Fintiri of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Nevertheless, the final outcome still places women on subordinate political footing as none is yet to take the number one executive seat at both state and federal level.

In the final analysis, there is a misrepresentation across the polity as women struggle to attain viable political offices in the country. This implies that women's active role in politics is diminishing against the expectation of modern power politics which is supposed to embrace fairness and equity. The dominance of men across political lines proves Patriarchal Theory more applicable in the polity. The female population remains formidable, and the electoral process cannot undermine womenfolk in politics, but the snag still retains men continuously outplaying the political scenes across Nigeria. This questions equity and fairness as envisaged by the representation school of thought. Democracy signals liberty without any form of intimidation and marginalisation. However, the political dynamics in Nigeria are yet to be a balancer as the game of politics remains dominant of men's political parlance.

Stumbling variables to gender equality in contemporary Nigerian politics

Despite the global manifestation of gender inequality, this disturbing trend has peculiarities that vary depending on societal factors. Generally, Rashila and Saliha (1998) itemise five basic factors hindering women's activism in politics, ranging from social factors, time constraints, structural constraints, cultural or religious factors, and insufficient funds. These could be interpreted as holistic common excuses for women's marginalisation in politicking. However, there is no doubt that Nigeria shares the sentiments above; there are still unique contentious factors limiting females' political vibrancy in the country.

The sustained culture of the patriarchy system in Nigeria remains a stumbling block for gender equality. This cultural perspective hinders the economic and social activism of the female counterpart as certain professions are basically reserved for male dominance. According to the UNDP (2022), there is an alarming backlash against women's rights, which has crippled the economic well-being of several females. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic hit women more as the most jobs lost were within their

category. This contributes to the economic insecurity of women. Considering the Nigerian scenario, the economic culture designates certain jobs for men, neglecting the capacity of their female counterparts. For instance, basic jobs in the field of transportation, engineering and technical professions have always been perceived in the country as men's expertise, making women not want to signify interest in those sectors. The few women navigating such professions are tagged with derogatory adjectives. With this, it is culturally shocking to find women driving buses or piloting tricycles for commercial purposes. The few women exploring such have always been viewed as women with a masculine profession.

The parental preference for male children to be sufficiently educated also hinders equal opportunity that can guarantee gender equality in the country. The economic situation in the country could be attributed to one of the reasons for parents concentrating their available limited resources on male educational prowess ahead of their female counterparts. Though both sexes stand a better chance to be trained in tertiary institutions, postgraduate studies have always been male-dominated. This remains worrisome as the Human Development Index projects equal educational opportunity as a yardstick towards checking gender inequality (Sakariyau et al., 2020). The number of out-of-school children, particularly females, is alarming and reduces the chances of gender mainstreaming within the educational sector.

Politically, gender disparity is widely entrenched in Nigeria. Since the inception of the country's Fourth Republic, male dominance in the political atmosphere cannot be over-emphasised. By the nature of Nigeria's politicking, which requires rigorous and tougher campaigns, these have become masculine affairs. To Makama (2013), Nigerian politics is not largely guided by ideology, but rather it is a warfare engagement devoid of morality and decency. This singular approach is a sentiment working against women's involvement in any keenly contested electioneering. Be that as it may, partisan politics, particularly vying for elective offices, remains favourable to men. The federal political arrangement in the country has recorded male dominance across the 36 states. No woman has ever emerged victorious during gubernatorial elections, not to talk of winning the number one seat at the federal level, since the beginning of the current democratic dispensation in the country. Though women have been elected as members of the National Assembly, the percentage has always remained below the 35% gender affirmative ratified by Nigeria during the CEDAW that was adopted by the UN General Assembly in New York on 3 September 1981. Such simply indicates that Nigeria's theoretical ratification is not commensurate with practical operation.

In the final analysis, the gender equality advocacy requires robust dialogue via connecting the grassroots people with the urban inhabitants for proper orientation. Despite a series of gender-based civil society groups and government ministries of women affairs, society is yet to be well informed on the strategy and dynamics of gender equality that paves the way for equal opportunities and representations. The Nigerian polity fails to align with the United Nations Development Programme on gender equality strategy. The recent UNDP gender equality strategy (2022–2025) (UNDP, 2024) in the global context emphasises effective communication via orientation to reduce inequalities and exclusion of women in socio-economic and political spheres. With this, gender-based violence, the gender dimension of poverty and abuse of women's rights could be drastically reduced (UNDP, 2024).

Conclusion and recommendations

The concluding remark is tailored towards exploring how effective legislation can serve as a catalyst for improving women's representation in Nigerian politics. The significance of the legislative body in any democratic arrangement cannot be undermined. This is akin to the fact that legislators are critical actors in the socio-economic and political development of any democracy worldwide. Considering the Nigerian scenario, the National and State legislative bodies are vital instruments in public policymaking. The singular power of lawmaking is a responsibility that moves and shakes the dimension of the country's political atmosphere. The decisions of the legislators can make or mar the political future of the country.

However, the reduction of women's representation in the legislative bodies not only threatens gender mainstreaming in Nigeria but also lowers the voices of females in the public policymaking process. As noted earlier, after 23 years of democracy in Nigeria, women still struggle to attain 10% of representation in the political arena. The declining ratio of women's representation in politics is disappointing despite several programmes introduced by INEC to increase women's awareness of politics (INEC, 2019). It has also been observed that matters which are directly affecting women often suffer setbacks in parliament because of insufficient voices of the females. In place of this, this chapter tries to expose and pinpoint the strategic ways for ensuring successful passage of bills that revolve on gender sensitivity and invariably improves women's partisanship in political power.

Firstly, lobbying is a key instrument in any legislative arrangement. The right to lobby has changed some legislative decisions in the history of Nigeria's democracy. Several bills have been passed through lobbying. The notion of lobbying is vital to lawmakers globally. To achieve the affirmative

35% for women's representation in politics, more efforts should be placed on lobbying not only amongst the Principal Officers of the Legislature but also members of the National and State Houses of Assemblies. By lobbying, direct face-to-face contact or indirect methods can be adopted. But most importantly, the few women amongst the legislators can use their power of lobbying to persuade and influence sensitive bills for women's empowerment in the political setting. The notion of 'bench-warming' must be discarded by women at the plenary sessions. The women's voice should not be restricted to the secondment of motion or bills, sponsoring sensitive bills for women's viability in politics is required to toe the line of equal representation as envisaged by the United Nations at different fora.

In addition, the power of advocacy towards strengthening legislation for women's political viability is key. The passage of bills to enhance gender sensitivity requires robust advocacy. In view of this, different civil society groups can come up with formidable voices supporting women's political rights. This may require rigorous campaigns and mobilisation for female participation in politics. Though women's voting strength in Nigeria is high, their votes are usually cast for male aspirants. This indicates that women hardly vote for fellow female counterparts. The level of advocacy must be strategically channelled to ensure equal chances for women in politics.

Similarly, political socialisation is critical in enhancing women's partisanship in politics. The various tertiary institutions in Nigeria need to encourage female students across campuses to key into school politics. Generally, it has been observed that men's dominance in students' campus politics is an offshoot of national politicking. For instance, some of the political gladiators in national politics developed an interest in politicking during their days of active involvement in campus politics vis-à-vis students' unionism. Such narration can be improved with more female students taking leadership roles across various tertiary institutions in the country. This does not necessarily jettison male partisanship but it is a clarion call for young women to be initiated into competitive politics and leadership skills.

The mindset of viewing the female counterpart as the weaker sex must change. Serious advocacy is required to change peoples' mindset, which has denied discovery of potential talents amongst the females. Some non-governmental organisations have been advocating for a mindset shift to enhance high productivity amongst Nigerians, irrespective of gender. Legislative support can go a long way in changing the dimension of politicking in Nigeria from masculine dominance to equal representation. In fact, political parties can be mandated to consider a minimum of 30% of their slots to women during electioneering candidature selection. This can be achieved via passing a bill on electoral reform and political parties'

regulation. But such needs consistent and viable lobbying by carrying all relevant stakeholders along towards achieving the goal.

In the final analysis, gender mainstreaming is achievable if all relevant stakeholders support Nigeria's stride in attaining it beyond theoretical affirmation which has become frequent rhetoric within the polity. Convention and treaty ratifications have always been enjoying the country's signature, but implementation remains the major problem hindering the attainment of gender affirmative. Though there has been a series of advocacies and programmes on the significant role of women in politics, the swing of the pendulum is yet to be favourable. In view of this, as stated earlier, legislation is required to boost women's chances. The 10th National Assembly needs to come up with legislative policies to aid women's partisanship in politics. The appointment of principal officers in both the Senate and House of Representatives is not convincing towards an inclusive legislative body that would pave the way for women's strides.

The National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), being the research and policy dialogue centre for the National Assembly, should continue its advocacy and sensitisation programmes targeted at improving women's inclusiveness. Such a gesture should not be left to female counterparts alone; the political stalwarts amongst the men need to brace the storm and come up with how the gender affirmative can be realised in the country. With this, the sentiment of belonging to a patriarchy state can be corrected and democratic representation devoid of gender bias would be attained and which invariably could place Nigeria's democracy on a higher scale.

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Chapter 15

Social Media Adoption and Female User Agency as Determinants of Women's Visibility in Nigerian Public Affairs

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Abstract

The pervasiveness of social media has propelled them to a significant position in the running of public affairs globally. In Africa, social media has gained greater prominence and ascendancy in public affairs in recent times. While a lot of scholarly efforts have gone into investigating the use of social media in governance and public affairs generally, the place of women in this new wave of influence seems to have been neglected. The intention of this chapter is to interrogate the reduced participation of women on social media platforms which may in the long run provide agency and visibility for them in public affairs. Using a combination of digital humanities, a compatible approach of netnography and field observation as methods, the study seeks to identify the factors that demotivate female members of the national parliament from being as visible as their male counterparts on social media sites which may make them subjects of greater interest in public affairs. It argues that such a minimal adoption rate has the tendency to continually push women to the margins of governance and public life and deprive them of the confidence of self-assertion. The chapter concludes with a few recommendations for reversing the trend.

Keywords: Agency, Nigeria, Public Affairs, Social Media, Twitter/X, Visibility, Women

Introduction

Social media have become tools in various fields of human endeavour. The uses also vary depending on the objective or focus of the use. As Christian Fuchs argues, social media are “often understood as having to do with user-

generated content, comprising a network of contacts and followers, the sharing of texts, images, and videos, possibilities for online re-sharing and the spreading of content” (Fuchs, 2021:4). While they have become ubiquitous in networking for maintaining friendship, professional connections and other forms of acquaintances, social media continue to assume relevance in other spheres including public relations, business, governance, politics and public affairs. With such growing relevance, social media have also attracted scholarly attention with different scholars examining their diverse aspects in order to analyse or provide a better understanding of the activities involved in this communicative phenomenon. Researchers across the African continent have therefore explored issues ranging from modes of representation to identity formation, social impact, civic agency, categories of discourses and implications of the platforms for technological advancement (Anani-Bossman, 2023; Bidwell, 2016; Porter et al, 2016). It is pertinent to note, however, that much of the body of work on social media use in Africa, and in Nigeria especially, seems to have paid little or no attention to the ways in which women participate on different platforms as a form of agency with the potential to enhance visibility in public life. In other words, a considerable gap still exists in the scholarship on female social media adoption rate and, by extension, user agency as a major driving force of visibility in public life and governance in Nigeria.

The level of participation in governance by women in Nigeria has often been said to be low when compared to their male counterparts (Afolabi, 2019; Chitongo & Ojogiwa, 2021; Nwabunkeonye, 2014; Orisadare, 2019). This low level of participation by women is also generally agreed to be antithetical to the development and the evolution of an egalitarian society. In stretching further, the argument there is often the tendency to lay the blame at the feet of masculine chauvinism, patriarchy or some form of misogyny deriving from age-old cultural practices and beliefs to which society itself subscribes in spite of the claim to modernity and transformation. While feminist activists continue to raise their voices in demand for increased participation of women in politics and public affairs, a new crop of agitators professing a kind of digital feminism has emerged to canvass for greater opportunities for women to have an online presence like their male counterparts or at least better than what is currently the case. In many of these agitations, we find a reference to culture, history and conformist gender roles as factors which demotivate women from having a fair share of opportunities which may translate to greater visibility in the public space.

Public affairs, communication and social media

Public affairs has continued to evolve in different ways either as a concept, academic discipline or a form of professional practice with its attendant nuances which require careful analysis. This evolution is most evident in the various mutations of the definition of the term. Phil Harris and Craig Fleisher (2005), in providing three 'broad historic definitions' of public affairs, touch on policy formulation, political and social development, as well as the totality of government affairs or relations. For Conor McGrath et al. (2010), public affairs is the "fundamental bridge between organisations, society and government" (p. 335). They argue that public affairs "may refer to the nexus of politics, management and communication whereby an organisation seeks to deal with external public policy challenges" (McGrath et al., 2010:338). In aggregating the meanings that have evolved over the years, it is largely evident that the major significance of public affairs resides in the fact that it provides a meeting point for the political and administrative structures of government and the larger society. The focus in this study is on politics and the top-echelon of bureaucracy as two core components of public affairs in Nigeria.

The place of communication in public affairs cannot be over-emphasised. Most of the initial efforts to properly position public affairs either as a concept or as an academic discipline took off from the perspective of communication with greater focus on public relations, corporate communication and strategic communication. This further explains the obsession of much of the early definitions of public affairs with communication to the extent that it was almost possible to equate the whole of public affairs with communication to the exclusion of other forms of engagement. Beyond being one of the parent disciplines which provided impetus for its emergence and its flourishing, communications are important in public affairs. There are many social media platforms available for users to choose from depending on their preferences or the purpose for which they need to be connected. Some of these popular platforms include Facebook, Twitter (now known as X), LinkedIn, Instagram and personal blogs. Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter have gained popularity amongst corporate organisations, individuals, technocrats and politicians, who now keep accounts or profiles on those platforms. However, Twitter seems to have an edge as a very active space for political engagement and public affairs (Duncombe, 2018; Evans et al., 2011). As a result, Twitter was chosen as the primary social media platform for data collection for this study. This choice is borne out of the popularity that Twitter has attained in recent times as a social media platform of choice amongst public office holders and politicians who seek to keep in touch with constituents and other stakeholders in their

spheres of operation. For instance, almost every major political office holder in Nigeria has a Twitter account with which they engage their constituents and also gauge public opinion about their activities and current events locally and globally.

Theoretical and methodological considerations

The theoretical framework for this study is anchored on the Social Capital Theory (Hauberer, 2011; Kennan & Hazleton, 2000; Luoma-aho, 2013; Tabancali, 2022). Dating back to Bourdieu (1985), Social Capital Theory construes social relationships as capable of translating to useable resources for the benefit of individuals and organisations. According to Richard Machalek and Michael Martin, “social capital can be defined as any feature of a social relationship that yields reproductive benefits” (2015:894). The relevance of the theory, in this instance, is in its capacity to make sense of social media use amongst female politicians and technocrats based mainly in South West Nigeria. Connecting social capital to questions of communication excellence, Kennan and Hazleton see social capital as “something that can be acquired, stored, and expended and that can be used to facilitate action that can result in a competitive advantage for individuals, groups, and organisations” (2000:282). Approaching the concept from the perspective of civic engagements, Hauberer (2011) focuses on the benefits of social contacts and the ways in which such benefits help in reinforcing the visibility and subject positions of individuals and groups. Contacts made via different kinds of media including social media platforms therefore have the potential of enhancing the visibility of those who constantly feature in activities on such platforms than those who hardly do. In establishing the link between social capital and communication, Luoma-aho (2013) contends that social capital contributes to corporate reputation and individual reputation with the ability to influence personal or corporate brand image, reputation and public opinion in different ways.

This study combines netnography, which is a form of ethnographic research conducted online (Kozinets, 2015; Bartl et al., 2016) and field observations for data collection. While netnography is generally known as a form of digital ethnography, with the Internet providing the research area, field observation is a qualitative research method which allows for a careful and systematic observation of actions, practices and phenomena with the purpose of bringing out certain characteristics as may be necessary for the objective of the research. (McCall, 1984; Smiley, 2015). As Smiley argues, field observation is “an ethnographic practice of collecting data and information about a given social setting and situation” (Smiley 2015:1812). For McCall, systematic field observation involves a “naturalistic observation of human

social interaction” (1984:262). Both McCall and Smiley are unanimous on the suitability of field observation for studying social behaviour, with the latter advocating the suitability of the method for preliminary research towards a better understanding of communities and individual behaviour. Their postulations also make netnography and field observation attractive for studying social media adoption rate by participants based on their different demographic characteristics.

The area covered by this research is limited to the South West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Relying on the aforementioned netnographic field observation, the Twitter handles of members of the House of Representatives who represented constituencies from the six states of the South West from 2019 to 2023 were closely studied. The Twitter handles of all four females, out of seventy-one representatives, were purposively selected, while another set of Twitter handles of four male representatives chosen from four different states of the South West was also sampled for the purpose of comparison. Posts and activities on the sampled Twitter handles were closely observed for a period of twenty-one days. Inferences were made based on the frequency and tenacity of activities on the handles.

Twitter and low activity social media users

The first major observation on the Twitter handles during the period in question is that the ones belonging to the male representatives were more active than those of the female representatives. Morisson (2023) describes low-activity social media users as ‘casual users’ who engage in limited activities on social media platforms. For such users their level of visibility is also lower than that of high-activity social media users. The reason for this is not far-fetched. Once an account is active, the owner of the account is more likely to be seen and known by more people in cyberspace than one who operates a dormant or less active account. In addition to this, the male representatives showed more interest in issues beyond their immediate environment, like foreign news and other matters of global concern than their female counterparts. For instance, while the war between Russia and Ukraine trended for two consecutive days during the period, two of the four male representatives contributed to the discussion on the war, while none of the females posted anything on the two days. This kind of attitude supports the proposition that the kind of issues that users of social media show interest in has a considerable amount of impact on how much traction and visibility they gain in the process. At times, issues like sports (especially football, in the case of Nigeria), high-wired politics and the like, which attract heavy traffic online hardly interest women users of social media. Also, there were scanty comments and replies from the handles of the four female representatives

included in the study, showing a lower volume of exchanges and engagement with other users of the platform. More often, they were the originators of posts on their handles and there was less tenacity in following through with engagements in the form of comments and replies. This lack of tenacity represents a kind of trouble avoidance strategy that is used to stay out of very contentious issues with the potential for inviting some form of backlash.

Gender relations in Africa, as in much of the developing nations, often privilege men and other powerful individuals to the exclusion of women as a result of different historical and contemporary factors which determine the perception of different gender identities by the public, different governments and society at large (Mkhwanazi, 2018; Patel & Hochfeld, 2011). This kind of understanding has also continued to define different kinds of roles which men and women are expected to play in society. These normative expectations often manifest in the ways in which different categories of people respond to events, phenomena and even developments across different spheres. In Nigeria, gender issues have continued to remain extremely contentious for a number of reasons which revolve around cultural beliefs and value systems that tend to promote chauvinistic conduct. In a good number of ways the approach to gender roles also translates to negative manifestations in development and the move towards an egalitarian society (Enfield, 2019; Olonade et al., 2021).

Civic agency can be described as one of the major gains of the ubiquity and pervasiveness of social media (Bakarjieva, 2012; Hungbo, 2021). It is “a conscious action by citizens aimed at effecting a change in the character of their environment by means other than elections” (Hungbo, 2021:248). Adopting the public work and deliberation approach, Harry Boyte argues that “civic agency helps individuals and groups to negotiate a shared democratic way of life” (2014:1). In politics, civic engagement provides an opportunity for more voices to be heard in the public sphere. Such plurality of voices emanates from the deliberate act of catering for voices of people other than elected representatives who speak on the authority of their membership of an arm of government. Social media platforms like Twitter offer great opportunities for personal brand image and reputation management. Performative politics on social media, which involves the use of platforms like Twitter has become one of the major ways through which public office holders gain visibility and ingrain themselves in the minds of the public. While some female users of social media have used the platforms they feature on, for the purpose of challenging patriarchy, others continue to use such platforms for the advancement of public visibility. Yet, gender norms and patriarchy continue to play a role in the dynamics of political participation in Nigeria.

As Veronica Barassi argues, “social media activism has brought about another important transformation in media activism” (2018:2). This transformation implies some measure of agency for individuals who do not previously hold much power in the bigger scheme of things. In political circles, agency is quite significant as it gives voice and visibility to those who are able to exercise it. In addition to creating visibility for subaltern individuals, social media have also demonstrated the capacity to alter identities in both positive and negative ways. It is, however, important to take cognisance of some of the risks associated with constant online presence through the instrumentality of social media. Approaching the risks of online presence from the perspective of journalistic practice, Itai Zviyita and Admire Mare identify some of the risks that women are prone to online as “forms of harassment such as name calling, body shaming, trolling, verbal abuse, sextortion, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, manipulation of photos, cyberstalking, doxing, hacking, receiving unwanted, offensive sexually explicit emails or messages, and inappropriate advances on social media platforms” (2023:1). Digital stress experiences, anti-social media rhetoric and the moralised perception of social media as a harbour zone for ‘iniquities’ combined with different forms of harassment itemised above to threaten female politicians who find pleasure in using social media for the enhancement of their visibility. In spite of these threats, which Emiliano Treré and Veronica Barrasi (2015) categorise as ‘net authoritarianism’, the radical shift in the location of communities from the grassroots to a technologically determined realm of ‘netroots’ makes a more active presence more desirable for female participants on the social media space.

Conclusion

Self-representation and the construction of a positive identity have become part of the activities through which public office holders gain visibility. Under-representation of women in public affairs has been traced to several factors by previous research while ignoring the impact of visibility on the agency of women in the public sphere. Evidence in this chapter has, however, established low participation and low visibility as major characteristics of female users of social media in public life in South West Nigeria. The low participation by women in public affairs can be attributed to many factors both within and outside the control of the womenfolk. In addition, it is important to note that some of the factors said to be within the control of women have larger import and prompting from within the larger society where the women operate. Digital stress experiences, online harassment and other anti-social media behaviour which reinforce male dominance of the

public space should therefore not inhibit women politicians from claiming agency through social media for the enhancement of their visibility.

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Chapter 16

Intra-Party Democracy and Women's Political Participation in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Over the years, there has been a global movement and debate aimed at promoting women's participation in every facet of society. The advocacy for increased women's political participation has generated more controversies than resolving the perceived gender imbalances in the global political processes. While the available records indicate that women's involvement in the political processes has increased in recent times, both at the national and international levels, there are still gender imbalances and insufficient involvement of women in political activities, especially in Nigeria since the return of democratic governance in 1999. The literature on women's political participation is dominated by the issues hindering women from active participation in politics. However, there is a shortage of studies on women's involvement in intra-party democracy and how this may have contributed to or constrained their wider political participation. To fill this

gap in the literature, this study examines women's involvement in intra-party democracy, and how this may have constraints on women's political participation. To do so, the study focuses on the two major political parties – The All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) – in Ekiti State. The study collected data from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with purposively selected executives and other prominent members of the state's two political parties. The secondary data was sourced from journal articles, publications and textbooks. The findings of the study indicated that the absence of intra-party democracy plays a significant role in the limited participation of women in party politics and the decision-making process, which has contributed collectively to the under-representation of women on the Nigerian political landscape. Amongst others, the study recommends that there should be a gender-sensitive review of the electoral system within political parties.

Keywords: Democracy, Intra-party, Political Participation, Political Party

Introduction

At the very core of democracy is the opportunity for all citizens to take part in the administration of public affairs. However, fair representation of both men and women is a fundamental tenant of democracy. It creates a balance that more closely reflects the makeup of society. More importantly, studies have shown that gender-balanced decision-making leads to better outcomes and more effective policies. By including diverse perspectives and experiences, we can create more inclusive and equitable societies (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2005). According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2020), for democracy to hold significance and evolve, political policies and national laws must be collectively determined by both men and women, ensuring equal consideration for the interests and abilities of both genders. As a result, many initiatives and programmes have been introduced on both the national and international levels to recognise the significance of achieving gender parity in politics (M'Cormack-Hale, 2018). By encouraging equal opportunities for women and encouraging their active participation in decision-making processes, these initiatives seek to close the gender gap in political representation. Additionally, promoting gender mainstreaming in politics emphasises the significance of incorporating gender perspectives into formulating, implementing, and evaluating policies.

Efforts to achieve this gender equality in politics have received global attention, with the United Nations (UN) taking an early stand on women's rights and political participation. The UN has established conventions

and treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UN, 1979) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN, 1995), that highlight the importance of women's political empowerment. Regionally, African countries have also made commitments to increase women's participation in decision-making by signing protocols like the Maputo Protocol (AU, 2023) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gender and Development Protocol (SADC, 2021). These agreements aim to promote gender equality and enhance women's political representation. As a result of these collective efforts, there has been an increase in the number of women occupying political leadership positions and participating in decision-making processes, contributing to more inclusive and equitable political landscapes. However, despite these efforts, the progress towards gender parity, especially in developing democracies like Nigeria, has been slow and uneven, with women still vastly under-represented and facing significant barriers to entry and advancement in political careers (Ake et al., 2019). Evidence abounds that women still make up a small portion of those involved in political decision-making and leadership in Nigeria, despite Nigeria's signing of the United Nations and other international organisations' advocacy and declaration of the rights and equality between men and women. The control of public life has been dominated by the male gender with little or no effort to incompatibly integrate the gender that occupies 49.6% of the world's population. This gender imbalance in political power has resulted in discrimination and marginalisation of women and hindered the full realisation of democracy's potential. According to Oloyede (2015), the national average for women in elective and appointed positions in Nigeria has remained at 6.7%, which is significantly lower than the averages for the world (22.5%), Africa (23.4%), and West Africa (15%). Despite the twenty-four years of democracy (1999–2023), Nigeria is yet to produce a female governor in any of the 36 states of the Federation, a female president or vice president, or the senate president. In the 9th Assembly, there are 29 women who make up about 6% of the total members, including the House of Representatives and the Senate, as opposed to 440 male legislators. In the 8th House, there were 438 male legislators as opposed to just 31 female legislators with a mere 5.3% representation in state legislatures (Dataphyte, 2020).

According to scholars (Ahikire, 2004; Beck, 2003; Tripp, 2000), the issue of gender disparity in some sub-Saharan African nations, including Nigeria, can be attributed to the prevailing political climate characterised by patrimonialism and clientelism. Studies have also revealed that factors affecting women's political participation vary depending on socioeconomic development, geography, culture, and political system (Shvedova, 2005; Alzuabi, 2016). In Nigeria, for instance, women are working to assert a

significant voice in shaping the direction of their states, but they have faced numerous obstacles that have only bolstered their resolve. According to Shvedova (2005), the political climate and conditions of the country are still hostile and unfriendly to women, while women who constitute close to half (presently 49.5%) of Nigeria's national population continue to suffer marginalisation and discrimination (Oni & Agbude, 2019).

Recently, there has been a significant global movement and ongoing discussions focused on enhancing women's participation in various positions addressing the perceived gender imbalances within political processes worldwide. While various efforts and discussions abound on the reasons for low women's representation in politics and governance, little or no attention has been paid to the activeness or inactivity of women in intra-party politics. The literature on women's political participation is dominated by the issues hindering women from active participation in politics and why so few of them are elected or appointed into political positions. While a lot of work has been performed on women's participation in politics, little attention has been paid to women's involvement in intra-party democracy and how this might have contributed to or has constrained their wider political participation. Political parties are central to the political process, serving as key gatekeepers for political positions and opportunities. However, understanding how women navigate and engage with intra-party dynamics sheds light on their challenges within party structures. There has been limited research that examines women's engagement in intra-party democracy and its impact on their broader political participation. The role of political parties in shaping women's involvement in politics remains understudied, leaving a gap in our understanding of how party dynamics may either facilitate or hinder women's participation in the political arena.

To fill this gap in the literature, this study explores the struggles for and the dynamics of power distribution in the political parties and how this may have constraints on women's political participation. To do so, the study will focus on the two major political parties – The All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) – in Ekiti State.

Intraparty democracy and women's political participation: A review

Political parties are considered to be the bedrock of any democracy. However, there are some qualities that any party must meet for them to be seen as the backbone of democracy, as claimed. One such quality is internal party democracy and equal and fair representation (Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011). Internal democracy, as Ojukwu and Olaifa (2011:28.) argue,

is a broad term that describes a wide range of methods for including party members in intra-party deliberations and decision-making processes. In essence, it is democracy within a political party and the extent to which the party subscribes to or abides by the basic democratic tenets (Ojukwu & Olaifa, 2011). Tyoden (1994) posits that for a political system to be adjudged democratic, the place of political parties in the political processes cannot be overemphasised. Political parties must be able to exhibit the ingredients of democracy in their internal workings and processes. In the same vein, party democracy influences participatory democracy, which can be described as a process that emphasises citizens' broad participation (in decision-making) in the direction and operation of political systems. In general, the argument is that parties adhering to the principles of internal democracy are likely to select more capable and appealing leaders, have more responsive policies, and, as a result, enjoy greater electoral success. In addition, using internal democratic procedures for political parties' deliberation and decisions strengthens democratic culture generally (Daskalovski, 2012).

Supporting this, Daskalovski (2012) states that political party democracy is hinged on some important elements. Firstly, in a multiparty competitive political system, parties are key to and are major actors of political power. All political activities, from the attainment of power to the exercise of power, in which parties are involved as actors, must be adequately democratic in their content, process and objective. The political process of making and running the government can be democratic only when the parties, as actors, are internally adequately democratic. Only those parties and leaders which practice democracy in the entire process of all their party affairs and business can give a democratic character to the content and process of the state. Secondly, political parties are the primary structure and forum for the formation of the political will of citizens and the mobilisation of their political actions. The process of formation of will and carrying out of action in democracy must be sufficiently democratic. To ensure a democratic method of will formation and mobilisation of action, the parties that initiate, coordinate, synthesise, and conduct them must follow and practice fundamental principles of democracy in conducting all their internal business. Thirdly, democracy depends not on charisma, wisdom, and commitment occasionally shown by a few leaders but primarily on qualities such as skill, knowledge and virtue that political parties and their members possess, demonstrate and use. Finally, democracy is not just about periodically electing leaders and public office bearers. It is a set of social norms that govern our conduct and behaviour. Therefore, fundamental principles, methods and ideals of democracy must be practised, without exception, in all social and public life which alone can contribute to the democratisation of society, state and public institutions (Daskalovski, 2012).

Furthermore, for political parties to adequately exhibit the fundamental principles of democracy, equal and fair representation of all members of the party is very important. Over the years, women have been considered marginalised in politics, especially intraparty politics. This has brought about the movement towards women's relevance in intra-party democracy and democracy at large and this has gained relevance all over the world (Elson, 2002; Rubin & Bartle, 2005). Women's political participation primarily refers to their involvement in politics, which includes voting, joining political parties, and participating in government. However, a variety of factors, such as sociocultural norms, institutional structures, and personal experiences, influence the meaning of this concept. Olayinka and Onwudiwe (2017) define 'women's political participation' as "the participation of women in political activities, particularly in decision-making processes that affect their lives and those of their families, communities, and nations." This definition highlights the importance of women's involvement in politics and the need for their voices to be heard in shaping policies that affect them and their communities. It also emphasises women's role in contributing to their nations' development. Similarly, Okolie-Osemene and Okolie-Osemene (2016) argue that women's political participation is "the inclusion of women in the political arena through voting, running for political office, engaging in political activism, and other forms of political engagement that shape political outcomes." In his study, Igbuzor (2018) conceptualised women's political participation as "the active participation of women in political processes, such as exercising their right to vote, having the option to run for office, and taking part in decision-making at various levels of government."

A number of academics have emphasised the significance of comprehending women's political participation within its broader socio-cultural context. For instance, Chandra Mohanty (2003) contends that to fully comprehend the significance of women's political participation, it is necessary to consider how gender interacts with other social identities, such as race, class, and nationality. Similarly, Phillips (2000) stresses the significance of understanding how cultural norms and gendered stereotypes influence women's political participation. Institutional factors also play a critical role in shaping the meaning of women's political participation. Several scholars have focused on the impact of legal frameworks and electoral systems on women's political participation.

The conceptualisation of women's political participation underscores the significance of women's political participation in promoting gender equality and ensuring that their needs and perspectives are represented in policymaking within and outside the party system. They also suggest that women's involvement in politics can lead to more inclusive and effective

governance and greater social and economic development. Overall, these definitions stress the value of women participating actively in politics and their capacity to impact decisions that impact their lives and communities.

Overview of women's political participation in Nigeria

For a long time, scholars have been interested in women's political participation in Nigeria. Despite Nigeria's political and economic development, the under-representation of women in political leadership roles continues to be a serious problem. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with a population of over 230 million. Despite Nigeria's robust economy, her women are under-represented in politics compared to men. Research on the causes of the under-representation of women in politics has been extensively conducted, and studies have revealed the low involvement of women in politics and the decision-making process. Despite the international advocacy for the inclusion of women in politics and decision-making processes, women in Nigeria continue to have little influence over political decision-making, according to studies. According to a 2017 study by Ogbonna and Ukamaka, women are frequently marginalised in politics and excluded from important decision-making roles, such as party leadership positions. Similar findings were made by Adepoju and Adepoju (2018), who discovered that women are under-represented in the House of Representatives, where they hold only 6.4% of the seats. A study by Olutayo (2018) found that cultural norms and practices, such as patriarchy and gendered expectations, create barriers to women's political participation.

Additionally, women often face discrimination and harassment in politics, which can deter them from seeking political office (Adeniyi et al., 2020). Adeniyi et al. (2020) suggest that affirmative action policies such as gender quotas, can be effective in increasing women's representation in politics. Similarly, Oluwole and Jegede (2018) argue that targeted interventions, such as political education and mentorship programmes, can help to build women's political skills and confidence.

Women's political participation is crucial for achieving gender equality and inclusive development, according to Nigerian academics. According to Akpan and Akpabio (2020), women's involvement in politics can encourage more responsive and inclusive policies catering to marginalised groups' needs. Adesina and Fawole (2018) claim that women's political participation can contribute to sustainable development by addressing gender-based discrimination and inequality.

Feminist Political Theory and party politics: A theoretical discourse

This study delves into the intricate dynamics of intra-party politics and their relationship to women's political participation through the lens of Feminist Political Theory. As a political movement, feminism strives to combat various forms of inequality and dismantle the societal, cultural, economic, and political systems that subordinate women (Zalewski, 2000). By critically examining and reshaping institutions and theories that perpetuate women's subordination, feminist politics aims to eradicate the dominance imposed upon women. Situated within both Feminist Theory and Political Theory, Feminist Political Theory employs a feminist perspective to explore traditional inquiries within political philosophy, encompassing both contemporary and historical contexts (Tukur, 2014). It places women and their experiences at the forefront of political analysis. It challenges the existing power imbalance where men hold more power and privilege. By critically examining this gender-based disparity, it seeks transformative change and explores strategies for achieving a more equitable distribution of power and privilege between genders (Bryson, 2003:1).

In exploring the realm of intra-party politics in Nigeria, it becomes evident that the gender-power order described by Feminist Theory is a pervasive force that shapes and influences the distribution of power within political parties. This power structure determines the extent to which women are able to actively participate in political decision-making processes. However, this power order is often reflected in the under-representation of women in leadership positions and decision-making processes within political parties. Furthermore, it can perpetuate a culture that marginalises and silences women's voices, hindering their ability to effectively participate in and contribute to political discourse.

It is obvious that our society assigns distinct social benefits and burdens based on an individual's gender. As a result, the gender-based dichotomy becomes particularly relevant, as it influences the opportunities and challenges faced by women seeking political engagement within their respective parties. Gendered power dynamics, societal norms, and structural barriers shape women's opportunities and experiences within political parties. These factors often result in limited representation of women in leadership positions and decision-making roles within political parties. Political party operations are primarily created to support patriarchal patronage systems and serve the interests of men (Kelly, 2019). According to Pas et al. (2022), the rules and procedures that control the nomination stage within parties are created and structured in accordance with male norms and values. This gender bias in political party operations often results in the

under-representation of women in leadership positions and decision-making processes. Consequently, it perpetuates a cycle where women's voices and perspectives are marginalised, hindering progress towards gender equality in politics.

Methodology

The study used a combination of primary and secondary sources to gather data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews conducted with purposefully selected executives and influential individuals from the two political parties in Ekiti State. Secondary data, on the other hand, was sourced from journal articles, publications, and textbooks. The field survey predominantly took place in Ado Ekiti, the state's capital city. The researcher employed the purposive and snowball sampling methods to determine the appropriate sample size for the study. These sampling techniques are commonly used in non-probability sampling when seeking information from well-informed individuals regarding specific socio-political phenomena.

Additionally, they are effective when the participants assist in recruiting other participants, particularly when potential participants are difficult to locate. In total, the study involved interviews with 15 participants. This group consisted of eight executives and prominent members from both the APC and PDP parties (four individuals from each party), two scholars specialising in the field of women in politics, and five party members (three from the APC and two from the PDP). The primary research instrument utilised was an interview guide, comprising ten questions. The gathered data underwent discourse analysis as part of the research process.

Findings and discussions

This section focuses on the findings of this study. The study reveals that the two major political parties, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), lack intraparty democracy and female inclusion in intraparty politics. The study found that the APC and PDP exhibit a significant lack of internal democratic processes, such as transparent candidate selection and decision-making mechanisms. Furthermore, the study reveals a significant gender disparity within intraparty politics, implying a lack of female representation and participation. Women are consistently under-represented in key party positions such as leadership, nomination processes, and candidate selection. Female exclusion not only impedes gender equality, but also deprives political parties of diverse perspectives and undermines the potential for inclusive decision-making.

For example, a participant, a prominent member of the PDP in Ikole Local Government, Ward 10, who was also a female member of the Ekiti House of Assembly, stated:

Look, intra-party democracy, to me, does not exist in Nigeria or even in my party in Ekiti State because the godfather will determine who gets what within the party system. They determine which assembly will represent virtually all the local governments in the state within the party. So, there is no democracy anywhere within the party, so long as we are not allowed to choose or make our choices. What we have in the party system today is selection, which the party regards as consensus, which I see as a fraud. There is no democracy within the party. (Field work, 2023).

Supporting the findings, Hon. Mrs Lanre Fajuyi, an ex-officio member representing the PDP, South West Zone, emphasises that party leaders often determine the current process for selecting party members. This practice of leaders handpicking party executives undermines intra-party democracy and restricts the inclusivity of the selection process (Field work, 2023).

Corroborating this, a female card-carrying and prominent member of the APC, who wishes to remain unidentified noted:

My party does not have internal party democracy; we have godfathers, which some people see as elders of the party, that dictate the turn by selecting the party excos, whom they believe will be loyal to them and the party. This lack of internal party democracy has led to a stifling of voices and ideas within the party. It creates a system where loyalty to the godfathers takes precedence over merit and the best interests of the party. (Field work, 2023).

Giving further insight into the rating of females as executive members of the political party in Ekiti state, the PDP member of Ikole Local Government, Ward 10, Mrs Owolabi Akerele, who was also a female member of the Ekiti House of Assembly, explains that the rating of females as executive members is quite low compared to their male counterparts. She believes that this disparity is because of deep-rooted gender biases and stereotypes that still exist in the political landscape. She argued:

Women's representation as executives and elected members is still very slim. It is even worse at the executive level, generally in my own party and other political parties. Out of 17 or 18 members in the ward, the only positions considered for female gender are the women leader or assistant secretary, ex-officio; these are the positions that are less important and will

affect the decision-making process in the party. This is usually from ward level to local government until it gets to the top (Field work, 2023).

An APC member hailing from Ado-Ekiti Ward 2, who prefers to remain anonymous, pointed out that:

Even though women and their male counterparts are given equal opportunity to compete for elective positions in the party by the constitution. To me they are impracticable in the real sense because of the patriarchal nature of men. Men tend to dominate and control decision-making processes within the party, making it difficult for women to truly have an equal chance. Additionally, societal expectations and stereotypes often discourage women from actively participating in politics, further limiting their representation within the party (Field work, 2023).

An APC member from Ado-Ekiti ward 2, who did not want her name to be mentioned noted that:

Even though the women and their male counterparts are given equal opportunity to compete for elective position in the party by the constitution, To me they are unpracticable in the real sense. Because of the patriarchy nature of men. They believe that governance and been in charge or ruling generally are their birth rights (Field work, 2023).

She further argued:

There is no existing structure that ensures women are given the position of executives within the party or outside the party, as was the case in Kenya and Botswana. For example, once you produce three senatorial seats, one of them must be occupied by women. Although there are so many policies for women's inclusion in Nigeria, to me, most of those policies are like toothless bulldogs that cannot bite but can only bark. For instance, INEC has a female-inclusive policy that is not enforceable but is just on paper. For instance, Ekiti has about 35 elective positions, and the names of the contestants that will be submitted to INEC will all be male without a single female name on the list, and INEC will collect them from political parties without querying them. This instance illustrates my conclusion that the policies are toothless bulldogs that cannot bite. The structure that is in place is patriarchal. i.e., seeing the man as the head of the family (Field work, 2023).

In the same vein, a participant who is a female member of APC from the youth wing notes that women are not given equal opportunities as their male counterparts:

the main reason for that is the stigmatisation that she is a woman, and some questions ensue, such as, does she have money? Can she do it? Can she be trusted? Who is her sponsor or godfather? And, Who is she sleeping with? because some leaders will say you are not loyal if you are not sleeping with them (Field work, 2023).

This participant highlighted the pervasive gender bias and discrimination that women face within political parties. She emphasised that these stereotypes and assumptions about women's capabilities and personal relationships hinder their chances of being given equal opportunities for leadership positions. The participant also expressed concern about the role of party leaders in perpetuating this discriminatory culture by linking loyalty to sexual relationships.

Furthermore, a PDP stakeholder from Ado Ward 5 who preferred to remain anonymous explained the challenges of women in the decision-making process within the party politics. She explained thus:

The challenge women faced in becoming excos at the party level is a lack of financial muscle to compete in the world of men. She explains further by saying that even if she was able to stabilise financially, she would still spend more than men to prove that she has the money, and as such, she would be able to gain ground. (Field work, 2023)

Other points mentioned are political-based gender violence, insecurity, and intra-party manoeuvres. However, some other participants, especially those who are members of the PDP, argued that:

Given insight into the complex dynamics of gender-based violence, it becomes evident that political motivations often play a significant role in perpetuating such acts. Additionally, the issue of insecurity further exacerbates the vulnerability of marginalised groups, making them more susceptible to violence and discrimination. Furthermore, the presence of intra-party manoeuvres within political organisations can hinder progress towards addressing these pressing issues as power struggles and internal conflicts divert attention and resources away from meaningful change. (Field work, 2023).

In response to inquiries about potential solutions to the challenges faced by women in intra-party politics, a significant majority of participants suggest that the key lies in establishing a more inclusive and supportive environment within political parties. They emphasise the crucial role of party leaders in actively promoting and mentoring women candidates, ensuring equal opportunities for leadership positions, and addressing any gender biases or discrimination that may exist within party structures.

One of the participants argued:

The way to ensure gender parity is to implement mandatory gender quotas within political parties. Setting specific targets or quotas for the representation of women in leadership positions can help address the existing gender imbalance. By requiring parties to allocate a certain percentage of positions to women, it would create a more level playing field and encourage the inclusion of qualified and capable women in decision-making roles (Field work, 2023).

Also, Hon. Mrs Owolabi Akerele, who was also a female member of the Ekiti House of Assembly, explains steps to take to allow female inclusion in intraparty politics in Ekiti State and Nigeria as a whole. She noted a salient point:

By ensuring political will prevails and that political parties and other stakeholders within and outside the parties should ensure the enforcement of policies that are in place, women will play an active role in party politics. Not only that, but political parties should be intentional in ensuring key positions within the party are occupied by female politicians (Field work, 2023).

One significant finding of this study highlights the absence of intra-party democracy in the two major political parties, namely the APC and PDP, within the study area. This lack of internal democracy emerges as a key factor contributing to the under-representation of women in party politics and the decision-making process. The study reveals that the imposition of candidates by party elders within these parties has created an environment that hinders fair representation and inclusivity within the party. Consequently, this practice has perpetuated a system that undermines the active participation of women in party politics and their ability to influence decision-making processes. The finding is consistent with previous studies on internal party politics in Nigeria. For instance, the study of Akubo and Yakubu (2014) found that Nigeria's political parties lacked internal democracy because of problems of institutionalisation and personalisation. Furthermore, Egboh and Aniche's

(2012) study on the issue of international democracy within Nigerian political parties argued that the absence of internal party democracy in Nigerian political parties has a detrimental effect on the credibility of the overall electoral process, rendering it undemocratic.

Another notable finding of the study highlights the persistently low representation of women as executive elected members. Women are often limited to certain positions, such as women's leader, assistant secretary, and ex-officio, which are commonly regarded as positions of lesser significance. This limited scope of available positions for women further exacerbates their under-representation in party politics and decision-making processes. It underscores the urgent need to expand opportunities for women to hold influential and decision-making positions within political parties, breaking away from the prevailing perception that certain positions are inconsequential. Creating a more equitable and inclusive environment for women in party politics is essential to addressing these imbalances.

Consequently, the study's findings highlight that despite the constitutional provisions for equal opportunities for women's and men's representation, reality reveals a stigmatisation of women within political parties. Women are often not trusted with positions of responsibility because of various factors, such as doubts about their trustworthiness, questions about their sponsors, or baseless speculations about their personal relationships. Also, the study's findings indicate a lack of existing structures that provide special consideration or support for women as executives within political parties. Unlike other contexts where certain positions are specifically designated for women, Nigerian political parties generally do not have such provisions. This absence of targeted measures to promote women's representation further exacerbates their under-representation within party structures.

Furthermore, the study's findings shed light on the existence of numerous policies aimed at promoting women's inclusion in Nigeria. However, these policies are often perceived as toothless bulldogs, lacking the necessary enforcement mechanisms to bring about substantial change. An illustrative example is the female-inclusive policy implemented by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which, although articulated on paper, lacks enforceability in practice because the policy is considered to be more of an advisory policy which does not mandate political parties to bring out certain percentage of their candidates as women.

For instance, within the context of Ekiti State, there are approximately 35 elective positions within the political parties. It is disheartening to note that when the contestants' names are submitted to INEC, there is often

no female candidate included in the list. Regrettably, INEC accepts these submissions from the political parties without addressing the glaring gender imbalance. This highlights the prevalence of a patriarchal structure, which reinforces the notion of the man as the primary decision-maker and head of the family. The findings are consistent with those of Adeleke (2014), who worked on women's political participation at the local government level. Her findings reveal that patriarchy is the major challenge that women face in politics.

In conclusion, the field research revealed that patriarchy, limited financial resources for competition, political gender-based violence, insecurity, and internal manoeuvring are the primary obstacles encountered by women in Nigerian party politics.

Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, the results of this study strongly suggest that problems at the party level are primarily responsible for Nigeria's low representation of women and the marginalisation of women in the decision-making process. According to the study, party politics in Nigeria are marked by a lack of internal party democracy, the imposition of candidates by party elders, and patriarchal structures that uphold gender inequality. These party-level challenges create significant barriers for women seeking to actively participate and assume leadership roles in the country. The lack of transparent and inclusive processes for candidate selection and the dominance of party elders in decision-making undermine women's opportunities for equal representation and participation.

This under-representation of women within party structures is a significant barrier to their advancement in Nigerian politics. Without specific provisions to address this issue, women face additional challenges in accessing leadership positions and having their voices heard within political parties. Consequently, Nigerian political parties must adopt inclusive measures that prioritise gender equality and empower women to actively participate in decision-making processes. It is crucial for political parties to take the lead in creating a more inclusive and gender-balanced political landscape that reflects the diverse perspectives and talents of women, ultimately contributing to more equitable and effective decision-making at all levels of governance in Nigeria.

The study emphasises the critical need for political party reforms to address these issues. Promoting intra-party democracy is essential, and this can be accomplished by establishing transparent, equitable, and equal opportunity processes for choosing candidates. Party structures

should be updated to promote the inclusion and advancement of women in leadership positions, and party leaders should actively support and mentor female candidates. Furthermore, there is a critical need to develop and enforce gender-sensitive policies within political parties. Gender quotas or affirmative action measures can help bridge the gender gap by mandating a certain percentage of women's representation in party leadership positions.

Based on the findings of the study regarding the marginalisation of women in the decision-making process and the low representation of women in Nigeria, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Promote intra-party democracy by giving priority to and putting in place open, inclusive candidate selection procedures. This involves holding free and transparent primaries where party members can choose the candidates. Women will have equal opportunities to participate and compete for positions if internal party democracy is supported.
- Implement gender quotas: Political parties should create and enforce gender quotas or affirmative action guidelines that call for a specific proportion of women to hold leadership positions within their organisations. These steps can ensure that women are meaningfully represented and that their under-representation in decision-making processes is addressed.
- Address patriarchal biases and structures: Patriarchal structures within political parties should be contested and dismantled. This can be accomplished by running awareness campaigns, attending training sessions, and participating in workshops that promote gender equality, confront gender biases, and create welcoming social environments.
- Increase financial support: Women need access to financial resources in order to successfully participate in party politics. Political parties should set up funding mechanisms, such as grants or funds created specially to help women candidates cover campaign costs and associated expenses.
- Political parties should adopt zero-tolerance policies for political gender-based violence in order to combat it. They should actively work to create an atmosphere where women can engage in politics and feel safe and respected, and they should offer procedures for reporting and dealing with any acts of violence or harassment.
- Promote women's leadership development: Political parties should fund initiatives that are specifically geared towards empowering women in leadership roles. These programmes can give women the abilities, information, and self-assurance they need to hold positions of leadership both within their own party and in the larger political community. Implementing these recommendations will contribute to greater gender

equality, increased representation of women, and a more inclusive and democratic political landscape in Nigeria.

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PART 3

Policies and Legal Framework for Women's Representation in Governance

Chapter 17

Language and Women's Representation in Governance: An Examination of Nigerian Gender Policy Documents and Laws

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Abstract

This research examines the effect which language used in law and policy documents may have on the promotion or inhibition of women's representation and participation in governance in Nigeria. The impact of language is recognised by the gender-neutral language practice being promoted in legislative drafting. However, the foreign origin of this movement does not factor in the nuanced cultural bias in Nigerian languages and how this has found its way into law and policy documents. This cultural bias against women translates to and impacts on the level of women's participation and representation in governance. In Nigeria, there is evidence that cultural perspectives and representation of women, diverse as they may be, reflect on and impact on writings and actions on gender issues. This study adopts a content and discourse analysis approach to examine the language used in law and policy documents to determine whether it contributes to gender inequality, particularly in governance. The study deploys both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The documents analysed include the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Criminal and Penal Codes, Evidence Act and other statutes and Gender Policy documents. The research found that these laws and policies are replete with gender excluding, subordinating and subjugating language against the female gender. It suggests that this is a seepage from cultural realities. The research proposes that the language of law and policy documents could go beyond gender neutral language and be re-engineered to promote gender equality by emphasising capacity instead of socially constrained roles.

Keywords: Gender, Governance, Language, Laws, Policy



Introduction

One of the most powerful elements of culture often overlooked in the discourse of power dynamics as contained in law and policy documents in Nigeria, is language. The fact, however, is that language is the tool with which the communication of change can be effected. It is also the tool for perpetuating inequality (Stevenson et al., 2019). It is therefore important that any discourse about adjusting power dynamics through laws and policies should factor in the role of language. This applies to the question of women's representation and participation in governance. Interestingly, representation and the ability to express opinion is through language. Language as used here is beyond whether one speaks a particular tribal or regional language or the lingua franca. It deals more with the attribution given to words, emotions attached to expressions and connotations implied by the arrangement of certain words in a discussion (Luo, 2019). For instance, in certain cultures, items and things, animate and inanimate are ascribed genders. Either as female or males. At times, such ascription of gender reflects the perceived role of the item or thing in society. This inevitably affects how society treats the item or thing and what that society through culture may expect from the gender associated with the attribution (Roberts, 1983; Williams, 2001). Similarly, in general discussion on issues that affect both genders, there is the tendency to default to masculine pronouns when in fact the female gender is included in the subject of discussion (Ikekeonwu, 2008:16).

For women, this is reflected every day in discussions and write-up about women's representation and participation in governance even in academic institutions (Oamen, 2019:231). Not too long ago in Nigeria, a famous instance was the retort by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, President Muhammed Buhari that *'I don't know which party my wife belongs to, but she belongs to my kitchen and my living room and the other room and should not be heard to express her opinion on national issues'* (Ayo-Aderele, 2016). This invokes at least two suggestions which denigrate and derogate the right, dignity and competence of a woman to express opinion. It suggests that only men can be at the arena of discourse in governance and also offer their opinion. Women should neither be in the arena nor be heard. As innocent and jovial that retort may seem, it tells a lot about the President's and in fact society's perception of the capacity and role of women in Nigerian society. The irony is that he may not have realised the enormity of this statement.

This attitude consciously or otherwise also reflects in formal discourse, policy documents and statutory provisions relating to women and women's participation in governance. The language appears to slant towards viewing women as recipients of favours or unmerited affirmative action. There appears to be less discourse on language that views women on the same

and equal pedestal with men on issues of governance. This state of affairs greatly undermines the gender equality project. The discourse about gender equality cannot progress if conducted in a language that demeans, excludes or tokenises women's representation and participation in governance.

The gender-neutral language has attempted to resolve this inequality by suggesting that language that masks gender helps society to perceive all as equal (European Union Parliament, 2018:3). It attempts this by introducing gender-masking pronouns. This approach is, however, only effective when the subject of discussion broaches male and female gender. The gap, especially in gendered language cultures like in Africa, and in Nigeria in particular, where genders have their own language, is that gender-neutral language fails to resolve this challenge. Exclusion and subordination of women may still be conducted through innuendos, condescending tones and exclusionary language. Given the reality of this situation, this chapter examines how the exclusion and subordination language, using statutes and policy documents as case studies, may perpetuate gender inequality and hamper women's representation and participation in governance in Nigeria.

To address this question, the remaining part of this chapter is structured as follows. The next section provides a conceptual clarification and theoretical framework applied in the research. Next is a literature review to situate the research within extant discourse and justify the necessity for the study. This is followed by a description of the methodology adopted in the study. Next is a presentation of the findings and analysis. The chapter ends with a conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual clarification and theoretical frameworks

In this chapter, some concepts will reoccur as the discussion revolves around them. Prime amongst these are language and gender. To improve clarity, in recognition of the dynamism of language and the concept of gender, the following clarifications are proffered.

First is Language. Language has so many connotations. As a word that depicts communication, it communicates several meanings depending on purpose, context and culture. For instance, language could be seen from the perspective of a tool for communication (del Castillo, 2015:50). In this regard, anything performed to transfer an idea to another is language. This is why one can say computer language, English language, Sign language. The key denomination is that they are used to communicate. Another perspective sees language as a means of creation of meaning (Rabiah, 2012:2-3). This is seen as the key element in the language between humans, the capacity to create meaning through language. Such creation of meaning may be in

the form of sound, signs, drawings or written words. From this perspective, what imbues an activity with the feature of language is its capacity to create meaning. Several other perspectives abound which are more relevant to linguists. However, for purposes of our discourse, language is the combination of these two concepts - communication and meaning. Thus, language in this chapter is seen as an instrument of communicating meaning. 'Meaning' itself is not a settled concept. It is amorphous and depends on the context and culture and all relevant noise that impacts the communication (Akan et al., 2019:64; Amberg & Vause, 2009). For our purposes, we define meaning as understanding. Thus, language is an instrument of communicating understanding.

Second is Gender. Gender is a vexed topic in contemporary discourse on power and privileges. In governance, gender is more or less seen from the perspective of access, inclusion and exclusion. It is not necessarily seen from the perspective of anatomical attributes only, that persons with same anatomical structure tend to present similar social construct of their gender (Büyükahıska, 2011:460). For our discourse, we deem it sufficient to perceive and discuss gender from the perspective of anatomical structure and the social construct attached to it. This is the conceptualisation of male and female gender, at least within the contest of Nigeria. Thus, reference to gender policy here means the way and manner that government policy recognises and integrates the possession or absence of male or female gender in its policy guidelines and decisions. Simply put, gender here is social perception and expectation of male and female in Nigeria.

To present our analysis about the relationship between language and gender, it may be helpful to call on several theoretical frameworks. Some of these theories are overlapping in their attempt to communicate. They are, however, not exhaustive. But for purposes of our discourse, it is sufficient to present our analysis, through the ideology and perspectives communicated by some of the theories. These include gendered language, dominance and critical discourse analysis theories.

First is Gendered Language Theory: Gendered Language Theory explores how language is used to create and perpetuate conceptions of gender roles in society. It examines language as a tool for either subjugation of a particular sex or of exclusion (Abdalgane, 2021:208). The theory suggests that language can be used as a tool to perpetuate social stereotypes, misconceptions and myths built over time by society. Similarly, language can be used as a tool of liberating one gender from the stereotyped position it is placed in by another gender or by society itself. Such placement could be with the collaboration, wittingly or unwittingly of the excluded gender. Gendered language achieves this division, subjugation and inequality by attributing roles, responsibilities

and perpetuating inequalities of belief of such through grammar, vocabulary, norms and discourse patterns. The idea of this theoretical perspective is that an understanding of how language is shaped to obtain a particular advantage or disadvantage for a gender could also be reverse-engineered to stabilise the relationship. Accordingly, this theory is used in this perspective in the succeeding analysis.

Second is Dominance Theory. Dominance Theory holds the view that there is always a struggle of dominance between groups in society. It looks at the power relationships and how power is sustained (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). In terms of language, it examines how language could be used to reflect the power relationship between sections of society. This includes between male and female, between social strata, urban dwellers and rural dwellers, educated and uneducated, rich and poor. The Dominance Theory holds that society uses any tool available including force and violence to perpetuate a group's dominance in society (Pratto & Stewart, 2011:1). Language is also one of such powerful tools for obtaining and retaining or sustaining the dominance of a group over another. With respect to gender, the Dominance Theory argues that the arrangement of words, even the use of pronouns, ascription of positions through words may be used by the male gender to obtain and retain a position of dominance over the female gender. One of the ways that language is used to perpetuate dominance is the arrangement of hierarchy with words to project the male gender or assume the male gender in positions of power and authority, sometimes referred to as legitimising myths (Lakoff, 2003:176; Pratto & Stewart, 2011:2).

Finally, is Critical Discourse Analysis Theory: Following from the Gendered and Dominance theories is the Critical Discourse Analysis Theory. This theory is important for our research because we looked at documented evidence of gender exclusion and inclusion. Critical Discourse Analysis Theory thus is interested in analysing how issues are discoursed using language that creates, builds and reinforces stereotypes even when the discourse is intended to dismantle the stereotypes or exclusions (Luo, 2022). This is seen in discussions where, similar to Dominance Theory, during allocation of leadership roles, the masculine pronoun is used instead of the feminine. Critical Discourse Analysis Theory is thus important as it helps us to understand how language choices, ideologies, and social structures can be used to maintain or challenge gendered power imbalances in society.

It is noted that we have attempted, for purposes of communication, to simplify these theories. The important thing, however, is to appreciate that none of the theories is holistic or all-encompassing. They each share certain similarities with the other. They, however, highlight some key perspectives that are relevant to our discourse. These theories are relevant in this study as

lenses to understand the phrasing of legal and policy language that ascribes authority to the male gender and their implication to female representation in governance in Nigeria. Their value is properly highlighted in the methodologies adopted and the findings made. They are also integrated in the subsequent analysis.

Literature review

Language is a very powerful tool of social engineering. Its impact on gender relationships has been confirmed by several scholarly works. A few of these scholarships are reviewed here to demonstrate the impact of language on social engineering and how an understanding of the power of language may be properly harnessed for promotion of equality. It also highlights the gap in discourse and justifies this study. For instance, Hirmer et al. (2022), in their research in rural Uganda, posit that the use of gender-specific language in a gendered-language community may hinder the buy-in of the community into social development projects. They argue that it is best to use value-emphasising language instead of gendered language even when the project is meant for the benefit of a particular gender. They argue that a gender-balanced value-driven approach can create more positive impact and avoid unintentional harm. They reason that this is because of the perceived tension between the two genders as they struggle to dominate each other. Thus, the less the benefit is highlighted for a particular gender, especially the female gender, the more that society accepts the message. This is an interesting finding. It, however, appears to perpetuate or excuse gender inequality. It portends a similar conclusion with the use of gender-neutral language. This conclusion is supported by an earlier paper in Malaysia (Pérez & Tavits, 2019:23). The paper highlighted the tension between the genders and advocated for a genderless approach in discourse as a means of reducing tension and creating harmony in society. The research takes it as a given that in Malaysian society masculine gender is given an advantage by language. The authors suggest that by a conscious effort of gradually reducing the use of language that portends masculine bias and an increase in small consciousness-raising activities that check masculine bias on all levels of our society, inequality will gradually be constrained. Like the earlier paper, these scholars also appear to confirm the existence of tension between the genders. It is interesting to note that these two scholarships are from two different continents. Both, however, confirm the fact that language, as posited by the Dominance Theory, is a tool for dominance and allocation of benefit. Both scholars echo an earlier finding of an empirical research that examined how language impacts on gender balance in *genderless* tongues and *gendered* tongues, using Estonia and Russia as case studies respectively. The authors

appear to confirm the effect of language on gender harmony. They found that while Estonians, who use genderless language, are more liberal and accepting of gender equity policies and practices, a gendered-language community like Russia is more resistant to gender equality practices. It, however, highlights a limitation to the effect that this occurs in society where norms are embedded in the language. This implies that where norms about the expectation from each gender is separate from the language, genderless language may have no effect in changing those norms. This finding appears to confirm that language may be a normative tool for emphasising role allocation and inequality. This could be inferred from the fact that even where there is genderless language, the norms of society allocating the roles must still be couched in language, since it is the major communication tool available to humankind (del Castillo, 2015:50).

A 2019 work by Tolstokorova, in apparent recognition of the effect of language on gender inequality, posits the necessity for an international legal framework that mandates a language that promotes gender equality for women. They argue that equal representation of women and men in language and speech will be achieved when it is acknowledged as a right. The research termed it as linguistic right. Taking it forward, the scholars hypothesised that it may require an international legal framework in terms of gender language rights. One of the challenges of this proposal, however, is that international instruments are almost always not obeyed when they impact on entrenched culture. Also, the reputation or political interest of the country championing it may impact on its international reception. Another unaddressed challenge of this proposal is that a uniformity in language does not recognise the inevitability of differences in culture, a dynamic social construct that is affected by different factors including climate, location and level of development and which is not uniform in the world (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Dower et al., 2017). Also, language is part of culture. The idea of uniformity of language may strip humanity of its unique features. Nearer home, Dooga (2009) examined how power is invested along gender lines through language choice in two Nigerian works of fiction: Alpha Emeka's novel *The Carnival* and Razinat Mohammed's short story collection, *A Love Like a Woman's and Other Stories*, found that the language used in both works though written by authors from different tribes in Nigeria and of different genders, reflected the subjugation and objectification of women. It suggests that culture is reflected in writing and vice versa. Similarly, Aleke (2021) explored how language through the instrument of proverbs is deployed as a tool to maintain the dominance of the male gender in Igbo land. He posits that through language, the female gender is lured to accept a subordinate position in society and that this is also used to validate male assertion of authority and subjugation of the

female. He argues that this is sustained through proverbs that portray the acceptance of a second-class position as virtuous.

There are other scholars who have demonstrated that gendered language could be used positively to promote the capacity and roles of both genders (Rueda, 2022). The trick, however, is in striking a balance between non-gendered and sterile language and leveraging language to improve and assure inclusion. It appears that there are inevitable social roles that are affected by gender and must be discussed in gendered language. Examples include motherhood, bearing children, the role of fathers in child development, the role of mothers in children development, the role of parents in society, and so on (Ramatsetse & Ross, 2023). These biological roles inevitably invite gendered language. The problem, however, is not in using gendered, neutral or non-gendered language but in ensuring that the language used does not exclude, derogate, subordinate or malign or deprive any gender. Research has shown that for society to develop in a balanced way, gender as differentiated by sexes must play their role (Rueda, 2022; Ramatsetse & Ross, 2023:209). Thus, the question is how these roles can be promoted without using gendered, gender-neutral or non-gendered language that excludes, derogates, subordinates or maligns the female gender. It is against this background that this research seeks to examine how the use of language in Nigerian laws and policy documents may sustain gender imbalance in governance in Nigeria and how the gap may be addressed towards creating gender equality in representation and participation in governance.

Research methodology

This is a qualitative research. We collected and analysed data and from its findings we propose a theory of understanding women's representation in governance in Nigeria and how improved representation may be achieved through inclusive and empowering language. We adopted a qualitative approach because the purpose of this study calls for qualitative analysis of language in statutes and policy documents which perpetuate gender inequality and hamper women's representation and participation in governance in Nigeria. To this end, the research collected documentary data from the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), statutes such as the Criminal Code Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1990) and the Penal Code Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1960), Discrimination Against Persons with Disability (Prohibition) Act, 2018 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019), Evidence Act 2011 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2011) and policy documents. The data is then subjected to content and discourse analysis. Content analysis here means a systematic analysis of

text to identify and categorise features that seek to convey certain meanings or perceptions on gender (Ihugba, 2020:164; Luo, 2023). This includes features like dominance, hierarchy, capacity and subjugation. These features are drawn from literature and concepts projected by theories on gender equality. For purposes of rich analysis, qualitative and quantitative approach are integrated in the analysis. Discourse analysis (Luo, 2023) comes in handy to give meaning to quantitative and qualitative data gleaned from the content analysis. It is used to subject the data to an examination of how language creates and perpetuates dominance and inequality in gender discourse. This approach helped in highlighting and addressing implicit bias, ideologies and exclusionary practices that impact on gender representation and participation in governance.

Presentation of findings and analysis

Using content analysis of policy documents and laws, the following were found:

Legal framework

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999

The Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) devotes two chapters to the rights and dignity of the human person, specifically Chapters II and IV. Although, according to Section 6(c), Chapter II is non-justiciable, Chapter IV's provisions are justiciable and enforceable except when statutorily derogated (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999:S 45). Despite this seemingly huge promise for the respect and protection of the dignity and rights of persons, the language used to couch some key provisions of the Constitution sends a different message. For example, a Microsoft Word search of the Constitution for the word 'her' and 'she' brought up no result.

However, a search in the Constitution for the words 'him' and 'himself' brought up 58 occurrences: 52 for 'him' and 6 for 'himself.' A similar search for 'his' brought up 201 occurrences. Also, a search for 'he' brought up 268 results. A total of 529 references to the masculine without a single mention of the feminine.

It is interesting to note that most of the provisions where the masculine pronouns were used involved the allocation of rights, duties and responsibility. These include allocation of rights to vie for or hold political offices and leadership positions like the President, Governors, Senator and Member House of Representatives.

Discrimination Against Persons with Disability (Prohibition) Act 2018

This is another interesting finding. This is a law that supposedly sought to promote equality between persons, in this case persons with disability. The use of language in the Act, however, appears to tell a different story.

For example, the Act starts well with the use of gender-neutral language in its preamble when it stated it is meant for the “full integration of *persons* with disability into the society.” However, in the allocation of rights, duties and responsibility, there appears to be some inconsistency. The first section of the Act provides that a ‘*person with disability shall not be discriminated against on the ground of his disability by any person or institution in any manner or circumstance*’.

Within the same Section 1, in Sub-section 3, there is a visible attempt to use gender-inclusive language. Instead of using ‘his’ or ‘he’, the Section used the word ‘person’ throughout. This shows a recognition of the value of inclusive language. Interestingly, when it came to the provisions on the Establishment and Membership of the National Commission of Persons with Disability, Discrimination Against Persons with Disability (Prohibition) Act 2018, Part VII Sections 34 and 35, the law reverted to use gendered language with a heavy use of masculine pronouns and no use of feminine pronouns.

Criminal and Penal Codes

1. *The Language on Rape*: It is noted that the Penal Code Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1960) and the Criminal Code Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1990) both criminalise and sanction rape. Proof of rape is however made a bit difficult. The law does not contemplate independent scientific evidence like DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) and so on. It rather requires corroboration by other witnesses. Unfortunately, the secret nature of the offence of rape further undermines the protection of the female gender. Especially as, according to the Penal Code Act and the Criminal Code Act, only females can be victims of rape (see Section 357 of the Criminal Code Act). Interestingly, the female victim is faced with potential liability for defamation where the offence is not proven. Similarly, there is the non-criminalisation of marital rape in the Criminal Code Act and the Penal Code Act (see Sections 6 and 357 of the Criminal Code Act).
2. *The Language on Indecent Assault*: The Criminal Code Act provides different punishments for the offence of indecent assault depending on whether it is committed against a man or woman; where it is committed against a man, it is felony (see Section 353 of the Criminal Code Act), but

when committed against a woman it is a misdemeanour (see Section 360 of the Criminal Code Act).

3. *The Language on Battery* – Section 55 (1) of the Penal Code Act allows husbands to chastise their wives (if married under customary law) for correction purposes as long as such chastisement does not amount to infliction of grievous harm.

Evidence Act

The Evidence Act 2011 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2011) appears to have captured the derogatory use of language against the female gender more appropriately. According to Section 211 of the Evidence Act:

*When a man is prosecuted for rape or for attempt to commit rape or for indecent assault, it may be shown **that the woman against whom the offence is alleged to have been committed was of a generally immoral character**, although she is not cross-examined on the subject; the woman may in such a case be asked whether she has a **connection with other men**, but her answer cannot be contradicted and he may also be asked whether she had connection on other occasions with the prisoner, and if she denies, it may be contradicted.*

Policy and Institutional Framework Documents

Revised Draft National Policy On Gender In Agriculture by Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (2016; 2019)

According to the executive summary,

‘This gender policy in agriculture provides a policy direction that underscores the fact that accounting for the different roles of women and men in agriculture for development and gender equality in access to resources as well as equal opportunities in maximizing means of livelihood, is a necessary condition for progressively realizing the SDGs.’

It is interesting to note that although the content of the policy was geared towards empowering women in agriculture, the language was closer to that of gender empowerment instead of women’s empowerment (See the quoted paragraph above). Also, the policy document was conscious of the use of pronouns. It eliminated the use of both male and female pronouns and used mostly gender-neutral language all through. Words like ‘person and their’, ‘men and women’, ‘women and youths’ and so on, were used instead of gender-specific pronouns. The document also used the word ‘role’ to define what

men and women do in agriculture. The words 'capacity' and 'competence' were not used. In places where reference to training and capacity-building were made, it referred to capacity-building to enable women to perform their traditional roles. The words 'gender sensitive' were used ambiguously, in some instances to recognise the peculiarity of the biological and natural differences between the male and female gender, such as body build:

'Women in agriculture often find themselves with technologies that are not gender sensitive, for example, sizes of some agricultural machines are too big for women'.

In other instances, gender sensitivity was used to perpetuate social stereotyping and patriarchal practices. For example, in suggesting that trainings should be conducted where female participants can easily access, the policy document noted

'Again, women are impaired to attend trainings or seminars organised far from their communities because they have first to get approval from their husbands for staying overnights.'

The document appeared, however, to have recognised the necessity to concentrate more on women's empowerment than gender empowerment. For instance, there is mention of the word 'men' 56 times while 'women' was mentioned 120 times.

The National Gender Policy in Agriculture: Simplified Version for Smallholder Women Farmers 2021 by ActionAid on behalf of Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (ActionAid, 2021).

The 2021 National Gender Policy in Agriculture appeared to have made some great improvements. However, although there was deliberate non-use of pronouns for the feminine or masculine genders, there was frequent enforced collocation of other groups with the word women, such as women and men, women and youths and so on. Also, there is apparent restriction of women's participation to roles. For example, the policy states thus in the Executive Summary.

*The inability to recognize the **roles** and contribution of smallholder women farmers in agricultural production will have massive impact on output, income and food security. Hence, it is of great importance to highlight the **roles** of smallholder women farmers and integrate to the entire Agricultural production process and system.*

Analysis

A careful reading of the above findings discloses some worrying and some hopeful attributes in Nigerian law and policy documents. A recognition of these features will hopefully make it easier to address the exclusion and subordination of women. The analysis, using the data above, is accordingly presented under the concepts of Empowerment, Subordination, Ambiguity, Exclusion, Inclusiveness and Neutrality.

First, is the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). The Constitution in its preamble starts with an inclusive language *'We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria'*. This language suggests an inclusive language that recognises and empowers all genders. However, in the substantive provisions of the Constitution, the male gender takes pre-eminence. This is evident in the use of the masculine gender throughout the Constitution, particularly in the allocation of rights, recognition of duties and confirmation of capacity to hold office. This gives the impression that the female gender does not exist. Words reflect thought and consciousness (Usman et al., 2021:7). Thus, when a concept is not captured in words, it reflects the level of importance attached to the concept. The persistent use of male pronouns suggests a subordination of the female gender and the exclusion and lack of belief in the capacity of the female gender. With particular reference to representation and participation, it is an irony that the Discrimination Against Persons with Disability (Prohibition) Act 2018 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019), which supposedly was meant to promote equal rights by protecting the vulnerable minority still carries on the culture of subordination of the female gender. The Act at best is ambivalent about the use of gender-neutral language but exposed its bias against the female gender in provisions on allocation of leadership positions. First, the head of the Commission is referred to as 'Chairman'. Also, unlike most other provisions in the Act, the masculine pronoun is used to identify potential members of the leadership of the Commission. This suggests that women cannot or do not have the capacity to lead. Another interesting provision is that of Section 55(1) of the Penal Code Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1960), which allows husbands to chastise their wives (if married under customary law) for correction purposes as long as such chastisement does not lead to grievous harm. This provision is a clear subordination and subjugation of the woman to the man. It is interesting that a man has the capacity to chastise the woman but not the other way round.

The same excluding, subordinating and derogatory language is seen in most laws including the Evidence Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2011), the Criminal Code Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1990) and the Penal Code Act. These are principal national laws, but the language used in certain

circumstances in relation to women is discouraging and contrary to the spirit of the National Gender Policy, and in fact, constitutional provisions against discrimination. For instance, the empowerment by the Evidence Act of a defendant male to question the morality or sexual life of a female victim of rape unnecessarily and derogatorily brings to question the person of the female victim. This should have no impact on the trial. What should be the concern of the prosecution and law is the fact of penetration without consent. However, by virtue of the Evidence Act, a woman is subjected to ridicule. Also, the fact that proof of the crime is made difficult because of the need for corroboration, further negatively impacts on the dignity and integrity of the female gender. It suggests that the female word is not good enough and must require more people to validate it. Although there is validity in the need for corroboration, the fact that means of proof other than corroboration by persons exist, is not contemplated by the Act, impacts negatively on the perception and status of a woman. Already, rape has a stigma. Therefore, requiring a woman to subject herself to the scrutiny of more persons in order to prove rape is discouraging and moves the power balance in favour of the male defendant.

For policy documents, in apparent contrast to the use of masculine gender, but with the same result of exclusion and subordination of the female gender, the policy documents used gender-neutral language. However, this could not mask the deep-seated gender tension and bias against women. First the National Gender Policy is meant to promote the representation and participation of women in agriculture (ActionAid, 2021). It, however, had to use the words 'gender policy' instead of 'women's empowerment policy'. This appears to be an attempt to reduce the perceived tension between both genders. It suggests that women's empowerment should not be proposed and to accommodate social bias, gender equality should be used. This is another example of subordination of the female gender. This suggests that a deliberation on promotion of the female gender can only successfully take place under the cover of the male gender. A similar example of subordination is seen in the use of the collocation of words. Collocation here means the placement of two words together using the conjunction *and* in a statement. For example, while proposing initiatives that could better the opportunities for women, the document had to collocate 'women and youths', 'women and men', 'women and children'. This gives the impression that women need to be validated by identifying with the challenges of other groups. That is a classical symptom of exclusion and subordination.

Although the National Gender Policy in Agriculture (ActionAid, 2021) document recognised the need for the protection and promotion of the female gender, it appears to have restricted the necessity for protection

and promotion of their participation in agriculture to traditional gender-based roles. Even the introduction of initiatives that would have made significant changes is subjected to negative 'gender sensitivity' tests. For example, in supposed recognition of the peculiarity of the biological and natural differences between genders in their body build, it was proposed that machines be built in smaller sizes to accommodate females. This seems to suggest that all males are of the same large size and all women are small-sized and do not have the capacity to use such machines. This effectively represents women as not up to standard and do not belong and therefore, may only be accommodated. This language of tokenism is perpetuating and validating exclusion and subordination. Another instance is the recommendation on convening training at short distances where a woman would easily get consent from her husband to travel and attend. This suggests that the woman cannot be trusted to leave the house without the man's knowledge and approval. In order words, the woman is beneath the man. Similar strictures, in a supposed gender policy document, does not apply to men. This is subordination. This is thus another classic example of subordination language that perpetuates gender inequality. In this instance, the words 'gender sensitive' that are used to introduce those recommendations only perpetuate social stereotyping and patriarchal practices. Gender sensitivity in this policy document is used as a code for not upsetting the established patriarchal system. This sort of language confers on the male gender leadership positions and unconsciously undermines female capacity for leadership positions.

Conclusion

Gender equality, particularly the promotion and protection of the right of a woman, should start with the language used in the policy documents and laws that seek to achieve these objectives. Language as expressed in words is the expression of thoughts and convictions. Accordingly, we should be very mindful of the potential impact of the wrong language. While the attempts to curb these limitations through the introduction of practices like gender-neutral language have their benefits, they remain highly limited when they exclude or subordinate the female gender. As seen in the good use of gender-neutral language in policy documents, there was still the subordination of the female gender. This confirms that gender-neutral language in itself is insufficient. Similarly, the use of gendered or non-gendered language does not necessarily imply promotion of gender equality or otherwise. The achievement of gender equality lies in the concept projected in the language. This suggests a nuanced approach in the use of language that promotes gender equality. This chapter's contribution therefore is the concept of nuanced and deliberate use of language that empowers and is inclusive of the

female gender as against language that subordinates, excludes or derogates the female gender. Language, irrespective of whether it is gendered, non-gendered, genderless or gender-neutral will only be effective in the promotion of gender equality and equity when the choice of words and their arrangement, whether or not they represent male or female gender, are empowering and do not subordinate any gender. This will translate in the recognition of every gender, particularly the female gender, as capable of leadership positions and representation in governance.

Following from the above, it is recommended that language used in law and policy documents should be deliberate and circumspect to ensure it does not project traditional excluding or subordinating concepts. In specifics:

- The idea of negative gender sensitivity should be avoided. Gender sensitivity tests that are based on stereotypes and that neither recognise the capacity nor empower women should be avoided.
- Also, there is an urgent need to review Nigerian laws to bring the language used up to date. There is a need to be especially conscious of the language used in policy documents and laws that ascribe authority, allocate rights or confer political representation or seek to create opportunity for the female gender. Such opportunities should not be limiting or limited to traditional patriarchal gifts and tokens.
- Emphasis should not be on gender roles as these appear to have been defined traditionally and are limiting. Emphasis should be on gender capacities and the enhancing and empowerment of those capacities, as apart from biological roles, all genders can perform well in all endeavours including political leadership positions. Accordingly, the language of law and policy documents should be capacity-affirming language.

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Chapter 18

Islamic Law and Women's Political Representation in Nigeria: A Critical Exposition

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Abstract

This chapter is an interrogation of how Islamic law's textual positions on gender relations is often erroneously applied to violate private and public rights of women, especially the right to political representation of women in Muslim societies such as in Nigeria. Adopting the hermeneutics approach and doctrinal methodology, the chapter argues that the theoretical assumptions of Islamic law, from a clear reading of the operative textual provisions, do not bar the active participation of women in the political decision-making process. It concludes by suggesting possible strategies and recommendations for the actual realisation of the theoretical aspirations of Islamic law in relation to women's political representation in Nigeria.

Keywords: Islamic law, Nigeria, Politics, Representation, Women

Introduction

Sociologists argue that gender roles are societal constructs (Brickell, 2006; Murray, 1996). These conceptual understanding and constructs of gender roles, according to analysts, affect women's political representation in any society and Nigeria is an illustrious example (National Gender Policy, 2008–2013; FAO, 2008). National statistics (NBS, 2022) demonstrate disparate levels and gender imbalance against women's right to representation in the political decision-making process in Nigeria. What is interesting is that in terms of educational requirements and literacy levels for political representation, there is no empirical basis for the varying levels of disparity between men and women (NBS, 2022). What appears to be the case is the system of role definition and space of operation with political representation

viewed as a public endeavour mostly populated by men while women are typically expected to populate the private space (Shahid, 2007; Orakzai, 2014). A major influence of this gender perspective are the prescriptions of religious laws and in the Nigerian context, perhaps the most notable example is Islamic law. What follows is a critical examination of this position to argue that the existence of any barrier, ideological and/or physical, to the political representation of women is contrary to clear Islamic textual provisions and the documented practical manifestations in classical Muslim societies.

Political representation in Islamic law: From hermeneutics to praxis

The relationship between Islam and politics generally has been the subject of enquiry by classical and contemporary scholars (Muti'i, 1926; Imara, 1989; Ibn Taymiyya, 2000; Nasr, 2001; Khan, 2006; Otto, 2010; March, 2015). Contemporary studies propose a term for this relationship as 'political Islam' which, as March (2015) argues, includes all manner of policies, ideologies and movements directed at an authoritative position for Islam in politics. This description is generally informative and over-inclusive. First, it is informative in the sense of an outsider's scholarly perspective of the relationship between Islam and politics. It is, however, over-inclusive because it suggests an uncritical acceptance of all movements, labels and ideologies that claim affiliation with the religion of Islam regardless of internal coherence with wider objectives of Islamic law. The internal coherence referred to are the unequivocal assertions of the essence of revelation in Islam and its relationship with political administration. By way of illustration, the Holy Qur'an provides in Q57:25 that: "We sent aforetime Our messengers with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of right and wrong), that human beings may stand forth in equity . . ." A critical look at this provision suggests that human socialisation at all levels with political administration at the peak must be fair and equitable. To underscore this point, it is also narrated by *Abū Sa'id Al-Khudri* from the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH) that 'Indeed among the greatest types of *jihād* is a just statement before a tyrannical ruler' (*Jamī at-Tirmidhi*, 2174). Any system, ideology or movement that seeks a lesser standard, particularly exclusive political ideologies, would fall below the Islamic equitable standard. Thus, contemporary understanding of political representation as a concept that allows for the active participation of all components of society (Dovi, 2018) would clearly fall within the Islamic equitable standard. At this juncture, a question that needs to be answered is 'What is to be taken as the actual meaning of political representation in the popular sense?' The contention by Dovi (2018) is very persuasive for its position that there are competing

dimensions to political representation as well as the expectations of citizens from political representatives. It is not the intention here to attempt to proffer a conclusive definition to the concept of political representation. This is not only an academic impossibility within the context of a book chapter, but also far afield from the focus of concern. The essence of the analysis hereunder is to underscore the point that representation is not necessarily 'concrete presence' of all components of society but that there are no abstract or concrete barriers to the emergence of the political class. Put another way, all sections of the populace must be actively engaged in the process of the choice of the political leaders. Therefore, the Islamic philosophy of political representation, as the 20th century-born Indian Islamic scholar and peace ambassador Wahiduddin Khan (1999) correctly argues:

The political philosophy of Islam is flexible. It is not based on any rigid principles. Basically, it is the real circumstances of any given situation that determine the Islamic political system. In spirit [of equity, justice, and fairness], the Islamic political philosophy is eternal but in form, it is flexible. Islam does not clearly outline a political system because politics by its very nature should be flexible and malleable. Otherwise, it would go against Nature and would not be sustainable (Khan, 1999:5).

For the practical nature of the Islamic political system and representation during the lifetime of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH), Khan rightly identifies three different political systems within the twenty-year period of prophethood (1999:5). The three different political systems demonstrated that Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) political behaviour was always responsive to the prevailing circumstance. In the early period of prophethood which spanned a period of 13 years in Makkah, the system of government was what Khan (1999) describes as *Dar-al Nadwa* (loosely translated as *Tribal Parliament*). The Muslims were a political and ideological minority to the prevailing religio-political ideology of idol-worshipping. Prophet Muhammad did attempt to forcefully gain political dominance by force but immersed himself in peaceful propagation of Islamic ideology and way of life (Khan, 1999). Khan (1999) refers to this as 'positive *statusquoism* because it provides room to continue peaceful activity in fields other than politics' (p.5). Contemporary replication, perhaps, of this historical situation is the size of the Muslim population in India which is a staggering ratio in comparative terms to the size of the Nigerian Muslim population (India: 200 million of 1.3 billion (14.6%); Nigeria 97 million of 200 million (48%) - World Population Review, 2024). However, the Indian Muslims are a tiny religious minority against the dominant Hindu ideology of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under Prime Minister Narendra Modi (Ahmed, 2022:4-5). The

second political system that Khan (1999) identifies from the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) started after his migration to Madinah, which was for ten years. This is specifically regarding the first half, during which time Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was the political leader of a city comprising three communities – the Muslims, the idol worshippers and the various Jewish tribes. Khan (1999) describes the political system adopted as ‘common politics’ through the promulgation of the Charter of Madinah (*Sahifa-al-Madinah*) within which ‘all three communities were to enjoy cultural and religious freedom’ and the Jewish judicial system which had been in existence continued to operate (p.5). This second political arrangement calls to mind the system under constitutional democracies that recognises Islamic law as a legal source, amongst others such as the Nigerian example (The Constitution of Nigeria, 1999, as amended – Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). The third and final political method adopted by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a system of unified political and religious leadership in the latter part of his lifetime through to his death when both Madinah and Makkah became homogenous religious societies under the prophet. Khan describes this final system as that ‘governed completely by Islam’ (1999:5). This assertion is only partially correct as the earlier two political systems practised by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) can also be taken as being completely governed by Islam. The reason being that the basis of the different political systems can be validated from the spirit of the Islamic philosophy of political administration which is equity, justice and fairness as provided in the cited provision of Q57:25.

It is pertinent to note that there is no homogenous Islamic society that can be described as an Islamic state anywhere in the contemporary world of modern nation-states with border controls and immigration policies that determine citizenship and rights of residence. For emphasis, Nigeria cannot be described as an Islamic state. This is because according to the requirements of Islamic constitutional law, a core requirement for the attainment of the Islamic state status is that the basis of citizenship is the proclamation of adherence to the tenets of the Islamic faith regardless of race, colour, and lingual differences (Abū Faris, 1980:169; Al-Rasheed et al., 2013; al-Bannā, 1965; Isma’il & Hajjā, 2011). As such, requirements of citizenship by birth, long residence, naturalisation and so on, as is the case in citizenship and immigration laws of most modern nation-states, are contrary to the core requirements of describing a state or nation as Islamic. Thus, the homogenous society referred to above should be understood in the sense of a uniform religious ideology which is Islam and not on any other basis of distinction in terms of social identity such as race, skin colour, and language. Where there is uniform religious ideology based on Islam in any society, as Islamic jurists would argue, such society must be unified under a single spiritual and

political leadership (for example, Abū Faris, 1980). This unification, from the discussions so far, will clearly bar the emergence of a woman as the spiritual head, since a woman, because of biological composition but not spiritual inferiority as already stated, cannot occupy the office of an Imam. That is to say, because of the reproductive process of menstrual cycles and aftermaths of childbirth, a woman is excused from the rituals of worship such as five daily prayers and fasting which form part of the core of spiritual leadership as an Imam. It needs to be stated that even within the homogenous society as an Islamic state, as shall later be discussed, historical accounts indicate the representation of women at levels of political administration other than the overall spiritual and political head. In addition, it is important to note that within the Islamic philosophy of political representation as discussed above, Nigeria would qualify as a constitutional democracy, which is the second type of political system experienced by Prophet Muhamamd (PBUH) in Khan's (1999) typology. Within this system, as shall be examined in the next section, there appears to be no textual bases in Islamic law against women's political representation at all levels of political administration in Nigeria.

Women, gender, and political representation in Nigeria

As is generally known, gender refers to the socially constructed roles, attitudes, activities, and characteristics that any society perceives as being the proper representation of lived experiences for the biological sexes of women and men (Brickell, 2006; Murray, 1996). Evidence sourced from the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022) on power and decision-making in the private, public, and political spheres suggests that the realisation of women's rights in this area is still far below the satisfactory levels. For example, the total projected population for 2021 was 211,493,324, with women constituting 49.99% (105,716,452), while men constitute 50.01% (105,776,862). Despite this close demographic margin of both sexes, the total number of female aspirants to the highest political offices of the President and Vice President for the years 2019 to 2022 were 6 and 22 respectively for each office, while that of male aspirants were 67 and 52 respectively for each office. For the gubernatorial offices for the 36 federating units of Nigeria as Governors and Deputy Governors, the female aspirants were 80 and 271 respectively for each office compared to 984 and 789 male aspirants respectively for the same offices. Regarding the senatorial position of the upper house of the Nigerian National Assembly as the lawmaking arm, there were 234 female aspirants compared to 1,649 male aspirants. In fact, since the return to democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999 to 2021, the percentage of female senators is 15.91% compared to a whopping 84.09% for male senators.

In fact, in the recently conducted gubernatorial elections in Nigerian of 18 March 2023, initial reports were that history was going to be made in Nigeria with the emergence of the first female governor for the federating unit of Adamawa state in the northern region of Nigeria (Shotayo, 2023). The election was, however, later declared as inclusive (Vanguard News, 2023) and the country awaits the pronouncement of the election tribunal. Out of a total number of 15,307 candidates who stood for the electoral offices of President, Vice President, Governors, Deputy Governors, Senate, Federal House of Representatives and State Houses of Assembly, only 1,552, amounting to 10% were females. All these figures and the disparate level between the sexes favours the conclusion that there is a gender imbalance against women's right to political representation in Nigeria. A close offshoot of the focus of concern for this chapter on women's political representation is the representation of women generally in the public sector. The statistical report also contains some details on the disparity in representation of the sexes in the various sectors comprising the Nigerian public professional sector. In the judicial sector, for example, statistics from the year 2020 demonstrate that there are 138 national judicial officers who are male compared to 66 female judicial officers. The judicial officers include the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justices of Supreme Court, President of Court of Appeal, Justices of Court of Appeal, President of National Industrial Court, Judges of National Industrial Court, Chief Judge of Federal High Court, Judges of Federal High Court, Chief Judges of State High Courts, Judges of High Courts, and the Chief Registrar of Supreme Court. To illustrate the representation of the sexes in the medical sector, between 2018 and 2020 the percentage of male doctors was consistently around 62% to 65% compared to a percentage of 34% to 37% for women doctors. This fact is more disturbing if one considers the fact that the figures point to a representation of male doctors being twice the number of female doctors when it is the women who are most likely to visit health institutions on a higher frequency in relation to men. This is because of the added factor of reproductive health issues involving pre-natal, ante-natal, and post-natal cares outside of the natural health challenges that both men and women face. In the public service and administration sector, since the return to democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999 to 2021, there has never been a woman Secretary for the Federation. Additionally, only 13.73% of women have formed part of the federal cabinet as Ministers between 1999 and 2021 compared to 86.27% for men.

What is interesting about the above cited statistics as well as the level of disparity if the margin of the population projection between women and men is considered, is that in terms of educational requirements and literacy levels for all the stated positions, there appears to be no basis for the varying levels of disparity in representation. The same report also noted that the

literacy rate in English language as the Nigerian official language from data sourced between 2018 and 2019 was 78.3% for men and a very close 72.3% for women. In the same vein, the total enrolment of men for undergraduate studies in Nigerian universities was 438,260 for men and 346,999 for women in 2019. In like manner, and especially as it relates to political representation of women, the disproportionate representation of women in the existing political offices continues to be at variance with the realities of the demography of registered electorates in terms of numerical strength. Electoral observers (such as Afolabi, 2022) have argued that this is a recurring decimal in the Nigerian electoral process. To underscore the point being made, statistics for the 2019 and 2023 general elections depict roughly half of the entire numbers of the registered voters and actual electorates as women (Afolabi, 2022:3). Yet, the political offices continue to be dominated by men (Afolabi, 2022:6-8). Some reasons have been suggested for the domination of electoral aspirants and winners of electoral offices by men even where the numerical strength of women as electorates should result in the opposite. Observers cite the monetisation of the electoral process, godfatherism, electoral violence and patriarchy in Northern Nigeria especially, as some of the reasons (Afolabi, 2022; CDD-EAC, 2023). Out of all the stated reasons, patriarchy as a factor is ideological and is often euphemistically understood in relation to cultural and religious beliefs. Other factors such as political violence are more concrete and will ordinarily affect both the voting process and the emergence of successful candidates. From the available statistics, the fear of electoral violence has certainly not deterred the high number of female registered voters who are willing to participate as voters. Thus, the low levels of female elected representatives seem to address more the idea of agency of women and their perception of their sphere of existence and operation. As Orakzai (2014) correctly argues, the gendered division of society into 'private' (domestic environment of the house and family life) and the 'public' (the social and political spheres) adversely influence popular conceptions of women's empowerment in Muslim societies. Additionally, this distinction is not only stereotypical of the roles of women, but also creates ideological barriers that 'limit their ability in society to perform as functional agents (Orakzai, 2014:2-5). What is most unfortunate is that these ideological limitations that are often passed off as religious, rob women of their agency. This is as a result of historical socialisation on those ideological bases which has the effect of setting women off against each other rather than seeing themselves as comrades. Thus, there is a sense of distrust in female capability in the public sphere which is why women candidates would not necessarily be victorious despite the high numerical strength of their electoral power. The argument is not that men and women should be in competition with each other, but that political representation can only be meaningful when

all the demographic components of society are represented at the decision-making level. Otherwise, second-hand information would take the place of lived experiences that can influence state policies and the effect of state institutions on their life in society.

Islamic law and the ‘public’ woman: From hermeneutics to praxis

During the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the need to contain the spread of the contagion forced the government to institute lockdown and movement restriction orders. Thus, most work that traditionally occurred outside of the home (public) was carried out inside the home (private) regardless of the gender of the worker. This experience informs the observation (Amoloye-Adebayo, 2020) that the dichotomy between the private and public professional space is false. This is because the status of work and the modicum of respect with which it is viewed are largely determined by whether it occurred in the private space (at home which was the case for several women) or outside of the home in the public space (typically populated mostly by men) as noted earlier. The denigration of work in the private sphere is not only performed by men, but even women would also look disparagingly at fellow women who are ‘professional’ home workers in relation to domestic chores as well as the care of the elderly and the young. This is notwithstanding the fact that home work may require longer hours than an average white-collar 9 to 5 daily job outside of the home with no holidays, times off, or weekends. Home work is often taken for granted; it is generally not remunerated and it is also not considered valuable in terms of family income (like reducing cost for a cook, cleaner, caregiver, driver for school and shopping, and so on). Again, in several cases, little or no consideration is accorded to the well-being of the woman concerned. Moreover, the fact that home work is usually regarded as the exclusive preserve of women alone (Shahid, 2007; Orakzai, 2014) means that most women are unable to participate at optimal levels no matter how eminently qualified in the public space, be it professional or political.

Interestingly, for varied reasons ranging from the need for additional income because of escalating costs of maintaining a family, to self-awareness, several women are required to combine work both in and outside of the home. However, while engaged in the public space for ‘professional’ jobs like men, they nonetheless must find personally constructed strategies or ‘coping mechanisms’ (since it is considered their sole duty and not joint responsibility) to juggle the domestic chores as well. This double responsibility that women bear, often alone, not only comes at great cost to their physical and mental health, but it must also necessarily reduce

productivity in any public sphere, resulting in poor representation of women even when they are overqualified (Orakzai, 2014; Amoloye-Adebayo, 2020). The societally accepted denigration of the domestic chores as less important, foster a culture of passivity in most men who then consider it out of their sphere of concern because it occurs in the private space. Several Prophetic traditions exist to the contrary on this point (for instance, ‘I urge you to treat women well’ al-Bukhari, 331; Muslim, 1468). On the flip side, out of the need to satisfy societal expectations of self-worth, some women who already engage in a day’s work in the private sphere feel compelled to seek vocations in the public sphere even where such is not necessarily required for survival (Q4:34). The correct Islamic position is that there is textual validation of the agency of women as autonomous entities, and this is important in the process of self-determination of how best to contribute their quota to societal development through their natural abilities (Q2:226, Q2:187, Q30:21 and so on).

Once the position is settled there are no Islamic textual barriers to the agency of a ‘public’ woman, then the question of political representation is a necessary corollary. In the first instance, it is useful to recall at this juncture the discussion on the Islamic philosophy of political representation which is crafted on the timeless spirit of equity, justice, and fairness. The categorical textual position and scholarly discussions disclose no basis of discrimination on the grounds of sex or gender roles for political leadership and representation. Thus, any limitation on representation by any member of society should be based on textual positions that serve the higher objectives of Islamic law. To exemplify the point being made, it is useful to restate the three different political systems that Khan (1999) distilled from the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Political representation of women at the first two levels of *statusquoism* such as in India and constitutional democracy such as Nigeria, even to the level of the highest political office, would be compatible with the spirit and text of Islamic law. However, it would be textually impossible at the level of a homogenous religious society for a woman to occupy the highest political office, but women may occupy other public roles. The reason is not far-fetched. In the first two situations, there is a distinction between political leadership and religious authority. In the last system, both the religious and spiritual authority would be fused in one person who must be a man for religious but not political purposes. According to the dictates of Islamic devotional worship, only a man can occupy the public office of an Imam for congregational spiritual observance. Non-adherents and some adherents of the Islamic faith often erroneously misconstrue the reason for this Islamic position with claims that it indicates the inferiority of Muslim women in relation to Muslim men (Shahid, 2007). Men and women vary in their biological compositions that predisposes one sex as being more suited

for certain roles than the other. The reproduction process certainly places more strain on the life of a woman than a man in terms of the menstrual circle, other physical indications of puberty, pregnancy, menopause and so on. During menstrual periods and some stages in the childbirth process, a woman is excused from the observance of certain rituals of worship whether alone or in congregation. These are matters that impact the private life of a woman and the Islamic position that a woman cannot be an Imam is to keep such occurrences as private matters for women. This will not be possible for an Imam who is expected to lead the members of society in congregational prayers. In terms of textual authority, the only Prophetic tradition regarding women's political leadership is the following tradition narrated by *Abu Bakra*:

During the days (of the battle) of A-Jamal, Allah benefited me with a word I had heard from Allah's Apostle after I had been about to join the Companions of Al-Jamal (i.e., the camel) and fight along with them. When Allah's Messenger (PBUH) was informed that the Persian had crowned the daughter of Khosrau as their ruler, he said "such people as ruled by a lady will never be successful" (Sahih al-Buhkari, 4425, Sunan of An-Nasai, 8/227).

It has been argued that patriarchal ideologies against women's political leadership in Muslim societies are based on this prophetic tradition (Wadud, 1999:80, 89). Scholarly discussion of this tradition varies. In the first place, political representation, as discussed, is not only about the highest political office. It is more about opportunities for representation in the decision-making process. Therefore, the chief executive officer as the president or governor is merely a part of the Islamic system of political administration which is expected to be based on mutual consultation between the political head and the citizenry but not on absolute authoritarianism. In this connection, it is useful to recall an earlier-cited Prophetic tradition of the spiritual praiseworthiness of speaking truth to a tyrannical leader. In classical Islamic political history from the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and onwards, women were visibly represented in the political decision-making process as well as what should be taken as popular understanding of some Islamic textual positions. It is on record that during the reign of the second Caliph in Islamic political history,

"Umar (RA), he appointed a woman, Ashifa bint Abdullah, into the public role of market inspector and manager in charge of general quality assurance and price control."

This chapter argues that women's political representation is not only about occupying the highest political office, but about being active in public and

political life. Even in modern democracies such as the United States, the emergence of a female president continues to remain elusive.

On the issue of the cited prophetic tradition about a woman ruler, it is useful to say that some Islamic scholars have made a case for its careful consideration. Baderin (2007), for example, argues that the tradition is the only known report against women's aspiration to the highest political office. It was not a categorical prohibition which as Wadud (1999) also notes, appear to contravene textual accounts in the Holy Qur'an. While Muslims believe that Prophetic traditions have elements of divine inspiration based on textual authority of the Qur'an, they also appreciate that not every account is authentic. A cardinal rule for guarding against possible fabrication is to determine the coherence of a tradition in question with the position of the Qur'an on the same matter. On the issue of a woman being at the helm of political affairs, the Qur'an gives an account of Queen *Bilqis* as the political head of the ancient city of Sheba. The textual depiction of her intellectual acumen and political sagacity as against the supposed wise counsel of her male subjects brought about the unification of her kingdom with the more prosperous one of Prophet Sulyman (PBUH) in the place of war and total destructions of the lives and properties of her people. The historical account is contained in the provisions of Q27:29-35:

(The Queen) said: "Ye chiefs! here is delivered to me- a letter worthy of respect. It is from Solomon and is (as follows): "In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Be ye not arrogant against me but come to me in submission (to the true religion)". She said: Ye Chiefs! advise me in (this) my affair: no affair have I decided except in your presence." They said: "We are endued with strength, and given to vehement war: but the commend is with thee; so, consider what thou will command." She said: "Kings, when they enter a country, be spoil it, and make the noblest of its people its meanest thus do they behave. But I am going to send him a present and (wait) to see with what (answer) return (my) ambassadors."

This historical account depicts a woman ruler in an extremely favourable way. In fact, aside from the Prophets and Messengers, she is the only ruler who is so favourably considered for her independence after consultation and sharp foresight. This is the reason why some scholars have suggested a great deal of caution in using the cited Prophetic tradition as the sole basis against women's political leadership.

To put the discussion so far in proper perspective, the textual authorities appear not to admit to any limitation against women's political participation and representation in Nigeria. The statistics on educational requirements for all professional, administrative, and political offices shows that there is

an almost even balance between men and women. It is here conceived that in spite of this balance, the imbalance in political representation is the result of societal outlook on gender roles through historical socialisation of Nigerian men and women along those lines. This socialisation is greatly influenced by what is taken to be the religious prescription on how men and women should operate within society. Unfortunately, it appears that over time women lost track of direct interrogation of the relevant religious prescriptions in order to chart self-defined paths to self-actualisation rather than simply succumbing to societal expectations that cannot be religiously validated. Therefore, women must take their destiny into their own hands. Certainly, the effect of sustained socialisation in a different way makes the struggle for change to be a Herculean task. But it is not insurmountable as the discussion in the next section demonstrates.

Countermeasures to women's agential passivity and recommendations to enhance women's political representation in Nigeria

The disparate level of gender representation is clearly a challenge to the meaningful protection of women's rights in all spheres of human existence, be it public or private. The problem of societal role definitions in relation to gender is acknowledged as an inhibiting factor against women, particularly where roles that are culturally and customarily constructed are passed off as religious positions. This is certainly true in the Nigerian situation where Islamic law is a constitutionally recognised source of law. Thus, certain gender role expectations by Muslim societies that keep women 'private' even when they have exceptional abilities for public, professional, and political excellence are erroneously understood and defended as 'Islamic' even by some Muslim women. The discussion of the textual provisions in the sections above is to demonstrate the fallacy of this position from a scriptural perspective.

Another challenge is that several women have been socialised into the erroneous conception that religious interpretation and application should be the exclusive preserve of men. Thus, there appears to be a level of passivity in terms of religious awareness of textually sound positions. This reduces the opportunity of direct perception of textual positions and the second-hand level of knowledge must undoubtedly affect their negotiating power in determining the future course of gender relations that are responsive to the clear textual assumptions. Put another way, this chapter recommends that women must acquire religious knowledge, not only just enough for spiritual observance but to be able to independently assume responsibility for self-awareness and self-actualisation. The numerical strength of the women

electorates and educational levels as discussed above show that external inhibiting factors can be surmounted but there must be a mindset change, and a paradigm shift from being a passive onlooker to an active agent. The process of agential activity must start from the domestic settings where socialisation of the sexes into different roles begin. Not all women are cut out for political leadership in the same way that not all men can perform successfully in political leadership. The point sought to be made is that where there are natural abilities for political leadership in women, religion should not be instrumentalised to erect cultural barriers to curtail their participation. Rather, men and women should partner for progress when there is the full realisation that a society that functions only on the basis of a segment of its members can only be successful to the extent and quality of the human resources at its public service. The Islamic textual position on the story of Queen *Bilqis* points to the ability of women as natural problem solvers when given the needed opportunity.

Importantly, the contents of civic education and social studies curriculum for educational instruction at the pre-primary, primary and post-primary levels require serious revision to be in tune with the dictates of collective aspiration to greatness. The educational socialisation should ignite the agency of all children towards patriotic engagements for national progress regardless of sex. Girls as well as boys must learn that they must not simply take the back seat in the decision-making process at all levels of their socialisation. Additionally, it is observed that at the level of tertiary educational enrolment, women are visible in the public space and in fact perform brilliantly. But the demand of domestic and family life often affects the professional progression of women later in life and determines the level and quality of out-of-home engagements. Hence, it is suggested that time taken off work for domestic responsibilities such as maternity leave and time off for the care of the elderly and children should be counted as active community service in the continuation and nurturing of human existence. This is in addition to adequate and government-backed childcare facilities to encourage professionalism by women while not sacrificing family life. The point sought to be made is that in some cases, society expects women to make a choice between meaningful contribution to family life and professional excellence or public participation. Because it is usually taken for granted that women will most often than not sacrifice profession for family, lots of rich human resources remain untapped and undiscovered in the domestic space. The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has given so much impetus to the position that a lot of professional and public work can be carried out from the domestic front. All that is required is robust consideration towards ensuring that women can contribute their quota to a successful family life while not sacrificing their other capabilities. The quest for strategies for ensuring a

family life-work life balance should therefore be a shared concern for both men and women and not be viewed as a burden for women alone.

Conclusion

The chapter has demonstrated that Islamic law is not against the political representation of women at all levels of society. Ideological barriers through societal definition of gender roles that socialises men solely as 'public' operators and women as most functional only in the 'private' space in Nigeria are not religious constructs, at least from the Islamic law perspective. It is hoped that women will realise this position and be active agents in the process of mindset change so that future indices of socialisation of both boys and girls will be representative of the Islamic law textual aspiration of an equitable, inclusive and egalitarian society where all segments of society can contribute their quota to the process of national and political development through exemplary leadership.

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Chapter 19

Assessing the Effectiveness of Affirmative Action Policies in Promoting Girls' Education in Kwara State: A Detailed Account of Girl Child Education in Vulnerable Communities in Ilorin Metropolis

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Abstract

The Nigerian National Policy on Education assures an equal educational opportunity to all children irrespective of religion, tribe or gender. This policy remains largely on paper as a wide gap still exists in children's access to education, particularly on the basis of gender, and particularly in Northern Nigeria. The girl child in Kwara State, as one of the Northern states in Nigeria, faces several barriers to education, including poverty, early marriage, and cultural beliefs that prioritise boys' education. To address these challenges, the Kwara State Government has implemented several affirmative action policies aimed at promoting girls' education. This research study, therefore, assesses the effectiveness of affirmative action policies in promoting girls' education in Kwara State, with a focus on a vulnerable community in Ilorin Metropolis. This study used a case study research design. The population comprises female children in vulnerable communities. Isale Gambari community was sampled. 14 parents and two community heads were engaged. Focus group discussions (FGD) and key informant interviews (KII) were used to collect data. The data were interpreted, and the finding reveals that there is little awareness of the policies; the policies are yet to contribute to girl child enrolment and retention in schools, cultural beliefs, parent education

and financial status as negative influence on a child's education, there is no known policy provided that promotes the education of a girl child, amongst others. It was therefore recommended that effort should be made to further implement the policies in vulnerable communities.

Keywords: Affirmative Action Policies, Education for All, Girl Child Education, Out of School Children, Vulnerable Children

Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping societies and empowering individuals, yet around the world, gender disparities persist, depriving countless girls of their right to education. In Kwara State, Nigeria, the challenge of ensuring equal access to education for girls remains a pressing concern, particularly in vulnerable communities within the Ilorin Metropolis. In response to this issue, affirmative action policies have been implemented, aiming to address the historical barriers and discriminatory practices that hinder girls' educational opportunities. This chapter delves into a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of these affirmative action policies in promoting girls' education, shedding light on the experiences and outcomes within the unique context of vulnerable communities in Ilorin Metropolis. This study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders invested in the pursuit of gender equality in education.

Education is widely recognised as a fundamental human right and a key driver of individual empowerment and societal development (UN, 2015). However, despite global efforts to achieve gender equality in education, gender disparities persist, particularly in many developing countries. Girls continue to face significant barriers that hinder their access to quality education and limit their opportunities for personal and professional growth (UNESCO, 2020). Gender disparities in education have far-reaching consequences, affecting not only the individual girls but also their communities and societies. Research has consistently shown that educating girls has a multiplier effect, leading to improved health outcomes, reduced poverty rates, and increased economic productivity (World Bank, 2018b). Moreover, educated women tend to have fewer children, which contributes to lower population growth and improved family well-being (Gibson et al., 2019). Thus, ensuring equal access to education for girls is not only a matter of human rights but also a critical strategy for achieving sustainable development.

However, in Kwara State, Nigeria, gender disparities in education persist, particularly in vulnerable communities within the Ilorin Metropolis.

Factors such as poverty, cultural norms, early marriage, and limited access to educational resources contribute to the marginalisation of girls in these communities (Olanrewaju & Adebisi, 2021; Uwaifo, 2018). Recognising the urgent need to address this issue, affirmative action policies have been implemented to promote and support girls' education. Affirmative action policies are deliberate interventions that seek to redress historical discrimination and provide targeted support to marginalised groups (Adeyemi & Aromolaran, 2020). These policies aim to remove barriers and create opportunities for under-represented individuals, including girls, in the educational sphere. By implementing initiatives such as scholarship programmes, gender-sensitive curriculum development, and community engagement, affirmative action policies strive to increase girls' enrolment, retention, and completion rates in schools. This is because the importance of education in empowering individuals and shaping societies cannot be overemphasised.

Education is widely recognised as a powerful tool for individual empowerment and social transformation. It equips individuals with knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities that enable them to navigate the complexities of life, make informed decisions, and contribute meaningfully to their communities (UN, 2020). The transformative potential of education extends beyond the individual, as it plays a crucial role in shaping societies and fostering inclusive and sustainable development. Education empowers individuals by expanding their horizons, broadening their perspectives, and enabling personal growth. Through education, individuals acquire foundational literacy and numeracy skills, which serve as building blocks for further learning and lifelong development (World Bank, 2018a). Moreover, education fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills, empowering individuals to engage actively in social, economic, and political spheres (UNESCO, 2015).

Educated individuals are more likely to secure employment and earn higher incomes, breaking the cycle of poverty and enhancing their overall well-being (World Bank, 2020). Education also promotes better health outcomes, as educated individuals are more likely to adopt healthy behaviours, access healthcare services, and make informed decisions regarding their own well-being and that of their families (Cutler & Lleras-Muney, 2010). Education plays a pivotal role in shaping societies and driving social change. It serves as a powerful mechanism for promoting social cohesion, reducing inequalities, and fostering inclusive development (UNESCO, 2015). Education provides individuals with opportunities to acquire knowledge about their rights, participate in democratic processes, and advocate for social justice and equality (Santos, 2021). It also helps challenge

stereotypes, discrimination, and harmful social norms, paving the way for more inclusive and tolerant societies.

Furthermore, education contributes to economic growth and productivity by equipping individuals with the skills and competencies needed in the labour market (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2012). A well-educated workforce enhances innovation, technological advancement, and economic diversification, leading to improved living standards and sustainable development (OECD, 2019). Education empowers individuals by providing them with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities necessary for personal and professional growth. At the societal level, education drives social transformation, promotes inclusivity, and contributes to economic development. Recognising the immense significance of education, it is imperative to address the gender disparities and barriers that hinder equal access to education, particularly for girls in vulnerable communities.

The persistent gender disparities in access to education have far-reaching consequences for individuals and societies. When girls are denied education, their potential remains untapped, depriving them of opportunities for personal development, economic empowerment, and social participation (World Bank, 2020). The lack of education perpetuates cycles of poverty and limits girls' ability to break free from intergenerational cycles of disadvantage (UNESCO, 2003). Moreover, gender disparities in education hinder social progress and sustainable development. When a significant portion of the population is excluded from education, societies miss out on the diverse perspectives, talents, and contributions that women and girls can bring (UN, 2019). Gender disparities in education impede efforts to achieve other Sustainable Development Goals, such as eradicating poverty, promoting gender equality, and fostering inclusive economic growth (World Bank, 2018b). Addressing these gender disparities and ensuring equal access to education for girls is not only a matter of human rights but also a crucial strategy for social, economic, and political advancement. It requires concerted efforts from governments, communities, and stakeholders to dismantle barriers, challenge gender norms, and implement gender-responsive policies and programmes that promote girls' educational and empower them to reach their full potential.

Kwara State, located in North Central Nigeria, is known for its diverse population and rich cultural heritage. With Ilorin as its capital city, the state is home to various communities, each with its unique social, economic, and educational landscape. Understanding the context of Kwara State is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of affirmative action policies in promoting girls' education in vulnerable communities within the Ilorin Metropolis. Kwara State faces significant challenges in ensuring equal access to education,

particularly for girls. The state struggles with high poverty rates, limited educational infrastructure, and cultural norms that prioritise male education over female education (NPC, 2014; Olanrewaju & Adebisi, 2021). These factors contribute to the persistent gender disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes.

In the Ilorin Metropolis, vulnerable communities further compound the barriers faced by girls in accessing education. These communities often experience socio-economic disadvantages, including limited access to basic amenities, inadequate healthcare services, and low-income households (Uwaifo, 2018). The vulnerability of these communities makes girls more susceptible to dropping out of school because of financial constraints, early marriage, and societal expectations. The specific challenges faced by girls in vulnerable communities within the Ilorin Metropolis necessitate targeted interventions to promote their educational opportunities. Affirmative action policies, such as scholarship programmes, gender-responsive curriculum development, and community engagement initiatives, have been implemented to address these challenges and improve girls' access to quality education.

Vulnerable communities within the Ilorin Metropolis in Kwara State, Nigeria, present a distinct context characterised by socio-economic challenges that impact girls' access to education. These communities experience various factors that contribute to the marginalisation and limited educational opportunities for girls. Vulnerable communities in the Ilorin Metropolis often face high levels of poverty and limited economic resources (Olanrewaju & Adebisi, 2021). Economic constraints can prevent families from prioritising girls' education, leading to increased school dropout rates and limited enrolment. Inadequate educational infrastructure is a significant challenge in vulnerable communities. Schools in these areas often lack basic amenities such as classrooms, libraries, and sanitation facilities (NPC, 2014). The absence of proper facilities can discourage parents from sending their daughters to school and hinder the learning environment for those who do attend.

Affirmative action policies are deliberate interventions implemented by governments, institutions, or organisations to address historical and systemic discrimination, promote equal opportunity, and foster inclusivity for marginalised groups, including girls in the context of education. The purpose of affirmative action policies is to rectify the imbalances and barriers that hinder the full participation and advancement of disadvantaged individuals, particularly in areas where they have been historically under-represented. In the context of girls' education, affirmative action policies aim to address the gender disparities and discriminatory practices that

limit girls' access to quality education. These policies recognise the specific challenges and barriers faced by girls, such as socio-cultural norms, poverty, and limited educational resources. By providing targeted support and implementing strategies tailored to girls' needs, affirmative action policies seek to create an enabling environment that promotes their educational opportunities and improves their educational outcomes. It is clear that there exists a persistence of gender disparities in access to education, particularly for girls, both globally and in the specific context of Kwara State, Nigeria. Economic constraints, harmful gender norms and stereotypes, cultural practices, limited infrastructure, and inadequate educational resources contribute to the marginalisation of girls in vulnerable communities within the Ilorin Metropolis.

These gender disparities in education have profound implications for individuals and societies. Denied access to education, girls are deprived of opportunities for personal development, economic empowerment, and social participation. Furthermore, the exclusion of girls from education hampers social progress, sustainable development, and the achievement of broader development goals. Recognising the significance of education in empowering individuals and shaping societies, affirmative action policies have been implemented to promote and support girls' education. These policies aim to address historical and systemic discrimination, remove barriers, and create inclusive educational environments that enhance girls' educational opportunities and outcomes. However, the effectiveness of affirmative action policies in vulnerable communities within the Ilorin Metropolis needs to be assessed comprehensively. By critically examining the implementation, impact, challenges, and successes of these policies, the research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and inform evidence-based strategies to further enhance girls' education in Kwara State.

Statement of the problem

Despite global efforts to promote gender equality in education, significant gender disparities persist, particularly in vulnerable communities within the Ilorin Metropolis of Kwara State, Nigeria. Girls face numerous barriers that hinder their access to quality education and limit their opportunities for personal growth, empowerment, and social advancement. The state of the problem is characterised by economic constraints, harmful gender norms and stereotypes, cultural practices, limited infrastructure, and inadequate educational resources. Economic factors, such as poverty and the cost of schooling, often prevent families from prioritising girls' education. Harmful gender norms and stereotypes perpetuate the belief that girls' primary role is within the household, leading to child marriage and the prioritisation

of boys' education. Cultural practices, such as gender-based violence and discrimination, further hinder girls' access to education and create hostile learning environments.

Additionally, vulnerable communities within the Ilorin Metropolis face limited educational infrastructure, including inadequate school facilities, these factors contribute to the marginalisation of girls, hindering their enrolment, retention, and educational outcomes. To address the state of the problem and promote girls' education in vulnerable communities within the Ilorin Metropolis, affirmative action policies have been implemented. These policies aim to address historical and systemic discrimination, remove barriers, and create inclusive educational environments that enhance girls' educational opportunities and outcomes. However, there is a need to assess the effectiveness of these policies and identify strategies for further improvement. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct research to assess the effectiveness of affirmative action policies in promoting girls' education in vulnerable communities within the Ilorin Metropolis.

Research questions

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. What is the awareness level of community members on affirmative action policies in promoting girls' education in Kwara State?
2. Have girl child enrolment and school retention increased in the last five years?
3. What are the factors influencing girl child education in the community?

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach which gathers qualitative data. Case study design was used to assess the current state of girls' education in Koroo afoju, isale gambari community in Ilorin Metropolis. Primary data sources were utilised to provide an in-depth understanding. The sample size comprised 14 participants and two key informants. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the vulnerable community within the Ilorin Metropolis, and the participants as well as the informants based on their direct involvement. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with stakeholders and parents or guardians, to explore their experiences, perspectives, and perceptions regarding girls' education. These qualitative methods allowed for a deeper understanding of the cultural, social, and economic factors influencing girls' education. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions. Themes and patterns related to barriers, challenges, and

effectiveness of affirmative action policies were identified. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. The research adhered to ethical guidelines in data collection, storage, and dissemination. The study's scope was limited to one community within the Ilorin Metropolis, and the findings may not be generalisable to the entire Ilorin or Kwara State or other regions.

Results

Thematic analysis was used in answering the research questions from the collected data, mainly from key informant interview and focus group discussion participants, which were transcribed, arranged and studied before answering research questions.

Research Question One: What is the awareness level of community members on affirmative action policies in promoting girls' education in Kwara State?

On the awareness level of community members on affirmative action policies in promoting girls' education in Kwara State, all members in the two focus group discussions claimed some awareness of government efforts in ensuring that a girl child in the community goes to school and completes school. A participant in the second focus group claimed not to be aware of any policy by government to promote female education. Meanwhile the two key informants acknowledged efforts by government in promoting male and female education in the community. This shows that though members of the community are aware of policy from the government, the awareness amounts to little.

Research Question Two: Has girl child enrolment and school retention increased in the last five years?

On the girl child enrolment and school retention point, there has been an increase in the last five years. The participants from the two groups and the key informants are yet to see any significant increase in the enrolment of girl children and are also aware of cases of female pupils in the community who are now out of school for one reason or another. This implies that the policies are yet to contribute to girl child enrolment and retention in the community.

Research Question Three: What are the factors influencing girl child education in the community?

On the factors influencing girl child education in the community, participants agreed to the following as amongst other factors militating girl child education in the community: cultural beliefs; parent education; and financial status as the leading causes and factors having a negative influence

on child education in the community; also the participants noted that there were a significant number of beggars living in the community. This may be why they are not aware of the policy's provisions that promote the education of a girl child.

Discussion of findings, conclusion and recommendations

Based on the findings, it appears that there is some level of awareness amongst community members regarding the government's efforts to promote girls' education in Kwara State. However, the extent of this awareness seems to vary within the community. During the focus group discussions, participants from the first group claimed to have some awareness of the government's initiatives aimed at ensuring girls' access to education and their completion of schooling. This suggests that these community members have some knowledge of the affirmative action policies and efforts in place to promote girls' education.

However, it is noteworthy that a participant in the second focus group expressed a lack of awareness regarding any specific government policy to promote female education. This individual's statement indicates that there might be gaps in disseminating information about affirmative action policies targeting girls' education within the community. Interestingly, both focus groups acknowledged the government's efforts in promoting education for both males and females in the community. This suggests that while community members are aware of broader educational initiatives, the specific focus on promoting girls' education might not be as widely recognised.

These findings indicate that although there is some level of awareness amongst community members regarding the government's efforts to promote girls' education, the extent of this awareness may be limited. The lack of awareness expressed by a participant in the second focus group highlights the need for more effective communication and dissemination of information about the specific policies and programmes aimed at promoting female education within the community. To address this, it is crucial for the government and other stakeholders to enhance their efforts in raising awareness about affirmative action policies targeted at promoting girls' education. This can be achieved through community engagement programmes, workshops, public awareness campaigns, and active involvement of local leaders and influential members of the community. By increasing awareness and understanding of these policies, community members can become more actively involved in supporting and advocating for girls' education, thereby contributing to the success of the affirmative action initiatives. It is important to note that further research and exploration

of the community members' perspectives and understanding of affirmative action policies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the awareness levels and potential barriers to their effective implementation.

The findings revealed that the participants from the two groups and the key informants are yet to see any significant increase in the enrolment of girl children and are aware of cases of female pupils in the community who are now out of school for one reason or another. This implies that the policies are yet to contribute to girl child enrolment and retention in the community. There is a perception amongst participants from the two focus groups and the key informants that there has been no significant increase in girls' enrolment and retention in the community over the past five years. Additionally, they are aware of cases where female pupils have dropped out of school for various reasons. This suggests that the existing affirmative action policies may not have effectively contributed to addressing the issues of enrolment and retention of girls in the community.

The lack of noticeable improvements in girls' enrolment and retention despite the presence of affirmative action policies is a matter of concern. It indicates that there may be barriers or challenges that hinder the effective implementation and impact of these policies. These barriers could be multifaceted and include factors such as socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and gender-based discrimination. Socio-cultural norms and expectations often prioritise male education over female education, leading to lower enrolment and higher dropout rates for girls. Economic constraints, including poverty and the associated costs of schooling, can further impede girls' access to education. Inadequate infrastructure, such as a lack of safe and well-equipped schools, can also contribute to low enrolment and retention rates. Moreover, gender-based discrimination and other social factors may discourage girls from pursuing education or force them to leave school prematurely.

To address these challenges and enhance girls' enrolment and retention, it is crucial to identify and address the specific barriers faced by girls in the community. This could involve implementing targeted interventions, such as providing scholarships, improving infrastructure, addressing cultural norms, and engaging the community in promoting girls' education. The findings suggest that there is a need for a comprehensive assessment of the existing affirmative action policies to identify gaps and areas for improvement. It is important to understand the reasons behind the limited impact of these policies and explore strategies to overcome the barriers that hinder girls' enrolment and retention.

Additionally, continuous monitoring and evaluation of the policies' effectiveness and outcomes are essential. This would allow for adjustments and adaptations to better align the policies with the specific needs and realities of the community, ultimately enhancing their impact on girls' enrolment and retention. By addressing the identified challenges and ensuring effective implementation of affirmative action policies, it is possible to create an enabling environment that promotes girls' education, increases enrolment rates, and improves retention, thereby fostering the educational empowerment and development of girls in the community.

According to the participants' views in the focus group discussions, several factors were identified as influencing girl child education in the community. These factors include cultural beliefs, parent education, and financial status. It is worth noting that these factors were highlighted as leading causes and negative influences on girl child education within the community. Additionally, the participants mentioned the presence of a significant number of beggars in the community. The existence of a large population of individuals living in poverty and relying on begging might contribute to a lack of awareness and understanding of government policies that promote girl child education. The focus and concern of these individuals may primarily revolve around meeting their basic needs, making it difficult for them to be informed about specific policies and provisions related to education.

To address these factors and promote girl child education, interventions should target changing cultural beliefs and norms through community engagement and awareness campaigns. Providing education and information to parents and guardians about the importance of education and its long-term benefits can also be effective in overcoming barriers. Additionally, efforts to alleviate poverty and improve economic conditions within the community can help to alleviate financial constraints that hinder access to education for girls.

Furthermore, it is essential to implement strategies that ensure that information about policies promoting girl child education reaches all segments of the community, including those living in poverty. Utilising various communication channels and working closely with community leaders can help to disseminate information effectively, ensuring that all community members are aware of the provisions and benefits of these policies. By addressing these influential factors and increasing awareness, communities can work towards creating an enabling environment that supports and prioritises the education of girls, thereby contributing to the overall development and empowerment of girls in the community.

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Chapter 20

Affirmative Action Policy and the Challenge of Female Cabinet Membership in Nigeria: An Analysis from 2019–2023

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Abstract

Affirmative action for women is an outcome of global advocacy for gender mainstreaming in politics and the decision-making process. Through the instrumentality of some gender-friendly treaties, to which many countries – including Nigeria – are signatories, women are to be allotted a certain percentage in all appointments. Thus, women’s visibility in the politics of the modern state is becoming increasingly a yardstick to measure levels of democratisation and sustainability of democracy. Countries across the globe, including the most conservative, are making both minor and radical changes to address gender issues. This explains why the Nigerian Government came up with its National Gender Policy (NGP) to allot 35% to women in all appointments in consonance with some international treaties like the CEDAW to which it is a signatory. However, women are still being marginalised in Nigerian politics because of the age-long notion that women are not relevant in public affairs. Also, domestication of gendered affirmative action policy in patriarchal society like Nigeria is problematic because of cultural and misogynistic factors. Methodically, this research is both qualitative and quantitative. Data were collected via a survey and analysed through percentage and tabular presentation. From the perspectives of Political Liberalism and Feminist Legal Theory, it critiques the concept of affirmative

action vis-à-vis women cabinet membership in Nigeria. Its findings reveal that constitutional barriers are the major implementation stumbling block. It concludes that until affirmative action is domesticated, its implementation will be at the mercy of the disposition of government in power towards gender issues. It recommends constitutional reforms to facilitate implementation.

Keywords: Affirmative Action, Marginalisation, Patriarchy, Political Appointment, Women

Introduction

Gender issues are gaining the attention of researchers and policymakers worldwide. This is evident in the ongoing global advocacy for gender equality and women's inclusiveness in government and decision-making processes. Many countries around the globe are making both minor and radical changes to address gender issues. Reforms that revolve around the gender question are gaining ascendancy such that many countries, including the most conservative, do not want to be left behind. It is becoming a yardstick to measure levels of democratisation in democratising states and a measure of sustainability of democracy in the considerably democratised ones. Yet, women are still being marginalised in Nigerian politics. Discrimination against women, as a result of marginalisation, is premised on the age-long notion that they are care-givers, home maintainers, and children breeders who have no business in public affairs. In some socio-cultural settings, women are not supposed to be educated in the first place. So, the need for their participation in public affairs – of general concerns – does not arise. It is also a common place to associate women with evils who are bereft of any progressive ideas. There is even a long debate on the humanness of women.

However, in the course of history, and because of the dynamic nature of time, changes encroached on thoughts and perceptions globally. These changes have, in one way or another, affected the way women think of themselves and how society views them. In addition, women's access to education has drastically improved worldwide. This enables them to realise some of their rights like franchise – the right to vote and to be voted for in elections. Therefore, women weaponise knowledge to challenge many gender-related stereotypes. The knowledge acquired by them, which is a sure path to liberation, has stood them shoulder to shoulder with men in politics and in other spheres. It is this liberation, couched in gender terms, that gives rise to the notion of gender equality. Thus, affirmative action in support of women is a brainchild of advocacy for gender equality.

Yet, implementation of a gendered affirmative action policy in a patriarchal society like Nigeria is problematic because of cultural, religious,

and misogynistic factors. This explains why 35% affirmative action for women in all appointments continues to fail. Nigeria signed many international treaties which highlight the need for gender equality. Most prominent of these treaties is the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UN, 1979), which provides that states (countries) should adopt special temporary measures aimed at accelerating equality between men and women. These measures, according to the CEDAW, shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.

Consequently, Nigeria stipulates 35% affirmative action in support of women in its National Gender Policy (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006) – a policy it has failed to implement despite a court ruling which orders implementation. Though affirmative action, as formulated, stipulates women's inclusiveness in all appointments, this study focuses on female cabinet membership across the thirty-six states in Nigeria from 2019 to 2023. It gives the statistics, highlights and analyses the challenges, and then proffers solution in forms of recommendations.

Methodology

This research is both qualitative and quantitative. It critiques the concept of affirmative action from the perspectives of its protagonists and antagonists. Using a secondary source of data collection, it surveyed the number of women appointed into various cabinets by state governors within the timeframe of the study. The population sample method is a census since all states of the Federation including the national government are captured in the study. It made use of percentage and tabular presentation to analyse its data.

Theoretical framework

This study critiques affirmative action vis-à-vis women's cabinet membership in Nigeria from the perspectives of Political Liberalism and Feminist Legal theories. Though each of these theories is, on its own, relevant, and can independently make a case for positive action in support of women, utilising them together is considered more apt. While Political Liberalism views affirmative action from a philosophical or ethical perspective, Feminist Legal Theory, also known as feminist jurisprudence, addresses it from the legal angle.

Political Liberalism is a liberal political concept of justice founded on the thoughts of John Rawls. He coined the concept in order to address the problem of political instability in modern constitutional democracies. It recognises that contemporary democratic states consist of religious, cultural

and ethnic pluralism which are in sharp contrast to one another. It therefore attempts to accommodate these diversities to bring about the common good to be enjoyed in a political community.

The terms 'political liberalism' and 'democracy' are essentially equivalent and entwined; so, almost interchangeable. Mannheim (1991) exemplifies it as 'liberal-democratic' ideology. Political liberalism is therefore a liberal-democratic ideology and institutional system of liberal-secular democracy. It primarily accommodates everyone, including minorities, outcasts (such as ex-prisoners), marginalised groups (such as women), and foreigners. Hence, it fosters the system of universal political liberty, equality, and justice for all where "everyone is entitled to an equal system of basic liberties" [i.e.] the right to *equal* subjective liberties" (Habermas, 2001:71).

On the other hand, Feminist Legal Theory explains the relationship between law and feminism with a focus on some of the ways through which law limits as well as enables socio-political reform (Bartlett & Kennedy, 2018). It thus poses a serious challenge to contemporary law, lawmaking, and legal institutions through the advocacy for the relevance of women in lawmaking after centuries of discrimination and dehumanisation. One major assumption, or rather assertion, of the Feminist Legal Theory is that laws are patriarchally based and androcentrically enacted, which, as a consequence, focus on men to the exclusion of women. This, feminists argue, poses a danger to womenfolk and leads to the suppression of women. This patriarchal basis of law is what the Feminist Legal Theory sets to challenge.

From this perspective, feminists see the oppression of women as the most fundamental and universal form of domination and its aim is to put an end to it. Until women have a say in lawmaking, they argue, they will continue to be consigned to the margins of society. They will neither make any input, nor will they benefit from any output in the form of policy favourable to them (women). To correct this anomaly, feminists aver, reforming the basis of lawmaking to enable significant inputs from women is a *sine qua non*. Gender mainstreaming in lawmaking ensures that women have, to borrow from a feminist theorist Rich (1979:271), "the power-to-create, power-to-think, power-to-articulate and concretize our visions and transform our lives and those of our children." Breaking the glass ceiling in lawmaking is not an easy task. Literature reveals that the major stumbling block to implementing affirmative action in favour of women's representation and/or appointment in Nigeria is the legislator.

With Nigeria being a patriarchal society, feminists will have to walk a tightrope between making demands for reforms that affect women on the

one hand and being forced to work within the conservative and patriarchal structures – which they seek to dismantle – on the other hand. Feminists do also have an identitarian challenge to battle with. For, the whole project of feminism is considered nonsensical in some conservative circles. Despite these challenges, affirmative action and the challenge of female cabinet membership in Nigeria could best be addressed through gender mainstreaming in lawmaking, which Feminist Legal Theory advocates.

Affirmative action: A conceptual clarification

The term ‘affirmative action’ is understood differently in today’s society. It, in most cases, elicits strong feelings – both positive and negative. These feelings arise from a misunderstanding of what affirmative action is all about. Affirmative action has no single definition, though it has existed since the late 1900s (Lederer, 2013). As the name implies, it is literally the practice of “acting affirmatively” according to Kranz, (2002:4):

taking positive, specific steps to overcome the history and current practice of discrimination by having employers, schools, and government contractors make a special effort to include people of color and women in predominantly white and/or male workforces, student bodies, and businesses receiving government contracts.

In his own way, Newman (1989:32) defines it as “any race- or sex- conscious employment practices devised with the intention of redressing past racial or gender imbalances and injustices. Affirmative action programmes may include preferential treatment to members of a targeted class of people.”

Lee (1999:394) defines it as the “proactive policy of making special efforts in employment decisions, college entrance, and other areas of public behavior as a way of compensating for past discrimination.” It is based on the thought that certain groups of people, even in the absence of current discrimination against any individual member of that group, are at a disadvantage in the workplace and on campuses because of the effects of past discrimination against some members of the group. Affirmative action is an attempt to create an environment of equality for whole categories of citizens, and the emphasis is on ‘disadvantaged groups’ rather than ‘injured individuals.’ Though Lee did not mention women as victims, he was general in his definition, and he made an important point in his explanation that the discrimination needs not to be present; the reverberating effects of the past discrimination can possibly create some forms of imbalance in the present. To address these imbalances, resorting to affirmative action becomes a necessity.

Rather than defining affirmative action, Holloway (1989) points to the confusion in people's perception of it. Some people confuse the terms 'affirmative action' and 'equal opportunity.' Others think that it is unfeasible for an employer to practice affirmative action and equal opportunity simultaneously because affirmative action means discriminating against a class of people or not providing equal opportunity. Distinguishing between the two concepts, Holloway (1989) particularly, makes a very clear distinction. He argues that affirmative action goes beyond equal opportunity. When the numbers of qualified members of the targeted groups constitute only a small percentage of the pool, then providing equal opportunity will not sufficiently undo the effects of years of discrimination. If, for instance, there are a few qualified women, disabled people, or minorities then differentiating recruiting requirements may be in order.

One important difference between affirmative action and equal opportunity is in the former's differential recruitment of disadvantaged groups. A common misconception of the meaning of affirmative action is that a person employed as a result of affirmative action is an inferior student or employee. People with this view operate on the assumption that minority group members in their company are invariably less qualified. This is apparently not always the case. Holloway concludes that affirmative action is an obligation on employers to first discover the barriers to the employment of those not well represented in the workforce and then remove those barriers. Therefore, it is a guide for employers to use in appraising all their programmes and policies to ensure that their impact on targeted groups is understood.

From another perspective, Nel (2011) describes affirmative action policies merely as extension of equality. This is different from Holloway who made a distinction between it and equal opportunity. Chambers and Wedel (2005) state that affirmative action is the policy of favouring members of a disadvantaged group who currently suffer or historically have suffered from discrimination within a culture. Some scholars define the concept from binary perspectives of the protagonists and antagonists. Protagonists for instance, The American Association for Access, Equity, and Diversity (AAAED), define it, approvingly, as "Taking positive steps to end discrimination, to prevent its recurrence, and to create new opportunities that were previously denied to qualified women and people of color." Contrarily, antagonists define it, disapprovingly, as quotas and preferences for unqualified candidates to occupy certain positions of authority, in which case other qualified candidates may be described as unqualified because of affirmative action (Murray, 1984). It is even argued that affirmative action promotes discrimination which it sets out to fight. From the above definitions, affirmative actions are positive

actions but embroiled in serious controversies and are sandwiched between unending wrangling between antagonists and protagonists. They are, in principle, essentially designed to address past discriminations.

The constitutionality of affirmative action and the National Gender Policy

Affirmative action policies in support of women did not emerge accidentally from nowhere. There are some legal instruments invoked to make them acceptable and implementable. Though the Nigerian Constitution of 1999 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) does not provide for any precise affirmative action clause, the general provision of equality before the law has always been resorted to as justification. Section 16 (1) (b) of the Constitution states that: "The State shall, within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in this Constitution, control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom, and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity."

In Section 17(1) and (2) (a), it states: "The State social order is founded on ideals of Freedom, Equality and Justice." In furtherance of the social order: "every citizen shall have equality of rights, obligations, and opportunities before the law." There are many other human rights, legal, and international instruments which advocate for gender equality and prohibit discriminations of any kind against women like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (UN, 1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (UN, 1966), the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) (AU, 1981) and the International Consensus in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) (UN, 1995), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UN, 2000), and the Women's Rights Protocol (HRP) (AU, 2003).

The good side of these treaties that advance the cause of women is that Nigeria is a signatory to them. However, the downside is that these treaties are not binding even after being signatories to them. They are not binding because the Nigerian Constitution stands to obstruct Nigerian women to press further for implementation of sections of those regional and international human rights instruments endorsed by Nigeria, prohibiting gender discrimination. For instance, Article 12 of the Constitution clearly states that "no treaty between the (Nigerian) Federation and any other country shall have any force of law except to the extent to which any such treaty has been enacted into law by the National Assembly." In a nutshell, affirmative actions in Nigeria have been made a policy option to support women. The fact, however, is that none of these policies have had legal backing. They are

therefore not legally enforceable. The challenge, therefore, is that of legality, not dearth of policies.

It should be noted that there are policies in support of women's integration into national development via affirmative action. The first visible affirmative action in support of women was introduced in Nigeria in the year 2000. This was after the transfer of political power from the military to democratic regime. The Federal Government of Nigeria, which was then led by former President Olusegun Obasanjo, formulated a National Policy on Women (Sokefun, 2010). It was principally informed by the resolution of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN, 1995). Thereafter, in 2006, the National Gender Policy (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006), still by Olusegun Obasanjo, was formulated to improve upon the previous one. The objective of the National Policy on Women was clearly stated:

To fulfil the yearnings as well as (promote) the efforts of Federal, State and Local Governments, Non-governmental Organisations, International Development Partners, the private sector, concerned corporate bodies and individuals to integrate women fully into national development, in order to remove those gender inequalities that have evolved through structures and processes created by patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2006:4).

It should be noted that the National Gender Policy is hinged upon some principles aimed at entrenching affirmative action by promoting gender equality as a globally accepted development factor with an inclination towards women's political empowerment for sustainable development (Omenka, 2017). Although the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, upon which the National Gender Policy was formulated, popularised the 35% affirmative action for women in elective and decision-making positions, women are largely under-represented at all levels of government in most countries – especially in the executive arm – despite the widespread advocacy for gender representation. Having established the constitutionality of gender affirmative action policy and situating it within some legal frameworks, the next theme focuses on challenges of women's cabinet membership in Nigeria.

Women's cabinet membership in Nigeria and the challenge of political participation

From the foregoing discussion, there are apparently no legal constraints against women's cabinet membership in Nigeria. There are, however, other challenges to women's ascendancy to the top level of decision-making circles across states of the federation. Some of these challenges are the patriarchal

system, low literacy rate, religion, money politics, violence, poverty rate, etc. All the aforementioned largely and negatively affect women's participation in politics (Luka, 2011; Awofeso & Odeyemi, 2014). Luka (2011) further argues that the literacy rate and poverty rate amongst Nigerian women are the most challenging obstacles to their participation in politics.

Salaudeen and Abdulmu'izz (2015) explain that women in Nigeria, as in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, still face many challenges in this male-dominated sphere, such as discrimination (both in voting for candidates and allocating political offices), lack of adequate finance to effectively participate, and views that stigmatise female politicians as loose. Kelly (2019) identifies five main reasons for the lack of women's representation, which are: lack of effective government action; lower levels of female employment and education; sexist attitudes – sometimes but not always deriving from religion or traditional practices; a corrupt and patronage-based political system; and violence at elections – including against women candidates.

Para-Mallam (2006) merges all these challenges under three critical constraints which she classifies as institutional, ideological, and logistical. It is important to note that institutions are humanly developed structures of rules and norms that shape the attitudes of a class of people and constrain individual behaviour. They are building blocks of social order that represent socially (not necessarily legally) sanctioned expectations (Streeck & Thelen, 2005). In the words of Goetz (1997:5), they are “humanly devised constraints which reduce uncertainty and provide structure to everyday life, making certain forms of behavior predictable and routine, *institutionalizing* them.” On the basis of institutional challenge, a male-dominated cabinet is predictable in any state in Nigeria because of the stereotypical expectation of women's social roles that are conventionally delineated.

Similarly, ideology poses a critical challenge to women's ascendancy in Nigerian politics. Through cultural and religious beliefs, females and femininity are looked down upon to the extent that their beingness – humanness – was, at some point in history, a subject of debate (Mackinnon, 2007; Salaudeen, 2021). People are indoctrinated to see ‘manness’ as virtue and ‘womanness’ as vile. Situating gender affirmative action within an ideological milieu that is essentially embedded in patriarchy poses a serious challenge to the presence of women as members of cabinet. In Nigeria, culture and religion, in the words of Para-Mallam (2006:262) “rationalize, justify, and sanctify the pre-eminence of maleness and male interests over femaleness and female interests.” Thus, because of gender bias, roles are stereotypically assigned to women only within the households and men in the public life.

Logistics is the third constraint identified by Para-Mallam (2006). This borders on financing day-to-day political activities which are integral to political contest in a monetised democracy like Nigeria. While lack of funds is a major stumbling block to women's ability to compete for elective positions, it should not be a serious challenge to becoming members of cabinet which is not elective but appointive. However, because of the nature of Nigerian politics in which elective officeholders use political appointments to reward their support group, women are financially disadvantaged to bankroll candidates for elective positions or constitute a formidable support group. This, in turn, stands in their way of being rewarded with political appointments like cabinet membership.

Having highlighted some major challenges faced by women in the sphere of politics which border on patriarchy, religion, and culture, it is important to draw attention to another challenge (probably one of the most problematic), which many gender advocates and researchers do ignore in gender discourse. This is the challenge of 'women versus women' or 'women against women.' Studies have shown that women are their own worst enemies. Highlighting woman's inhumanity to woman, Valen (2010:11), a woman herself, laments: "We limit and stifle the very connections that could nourish us by turning away, perpetuating insults upon one another, and stirring up self-sabotaging currents that beat us back."

In an interview conducted by *Daily Post* after the 2023 General Election, an interviewee – a female aspirant – gives a grotesque account of women's travails in Nigerian politics which includes the challenge of woman against woman. She recounts:

No one listened to me, neither did anyone wanted to know what my manifesto entailed without me first of all presenting drinks and cash, even my fellow women. I had to buy bags of rice, wrappers etc. to consult them... she did not win the elections because she was told by the men in her community that she has married outside the area and should go to her husband's local government to vie for political office and not her father's house (Daily Post, 2023, para. 6–8).

Could there be any disturbing example of challenges faced by women in politics like that of Sarah Jibril? According to Salaudeen (2019:117), "Sarah Jibril could be called the women 'political trailblazer' who had been contesting for Nigeria's president since 1992. Securing only one vote in the 2011 PDP primaries could have perhaps dashed her hope of any glimmery political future." Hence, she did not contest thereafter.

Prior to the 2023 gubernatorial election, Paul (2022) reports how the former First Lady, Aisha Buhari, attempted to scuttle the ambitions of Aisha Binani, a woman like her, in her bid to contest for the governorship of Adamawa State. Though Binani later won the APC primary election, she (Aisha Buhari) reportedly directed all the stakeholders to vote for Nuhu Ribadu – supporting a male against a female candidate. Her major contention was that Nigeria is not ripe for a female gubernatorial candidate, much less a female governor. This is a classic case of woman against woman. Valen (2010:xv) mused this reality rather poetically:

I want to trust women but can't—been burned too many times.

I'm always cautious. Except for my closest friends, I keep women at arm's length.

Wake up, women! The enemy is within. We can't keep blaming men.

Percentage of female cabinet membership in Nigeria from 2019 to 2023

Nigeria’s unbroken democracy beginning from 1999 has witnessed 24 years of existence. After its experimentation for these years, it has not overcome many of its challenges, one of which is fair gender representation. Despite almost two decades of formulating the 2006 National Gender Policy, which stipulates 35% for women’s representation in all political appointments, women still feel marginalised. They are marginalised. While the marginalisation is multi-faceted, this chapter focuses on how women were marginalised – despite the 35% affirmative action – as cabinet membership in the fifth regime (2019–2023) of unbroken democracy. Table 25 shows the number and percentage of female commissioners across the 36 states of the Federation.

Table 25: Number of commissioners across thirty-six states in Nigeria (2019–2023)

S/N	State	Total	Female Commissioners	Percentage	Year of Appointment
	Abia	23	2	9.5	2019
	Adamawa	23	4	17.4	2019
	Akwa Ibom	21	1	4.8	2019
	Anambra	20	5	25	2022
	Bauchi	21	4	19	2021
	Bayelsa	24	2	8.3	2021

Women Representation in Governance in Nigeria

S/N	State	Total	Female Commissioners	Percentage	Year of Appointment
	Benue	15	3	20	2019
	Borno	22	2	9.1	2019
	Cross River	39	7	17.9	2019
	Delta	25	2	8	2019
	Ebonyi	27	4	14.8	2019
	Edo	11	5	45.5	2021
	Ekiti	14	2	14.3	2019
	Enugu	19	3	15.8	2019
	Gombe	21	3	14.3	2019
	Imo	22	5	22.7	2019
	Jigawa	11	1	9.1	2019
	Kaduna	14	6	42.9	2019
	Kano	20	2	10	2019
	Katsina	18	1	5.6	2019
	Kebbi	16	2	12.5	2020
	Kogi	17	1	5.9	2019
	Kwara	16	9	56.3	2019
	Lagos	22	8	36.4	2019
	Nasarawa	15	2	13.3	2019
	Niger	20	4	20	2019
	Ogun	19	4	21.1	2019
	Ondo	14	4	28.6	2021
	Osun	23	4	17.4	2019
	Oyo	14	1	7.1	2019
	Plateau	23	4	17.4	2019
	Rivers	13	2	15.4	2019
	Sokoto	25	2	8	2019
	Taraba	25	2	8	2019
	Yobe	20	2	10	2019
	Zamfara	19	1	5.3	2019

Source: Compiled by authors

From Table 25, it is very obvious that women were acutely under-represented as cabinet members in most states of the Federation. States like Akwa-Ibom, Jigawa, Katsina, Kogi, Oyo, and Zamfara had only one female commissioner. This implies that six out of the thirty-six states (17%) had only one female as commissioner for Ministry of Women Affairs, which has always been led by females. This is not to say that men have never been appointed to officially look after women. We have had such in Bauchi State under former Governor Yuguda in 2007 when he appointed Alhaji Idris Halilu in that capacity. Also, Governor Jibrilla Bindow in 2015 appointed male commissioner, Aliyu Tola, to man the Ministry of Women Affairs (Fulani, 2015). While this sounds illogical, nauseating, and insulting to the sensibility of many gender advocates, it is argued that it is not against any of the provisions of the 1999 Constitution. “There is no law”, argued the then Special Assistant on Media to Governor Yuguda, “which makes it compulsory that only woman should be a Commissioner for Women Affairs” (Gusau, 2007). Though, in the period under study, all ministries of women affairs in the thirty-six states were headed by women.

It should also be noted, as Table 25 reveals, that women’s abysmal representation in cabinet is not confined to any region, religion, or ethnicity. Both North and South – despite their ethnic and religious differences – have states with only one female commissioner. It is argued that political pressure from stakeholders explains why women are hardly appointed. For instance, in his first appointment of commissioners in Delta State in 2019, Governor Okowa expressed regret for appointing only one woman into his cabinet. In his words: “I want to apologise to women, it is not easy to balance out the various pressure from our local government areas but I want to assure women that in other areas of appointments, I will bring my discretion in fullest that women will be adequately represented.” (*Premium Times*, 2019). Though Governor Okowa later appointed more women as commissioners, the figures and percentages in the table only capture the first full appointments. It does not take subsequent ‘add and drop’ or reshuffling of cabinet into account.

That said, four states stood out to appoint an appreciable number of female commissioners to even exceed the 35% affirmative action as stipulated in the National Gender Policy: two states in the North and two in the South. These states are, in ascending order, Lagos (36.4%), Kaduna (42.9%), Edo (45.5%), and Kwara (56.3%). In fact, Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq of Kwara state unprecedentedly appointed more female commissioners than male. This is unprecedented not only in the State but in Nigerian History. While these four states acted commendably in gender balancing, they constitute only 11% of the thirty-six states. The percentage is still very poor. Two out of nineteen states (10.5%) in the North achieved 35%

affirmative action. Similarly, two out of sixteen states (12.5%) in the South achieved it.

At the national level under President Muhammadu Buhari, only seven out of forty-three ministers were females. This is approximately 16%, which falls way below the stipulated 35%. It is a repeat of his 2015 ministerial list which had six out of thirty-six – approximately 16%. This trend of normalising the shortfall of women in cabinet despite the 35% affirmative action in their favour is a serious challenge to gender mainstreaming. Reading with the lens of Feminist Legal Theory which presupposes women's input in lawmaking and political liberalism which emphasises accommodating everyone, it reeks of gender insensitiveness that some states could only have one female in their cabinet – ostensibly to head Ministry of Women Affairs.

Analysis and discussion

This chapter discusses affirmative action and highlights some of the contentious issues that accompany its implementation. Whether one agrees with it or not, the reality is that it is a universal and age-long concept which aims at addressing age-long discrimination by discriminating against discrimination through discrimination. One of the major arguments against it is that it rewards mediocrity and thus discriminates against merit. Would women's inclusiveness in cabinets lead to mainstreaming unqualified women and discrimination against men, as opponents argue? This is a binary question that requires two answers.

To answer the first part of the question, affirmative action vis-à-vis women's representation in cabinet would not, in itself, lead to mainstreaming unqualified women. Nigeria has a pool of meritorious women who are well qualified for public roles to draw from. On the question of discrimination, it must be acknowledged that there is a symbiotic relationship between affirmative action and discrimination. Yet advocates, acknowledging that it is discriminatory, term it 'positive discrimination' as it addresses negative discrimination. That is why affirmative action must have a time frame to be justifiable. It must be timetabled and periodised as a temporary remedial measure. The recent Supreme Court judgement in the United States, overturning the decades of precedents supporting affirmative action in college admission for the disadvantaged ethnic minority groups, is a classic example of the temporariness of affirmative action (Mangan, 2023).

Religion is said to be a factor that debars women from making it to the cabinet and other high-ranking positions in government. This is not always the case, as Table 25 reveals. Two Northern states (Kwara and Kaduna) were able to achieve 35% affirmative action and even beyond, despite religion.

Kaduna State is a sharia state in the north while Kwara, though not officially a sharia state, has a strong attachment to Islam. Governor Ifeanyi Okowa, who appointed two women into his cabinet in his earlier appointments in 2019 in Delta State, did not mention religion as a factor that influenced his decision. He promised to include women in his subsequent appointments and revealed that pressure from local governments was the reason for the gender imbalance. This was a promise later fulfilled as he subsequently appointed more women into his cabinet. In 2021, Governor Okowa swore in 18 commissioners out of which 5 were women. Then, in response to criticism against poor representation of women, he said “the resolve for more female visibility (and participation) in politics and governance was a deliberate at enhancing women’s participation in decision-making process in government” (Onabu, 2021:para. 2). Similarly, when Bauchi State under Governor Isa Yuguda insisted on a male commissioner for women affairs, the government did not reference religion as *raison d’être* for its position. It rather argued from the position of the law that there is no law which makes it compulsory that only women should be Commissioner for Women Affairs.

Violence is another factor often cited for women’s poor representation in governance. While it is true that violence actually steers women away from politics (especially the core power struggle), it has nothing to do with their representation in cabinet. Cabinet membership is not an elective position that requires fierce contest. Members are appointed, not elected. What about sexist attitudes, which, according to Kelly (2019), sometimes, but not always, derive from religion or traditional practices? The issue of religion has been addressed above. What remains is sexist attitudes. This is a serious factor that cannot be ignored, and it boils down to patriarchy. Nigeria is essentially a patriarchal society. Literarily, patriarchy means “the rule of the father” which consequently means a society dominated by men who rule over women. Explaining patriarchy as a factor inhibiting women from politics, Chinwe (2021) asserts that men have enjoyed a historical dominance over women in politics; they often stereotype women as subordinate and justify their subordination. Women are culturally required to seek husbands’ or fathers’ permission to participate in politics. Not only that, women in politics are generally stereotyped as promiscuous, irresponsible and of low virtue. Thus, patriarchy – firmly rooted in Nigerian cultures – leaves women with little chance of becoming involved in politics. Nigerian politics is mannish – culturally considered unwomanly. It characteristically involves “thuggery, night meetings at private homes, blackmailing and rigging” (Ikpeze, 2011:171).

When women, against all odds, eventually participate in politics, they are most relevant on the fringe of the political arena as mobilisers, dancers,

and voters. Political campaigns are often populated by women of different categories and age brackets where they sing and dance to boost the ego of male political office-seekers. Their visibility becomes very important and adds colour to campaign activities. But ironically, their usefulness ends as soon as elections are won. They are thus called 'occasion women' who hardly make it to the decision-making circle - much less cabinet membership. Even when women eventually make it to what looks like the political top, they are, to borrow from Nkereuwem (2023:7), "are often delegated to decorative offices" - that is, in a deputising capacity. To address these challenges, women's affirmative action policy becomes very handy. Therefore, the National Gender Policy, which positively recommends 35% for women in all appointments is a laudable intervention.

That said, the National Gender Policy is said to be a proverbial toothless bulldog with moral but no legal authority. Policy provisions as guidelines for government action are not judicable and women cannot hold government accountable in a court of law for non-implementation. Policies are statements of intention regarding government's responsibility towards citizens. While they can be used as a yardstick to measure performance, they possess no inherent powers to ensure compliance with policy provisions. But this is not about the gender policy, it is about patriarchy. Though the Constitution of Nigeria (1999) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) is recognised as binding on all Nigerians, "its practical enforcement in changing some social issues seems to make it a toothless bulldog in the face of the overwhelming patriarchal structures with regard to women in Nigeria. It is important to note that laws in themselves are not sufficient to change the mindset of the people. Enforcement of such laws is important" (Abinbola et al., 2023:9).

However, the Abuja Division of the Federal High Court on the matter filed by the Women in Politics Forum (WIPF) against the federal government, has ruled in favour of the 35% affirmative action in appointments of women into public office. According to the judgement, "Formulating policies based on sex, stereotyping, feudal and patriarchal traditions will no longer be tolerated because of the supremacy of constitutional values." The court said that the government had an obligation to implement the 35% affirmative action, accusing previous administrations of breaching international treaties on women's participation in government. This judgement would have been a great victory in the struggle for women's inclusiveness by making the implementation of the 35% affirmative action of the National Gender Policy legally binding, but it is not coming from the Supreme Court. The judgement is thus appealable. And as expected, the Nigerian Government appealed the judgement compelling it to reserve 35% of public offices for women (Ejekwonyilo, 2022). The case will likely be pushed to the apex court.

Would it favour the Women in Politics Forum in the end? Only time will tell. The National Gender Policy (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2013) and the ensuing legal tussle it sparks is an ironic case of government against itself: its brainchild.

Summary, conclusion and recommendations

This chapter discussed and justified gender affirmative action within the context of Nigerian milieu where discrimination against women has been institutionalised. The point is, should justice prevail, there must be restitution for victims of discrimination. Ethically and from the perspective of Political Liberalism, gender affirmative action is to make women who were / are victims of discrimination to be beneficiaries of discrimination. This is the core logic of affirmative action – that is, accommodating everyone.

Though affirmative action addresses marginalised groups generally, this chapter focused on how Nigerian women are marginalised vis-à-vis participation in politics at the level of cabinet membership. It thus explains why it has always been Herculean for women to make it to the cabinet – both at state and national levels. It highlights some of the hurdles that women have to overcome to be mainstreamed into the decision-making circle in government. It argued that women's participation in politics has not been meaningful; rather, it has been occasional, which narrows their participation to the fringe, while this boils down to some challenges like poverty, poor literacy rate, violence in the political arena, religion, stereotyped gender role, women's inhumanity to women, and so on.

It is argued that the 35% affirmative action for women in Nigeria has not been achieved for over 17 years of the formulation of the National Gender Policy because of the socio-economic variables (mentioned above) that adversely affect its implementation. It is however observed that in some African countries where similar socio-economic variables (like patriarchy, poor literacy rate, poverty, and violence) exist, gender policies are being implemented with incredible success. Countries like Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, Djibouti, DRC, Kenya, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, and Togo (all in Africa) are amongst those that have passed legislation and adopted national policies mandating gender parity in executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Quotas are often legislated to increase female representation in public offices. Burundi, Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini, Morocco, and Niger have ratified laws establishing minimum requirements for women's representation in cabinet, legislative bodies and/or the judiciary (AU, 2022).

Addressing this challenge from the constitutional angle is the way to go. Therefore, this chapter finds that the most problematic of all the obstacles on the trajectory of women's actualisation of their political dream are patriarchy and constitutional barriers. It is not that the 1999 Nigerian Constitution is apparently against women's participation in politics, but because of patriarchal influence, its provisions are too general to address these specific gendered socio-political challenges. The 35% affirmative action policy for Nigerian women will only be realised if the government makes laws that will compel political parties to comply with the policy requirements. From the perspective of Feminist Legal Theory, it becomes a necessity that women should either have a say in lawmaking or male lawmakers must prioritise the concerns of women. Though some state governors are gender-friendly, as shown in Table 25, they may choose to be gender-adversarial. This chapter concludes that until affirmative action is domesticated, its implementation will be at the mercy of the disposition of the government in power towards gender issues.

Women's participation in politics should go beyond 'occasional membership.' They have to be registered members. It is true that women have ascended to the zenith of some professional careers in Nigeria. We have had women directors, permanent secretaries, vice chancellors, provosts and so on, yet their visibility in politics still leaves much to be desired. This, in part, could be because very few of them are registered members of political parties. Going by the Constitution, one is not qualified to be appointed into cabinet without being a politician – a registered member of political part(ies).

For instance, Section 147 (5) says: "No person shall be appointed as a Minister of the Government of the Federation unless he is qualified for election as a member of the House of Representatives." Similarly, Section 192 (4) reads: "No person shall be appointed as a Commissioner of the Government of a State unless he is qualified for election as a member of the House of Assembly of the State." This implies that for any woman to be appointed into state or federal cabinet, she must be qualified to contest for election, and to be qualified she must be a registered member of a political party.

The Nigerian Government has successfully sloganised its support of women in terms of policy; what it has failed to do is to institutionalise that support through the implementation of the 35% affirmative action – a prescription of a policy that it willingly drafted. The Federal Government denies women the rights it ostentatiously grants them. A quote from Aina-Pelemo's work (2023:110) best describes government's action, "any human being (male or female) whose rights are denied by will, at the very least, have their humanity destroyed, and at the worst, their humanhood distorted."

For the government to fulfil its 35% gender policy promise, there is a need for constitutional reforms that will positively address the women in politics question. This will facilitate the implementation of gender policies as evident in other African countries.

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PART 4

Disabilities, Political Exclusion and Women's Representation in Governance

Chapter 21

Women Living with Disabilities and Political Inclusion in Nigeria: The Extent and Dimensions

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Abstract

All over the world, politics and governance inclusion are activities that involve both males and females in society. It is usually a fierce competition amongst contesting groups for a political office. Men have been the dominant group in politics. Despite the global affirmative action for women inclusion in politics, they are mostly excluded from this contest because of the 'rough' (money politics, sit-tight-syndrome, godfatherism, winner-takes-all and violence, amongst others) nature of politics in developing countries. This exclusion is most obvious amongst women living with disabilities (WLDs) in Nigeria. This chapter examines the dimension of inclusion and the extent of the exclusion of women living with disabilities in Nigeria and how to mitigate the trend to enable a fair inclusion in governance. The Michigan School's Psychological Theory of Party Identification of Civil Participation is utilised to reveal why WLDs are excluded in Nigerian politics and how to reintegrate them appropriately. Data is collected through an archival study of events, Afrobarometer survey and interviews of people, including WLDs, amongst others. Data is analysed explanatorily. Findings reveal that WLDs have a psychological inferiority complex coupled with the 'rough' nature of politics in Nigeria that further makes them unfavourably fit for inclusion. WLDs must be seen as part of society and participate in governance through grassroots participation, which will eventually make them visible nationally.

Keywords: Disabilities, Election, Governance, Politics, Poverty, Women

Introduction

Politics is not a ground for sympathy. It is a pedestal for people who can lead and deliver good governance to the people. The global population can be divided into two groups by gender classifications: male and female. Using physical disabilities as a yardstick, these include people living with disabilities and people living without disabilities. People living without disabilities are mostly prominent and active participants and political office holders in the politics and governance landscape of many countries in the world. People living with disabilities may be included or appointed in political offices based on compassion but with certain limitations. The people living with disabilities (PLDs) are part of the members of every society; therefore they have the right to contest for any political office and be included in governance provided that they can cope with the necessary rigour required in such office and governance.

Globally, politics and governance are activities that encompass the inclusion and contribution of both males and females regardless of physical disabilities. It is a quest to contribute to the development quest of society and opportunities for individuals to contribute their personal quota to the development of the country (Aluko, 2020a; Bonkat-Jonathan, 2021). It is usually a tug of war amongst opponents vying for a political office or seeking for governance inclusion. The requirement for this political inclusion should be passion and capability to deliver the popular mandate. Political participation and inclusion in national politics qualifications should not be based on gender or physical disability as a yardstick.

On the gender discourse, females who are not physically impaired are not making a significant impact in the entire political contest and quest for political relevance in many regions of the world (Eniola et al., 2023; Idahosa & Ihensekhien, 2023). This, therefore, gives the women living with disabilities (WLDs) an uphill task (Van Hees et al., 2019; Shakespeare et al., 2019). Despite the global affirmative action for women's inclusion in politics, they are mostly excluded from this contest because of the 'rough' (money politics, sit-tight-syndrome, godfatherism, winner-takes-all and violence, amongst others) nature of politics in developing countries (Schur & Adya, 2013; Ambali & Asiyambi, 2023). This exclusion is most obvious amongst WLDs in Nigeria (Shittu et al., 2022; Balogun, 2022).

This chapter examines the dimension of inclusion and the extent of the exclusion of women living with disabilities in Nigeria and how to mitigate the trend to enable a fair inclusion in governance. The Michigan School's Psychological Theory of Party Identification of Civil Participation is utilised to reveal why WLDs are excluded in Nigerian politics and how to reintegrate

them appropriately. Data is collected through an archival study of events, Afrobarometer survey and interview of people including WLDs, amongst others. Data is analysed explanatorily.

Conceptual clarification

This section of the research deals with two concepts to be clarified. These include political inclusion and disabilities. Political inclusion is the act of perception of people about others in the political sphere of a particular location. The people within the sphere have varied tendencies and procedures of accepting new members into the political sphere of their society. Ideally, political inclusion is obtained by birth of an individual as a citizen having a right to vote and be voted for in a political sphere. Other ways include by legal provisions such as the number of years that the individual is required to spend in such society before that person could enjoy certain political inclusion privileges.

Political inclusion in other words is the extent to which an individual perceives themselves to be relevant to the political matrix of a society (Aluko, 2020b). This is not how society perceives the individual but how an individual perceives their worth in the political landscape of society. A politically qualified person (regarding *de jure* and *de facto*) may exclude themselves from the politics of the state because of ignorance or lack of political interest (that is, dormant political participation).

Political inclusion is therefore the entire activities of politics regarding active political participation and passive political involvement. These include political activities such as joining a political party, engagement in political campaigns and political education, contesting for public offices, ability to accept political appointments such as non-elective public offices (ministerial, commissioners, director of national agencies and ambassadorial appointments, amongst others).

Disability, on the other hand, is differently perceived depending on various paradigms, schools of thought or models being considered. The medical model of disability is based on the individual's medical predicament or condition. People are regarded as disabled on the platform of being restricted greatly or mildly to utilise any part of the body effectively (UN, 2009; Series, 2019; Shittu et al., 2022; Oluwadele & Aluko, 2023). Disability as an impairment condition in human beings implies the circumstance that makes a person not suitable to fully realise their life dreams or potentials in participating in an event and developmental processes of society (WHO, 2020). Disability, as perceived by Barton (2013) and Disabled World (2021), is a mental or physical deformation that reduces or somewhat limits any

aspect of life activities of an individual having such impairment. Human disability could be a form of physical limitations of deformation, sense organ impairment or memory-intellectual based. It can also be partial or total. It can be caused from birth or congenitally, by embryo-infectious diseases, by human error or accident, through negligence, by judicial pronouncement or any form of neglects.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2020) submit that disabilities are impairments which affect any victim's chances to perform a given role. These impairments are caused by various negative changes in the biological functioning of human body. Persons with disabilities (PwDs) vary in types and their forms. Therefore, they could be with visible disability, with affected limb functions, those with partial or total loss of sight, those with hearing impairment, those infected with leprosy, those with intellectual disability, the albinos and those with spinal cord injury.

Woodward (2015) attempted a classification of disability into a number of categories, which include the following:

1. **Mobility and Physical Impairments:** This disability category includes people with different degrees and types of physical disabilities. It includes: Upper and lower limb(s) deformity and different organs of the body co-ordination disability. Mobility and limbs function disability can be a congenital or acquired problem because of negative situations (Waldschmidt & Sépulchre, 2019; Kasnitz, 2020). It could also be disease-related effects. People with accidental broken bones could be categorised as having a disability.
2. **Spinal Cord Disability:** this could be from birth or from an accident. This injury can be either complete loss of function or incomplete spinal cord loss of function because of dis-functioning of the sensory organs.
3. **Head Injuries - Brain Disability:** This could be brain injury that could be mild, moderate or severe.
4. **Vision Disability:** There are a lot of people who are suffering from minor or major vision impairments. It could result into blindness and other ocular trauma.
5. **Hearing Disability:** Hearing disabilities includes people who are partially or completely deaf. Deafness can be evident at birth or occur later in life from several biologic causes, for example Meningitis can damage the auditory nerve or the cochlea.
6. **Learning or Cognitive Disabilities:** These are the kind of disabilities that express learning difficulties such as dyslexia and speech disorders, amongst others.
7. **Psychological Impairment:** These include disorders of feeling or mood. It is part of the mental health disorders term used to describe people with

psychiatric problems or illness such as: personality disorders, which is an irregular pattern of behaviour to day-to-day activities and schizophrenia which is basically thinking, mood, and behaviour disorders.

Disability can therefore be summed as the condition that limits individuals from participating in any lawful activity as they should freely be able to. In political science parlance, “man is born free but everywhere he is in chains” implies here that things like laws in society may become a source of handicap to a person’s free will actions in society. Social limitations such as culture, traditions, beliefs and some religious practices may hinder some practitioners from participating in politics, thereby limiting their political inclusion.

Theoretical framework

This section explains the Michigan School’s Psychological Theory of Political Participation. This is explained in relations with people living with disabilities’ political participations. The Michigan School advances a psycho-behavioural theory of voting and participation in political activities, which is known as Political Party Identification Theory. In 1960 and 1966 respectively, scholars from the Michigan School, such as Campbell Angus, Miller E. Warren, Converse E. Philip, Stokes E. and Donald opined that the citizens are not actually determined for political party participation by selecting a political party subject between a few alternatives, but they irrationally incline towards a subject (Bañales et al., 2020; Chyn & Haggag, 2023).

This theory of identification with a political party and civil participation observes politics as a means of identifying and expressing a phenomenon, in which the members of the group share the same interest, which are compatible with the group values. According to the theory, the voters observe the parties that have their interest and use political participation as a yardstick of their adherence to a certain political option. This theory to some extent explains why the differences in social status are not always reflected in the voting during the elections. That is, why in a way people with similar social status or disability will vote for the same political parties and vice versa, why people with different social status vote for the same or different political party (Withers, 2020).

Citizens have the natural instinct to belong to any social group of choice and personal interest. Political parties, with their various ideologies, values and traditions, attract and appeal to the citizens’ sense of living, compatibility and sense of belonging. Different people with different characters and disabilities determine the term ‘party identification’ as a tendency for long-term determination of their allegiance to select candidates who are advocates of a certain political party and various levels of political

inclusion. The identification criteria are achieved when the party has a special way of taking care of special needs of different people. This means that the person has adherence to a certain party that caters for their special needs such as female gender and people living with disabilities, amongst others. This enables them to have a feeling of responsibility for the same, and not only temporary voting for the party.

The authors from the Michigan School indicate that in order to understand the political inclusiveness of a certain set of people and the citizens generally, one must take into consideration some long-term factors that have influence on their manner of living. Additionally, party identification is a psychological force by means of which social actors interpret the events that are relevant for politics, who should participate and who should benefit. Women and WLDs in politics have the psychological attachment to political parties that have special slots for them so as to be able to physically compete with others and have a chance of political inclusion in governance.

Women, women living with disabilities (WLDs) and political inclusion in Nigeria

Using the yardstick of global and regional standards, Nigeria has low rates of female representation in politics. Interestingly, between 1999 and 2007, there is a slight increase in proportions of women elected into positions, with an average increment between both houses of legislature from 2.3% to 7.8%. Sadly, these small gains were not replicated in the 2011 general elections. The number of women elected into positions in the 2015 election, was 20 out of 359 positions in the lower legislative chamber (5.6%) and in the upper legislative chamber, there were 7 out of 109 seats (6.4%). This ranking (UN Women, 2021) put Nigeria at 180th in the world. Consequently, women made up 7.3% of the Nigerian Senate and 3.1% of the House of Representatives in the 2019 elections. No state in Nigeria has a woman as governor (NWTF, 2019). The total number of women who served in executive capacities, either minister or special advisers, at the federal level is also very low. There is a total of 11 out of the 636 appointed executives between 1999 and 2015 as women (17.5%) and ministers are 15% from 1999 until 2015 (NCWD, 2016). In 2023, this figure has no significant improvement as the percentage of women's inclusion in politics dropped to 9% (Osimosu & Adefisoye, 2023). In all, the statistics of women living with disabilities' inclusiveness in politics is not significant and virtually does not exist (Melugbo et al., 2022; Ambali & Asiyanbi, 2023).

The political inclusion in terms of the proportion of women to men in top public executive offices and parliamentary positions, as well as the duration as head of state over the last fifty years measured by the World Economic Forum (2018 to 2022) (WEF, 2023) revealed that their global gender gap report positions Nigeria 139th out of a total of 149 countries. Nigeria is ranked as having the largest gender differential gap in political inclusion, participation and empowerment. This survey shows how generally poor the female was represented in active political positions and a very poor and unrealistic fate of women living with disabilities is in Nigerian politics.

The Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024) report revealed that 7% in the years 1999–2023 of councillors (local government) were women, of judges in the federal court, 24% were women, and of each type of high-level government officials and senior administrators such as permanent secretary, head of service, special adviser, central bank governors, special assistant, chief executive officer, executive secretary and director general, an average of 7% were women (Aremu & Aluko, 2016; Aluko & Oladele, 2023). There were no female central bank governors (of four positions). The post of special assistant has 28% which is the highest percentage for women so far. This revealed that women are considered more for non-elective positions as a consolation political inclusive role instead of the decisive political offices. The women living with disabilities are simply excluded from political offices and they are mostly categorised with the few women who were given political roles in Nigeria.

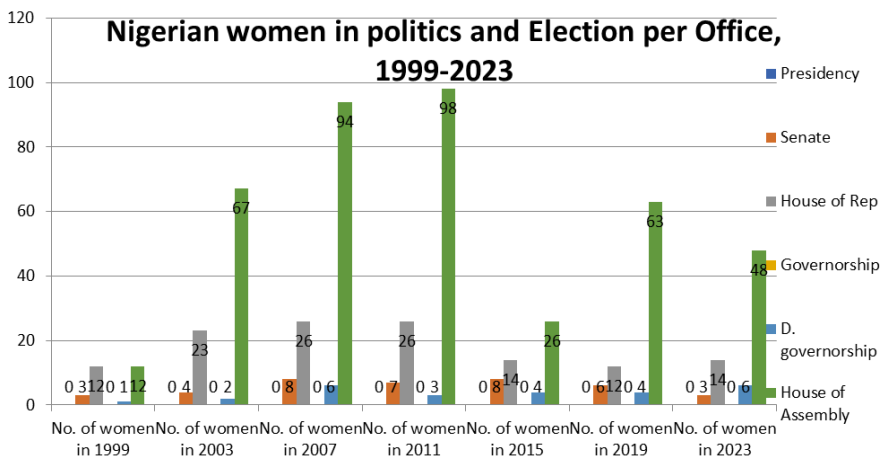


Figure 12: The performance of women in Nigerian politics across six offices from 1999 to 2023. Source: Author's own

Table 26: Time series of the number of offices available and women occupying such offices in Nigeria, 1999-2023

#	Position	Available seats	Women 1999	Women 2003	Women 2007	Women 2011	Women 2015	Women 2019	Women 2023	Total Women elected 1999-2023
1	Presidency	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	Senate	109	3	4	8	7	8	6	3	39
3	House of Representatives	360	12	23	26	26	14	12	14	127
4	Governorship	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	D. governorship	36	1	2	6	3	4	4	6	26
6	House of Assembly	990	12	67	94	98	26	63	48	408
	Total	1533	28	67	94	98	26	63	71	447

Source: Author's compilation 2023

It is obvious that no woman has ever become the president of Nigeria and governor of any of the 36 states. The office of deputy governor is the highest office occupied by women. From Figure 12, the performance of women in the 2007 and 2011 general elections marks the peak of performance of women in Nigerian politics especially in the house of assembly. It is shown that the number of women in the senate chamber climaxes in the 2003 general elections with 67 elected seats, while it has decreased to 48 in the 2023 general election. No woman living with disabilities has ever occupied any of these offices but are simply given special considerations in other political participation such as voting priority as the mode of their disability requires during elections.

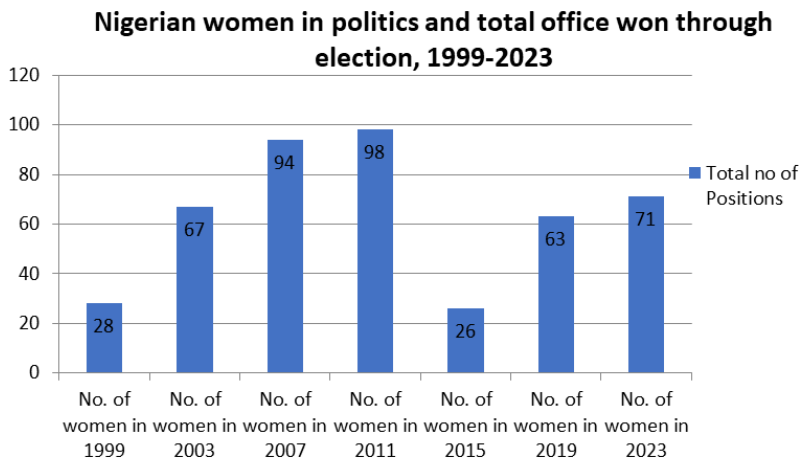


Figure 13: Time series of total number of seats won by women in Nigerian politics from 1999 to 2023. Source: Author's own

Figure 13 presents that the peak year of women's involvement in elective office in 2011 was 98 total seats, closely followed by 94 seats in 2007. The lowest number recorded in Nigeria's history was in 2015, with 26 seats and it has gradually risen to 63 and 71 in the 2019 and 2023 elections respectively. In all of these time series under review, no woman living with disabilities has won a public elected seat in Nigeria.

Figure 14 shows that the House of Assembly is the most patronised office with little resistance and good affinity for the women in Nigerian politics. 408 women have occupied the office from 1999 to 2023. This is closely followed by the House of Representatives with 127 total women from 1999 to 2023. It appears that the higher the number of seats available, the better the chance of women competing. This implies that women may never have the opportunity to occupy offices with minimum seats such as president

and governors. It is, however, dismaying that women living with disabilities have no elected seat position and may not have such opportunity until special legal and non-legal provisions and considerations are given to them.

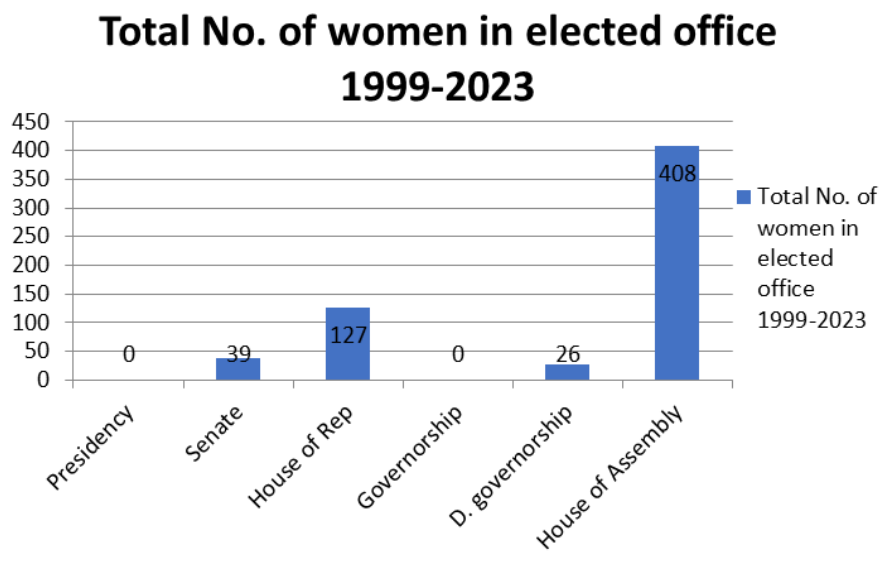


Figure 14: Total number of seats occupied by women in Nigerian politics across five offices from 1999 to 2023. Source: Author's own

Reasons for WLDs' low political inclusion

Although Nigeria has about 49% females, and many of them have the aspiration to hold political office, many of the aspirations are short-lived. A general nomenclature adduced for this low political participation and inclusion in politics is the problem of marginalisation in the country's democratisation process. The political marginalisation concept explains that females' electoral victory rate is low compared to their male counterparts. Other particular factors that can be adduced for women living with disabilities' low level of political participation and inclusion in politics generally include frontline issues such as political violence, money or financial incapability, *godfatherism* as well as the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society (Shittu et al., 2022). Other issues include a low level of compliance with existing laws enabling equal participation in politics and socio-cultural reasons (Evans & Reher, 2022).

The Afrobarometer time series data (1999-2022) (Afrobarometer, 2023) revealed that 48% of people in Nigeria perceived that women who run for office are either criticised or harassed. Therefore, women are not given

free societal opportunity. This makes a perception that a total of 78% of women who run for office may be criticised or harassed, therefore they may not boldly participate in politics or seek political inclusion.

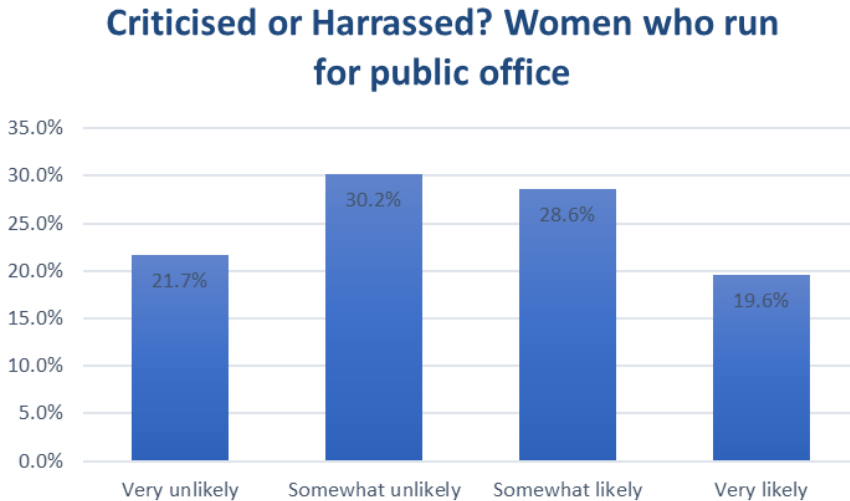


Figure 15: Women who run for office are criticised or harassed. Source: Afrobarometer time series data (1999–2022) (2023)

Another problem confirmed by a wide perception of people in Nigeria in the 2022 Afrobarometer survey is ‘women who run for office face family problems.’ Figure 15 reveals that 39% of Nigerians perceived that women who run for office face family problems, while about 30% believed that they are likely to face family problems in the future. This makes a negative perception that about 69% of women who run for office face family problems, therefore they would not participate or seek inclusion in politics.

Figure 16 reveals that most husbands and family members of these politically inclined families are willing to release the women to join political parties and contribute their quota to politics. It also supports the affirmative action of 35% for women in all political spheres for governance and administration. Although women are still under-represented in the executive, judiciary and legislative arms of government and are short-changed in the political activities in the country, there are indicators of their better performances than men (Aluko, 2020b).

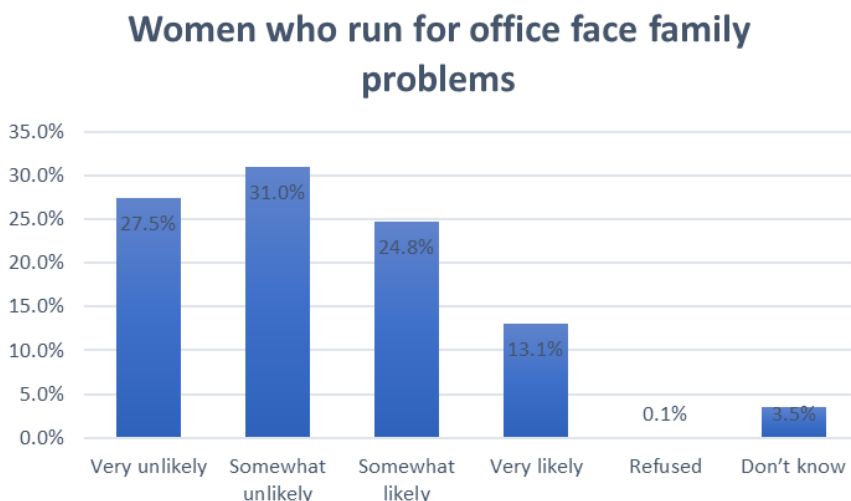


Figure 16: Women who run for office face family problems. Source: Afrobarometer time series data (1999–2022) (2023)

Capable women are strongly restricted from effectively competing at the political party level. This is because they are seen as weak vessels and some political positions such as the President and Vice president, the governor and the deputy governor, the senate president and speaker of the house of representatives, amongst others, are deemed to have been reserved for the men. No woman has become political party chairperson in any of the front-line political parties nor in other important party positions apart from the statutory ‘women leader position’ in Nigeria. This shows that it will be difficult to position women in elective and high-profile positions in Nigeria. However, the plight of the WLDs is more in jeopardy because, firstly, they are women who fall into the category of politically marginalised people (Waldschmidt & Sépulchre, 2019) and secondly, they have a form of disability which makes them unfavourable to compete with women without disability and much more with the men.

The interview conducted in Kwara and Oyo states in Nigeria with people living with disabilities revealed that people living with disabilities have little trust in the election and governance processes (Ambali & Asiyanbi, 2023). This is because they are not carried along effectively in election processes and governance. The ballot papers are not readable by people with visual impairment, and they are made to choose a contestant who may be contrary to their choice.

The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019) has little provision for persons

living with disabilities and election matters. The hearing-impaired are not provided with sign language for interpretation of events at the party level and during the election processes. They claim that if the election process did not take care of their various impairments, how will any emerged leader take care of their special needs and include them in governance processes? They also remarked that their special needs have made them a little bit less competitive in politics and amongst members of society at large.

The Electoral Act (Amendment) 2022 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2022), and its consideration for Persons with Disabilities in Section 54 provides a leeway for PLDs to have smooth election participations such as the provision of special ballot papers for the visually impaired, symbols of political parties for the deaf and fast voting considerations for them before other people. However, these considerations do not translate into governance inclusion. Therefore, they are at the mercy of the government to take care of their special needs, make laws to enable them to be favourable contestants in elections and contest elections only with contestants with similar impairments (Berghs et al., 2019).

Prospects for the future

The plethora of problems facing women and women living with disabilities in politics and their quest for political inclusion in Nigeria is the primary reason why women living with disabilities are largely excluded from politics. Nevertheless, the prospect for their political participation and inclusion in politics is not totally impossible in the near future. In Figure 17, the Afrobarometer time series data 1999–2022 (2023) reveals that women who run for office gain standing for election and political popularity. 78% of people in Nigeria perceived that women who run for office will have the opportunity to gain political standing of election victory and political inclusions. Therefore, women and women living with disabilities have good chances of winning elections if they persist in the quest of representing the people in general elections.

To improve their political prospects, women living with disabilities must distinguish themselves first of all in other works and professions of life such as education, business, international networking and internal political party politics, amongst others. This will strengthen their chances of competing with the other women and their male counterparts in political participation and governance inclusion.

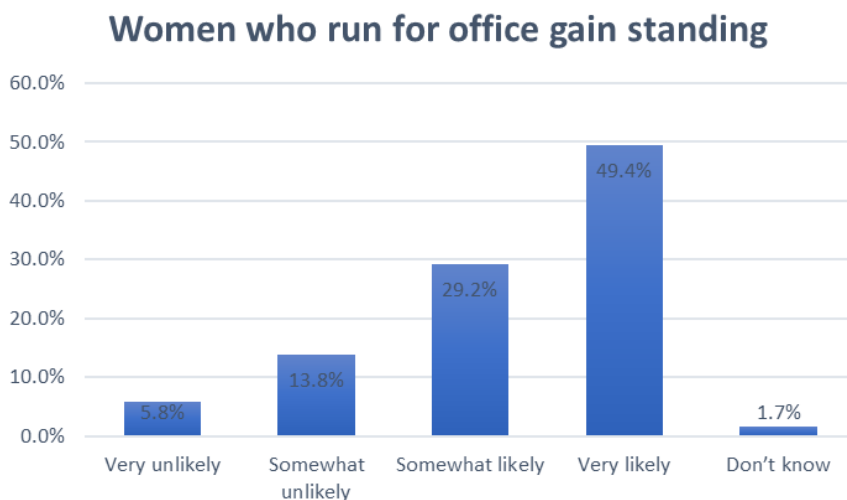


Figure 17: Women who run for office gain standing. Source: Afrobarometer time series data (1999–2022) (2023)

The interview conducted in Kwara and Oyo states in Nigeria with people living with disabilities revealed that the fate and political inclusion prospects of people living with disabilities majorly relies on lawmaking such as affirmative actions for the people living with disabilities and national gender policies to politically empower them is inevitable. This will enable them to have a direct slot in governance such as ministry of special needs that will have ministers at the national level and commissioners at the state level from amongst the population of people living with special needs. This will make them have an automatic slot in governance and a permanent inclusion in politics. The prospect could also be improved if a special political office can be created (just as the Paralympics) so as to enable only the people with special needs to contest for political power with one another and not against the able-bodied people.

The prospect of women in politics and WLDs' inclusion in political governance can also be strengthened by making relevant laws to help women in general political participations. Laws such as “every office with deputies must be occupied by the two genders and not dominated by a single gender.” This will make the office of the president, governor, political party chairmen, senate president, house of representatives' top seat and many others to be open to the females to compete for, especially as a deputy which may eventually be translated into the substantive office holder in the near future.

Conclusion

The nature of politics in developing countries, including Nigeria, is a tug-of-war. The strong, superior and powerful take the entire spoils and the weak, inferior and not powerful remain subjugated. This nature has made the men dominate the political landscape for a long period of time at the expense of the womenfolk. This had grossly skewed the women living with disabilities out of political participation and inclusion in Nigeria politics.

Operationally, women and people living with disabilities had been naturally and physically disadvantaged to fully participate in many activities in society; their political inclusion in the near future is not feasible. Findings from the theoretical framework revealed that women living with disabilities have a psychological inferiority complex. Coupled with the 'rough' nature of politics in Nigeria where men dominate and the winners take all, they are subjected to unfavourable conditions that further makes them unfit for political inclusion. Therefore, general elections should reflect the electoral act provisions for people with special needs such as visually impaired and hearing impairment, amongst others.

To further correct this mal-positioning of the WLDs in Nigerian politics, the law must be utilised to create room for their political inclusion. The law should create a special political office such as the ministry of special needs, where women and people generally with special needs can head as ministers for the federal government and commissioners for the state. This will enhance their political feasibilities at the political party level.

Also, the government can make special provisions for people with special needs to compete for public offices amongst themselves and not against an able-bodied person. These legal actions will make WLDs be seen as part of society and have a stake in governance. Policies such as affirmative action for persons living with disabilities can be institutionalised to enhance their political inclusion. A special ministry can be provided by the executives that will make them an automatic member of the government cabinet. Finally, participating in governance through grassroots politics will eventually and inevitably make them be visible nationally.

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Chapter 22

Inclusiveness of Women with Disabilities in Politics and Governance

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Abstract

Persons with disabilities have always been discriminated against or been completely excluded in most, if not all, aspects of societal life, including the areas of politics and governance. This exclusion is more pronounced in the case of women with disabilities (WWDs). More often than not, most WWDs choose to remain in the background because of the stigma and discrimination that they face when they attempt to live more active lives. Their impairments notwithstanding, they are human and part of our society and also have the right to be included in the decision-making and implementation processes of society. This study examined the situation of disabled women in Nigeria, as it pertains to their inclusion and participation in politics and governance. What difficulties or challenges do they face as they attempt to participate in the politics and governance processes of our nation? Are there any special provisions, legal or otherwise, made to ensure their inclusion? What are the perceived roles of governments and persons in authority in ensuring their inclusion? In an attempt to answer these questions, the author relied on her knowledge and personal encounters, and other primary data sourced from women, all of whom suffer from an impairment. The study concluded that women with disabilities have as much capabilities as those without disabilities and deserve to be included in the political and governance processes for the good of all.

Keywords: Disability, Governance, Inclusion, Politics, Women

Introduction

There are various yardsticks for the classification of the human population, one of which is whether or not they live with a disability. Thus, we have people

living with disabilities and people living without disabilities. According to recent research by the Centre for Citizens with Disabilities in Nigeria titled *Our Nigeria, Our Disability* report, (Guardian, 2021) there are approximately 31 million people with disabilities in Nigeria, with women making up the bulk of this population.

Right from the inception or grassroots to the execution or highest stages, it is apparent to any keen observer that politics and governance in Nigeria are generally organised in ways that particularly favour the non-disabled and this makes it extremely difficult and at times impossible for the disabled to fully participate in them. This aligns with the view by Virendra Kumar et al. (2018), in their investigation of the political engagement of women with disabilities in Africa, that the obstacles faced by people with disabilities are severe. Disabled persons are members of our society and have every right to full participation in politics and governance on an equal footing with the non-disabled. The inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream decision-making is a major problem because over 90% of the population does not see these individuals as active members who contribute to the growth of society (Haruna, 2017).

Women, whether disabled or not, play important and stabilising roles in every society. It is therefore important that they be included, and their interests adequately protected at all levels and in all societal activities. This author, who currently suffers from some hearing loss, has over the years faced some challenges in her quest to participate fully in the politics and governance processes in Nigeria and this led her to become interested in finding out the experiences of WWDs in similar situations. There is a paucity of literature that focuses specifically on the inclusiveness of WWDs in politics and governance in Nigeria as existing studies focus on PwDs generally. Consequently, there is a lack of research data on the inclusiveness of WWDs in politics and governance in Nigeria. This research sought to fill this existing gap.

The study investigated the challenges or obstacles faced by WWDs in politics and governance in Nigeria, the extent of their inclusion and the roles that governments should play to ensure their full participation. The study made use of primary and secondary data collection methods and the Rights-Based Theory or ideology. The data in this study is analysed explanatorily.

Conceptual clarifications

Disability is an illness, injury, or condition that makes it difficult for someone to do some things that other people do, and that is usually permanent or lasts for a long time: a physical / learning disability (Cambridge Dictionary,

2024). It is a condition that makes someone unable to act in a way that is considered usual for most people (Barton, 2013). It is any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of the ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being (WHO, 1980). Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006) states that “persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”. It might be congenital (existing at birth), develop later in life, or be brought on by a disease or injury. Disabilities are of different natures, and it is the nature that determines their physical manifestation. It is the severity of the impairment that informs labelling - when the impairment is physically obvious or evokes rejection or pity from others; such impairment is regarded as disability, and vice versa. While some disabilities are slight and may not negatively affect the daily life of the individual concerned, others are more pronounced and are such that the individual concerned needs extra consideration or help to fully participate in societal activities. This chapter focuses on this latter category of disabilities.

Politics, on the other hand, represents the nerve-centre of human, peaceful, and organised co-existence (Kolawole, 1997, as cited in Omotso & Abe, 2014), as it deals extensively with the consequences and outcomes of human actions in the quest and struggles for survival, prominence, and relevance (Omotso & Abe, 2014). It involves “the events that happen around the decision-making centers of governments” (De Grazia, 1965, as cited in Omotso & Abe, 2014). To Ernest Baker (1962, as cited in Omotso & Abe, 2014), politics is the activity (negotiation, argument, discussion, application of force, persuasion, etc.) by which an issue is agitated or settled. Politics can be viewed as a process characterised by events or activities that entail rivalry, compromises, cooperation, and so on in the distribution and exercise of political power necessary for decision-making and governance in society.

The word ‘politics’ encompasses the whole essence of people’s wants, needs, sufferings, aspirations, and expectations within any human society. It also encompasses mediums, strategies, and mechanisms for improving upon situations and outcomes which are a result of political decisions and actions. It encompasses all activities involved in acquiring and using power in public life and being able to influence decisions that affect a country or a society. In summary, politics is who gets what, when they get it, and how they get it.

Governance refers to the use of political powers to manage a nation’s public affairs and to shape its economic and social environment in line with perceived notions of public interest and societal process (Omotso & Abe,

2014). This involves the placement of qualified and capable persons in various positions to perform or oversee the performance of various tasks necessary for the well-being of the citizens, and to ensure that the policies and plans of the government are actualised to the letter. The goal of governance should ideally be to meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal.

The term *inclusion* refers to the action or state of including someone or something within a group, structure, plan, scheme, and so on. It entails organising any process in a way that every individual (whether disabled or not), who desires to participate in that process, can do so. It refers to the absence of any limiting barriers in the way of any woman with a disability who wishes to participate.

In this chapter, the term 'process' or 'processes' is used to refer to those activities that are necessary for the realisation of political and governance goals. These activities include voter registration, public enlightenment and campaigns, meetings, various political party-based activities, elections, nomination and screening of candidates for political and appointive offices, support mechanisms for occupants of public offices, and so on. The term 'persons in authority' is used to refer to persons directly vested with authority or power, either alone or as a member of a group, to carry out a particular activity or perform some specific tasks.

Literature review

This chapter adopted the Rights-Based Theory as its theoretical framework. Under this ethical theory the language of rights provides the basic terminology for ethical and political theory; it also maintains that a democratic society must protect individuals and allow all to pursue personal goals.

This Rights-Based Theory is based on basic human rights principles and acknowledges that disabilities are a natural component of human diversity and must be recognised and supported in all of their manifestations. People with impairments are entitled to the same rights as everyone else. A theory of natural rights based on rights to life was established by thinkers including Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704), and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Under this theory, all human rights, including those of people with disabilities, should be upheld, promoted, and integrated into all societies in order to ensure their well-being and full participation in socio-economic and political life.

Various laws provide, albeit inadequately, for the inclusion and free participation of WWDs in the political and governance processes in Nigeria.

Section 42 in Chapter IV of the Nigerian Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), which prohibits discrimination, provides as follows:

42. Right to freedom from discrimination

(1) A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person –

(a) be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the Government, to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religious or political opinions are not made subject; or

(b) be accorded either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any such executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religious or political opinions.

(2) No citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of his birth.

(3) Nothing in subsection (1) of this section shall invalidate any law by reason only that the law imposes restrictions with respect to the appointment of any person to any office under the State or as a member of the armed forces of the Federation or member of the Nigeria Police Force or to an office in the service of a body corporate established directly by any law in force in Nigeria.

A close look at the foregoing provision on discrimination reveals that there is no specific aspect of it dedicated to the inclusion of WWDs. The section only guarantees the right against discrimination of citizens generally, without distinction between disabled or non-disabled citizens.

The Electoral Act no. 13 of 2022 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2022), in Section 12 provides the qualifications for registration as a voter without any reference to disability.

12. (1) A person shall be qualified to be registered as a voter if such a person—

(a) is a citizen of Nigeria;

(b) has attained the age of 18 years;

(c) is ordinarily resident, works in, originates from the Local Government, Area Council or Ward covered by the registration centre;

(d) presents himself to the registration officers of the Commission for registration as a voter; and

(e) is not subject to any legal incapacity to vote under any law, rule or regulations in force in Nigeria.

Section 54 of the Electoral Act 2022 provides specifically for visually impaired and incapacitated voters as follows:

54. (1) A Voter with visual impairment or other form of disability who is otherwise unable to distinguish symbol or who suffers from any other physical disability may be accompanied into the polling unit by a person chosen by him or her and that person shall, after informing the Presiding officer of the disability, be permitted to accompany the voter into the voting compartment and assist the voter to make his or her mark in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the Commission.

(2) The Commission shall take reasonable steps to ensure that persons with disabilities, special needs and vulnerable persons are assisted at the polling place by the provision of suitable means of communication, such as Braille, large embossed print, electronic devices, sign language interpretation, or off-site voting in appropriate cases.

It appears that Section 84 of the Electoral Act 2022 seeks to impose a equal conditions for both WWDs and other persons in contesting for elective positions by providing thus:

S. 84 Qualifications of Aspirants and Candidates

(3) A political party shall not impose nomination qualification or disqualification criteria, measures, or conditions on any aspirant or candidate for any election in its constitution, guidelines, or rules for nomination of candidates for elections, except as prescribed under sections 65, 66, 106, 107, 131, 137, 177 and 187 of the Constitution.

The Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) Regulations and Guidelines for the Conduct of Elections, 2022 (INEC, 2022) contain certain provisions meant to ease voting for PwDs generally which are also applicable to WWDs. The relevant sections are:

24 (a) The Presiding Officer shall allow a voter who is visually impaired or with other forms of disability, who is unable to distinguish symbols or

who has any other physical disability to be accompanied into the Polling Unit and be assisted to vote by a person chosen by him/her, other than an Election Official, a polling agent or a security personnel on election duty.

(b) Visually Impaired registered voters may, where available, use Assistive Voting Devices such as the Braille Ballot Guide or magnifying glass.

(c) No person shall accompany a voter to the voting area or assist a voter in marking a ballot paper, except as specified in these Regulations and Guidelines.

25 PwDs, visibly pregnant women, nursing or breast-feeding mothers and the elderly, shall be granted priority access to voting at the Polling Units.

The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018, (signed into law in January 2019, and hereafter referred to as the ‘Disabilities Act’) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019) is meant to provide a general framework for the complete integration of people with disabilities into Nigerian society and to ensure that their rights as contained in the Nigerian Constitution are realised.

The Disabilities Act contains some provisions that can have a positive impact on the inclusion of PwDs in politics and governance. In Section 1 it prohibits discrimination against PwDs in any manner or circumstance, while Section 2 mandates the Federal Ministry of Information to make provisions for the promotion of awareness regarding them. Sections 4 and 5 mandate the inclusion of accessibility aids in public buildings, and Section 6 mandates the modification of existing public structures to make them accessible by PwDs. Section 15 provides for any general information to be translated into an accessible format appropriate to the PwDs. Other sections of the Disabilities Act contain laudable provisions meant to promote and protect the welfare and interest of persons living with disabilities. It is, however, instructive to note that the Act is meant for PwDs generally and not specifically for WWDs. Furthermore, the Disabilities Act is not applicable nationwide, as only about 17 States of the Federation have domesticated it so far. Amongst those States that have domesticated the Act, there is little or no compliance, which supports the assertions of Evans and Reher (2022) and Osakuni (2011), that low levels of compliance with existing laws is an issue faced by WWDs in their quest for political inclusion.

A look through the Constitutions of the major political parties in Nigeria (Peoples Democratic Party, All Progressives Congress, Labour Party) revealed that it is only the All Progressives Congress that made express provisions for the inclusion of a Special (Physically Challenged) Leader in all its Committees, from the Polling Unit level to the National Executive level.

However, the provisions do not specify the gender of a Special (Physically Challenged) Leader. The Constitutions of the other two parties are silent on the issue.

Again, under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Electoral Act, and the political parties' Constitutions, nominations and contests for elective offices are open to all: men, women, disabled, and non-disabled. No special consideration, regard or exemption is given to WWDs.

From the above, it is safe to conclude that to the best knowledge of this author, there is no special provision available to ensure the inclusion of WWDs in politics and governance in Nigeria.

Methodology

Qualitative methods were utilised in gathering and analysing data used in this study. Copies of the same questionnaire were sent out via e-mail, Facebook and were also posted in various WhatsApp groups, but responses were received from only five WWDs in the country. The questionnaire was physically administered by the author to two more people. Two officials of a national Disabled People's Organization (Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities) were contacted via email and social media, but no positive feedback was received from either.

This chapter is therefore primarily based on the experiences of eight women (including the author who suffers from some hearing loss). The respondents were all living in urban areas and were assured of anonymity and confidentiality of the information they provided. The questionnaire contained the following questions which were open-ended, allowing the respondents to express themselves in whatever way they desired to.

1. Which of the 36 states of Nigeria does your response relate to? (Edo: 1, Delta: 3, Lagos: 3, Anambra: 1)
2. What is your level of education? (First School Leaving Certificate: 1, Bachelor of Science: 5, Postgraduate Degree: 2)
3. What type or nature of impairment do you suffer from? (Hearing impaired: 2, Deaf-mute: 1, Mobility impaired: 3, spinal cord injury: 1, visually impaired: 1)
4. Has this impairment ever affected your participation in politics and governance?
5. What challenges have you faced while trying to participate in the political process in Nigeria?
6. Did you complain to the person in charge of the process?
7. What was the response of the person in charge?
8. Were you satisfied with the response of the person?

9. Have you ever, on the basis of the impairment or disability, been discriminated against in appointment or employment into a public office or civil service?
10. Have you ever, on the basis of the impairment or disability, been discriminated against in nomination for an elective position or office?
11. Do you desire to participate in politics and governance in Nigeria?
12. If no, why?
13. If yes, what do you think the government or persons in authority should do to ensure or improve your inclusion?

The questions were about their experiences in the political and governance processes, in line with the objectives of this research, and to enhance the generalisability of findings to Nigerian society. A limitation to the data collection was the few people with disabilities who participated, but despite this, the disabling barriers encountered by them were recurring themes in all the responses provided by the participants. This provided consistency and reliability to their responses which are analysed explanatorily below.

Results

Access barriers: The respondents were unanimous in stating that Nigeria's political and governance processes are not designed or run in a way that eases or encourages their participation. The environmental factors, materials in use, mode of execution of the processes and the qualification of the staff are pointers to this assertion. Voter registration centres and polling units are commonly cited without considerations given to ease of access to those who may have mobility issues. When we consider the environment, we live in having physical obstacles practically everywhere, we realise that those with mobility issues will have a lot of challenges moving around. This is compounded by the challenges of lack of ramps, lifts, use of narrow entrances and corridors, and so on.

A respondent in the study who is confined to a wheelchair stated thus:

I had no difficulty accessing my polling unit in my wheelchair. The ground was flat and I was able to manoeuvre around with ease,

A second respondent with mobility issues stated that access to the voter registration centres and polling units was difficult. According to the visually impaired respondent:

Although things are not designed to favour us, I am lucky. Just lucky. I asked people for directions and they were very helpful. I can move around on my own and I was able to easily access my polling centre during the last

elections. The way things were easy for me, it wasn't that way for others. I am aware that other people with mobility issues had a lot of challenges and I feel for them, but I am just lucky I didn't experience any.

Information and communication barriers: Public information in both processes are usually first passed orally through television or radio broadcasts, which is a challenge to those with hearing impairments. Some of these women rely on sign language alone and most television stations do not have sign language interpreters. There are also women who do not understand sign language and have to rely on reading the captions on the screen, which turn out to be grossly inadequate and incapable of providing even just a basic summary of the news. Such women have to depend on third parties, or online and social media sites for news updates with the inherent danger of fake or distorted news and the distractions that come with it. What about situations where mobile data is not available? What about the women who are so impoverished that they either have no Internet-enabled device or do not have funds for regular mobile data subscriptions? Again, some bits of news items are never reported online. Where the information is summarised in written format and distributed in the form of pamphlets and handbills, the summary is often not enough to give a full story of what is happening and more clarifications are often necessary which may prove difficult to obtain.

At most physical events and gatherings there are no sign language interpreters and most times the officials in charge of the processes are not patient enough to give more explanations or simply do not make any effort to communicate with them. A casual observer would get the impression that those in authority want WWDs to stay away from both processes. WWDs are most times left to figure out ways to cope on their own. In other words, their participation was always at their own expense. They either find a way to cope and fit into the processes as they are or stay away. It is the complaint of hearing-impaired respondents that when they asked questions for further clarification on issues that they did not hear or understand properly, they were shouted at, and their requests were ignored most of the time. A respondent based in Lagos often had to depend on considerate citizens or neighbours for detailed explanations and answers to her questions. Although such good neighbourliness is commendable, the fact remains that the duty is first that of the government or persons in authority and not that of the citizens or neighbours.

A respondent stated that most times she just watched what others were doing and followed suit, at times not sure if she was getting things right.

Rejection by society / Attitudinal barriers: Generally, people with disabilities are not accorded the same respect or regard as non-disabled individuals.

Negative or oppressive social attitudes towards them include outright hostility, pity, distrust, patronising behaviour, and so on. People generally move further away from disabled persons, perhaps afraid that they might become infected with the disability if they go too close. Such attitudes make the WWDs lose their self-esteem, withdraw themselves and choose to stay quietly in the background.

In the process of physically administering the questionnaire, most of the persons whom this author spoke with claimed not to know any WWDs and this made the author wonder just how invisible WWDs have become. Some did not even wish to hear or discuss anything about disabilities. We all know that disabled women are around us but the constant rejection that they experience from other members of society has made a great number of them choose to withdraw and remain hidden because of the stigma and discrimination that they face when they go public or attempt to go public. This withdrawal is so deep that most of them are not even willing to discuss their issues with anyone. Only a few dare to brave the social and environmental barriers and make attempts to live their lives in the fullest possible way.

A respondent who had suffered the loss of some limbs wrote that when she indicated interest in contesting for a particular position in her area, she was told that *there are better people*. This respondent was the only one who said that she had shown interest in contesting for an elective position. All others were not interested in holding any elective office and some remarked that the reason for their lack of interest was the unfavourable environment.

A hearing-impaired respondent stated that whenever she made inquiries or made complaints, she always received responses like

wait, we will attend to your type later.

However, she always waited in vain but was never attended to. Another stated that she was often ignored.

The findings in this regard support the view that stigmatisation may lead to self-stigma, especially where WWDs and their family members internalise society's negative attitudes towards them. They may even actually start to believe what others say and think about them, which often leads to self-blame and a decrease in self-esteem. Anticipation of rejection because of stigma may result in many people with disabilities reducing their social networks and not taking advantage of life's opportunities. Experienced or anticipated discrimination is the main reason why many people [women] hide their disabilities and do not seek help (Michael, 2013, as cited in Ibrahim & Abdulraheem-Mustapha, 2016).

Lack of or mismanagement of resources: These can be seen on the part of the government, its agencies and persons in authority on one hand, and on the part of the WWDs on the other hand.

Some of the challenges faced by WWDs, such as information and communication barriers, and access barriers are a direct result of either a lack of resources or the mismanagement of available resources on the part of the government, its agencies and persons in authority. The visually impaired respondent stated that she could not affix her thumbprint on the ballot papers without assistance because of the non-availability of Braille ballot papers. Lack of or mismanagement of resources also manifests in the absence of other provisions which are necessary for the inclusion of WWDs in the processes. Such provisions include ramps, lifts, sign language interpreters, necessary software for automatic and real-time speech transcription, documents in Braille or audio formats, suitable alternatives to thumb printing (for those who have lost their fingers), bad conditions of access roads, properly trained and well-motivated staff, and so on. This author suspects that the reason why some staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission and various State Independent Electoral Commissions ignore or give vague responses to inquiries or complaints from WWDs may be that because of improper training, they lack knowledge of what is being inquired about. Continuous training and professional development are necessary for staff to stay up-to-date on the latest trends in their industry, and resources are necessary for this to be achieved.

Regarding the participation of a WWD in the 2019 elections, it was reported in an online media (Falodun, 2022) thus:

After voting, she asked to fill out the INEC-designated form for feedback from PwDs to help in its planning. None of the staff was aware of its existence there or at several other polling units, as she found out later.

On the other hand, WWDs also face the challenge of lack or mismanagement of resources. In a lot of cases, WWDs have no choice but to bear the cost of their participation, which requires some expenditure on their part. Because of their disabilities, a good number of them do not have a stable or reasonable source of income and would rather apply the meagre income that they have to more urgent needs. Of what immediate use is participation in politics and governance to a WWD who cannot afford even two meals in a day and lives with five other people in a single room with no amenities?

Those who decide to contest for an elective seat also have to consider the high cost of nomination forms and incidental expenses, in a country with high levels of poverty and unemployment. From where would a WWD get the

huge funds to purchase nomination forms and campaign for the elections? Simply put, they are on their own. They have no choice but to accept whatever is made available to them, and they are considered lucky or privileged to receive any aid at all.

Selfishness on the part of non-disabled individuals: One of the reasons WWDs (particularly the educated ones) have a hard time obtaining nominations or appointments into positions of governance is the selfish attitudes of the non-disabled. They are willing to use WWDs in the background for their selfish aggrandisement or benefit, but they are unwilling to put WWDs forward for their own benefit or growth.

The mentality of a good number of non-disabled persons is *why should WWDs be allowed to contest for and win elective seats, or obtain appointments when able-bodied persons like us are in abundance?* The general assumption is that non-disabled persons are better in all respects than WWDs.

According to the visually impaired respondent in this research,

They [non-visually impaired persons] think they are better than I am. I may be physically blind but mentally, I can see and I'm very alert. My mind is open and nothing is wrong with me. I interact with people a lot and I can tell what some of them think. I have achieved in my life things that those who can see have not been able to achieve....

In many situations where WWDs happen to obtain appointments, the non-disabled individuals who facilitated the appointment would prefer to restrict them to the background, even though they (the WWDs) might be responsible for the major activities in the establishment. They are also often subjected to various forms of abuse, oppression and suppression, disrespect, and their dues and benefits are often kept from them. They serve at the whims and caprices of their benefactor and more often than not for their benefit and glory. Most times they are looked upon as being incapable of delivering on corporate goals. This is the experience of this author.

Unwritten and unspoken barriers to contesting for positions: The conversation about the inclusion of WWDs in politics focuses most times only on the right to vote. It would take a whole lot for a WWD to win an election in Nigeria given the huge costs involved, topped with the additional factor of her impairment. This is corroborated in the work of Waldschmidt and S  pulchre (2019).

In this part of the world, there is a prevailing and deep-rooted culture that tends to suppress women in favour of men, particularly concerning public office and public affairs. Despite the efforts of women generally to overcome this hurdle, a lot still needs to be done.

The patriarchal structure of Nigerian society discourages WWDs from participating in contests for elective positions (Shittu et al., 2022). Where positions are reserved for a disabled person, they are more likely to be given to a disabled man than to a WWD. So WWDs encounter two discriminations here: being a woman and being disabled. Most people focus on disability and gender before the capacity and credibility of candidates. This writer has never heard of a WWD winning an election in Nigeria.

Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter analysed some of the barriers facing WWDs in politics and governance in Nigeria and argued that the responsibility for ensuring their inclusion rests mainly on the government and persons in authority. The Nigerian State [through its leaders at the Federal and State levels, and through its institutions (agencies, parastatals, ministries, civil and political office holders)] and persons in authority have the responsibility to play the leading role in the empowerment of all Nigerians as a prerequisite for the prosperity of the people.

Wherever and whoever they are, WWDs always have the fear of domination and oppression so mechanisms need to be put in place to allay their fears. In view of this, the findings of the study show that disability issues should be taken as important by policymakers to ensure that disabled people are considered and not abandoned. There is therefore the need for the government to build a strong institutional mechanism that will ensure the inclusion of WWDs in politics and governance. WWDs have as many capabilities, talents and knowledge as those without disabilities and have a lot to offer in the collective quest to build a better and more prosperous nation.

Nigeria is a very good boy of international human rights; that is, if you consider the number of international human rights conventions which the country has ratified and even domesticated. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (AU, 1981), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Social and Economic Rights (UN, 1966), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (UN, 1979), and the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) (UN, 2006), amongst others. Nigeria is usually a signatory to such covenants and ratifies them without putting any reservation(s), unlike countries like Saudi Arabia and the United States that have reservations on some of the provisions. Ratification and domestication of these conventions and agreements is one thing, implementing and/or

enforcing them is a completely different thing. Unfortunately, Nigeria has not fared well in the latter.

The following recommendations are a summary of the roles which the respondents in the study want the government and persons in authority to play in order to ensure their participation or inclusion in the politics and governance processes in Nigeria.

Suitable legal frameworks should be put in place by the lawmaking bodies to ensure the inclusion of WWDs in politics and governance. Existing laws can also be built upon to achieve this goal. Without a legal framework, there is no foundation for WWDs to stand upon and demand their rights to participate in politics and governance. Those States that have not domesticated the Disabilities Act should be encouraged to do so. Certain percentages or quotas of appointments and elective positions should be statutorily reserved for WWDs; and where reserved generally for PwDs, should be split equally between male and female PwDs.

Adequate implementation of our laws. It is not enough to have laws or rules; necessary steps should be taken by the Executive arm of government and its agencies to implement them, or else they might not be worth the paper that they are written on. Implementation requires the necessary political will and funding.

Funding is necessary for the provision of those materials and structures needed to grant access to WWDs. Sufficient provision for these needs should be made in the relevant or applicable budgets. It is also important that funds released for this purpose be closely monitored to ensure they are properly managed and put to correct use by those to whom they are entrusted. Industries for the production of the materials can be established as these items can be manufactured within the country at cheaper rates. This will also help to reduce the level of unemployment amongst our people. The visually impaired respondent in this study stated that she was assisted to affix her thumbprint on the ballot papers because Braille ballot papers were not available. She added that she was a bit sad as there was no way she could personally verify that her helper placed her thumb in the spaces meant for the party of her choice.

The government and persons in authority must listen to and understand WWDs. WWDs should be allowed to express their views and desires in the same way that non-disabled people are given the opportunity to express themselves. A lot of WWDs are exceptionally brilliant and talented, and ignoring them only results in immeasurable losses and delays. This author has witnessed so many instances of this. Understanding a challenge is very necessary in any quest to solve that challenge.

The government, her agencies and persons in authority need to utilise various channels in raising societal awareness of the plight and rights of WWDs. One of the reasons why WWDs are regarded poorly in society is because of some age-old cultural beliefs and practices which in some places condemn and suppress WWDs from taking part in community activities. Many people believe that associating with WWDs brings bad luck or is a bad omen. Such people forget that some of these disabilities are not the making of the WWD but were brought about by misfortunes such as different kinds of accidents, untreated or improperly treated sicknesses, acts of God, and so on, and the victims were just unlucky to have been the ones involved. When WWDs are better understood, they will cease to be targets of oppression and suppression and will thus be more open to participation in societal activities.

The political and governance processes need to be made accessible to WWDs. As far as is practicable, voter registration centres, PVC collection centres, polling units and other public buildings should be sited on flat terrain to ease access by WWDs who have mobility challenges. If the environment is made disability-friendly, WWDs will be able to carry out their activities independently, and this will result in less pressure or demands on others. Accessibility aids should be included in the construction of public and major buildings. Existing buildings and structures do not need to be demolished and rebuilt; slight modifications can be made to make them accessible.

Human resources are a vital aspect of the political and governance processes. Employers of labour (both public and private) need to make proper investment in the recruitment, training, and compensation of competent staff that can adequately handle issues relating to WWDs.

The government and regulatory agencies should mandate or encourage the news media and other public information outlets to make their services and programmes available in a way that will meet the needs of WWDs. Detailed subtitles or captions can be introduced on television channels, for example, to replace the current practice of scrolling a few headlines repeatedly across the screen. Any general information should be translated into the accessible format appropriate to the WWDs. It is more economical to access news on television than on the Internet or social media, which are given to so much manipulation, falsehoods and destructive narratives that look real until time exposes their falsity.

WWDs who desire to contest for elective offices should be supported in any way possible. The government can make laws to limit the cost of nomination forms. From where will a WWD get millions of naira to purchase these forms? Political parties should also be encouraged to reduce their fees and members' dues so that more WWDs can afford them. Nomination forms

can also be given to WWDs at a discount. It is common knowledge that most WWDs lack finances and sponsors. CSOs and well-to-do individuals should be encouraged to lend their support, especially in situations where the WWDs are capable of carrying out the functions of the office in view.

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Chapter 23

Educational Displacement Rights of Persons with Disability in Nigeria: A Need for Representation of Physically Challenged Women in Politics and Governance

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Abstract

One of the primary responsibilities of government in policymaking is to ensure that all citizens, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or physical abilities, have access to education and the opportunity to actively engage in politics and governance. Universal access to education represents the fundamental right of individuals to receive an equitable education, regardless of their background, gender, ethnic, or physical and cognitive capabilities. In a democratic society, education and meaningful participation of women and girl children with physical disabilities in political processes are cornerstones of good governance. Consequently, disability should never serve as a barrier to accessing education and participating in governance of women and girl children. Therefore, any policy that segregates women and girl children with disabilities within the educational system or restricts their involvement in governance is discriminatory and runs counter to the principles of equality protected in various international, regional and national human rights instruments, treaties and outcomes of various global conferences that call for the inclusion of women and girl children with disabilities, which includes, but are not limited to, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (CRPD), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the National Gender

Policy. Despite significant progress in Nigeria's pursuit of gender equality and the rights of persons with disabilities, women and girl children who are disabled and often disenfranchised continue to face barriers in accessing quality education and participation in governance. This chapter aims to provide an overview of the Nigerian government's commitment to safeguard the rights to access education and political representation for women and girl children with disabilities. To achieve this objective, the chapter adopts a doctrinal legal research approach, analysing contentious issues pertaining to the realisation of the educational and political rights of women and girl children with disabilities. Hence, drawing from societal context, the chapter advocates for a more inclusive, equitable, and participatory political landscape that permits women and girl children with disabilities to claim their rightful place in shaping the nation's future.

Keywords: Educational Policy, Human Rights Instruments, Political Participation, Rights of Physically Challenged, Women and Girl Children

Introduction

Access to education represents the capacity of all individuals to enjoy equal educational opportunities, without regard to their social standing, gender, ethnic origin, or physical and mental abilities. Although primary education is declared as both free and mandatory in Nigeria, statistics indicate that only 61% of children aged 6 to 11 years consistently attend primary school (UNICEF, 2017). It is imperative to note that every child, irrespective of their gender or circumstances, possesses the fundamental right to receive a quality education.

Over 27 million Nigerians have at least one disability and more than 50% of the 27 million Nigerians living with disabilities are female (World Disability Report, 2022). Women and girls with special needs face triple-fold discernment; first as women, then as women with disabilities and because they are poor (Patrick-Ogbogu, 2021). To her, because of the patriarchy system in this part of the country, women are considered second-class citizens. Women with special needs are a demographic that is often rendered 'invisible' by the system (Toyosi Giwa, Coordinator, SARCs, 2020). The advocated inclusiveness for persons with disabilities have not been implemented and there is a need for government to tackle the educational, political, social and structural discrimination that renounce access to basic services for persons with special needs especially women and girls with disabilities.

Inclusive education stands out as a significant challenge confronting educational systems worldwide. It is crucial to emphasise that every

child, including those with disabilities, possesses the inherent right to receive an education (UNICEF, 2017). Until the recent enactment of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019) in Nigeria by the former President, Muhammadu Buhari, individuals with disabilities in the country commonly experienced discrimination, exclusion, and victimisation (Francis, 2023). Inclusive education goes beyond merely placing students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms; it entails providing them with the opportunity to fully engage as participants in all school activities and upholding their right to equal opportunities (Isah, 2014). This approach involves integrating individuals with disabilities and those without disabilities into the same classrooms, equipped with adaptable facilities and resources (Obi & Ashi, 2016).

The National Centre on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion in the United States (1995) provides a comprehensive definition of inclusive education “which encompasses the provision of equal opportunities for all students, including those with significant disabilities, to access effective educational services”. These services should be complemented with the required assistance and support, all within age-appropriate classrooms. The goal is to equip students to assume productive roles as fully integrated members of society. Nevertheless, it has become apparent that physically disabled students, especially girls, are frequently marginalised or neglected, often being inappropriately grouped with other minority demographics in higher education.

Conversely, individuals with disabilities make up roughly 10% of the global population, with 75% of them residing in developing nations. According to Barron and Amerena (2007), “they comprise one of the most economically deprived, ostracised, and socially excluded segments in any society”. Consequently, there is a pressing need to allocate more significant attention to ensuring access to higher education for women and girl children with physical disabilities, enabling them to make substantial contributions to national development (Oriogu, et al., 2017). It is essential to establish and promote legal frameworks that safeguard the rights of women and girl children with disabilities while also raising awareness about them.

From the recent enactment of laws on the discrimination on gender and disability basis, Nigeria has made significant strides in recognising and promoting the rights of women and persons with disabilities (Ewang, 2019). However, the intersectionality of gender and disability presents unique challenges that demand specific attention, thus the need to examine the realm of educational displacement, a pervasive issue affecting women and girl children with disabilities and underscores the necessity of their

representation in the political and governance spheres (USAID, 2022). It has been discovered that women and girl children with special needs often encounter discrimination and social stigmatisation. Negative stereotypes, misconceptions, and biases limit their opportunities in education, employment, social and political participation (UNICEF, 2022). These individuals are at a higher risk of experiencing gender-based violence, with limited resources and support systems available to them. The intersection of gender and disability often amplifies their vulnerability to abuse (World Bank, 2019). These challenges are compounded when one examines the under-representation of physically challenged women in politics and governance. Effective participation in these arenas is essential for advocating the rights of marginalised groups and crafting policies that cater for their needs. The voices and experiences of disabled women have been, to a large extent, unheard in Nigeria's political discourse, resulting in policies that often overlook their specific concerns (Falodun, 2022).

In pursuit of these objectives, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (AU, 1981) concerning the rights of persons with disabilities in Africa places a significant emphasis on non-discrimination and the complete, active participation and inclusion of individuals with disabilities in society (ACHPR, Article 4). Furthermore, any policy that isolates individuals with disabilities within the educational environment and restricts their representation in politics and governance is discriminatory and runs counter to the principles of equality enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UN, 1979), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its optional Protocol (CRPD) (UN, 2006), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UN, 1989), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN, 1995), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015) and the National Gender Policy, amongst others. In view of this, this chapter will delve into the intricacies of educational displacement faced by women and girl children with special needs in Nigeria, while also highlighting the urgent need for a more inclusive political landscape that ensures the representation of physically challenged women and children. The overarching goal is to promote a more equitable, compassionate, and progressive society where every citizen has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their gender and physical abilities (Price, 2018) of inclusive education in realising the educational and political rights of women and girl children with special needs.

Methodology

This study adopted a doctrinal legal research approach, where relevant documents were analysed in identifying contentious issues pertaining to

the realisation of the educational and political rights of women and girl children with disabilities. Documents analysed included the ones that relate to persons with disabilities and the ones that call for the inclusion of women and girl children with disabilities, which includes, but is not limited to, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (CRPD) (UN, 2006), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UN, 1989), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UN, 1979), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN, 1995), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015) and National Gender Policy and other related literature.

Educational displacement rights of women and girls with special needs in Nigeria

Etieyibo (2020) states that “across history, individuals with disabilities have often endured disparities and injustices”. Adie and Shamagana (2018) believe that development discourses hardly take care of women and girls with disabilities, which rendered women occupying the back seat in almost all spheres of life. Historical examples of bias against people with diverse physical and mental disabilities have encompassed societal mockery and, at its most extreme, profound exclusion, even leading to their confinement in asylums. Some have even faced tragic fates, such as drowning, neglect, or outright execution (Pritchard, 1943).

According to the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2014) “individuals with disabilities are frequently viewed not as empowered individuals entitled to engage fully in political, economic, cultural, and developmental aspects of life, but rather as passive recipients of charitable acts or welfare support”. They are often the object of pity, relying on the good will of various entities such as government bodies, charitable organisations, homes, foundations, and religious institutions to formulate policies related to disabilities and to assume responsibility for individuals, especially women and girls with special needs. Consequently, individuals with disabilities frequently experience disempowerment, a lack of control over their own lives, and limited or no involvement in the political and governance processes of their society; this is as a result of being considered a burden on society (UNHR’s Office, 2014).

According to Etieyibo (2020), “individuals, especially women and girls with disabilities often encounter discrimination in the realm of education in

Nigeria. One form of discrimination they encounter pertains to the limited availability of financial resources and educational institutions tailored to cater for their specific needs. Currently, there is a noticeable scarcity of educational institutions and inclusive schools designed to accommodate individuals with disabilities across the country. This shortage of resources and educational facilities significantly impedes the accessibility of education for both children and adults with disabilities, resulting in many of them being unable to attend school". Also, in line with the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD, 2016), the primary reason behind the exclusion of these children from the education system is the lack of inclusivity and accessibility within school environments.

Furthermore, as highlighted by the JONAPWD (2016), "the organizational and managerial framework of these schools inadvertently sustains harmful societal norms. This includes perpetuating discrimination, promoting segregation, fostering low self-esteem, and denying fundamental rights to women and girls with disabilities". Women and girls with special needs suffer not only because of their disabilities but also because of their gender and poverty. In Nigeria, the peculiar needs of women and girls with special needs are seldom catered for by the relevant legal frameworks and policies which invariably breach their fundamental human rights (Adie & Shamagana, 2018). Therefore, the Theory on Human Rights and Social Inclusiveness will be of great help in protecting the rights of people with disabilities.

According to a report compiled by the Advocacy for Women with Disabilities Initiative (AWWDI), Legal Defence and Assistance Project (LEDAP) and Women Enabled International (WEI) (AWWDI, 2023), women with disabilities in Nigeria find themselves in a context where services and buildings cannot be accessed by everyone, a place where they cannot participate fully, a place where there is no respect for their human dignity and rights, and a place where they cannot have friends outside the disability group.

Another method through which the educational rights of individuals with disabilities are compromised in Nigeria is via educational segregation. To illustrate, in Cross River State, special education services have been delivered in three Senatorial districts, largely through the initiatives of missionary organisations and philanthropic individuals. Although this signifies a positive stride in recognising the rights of individuals with disabilities in Nigeria, there exists a substantial amount of work yet to be accomplished. This endeavour necessitates concerted efforts from both the government and non-governmental organisations. There is a need to foster collaboration between government agencies, civil society organisations, and disability

advocacy groups to work together in creating a more inclusive and equitable society for individuals with disabilities. The objective should be to harness their full potential, promote self-reliance, and enable them to achieve a reasonable degree of independence. The most effective means to accomplish this is through the implementation of inclusive educational policies to accommodate persons, especially women and girl children with disabilities.

Implications of educational displacement rights of women and girls with disabilities

It is essential to recognise the detrimental consequences resulting from the displacement of educational rights of women and girl children with disabilities and underscore the significance of an inclusive education system. Here are some of the effects:

1. Failing to address the environmental and accessibility needs of women and girls with disabilities in society will inevitably impede their participation in various aspects of life, including education, social interactions, recreation, economic activities, and political engagement.
2. Negative attitudes held by individuals without disabilities towards those with disabilities can create barriers across all domains. Addressing these misconceptions and biases necessitates educational initiatives and awareness-raising efforts.
3. The absence of suitable educational facilities and educational accessibility not only discriminates against individuals with disabilities but also complicates their daily lives. Take, for example, the case of Lekan Ajayi, a wheelchair user, as reported by the University World News as stated by Etieyibo (2020). Ajayi faces mobility challenges and depends on others for routine tasks such as visiting the bank. Because of the lack of wheelchair-accessible facilities, he must ask friends to handle banking transactions for him, leading to feelings of frustration and a loss of privacy.
4. Negative attitudes held by faculty and administrative staff may discourage students from disclosing their disabilities and seeking the accommodations to which they are entitled. Consequently, inclusive education is crucial for dispelling ignorance and misinformation.

Hence, according to Oriogu et al. (2017), “facilitating access to education is not only essential for personal development but also plays a vital role in the contemporary societal advancement and the progress of women and girls with special needs.”

Women with disabilities' representation in politics and governance in Nigeria

In Nigeria, as in many parts of the world, the journey towards gender equality in politics and governance has been a long and challenging one. While significant strides have been made to empower women in these sectors, the issue of representation becomes even more complex when we consider women with disabilities. Thus, in patriarchal societies like Nigeria, women battle discriminatory attitudes every single day, one way or the other, and even more so for women with disabilities. Gender discrimination is heightened by prejudices related to the impairment itself. Legal protection and services are inaccessible because there is a dearth of knowledge about the issues that women and girls with disabilities face (AWWDI, 2023).

As pointed out in the report of the Advocacy for Women Disabilities Initiative (AWWDI) submitted to the CEDAW committee on equal and inclusive representation of women with disabilities in decision-making in 2023 (AWWDI, 2023), it is very challenging for women with disabilities to participate fully in political processes because of discrimination within the system and it is even worse for those who strive to move into political positions. Although this is a general problem with the overall women's group for women with disabilities, it is heightened by the barriers that they face because of the intersectional discrimination of being women and women with disabilities (AWWDI, 2023). Women with disabilities in general are perceived as a secluded group in a community not capable of making their own decisions. As a result, the rights and concerns of women with disabilities in Nigeria are invisible because they are excluded from decision-making positions.

Adie and Shamagana (2018) pointed out that women with disabilities in Nigeria experience a wide variety of discrimination and stereotypes about their capabilities and roles in society that are distinct from other women and from men with disabilities. Consequently, women with disabilities face higher rates of unemployment and increased barriers to poverty and exposure to danger than men with disabilities. This treatment is often based on social and cultural stereotypes in Nigeria about women and about persons with disabilities. For instance, because of gender-based discrimination, women in Nigeria are valued less than men with disabilities, because men with disabilities can still inherit property and land, carry on the family name, and make family decisions. Therefore, women and girls with disabilities in Nigeria suffer from the double burden of their gender and disabilities status. Over the years marginalisation has characterised women's participation in politics because of various impeding social, cultural, and religious forces. These forces have continued to affect women's sensitivity to politics, leading

to a very low level of political interest, knowledge, and activities of women in politics, despite an exciting political prospect for women in Nigeria (Ayetigbo & Abiodun, 2022). It appears that a major factor contributing to the exclusion of women in politics is the socio-cultural view and worth of women in society, taking cognisance of the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society. Thus, while observing the declining trend of women's participation and representation in the Nigerian political regime from 1999 to 2019, Ayetigbo and Abiodun (2022) opined that patriarchy refers to a society ruled and dominated by men over women, resulting in women being primarily confined to traditional domestic roles and excluded from active involvement in household decision-making, let alone seeking political leadership positions.

The presence of women with disabilities in politics and governance is not merely a matter of controversy, it is a reflection of a more inclusive and equitable democracy. Representation is not just a matter of fulfilling a quota, it is about enabling women with disabilities to be active agents in shaping the future of their country. It is essential to recognise their rights, address their unique challenges, and provide the necessary support to enable them to participate actively in shaping Nigeria's future.

International legal instruments on rights of individuals with disabilities

It is essential to examine the national, regional and international legal frameworks and instruments that outline the rights of women and girl children with disabilities. Amongst the international legal instruments relevant to this discussion are the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (AU, 1981), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006), specifically focusing on Articles 6, 12, 24, and 29, which pertain to the rights of individuals and women with disabilities. Another international legal instrument on the rights of persons with disabilities is Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). An international legal instrument to which without its mention, this discussion is not complete, is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UN, 1979). Other notable international legal instruments on the rights of women and girls with disabilities are the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN, 1995).

According to the United Nations (1948), "several international human rights instruments, including treaties, laws, and conventions, recognize and safeguard human rights. These instruments encompass the Universal Declaration of Human Rights", the International Covenant on Civil and

Political Rights (UN, 1966a), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (UN, 1966b).

The rights of individuals with disabilities find recognition and protection within the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006). This convention mandates state parties to:

“take appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices that constitute discrimination against individuals with disabilities” (UN, 2006: Article 4).

Nigeria, as a state party and signatory to all of these legal instruments, is obligated to adhere to and enforce their provisions (Etieyibo, 2020). Other regional and national instruments pertaining to the rights of women and persons with disabilities in Nigeria includes the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), particularly Section 42, and the relevant provision of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019).

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (UN, 2006) adopts a comprehensive approach to categorising individuals with disabilities, emphasising the assertion of all types of incapacities and the complete and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for individuals with disabilities. It further underscores the promotion and preservation of the inherent dignity of individuals with disabilities, mandating that states’ parties promote and safeguard their rights to ensure their full equality under the law. Article 2 of the Convention (UN, 2006) defines discrimination on the basis of disability as “any variation, segregation, or restriction rooted in disability that aims to impede or nullify the acknowledgment, enjoyment, or exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal footing with others, encompassing all forms of discrimination, including the denial of reasonable accommodations.”

Every individual, regardless of their disability, should have equal access to rights such as parity before the law, equal protection under the law, meaningful participation, and the right to be heard (Article 13). The provisions outlined in the CRPD are intended to guide states in formulating improved policies to eliminate the educational marginalisation of individuals, especially women and girls with disabilities. Article 24 of the CRPD asserts that every person has the right to receive an education and must not be

excluded from educational opportunities based on their disability. Segregated schooling should be avoided, and Article 24 emphasises that children with disabilities are entitled to the same education and curriculum as other children, with the government providing the necessary support to facilitate this inclusivity.

Article 6 is a significant article within the Convention as it addresses the specific rights and challenges faced by women with disabilities. The Article obligates states' parties "to acknowledge that women and girls with disabilities face discrimination and, consequently, must take steps to guarantee their complete and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms". The article further requires states' parties to implement all appropriate measures to facilitate the comprehensive development, progress, and empowerment of women. This is essential for ensuring that the UN CRPD guarantees them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms outlined in the Convention.

Article 6 of the CRPD underscores the importance of addressing the unique challenges and discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities. It calls on states' parties to take measures to ensure their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights related to marriage, family, parenthood, and reproductive health. The article emphasises the need for empowerment and the elimination of discrimination to guarantee the exercise of these rights on an equal basis with others. Regarding Article 24, states' parties are obliged to recognise the right of individuals with disabilities to receive an education. In pursuit of this right, without discrimination and with an emphasis on equal opportunities, states' parties are directed to establish an inclusive education system at all levels and promote lifelong learning with the following objectives:

1. Fostering the complete development of human potential and nurturing a sense of dignity and self-worth, while reinforcing respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, and human diversity.
2. Facilitating the development of the personality, talents, creativity, as well as the mental and physical capabilities, of individuals with disabilities to their fullest extent.
3. Empowering individuals with disabilities to actively participate in a free society.

In upholding this right, states' parties are obligated to ensure that:

1. Individuals with disabilities are not excluded from mainstream education because of their disabilities, and children with disabilities have equal access to free and compulsory primary and secondary education, irrespective of their disabilities.

2. Persons with disabilities have equal access to inclusive, high-quality, and free primary and secondary education within their communities.
3. Reasonable accommodations are made to meet the specific needs of individuals with disabilities.
4. Persons with disabilities receive the necessary support within the general education system to facilitate their effective learning.
5. Effective personalised support measures are provided in environments that promote both academic and social development, with the ultimate aim of full inclusion.

States' parties must provide the necessary equipment and resources to enhance the learning experience of individuals, especially women and girls with disabilities. They should also implement effective measures, including peer support, to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve and maintain maximum independence, complete physical and mental well-being, social integration, and full participation in all aspects of life. To achieve these objectives, states' parties should establish, strengthen, and expand comprehensive habitation and rehabilitation services and programmes, particularly in areas such as healthcare, employment, education, and social services (Article 26).

Article 29 mandates that states' parties ensure the political rights of individuals with disabilities and enable them to exercise these rights on an equal basis with others. States' parties commit to ensuring that individuals with disabilities can fully and effectively participate in political and public life, whether directly or through freely chosen representatives. This encompasses the right to vote and run for office. Article 24 delineates the prerequisites for upholding the right to education for children with disabilities (UN, 2006):

1. Non-discrimination: Children with disabilities must have the opportunity to access education without encountering discrimination, in an environment characterised by equality. This encompasses the right to be free from segregation and to receive all necessary support. The elimination of all forms of barriers is imperative, including legal, physical, communication and language, social, financial, and attitudinal barriers.
2. Educational Goals: Education should aim to facilitate the comprehensive development of the abilities and potential of children with disabilities. It should enable their full integration into society and provide them with knowledge of human rights, diversity, tolerance, and environmental stewardship.
3. Inclusivity: Children with disabilities should never be excluded from the mainstream education system. Any legislation that impedes their access should be repealed.

4. Access to Primary and Secondary Education: Children with disabilities must enjoy equal access to inclusive, high-quality, and tuition-free primary and secondary education within their local communities.

Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015) provide a framework for advancing towards a more sustainable and enhanced future for all, addressing global challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice (UN, 2015). Goal 4 of the SDGs includes a particular target, which is to eliminate gender disparities in education and guarantee equal access to education and vocational training for all individuals, particularly those in vulnerable circumstances such as persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children facing adversity.

The principle underlying this goal is the universal right to education. Therefore, disability should never be a hindrance to accessing education and participating in governance. Any policy that segregates individuals with disabilities in educational settings and restricts their involvement in politics and governance represents a form of discrimination and contradicts the objectives set forth in Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Article 13 emphasises that the states' parties to the Covenant must recognise the right of every individual to education. They are obligated to ensure that education aims at fostering the full development of the human personality and instilling a sense of its inherent dignity. Additionally, education should contribute to the promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

States' parties also agree that education should enable all individuals to engage actively in a democratic society, promote mutual understanding, tolerance, and harmony amongst nations and various racial, ethnic, or religious communities. Furthermore, it should support the efforts of the UN in the maintenance of peace.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

The CEDAW was adopted and ratified by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 as an international instrument on the rights of women. The Convention supports equal rights for women and guarantees their

freedom from all forms of discrimination. It is the only human rights treaty that upholds women's reproductive rights and specifically mentions culture and tradition as influencing factors in determining gender roles and family dynamics. The Convention lays the groundwork for achieving gender equality by guaranteeing women's equal access to and opportunities in political and public life, including the right to vote and run for office as well as the right to education, health and employment. Article 5 of the Convention calls for a modification of social practices and other cultural patterns of men and women to eliminate practices based on the idea of sex role stereotyping or the inferiority or superiority of either sex. On the account of women with disabilities, the Convention is relevant as it frowns at any form of discrimination that women in general may have been suffering on account of their sex (UN, 1979).

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) is an international legal framework that caters for the rights of all children across the globe. The CRC is a human rights convention that outlines the civil, political, economic, social, cultural and other rights of children under the age of 18, although the CRC does not have specific provisions that explicitly address the rights of women and girl children with disabilities. However, it includes general principles and provisions related to the rights of all children, including those with disabilities, and it prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. Thus, Article 2 requires states to ensure that all children enjoy their rights without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or their parent's disability. Also, the provision of Article 3 obligates all states' parties to consider the best interests of the child in all actions concerning them. This principle is particularly important when addressing the unique needs and circumstances of children with disabilities.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN, 1995), adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, primarily addresses gender equality and the advancement of women's rights. It does not have specific provisions dedicated to the rights of women and girl children with disabilities (UN, 1995). However, it is important to note that the Beijing Declaration recognises the intersectionality of gender and disability, and the need to consider the rights and challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities within the broader framework of gender equality. It emphasises the importance of inclusivity and ensuring that policies and programmes aimed at advancing human rights are accessible to all women, including those with disabilities.

Government policies on rights of access to education, politics and governance of physically challenged in Nigeria

As accurately noted, the legal framework plays a crucial role in safeguarding, enforcing, and advancing equality of opportunity for individuals with disabilities within any society (Imam & AbdulRaheem-Mustapha, 2016). Furthermore, the issue of accessibility to public facilities remains a significant concern in Nigeria, despite the purported inclusive education policies in place. Many public buildings and educational institutions in the country are inadequately designed and constructed, making it difficult for individuals with disabilities to access them.

Two primary legal instruments relevant to the rights of women and girl children with disabilities in Nigeria that will be scrutinised include the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) and the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019).

Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, holds a central position as the highest legal authority in Nigeria and contains provisions regarding the fundamental rights of citizens. Specific clauses addressing the rights of citizens are located in Chapter IV, encompassing Sections 33–35, 37, and 41–42 of the Constitution. To illustrate, Section 33(1) affirms the right to life, stating that “every person has a right to life, and no one shall be intentionally deprived of their life, except through a court sentence for a criminal offense in Nigeria.” Section 34(1) underscores the entitlement of every individual to the respect of their personal dignity, while Section 35(1) proclaims the right to personal liberty for all persons, subject to specific circumstances as permitted by law. When applied broadly, these provisions can be seen as applying equally to individuals with disabilities (Etieyibo, 2020). In essence, Section 42 of the Constitution explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex (gender), amongst other attributes. It ensures that no citizen of Nigeria can be subjected to any form of discrimination based solely on their gender. This constitutional provision is a fundamental step towards ensuring gender equality and protection against gender-based discrimination in Nigeria.

However, it is important to highlight that even though Section 42 of the Constitution addresses the right to freedom from discrimination based on factors such as ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion, or political opinion, it does not explicitly reference persons with disabilities. The Constitution

lacks specific provisions regarding the rights of individuals with disabilities. It is possible that concerns about the widespread stigmatisation of disabled individuals in society prompted a change in perspective during a past military regime under Gen. Babangida in Nigeria. As a result, the Nigerians with Disability Decree of 1993 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1993) was enacted, guaranteeing equal treatment for disabled individuals alongside able-bodied Nigerians. Nevertheless, the existence of this Decree remains uncertain, as it is not included in the 2004 edition of the Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

Given these circumstances, it becomes imperative to consider amending the supreme law of the land, the Federal Republic of Nigeria's Constitution, to incorporate provisions that specifically enumerate the rights to be enjoyed by individuals, especially women with disabilities, as they are exposed to double discrimination.

Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018

The terms "Discrimination, Exclusion, Victimisation" were frequently associated with individuals with disabilities in Nigeria until the recent enactment of the Act against Discrimination of Persons with Disabilities by former President Muhammadu Buhari (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019). The absence of clear and specific references to the rights of persons with disabilities in the Nigerian Constitution made it necessary to pass the Disabilities Act. The Disabilities Act was initially approved by the Nigerian Senate on March 10, 2009, but it did not receive the approval of the then President of Nigeria, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua.

The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, which was signed into law in January 2019, now makes discrimination based on physical, mental, or sensory impairments illegal. This Act also establishes a National Commission for Persons with Disabilities to oversee the integration of individuals with disabilities into society and enhance their well-being (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2020).

Section 3 of the Act ensures that individuals with disabilities have the right to access physical environments and buildings on an equal basis with others. This provision is reinforced by Sections 4 and 5, which mandate that public facilities, including sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, elevators, crutches, guide canes, toilet facilities, door protection, and re-opening devices, must be accessible and usable by persons with disabilities.

In terms of the inclusive education policy, Section 17 grants individuals with disabilities the right to education without discrimination. It also entitles them to free education up to the secondary level and requires the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities to provide educational assistive devices. Section 18 further mandates that all public schools, from primary to tertiary levels, must be inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. To achieve this, it necessitates the provision of special facilities and at least one trained personnel in every school to cater for the education of persons with disabilities. The Act also requires the inclusion of Braille, sign language, and other relevant skills in the curricula of primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions.

Section 28 of the Act upholds the right of individuals with disabilities to pursue employment and earn a livelihood in a labour market and work environment that is free from barriers to employment.

Section 30 promotes political participation, encouraging active involvement of persons with disabilities in politics and public life. It also mandates the government to create an inclusive environment where persons with disabilities can engage in public affairs through non-governmental organisations, associations, and participation in political party administration.

In summary, the Disabilities Act lays the foundation for the full integration of people with disabilities into Nigerian society. “It ensures the realization of their social, political, and economic rights, including education and healthcare, as outlined in the Nigerian Constitution,” as stated by Etieyibo (2020). The Act applies to persons with disabilities who are either citizens or are legal immigrants in Nigeria and aims to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities in all aspects of social, economic, cultural, and political life. It prohibits any form of discrimination against persons with disabilities based on their disability (Section 1). Certain provisions within the Act, particularly those related to life, liberty, security of the person, education, employment, accommodation, safety, and accessibility, bear similarities to the CRPD.

Concerning education, Section 17 asserts that individuals with disabilities have the right to education without encountering discrimination or segregation in any form. They are also entitled to free education at all levels in public educational institutions. Furthermore, Sections 18 and 19 mandate that all schools must be inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities, and they should:

1. Have at least one trained staff member to cater to the educational development of persons with disabilities;

2. Establish a programme for ongoing training of personnel responsible for persons with disabilities; and
3. Provide special facilities to ensure effective education for persons with disabilities.

This Act includes general provisions that protect the rights and well-being of all persons with disabilities, including women. However, the Act does not have a specific provision solely dedicated to the rights of women and girl children with disabilities, thus leaving them in their current vulnerable state without protection. Perhaps there is a need to amend this legal instrument to subsequently accommodate rights specifically aimed at protecting women and girls for social and equitable justice.

Recommendations

The current focus lies in integrating children and young individuals, especially women and girl children with special needs, into regular schools in Nigeria, accompanied by an exploration of diverse legal strategies designed to counteract discrimination against persons with disabilities. These recommendations aim to address the educational displacement and under-representation of women and girl children with disabilities in Nigeria and promote a more inclusive, equitable, and compassionate society that upholds the rights of all its citizens, regardless of gender and physical abilities:

1. Considering the widespread negative perceptions surrounding disability in Nigeria and its association with discriminatory conduct directed at individuals with disabilities, it becomes imperative for both governmental bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to launch advocacy campaigns with the aim of enlightening the public. These advocacy endeavours might entail collaborative efforts between the government and NGOs, engaging with communities to eradicate traditions and norms that foster discrimination against individuals with disabilities, especially women and girl children who are the most vulnerable groups, in regions where such discrimination remains prevalent.
2. Increasing public awareness of the rights of people with disabilities by the government and non-governmental organisations. This is because the laws put in place by the government to fight discrimination against persons with disabilities will be futile if the affected victims are not aware of their rights to begin with. On this, it is recommended that the various states across the country should be proactive in the enactment of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities Prohibition Laws.
3. Expanding upon the earlier recommendation, it is crucial for all institutions to embrace inclusive education policies. This approach

empowers individuals with disabilities to acknowledge their intrinsic worth and the valuable contributions that they can make to societal progress. Furthermore, educational establishments should integrate mandatory programmes, such as sign language, into their curricula and course materials to enhance effective communication with students who possess disabilities. Traditional practices of segregating students with disabilities or delivering separate instruction can have adverse effects on a student's self-esteem. By embracing inclusive education, institutions can play a vital role in fostering self-confidence in every student.

4. Strengthen legal frameworks: The government should continue enforcing and strengthening legal frameworks that protect the rights of individuals with disabilities, including the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act. This should also include addressing gender-based discrimination and ensuring that the law protects women and girls with disabilities.
5. Ensure representation in politics: Political parties and organisations should actively seek to include women and girls with disabilities in the political landscape. Special measures and support systems should be established to enable their participation in decision-making processes.
6. Advocate for intersectional rights: Recognise and address the unique challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities, considering the intersection of gender and disability. Policies and programmes should be tailored to provide specific support for this marginalised group.
7. Participate in international agreements: Nigeria should actively participate in international agreements and conventions related to the rights of individuals with disabilities and women. Commitment to these agreements is essential for promoting and protecting the rights of marginalised groups.
8. Data collection and research: Conduct comprehensive research and data collection to understand the specific needs, challenges, and experiences of women and girls with disabilities in Nigeria. This data can inform evidence-based policies and programmes to address their unique concerns.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this research was to investigate the educational displacement rights of women and girl children with disabilities in Nigeria and to emphasise the importance of representation for the physically challenged women in politics and governance. Education is important to the development of every child in society. Every child, regardless of their gender or disabilities, is entitled to education. The rights of women and girls

with disabilities in Nigeria are a vital aspect of achieving social, political, economic, equity and justice. However, it is unfortunate that PwDs, especially women, face both environmental and attitudinal obstacles that hinder their participation in society. Many of them encounter social exclusion, which results in living in poverty and being unable to contribute to the development of society. Besides the prevalent issue of educational segregation that women and girl children with disabilities often endure, another concerning problem is their exclusion from political participation and governance in their local communities. They are also frequently marginalised in the realm of political administration.

Therefore, in addition to concerns about election violence, individuals who use wheelchairs, those who are blind, and those who are deaf, may encounter significant challenges in reaching polling stations. Even if they manage to get to the polling stations, they may not have access to interpreters to assist them in casting their votes for their preferred parties and candidates. Consequently, persons with disabilities, especially women, are excluded both directly and indirectly from being elected during elections because of their vulnerable state. This exclusion arises because political parties are generally hesitant to nominate women, and talk more of those with disabilities for elective positions, whether at the national or international level.

Given this context, a thorough examination of both Nigerian and international legal frameworks has been undertaken to combat exclusionary and discriminatory practices against women with disabilities in Nigeria. Thus, given the prevailing situation where the rights of individuals with disabilities have not been adequately acknowledged within Nigeria, the urgent need for dedicated legislation to safeguard these rights has become increasingly evident. The ultimate goal for female students with disabilities should be to guarantee their equitable access to opportunities that facilitate successful outcomes in education, employment, and societal integration. While progress has been made in recognising their rights and implementing supportive policies, there is still much work to be performed. Continued advocacy, awareness, and collaboration amongst government, civil society, and international organisations will play a crucial role in furthering the rights and inclusion of these vulnerable groups, ensuring that they can fully participate in and contribute to Nigerian society. It is the collective responsibility of the nation to protect and empower all its citizens, regardless of gender or disability.

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Chapter 24

Social Exclusion of Women with Disabilities: Implication for Policy Options

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Abstract

Social exclusion of women with disabilities has remained widespread, despite their roles in society. As nation-builders, women with disabilities are excluded in many ways, especially socially, politically, and economically, despite their political and economic contributions to nation-building. The social model of Disability Theory was used for the study. The study utilised mixed methods for data collection. A uniform level of analysis was employed for the quantitative data, while content analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. Results from the study indicated that disability is a social construct and one of the challenges facing human beings in the world. In every aspect of their lives, women with disabilities are faced with significant challenges that may result in depression and frustration if adequate attention is not given to them. The study also found that exclusion from political participation, employment, governance, and the negative attitude of the public towards people with disabilities were considered the major issues contributing to the exclusion of women living with disabilities. The study also revealed that asking for alms was viewed as a supplement to other survival strategies. Based on these findings, this study concludes that women with disabilities are marginalised and face severe social exclusion because of cultural and societal beliefs. The study recommends that social inclusion of

women with disabilities in all aspects be advocated as a means of reducing exclusion amongst them.

Keywords: Disability, Nigeria, Social Exclusion, Social Inclusion, Nigeria

Introduction

Women are the nation's builders, but despite playing a crucial role in our society, they are vulnerable and face many difficult life situations. Women constitute almost half of the world population, and they account for a sizeable portion of the labour force (Bharti, 2021). In many societies, women often take on significant roles, including those of mothers, producers, home administrators, community organisers, and political and sociocultural societal activists. In Africa, women and girls with disabilities experience prejudice on numerous levels because of their age, gender, and disability. Almost 15% of the world's population – men and women – is made up of people with impairments (WHO, 2011).

Disability means any form of physical or mental condition that restricts a person's way of life. It ranges from visual impairments and lameness to complex intellectual or mental health challenges. Research reveals that about 15% of the world's population suffers from various forms of disability (WHO, 2011). The number is expected to keep increasing because of continuing conflicts, terrorism, hunger, and ageing populations. People with disabilities are usually discriminated against in virtually everything, including education and employment. Of the majority of people who are living with disabilities, about 80% reside in developing countries, and globally, women and girls with disabilities account for about 20% of all women and more than half of all people with disabilities (Omolawal & Obisesan, 2022). For example, women who are living with disabilities are twice as likely to be illiterate, three times as likely to have unmet needs, twice as likely to be unemployed, and twice as likely to not have access to the Internet. Amongst those who are employed, women with disabilities are two times less likely to hold positions of authority or management (Mahmood et al., 2022). The majority of women with disabilities are undereducated, untrained, unemployed, and ill, making them the worst-off in society. People with disabilities are nevertheless excluded from human rights privileges like employment, the right to marry and own property, the ability to establish a bank account, the right to vote, legal competence, education, and the right to live (Jobodwana & Tshifhumulo, 2021).

However, despite their significant contributions, women with disabilities continue to face inadequate representation and limited opportunities to work and pursue their careers. In Nigeria, people with

disabilities make up a larger percentage of the population than the worldwide percentage of people with disabilities. According to the global survey on disability conducted in 2018 (UNESCO, 2018), over 25 million Nigerians have at least one impairment, with 3.6 million having major mobility difficulties. Despite this large number, people with disabilities are often deprived of full and effective participation in society on an equal footing with others (Mbada et al., 2022). In Nigeria, as across the world, some measures have been taken to address the needs of those with disabilities. The ratification of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019) was a necessary step forward in January 2019. However, implementation has not happened yet. In order to lessen their dependence and promote their social and economic development, it is critical to take care of women with impairments. The inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream decision-making is a major problem because over 90% of the population still sees these individuals as deserving of assistance, maintenance, and other humanitarian efforts rather than as active members of society who contribute to the growth of their country (Haruna, 2017). Unfortunately, notwithstanding the efforts made by international organisations like the United Nations, other regional organisations, and numerous governments to create and enact laws intended to guarantee the rights of people with impairments throughout the world, this has not been adequately realised in Oyo State, South West Nigeria, hence this study. The main objectives of this study are to investigate social exclusion amongst women with disabilities and its implications for policy options. The study is crucial because it concurs with the time that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015) have given conservable attention to social exclusion. The introduction, theoretical framework, empirical review, methodology results and discussion, conclusion, and recommendation make up the structure of this study.

Theoretical framework

The study was based on the social model of Disability Theory, which aims at influencing society to make room for those who have impairments. People with disabilities established the social model of disability, which is a process of viewing the world. The theory posits that people become impaired because of societal barriers like the absence of ramps or accessible lavatories in buildings or because of other people's attitudes, such as the idea that people with disabilities cannot perform specific activities. This paradigm sees disability as a social construct rather than a personal trait. The social model states that people's limitations are not the cause of disability. Instead, it is society's inability to provide the proper services and effectively guarantee that

the needs of people with disabilities are taken into consideration in societal organisation. Similarly, Ngubane-Mokiwa (2018) states that treatment of people with disabilities is not cast in stone but can be renegotiated and restructured through community engagement to represent genuine inclusion. He stresses further that society denies impaired people access to fundamental social services, preventing them from reaching their full potential and exercising their rights. In a similar vein, Haruna (2017) claims that the social model seeks to rescue and emancipate people with disabilities and positively empower them to overcome any barriers to their involvement in society. By actively carrying out the tasks required of them as lawmakers, the legislature should assist disabled people in achieving full participation in their communities so that they can live and work independently.

Empirical review

Recent years have seen an increase in the number of studies on people with disabilities conducted around the globe. Disability necessitates a complete role reorientation on the part of the person.

Gomathi's (2021) research on *The social exclusion of women with disabilities in Sivagangai district: A gender analysis*, a descriptive and analytical research design, was used for the study. A mixed method of data collection was employed to collect the data. The data was analysed at uniform levels. The result of the study shows that a large majority of the respondents (72.5%) are facing problems because of disabilities. Also, about 45% of them face discrimination in their houses. In fact, 10% of them are not aware of their legislative rights. The study concluded that the consequences of disability have an impact at personal, interpersonal, family, and social levels. The study also concluded that governments need to enhance their coordination to enhance the quality of life of disabled women.

An inclusive future for promoting disability inclusion was studied by Thompson et al. (2021). They advocate for disability inclusion. In order to find comprehensive information regarding their perceptions of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, a narrative interview technique was used. The study revealed that the experiences of persons with disabilities in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic were essentially a common outcome. In other words, they had basically the same experience. The study also shows that the pandemic and government responses to it had further marginalised people with disabilities in Nigeria. The study recommends that inclusive approaches be implemented in order to ensure that attitudes towards people with disabilities should be averted in order to overcome current difficulties and potential future crises. This study erroneously concludes that

government responses to PwDs are unfavourable to them without taking into account the fact that some state governments have a soft spot for the person with disabilities.

Kalidasan and Sivakumar (2020) studied *The collision of COVID-19: Livelihood analysis of women with disabilities through a gender lens*. The study was guided by Feminist Theory. The study was qualitative, and found that women who are affected by disabilities are faced with multiple challenges, such as lack of opportunities for education, a lack of legal capacity, access to community support services, lack of accessible communication and information, inadequate healthcare, a lack of employment, attitudinal barriers, and so on. The study concluded that the COVID-19 precautionary measures, such as limitations and differentiated local responses, amongst others, led to difficulties and unpleasant experiences for women with disabilities in their daily lives.

Adwoman (2019) examined the realities of life with disability in Ibadan, Nigeria. The study employed an exploratory design. The study was qualitative in nature and was an ethnographic study. The study came to the conclusion that there is a need for facilities and services that will improve and simplify the lives of women with disabilities. The study also suggested that there is a need for access to everything that individuals without disabilities have, and the government should be able to provide them with these things.

Haruna (2017) conducted research on the problems of living with disability in Nigeria. Data for this study was gathered from a documentary source. The medical model and the social model of disability were chosen as the theoretical frameworks for the study. The study revealed that the majority of individuals in their community, including the government, discriminate against people with disabilities. The study also found that the majority of those living with disability have negative experiences with appropriate training, social exclusion, sustainable and reliable empowerment, employment, and participation in decision-making on matters that directly affect their lives, such as lack of access to public facilities.

Methodology

A cross-sectional survey design was used for the study. This study was conducted in Oyo State, South West Nigeria. The population for the study comprised four clusters of people with disabilities (physically challenged, vision-impaired (blind), albinism, and hearing-impaired) aged 18 years and older, literate in English, and able to give informed consent. The number of respondents was calculated using Taro Yamane's (1973) formula. For the study, a total of forty respondents was chosen. Both quantitative and

qualitative data collection techniques were used. These encompassed the focus group discussions (FGDs), the questionnaire, and key informant interviews (KII). Different methods of data collection were used to ensure that the limitations of one form of data collection were balanced by the strengths of another. Copies of questionnaires were administered to 40 women with disabilities. The questionnaire schedule was structured into two sections. The first section was designed to obtain information on the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. The other sections were structured to raise questions about the other objectives, which included examining the forms of social exclusion suffered by women with disabilities in the study area, exploring the challenges faced by women with disabilities in the study area, and investigating their coping mechanisms.

For the qualitative data, the complementary instruments used in the study involved six to eight FGDs, guides and the five KIIs. The FGDs allowed the participants to share their opinions on the subject of the study. While the KIIs guide was also utilised to gather information from the key officers of the women living with disabilities, qualitative data was used to supplement the data gathered from the questionnaire, and comments from the interviews were quoted directly to emphasise key aspects. Five KIIs were conducted. Four KIIs were conducted with the key officers of women living with disabilities. One key officer was selected from the welfare department of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Inclusion in Oyo State, making a total of five KIIs. Two different KII schedules were designed to collect information from the women with disabilities' executive members and the officials of the ministry. This is to elicit information on their experiences with people with disabilities. The officers were chosen based on their in-depth managerial skills, competence, experience, knowledge, and involvement in the activities of the PwDs. The KIIs also assisted the researchers in gaining practical experience with the topic under investigation. The questions were structured and unstructured to give room for adequate exploration and to adjust the questions based on a respondent's condition of response. The interviews were conducted at the appropriate venues of their choice. This study also adopted two approaches to data analysis: a quantitative and a qualitative approach. The quantitative data collected was coded and analysed at a univariate level, comprising descriptive statistics (percentage score, frequency distribution, tables, and charts). Descriptive statistics were used because of their ability to distribute the respondents according to the various values of the study variables. Similarly, both quantitative and qualitative data was also triangulated for better research results with the support of the IBM® SPSS® Statistics software package.

The qualitative data was collected through KIIs and **FGDs** and were transcribed, translated, and analysed using content analysis and the descriptive method. The data was used to supplement the questionnaire data, and where necessary, comments from the interviews were quoted verbatim to highlight important points.

Results and discussion of findings

Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

This section offers information on the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, sex of respondents, age, occupation, marital status, education, living arrangement, level of income, and number of children as depicted in the figures and tables below:

Table 27 depicts the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics. For the sex of the respondents, 100% of the population was female. This infers that the study comprises a female population. This may also be the belief that women are amongst the most vulnerable groups in society. The table also shows that 50% of the respondents were not married, 25% were married, 7.5% were widowed, 5% were divorced, and 12.5% were separated. This denotes that the high number of unmarried respondents may be attributed to the challenges faced by women with disabilities. This is also an indication that Nigeria is a patriarchal society where men are not prepared to marry a woman with a disability. Similarly, according to the Advocacy for Women with Disabilities Initiative organisation (AWWDI), women with disabilities are seen as less qualified for marriage because they are thought to be asexual, incapable of giving birth, and unable to perform basic household duties. These perceptions make them appear to be unable to fulfil their gendered roles as wives and mothers. In fact, spouses who are unable to deal with the perceived shame associated with disability may desert wives who become disabled during their marriage.

Badran et al. (2022) assert that gender is an important factor, with women with disabilities experiencing greater stigma and unfavourable conditions than men with disabilities. On the education side, the table reveals the distribution of the respondents: the majority (37.5%) have no access to inclusive education; 27.5% studied in primary school; 20% attended secondary school; and 15% had a tertiary education certificate. This result supports Thompson (2019), who confirms that obstacles to accessing education for persons with disabilities comprise long and difficult commutes, poverty and high school prices, unfavourable attitudes and stigma, inaccessible infrastructure, and a lack of professional support services.

According to Morakinyo et al. (2018), disabled persons should be given equal chances, such as access to education, without facing any prejudice based on their impairments. The educational level is a very critical factor in women with disabilities' programmes and support in order for them to be effective. This result also indicated that the low level of education experienced by the respondents can serve as a barrier to their full participation in society. In terms of religion, the table shows that Christians constituted 42.5% and Muslims 32.5%. 5% stated that they do not belong to any religion, while 20% belong to an African traditional religion. A close look at the table shows that the respondents practice two major religions in Nigeria (Christianity and Islam). The result depicts that through religion, the majority of them developed their confidence in God, believing that everything would be well notwithstanding their problems and the ill-treatment that they received from the general public. Religion gave them hope and the capacity to stay in their condition. In terms of the age of the respondents, the result indicated that 20% of the respondents were between 26 and 40 years old, showing a working population amongst the respondents. This further shows that the respondents can contribute their own quota for the development of the economy if a chance to participate is given to them.

On the occupation of the respondents, the findings showed that about 45% had no job. 32.5% were self-employed, 5% were engaged by private firms, and 17.5% were employed by the government. From the table, unemployment posed the highest percentage, indicating that the majority of the respondents have nothing to do for a living. This result may be attributed to a disability. This revelation may also be attributed to the societal attitude towards people living with disabilities. This result supports the European Institute on Gender Equality's published data in 2021 (EIGE, 2021), which reported that 20% of women with disabilities were employed full-time in the EU (European Union) in 2021, compared to 28% of men with disabilities and 49% of women without disabilities as against 65% of men without disabilities in full-time employment (the full-time employment rate takes into account the higher incidence of part-time employment amongst women and is obtained by comparing each worker's average number of hours worked with the average number of hours worked by a full-time worker). The lack of employment opportunity amongst women with disabilities is crucial and needs urgent attention to enable them to properly have a sense of belonging in society.

Table 27 also shows the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics. A critical investigation was carried out on the number of children who belonged to the respondents. The table shows that the respondents have two to four children to cater for. 68% of the total

population sampled had zero to two children, showing a low number of children. This may be because of the limited resources at their disposal as well as their condition. The table also shows that about 25% had up to four children. It was learned during the focus group discussion that the number of children was as a result of sexual abuse and also to serve as caregivers or their guides, especially the visually impaired and physically challenged groups. An investigation was carried out on the level of income of the respondents. It was discovered that 25% of the respondents earned less than N20,000, while the majority, 45%, earned between N20,000 and N39,999; 22.5% of the respondents earned between N40,000 and N59,999; 5% earned within the range of N60,000 to N79,999; and 2.5% earned N80,000 and above. These findings support Catalyst's (2020a) assertion that although women comprise 39% of the global workforce, pay disparities persist across all levels and nations, with women earning on average, 32% less than their male counterparts. However, with the present situation of the Nigerian economy, what the majority of them earn as monthly income is insufficient to provide for themselves and their families. For example, the results revealed that only 2.5% of the respondents earn N80,000 or more as their monthly income, which is so injurious to their condition. This shows that women with impairments had lower incomes. Additionally, this prohibits women from living a normal life and has an impact on their basic needs. On the living arrangements, the table indicates that 15% of the respondents are living with their spouse; 22.5% live with their children; 40% live with their family; 12.5% live alone; and 10% live in a charity home.

Table 27: Socio-demographic & socio-cultural Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex of the respondents		
Male	0	0.0
Female	40	100
Total	40	100
Age in years		
20-25	5	12.5
26-30	8	20
30-35	15	37.5
36-40	5	12.5
40 above	7	17.5
Total	40	100

Women Representation in Governance in Nigeria

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Educational status		
No formal education	15	37.5
Primary school	11	27.5
Secondly school	8	20
Tertiary education	6	15
Total	40	100
Marital status		
Never married	20	50
Married	10	25
Widowed	3	7.5
Divorced	2	5
Separated	5	12.5
Total	40	100
Occupation		
Employed by government	7	17.5
Employed by private firm	2	5
Self-employed	13	32.5
Unemployed	18	45
Total	40	100
Religion		
No religion	2	5
Christian	17	42.5
Muslim	13	32.5
African traditional religion	8	20
Total	40	100
Number of Children		
0-2	27	67.5
2-4	10	25
4 and above	3	7.5
Total	40	100
Level of Income (per month)		
Less than 20000	10	25
20000-39999	18	45
40000-59999	9	22.5
60000-79999	2	5
80000 above	1	2.5
Total	40	100
Living Arrangement		
With spouse/partner	6	15
With children	9	22.5
With family	16	40
Alone	5	12.5
Charitable home	4	10
Total	40	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Forms of social exclusion amongst the women with disabilities

Figure 18 presents the forms of social exclusion through which women with disabilities are socially excluded amongst the respondents. These include economic exclusion at 17%, social exclusion at 27%, political exclusion at 18%, service exclusion at 25%, and gender inequality at 13%. These results show that women living with disabilities are faced with so many challenges that prevent them from playing an active role in society. For the qualitative information, it was found that on social exclusion, the respondents were not usually involved in social interaction and community activities. On the economic aspect, it was discovered that a lack of resources and low income reduced the standard of living. Lack of access to financial aid and a lack of jobs were most experienced by women. In terms of political activities, they were not seen anywhere. In social services, they lack access to medical care, public buildings, etc., the exclusion is within all four clusters of social exclusion used in the study. From the figure, social exclusion posed the highest percentage, depicting that people's approaches towards women with disabilities are one of the most challenging conditions for women living with disabilities. This revelation is consistent with O'Grady and Howard's (2010) assertion that individuals with disabilities are the most socially excluded and underprivileged members of society (cited in Omolawal & Obisesan, 2019). Additionally, one of the main causes of social exclusion is gender inequality. The perception of disabled women as having inferior status is common and is reinforced by societal norms and beliefs. These findings also contradict the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), which mandates that all groups of people should be treated equally and justly. Therefore, it is expected that public buildings will be constructed to meet everyone's accessibility demands. This will guarantee that everyone has the chance to find a suitable job and engage in social activities. This finding is also not in line with the Nigerian Gender Policy, which guarantees 35% affirmative action for Nigerian women. This result was further stressed by a respondent, who stated thus:

"I am a civil servant, I went to school and made a very good result but because I am a woman and also a physically challenged person. My school denied me the opportunity to be the head of my department for many years because of my condition. The issue lingered for years, transferring from one school to another until the matter wants to gets to the state governor and they became afraid that if care is not taken their job may be affected and that was when I was given the post. Even my fellow women were against me. Because of disability my junior has been my boss for four to five years. I suffered but I thank God for today (KII / female/).

This result should be attributed to attritional behaviour towards PwDs by society. A respondent explained thus:

Ha! We are not finding life easy ooo! We suffer a lot here, like we the physically challenged persons, vehicles do not like to carry us because of our condition. Even when they want, they always complain of space where we will put our wheelchair or crutches. Even the vehicle design did not favour us at all. It is a problem. (KII / female / physically challenged).

A respondent stated thus:

“When we go out, they lie to us that where we are going to a far place due our condition. For example, I was coming for this meeting and the rider who brought me to this place told me that it is very far and charged me high price, I told him that I know where I am going and that it is a “stone throw” he left me and I stood there for a long time when God brought the one that is manageable. We are not pleased the way and manner the society is seeing us. Sometimes, we need to cross road to do one thing or the other you will never see any one rendering help. Are we the one that choose to be in this condition? God show us mercy. The only solution is that we wait for our bill to be signed so that our problems will be reduced by the grace of God. (FGDs / female / vision impaired)

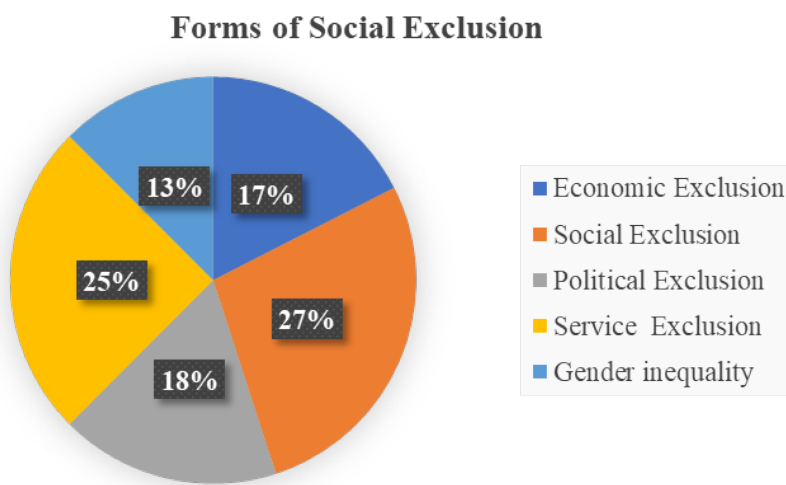


Figure 18: Forms of Social exclusion amongst the women living with disabilities. Source: Field Survey.

Challenges faced by the women with disabilities

Disability is a global challenge. Despite the fact that both men and women experience the aggravation of living with a condition, women are more likely to become disabled. In the patriarchal society of Nigeria, men are favoured above women. There is a preference for disabled men over women. Regarding their social, economic, political, and health situations, they are the most marginalised. They are not regarded as a group that society should prioritise. In Nigeria, politics has historically been an empire dominated by older men who are usually wealthy, which has led to the political exclusion of women from political discussion and choices. Notwithstanding that Nigerian women count for about half the country's population, they occupy less than a quarter of the political seats in the National Assembly. Their contribution remains a subtle issue in the various zones of the country. To build an operative democracy, the participation of people at the local level is critical, yet this is where women usually lack the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. Women with disabilities in Nigeria are subject to double discrimination because of their age, ethnicity, and gender, which results in additional tasks for them compared to men. Because this age range is typically connected with marriage or parenthood aspirations, age eligibility rules for candidates (such as being between 25 and 30 years old) may be harmful to women's efforts to run for office. The result revealed that 25% of the respondents were having challenges accessing the social services meant for the general public, 20% for marital status, 10% for sexual abuse, 15% for accessing healthcare services, getting employment recorded, and 12.5% for inclusive education. These findings are a result of being excluded from fully participating in society. To stress this further, a respondent from the focus group discussion responded:

“in terms of marriage, I am a 43 years old graduate without a job and a husband. It was before that I was thinking of husband but not now. I have resigned to faith. I face sexual abuse. They only need me to warm their beds and not for marriage. I am facing all these challenges because of disability. Let me ask you a question, will you allow your brother to marry me? It is not easy for us especially the vision impaired! (FGDs / female / vision impaired)”.

A respondent explained:

that even if a man wants to marry us, the family will never accept such a woman if he insists, they man will be disowned by the family. May God help us? Ha! We are not finding life easyooo! (FGDs / female / vision impaired).

A hearing-impaired respondent lamented thus:

we face abuse everywhere because we cannot hear any sound unless we see it with our own eyes. Insult upon insult. hospital, public transport, religious organisation, there is no interpreter, we find it difficult to express ourselves to the doctor and other places that we need assistance We need public interpreter for us to be fully integrated in society. (FGDs / female / hearing impaired).

An albino lamented that her two children are also albinos:

Every time I do go to quench fight because of my children. They face abuse and physical assault. At school, they don't see well on the chalk board and teachers are not doing anything about their problem. People said that we not physically challenged but we are suffering a lot. We lack employment, inclusive education, marital issues etc. Sometimes they call me 'moon'. In some areas we are seen as sprit. We are not welcomed in some area at all. (KII / female / albinism).

This result revealed that women with disabilities experience limited opportunities in terms of inclusive education, employment, marriage, and health services. The situation for women with disabilities is worsening amongst the disabled population because of disability across cultures. This result also supports Tade's (2021) assertion that negative social construction by the families' spouses, neighbours, and others was caused by culture and religious beliefs about disability and led to multiple victimisations with harmful consequences for the lives of people living with disabilities.

Challenges faced by the women with disabilities

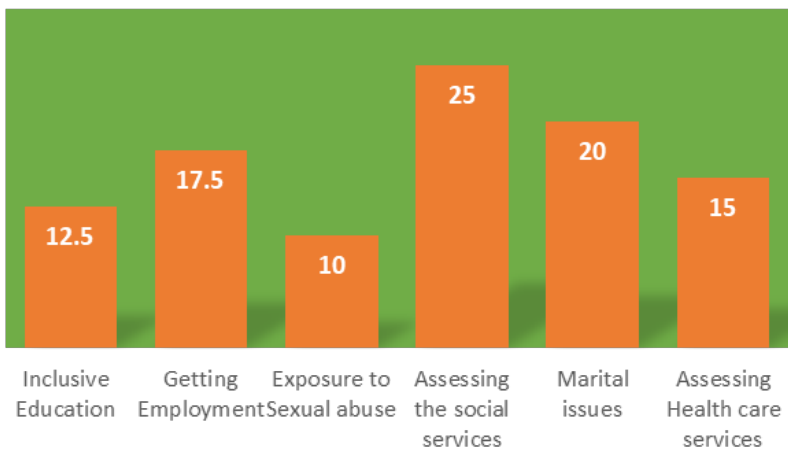


Figure 19: Responses of respondents on challenges of women living with disability. Source: Field Survey.

Coping mechanisms amongst women with disability.

On the coping mechanisms for women with disabilities, this includes remittances, charity, begging for alms, self-reliance, religious organisations, and pensions. As indicated in Figure 19, about 50% of the respondents recorded begging for alms to support themselves and keep their lives going. Dependency on charity is 20%; pensions are recorded at 5%; assistance from religious organisations constitutes 7.5%; remittances are 5%; and individual self-help is recorded at 12.5% as a survival mechanism for their livelihood. The findings indicate that the respondents considered depending on charity as a major means of coping with disability. This result supports what was experienced from the respondents' characteristics, where the age of the respondents showed a working population, and it is also evident that about 13% were able to care for themselves despite these conditions. That also showed that they lack employment opportunities; this may be why those relying on pensions for survival stood at 5%. This result implies that the respondents need to be provided with jobs so as to live a meaningful life. This result was also supported by the respondents, who affirm:

“We resorted to begging because of the condition we find ourselves. it is not easy for us especially now that the country is facing financial crises. We need to design the means of coping with our circumstances instead of receiving sympathy and pity from the society. (FGDs / female / vision-impaired / 2022).

Another respondent added thus:

it is not easy for those of us with coloured skin, there is nothing for us to protect ourselves from harsh sun. Look at me, my skin looks like somebody that was gutted by fire.

Another respondent stated thus:

Mobility is our challenge, most of us find it difficult because of wheelchair or crutches. I took my child to the hospital for treatment, there is no means us to enter the place. It’s a serious challenge because we cannot access health facilities and even social services like roads. The roads are bad for us to the wheel chair. (FGDs / female / physically challenged).

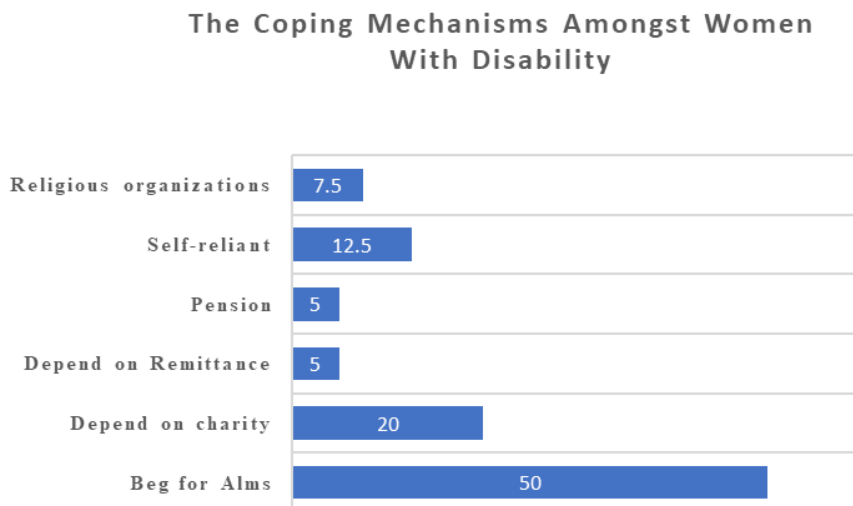


Figure 20: Responses of respondents on the coping mechanisms amongst women with disability. Source: Field Survey.

Lessons from other countries about people with disabilities

Addressing the vulnerability of people with disabilities has been at the core of the UN development system. This emphasis is consistent with the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, which see gender equality as an essential component of a future that is peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable (UN, 2015: SDG 5). It is important to learn lessons from other countries to emulate the way forward.

In Australia, the National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 (DSS, 2010) was established to enhance the lives of Australians with disabilities, their families, and careers through a unified, national approach to disability policy and programme development on the significance of making inclusive development for people living with disabilities (PwDs) more comprehensive, covering all aspects of life. Nigeria can learn from the Australian government.

The Nigerian government can also learn from the Ugandan government, which has established a Special Grant for Persons with Disabilities within the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD) (MGLSD, 2022) to assist people with disabilities in their efforts to generate money. This aims to provide employment, raise income levels, and make it possible for people with disabilities to participate actively in the development process. In Uganda, people with disabilities had also been elected as members of Parliament. The legal framework recognised the rights of people with disabilities and offered the fundamental rules and regulations to solve their issues.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's 2016–2021 Strategy for the Advancement of Rights and Status of PWD (FZS, 2017), which covered all aspects such as healthcare, education, accessibility, vocational rehabilitation and employment, and social protection through financial support, is another example of comprehensive social inclusion for PwDs that is modelled after UN Convention I.

Lessons from other African countries on women's representation and participation in politics

In taking measures towards gender representation, it is necessary to consider the policies and programmes available in other African countries to pull out valuable lessons that can be emulated.

South Africa

In South Africa, in efforts to guarantee that women are represented in the South African parliament, three forms were involved: namely, women's parties, draft legislation requiring gender equality in political parties, and the voluntary adoption of quotas by the African National Congress (ANC). South Africa has 45.61% women in its parliament as of 2022, which

is commendable when compared to Nigeria. They also recorded a level of women's participation above 40%.

Zimbabwe

Because of women's difficulties in accessing financial credit and other opportunities, the Zimbabwean government established the Zimbabwe Women's Microfinance Bank in 2018 (AFI, 2021). This initiative aims to support women entrepreneurs. By doing this, women can receive assistance in participating in political activities. In Zimbabwe, women also held roughly 30.57% of the seats in parliament, compared to only 3.91% in Nigeria.

Kenya

The Kenyan Constitution of 2010 (Parliament of Kenya, 2010) acknowledges women by way of establishing special seats for women in the parliament, which resulted in the election of 47 women into the National Assembly, the nomination of 16 women by political parties, and the appointment of 1 woman to represent the youth and persons with disabilities.

Rwanda

In Rwanda, women held over 60% of seats in the national parliament. In Africa, the country had the strongest female participation in politics. Globally, it was ranked as the first and best-performing country concerning female representation (IPU, 2019). It has the highest percentage of women in power in the parliament of any other country.

Namibia

In 1997, the Namibian government implemented the National Plan of Action (NPAC) (Republic of Namibia, 2019) and the National Gender Policy (NGP) (Republic of Namibia, 2020) to tackle gender disparities, which were ratified in 1998. The Namibian government has made significant progress and established gender cells in each office, ministry, and agency. The proportion of women in parliament rose from 25% to 47%. There have also been parliamentary discussions focusing on gender issues. There was gender sensitivity training for the legislators. In 2022, the Namibian government allocated N\$5.4 billion (or 9.2% of the overall budget) to gender-responsive budgeting for the country's annual budget.

Uganda

The Ugandan government has implemented five programmes to increase women's emancipation: The Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) (MGLSD,

2014), the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) (MGLSD, 2015a), and the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) (MGLSD, 2015b). This is to enable women to participate fully in society. In Uganda, a total of 34.9% of seats in parliament were occupied by women. There are more and more governmental and non-governmental institutions fighting for women's representation in politics. Even researchers and decision-makers are aware that in order for countries to truly experience nation-building, women must be mobilised and given the opportunity to participate in the development process. Their development must be considered distinct from that of men.

Conclusion

Disability is a social construct and one of the challenges facing human beings in the world. People living with disabilities constitute a significant number in our society, including women with disabilities. Women with disabilities are faced with significant challenges in every aspect of their lives, that may result in depression and frustration if adequate attention is not given to them. In Nigeria, people with disabilities are the most disadvantaged group, of which women with disabilities are the worst-hit. The situation of women with disabilities is in line with Connie Laurin-Bowie's (2015) assertion that to recognise the reason that disabled people continue to be amongst the most disadvantaged people in the world, we must ponder how people with disabilities are seen by the public and policymakers and how development policy addresses disability. Social policy is required to increase public awareness and reduce misconceptions regarding disability. This will encourage women with disabilities to reach their potential.

Policy suggestion

- Creating public awareness about disability problems would help to reduce the stigma and unfavourable attitudes that the general public has towards women who live with disabilities. The general public should see people with disabilities more favourably. Women ought to be seen as an integral part of society. The general public needs to be made aware that there is ability in disability and that people with disabilities should not face discrimination. They should be treated with respect.
- There should be inclusive education in our society since it is the cornerstone of a society that values diversity. At the same time, winning the battle against prejudice and discrimination requires both integration and early human rights education for children. If they are given the required assistance, the majority of impaired children can participate in regular education.

- The government at all levels should make social services accessible to women living with disabilities so as to meet their needs. This will enable them to be more fully integrated into society.
- The educated ones amongst women with disabilities should have access to employment opportunities in order to help them manage their condition.
- The Disability Act, which has become a global concern and has been signed in Nigeria, should be signed and implemented in Oyo State. This will enable them to be fully integrated in society.

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PART 5

Access to Education, Health, Technology and Women's Representation in Governance

Chapter 25

Ecofeminism and Girl Child Education in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

One of the current issues in the Nigerian educational system has been implementing policies that will address people's environmental, psychological, social, and material demands. The implications of inadequate implementation of Nigerian educational policies for educational development, particularly as it affects the future of the girl child in the Northern part of the country, are imperative. There have been several incidences of kidnapping and abduction, particularly in Northern Nigeria, and there appears to be no end in sight to this dreadful menace. The qualitative approach of in-depth interviews, media reports, and reconstructive argumentation is used in this research. The findings exposed the government's insensitivity to some critical environmental measures, particularly in schools. They highlighted the interconnectedness of safety, security, and schoolgirls, specifically the strategies that could be implemented to ensure a safe teaching and learning environment. It proposes an ecofeminist philosophical position to address the neglect of environmental learning infrastructures, reflected in the series of abduction and sexual abuses of schoolgirls, particularly in Northern Nigeria. The study recommended a review of the Educational Policy in Nigeria and its implementation in a bid to ensure adequate security measures for the girl child such that an egalitarian society is achieved.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Educational Policies, Egalitarian, Girl child, School Safety

Introduction

It has been acknowledged globally that education is one of the most profitable investments a family, community, society, country and nation can make because it is life-changing. This awareness stems from the recognition of the values of education that help to develop an individual's full potential, irrespective of age, status or gender, in a world where concepts such as justice, equality, leadership or even a good healthcare system are believed to be foundational to the running of an ideal society. Educating a girl child can kick-start a virtuous development circle. Numerous studies have shown that educated girls are less likely to marry early, have healthier children, earn more money, invest it back into their families and communities, and actively participate in the leadership of their communities and nations (King & Winthrop, 2015). Achieving gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment via high-quality education is one of the sustainable development objectives, specifically the fourth, which addresses both the present and the future (UN, 2015a).

At the 4th United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (UN, 1995), the relationship between women and the environment was firmly established on a global scale. The discussion of 'women and the environment' was one of the conference's important areas of concern. All people live in cultures that strongly emphasise nature's dominance. King (1987) highlights that as Western civilisation and the scientific revolution developed, nature was dominated by constructing nuclear power plants without any provisions for waste disposal and launching satellites into space without any plans for retrieval. This is supported by Merchant (1960), who states that nature was depleted of her abilities and attributes and reduced to natural resources to be exploited by man. She argues further that this scientific revolution which she called 'the death of nature', had a detrimental effect on women. This could be a significant fact for women because, since women are believed to be closer to nature, it is a starting point to end the domination of nature. Consequently, if society ceases to alter nature, then there will be an end to the domination of women by men; in the same vein, this study identifies the improvement of some environmental factors that are necessary for ensuring the safety and security of schoolgirls as a possible way of ending insecurity and violence against schoolgirls. While it is critical to provide great education for schoolgirls, environmental aspects should be implemented to improve their safety and security (UNICEF, 2006).

Advocacy on education for the girl child has also been on the increase in recent times to ensure better lives for girls across Africa. There have been efforts by individuals and governments to ensure that the girl child is not denied her right to quality education. Children contribute significantly to

the nation's human resource and can be optimally enhanced by providing a safe and appropriate educational environment. The benefits of educating a girl child must be balanced. Therefore, it is important to take all measures to ensure the safety and security of schoolgirls. Barr et al. (2009) argue that providing children with a secure educational setting is commonly thought of as safeguarding and that it is the responsibility of adults to ensure a secure physical setting for children's learning. For instance, Akiba et al. (2002) point out that the safety and security of schoolgirls enhances their interest in learning and increases their enrolment in school.

The problem of insecurity of schoolgirls through kidnap and abduction has remained persistent, especially in Nigeria, and there seems to be no clue to ending this worrisome menace. Safety, which involves eliminating physical harm, and security as a state of not being threatened physically or emotionally eluded most schoolgirls in some parts of Nigeria, raising the fundamental question of the importance that Nigerian society attaches to the safety and security of the schoolgirls, drawing from the experience of Chibok Girls Borno State, Dapchi Yobe State, Kankare, Katsina State, Kagara, Niger State and Jangebe, Zamfara State.

This chapter explores recurrent challenges of the safety and security of schoolgirls in Northern Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative method utilising interview method, media reports, and reconstructive philosophical argumentation from the feminist lens to juxtapose ecofeminism and the safety and security of schoolgirls in Northern Nigeria. The chapter is segmented into five sub-headings: Educational policies and their challenges in Nigeria; the second section discusses the conceptualisation of ecofeminism; the next section of the chapter explains ensuring the safety and security of schoolgirls from an ecofeminist perspective; the next section highlights why the safety and security of schoolgirls is imperative, while the last section is the recommendations and concluding section.

Educational policies and their challenges in Nigeria

Educational policies could be defined as the judgements and guiding concepts that affect how education is practised as well as the body of legislation and regulations that control how educational systems are operated. In other words, the Nigerian government has had several policies on education from time to time. The Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) was launched in Norway in May 2015 (UN, 2015b). The SSD was intended to give countries with an incentive to declare support for safeguarding learners, instructors and learning environments from violence. In the declaration, frameworks and suggestions for successfully preventing assaults on educational institutions,

safeguarding educational facilities and pupils, and responding to and lessening the effects of such assaults in impacted locations were addressed. In line with this, this study addresses environmental variables that may affect the safety and security of schoolgirls, as well as its interconnection with ecofeminism, which I term as 'women's safe environment' or, put another way, an environment in which schoolgirls can learn safely.

The Norway Declaration on Girl Child Education convention was held in Abuja, Nigeria in 2016 (UN, 2017). The declaration aims to prioritise the education of girls by working to encourage girls' safe attendance at school in Northern Nigeria and to provide aid to areas that have been impacted by kidnappings. The declaration will take into consideration offering humanitarian aid to refugees and internally displaced individuals in the conflict zones. Furthermore, the Safe Schools initiative aims to assist women and girls who have been subjected to one type of abuse or another, as well as to promote basic education in the conflict-torn North East Nigerian states of Yobe, Borno, Adamawa, and Gombe.

In addition to the Norwegian government's intervention, the federal government of Nigeria was forced to start the Safe Schools Initiative (GIZ, 2014) after it became clear that the nation's schools were frequently the target of attacks by radicals, robbers, and kidnappers. As part of the intervention measures for victims of conflict zones, funding was granted for the Safe Schools programme. Eighteen high-risk states have been chosen to be covered between 2023 and 2026. Over the medium term, the government intends to cover half of the majority of public schools at risk of assault. With UNICEF's assistance, almost 100,000 children are currently gaining access to education in North East Nigeria through Temporary Learning Spaces and schools (UNICEF, n.d.).

According to Mwoma et al. (2018), the government funding would enable more children to complete their basic education in a conducive learning atmosphere and would provide much-needed counselling for girls who have endured unfathomable anguish at the hands of their abductors. In Borno State, a fair number of women and girls were reintegrated back to their families and communities. In addition to the Safe Schools initiative, in 2021 the Federal Ministry of Education came up with some policies that could address the problems of safety, security and violence in Nigerian schools. One of such is the policy on violence against children (VAC) proposed by Nigeria's National Policy on Safety, Security, and Violence-Free Schools (Federal Ministry of Education, 2021). This programme emphasises the need to address all acts of violence and abuse on children under the age of 18 within school grounds or on their journey to and from school. The VAC policy is also concerned with creating a child-friendly school where students may enrol,

learn, retain, and complete their teaching and learning. Consequently, girls should not learn in a toxic environment.

A fundamental objective of this policy is to provide quality education for students of all ages irrespective of gender, which includes adults and children. It strives to ensure that all learners and teachers have the right to an educational experience in an atmosphere that is secure and safe. Izam (2023) contends that a large number of females in Northern Nigeria encounter substantial educational obstacles, such as impoverishment, early marriage, and customs that place a higher value on male education than female education. As stated by UNICEF (2007), an estimated 10 million school-age females are out of school, the majority of whom are from Northern Nigeria. Girls' access to basic education in Nigeria has remained poor, particularly in Northern areas (Akinbi & Akinbi, 2015). Children out of school can be measured in terms of the number of children who could not make the transition from primary to secondary school. Izam (2023) argues that investing in girls' education is crucial for improving the overall well-being of families and communities in the Northern region. When a country prioritises girls' education, it thus creates a just and equitable society where everyone can thrive. Supporting this point, McCartney (2018) posits that educating girls breaks the cycle of poverty and is one of the most effective tools. Educated girls are more likely to secure better-paying jobs, which can help lift their families out of poverty. Additionally, educated women can better support their children's education and health, creating a positive development cycle. Education is a powerful tool for empowering girls and giving them a voice in their communities. They could also be involved in decision-making and assume leadership roles, and can better advocate for their rights and those of others. For Ujam (2019), education reduces the rate of child marriage, which is prevalent in Northern Nigeria and can help stimulate economic development in the region and reduce dependence on aid and foreign investment.

In addition to the terrorist groups' increasingly obvious violence and their targeting of girls' education, attendance at schools in Northern Nigeria is constrained because of issues with school access, family and educational resources, and attitudes towards learning. Poor fundamental education standards in Northern Nigeria result in low demand and appallingly low academic achievement, particularly in the Qur'anic school system. The scenario of the several kidnap cases of schoolgirls in Northern Nigeria reveals the insensitivity of the Nigerian government to the environmental factors and safety measures around schools that contributed greatly to the insecurity of schoolgirls.

Nti, on 14 April 2014, reported the kidnap of schoolgirls from their school premises in Chibok, Borno State. A total of 276 were reportedly kidnapped, while 57 girls managed to escape. Amnesty International (2015) estimated that in 2015, at least two thousand women and girls were abducted following the Chibok incident. The repeated kidnapping and abduction instances in Nigeria sparked international outrage, social media campaigns, and civil society advocacy. Yet, Boko Haram activities of consistent kidnappings and abductions became rampant in the Nigeria-Cameroon-Chad-Niger border regions. Thus, the kidnapping of the Chibok girls raised awareness around the world and sparked the then-viral #BringBackOurGirls rallies. Despite the #BringBackOurGirls campaign (#BringBackOurGirls, 2024), the Nigerian government and security forces have done little to nothing to fully rescue the girls from their captors, putting the parents of these children in unrelenting misery. Apart from the 57 girls who escaped the day their schoolmates were kidnapped, some of the abducted girls have been released, while the country still hopes to release the remaining girls.

After the Chibok incident, there have been several other kidnap and abduction cases of schoolgirls in Nigeria. For example, Hegarty (2018) reported on BBC that some 110 schoolgirls were abducted in Dapchi in Yobe state in 2018. In addition, Mosadomi (2021) reported in the *Vanguard* newspaper that 42 persons, including 21 students and three staff, were kidnapped at a government college, Kagara, Niger State. Eyoboka (2021) reported in the *Vanguard* newspaper that 153 Bethel Baptist Church Secondary School students in Chikun, Kaduna State, were kidnapped. These kidnaps are some of the many cases that Nigeria has witnessed in the last ten years. It is worrisome that these kidnap and abduction cases are mostly women and girls.

Consequently, feminist scholars, NGOs and women activists seek the need to address the safety and security of schoolgirls and put a stop to this menace that threatens the future of Nigerian women and girls. Subsequently, this chapter examines the concept of ecofeminism, which is considered instructive and relevant to the issues around violence, environmental safety and security of schoolgirls in Nigeria. Thus, education, one of the sustainable development goals, is confronted with a major obstacle to implementing policies that could foster its progress and advancement.

More often than not, the reality of these policies is far from implementation as Nigerian governments pay less attention to issues around education and give more attention to other sectors of the economy. Their act of tokenism towards the educational sector is worrisome as it continues to cause a major barrier to the safety and security of Nigerian schoolgirls. Thus, feminist scholars and other stakeholders in the educational sector are making

unrelenting efforts to bring to public awareness this great menace to Northern Nigerian girl child education and the way forward. It is envisaged that the federal government will help reduce all incidents of violence, insecurity, and lack of safety in schools if it can put into practise the measures recommended by the national policy on security, safety, and violent-free schools.

Conceptualising ecofeminism

The concept 'ecofeminism' is a current environmental ethic that examines the connections between women and nature. *MacGregor (2006) avers that ecofeminism explains the connection between women, the environment and nature.* It utilises the notion of gender to examine how people interact with the natural world. As King (1987) posits, it is a concept that signifies the integration of radical ecological and feminist philosophy from many perspectives. It aims to eradicate inequalities and hierarchies based on gender while also protecting the environment and establishing connections linking women and environmental abuse. This notion contends that the dominant patriarchal system could be accountable for the manipulation of womankind and nature in developing nations.

The issue of gender relations and hegemony in the approach to environmental conservation is fundamental to ecofeminism's thought. Regan (2020) argues that ecofeminism spots climate change, equality of gender, and social injustice in general are all inherently connected issues, all linked to masculine domination in society, and specifically draws attention to the reality that environmental challenges disproportionately affect women.

D'Eaubonne (1974) emphasises that the disenfranchisement and oppression of women, individuals of colour, and economically disadvantaged people are inextricably related to the degradation of the nanorod, as both arose as a result of patriarchal power. Many of them agree that all types of oppression are interconnected and that oppressive structures must be addressed in their entirety. They see this socially constructed oppression as a result of patriarchal power dynamics. Consequently, this chapter argues that the threat to the Northern Nigerian schoolgirls' safety and security could be linked to the abuse and oppression of girls, through the series of kidnap cases reported. Bringing in the concept of ecofeminism helps us to understand that women have a close relationship with nature (always using water for house chores, firewood for cooking, plants and leaves for soups and herbs), and it also helps to appreciate the worth, dignity, and necessities of all biotic life. D'Eaubonne (1974) avers that ecofeminism is geared towards putting an end to the dual dominance and abuse of women and nature, and how it contributes to the formation of a loving, compassionate, and understanding

attitude towards all living things. Therefore, it can be said to cultivate the grounds for a peaceful and mutual co-existence.

Ruther (1983) argues that ecofeminism will help to completely overhaul all patriarchal dominance and abuse of women and replace it with an ethic of care, a morality based on women's nurturing and caring qualities. This strategy emphasises human kindness and acting in a way that puts others' needs before one's own (especially women and girls). It targets how actions can be taken to improve the environment conducive to habitation for secure schoolgirls' safety and security. In the same vein, Warren (1987) argues that feminists should pay attention to environmental challenges and ecological interdependence. On the basis of these views, women should be more mindful of their environmental difficulties, particularly as they affect their well-being.

Warren (2014) argues that ecofeminism is about strategies, solutions, and precise descriptions of problems. She believes that the fight for international justice and ecological well-being are intimately connected to ecofeminism, which involves complex studies of gender, racism, and colonialism. Ecofeminism has survived the anti-essentialist panic and has developed into a more rigorous, multicultural, and practical perspective. This is possible because the underlying assumptions of ecofeminism resonate deeply with women and community struggles worldwide, including movements against oppressive globalisation.

Ruther (1983:24) asserts that many ecofeminists agree that women's dominance is linked to nature's dominance. "We cannot critique the male-female hierarchy without ultimately attacking and overcoming the hierarchy of humans over nature." As a result, they see gender equality and social injustice as inextricably linked concerns rooted in masculine supremacy in society. Conceptualising ecofeminism in Nigeria, male dominance comes to play in how men play prominent roles in decision-making. From the federal to local government levels, it cannot be disputed that there are more men who make decisions than women, even in the educational sector. In a bid to achieve the SDGs (UN, 2015a) in Nigeria, it is very crucial to begin to consider involving more women in decision-making and implementations. The kidnaps and attacks on schoolgirls in Nigeria are an undercover of male dominance, female exploitation and oppression in Northern Nigeria, which results in making the girls become premature mothers and suicide bombers against their wishes. Therefore, the inductive application of ecofeminism strategies to the educational sector is critical for ensuring the protection and security of schoolgirls in the Northern part of the country.

Ensuring the safety and security of schoolgirls from an ecofeminist perspective

A school is an institution where people come to learn and teach. It is not only about creating a structure, but also about ensuring that it contains appropriate teaching and learning activity. Schools can be viewed as crucial to nation-building since they give children a thorough education and development. This, nevertheless, can only be ensured if learning takes place in a secure and safe atmosphere. Despite the Nigerian government's useful intentions in enacting various rules aimed at ensuring school safety and security, particularly in the North, there are still gaps in implementation. According to the findings of the 2014 National Survey (NPC, 2014), violence against children is still pervasive in Nigeria. One of the factors responsible for this high prevalence is not putting environmental factors of learning into consideration. By environmental factors of learning, it means issues like location of the school, roads leading to the school and the infrastructure.

According to UNICEF (2006), preserving the safety and security of schoolgirls necessitates important and necessary 'in-school' and 'out-of-school' environmental norms where effective teaching and learning may take place. This indicates that all biotic variables in the school should be safe for teaching and learning in order to improve learning, such as by providing and promoting a mentally, physically, socially, and cognitively secure environment. A focus on school safety takes into cognisance three important factors: (a) safe school facilities and learning environment; (b) disaster risk reduction in schools; and (c) protection of children from violence and all forms of abuse in school. Therefore, there is a need to advocate for a stronger trans-disciplinary collaboration between ecofeminists, educationists / education, and the Nigerian government towards creating gender-balanced formal and informal learning conditions suitable for the safety and security of schoolgirls.

UN Resolution 1325: Content, implementation and relevance

Resolution 1325 (S/RES/1325) on women, peace, and security was adopted by the UN Security Council in a unanimous vote on 31 October 2000 (UN, 2000). It was the Security Council's first official and binding resolution demanding warring parties to respect women's rights, encourage women's participation in peace talks and post-conflict reconstruction, and safeguard women and girls from sexual violence in conflict. Armed conflict has a significant and exceptionally devastating impact on women and girls, according to the resolution. It urges the application of a gender perspective to address the special requirements of women and girls during war, rehabilitation and

relocation, recovery, reintegrating into society and reconstruction following a conflict.

The resolution's primary objective is to safeguard against sexual and gender-based violence in crisis zones. It calls on the state to eradicate all sorts of crimes against humanity, particularly sexual assault, and to prosecute offenders. Another aspect of Resolution 1325 is the inclusion of women in peace negotiations in all conflict zones, with a focus on supporting local women's peace initiatives. In addition, the information is intended to protect women and girls in refugee contexts. The resolution urges conflicting parties to contemplate the unique necessities of women and girls when planning and operating refugee camps. It attempts to take gender into account in discharge, demobilisation, and reintegration, particularly the distinct needs of male and female ex-combatants, and to train UN member states in the protection of women's and girls' rights, increasing female political engagement at all levels. Gender equality in the UN is being achieved by expanding the number of women serving as Special Representatives in field operations, observers, and relief personnel.

Implementing the Resolution demands four primary procedures, which are as follows: Preventing all types of gender and sexual violence, as well as sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping forces; Safeguarding, which entails improving women and girls' safety, mental and physical wellness, economic security, and general well-being; Engagement entails supporting and promoting women's engagement in the peacekeeping process; Recovery and relief tracking numbers connected to outcomes, such as the number of women in peace talks, the number of military manuals that incorporate measures for women's protection, or the number of cases probed for violence against women, are examples of specific indicators. The UN Security Council Resolution is pertinent to this study since its execution will aid in the improvement of education and instruction. When the environment is safe, learning may occur efficiently. There will be an incentive for females in the Northern states to attend school, which would eventually contribute to their empowerment and advancement in society, state, and nation.

Why is the safety of schoolgirls imperative?

The factors that make a school safe can vary depending on who you ask. In one instance, Hernandez et al. (2010) state that a secure educational institution lacks the threat of aggressive behaviour and is characterised by a setting without a sense of dread for the establishment or its punitive measures. This suggests that everyone who works in or visits a school can do so without fear of being harmed: children, teachers, staff, and guests. A more

pragmatist and management-focused description of school safety is provided by Hull (2010), who asserts that it includes the school's culture as well as the appropriate tools and training to deal with risks and dangers. According to Squelch (2001), a safe school is one where staff, teachers, and students can work, impart knowledge, and study without being concerned about being made fun of, harassed, humiliated, or physically harmed.

USAid EducationLinks' *A Practical Guideline to Making Schools Safer from Natural Disasters for School Principals and School Committees* (2014) defined school safety as an instance in which an educational institution acknowledges and safeguards children's rights by providing a situation and setting that guarantee students' well-being, security, and safety at all times throughout the entire teaching and learning process.

"Safer schools give students and teachers a sense of safety, comfort, and health both in everyday situations and in case of emergencies. By implementing the standard for catastrophe-resilient structures and systems and creating a safer social structure, schools are able to protect the school community including the surrounding environment from disaster risk"
(USAid EducationLinks, 2014:13)

In reference to Safe and Sound Schools (2014), which examined safety in the context of school societies, the word 'safety' refers to all of our efforts to maintain the security of the school community and its surroundings. A school community tackles various problems and emergencies under the umbrella term of 'safety' to protect its students' well-being. Physical and mental health, school environment, fire prevention, climate safety, architectural security, hazardous persons, bullying, natural catastrophes, neighbourhood crime, and transit and roadway safety are all examples of safety concerns, according to Safe and Sound Schools (2014). Providing a safe environment for pupils from their residences to travel to their schools and return is referred to as 'school safety'. This includes defence against all forms of abuse, aggression, mental issues, fire, transportation, and natural and man-made calamities. In a safe school, teachers, students, and other staff members can participate in and carry out their educational and instructional endeavours without worrying about potential danger. A safe school emphasises internal risks or threats that originate inside the structure.

According to Squelch (2001), children who feel threatened or fearful of their fellow students, teachers, supervisors, or even the school's architectural structure may indicate a symptom of school safety. For instance, a school would be regarded as dangerous if there had been violence there between students, teachers, or members of the community. Squelch (2001) avers that a plan in the school policy meant to handle situations that may be dangerous

for children and staff is the primary indicator of a safe school. Successful learning takes place in a safe and encouraging atmosphere at school. Gender-related issues, such as the focus of this chapter, are a fundamental global issue that demands urgent attention. Consequently, the importance of the safety and security of schoolgirls must be balanced. The Federal Ministry of Education (2016:3) defined school safety as “establishing safe settings for kids from their homelands to their schools and back. This covers protection from violence, natural disasters, human-caused disasters, more frequent, smaller-scale fires, other emergencies, and environmental dangers that could endanger children’s life”.

School safety could be defined as measures taken by staff, parents, students, and other stakeholders to reduce or remove risk factors or threats that could result in mishaps, physical harm, as well as emotional and psychological suffering. Apart from natural disasters, other forms of disaster are man-induced. They can be prevented because they are artificial disasters. These disasters can be completely avoided or reduced if some measures are implemented. The bottom line is: once humans are able to ensure that certain things are preserved, protected and well-organised, then the safety of everyone can be guaranteed, at least to an extent. Furthermore, the safety and security of schoolgirls enhance the progress and development of the global world. As more girls gain access to good education, many are empowered to become professionals in their fields of study. Girls and women who are more educated aspire to be leaders, which increases a nation’s leadership and entrepreneurial skills. They also attain the knowledge to become leaders and participate in decision-making for the progress and development of the nation.

For King and Winthrop (2015), academic excellence could be achieved if girls learn in a safe and secure setting and are found to achieve a high level of academic performance than schoolgirls in an unsafe environment. In addition, learning in a safe environment makes girls relax and ready to learn. Their concentration will be high as there will be no hindrance to schoolwork. It also helps them psychologically to be calmer, more flexible and more anxious to be in school.

The kidnapping of the Chibok girls prompted foreign governments such as China, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States to intervene, giving military advisors as well as information and surveillance help. Despite this assistance, several girls continue to be held captive by Boko Haram. The involvement of foreign nations highlights the intricate logistical arrangements that must be made to ensure the protection of a limited number of girls. As a result, while a state’s primary duty is to safeguard its women and girls and, as a result, solve any internal issues like

corruption and gaps in training and equipment maintenance, as is the case in Nigeria, effective implementation of UNSCR 1325 (UN, 2000) also requires international cooperation. This scenario could have been avoided if certain measures had been implemented, for example, security infrastructure like fencing the school with electric wiring, bulletproof doors and walls around the school buildings. UNICEF (2006) suggests that installing CCTV (closed-circuit television) cameras at the entrance and school offices will greatly help. If the Chibok school had a CCTV camera, the school management would have seen the attackers and taken prompt action to ensure the girls' safety.

There is a need to increase security personnel in Nigerian schools. More police officers and other security personnel should be provided in schools, not just providing security personnel alone, but they should be well equipped for defence in case of an attack on the school. In addition, effective communication and prompt response: schools should be provided with Internet services, an intercom for staff and security for close enough communication. It is also important to note that schools should not be built too far away from town for easy Internet network access. This would also have helped the safety and security of the Chibok girls as the school management would quickly place calls to security personnel and local security agents who would have quickly responded to the distress call. A safe alternative exit route in times of distress should also be provided. If the Chibok girls had an alternative route of escape, many of the girls would have been able to escape from their abductors. Girl-friendly infrastructure is also one of the things that could improve the safety of schoolgirls. This is the provision of facilities that are girl-friendly, such as decent restrooms, classrooms, laboratories, and dormitories in the event of schools with hostel facilities, and good potable water for simple washing.

Additionally, in order to increase the academic success of girls, programmes that concentrate on improving infrastructure and educational inputs should be developed with incentives for girls in mind. An illustration of such a programme is the Burkinabé Response to Improve Girls' Chances to Succeed (BRIGHT) programme (Reliefweb, 2014), a government initiative that established well-equipped schools in 132 villages in Burkina Faso. The package of interventions encompassed, amongst other things, a school structure, educational resources, housing and support for teachers, training for government officials on sensitivity to gender, monetary incentives for children to go to school, a mechanism for galvanising support from the community for education in general and girls' education specifically, environmental factors such as good access roads to schools. Providing good access roads to the schools, that are easily traceable and not built in the forest or deserted places should also be considered. With good access roads to

school, transportation will be made easy. It could be argued that the Chibok attack could have been avoided if the road to the school was safe and passable for vehicles out of concern for being blocked or pursued by security personnel.

Mwoma et al. (2018) put forward that in every educational setting, it is essential to make sure that safety supplies like first aid kits and firefighting equipment are accessible. Other safety precautions include keeping blankets, water, and buckets of sand on hand in case of a fire outbreak. It is important to ensure safety in schools and freedom from violence; schoolgirls must not be made to go through psychological, emotional or physical abuse such that their rights are protected. Environment disaster risk reduction (DRR) such as schools should not be built in an unsafe environment like places close to canals, rivers, or deserted places. The government must also guide against environmental pollution around the school. The location of the Chibok school could also be one of the reasons why it was very easy for the Boko Haram to launch an attack. With all of these in place, there will be a great result in girls' education which will be a means of liberation of women and girls from male dominance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Gender issues are critical to global significance because they can influence a society's progress and development. Gender and feminist scholars advocate for women's and girls' liberation from male oppression and subjugation. Consequently, maintaining women's and girls' human rights is fundamental to attaining sustainable development in Nigeria. Recently, Nigeria has been confronted with a persistent challenge of insecurity. Undoubtedly, this challenge remains a thorn in the flesh of Nigeria and the world at large. Despite these security challenges, it is discovered that women and girls are more vulnerable to insecurity. The vulnerability of women and girls to insecurity is overwhelming and calls for the intervention of global powers. Nigeria is mostly patriarchal, so less attention is paid to the safety and security of women and girls. It is therefore recommended that:

1. The environment for the schoolgirls must not be toxic.
2. There is a need for funding and partnership by the government, stakeholders and non- governmental agencies.
3. There must be a political will to implement educational policies and the elimination of all forms of violence against children, especially girls.
4. VAC must be domesticated with more concentration on the Northern parts of the country.
5. Our advocacies and agitations must go beyond paperwork to actual implementation.

One of the fundamental human rights is that every child should have a right to quality education. Not just any education, but a good one. This good education must occur not just anywhere but in a conducive environment that is suitable for teaching and learning.

The agitations to resist the continued dominance of women by men is central to women globally. This chapter focuses on the gender dimension of the problem of insecurity in Nigeria. It emphasises the safety and security of schoolgirls and the government's and society's neglect of environmental and ecological conditions surrounding schools, exploring the narratives of the Chibok schoolgirls and related cases of kidnap as a case study on the safety and security of schoolgirls. The chapter also addresses the problem of the lack of fit between pedagogical needs and the environmental factors well-suited for the safe learning of a girl child. There is a need for adequate security in educational institutions. Efforts should be made to see that every girl child is well protected from any form of emotional or physical attack. Therefore, the federal government should conduct twice-yearly investigations into potential threats to the security of students and personnel in open schools, with a particular emphasis on those institutions serving female students and are located in remote areas. The risk study should also look at infrastructure vulnerabilities in schools, analyse and prepare evacuation routes, and assess how well risk and vulnerability mitigation strategies are working.

This chapter recommends that educational policies at all levels should be reviewed such that they meet up with the international standards. Restrictions on school entrances with tight security should be implemented, and school safety focal points with trained teachers are recommended. Ecofeminist ideas and concepts are particularly pertinent now to evaluate the sexist and profit-driven capitalist patriarchy that continues to damage our ecosystem by exploiting its inhabitants and its natural resources.

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Chapter 26

Enrolment and Completion Rate amongst Females in STEM Postgraduate Programmes in Universities in South West Nigeria

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Abstract

In Nigeria, undergraduate and postgraduate female students are more fully represented in disciplines such as Arts, Education, Management, and so on than in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) courses. The gender disparity in the Science and Technology fields is growing, which is worrying, considering 90% of the jobs in the next 10 years will require technological knowledge and skills in Nigeria. Several researches have focused on encouraging enrolment of females into STEM undergraduate courses, with fewer studies on females' interest into STEM postgraduate programmes in Nigerian universities. Thus, this study investigated the enrolment and completion rate amongst female students in STEM postgraduate programmes in South West Nigeria. The study was guided by the Role Congruity Theory, while the mixed methods design was adopted. The convenience sampling technique was used to select female postgraduate students in the STEM faculties from two federal and three state universities in Lagos, Ogun and Oyo states respectively. 69 Google Forms questionnaires were retrieved and 14 in-depth interviews were conducted as well with selected female postgraduate students. Data were analysed by using percentages, content analysis, and so on. Findings revealed that the enrolment of females was more in Master's degrees than in the Ph.D. programmes, while the completion rate took longer for some females. Challenges encountered were linked to home front, funds, sponsorship, mentoring, and so on. Thus, the study recommends that the provision of full sponsorship, day care centres, scholarships, mentoring

and so on should be introduced by the government, as this will enable and motivate females' enrolment into STEM postgraduate programmes in Nigerian universities.

Keywords: Females, Postgraduate Programmes, Postgraduate Students, STEM, Universities

Introduction

In Nigeria and other countries in Africa, both undergraduate and postgraduate females appear to be fully represented in university enrolment, especially in disciplines such as Arts, Education, Management, and so on but with fewer undergraduate students enrolled into the STEM (Sciences, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) courses of study. This can pose a big hindrance in opening doors to opportunities and development for women in STEM where Masters and Ph.D. degrees are requirements for employment. Thus, there is a need for a shift in both the mindset and perception towards the enrolment of females into STEM postgraduate courses in Nigerian universities (Okeke, 2019). STEM includes courses in the Engineering and Technology, Mathematics and Computer and Information Sciences, Agricultural Sciences, Physical Sciences and Biological Sciences. Disciplines in the Social and Behavioural Sciences and health workers like Doctors and Nurses are not included or categorised as part of the STEM courses (Hill et al., 2010).

Gender disparity in the Science and Technology fields is growing, which is worrying considering the fact that 90% of the jobs in the next 10 years in Nigeria will require technology knowledge and skills. Thus, nations have come to realise and agree that STEM happens to be the major purpose when determining their economic growth and development with the global technological changes in the labour market. However, the gender gap in STEM still exists in enrolment into tertiary institutions in Nigeria and may have negative implications on enabling development in the technological aspect of the economy (Okorafor et al., 2015). The low enrolment amongst female students into courses in STEM have been linked to certain factors amongst which is the traditional perspective that men are more suitable than women. Other causes of challenges amongst female students have been linked to the lack of confidence and interest in STEM courses from even primary education, poor funding, no mentoring, lack of support from home and the institution.

Globally, some females in STEM professions have emerged over the years and they have significantly contributed to the social and economic development of their home countries. Amongst notable females who changed the world through STEM are: the NASA space scientist known as Katherine

Johnson; the Countess of Lovelace: the famous mathematician, Augusta Ada King; Radia Perlman – Internet pioneer; Joan Clarke, code breaker and cryptanalyst; Susan Kare, iconographer; Rear Admiral Grace Hopper, inventor and computer scientist; Florence Nightingale, social reformer and statistician; Adriana Ocampo, planetary geologist; Irene Au, human computer interaction designer; Roberta Bondar, astronaut neurologist; Ginni Rometty, CEO of IBM; Barbara McClintock, geneticist, and so on (International Women's Day, 2016).

In a report by the World Bank (2021) on the advancement of females' participation in STEM, the findings revealed that globally, for every 100 men enrolled in universities, there are 115 women enrolled. STEM courses in the universities had fewer females than men enrolled; Engineering courses had only 7% of females, Manufacturing or Construction had 22% females, Natural Sciences had 5%, Mathematics and Statistics had 6%, and Information and Communication Technologies had only 3% and 8% females enrolled respectively. The report further stated that there is a need for a much more detailed data and research outside the US and Europe contexts, that use rigorous methodologies as well as large and more diverse samples (World Bank, 2021).

According to the National Science Foundation (NSB, 2010), an estimation of about five million individuals have direct work in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics jobs with just over 4% of the various occupations in the entire world. This minority of workers are amongst the critical workforce that are crucial to economic innovation and productivity. In addition, employees working in the fields of STEM are well-paid and enjoy a much-secured job in the labour market. The United States Department of Labour reports that the workforce projection for 2018 to 2028 shows that training will be required in a significant scientific or a mathematical knowledge in at least a bachelor's degree in the 10 fastest growing occupations (WorkForce GPS, 2019). Several of the Science and Engineering jobs have been predicted to grow faster than the average rate of growth in other occupations. However, women currently hold only one of a quarter or lesser compared to men in Engineering and computer-related types of jobs (Lacey & Wright, 2009; NSB, 2010).

According to Espinosa (2011), it is pertinent to know that supporting university undergraduate achievements in courses in STEM happens to be paramount in ensuring a sustainable scientific and technological advancement. Although several researches and policies have focused on encouraging enrolment of females into STEM undergraduate programmes and at secondary school level, less studies have shown statistics on women's interests in proceeding into STEM Master's and Ph.D. programmes in Nigerian

universities. Thus, this study investigated the enrolment and completion rate amongst female students in STEM postgraduate programmes in South West Nigeria. In addition, the challenges encountered by the postgraduate female students as well as possible solutions were also investigated in order to enable women's full participation in educational and career opportunities in STEM fields that will enhance the national development of the country.

Statement of the problem

Girls' and women's participation in STEM courses and professions have brought about concerns amongst the government, institutions of learning and other stakeholders in Nigeria. Despite the creation and implementation of several policies and interventions to increase the enrolment of females into these STEM courses in Nigeria, there are still shortages in the full participation of women in the world of work. These interventions include the CapED Programmes 18 initiated by UNESCO (2019) in order to support fragile and low-income countries like Nigeria. This is to design and implement education reforms that can enable the achievement of the national development priorities and goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015) as well as enabling the participation and inclusion of girls into STEM (UNICEF & ITU, 2020). Some NGOs are not left out in the drive to enhance girls' participation into STEM subjects in the country. They include High-Tech Women (High-Tech Women, 2024), which focuses on empowering young girls, women and youth through ICT (information and communication technology) for research, entrepreneurial and wealth creation. The Pearls Africa Foundation, championed by Abisoye Ajayi-Akinfolarin, has also encouraged young girls to participate in coding which equips and enables functional IT (information technology) skills.

Women are less represented in STEM jobs, especially where skills and knowledge derived from postgraduate studies are requirements. In Nigeria, only 28% of females are involved in the jobs of STEM, compared to men. The gender gaps appear to be high in the future of these jobs which are highly paid. Examples of these jobs include Computer Science and Engineering. Thus, giving women equal chances to be involved in careers in STEM will definitely help in narrowing the gender gap, enable and enhance women's economic security that will ensure a talented workforce and the prevention of biases in the field of STEM. Thus, this study examined the enrolment and completion rate amongst females in STEM postgraduate programmes, and the challenges that they encounter in universities in the South West geopolitical zone in Nigeria.

Research objectives

The broad objective of this study is to determine the enrolment and completion rate of female students in postgraduate programmes in universities in South Western Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. determine female students' enrolment into STEM faculties in universities in South West Nigeria
2. examine the completion rate of female students in postgraduate STEM faculties in South West Nigeria
3. examine the challenges associated with postgraduate female students in STEM faculties in South West Nigeria, and
4. proffer policy recommendations that will enhance the enrolment of female students into postgraduate courses in South West Nigeria.

The study is limited to all the female postgraduate students in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics departments in the universities in South Western Nigeria, in order to enable and enhance their participation in to STEM educational and career prospects.

Literature review

The level of women's participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

Over the years, the role of women has always been critical within the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics fields. However, these contributions have been overlooked and have even been forgotten. The campaign for the inclusion of women into STEM courses has been continuing for decades because of the importance on the economic development of any nation. The campaign for equal access to education applies to the STEM subjects and programmes, most especially for the STEM postgraduate studies. To date, there is a Science gender gap. According to the UK Education Hub (2021), less than 30% of women are amongst the world researchers and this applies to every country of the world.

According to AAUW Action Fund online report (2022), girls and women are systematically exempted from Science and Mathematics even from the elementary stage of schooling to the highest level of education. This has limited women's access, preparation to opportunities in the STEM fields as adults. As a result of this only 21% of women make up the workforce of STEM jobs. The gender gaps are particularly high in some of the fastest-growing and highest-paid jobs of the future, like Computer Science and Engineering.

Theoretical framework

Role Congruity Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002)

The study was guided by the Role Congruity Theory by Eagly and Karau in 2002, which states that the prejudice aimed at women's involvement and participation into specific occupations, responsibilities and roles tends to happen because of the inconsistencies that exist amongst the characteristics that are associated with the female gender stereotype. These stereotypes are also associated with roles and positions in typical leadership. Furthermore, the Role Congruity Theory proposes that a particular group tends to be positively evaluated after its characteristics are recognised and appreciated when it aligns with a groups' typical social roles and functions (Eagly & Diekmann, 2005). Conversely, the stereotype fit hypothesis that suggests that group members will experience discrimination in different social roles or positions to the extent that their group stereotypically does not have characteristics associated with success in the position.

The Role Congruity Theory is related to this study because STEM courses are believed to be for the male folk rather than the females. This stereotyping has limited females' interest and participation in STEM courses even from early education. Young female students tend to have a fear for Mathematics and this phobia lingers into higher education studies such as STEM courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Methodology

The mixed methods design was implemented for the study. The design enabled the combination of both the qualitative and quantitative approaches for comprehensive collection of data. The study population comprised of all females in STEM postgraduate courses in universities in the South West region, Nigeria. Out of the six states in the South Western region, three states were randomly selected, where two federal (University of Ibadan and Federal University of Agriculture) and three state universities (Lagos State University, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology) were selected from South West region, Nigeria. Also, the purposive sampling technique was used to select females in the STEM postgraduate programmes from the selected universities. The instrument used for data collection was an in-depth interview guide and a 32-item online Google Forms questionnaire designed to capture information on their demographic information, length of study and the challenges encountered by the female postgraduate students in the STEM programmes. The instrument was administered by the Deans, Provosts and Faculty officers of the Postgraduates Colleges

in the selected universities through the generated online link from the Google Forms questionnaire via WhatsApp. The instrument comprised closed-ended questions in a four-point Likert scale of ‘Strongly Disagree’, ‘Disagree’, ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ with weighed values of 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The instrument was given to experts who carried out face validity. 72 responses were retrieved with only 69 valid responses, and this was adequate for the study. Furthermore, 14 in-depth interviews were conducted with STEM postgraduate female students randomly selected from the selected universities, in order to obtain detailed information on the enrolment and completion rate of STEM female postgraduate students as well as the encountered challenges. The data were analysed by using descriptive statistics and content analysis.

Results and discussion

Demographics

Table 28: Distribution of female postgraduate students’ marital status in STEM faculties in South Western Nigeria.

Marital Status				
	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Divorced	1	1.4	1.4	1.4
Married	38	55.1	55.1	56.5
Separated	1	1.4	1.4	58.0
Single	29	42.0	42.0	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

The findings according to Table 28 also revealed that the number of married female postgraduate students (55.1%) enrolled in the STEM postgraduate programmes in the universities in South Western region, Nigeria was more than the single female postgraduate students (42%).

Table 29 shows that the majority of the female postgraduate students were between 20 years and 49 years old. In addition, the findings show that women over 50 years of age were also enrolled in the STEM postgraduate programmes (4.3%) but at a very minimal representation.

Table 29: Distribution of the Age of Female Postgraduate Students in STEM Faculties in Universities in South Western Region, Nigeria

Age				
	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
20 – 29	26	37.7	37.7	37.7
30 – 39	22	31.9	31.9	69.6
40 – 49	18	26.1	26.1	95.7
50 – 59	3	4.3	4.3	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Presentation of results

Objective 1: Determine female students' enrolment into STEM faculties in universities in the South Western geo-political zone in Nigeria

Table 30: Distribution of the Number of Female Postgraduate Students in the STEM Faculties in South Western region, Nigeria.

Faculty				
	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Engineering	3	4.3	4.3	4.3
Mathematics	4	5.8	5.8	10.1
Science	49	71.0	71.0	81.1
Technology	13	18.8	18.8	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 30. The findings from the study reveal that the female postgraduate students were mostly enrolled in the Faculties of Science at 71%, while the department of Mathematics had the least number of enrolled female postgraduate students, at 5.8%.

Table 31: Distribution of Females in the Postgraduate programmes in the STEM Faculties in Universities in South Western Region, Nigeria.

Postgraduate Programme				
	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
M.Phil/ Ph.D.	5	7.2	7.2	7.2
Master's Degree	43	62.3	62.3	69.5
Ph. D.	21	30.4	30.4	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 31 reveals that the female students enrolled more in the Master's degree STEM programmes (62.3%), while less than half of the Master's degree students were enrolled in the Ph.D. programmes. These findings also show that although female students are now enrolled into Ph.D. STEM programmes, the disparity between the female and male numbers is still significant.

Table 32: Distribution of Female Postgraduate Students' Enrolment into STEM programmes by Year

Postgraduate Programme				
Year of entry	Master's degree	M.Phil/Ph.D.	Ph.D.	Total
2001/2002	1	0	0	1
2014	0	0	1	1
2016/2017	0	1	1	2
2017/2018	1	1	4	6
2018/2019	1	1	2	4
2019/2020	3	0	5	8
2020/2021	7	2	3	12
2021	12	0	0	12
2021/2022	7	0	2	9
2022	11	0	2	13
2023	1	0	0	1
Total	44	5	20	69

Source: Field work 2023

Findings on Table 32 show that very few female students were enrolled into STEM Master's and none for Ph.D. degree programmes in earlier years – 2001/2002, but there was an increase in female's enrolment in 2021 especially in the Master's degree programmes. There was an increased women's enrolment into Ph.D. programmes and the highest number of women who enrolled in Ph.D. programmes was in the 2019/2020 academic session. The findings also reveal that there are female postgraduate students who have spent longer years on acquiring their Master's degree in the STEM faculty. The findings show that female students who were enrolled in 2016/2017 to 2018/2019 academic sessions had stayed longer than the usual two years in acquiring their Master's degree.

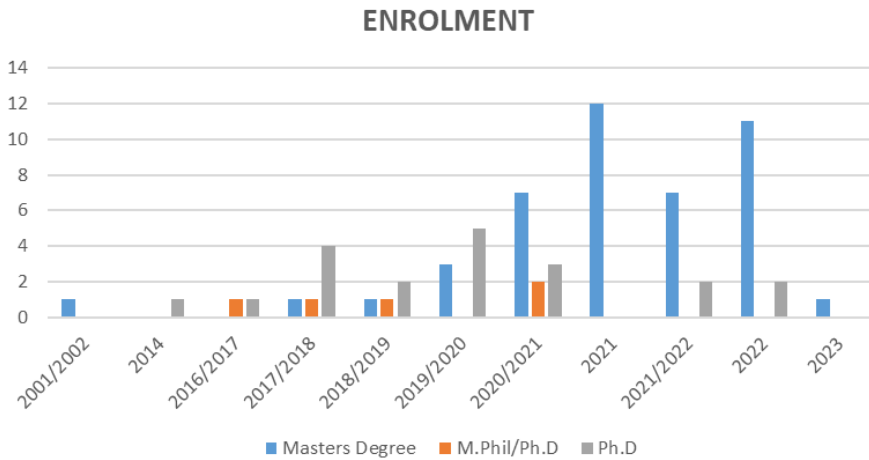


Figure 21: Enrolment by Year of Female Postgraduate Students in STEM Faculties in Universities in South West Region, Nigeria. Source: Field work 2023

Objective 2: Examine the completion rate of female students in postgraduate STEM faculties in South West geo-political zones in Nigeria

I have spent more years in the programme than I am supposed to.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Agree	15	21.7	21.7	21.7
Disagree	20	29.0	29.0	50.7
Strongly Agree	19	27.5	27.5	78.3
Strongly Disagree	15	21.7	21.7	100.0
Total	69	100.0	100.0	

Figure 22: Completion rate of female students in postgraduate STEM faculties. Source: Field work 2023

Findings reveal that 21.7% and 27.5% of the respondents indicated ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ to have spent more years on STEM Postgraduate programmes than they were supposed to.

Objective 3: Examine the Challenges Associated with Postgraduate Female Students in STEM Faculties in Universities in South West Region, Nigeria,

Table 33: Female Postgraduate Students’ Comfort with Course of Study in STEM Programmes

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	36	52.2	52.2	52.2
Disagree	4	5.8	5.8	58.0
Strongly Agree	26	37.7	37.7	95.7
Strongly Disagree	3	4.3	4.3	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 34: The course workload in my department is just convenient for me

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	43	62.3	62.3	62.3
Disagree	13	18.8	18.8	81.1
Strongly Agree	12	17.4	17.4	98.6
Strongly Disagree	1	1.4	1.43	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 35: I assimilate and have full understanding of my course of study

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	42	60.9	60.9	60.9
Disagree	10	14.5	14.5	75.4
Strongly Agree	16	23.2	23.2	98.6
Strongly Disagree	1	1.4	1.4	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 36: I am able to attend my lectures regularly

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	39	56.5	56.5	56.5
Disagree	11	15.9	15.9	72.4
Strongly Agree	18	26.1	26.1	98.5
Strongly Disagree	1	1.4	1.4	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 37: My lecturers are very detailed in delivering instructional studies

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	42	60.9	60.9	60.9
Disagree	10	14.5	14.5	75.4
Strongly Agree	16	23.2	23.2	98.6
Strongly Disagree	1	1.4	1.4	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 38: I engage in considerable number of practical activities as expected

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	39	56.5	56.5	56.5
Disagree	16	23.2	23.2	79.7
Strongly Agree	10	14.5	14.5	94.2
Strongly Disagree	4	5.8	5.8	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 39: My institution has adequate laboratory and resources to enable my detailed knowledge and skill development of my discipline (STEM)

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	31	44.9	44.9	44.9
Disagree	22	31.9	31.9	76.8
Strongly Agree	5	7.2	7.2	84.1
Strongly Disagree	11	15.9	15.9	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 40: My career aspiration aligns with my current course of study

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	46	66.7	66.7	66.7
Disagree	2	2.9	2.9	69.6
Strongly Agree	20	29.0	29.0	98.6
Strongly Disagree	1	1.4	1.4	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 41: I receive a form of scholarship or support from my university as a female STEM postgraduate student

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	3	4.3	4.3	4.3
Disagree	24	34.8	34.8	39.1
Strongly Agree	4	5.8	5.8	44.9
Strongly Disagree	38	55.1	55.1	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 42: I get enough encouragement from my university, faculty, department as a female STEM postgraduate student

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	34	49.3	49.3	49.3
Disagree	20	29.0	29.0	78.3
Strongly Agree	5	7.2	7.2	85.5
Strongly Disagree	10	14.5	14.5	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 43: I am able to foot the fees of my postgraduate studies

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	35	50.7	50.7	50.7
Disagree	20	29.0	29.0	79.7
Strongly Agree	10	14.5	14.5	94.2
Strongly Disagree	4	5.8	5.8	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 44: I am not able to afford other expenses (transportation, reading materials, getting materials for hand on assignments and projects)

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	28	40.6	40.6	40.6
Disagree	27	39.1	39.1	79.7
Strongly Agree	6	8.7	8.7	88.4
Strongly Disagree	8	11.6	11.6	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 45: I don't get good grades in my course of study

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	2	2.9	2.9	2.9
Disagree	38	55.1	55.1	58.0
Strongly Agree	0	0	0	58.0
Strongly Disagree	29	42.0	42.0	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 46: I have spent more years in the programme than I am supposed to

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	15	21.7	21.7	21.7
Disagree	20	29.0	29.0	50.7
Strongly Agree	19	27.5	27.5	78.3
Strongly Disagree	15	21.7	21.7	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 47: I receive no support from my family members

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	4	5.8	5.8	5.8
Disagree	32	46.4	46.4	52.2
Strongly Agree	5	7.2	7.2	59.4
Strongly Disagree	28	40.6	40.6	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 48: The workload from home affects my academic performance

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	19	27.5	27.5	27.5
Disagree	25	36.2	36.2	63.8
Strongly Agree	9	13.0	13.0	76.8
Strongly Disagree	16	23.2	23.2	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Table 49: There is provision of baby day care services while I receive lecturers

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Agree	15	21.7	21.7	21.7
Disagree	26	37.7	37.7	59.4
Strongly Agree	4	5.8	5.8	65.2
Strongly Disagree	24	34.8	34.8	100
Total	69	100	100	

Source: Field work 2023

Responses from the in-depth interviews conducted revealed the challenges encountered by the female postgraduate students in STEM programmes in universities in South West region, Nigeria. As stated, the challenges mentioned by the female postgraduate students were:

“As a married female student and combining the responsibilities of a wife, mother, student and working class is not easy but my family supports me and even financially”.

Most of the female postgraduate students mentioned this as a challenge that hindered their full participation in their course work. Other challenges mentioned were: lack of communication and feedback from their lecturers, absence of mentorship, no Internet facilities, shortages of resource materials, and so on.

“Communication and feedback about what you need to know or do are not always shared to students”

“Left a university after 3 years of no progress because I was told I’m not their Alma mater. Little/No agreement with students”

“No free access to Internet facilities in the department. They should provide Classroom for only PG students, it will help to create room for interactions. Our lecturers have too much workloads thereby making it difficult for them to spend quality time with the PG students”

“Not getting information of conferences or meetings to attend in order to meet and network with like minds”.

“There are no adequate equipment or facilities that could help speed up research work or make the learning environment conducive. You have to get all you need with your money, outsource some experiments. No consideration given to female who are married or about to have children”.

“No toilet facilities Power failure that affects practicals”

“The workload from work and the Ph.D. program coupled with marital duties is overwhelming. The workload is much, Over spent years of studies”.

“There were no recent or current instructional materials at our disposal during lectures. Too much theory less practical. Uncooperative attitudes of the supervisors, mental and sexual threats from male supervisors”

Discussion of findings

The findings from this study reveal that the enrolment of females in postgraduate STEM courses in universities in the South West geo-political zones of Nigeria appear to be at a minimal level compared to even at secondary and undergraduates' level. The distributions of students' enrolment show the female postgraduate students are enrolled more in the Sciences but with the least of them enrolled in the Mathematics department. This finding corroborates with the study conducted by Canning et al. (2019). Also, the findings show that the females in STEM postgraduate courses in Nigerian universities tend to spend longer years in their field of study. This finding can be said to be associated with the findings that also show that a larger percentage of the females are married. Thus, combining marriage and postgraduate studies was a major challenge that distracted female STEM postgraduate students. In addition, the postgraduate females in STEM programmes encounter other challenges, which included poor funding, support from the universities, lack of mentoring, lack of family support and no baby care arrangement for the nursing mothers for some of the females in the postgraduate STEM courses in the universities. On the other hand, the findings from the study reveals that the female postgraduate students happen to be comfortable with their course of study, have good grades in their academic performance, they attend lectures regularly and have a cognitive understanding of the STEM courses.

In summary, the findings from this study reveal that achieving the considerable number of women participations in STEM jobs in the future might not be realisable in Nigeria if the necessary intervention is not performed soon. Thus, there is a need for the federal and state government, and university institutions to take up the necessary measures to enable the participation and development of females' skill and knowledge in STEM disciplines especially at postgraduate levels of university education.

Policy recommendations

As a result of the findings deduced from this study, although more female students endeavour to enrol into STEM programmes at Master's and Ph.D. levels compared to earlier years, there is still the need to encourage females' enrolment and timely completion in these STEM postgraduate programmes. This will enable female participation in STEM professions that will facilitate national development in Nigeria. Thus, this study recommends that:

The Federal and State government, universities, other higher institutions and other stakeholders of STEM should note that: -

- There is the urgent need to promote STEM awareness and interest amongst female undergraduate and postgraduate students in STEM courses by creating supportive and inclusive learning environments, financial support and scholarships, capacity-building and skills development, collaboration and partnerships.
- There should be a high level of encouragement from secondary school stage through sensitive programmes like career talk especially for the females.
- There should be a programme that would encourage females into STEM postgraduate courses such as orientation programmes, innovation programmes, successful females in STEM professions to share their own experience and how they made it.
- A deliberate form of mentorship programme at every level of study. Mentors can be situated outside the university of the mentees, with an entrenched means of tracking improvement.
- Fund / grant / scholarship. If students are sure that they will graduate within reasonable years, it will also encourage many to enrol.
- Employment and career opportunities after females enrol into STEM programmes, in order to be able to obtain a lecturing job. If female postgraduate students have chances of being employed, many will want to commit themselves to the study.
- Provision of baby day care services while female postgraduate students in STEM courses receive lectures because it would be very helpful for nursing mothers who are students.
- Further, a more practical curriculum should be used instead of the theoretical coursework that is being used currently by universities; at least it will tailor a better futuristic endeavour.
- Incorporation of online classes and assessments as well as the provision of Internet facilities to STEM departments.
- Lecturers and supervisors should be approachable and make efforts to ensure their students graduate at due time. Students should be allowed

to make their challenges known without being punished for expressing themselves.

- More skilful administration and avoidance of delaying students from graduation, especially female students, as such delays are usually psychologically traumatic.

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Chapter 27

Cash *Waqf* as a Viable Source of Financing Women's Healthcare Services in Ilorin–West, Kwara State, Nigeria: Imperative Legislation for Realising Sustainable Development Goal–1 (No Poverty)

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Abstract

Globally, one of the challenges facing people is the issue of poverty. To eradicate poverty in all its forms, the United Nations member states integrated Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)-1 (No Poverty) in another set of 17 goals to be pursued until 2030 after the expiration of the Millennium Development Goals. The concept of poverty, which is a condition of non-availability of basic human needs, encompasses insufficient access to healthcare services. In a bid to provide sufficient access to healthcare services to the low-income earners, Nigerian governments, federal and states, have introduced various schemes. For instance, Kwara State government introduced the 'KwaraCare' scheme. However, the scheme is yet to yield desirable results particularly for women, as some of them, out of poverty, are still unable to settle their hospital bills. Thus, this chapter seeks to explore cash waqf as a viable mechanism to empower women and provide them with sustainable access to healthcare services in Ilorin–West, Kwara State. Nonetheless, this may prove difficult if there is no effective legal framework sanctioning cash waqf institution in the State. Therefore, the chapter seeks to bring forth an effective legal framework for empowering women through cash waqf in Ilorin–West, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study adopts a legal research methodology of content analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on selected persons in Ilorin–West. The study revealed that women in Ilorin–West, Kwara State, lacked sufficient access to healthcare

facilities. The study also found that cash waqf is a viable tool to empower and finance healthcare services of women in Ilorin–West, Kwara State. The study further discovered that there are no extant laws on waqf administration in Kwara State for possible exploration of cash waqf to empower women. Thus, this chapter concludes by recommending necessary provisions such as all the required elements and varieties of waqf, modalities of waqf investment, mismanagement sanctions, to be included in the proposed legislation on waqf

Keywords: Cash Waqf, Nigeria, Poverty, Sustainable Development Goals, Women's Empowerment

Introduction

Globally, poverty is one of the great challenges confronting a vast number of people (Aluko & Mbada, 2020; World Vision, 2023). According to available documents, poverty affects 9.2% of the world population, that is, about 719 million people around the globe are wallowing in abject poverty as they live on less than \$2.15 a day (World Vision, 2023). All these numbers are arrived at based on people's income and their ability to meet necessity of life. But when the number of people facing lack of access to healthcare services, education, and so on is considered, World Vision (2023) note that 1.2 billion people around the world are in extreme poverty: they are multidimensionally poor. Recognising poverty's adverse effects and in order to address it in all forms, leaders of different nations, including Nigeria, unanimously agreed on Sustainable Development Goal-1 (No Poverty) as the first goal of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be realised by 2030 (UN, 2015; Aluko & Mbada, 2020). Some nations have made remarkable progress in alleviating levels of poverty in their respective jurisdictions while the emergency of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), natural disasters and a host of others have posed threats to the progress made by the United Nations (UN) in the realisation of SDG-1 by 2030 (World Vision, 2023). However, the unpleasant situation is more pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria. In this way, Nigerian governments, in a bid to implement this goal, put in place various schemes to alleviate poverty of the most vulnerable individuals, including women in society. Despite these efforts, the target of the UN to reduce the number of people around the world living in abject poverty to less than 3% by 2030 appears to be a mirage (Aluko & Mbada, 2020) unless effective strategies and actions are taken.

World Vision (2023) maintain that the inability of a person to afford healthcare services constitutes living in poverty. Along this line, women in Nigeria are mostly faced with an ineffective healthcare system. The situation is exacerbated by poverty that deprives them of the required resources to visit

medical facilities (Akanni, 2021). Given the fact that women have significant roles to play in the development of the nation and there seems to be no viable mechanisms capable of addressing the root causes of challenges, this study seeks to demonstrate how cash *waqf* may be explored to realise SDG-1 by empowering women in Ilorin-West and thereby facilitating their access to healthcare services. The study will be of immense benefit to the Kwara State government to address the threat that poverty poses to the realisation of SDG-1 regarding women's access to healthcare services in Ilorin-West Local Government area of the State.

Thus, the chapter is structured into eight sections. Section two, which follows the introductory section, deals with methodology being adopted for the study. Section three takes a look at conceptualisation of cash *waqf*; Section four undertakes an overview of the implementation of SDG-1 in Nigeria. Section five examines access of Ilorin-West women to healthcare services in Kwara State; Section six seeks to demonstrate how cash *waqf* may be harnessed to help to alleviate Ilorin-West women's poverty by having more access to healthcare services in the Local Government Area. An analysis of the relevant existing Nigerian legal instruments on *waqf* will be conducted in Section seven. Finally, Section eight concludes the discussion of the chapter and recommends imperative provisions to be integrated in the proposed legislation for possible exploration of cash *waqf* to finance healthcare services of Ilorin-West Local Government women.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research design using both doctrinal and non-doctrinal methods. Regarding doctrinal, the study analysed the primary and secondary sources such as the 1999 Constitution (as amended) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), the Northern Endowments Laws (Ostien, 2018), articles in journals, electronic materials and so on. The non-doctrinal method involved field research of data garnered through face-to-face interviews. However, the study focused on the Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State which is the study population. Thus, semi-structured interviews were conducted on selected participants in the area regarded as the subject matter of this study.

Conceptualisation of cash *waqf*

Like what is obtainable under Chapter II of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, Islamic law has certain objectives (referred to as *Maqāṣid As-Sharī'ah*) to realise. *Maqāṣid As-Sharī'ah* aimed at taking care of the total well-being of individuals in society [including poverty eradication and provision of

healthcare] and protecting them against harm (Kamali, 2008). One of the viable social finance mechanisms put in place by Islamic law to realise its objectives, besides *zakat* (compulsory giving alms to the poor) and *sadaqat* (voluntary charity), is *waqf* (Islamic endowment system).

The word *waqf* literally signifies 'confinement or detention'. Technically, the word '*waqf*' has been defined in various ways by the classical Islamic schools of law. However, *waqf* is simply described as the act of dedicating a property for the benefit of those in need of same, excluding the property so dedicated from ownership claim by any individuals; and no longer subject to inheritance, gift, sales, and mortgage. Moreover, once *waqf* has duly been created it then immediately attracts the following three legal consequences, namely: irrevocability, perpetuity and inalienability. As for the irrevocability, the donor who donates his property as *waqf* has forfeited his right to revoke such donation. So also, the *waqf* must be created in perpetuity and it is inalienable. Thus, *waqf* remains as such forever and that the donor or his *mutawalli* (*waqf* manager) neither has power to alienate or transfer the property, nor can his heirs inherit same or sell it or make it a gift (Budiman & Kusuma, 2011). It could, however, be substituted with other properties of the same market value and worth subject to very stringent rules of substitution known as *istibdāl*.

It is noteworthy that the institution of *waqf* has been explored to provide succour for the poor segment of society right from the prophetic period. For instance, it is on record that the first *waqf* by way of charitable purpose is that of the Prophet (SAW – 'sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam'). A Jewish man called Mukhairiq, who not only loved the Prophet greatly, but was also killed in the battle of *Uhud* on his Jewish religion, dashed his seven gardens of date palm, by way of testamentary to the Prophet (SAW) to deal with them as the latter wishes (Khasaf, n.d.). The Prophet (SAW) donated them to the people as *waqf* (Khasaf, n.d.). Thereafter, Umar bin Khattab (RA – Radiya Allahu anhu) followed suit. Thus, on the authority of the son of Umar (RA) who said: 'Umar the son of Khattab (RA) once upon a time got a piece of land called *Thamgh* at *Khaibar* and went to the Prophet (SAW) in order to seek the latter's advice in respect of the land saying: 'O Messenger of Allah! I secured a land at *Khaibar* and I have never had a property more precious than it and as such how best can I utilise same? The Prophet (SAW) then said to Umar (RA): "If you like you hold back its corpus and make its usufruct a charity." Consequently, Umar (RA) donated the land as *waqf* (charity), with the condition that same should not be sold or given out as a gift, or be inherited, to the indigent, the relatives, the wayfarers, the slaves, the cause of Allah and the strangers and that there is no blame on its manager to benefit from it, but not in a way to enrich himself '(Khasaf, n.d.:5-6). It should be mentioned here

that both Muslims and non-Muslims are eligible to be the *waqf* beneficiaries as it is discernible from the foregoing.

Furthermore, what can be made as subject matters of *waqf* takes different forms. Thus, *waqf* objects may be movable, immovable, tangible and intangible. For the purpose of this study, however, cash as a movable form of *waqf* is considered. What is then cash *waqf*? Cash *waqf* is described as ‘a *waqf* of a liquid asset that yields returns that can be used to meet the intended objectives under the *waqf* charter (Ali & Markom, 2020:3).

An overview of sustainable development goal-1 (no poverty) implementation in Nigeria

The attainment of ‘development’ is expected to be the preoccupation of leadership of any nation; for the simple reason that the ultimate aim of craving for ‘development’ is to ensure that living conditions of all people improve positively (Ogbodo et al, 2021). Thus, in the quest for development of their respective nations, 189 leaders of different nations endorsed the Millennium Declaration, which metamorphosed into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the year 2000 (UN, 2000). After the expiration of the MDGs in 2015, there emerged 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015). The goals were conceived and adopted and aimed to be pursued for the next fifteen years (that is, 2016 to 2030).

In the 21st century, one of the major challenges confronting nations around the world is extreme poverty. For this reason, tackling poverty is the foremost goal of the SDGs. According to World Vision (2023), poverty is “a state of deprivation in which people or communities lack access to resources and basic necessities needed to live a healthy and dignified life”. Anyawu (2010) notes that poverty is noticeable when one lacks access to sufficient resources or capabilities to meet the basic needs, whether in the city or rural areas.

In an attempt to tackle the menace of poverty in society, Nigerian governments, federal, state and local, seem to have been making efforts to eradicate poverty in Nigeria. For example, the Nigerian government introduced the National Social Investment Programme whose objective is to provide social safety nets for the less privileged, make available palliative measures for unemployed youths and create three million jobs (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2016). In essence, the ultimate purpose of the programme is to empower the poor and the vulnerable individuals and thereby taking them out of the poverty bracket (Nigeria Voluntary National Review, 2020). Along this line, the Nigerian government has implemented the plan by giving out cash transfers to the poor and vulnerable individuals with

the aim of eradication of their poverty. Other programmes embarked upon by the government to take Nigerian people out of poverty are the N-Power programme (Omoligho, 2022), the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) (Bank of Industry, 2024), which is aimed at empowering market women, women cooperatives and so on (Nigeria Voluntary National Review, 2020). Moreover, states are not left out in the eradication of poverty initiatives in their respective domains as various programmes such as Conditional Cash Transfer, Youth Empowerment, Livelihood, Community Development and so on have been created (Nigeria Voluntary National Review, 2020). Furthermore, many Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have contributed immensely towards poverty eradication in Nigeria. To cite examples, the Angel Support Foundation (Angel Support Foundation, 2022) has extensively embarked on women and girls' empowerment in the various states of the federation. It is documented that Action Aid in FCT trained 6,000 women and youths how to be economically independent (Nigeria Voluntary National Review, 2020).

Notwithstanding the above, a question that may be asked is: do all these efforts made by the Nigerian governments have significant impacts on the Nigerian people, particularly women? A report released by the World Bank in 2022 answers the question raised in the negative when it established that Nigerians are still in bondage of poverty. According to the report, 4 in 10 Nigerian citizens wallow in abject poverty (World Bank, 2022). To substantiate this position, the World Bank Country Director for Nigeria remarked thus: "It is clear that much needs to be done to help lift millions of Nigerians out of poverty, including boosting health and education, bolstering productive jobs, and expanding social protection" (World Bank, 2022). This remark did not come as a surprise because the 2018/19 report of Nigeria Living Standard Survey (NLSS) and World Bank (World Bank, 2021) revealed that 82.9 million, which represents 40%, of Nigerians lived on less than the national poverty line of ₦376.50 per day (World Bank, 2022; NBS, 2022). Also, according to the National Bureau of Statistics' latest report of 2022, 63% of Nigerian people, that is, 133 million, live in multidimensional poverty (NBS, 2022). It is disheartening to state that the most affected individuals are the women and children (NBS, 2022). From all indications, Nigeria is yet to satisfactorily realise SDG-1. Hence, this unpleasant situation requires the urgent attention of all stakeholders.

That said, poverty is multifaceted in nature. It is not restricted only to lack of income and resources but insufficient access to healthcare and other essential needs are inclusive (UN, 2018). Out of poverty, Nigerian women experience great challenges in their access to healthcare services. In fact, the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey showed that about

52% of Nigerian women are faced with certain challenges such as financial insecurity in the process of seeking healthcare services (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2018). In view of this, as Ojo and Osundina (2021) note, women are an essential part of any society and to an extent have significant roles to play in the development and growth of a nation. Therefore, tackling their challenges should occupy a prominent place. A scholar is quoted to have rightly reasoned thus: “the growth of a nation is measured by how well it treats its women” (Ojo & Osundina, 2021:41).

It is discernible in the foregoing that there is poverty amongst the Nigerian people but the menace is more pronounced in women than men. Hence, as Anyawu (2010:40) rightly observes that it is necessary to place a high premium on women’s empowerment on the ground that: “in most countries, women constitute half of the population. Therefore, any development process that ignores the life-chances of half, the population cannot address the problem of poverty and the crisis of sustainability. This is why at this critical junction of global change, it is necessary for development process to fully incorporate an agenda for women’s empowerment by including women’s realities in the fullest sense”. To this end, the next section takes a look at the extent to which women in Ilorin–West Local Government Area Kwara State have access to healthcare facilities.

Women and access to healthcare facilities in Ilorin–West Kwara State

Given the fact that contributions of women to the development of any nation are immeasurable, they have to be handled with utmost care and all possible efforts must be taken to ensure their well-being in any given society. Thus, this section is undertaken to gauge the extent to which women in Ilorin–West have access to healthcare facilities.

a. Context of Ilorin–West local government, Kwara State

Ilorin–West, which is one of the sixteen Local Government Areas under Kwara State, was created in 1991 from the old Ilorin Local Government, formerly having its headquarters situated at Oja–Oba but now at Warrah Osin area. According to the 2006 census, the population of Ilorin–West Local Government Area stood at 364,666 (Kwara State, 2020), while by projection, as at 21 March 2022, it is estimated to be 548,300 (City Population, n.d.). Ilorin–West is the largest and most populous Local Government Area of the State with an area of 105 km² and 12 wards. The major languages of the Ilorin–West Local Government people are Yoruba, Hausa and Fulani while they mainly engage in trading, hunting, civil service jobs, artisans and so

on. According to Ojo and Osundina (2021), Ilorin-West is predominantly dominated by women, whose population exceeds half of its total population.

b. Operation of Kwara State health insurance agency (KWHIA)

As Anyawu (2010) notes, one of the potential policy instruments to eradicate poverty is to provide for access to health, amongst others. Along this line, the Kwara State government made some efforts to reduce poverty regarding insufficient access to healthcare facilities in the State. To this end, the government introduced various programmes such as the Kwara State Health Insurance Agency (KWHIA), which was created on 15 November 2017; with a view to scaling up access of Kwara State residents to healthcare insurance coverage (KWHIA, 2022). The scheme, which is managed by Kwara State Health Insurance Agency (KWHIA), not only allows all Kwara State residents, who are employees in the public, private and informal sectors, as well as unemployed individuals, to enrol. One of the objectives of the scheme is to allow for investment in the healthcare delivery system by exploring public-private financing mechanisms (KWHIA, 2022).

Furthermore, the scheme comprises three different packages, namely: Informal Health Plan (IHP); Formal Health Plan (FHP) and Equity Health Plan (EHP). Regarding the IHP, those who are in informal sectors such as self-employed individuals, farmers and artisans are accommodated in the plan. The token sum of ₦6,000.00 per annum is required for subscription under the plan. The FHP is meant for all local or state civil servants working in the State. Additionally, the plan includes employees who work in private organisations with more than five employees in the State. The amount required for enrolment under this plan is ₦9,000.00. The EHP is designed for the benefit of the indigent families and vulnerable people residing in the State. Under this plan, the poor people will be given healthcare services free of charge (KWHIA, 2022). However, the eligibility of a person to be enrolled under this plan is recommended by the Kwara Houses of Assembly Governing Board and approved by the State Executive Council (KWHIA, 2022). It is cheering to note that based on the available records, many indigent people totalling 51,750 have been enrolled under the EHP for 2022/2023 and have enjoyed free healthcare services (Kwara State Government, 2022).

The Ilorin-West Local Government Area people have shared their respective views about the EHP. One of the respondents, who is a widow and a hair stylist, when interviewed at her shop, commented that with the scheme, herself and her children have been able to receive healthcare services free of charge. Another respondent, a petty trader and is hypertensive, stated that unlike before the introduction of the scheme, it has assisted her immensely

to consult her doctor regularly and has helped her to obtain medications without being fearful of hospital bills whatsoever.

However, as laudable as the scheme is, there are many Ilorin-West Local Government Area women who are yet to be captured onto the scheme. For instance, a nursing mother respondent lamented that the lack of financial capability has denied her the opportunity of being captured onto the scheme. Consequently, out of poverty, those women are facing challenges of accessing healthcare services. On the strength of this, it is necessary that the laudable efforts of the government are to be complemented in this respect. Fortunately, Goal 17 of the SDGs specifically deals with means of implementation of goals including SDG-1. According to the UN: “We acknowledge the role of the diverse private sector, ranging from microenterprises to cooperatives to multinationals, and that of civil society organisations and philanthropic organisations in the implementation of new Agenda” (United Nations, 2015:14).

Thus, the next section of this chapter seeks to examine how cash *waqf* can be explored to help empower the women of Ilorin-West Local Government Area and thereby scale up their access to effective and affordable healthcare services.

Exploring cash *waqf* for financing women’s healthcare services in Ilorin-West, Kwara State

Earlier it was established that the scheme put in place by the Kwara State government to provide healthcare services for all the residents of the state appears not to be sufficient enough to accommodate all women in Ilorin-West. On this strength, it is not out of place to complement the Kwara State government in this respect.

a. Viability of cash *waqf* for the provision of healthcare services

Arguably, cash *waqf* is a viable means to provide healthcare services for vulnerable people in society. Various practical examples of this can be seen in many jurisdictions. In this connection, some lessons may be drawn for provision of Ilorin-West women’s healthcare facilities from the experience of the Waqaf An-Nur Corporation Berhad (WANCorp), in Malaysia where cash *waqf* has been harnessed successfully to provide healthcare services. This is hinged on a lot of laudable achievements recorded by the corporation in this regard.

In the year 2000, the Johor Corporation (JCorp) established WANCorp and saddled it with the responsibility of managing its *waqf* fund, particularly

assets and shares (Saad et al., 2016; Sowtali, 2021). In 2006, JCorp made it known to the public that RM200 million of its shares had been transferred as *waqf* assets to WANCorp (Saad et al., 2016). As a required process, on 4 December 2009, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between JCorp and the Johor Islamic Religious Council where the latter approved the appointment of WANCorp as a special manager (*Mutawalli*) of shares and assets made as *waqf* assets by the former (Saad et al., 2016). The main objectives of establishing WANCorp are to oversee the operation and activities of Waqaf An-Nur Clinics, on one hand, and to ensure that the objective of providing affordable healthcare and dialysis to the less-privileged people in Malaysia is actualised (Saad et al., 2016).

Regarding the distribution of profits generated by WANCorp, the sharing formula is ratio 70:25:5. Thus, when JCorp receives 70% of the profits for reinvestment of same, WANCorp gets 25% for socio-economic purposes such as public works and provision of healthcare services to the poor. The remaining 5% of the dividend goes to the Johor Islamic Religious Council. The rationale behind giving JCorp the lion's share of the benefits is to sustain the company that is the major contributor of the *waqf* assets and to make it donate more of it in the future (Saad et al., 2016).

One of the landmark achievements recorded by WANCorp is the provision of healthcare services to the vulnerable and poor people via clinics referred to as the An-Nur Waqaf Clinic and Hospital Waqaf An-Nur, both of which began operations in 2007. As of 2019, 18 branches of An-Nur Waqaf Clinic, including 4 mobile clinics and 9 dialysis centres, are owned and operated by WANCorp (JCorp, 2019). It must be mentioned that as part of its social responsibility, in 2019, WANCorp, through An-Nur Waqaf Clinics, provided healthcare services and treatment valued at RM124,618 to less privileged patients from different tribal and religious affiliations across Malaysia (JCorp, 2019), at a discounted charge of RM5 (Sowtali, 2020). However, Saad et al. (2016) note that in 2011 more than 765,000 patients were given healthcare services for a token amount of RM5 per treatment. Also, dialysis machines are used by all An-Nur Waqaf Clinics for all patients who are in need of them, at subsidised rates of RM90. In some cases, healthcare services are rendered free of charge for deserving patients (Saad et al., 2016).

To further substantiate the potentiality of *waqf*, it is argued that there are many reputable hospitals worldwide that are financed through the concept of endowment. Such hospitals include Johns Hopkins Hospital in the US. Also, St John's Hospital Mary in London explored an endowment approach to fund the hospital (*Marina et al.*, 2020). As for the Johns Hopkins Hospital, which was considered as the largest medical centre in the United States of America, was unveiled on 7 May 1889. The hospital has 25 doctors,

200 workers, 17 structures and 330 bed spaces (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2024a). Endowments and other sources of income played a significant role in many respects for the existence and sustainability of the hospital. Through endowments, the hospital is able to consistently meet its financial obligations; retain its paediatric doctors and specialists; and support its care, research and teaching (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2024b).

The abovementioned substantiates the viability of cash *waqf* to provide healthcare services. Before concluding this section, it must be stated here that the establishment of cash *waqf* is also relevant to provide healthcare services to the poor segment of Ilorin–West Local Government Area women. How this can be attained is the focus of the next sub–section.

b. Modus operandi for financing women’s healthcare services through cash *waqf* in Ilorin–West, Kwara State

It has been argued so far that some women in Ilorin–West Local Government Area, Kwara State are being deprived of access to healthcare services, whereas there are many contributions that they can make to the development of society. It was demonstrated earlier that cash *waqf* is a viable mechanism to alleviate poverty in terms of providing for healthcare services in some jurisdictions such as Malaysia. Thus, two ways, amongst others, in which cash *waqf* may be explored to finance women’s healthcare services in Ilorin–West Kwara State are depicted as follows:

- The individuals and the government should collaborate in the provision of healthcare services for women in Ilorin West Local Government Area.
- An *Al-ṣundūq Al-Waqfiyyah* (*waqf* fund) will be created for the purpose of providing healthcare services. A similar arrangement was adopted in the State of Kuwait (Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation, 2023:19).
- Since the projected population of Ilorin West stood at 548,300, units of shares, say 500,000, will be issued at say ₦1,000 by the competent and qualified fund manager (*Mutawalli*), say an Islamic bank, for healthcare provision.
- Each prospective *wāqif* (donor) subscribes to the units of shares he or she wishes and a cash-*waqf* certificate will be issued to every subscriber. These units represent the number of *waqf* shares that each prospective *wāqif* acquires. This allows everybody even the less-privileged to participate in the creation of cash *waqf*.
- The fund manager invests *waqf* money totalling ₦500 million in Shari’ah-compliant businesses to yield a relatively high return at a lower risk.
- Incomes generated from the *waqf* fund will be utilised to cater for the purchase of hospitals’ equipment, provision of relevant drugs, medical

bill footing, payment of healthcare workers' emoluments, and a host of others in all the twelve wards of the Local Government Area. The lesson could be drawn from the experience of Waqaf An-Nur Corporation (WANCorp) in Malaysia, discussed in the foregoing.

- The state government plays its role by creating an enabling environment for the operation of cash *waqf* in this regard.

Alternatively, the second way is that the pooled money, ₦500 million, in a special account of an Islamic bank will be loaned to the less-privileged women in the Local Government Area by way of *Qard Hassan* (benevolent loan). *Qard Hassan* is an interest-free loan aimed at assisting a person who is in need of cash. It is a non-rewarding loan, therefore, the borrower only pays back the amount he borrowed with no interest and the lender does not expect any monetary return (Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2019). This is based on the principle that consumption of *riba* (interest) is totally forbidden in Islam (Qur'an 2 (Surah Al-Baqarah, verses 275-279). The ultimate purpose of this institution is to assist vulnerable women to stand on their feet to become part of economic activities. Thus, by so doing, Ilorin-West Local Government Area's women will be brought into the formal financial sector and as they come out of poverty by engaging in business ventures using their skills and expertise, they are empowered to finance their healthcare services.

It is the considered view of this researcher that if the foregoing strategies are explored, women in the Ilorin-West Local Government Area will be empowered and will thereby have access to healthcare facilities. Nonetheless, this may prove difficult if there is no effective legal framework sanctioning cash *waqf* institution in the State. Therefore, the next section focuses on the analysis of extant laws on *waqf* in Kwara State.

Analysis of extant laws on *waqf* in Kwara State

The Constitution is one of the instruments providing legal backing for the operation of *waqf* in Nigeria. By its provisions, the Constitution expressly declares *waqf* as part of the Islamic Personal Law matters and empowers the *Sharia'h* Court of Appeal to hear and determine disputes relating to *waqf* matters. The relevant provisions of Section 277 (2) (c) and 262 (2) (c) of the Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) provide thus: "For the purposes of subsection (1) of this section, the Sharia Court of Appeal shall be competent to decide...(c) any question of Islamic personal law regarding a *wakf*, gift or succession where the endower, donor, testator or deceased person is a Muslim." It is instructive to note that the word '*waqf*' is spelt as '**wakf**' in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, whereas the word '*wakf*' in Arabic philology means: to drip, trickle, leak. Notwithstanding this meaning in

Arabic language, which does not properly convey the real sense of '*waqf*', the intention of the Constitution drafters on *waqf* is 'Islamic Endowment System'. This is hinged on the fact that the Constitution provides that the *Shari'a*'h Court of Appeal has jurisdictional power to determine any Islamic Personal Law concerning '*wakf*' where the **endower person [author's emphasis]** is a Muslim.

Beyond the 1999 Constitution, no legislation currently at the federal level, that is an 'Act' of National Assembly, provides for the operation of *waqf* (Ishola, 2019). This is supported by the fact that being a residual matter, power to legislate on *waqf* is vested in the State House of Assembly. In this regard, many of the nineteen states, specifically nine of them, in the Northern part of Nigeria that are implementing Sharia have legislated laws on *waqf*. It is imperative to state here that according to the findings of Oseni (2012), the available laws in the *Shari'a*'h-implementing States are not even sufficient for the operation of *waqf* in their respective states. However, Zamfara State has enacted the Zakat (Collection, Distribution and Endowment) Board Law, 2003, which is considered as specific *waqf* legislation, to govern administration and management of *Zakah* and *waqf* through its House of Assembly (Oseni, 2012). By its provisions, the law accommodates cash as a kind of *waqf*. For instance, Section 32 of the law validates shares in companies, part of salaries, special grants by Local and State Governments, foundations, social services like roads and hospitals, donations, and such other kinds of charity. Recently, Sokoto State followed suit as it enacted a comprehensive law on *waqf* in the state. All these expositions are nothing but to establish that some states have relevant provisions regarding cash *waqf* in their laws from which other states can borrow a leaf.

Coming to Kwara State, which is one of the states that fall under the North Central of Nigeria, no law has been enacted on the practice of *waqf* in the state, let alone integrating relevant provisions in respect of cash *waqf*. The need for *waqf* law in the state is hinged on the fact that there are various kinds of *waqf* assets, ranging from immovable to movable property such as shares, bonds and cash, which are regulated by some laws other than Islamic law. Again, there must be provisions for elements, establishment, registration of *waqf*, and over which the court has jurisdiction when dispute regarding cash *waqf* arises. Therefore, to be accepted as valid *waqf* there must be legislation to that effect and regulate their handling by a *waqf* manager. In essence, there has been a lack of *waqf* legislation in Kwara state.

Notwithstanding the above position, it is cheering to mention that at present, the Kwara state *Shari'a*'h Court of Appeal's efforts to formulate a *waqf* law in the state to regulate management and administration of *waqf* are a commendable development; as this would help the effective exploration of

waqf, particularly cash *waqf*, to finance women's healthcare in Ilorin-West Local Government Area. One of the participants, a legal practitioner, when interviewed, stated that in the ongoing preparation of a bill on *waqf* to be sent to the Kwara state House of Assembly, that for *waqf* to be effectively practiced in the state, there must be legislation to that effect. He added that once the proposed bill passed into law the practice of *waqf* in all its kind, including cash *waqf*, would serve its purpose of providing succour to the people of the State.

Conclusion and recommendations

From the discussions so far, it is seen that one of the great challenges ravaging the world over, particularly women, is the issue of poverty. It is on this strength that the United Nations member states, including Nigeria, have made eradication of poverty as Goal-1 in the realisation of the SDG agenda. Also, it is established that the concept of poverty encompasses the inability of a person to have sufficient access to healthcare services.

Moreover, it is discovered that despite all the efforts put in place by the Kwara State government to eradicate poverty in the area of making provision for healthcare services for the state residents, the government alone cannot provide all the basic needs of the citizenry. Rather, it requires private sector participation in this regard. In other words, the public sector needs the private sector in the provision of social services, and this can be achieved through cash *waqf*.

It is found that, notwithstanding the potentiality of cash *waqf* to finance healthcare services of women in Ilorin-West as strategised in the foregoing, there has been a challenge of the lack of *waqf* legislation that may face its successful exploration in Ilorin-West and by extension in the state. If the challenge is addressed, then cash *waqf* can be harnessed effectively to create a sustainable and continuous benefit for all women in the Local Government Area.

In view of the foregoing, the following are suggested to be included in the legislation:

1. The new law should provide for the integration of all the required elements and varieties of *waqf*, including cash as a valid subject matter of *waqf*.
2. The proposed Kwara state *waqf* law should make provision for modalities of *waqf* investment.
3. The intended legislation should include provisions capable of ensuring accountability, fairness and transparency. Such enactment should also make provision for sanctions to be meted out to the offender in case *waqf* resources are mismanaged.

4. The state government should contribute at least 1% of its total annual revenue to the *waqf* as it is done by Zamfara State government under Section 32 of the Zakat (Collection, Distribution and Endowment) Board Law of Zamfara State.

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PART 6

Conflict, Development, Climate Change and Women's Representation in Governance

Chapter 28

Conflict-Induced Displacement and Women's Political Representation in Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract

From a gender and women's lens, this study examines the nexus between displacement and women's political representation in Benue State. The central argument of the chapter is that humanitarian emergencies contribute to weaken women's agency for political mobilisation and participation by creating conditions that socially decapitate women as a viable political agency. The study further investigates: (a) the relationship between internally displaced women and political representation; (b) how displacements and their associated vulnerabilities impinge on women's political mobilisation, (c) roles of the state and CSOs in advancing socio-economic justice for women in IDP camps and (d) feasible strategies for women's political empowerment in IDPs for sustainable democratic consolidation. Primary and secondary sources of data were both adopted. The purposive sampling method was employed to include displaced women in seven IDP camps across the three senatorial zones of Benue State. The Human Needs Theory was adopted to elucidate the unmet needs of women IDPs. Collected data was content and descriptively analysed. The findings reveal that the humanitarian crisis and its resultant sufferings have weakened and shifted the attention and focus of women in IDP camps from seeking political inclusion to struggling for survival. Also, the findings further disclosed that the displacement of women from different villages into several IDP camps constitute short- and long-term albatrosses to building sustainable women's political representation; thereby widening the gender gap in political representation. The study recommends that even in the midst of displacement and the need for IDPs to

return home or be resettled, a women's political empowerment programme should be encouraged.

Keywords: Conflict, Displacement, Governance, Representation, Women

Introduction

Human displacement generally is a growing global problem. The affected persons can be categorised in several ways. Those displaced across international borders are technically labelled as 'refugees' and those still circulating within their countries of origin are known as 'internally displaced persons' (IDPs). This study is about IDPs, and amongst the IDPs, the focus is further narrowed down to the women. Research has shown that in 2022, internal displacement reached an all-time high of nearly 60 million people world-wide, while it was about 59.1 million at the end of 2021. Of the figure for 2021, 53.2 million were as a result of conflict and violence, and 5.9 million were because of disasters (IDMC, 2022).

While the rate of displacement continues to rise at an exponential rate, discrimination on the basis of sex and inequality globally has become an issue of concern especially as the lack of women's political representatives continues to interfere with the enjoyment of rights and the full advancement of women and girls worldwide (UNDOC, 2006). Displacement arising from armed conflict, persecution and other forms of human rights violations can intensify this discrimination and inequality. Discrimination against women can be the cause – or a contributing cause – of displacement, and it can occur at all stages in the displacement cycle: during flight, settlement or return. Although all forcibly displaced persons face protection problems, "women and girls can be exposed to particular protection problems related to their gender, their cultural and socio-economic position, and their legal status" (Jeremy & Mooney, 2007).

In Nigeria, women have the legal and socio-political rights to be represented in all spheres of government in accordance with the affirmative action which reserves 35% of political elective positions, and political appointments for women, minorities and individuals with disabilities; this was meant to eliminate gender discrimination, ensure equality and human dignity to all, men and women (Ejekwonyilo, 2022). However, the escalating dimensions of displacement because of farmers-herders, communal and inter-intra ethnic conflicts have contributed in no small measure to demobilising and ostracising women as a viable political agency.

It is on record that since 2010 herders have resorted to the use of arms, and other resources that are best known to them to launch ferocious attacks on the people of Benue to gain access to grazing lands by force. Between 2010

and 2020 the group has rapaciously attacked, maimed, killed and displaced millions of people in Benue. The devastating nature of attacks seems to make Benue State the epicentre of the herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria (Wegh, 2018). One of the most devastating effects of this war of attrition is that it has led to the loss of lives and properties. One of the sad incidences took place on 1 January 2018, when the herders, during a night raid, killed over 70 people in Guma Local Government Area in the State (Ukase & Jatto, 2020). These heinous acts have led to the rising profile of the herdsmen as one of the most dangerous and most dreaded terrorist groups globally (Iyang & Effiong, 2022). In addition to these attacks, communal and ethnic clashes continue to threaten peaceful co-existence (Ajiye, 2018; Bello & Olutola, 2016; Oravee, 2015).

These consistent and well-coordinated attacks by herdsmen, continual communal and inter-communal crises have led to displacement of villages across Benue State, the emergence of IDPs and the creation of official and unofficial IDP camps in selected locations in Benue State to cater for the IDPs. By April 2022, Benue had become a home to 27 IDP camps, comprising official camps created by the government, and unofficial camps created by the people affected to create shelter and security for themselves. A preliminary survey further revealed that the IDP crisis is under-reported, as there are at least fifty IDP camps across Benue.¹ In 2022, the Ortom-led government reported that the IDP camps in Benue have become shelter to over two million IDPs and the number of those coming into the camps has continued to increase exponentially (Vanguard 1 April, 2022).

Because of the complexity of the crisis, there has been a corresponding rise in the number of women IDPs in Benue State, thereby dislocating them from their social networks – family relationships, husbands, sons and others. While there has been difficulty in gathering data as to the exact number of displaced people, evidence from the field during this study reveals that of the over two million people displaced in Benue State, women and girls form at least 65%, while men and boys form the remaining 35%.² This disconnection contributes in no small way to weakening their economic livelihood and desire for political participation and representations. The central argument of the study is that humanitarian emergencies contribute to weaken women's agency for political mobilisation and participation by creating conditions that ostracise and socially decapitate them as a viable political agency.

1 Survey of IDPs camps, and personal communications with Moses Timothy 35, one of BSEMA IDP Camp Managers: 20 April 2023.

2 Interview and personal communications with David Azenda, 55+ Senior Special Assistance to the Governor of Benue State on Humanitarian Affairs, at BSEMA office, 21 April 2023.

Although a lot of empirical scholarly works have been carried out by reputable scholars across numerous disciplines on internally displaced persons, none, to the best knowledge of the researcher, has tackled the gap between conflict-induced displacements and the political representation of women. From a gender and women's lens, therefore, this study examines the nexus between conflict-induced displacement and women's political representation in Benue State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are: (a) to examine the causes of displacement; (b) to examine the relationship between internally displaced women and political representation; (c) to interrogate how displacements and their associated vulnerabilities impinge on women's political mobilisation; (d) to explore the roles of the state and CSOs in advancing socio-economic justice for women in IDP camps; and (e) to proffer feasible strategies for political empowerment of women IDPs.

Research methodology

Primary and secondary sources of data were both adopted for this study. Primary data include 40 oral KIIs with internally displaced women, 7 IDP camp managers, and 12 KIIs with six civil society organisations. Secondary sources like books, journal publications, newspapers and relevant Internet materials were employed. The purposive sampling method was employed to include displaced women in the IDP camps. Seven IDP camps were selected to include official and unofficial camps across the three senatorial zones of Benue State. They include a sample of three official camps: Abagena (Makurdi), Daudu Camp (Guma LGA) and Anyinn Camp (Logo) and three unofficial camps: Agatu LGA, Agagbe at Gwer-West LGA, and Ichwa (Makurdi). The justification for the selection of these zones is hinged on the fact that the areas give robust data regarding IDPs across Benue State.

Theoretical perspective

This section of the study will succinctly and briefly discuss the theoretical underpinnings of this study.

The Human Needs Theory (Coate & Rosati, 1988): The assumption of the theory is that human needs are a powerful source of explanation of human behaviour and social interactions. The theory in this study establishes the various needs of the internally displaced persons, which have distracted them from political participation. The unmet needs have led to the channelling of their energies to fighting for food, relief materials and other needs that guarantee survival. The relevance of the Human Needs Theory to this study is further corroborated by the fact that when the needs of the internally displaced persons are not met, it could lead to increasing the level

of insecurity in the region. A preliminary field survey reveals that some IDPs become involved in anti-social or deviant activities because of lack or inadequacy of basic needs in camps.³ All of these are distractions from relevant political engagements.

a. Causes of displacement

Benue is largely an agrarian society; meaning that they depend largely on agricultural produce for survival. However, consistent conflicts between the nomadic Fulani pastoralists, who need a large amount of land for their cattle grazing have fuelled an unending crisis between them and the farmers, which has contributed largely to the decimation of several villages and towns across Benue State. Although, hitherto, the nomadic Fulani herdsmen have maintained a relationship of conviviality from the precolonial era, sadly, that is not the story anymore, as the Benue inhabitants are dissatisfied with the habitual nature of the Fulani herdsmen, who constantly encroach into their farms and destroy crops and farmlands. These crises have led to a series of attacks, leading to thousands of deaths and displacement. The following is a summation of the factors causing displacement in Benue State, Nigeria.

1. Recurrent Challenges of Itinerant Grazing: Intergroup relations between farmers and pastoralists have become strained, because of the destruction of crops in recent times and the conflict has been greeted with more conflict and intermittent attacks than dialogue. Encroachments into farmlands and destruction of crops either deliberately or accidentally has been one of the major challenges of the skirmishes between the farmers and the herders, escalating to armed confrontation, leading to massive displacement (FJDP & CPDS, 2020).
2. Acquisition of Grazing Space: Oral interviews have revealed that the improper acquisition of grazing space is one of the most prominent causes of conflict between farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria. Some traditional rulers and other highly placed persons in the state have struck secret deals with pastoralists through their representatives or leaders – a ‘deal’ which grants pastoralists the right to graze in such communities.
3. Criminality and Desperation: Because of desperation, farmers and pastoralists have engaged themselves in various forms of criminality to the detriment of each other, which includes cattle rustling, over-charging for destroyed crops, and indiscriminate killing of cattle for sale and consumption, intimidation and advance fee fraud. Conversely, a network of cattle rustlers believed to be sponsored in Nigeria by abattoir owners has been using people, especially the youths, to operate it. It has been

3 Oral Interviews with an IDP Camp Manger Mr Chia. S. (S.A on IDPs) on 19 April 2023 at BSEMA Office, Benue State.

estimated that Fulani pastoralists have been losing at least eighty cows annually to cattle rustlers in the state. Meanwhile, even though the Fulani pastoralists state that their relatives have spearheaded this criminality, they do not deny the fact that they do it in connivance with the youths of their host communities. This alone has been generating tensions and the urge for revenge on the parts of the herdsmen (Iorwuese, 2013; FJDP & CPDS, 2020).

4. **Climate Change:** This has been causing the aridisation of the far north, thereby forcing southward migration of herdsmen. It was revealed that the states of Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi, Kano, Jigawa, Yobe, Adamawa and Borno are regarded as the frontier states and majorly impacted by the desert-like conditions, affecting an area of about 580,841 km² or 63.8% of Nigeria's landmass, thereby forcing southward migration of pastoralists and their cattle (Falaki et al., 2020). Because of the growing population, there has been an attendant shortage of arable land for farming activities. Even the existing portions have become infertile because of continuous usage (FJDP & CPDS, 2020).
5. **Activities of Criminal Groups:** Pastoralists have been using youths in their host communities as spies for financial and other benefits. This has contributed in no small measure to heightening tensions between the two groups because such spies leak damaging pieces of information to pastoralists such as: the level of preparedness of their communities for defence or attack; names of strong opinion leaders or warriors who pastoralists should bribe for support or kill to achieve their aims; the kinds of charms they possess; time and place of attacks or reprisal attacks, and so on (FJDP & CPDS, 2020).
6. **Communal and Ethnic Clashes:** Another worrisome cause of displacement in Benue is the nature of inter-and intra-communal clashes (Gabtse, 2022). These crises and their manifestations have contributed in no small measure to the increasing displacement and its harmful outcomes on women.

b. The nexus between internally displaced women and political representation

Firstly, female IDPs have the right to political participation, including the right to vote and be elected as well as to participate on governmental and public affairs. This right is expressly affirmed in the Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement (UNDOC, 1998). This is the internationally recognised framework setting forth the rights and guarantees of IDPs, and it is rooted in well-established standards of international human rights law (Grace & Mooney, 2007).

Guiding Principle 22(1) (d) expressly affirms that these tenets apply to the right to political participation. It specifies:

Internally displaced persons, whether or not they are living in camps, shall not be discriminated against as a result of their displacement in the enjoyment of ...(1) the right to vote and participate in government and public affairs, including the right to have access to the means necessary to exercise this right. (Emphasis added).

To give effect to this right, Guiding Principle 22(1) (a) affirms for IDPs “the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, opinion and expression” and Principle 22(1) (c) providing the “right to associate freely and participate equally in community affairs”.

The Convention on the Political Rights affirms that women shall be entitled to vote in all elections and shall be eligible for elections to all publicly elected bodies on equal terms with men, without any discrimination (UN, 1954). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (UN, 1979) requires state parties to:

Take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right... to vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies (UN, 1979).

Amongst regional instruments affirming this right is the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights of Women in Africa (AU, 2003). Article 9, titled the Right to Participation in the Political and Decision-Making Process, requires state parties to:

Take specific positive action to promote participative governance and the equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures to ensure that: a) women participate without any discrimination in all elections; b) women are represented equally at all levels with men in electoral processes; c) women are equal partners with men at all levels of development and implementation of state policies and development programmes.

Electoral participation by women IDPs promotes engagement, reintegration, reconciliation in divided societies, and prevents marginalisation. The political voice of IDPs is needed for dialogue and for making governments more

accountable, which can be particularly important for IDPs' services and provisions. Securing electoral rights in their area of origin, current location or future settlement site is a key component of a durable solution for IDPs themselves and often the crisis that created the displacement. In cases of protracted displacement, as it is with the context of this study, it can be argued that fully meaningful enfranchisement requires that IDPs have a choice over where to vote and where to stand as a candidate. This choice may be seen as fostering IDPs' political engagement and increasing the possibility of durable solutions. When women IDPs obtain the security to be able to fight for the political opportunity they deserve, it goes a long way to securing all-inclusive help for all IDPs. It is a good practice in the development of policies as well as the implementation of the affirmative action, and laws related to vulnerable groups' electoral participation; to consult with broadly representative groups, regarding the case of IDPs to explore possible solutions (IFES, 2013).

In a nutshell, the principle of universal and equal suffrage, by definition, encompasses IDPs, extending to all internally displaced citizens who are eligible to vote and to stand for election. In other words, for individuals meeting the eligibility requirements specified in national electoral legislation (for instance, having attained the age of majority), the right to vote and the right to be elected remain untrammelled by displacement. These rights extend to all citizens, without distinction of any kind, including on the grounds of being displaced. Whereas residency requirements often apply, it is well established that these cannot exclude the internally displaced from being able to exercise their rights to political participation and representation. A number of normative statements expressly affirm that the right to political participation continues to apply in situations of internal displacement (Jeremy & Mooney, 2007).

The above argument puts an end to the question of the nexus between women IDPs and political representation, being first of all humans, they have equal political rights with every other human legally recognised in any and every political sphere. This therefore bestows responsibility on government to ensure that women are provided with all they need to be part of all electoral processes as stipulated by law.

c. How displacements and their associated vulnerabilities impinge on women's political mobilisation

The framing of displacement within a crisis framework draws attention to immediate survival, relief and protection at the expense of the very socio-political effects of displacement and how these effects change over time. Internal displacement is approached primarily as a geographical

displacement and the material effects of that. Evidence gathered in this research indicates that displacement needs to be understood as a socio-political displacement, such that dislocates women from representation in the governance of their constituencies. The process of displacement involves disruption, and often severance of important social bonds, networks and relationships, with profound effects. A geographical focus on displacement encourages a focus on how many people have been forced out of place. A socio-political lens enables a clearer view of the effects of displacement on social relations and structures, thereby drawing greater attention to the impacts on gender roles and relations. The dislocation of women from social relations and structures makes them irrelevant in political mobilisation and participation.

Shackel and Fiske (2016) argue that these socio-political effects are especially important to consider in societies with relatively weak formal citizenship, and amongst populations within societies that have normatively weak citizenship (women, ethnic minorities, children) who, despite formally holding full citizenship, realise their 'rights' through social relationships (Shackel & Fiske, 2016). In many highly patriarchal societies, including the current focus of this study, regardless of the legal citizenship status, women realise their rights through social relationships, primarily male relationships (fathers, husbands, and sons). This scenario too has been captured by Fiske and Shackel in their research in the DRC, Kenya and Uganda (Fiske & Shackel, 2016; Yuval-Davis, 1993). The evidence from Fiske and Shackel's research is further proof that across Africa, women go through very horrible conditions during humanitarian emergencies.

Fiske and Shackel further argue in their studies that while fracturing of formal citizenship rights entailed in internal displacement affects men, women and children, women's access to rights is doubly impaired; not only are any formal rights previously held effectively suspended by a neglectful or persecutory state, the relationship through which they accessed these rights may be additionally ruptured or distorted. This has multiple flow-on effects on gender relations amongst internally displaced populations including causing greater imbalance in power relations between men and women within many groups, forcing women into exploitative and/or abusive relationships, and leaving women with little or no social support network and at greater risk of the harms associated with internal displacement. These relational effects of displacement extend to intergenerational effects with both immediate and lasting impacts on displaced children. Needless to say, these dislocations place women in a state of trauma, hunger, illnesses, such that instead of serving as a viable political agency; they are out, struggling to receive relief materials in order to take care of themselves (Fiske & Shackel, 2016).

Dynamics of gender roles in displacement

Research demonstrates that gender relations or roles are often impacted and may be reconfigured by displacement, injury, incapacitation, or death of young men and husbands in conflicts and will shift the burden of providing for the entire households, in terms of food, care of children and their education, to a much greater extent, and sometimes exclusively, unto women (Lwambo, 2013; Kesmaecker-Wissing & Pagot, 2015; Shackel & Fiske, 2016; El-Bushra, 2003). Women who have lost their husbands to conflict face additional challenges and responsibilities as heads of households, and have to rely on basic survival skills (Ferris, 2014).

Many of the women in the IDP camps recounted how their lives and roles have changed completely as they had to cater for their children and their entire household; in some cases, while they cannot give accounts of where their husbands are, some mentioned that their husbands were killed by the Fulani herdsmen, or that during the attacks, their husbands and children took to different routes; they do not know if their husband is still alive or dead. A 45-year old respondent at one of the IDP camps explains her concerns:

... Before the attack that night, I was into petty trading and my husband was a farmer, we had five children, suddenly at night, we heard the sound of very many people, speaking strange languages, somehow, we observed it was the herdsmen, I and my five children managed to escaped narrowly, my husband left us and said he will join us at the IDPs camp, we never saw him again, we do not know if he is alive or dead; the children have now become my total responsibility, no home, nowhere to go.

Another respondent, Mary, 37 years old recounts her ordeal:

... I travelled to see my parents with my two children, upon my return, our house has been burnt down, with my husband and two children killed, I and my children had nothing left except the clothes on our body, dealing with the grief is the most traumatic experience of my life; now, life has been unbearable here with I and my children after my husband and other children were brutally killed that day, I am now their father and at same time mother (paraphrased).

In another sad story, a 27-year-old woman lost her husband to the Fulani herdsmen attack at Logo LGA, where 70 people alongside her husband were killed, leaving behind two children; because of the suffering, she and her children moved into the IDP camp in Makurdi. In a similar attack, Mrs Anyamve narrated how the herdsmen killed her husband and 17 others in

Chembe in 2015. She said she is now left with seven children to care for alone (Adams, 2020).

The above assertions were captured from many other similar responses; it was clear that the change of gender roles and the burden it brings, as well as coping with the sufferings in the IDPs camps are enough distraction to deter the women from political participation or representation. Conflict-induced displacement therefore places more burden and responsibilities on women.

Sexual and gender-based violence: Stigmatisation, rejections, shame and guilt

Internally displaced women face a range of protection issues on a daily basis. Most notably, sexual and gender-based violence is an unfortunate reality for many. Often without the protection of family and communities that they had before displacement, internally displaced women can be vulnerable to rape, domestic violence, forced prostitution, trafficking and any number of other violent situations (Ferris, 2014). It has been discovered that in a classical patriarchy, women's social status and value are derived primarily from their roles as daughters, wives and mothers, roles that fundamentally rest on chastity, fidelity and honour (Brownmiller, 1993). Sexual violence is not only an assault and offence against a woman's physical and psychological well-being, but it often precipitates a catastrophic loss of social status and expulsion from social networks (Shackel & Fiske, 2016).

In Benue state IDP camps, a number of women who have been victims of rape and all forms of sexual assaults are afraid of speaking out for fear of rejection by their social networks - husbands, communities, churches and even mosques. These attacks on women continually keep them in different kind of cages. After a lot of persuasions, a few of the female IDPs opened up on being rape victims even before they arrived at the IDP camps. They noted that the painful incidence led to the breakdown of family and societal love towards them:

According to one of the women at Naka IDP camp on 28 April, 2023 (name hidden)

... I was gang raped in the presence of my husband, by some men I suspected to be Fulani herdsmen; since then, my husband never looked at me anymore, nor spoke to me, I felt horrible, eventually when he mustered courage to speak, he said he can no longer continue in the marriage, because he has lost his affection for me.

In another interview, my respondent at *Ichwa* IDP camp, 29 April 2023, narrated her ordeal in the Nigerian *pidgin* English (name hidden):

... one night, whether na Fulani oo, I no know, them enter our house, them say them wan sleep (sex) with me, say if me and my husband no gree, them go kill two of us, after we drag, drag, sake of say make them no touch my husband, na so I come gree, since that time, na wahala every day, sotey, him come say him no fit marry me again, na so the marriage end ooo.

Translation:

...One night, we were invaded by strange men, whether Fulani, I do not know, they insisted they must have carnal knowledge of me, and if I resist, my husband will be killed, after a lot of struggle, I let them have their way to save my husband, ever since that incident, I and my husband have lost peace in our marriage, until he told me that the marriage was over.

Earlier in this study, the author had corroborated the view of Brownmiller (1993), that in classical patriarchal societies, women's social status and value are derived primarily through their roles as daughters, wives and mothers; roles that fundamentally rest on chastity, fidelity and honour. If a woman is termed as a victim of rape or sexual violence, there will be automatic loss of her social networks – husband, fiancé, brothers, and other family relatives because of stigmatisation, which further reduces the value that society places on her and further de-markets her in political spheres. In addition, women who are active in politics face stigmatisation; in other times they may be regarded as prostitutes (Ogunyemi, 2019). In the 2023 polls in Nigeria, it was further observed that the travails of women seeking elective positions had worsened because of discrimination (Anthony, 2023).

All of these variables contribute disadvantageously to the loss of a woman's self-confidence, worth, value and the continual feelings of guilt and shame that society continues to place on her. With the way the woman battles for relevance, it therefore becomes difficult for those around her to market her for a political office or see her worthy to represent them in a political office or for her to even market herself. Despite the affirmative action of Nigeria, this issue continues to threaten women's representation in governance.

Disconnections from family and means of livelihood

Despite the fact that the affirmative action clause makes provision for women to pick up forms for elective positions at a lower cost, it is important

to note that politics, especially the mobilisation of electorates to vote for their preferred candidates require money. This is because anyone vying for any political position will need to travel to meet electorates, such as youths, women, elders and community leaders from various communities and constituencies to make known their manifestoes and intentions, as well as make consultations with other relevant stakeholders. Displacement disconnects women from managing their businesses, farming investments, jobs, and so on, which makes it almost impossible for them to make the money required to provide logistics to be able to contest for elective positions.

According to one of the respondents at Abegena camp, 30 April 2023:

I have political intentions, but where is the money, I am inspired by the sufferings in the IDPs camps, I am also an IDP, regrettably. If I am able to get a political office, I will be able to press on to pass policies that will favour and resettle the IDPs.

In another vein, a respondent at Agatu camp, 16 April 2023 noted that:

I will love to represent women in governance, but I have lost everything, my husband, my three children, here, we are victims of hunger, illness, malnourishment; mentally too, a lot of us are ill, whether we will ever heal, we do not know. Our focus now is not politics, but survival, you must be well to be able to help others.

Many other respondents mentioned that poverty, hunger, illness, malnourishment and general lack are major obstacles to representation in governance. This is because of the loss of all means of livelihood, business and social networks as a result of displacement.

Illiteracy and poor political education

One of the fundamental problems encountered in the course of this study was that most of the female IDPs could not speak English; however, I had carried with me a member of staff of the Benue State Emergency Management Agency (BSEMA), as well as the resident camp managers of the various camps that we visited for field work. Illiteracy and poor political education are a major plague that women's organisations and CSOs must deal with in order to achieve the affirmative action goal.

While internal displacements affect the quality, cost and access to educational opportunities, the vital role of education as a response to emergencies has been recognised by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) – a global network of around 1,400 individual and

organisational members who work together within a humanitarian network and develop a minimum standards framework to ensure the right to education in emergencies and post-crisis reconstruction:

Education is not only a right, but in the situation of emergencies, chronic crisis and early reconstruction, it provides physical, psychological and cognitive protection, which can be both life-saving and life-sustaining. Education sustains life by offering safe places for learning, as well as the ability to identify and provide support for affected individuals, particularly children and adolescents. Education mitigates the psychosocial impact of conflict and disasters by giving a sense of normalcy, stability, structure and hope for the future during a time of crisis, and provides essential building blocks for economic stability... it can also save lives by protecting against exploitation and harm, including abduction, recruitment of children into armed groups and sexual and gender-based violence. Lastly, education provides the knowledge and skills to survive in a crisis through the dissemination of life-saving information and landmine safety, HIV/AIDS prevention, conflict resolution and peace-building (INEE, 2004).

The above revelation by INEE (2004) explicitly captures the indispensable relevance of adult education for women in IDP camps, who must make their voices heard through political inclusion and representation. Despite the relevance of education for IDPs, no serious NGOs, or CSOs have been involved in providing adult or even children's education in the IDP camps visited.

According to a respondent at Daudu camp, 15 April 2023:

We have been here for 7 years now, our children are out of school, is it adult or girl education you are talking about when even our children are out of school? Many of the women have not been to school and that contributes to hampering our capacity for political activities.

A woman corroborated the view of the above person at Naka camp, 20 April 2023, although seems educated from her use of English, she noted that:

Politics in Africa is for the strong, educated and powerful, besides, we are only allowed to vote here, we cannot contest for certain political offices as this community is only hosting us, we are not from here.

From the above, we can deduce that poverty, homelessness, illiteracy and poor political education are very strong indices that disenfranchise female IDPs from political representation. The lack of or inadequate prerequisite knowledge needed to consult with relevant bodies, mobilise voters, seek for

votes, present manifestoes; are some of the issues discovered to be plaguing the achievement of affirmative action. These are in addition to the fact that most of the women interviewed knew nothing about the affirmative action, nor the requirements to contest in any type of election in the state. Worse still, many of the women are not card-carrying members of any political party, except that a good number of them have voters' cards.

Roles of the state and CSOs in advancing socio-economic justice for women in IDP camps.

The inclusion of women in political leadership is not only a prerequisite for a functional democracy, but also a matter of efficiency in governance. From different parts of the world, women bring into their leadership unique perspectives, networks, skills and abilities (Kark, 2004). This access to women broadens policy agendas relevant for national transformation and sustainable development. The state and the CSOs are expected to play the roles of complementarity to bring women out of their shells, and ensure that their voices are heard; how well the state and civil society have performed in performing this all-important role is what this section of the study is committed to investigating. While some of the roles towards women IDPs remain the exclusive reserve of the government, others can be acted upon through the collaborative efforts of the government and the CSOs.

In the 2023 polls, Governor Samuel Ortom made it a point of duty, ensuring that across the IDP camps in the state, IDPs voted (Punch, 2022). It was reported that INEC not only ensured that IDPs voted in the last elections, but that two IDPs were recruited as ad-hoc staff for the 2023 general elections; in addition, 60 voting centres were created for the IDPs; 56 in host communities and four in IDP camps across the six Local Government Areas of Benue State. This effort was commended by Community Links and Human Empowerment Initiative, (CHLEI), a non-governmental organisation (Onyeka, 2023).

In another dimension, the state, at all levels, owes the women IDPs security, to ensure that they are protected from rape and all kinds of gender-based violence, that steals their confidence, worth and self-esteem away; ensuring that culprits are adequately prosecuted in the courts of law. However, the disposition of the state towards implementing such laws that will deal with GBV generally has not been very commendable. The Coalition of CSOs-Benue has continued to lament this condition.

For example, on 8 March 2022, civil society organisations, Benue State, in conjunction with the State Ministry of Women Affairs shared how they commemorated world International Women's Day by taking a walk

from Savanna roundabout through Woodland Park to Benue State House of Assembly. With one voice, the women registered their dismay with the rejection of the Bill for inclusive governance by the National Assembly. The Benue State women strongly condemn the discriminative, inequality and inhumane acts carried out by the assembly. The Bill for gender equality was thrown out in 2015, 2019 and 2022. The women further demanded 35% in party leadership and 111 seats for women (Benue State President, CSO-B, 2022; Olafusi 2022). A court sitting in Abuja mandated the government to heed to the National Gender Policy of 35% of public offices for women (Ejekwonyilo, 2022). It is not enough for laws to be passed; all stakeholders must press for the executive arm of government to implement them.

The above experiences and much more from the field, exposes the Nigerian State and the Benue State Government for the poor attention given to the inclusion of women in governance, poor steps towards poverty eradication and women's empowerment as well as the implementation of the GBV laws in the state. Although a cross-section of NGOs and CSOs have continued to raise attention through activism and public lectures concerning these needs for women generally, the condition only continues to worsen; no female IDP contested any elective position in Benue state in the 2023 general elections. While these conditions continue to militate against women generally, internally displaced women are even more vulnerable, as none of them from interviews was interested in political inclusion, but rather, survival.

Feasible strategies for political empowerment of female IDPs for sustainable democratic consolidation.

In this section of the study, a few recommendations will be made to see how the political representation of female IDPs in governance can be enhanced. The points raised here include; strong legal and governance structures, strong socio-economic justice structure, security structure; and electoral and political participation regulations. A detailed explanation of the points above are given below:

Legal and Governance Structure: Women's political representation is a functional aspect of a strong legal system and an efficient democracy. The State at all levels must recognise that the inconsistent disposition of government towards women's political inclusion is a gender-based violence against women, hence the first recommendation here will be that women should be seen as humans, protected by all known international laws and should not be disenfranchised because of their gender. It is therefore left for government to demonstrate legal and good governance commitment to the

IDPs, as well as full implementation of the affirmative action; ensuring that even women from IDP camps are prioritised because of their circumstances.

Many women are afraid of speaking out when they face rape, and other forms of gender-based violence. Local, state and federal government should strengthen the laws against GBV, ensuring that all culprits are brought to book, and are administered the right punitive measures. All of these will not be possible until there are strong institutions to help achieve justice.

In addition, there should be a review of the impact of national electoral legislation and procedures on the political participation of female IDPs and introduce legislative and procedural reform as required to ensure IDPs' ability to exercise their rights to political participation. Special attention should be paid to residency and documentation requirements and their potential consequences or repercussions for internally displaced electors. INEC, government and relevant stakeholders should prepare for the possibility of displacement, ensuring that electoral residency requirements have built-in safeguards against the disenfranchisement of electorates in the event of displacement and issues such as temporary loss of residence and loss of documentation. Although INEC registers new voters, and do a change of polling units for electorates before every election, new mechanisms should be included to make it better.

Socio-Economic Justice Structure: In addition, it was realised that while it seems like affirmative action is not given the respect it deserves, a cross-section of men from civil society interviewed in this study had mentioned that government tends to forget to implement affirmative action because not many women are interested in politics. While some of them likened this to cultural and religious bias, which is usually found in patriarchal societies, others likened it to political apathy because of trauma, poverty and poor education. Government at all levels and CSOs are hereby encouraged to be part of the transformative process.

While the government should be pressured by the CSOs to draft policies and inaugurate actionable plans towards economic, and socio-political justice and recovery for IDPs women, CSOs should do all they can to complement government in providing political education and other genres of empowerment for women IDPs. There should be mediums to deal with cultural bias through orientation and effective education.

Economic Empowerment: women IDPs with viable business plans should be given small business loans by government or CSOs to be able to kick-start their lives again. This will strengthen them to deal with the trauma and distractions that displacement brings; in addition, there should be financial capacity training to enhance the livelihood for women IDPs. In a nutshell, in

the midst of displacement and the need for IDPs to return home or resettled, women's economic empowerment programmes should be encouraged.

Viable Security Structure: Socially, a woman's social capital and network is usually depleted during displacement. This incidence contributes majorly to diminishing her political relevance across communities and villages. Government is hereby encouraged to further strengthen security across soft spots to negate the well-coordinated and consistent violent attacks meted out to communities. This will in a great way deal with the rising scourge of attacks and its attendant consequences. Consultations should be made with IDPs and grassroots stakeholders in the decision-making process in order to effectively galvanise the right mediums to securing the villages that have been left desolate by the various attacks. Even if the contestant is a woman, and not an IDP, those who are supposed to vote for her have been driven away or displaced by insecurity.

Electoral and Political Participation Regulations: consultations should be held with IDPs, including women, in the formulation, monitoring, review and appraisal of national and local electoral legislation and procedures, so as to ensure that the particular obstacles that women may face in political mobilisation and participation are understood, taken into account and effectively addressed. Electoral officers should be adequately enlightened and trained on the rights of internally displaced women to political participation, the particular types of obstacles that IDPs face in exercising their rights and the national legislative and procedural provisions in place to enable IDPs to exercise their rights.

Enable IDPs to have their electoral districts, with women being prioritised, as either their place of origin or to re-register in another part of the country where they were residing before being displaced, without repercussion, such as loss of assistance or other benefits. Safe access and free logistics and transportation for IDPs to their electoral units should also be provided.

Illiteracy has eaten deep into the lives and fabrics of many of the IDPs. The importance of educating voters on their rights, especially women, can never be overemphasised; INEC and relevant stakeholders must ensure that voters' education campaigns reach IDP communities and provide clear and timely information in a language that they understand, including on the electoral procedures in place to enable IDPs to exercise their rights to political participation.

In conclusion: conflict-induced displacement, and its resultant sufferings have weakened and shifted the attention and focus of women in Benue IDP camps from seeking political inclusion to struggling for survival.

Also, the study's findings further disclosed that the displacement of women from different villages into several IDP camps constitutes short- and long-term albatrosses to building sustainable women's political representation; thereby widening the gender gap in political representation. These inadequacies require multifaceted layers of actions between government at local, state and federal level, as well as civil society organisations; partnering to ensure strong legal institutions, socio-economic justice, recovery pathways, and viable security structures to ameliorate the gaps, as well as deal with the immediate and remote causes of the displacement.

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Chapter 29

Women's Representation and Participation in Climate Change Governance in Nigeria: A Need for a Paradigm Shift

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Abstract

Though the effects of climate change are gender- and status-neutral, their impacts are more severe on vulnerable groups like women, children, disabled and minority groups. However, women need to be adequately represented in climate change decision-making and governance in Nigeria (the centrepiece of procedural rights) despite being amongst the most vulnerable groups to the effects of climate change. This chapter adopts a doctrinal research approach to examine gender rights' impacts of climate change, and women's representation and participation in climate change governance. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Climate Change Act 2021 and other relevant statutes were contextually analysed along the thematic areas of climate change impact on women, and women's participation in climate change governance in Nigeria. The study finds that climate change

has impacted women's substantive and procedural rights in Nigeria. It also finds that some unintended human rights violations (especially women's rights) occur in the cause of siting and implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation projects. Despite these effects, women must be adequately involved in Nigeria's climate change decision-making and governance because of cultural biases, patriarchy, illiteracy, and poverty. It also finds that gender rights were not adequately mainstreamed in extant international and municipal legal regimes on climate change. Hence, it is a significant challenge to enforce the rights of women infringed upon through the impacts of climate change or its coping measures in Nigeria; it also demands more women's involvement in climate change governance. It concludes by recommending that human rights (especially procedural gender rights) should be appropriately mainstreamed in Nigeria's climate change regime, and the government should create an enabling environment for their enforcement.

Keywords: Climate Change, Decision-Making, Governance, Participation, Women

Introduction

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century (Onu, 2021). Its effects are felt globally, particularly in the Global South and Nigeria. Nigeria is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as a rise in sea level, flooding, drought, extreme weather conditions, food scarcity, and diseases, amongst others. Although these effects are general, they impact more on vulnerable groups such as women and children in Nigeria. Recent research indicates that climate change and its remedial measures result in the unintended violation of substantive and procedural rights of people, especially women (Onu, 2021). Nigerian women constitute a more significant percentage of its workforce, and they labour to provide food and basic housing materials for their families. However, they are also the worst hit by the effects of climate change (Adeniyi & Adeniyi, 2020). Despite the impacts of climate change on women in Nigeria, women are sparingly represented and participate in climate change governance in Nigeria, although the current director of the Department of Climate Change, Federal Ministry of Environment, Mrs Iniobong Abiola-Awe (who serves as the focal person of Nigeria at the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the immediate past Minister of State for Environment (Barr. Sharon Ikeazor) are both women, which give the impression that women are actively involved in climate governance. Nevertheless, this is only true at the national and state levels. In reality, women are not actively involved in climate change decision-making at local

or rural levels because of patriarchy, cultural biases, equalities and economic limitations. This study uses the doctrinal research approach to examine the involvement of women in climate change decision-making in Nigeria.

The chapter is divided into six parts. Part one is the general introduction. Part two is dedicated to conceptual clarification. Part three considers the legal frameworks on climate change and women's representation. Part four examines the various factors militating against women's involvement in climate change governance in Nigeria. Part five considers the lessons that Nigeria can learn from other jurisdictions in paving the way for gender inclusion in climate change governance. Part six is the conclusion and recommendations.

Methodology

The authors used the doctrinal research methodology in carrying out this research. According to McConville and Chui (2017), doctrinal methodology "aims to systematize, rectify and clarify the law on any particular topic by a distinctive analysis of authoritative texts that consist of primary and secondary sources". Premised on the above, authors who deploy doctrinal research method demonstrate "the doctrine or gaps prevalent therein and state, with rationale and reasons, what are the correct propositions of law that need to apply" (Vibhute & Aynalem, 2009).

The doctrinal methodology is used to analyse the relevant provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999; the Climate Change Act, 2021 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2021); the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Act, 1986 (AU, 1981); the Police Act 2020 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2020) and the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (Establishment) Act (NESREA), (as amended) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2007). These statutes and other relevant legal instruments were contextually analysed on the thematic areas of women's representation and participation in climate change governance in Nigeria. Social factors militating against women's participation and representation in climate change governance were sourced from secondary data and tied together with the already existing legislative analysis.

Conceptual clarification

The major concepts must be mentioned and critically examined to create a balanced basis for this discourse.

Climate change: Meaning, nature, causes, and effects.

Climate change is defined to mean “a transformation of climatic conditions that are characterized by alterations in the mean and or the distinctions of its assets that are consistent and evolve for a long period of time. This transformation of the earth’s climatic condition could take decades or longer” (IPCC, 2021:5).

Climate change is not a coincidental or unprecedented occurrence. It is a phenomenon that flows from certain domestic, commercial, industrial, and agricultural activities of man. Specific forms of carbon and gases are emitted by man’s activities, which results in climate change (YouMatter, 2018).

One of these gases is carbon dioxide. From fundamental knowledge, carbon dioxide is the gas emitted by humans when they breathe (Huma, 2019). While plants emit oxygen and take in carbon dioxide, humans take in oxygen and emit carbon dioxide. However, the general issue is that carbon dioxide (and other greenhouse gases (GHGs)) is being released into the atmosphere by people more quickly than natural processes are removing them (Locke & Mackey, 2009). A certain degree of heat in the atmosphere is beneficial and provides us with a habitable climate. Still, today’s rising carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere is driving a rise in global temperature with catastrophic effects. This increase in carbon level is not only from the respiratory process of breathing, as the eco-relation of plants and man could balance that, but the spike in carbon level is also a result of man burning fossil fuel and other industrial actions. These activities cause the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere from locations on or below the earth’s surface where it was previously accumulated as one of several forms of carbon that we refer to as fossil fuels. It is well-recognised that burning carbon-dense fuels like coal, oil, and gas is the primary source of carbon dioxide (Locke & Mackey, 2009).

Burning fossil fuels is not the only cause of climate change; greenhouse gas emission is also a major cause. In a country like Nigeria, where ownership of private vehicles is a show of luxury and riches, almost every average household owns a car or motorcycle, and those who do not own one work hard to purchase one. These vehicles, however, emit greenhouse gases such as sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide from their exhausts (Ayetor et al., 2021).

Deforestation is another factor that contributes to climate change. Trees are meant to help deal with and reduce the impact of heat and the depleted ozone layer. However, because of the quest of humans to develop, build, and erect structures, trees are being felled indiscriminately without proper replacement. Therefore, more is needed to balance the temperature

switch-up caused by greenhouse gas emissions (Ole et al., 2023). Burning gasoline while driving, cooking using electricity generated from coal, natural gas, and oil all form the domestic source of greenhouse gas emissions, resulting in climate change.

Climate change is rapidly becoming a menace which has been and will further affect the life of Nigerians. Experts have deemed the floods of 2022 to be the worst to hit Nigeria since 2012, as they damaged the crops on more than 500,000 hectares of farmland owned by thousands of smallholder and commercial farmers around the nation. The devastation was the order of the day as many families were displaced, and many properties, businesses, and investments were lost. Floods are not the only consequence of climate change, as drought also negatively affects socio-economic growth and has been forecasted and projected to worsen in coming years (*Daily Trust*, 2022).

Not only does climate change result in natural disasters, but it also results in the loss of income for the citizens. Climate change depletes agricultural and animal production revenue at the national and individual levels by destroying farmlands. According to the World Health Organization, malaria complications that might be fatal are frequent, especially in children under five (WHO, 2023). The healthcare system may be strained as a result.

Climate change and women in Nigeria

Having examined the dire effects of climate change on the nation's domestic, economic, and medical aspects, it can be inferred that the negative impacts of climate change cut across all classes of people and therefore, everyone bears the brunt of this menace. However, considering that people have different social and circumstantial standings in society, the impact of climate change will affect them differently. Women, children, and people with disabilities are categorised as vulnerable as they have many major limitations that make them highly susceptible to unfavourable conditions (UNDP, 2023).

How are women affected by climate change in Nigeria?

Women seem to be more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change than men because of their disproportionate reliance on threatened natural resources and their representation as the majority of the world's poor. Despite these differences, men and women share similar needs and roles. The ability of the female fold to adapt to climate change is lower than men's because women need more access to resources such as land, loans, agricultural inputs, decision-making procedures, technology, training, and extension services (Osman-Elasha, 2012). During harsh weather, such as droughts and floods, women often work longer hours to ensure the household's financial

security. As a result, women will have fewer opportunities to advance their education and careers, develop their skills, or enter the workforce. Based on research, when women have less access to resources and political power because of mobility constraints, the effects of climate change are amplified (Osman-Elasha, 2012).

As a result of the worldwide climate crisis, women and children are increasingly vulnerable to human trafficking, child marriage, and other forms of abuse, as well as sexual violence associated with conflict. Women have a lower survival rate and a higher risk of injury during disasters because of persistent gender disparities that limit their access to information, mobility, decision-making power, resources, and education. When women and girls are less able to seek aid and support in the aftermath of disasters, it creates a vicious cycle that makes them more vulnerable to future disasters. Their livelihoods, welfare, and chance at recovery are all jeopardised.

Access to services and treatment is hampered, and maternal and child health risks are increased because of climate change and natural disasters (UN Women, 2022).

Women's rights are directly and indirectly affected by the effects of climate change and its remedial measures

Not only does climate change affect women economically and medically, it also affects certain women's rights. Article 24 of the ACHPR rightly provides that all peoples shall have the right to a generally satisfactory environment favourable to their development. This provision has been domesticated pursuant to the Nigerian Constitution; therefore, all Nigerian citizens can claim the right to a healthy environment. However, climate change exacerbates land, water, biodiversity, and livelihood hazards, affecting women significantly as they are more dependent and likely to suffer the negative impacts of climate change.

Women have the right to life as enshrined under section 33 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) 1999 (as amended). This right to life is being infringed upon as the lives of women are being risked by various disasters occasioned by climate change, which, because of their dependence and gender limitations, they might not be able to deal with. The mortality and stillbirth rate amongst pregnant women have been high because of certain medical conditions caused by climate change.

The right to freedom from discrimination against women and the right to healthcare (Article 16 ACHPR) (AU, 1981) are also affected. By virtue of Section 42 of the CFRN (as amended) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), no

one should be discriminated against based on nativity, gender, or any other factor. However, in certain areas of the country where women are still seen, culturally, as a minority, when disaster strikes, the access that these women have to healthcare is different to that which men have. Because of cultural bias, women cannot move as freely as men and, therefore, cannot seek healthcare as freely and swiftly as a man would as against Article 16(1) of the African Charter (AU, 1981), which provides that every person has the right to the highest possible level of bodily and mental health.

Most women in rural areas depend solely on petty trading and farming as their source of income; however, when floods, drought, and other effects of climate change strike, these women have their right to movement (Section 41 CFRN) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) infringed as they will not be able to go to their farms or stalls. It could be wondered how this issue affects women more than men. A typical illustration would be of a couple with two children. When disaster strikes, the man can ruggedly use a boat or find some other means to travel to his workplace, but the woman has to consider how safe the means of transport is for her and her children, which most times is not so safe or palatable. The strength of a man cannot be compared to that of a pregnant woman; therefore, specific issues tend to affect women more than men.

Women's participation and representation in climate change governance and decision-making process in Nigeria

Considering the specific and general effects of climate change on women, children, and people with disabilities, these people must be included in the decision-making process regarding climate change. To guarantee an equitable distribution of benefits, people most likely impacted by climate change must be included in the planning and execution of climate response measures. Nigeria has taken commendable steps to tackle climate change regarding various legal frameworks like the Climate Change Act of 2021 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2021), the Energy Transition Plan (Federal Republic of Nigeria, n.d.), the Electricity Act of 2023 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2023), amongst others. Beyond these, however, there is a need for the involvement of women, to whom climate change is more detrimental, in the decision-formulation process.

Over the years, the involvement of women in various policymaking and leadership platforms has always yielded remarkable results (United Nations Women, 2022). The present director of the Department of Climate Change under the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Environment is a woman (Mrs Iniobong Abiola-Awe), who holds a master's degree in environmental

management; the post of the Minister for Environment in Nigeria has also been primarily held by women so far, Sharon Ikeazor, who was the acting Minister before Dr Iyorchia Ayu, Mrs Helen Esuene, Mrs Halima Tayo Alao, amongst others, are all women who have participated and held leadership roles in the decision-formulation process. This shows that the involvement and participation of women in the decision-making process is still bleak considering the insignificant number of women occupying leadership positions at the national and local levels; however, it is still a seeming struggle. Therefore, seeing the urgency of the need to address climate change through decision-making and climate governance adequately, women must be represented and participate. A 2019 study found that countries with more women in parliament enacted tighter laws. Women's participation in natural resource management is associated with enhanced local conservation and resource governance (United Nations Women, 2022).

By including women in climate governance will guarantee that the required attention is being paid to women's rights as they are affected by climate change. If women are involved, women's access to productive resources will inevitably be expanded. If all female smallholders had equal access to productive resources, their agricultural output would increase by 20% to 30%, alleviating hunger for 100 to 150 million people. Farm productivity improvements can lessen the need to clear more forest area, which will result in less emissions overall (United Nations WomenWatch, 2007).

The fight against climate change must be collective and balanced. There is a chance to develop new opportunities and upskill female workers as we move away from extractivist methods and fossil fuel economies. An excellent method to shift the emphasis to community wellness and boost economies without raising emissions is to increase investment in the care industry which will be more easily achieved with women onboard. Gender equality in climate action requires the protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Change is needed, but climate change is not needed (Onu & Lomole, 2023). The battle against climate change places a high focus on women's full and equal participation in decision-making processes. A sustainable, more equitable future will be impossible to achieve without gender equality now.

Legal framework on climate change and women's representation

Over time, and more recently, the battle against climate change has assumed the necessity for combined efforts and wholesome inclusion of all humans regardless of age, gender, colour, or other factors. It is, therefore, necessary

to analyse the existing legal frameworks on climate change, how they are related to women's rights, and the effect they have on the involvement and participation of women in the decision-formulation process.

1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended)

The Nigerian Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) contains provisions that place obligatory roles on both the people and the government towards climate protection. Section 20 of the Constitution stipulates a clear-cut statement on the obligation of the country to safeguard the environment. It provides that the state is responsible for ensuring that Nigeria's environment, water, air, land, forests, and wildlife are all protected, improved, and safeguarded. This is usually the foremost Nigerian legal provision for environmental protection. This implies that the government of Nigeria owes every citizen (including women) the proper protection of the environment through necessary means.

Beyond this, everyone in Nigeria can express concerns, ideas, and recommendations on environmental improvement as the Constitution has guaranteed their freedom of expression. From this, the inference is drawn that women, like every other person, have the right to voice their concerns and opinions and impart that information. By virtue of Section 42 of the Constitution, as mentioned above, no person should be discriminated against on grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status and so on. This implies that the right to voice and impart concerns, opinions, and information, amongst other rights, should not be withheld or deprived of women based on gender or any grounds. This conforms with the principle of sustainable development, which forms part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change guidelines (UNFCCC, 2023).

Based on the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution on environmental protection, freedom of expression, and freedom from discrimination, women are entitled to be included in climate change actions without any form of restriction.

Climate Change Act 2021

The Nigerian Climate Change Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2021) provides an integrated body of law for unifying climate activities in line with national development concerns. It prescribes a net-zero target for 2050 to 2070 (Section 1 (f) of the Climate Change Act 2021). It also authorises the creation of a National Climate Change Action Plan in every five-year cycle to warrant that the national emission report is in line with the carbon budget goals and

dictates guidelines for realising steps for climate change alleviation (Section 19 (1) (b) of the Climate Change Act 2021). In determining the carbon budget, however, it is imperative that women are involved in determining the National Climate Change Action Plan within the stipulated cycle. This will ensure that the carbon budget goals and the guidelines for climate change alleviation are realistic and practical. Women in the household highly sponsor domestic carbon emissions through cooking and other domestic activities. Therefore, women will understand better how to handle and develop cost-effective and efficient alternatives to conventional domestic activities that emit high levels of carbon emissions.

In addition, the Act inaugurates the National Council on Climate Change, whose chairman will be the President of Nigeria, and comprise members from all sectors, including civil society, women, youth, and persons with disabilities (Sections 3 and 5(1) of the Climate Change Act 2021). This commendable provision can be deemed holistic as it recognises the various sectors of society, including those that are generally seen as a minority. The representation of women, amongst other groups, in the National Council on Climate Change, would create a balanced and equal point of view and interests in the management of the climate change fund, and so on. However, including women on the National Council does not alter the provisions of the Climate Change Act, which do not streamline climate change actions to protect women and their rights that are specifically affected by climate change.

The National Policy on Climate Change is a deliberate action to promote reduced carbon usage, increase financial expansion routes and institute a climate-resilient nation by accomplishing laid-down objectives (Climate Policy Radar, 2013). The policy recognises climate change as a major impediment to economic advancement. The plan covers tangible actions in afforestation and energy allocation to meet the challenges of the economic downturn because of climate change. The National Climate Change Policy Response and Strategy (NCCPRS) aims to build a Nigeria equipped for quick and maintainable socio-economic growth. The policy does not, however, pay due recourse to the specific effects of climate change on women; it instead focuses on the general economic and financial impacts of climate change.

Nigeria developed a climate change gender action policy in 2020. The key objective of the gender action scheme is to make sure that climate change efforts in the country are all-inclusive. This is to ensure that women, children, and other vulnerable groups can access, engage in, contribute to, and collectively enjoy climate change policies, initiatives, programmes, and funds. The plan includes the expansion of the knowledge base of women on climate change through the use of information dissemination and evidence analysis in all sectors of the economy. It is likewise constructed to support

the incorporation of gender-inventive methods in the execution of Nigeria's Nationally Determined Contributions (Onu, 2021).

The Gender Action Plan, although commendable, has achieved inconsiderable success. The most recent Action Plan is 2020, and ever since, climate change's impact on women has yet to be addressed (Onu, 2021).

African Charter on Human and People's Rights 1981

The Organisation of African Unity, the forerunner to the African Union, adopted the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on 28 June 1981 (Centre for Women, Peace and Security, 2016). The Charter was drafted over two years and specified the prescriptive structure for the African human rights framework. It serves as a legal agreement covering civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the rights of people. Every member state of the African Union has sanctioned it. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights supervises the Charter's operation. It aids states in attaining their goals, while the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights squares this function.

Article 24 of the African Charter caters for the right to a clean and healthy environment. It provides that every person has the right to a generally satisfactory environment favourable to their development. In other words, women are not exempted from the right to have a healthy environment, which should not be infringed upon by anybody based on gender or sex.

Supporting this provision concerning women's rights are the provisions of Article 2, which provide for the right to freedom from discrimination; Article 3, which ensures the equality of all humans before the law and equal protection of the law; Article 4, which provides the right to life; Article 5, which prohibits torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment which can be occasioned by climate change when unabated; Article 6, which provides the right to personal liberty and protection from arbitrary arrest; Article 12, which provides the right to freedom of movement; Article 13, which provides the right to work; Article 16, which provides the right to physical and mental health and access to medical care; Article 17, which provides the right to education; and Article 18, which protects family and vulnerable groups. Article 18(3) of the Charter explicitly states that the state is responsible for eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and protecting children's and women's rights per international declarations and agreements. Going by this provision, the rights of women affected by climate change are meant to be protected by all means and standards. However, this is not the case, as the infringement of women's rights because of climate change impacts has only increased over the years.

The Charter also has a Protocol on women's rights commonly referred to as the Maputo Protocol, 2003 (AU, 2003), which made lofty provisions on women's emancipation and inclusion (Equality Now, 2021), the protocol was ratified by Nigeria in 2004 but is yet to be domesticated in Nigeria. This is a major impediment to the protection of women's rights in Nigeria as a nation, as the sole provisions of the African Charter cannot fully protect women from the impact of climate change, and the further framework that could specifically protect women and their rights is not domesticated in Nigeria.

National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (Establishment) Act, 2007 (NESREA).

The NESREA (Establishment) Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2007) was enacted to present guidelines for the safety and growth of the ecosystem in Nigeria. The main body vested with the duty for the safeguarding and improvement of the environment in the country is the NESREA (Section 1 NESREA Act). The Agency is founded as a corporate body and provides rules relevant to preserving the environment in Nigeria (Section 2 (b) NESREA Act). The Agency is responsible for preserving the environment, maintaining biodiversity and viable development of Nigeria's natural resources, and managing and cooperating with appropriate stakeholders within and outside Nigeria on implementing eco-friendly rules, regulations, standards, policies and guidelines (Section 2 NESREA Act).

A Governing Council is established under the Act to govern the Agency (Section 3 NESREA Act). The Agency shall also enforce the observance of laws, guidelines, policies and standards on pertinent conservational matters and synchronise with stakeholders within and outside Nigeria on environmental laws, principles and implementation issues (Section 7 (a) (b) NESREA Act). The Agency may also create general sensitisation and provide environmental education on organic environmental control, aid private sector conformity with environmental laws and circulate general, scientific or other data from the execution of its function (Section 7 (l) NESREA Act). This is connected to the education of the public on the need to collaborate on climate efforts and mainstream gender participation.

The Agency may also assume, direct, manage and harmonise the advancement of investigation, research, experimentations, reviews, and evaluations by public or private organisations, groups, and agencies regarding sources, implications, degree, stoppage, decrease, and decline of greenhouse gases and other matters on environmental maintenance and natural resources safeguarding besides the oil and gas sector (Section 8 (m)).

Quality research may assist policymakers in generating a workable climate policy for women or gender-neutral climate laws.

Factors mitigating against women's participation in climate change governance and decision-making process

Many factors prevent women's wide-ranging representation and involvement in climate change. They will now be discussed.

1. **Gender Inequality:** Gender inequality is a crucial challenge against women, especially in a country like Nigeria, where many patriarchal societies exist (United Nations WomenWatch, 2007). Women are relegated to the background and regarded as second-class citizens. This prevents the full exploration of their capacity to alleviate climate change even though they are most affected by it. An example of gender inequality is shown in the first edition of Nationally Determined Contributions in 2015 (WRI, 2015), which was imprecisely spoken about without proposing direct arrangements and programmes. The trouble encountered by many countries in harmonising gender considerations in their climate policies, programmes and action plans are undeniably evident.
2. **Exclusion from Policy Development:** Women are mostly denied the ability to access information and join policymaking processes on adjustments to their physical and natural environments, which is ironic as the environment is the very land on which they rely for their health and survival (Dan & Nwachukwu, 2022). They usually need more power to possess, showcase and propagate their ideas on climate change challenges. Also, the inadequate involvement of women's groups and other civil society organisations in climate change strategy progressions means that climate action scheduling in Nigeria is usually gender-biased. This emphasises the need to discuss with women's institutions and involve such institutions in preparation and decision-making processes in ensuring that climate action is gender-responsive. This can also be realised by providing specific devices to meet the needs and vulnerabilities of women.
3. **Lack of Technology:** The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2023) has placed wholesome technologies in the middle of worldwide reactions to climate change. Since then, technology has become progressively useful in familiarising and modifying climate change. In Nigeria, the right to information and communication technology by women is restrained by many factors, including social and cultural bias, lack of non-refundable income, deficient technological structures in rural areas, lower levels of education, particularly in the realms of science and technology, and the anxiety

in the use or lack of interest in technology. There is a need to model technologies in a manner that they are pertinent to women's conditions and to ensure that they are afforded unlimited access to information and knowledge relevant to the working of those technologies.

4. **Ineffective Laws:** While a few laws, treaties and policies are in place that promote women's participation in climate change, they could be more effective. This may be attributed to a need for more political and stakeholder willingness to take active steps towards implementation and widespread ignorance amongst women.
5. **Biased Research:** Bias in climate research constitutes another major problem, leading to the need for appropriate information for sensitisation, policy formulation, and gender-based information and data. This restricts the perception and database of how climate change effects differ between genders.
6. **Limited Participation in Politics:** In Nigeria, women are vastly under-represented. This makes them unable to partake in regulatory influence in climate change. This demands more women's involvement in politics and citizens' support to ensure a gender balance in the country's governance.
7. **Inadequate Healthcare:** Health issues related to poverty, poor diet, domestic violence, and hard labour are more prevalent amongst women. This shows the segregated effects of the food routine on both genders, as well as the prospects for developing food production procedures through gender impartiality which will, in turn, control climate change endeavours.
8. **Water and Sanitation:** Universally, men and women are both impacted by water accessibility, obtainability and quality. However, this is in varying circumstances because of predominant gender roles and customs. Most Nigerian rural societies indicate that women are responsible for fetching water and are affected mainly by the health impacts of water and sanitation (IUCN, 2022).
9. **Unequal Access to Viable Work and Income:** A gender gap exists in access to work and job opportunities. In other cases, the remuneration of women is less than that of men for the same work value. They also have limited control of capital, credit, and digital technologies. Hence, not only are women unduly impacted by climate change, but they are also in the capacity to act in response through climate alleviation and mitigation mechanisms.
10. **Leadership, Assets and Credit:** Women's restricted claims to land, property, and inheritance constrains their capacity to obtain economic and management control on land use. The lack of public and private resources and infrastructure intensifies gender-related limitations,

limiting the power to advance valuable information, including climate education and digital and fiscal literacy.

Lessons from other jurisdictions

In taking measures towards gender consideration, it is necessary to analyse the footsteps of other countries. Therefore, it is vital to consider the policies and programmes applicable in other countries to draw out valuable lessons that can be emulated.

Zambia

Zambia has keenly operated the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol) for legal activism (AU, 2003). The Protocol has been employed as an instrument for situations where women's rights have been breached, comprising incidents undertaken by autonomous agencies and bodies. Zambia ratified the Protocol in 2006, and it has been quoted in several court decisions. In this light, Nigeria should domesticate the Protocol for the maximum enjoyment of its provisions.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is setting up a renewable energy fund to establish free distinctive enterprise chances for women. Because of women's limitations and prevalent disparities in accessing credit, resources, jobs, and opportunities, women can be assisted in aiding climate action by establishing new financing systems and expertise.

Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, a pilot green mortgage arrangement assisted pastoral homes in five territories to have access to inexpensive low-carbon energy infrastructures. Because of the programme's gender-responsive benchmarks and indications, 67% of mortgages were undertaken by women-led homes. Hence, the country was able to intensify the gender-responsiveness of climate finance, increase the efficiency, effectiveness, and maintenance of venture capital and enhance women's equality.

Cabo Verde

Cabo Verde established the Institute for Gender Equality and Equity, a supplementary organisation throughout several divisions to outline precise

targets, needs and measures relevant to ensuring gender inclusion in climate action across all industries and intervention areas.

Conclusion

The shift of attention to the need to mainstream gender involvement with respect to women is slowly gaining ground. This is because women are not only the most affected by climate change, but they are also generally exempted from the process of promoting a safe environment and providing better climates for all. However, it is never enough to identify a need; but more important to address it. Hence, the inclusion and involvement of women in climate change schemes must be guaranteed, and the duty of women's groups and associations must be consolidated. Women must be evenly represented in policymaking structures to enable them to weigh in their distinctive suggestions and proficiency on climate change. This will not only help the collective efforts towards climate change but enhance women's overall perspective and status worldwide.

Recommendations

The following recommendations will now be discussed.

1. **Enhancement of Gender Equality:** As a matter of necessity, the pessimistic orientation that women are inferior to their male counterparts must be changed in promoting climate efforts (Geneva Environment Network, 2023). It is imperative that women should also have liberal access to education, finance and training programmes to develop their skills and ensure their unlimited membership in climate change initiatives. Gender variations in access to resources, including economic services, infrastructure and technology, must be considered in planning climate change activities.
2. **Adequate Financing:** The vigorous involvement of women in the expansion and division of capital for climate change programmes is essential, especially in rural areas (Tripodi, 2023). Assessment of economic tools for climate change policy formulation is necessary to ensure that investments are gender-sensitive for transferring relevant technology and building facilities. Also, the tools must be dynamic in meeting women's specific needs and priorities.
3. **Amendment of existing laws:** Nigeria needs to expressly mainstream gender and environmental rights in Chapter four of the Constitution so that same can become justiciable. The National Climate Policy on Gender should be promulgated into a law. The Climate Change Act should be amended to explicitly create a gender right and a right to healthy

environment in Nigeria. Nigeria needs to domesticate the Maputo Protocol and make it justiciable in Nigeria.

4. **Inclusion in National Policy:** As obtainable from other jurisdictions, the Nigerian government should integrate gender standpoints into its central policies, programmes, and other attempts to build maintainable growth of climate change actions. The realisation of this can be achieved with efficient gender evaluation, sex-disaggregated data collection and application and gender-sensitive benchmarks establishment. Pragmatic devices can also be developed to promote gender inclusion.
5. **Technological Innovation:** Innovations relevant to climate change must consider women's individual needs and ensure extensive usage of their education and skill, including home-grown experience and traditional practices. Including women in the expansion of new infrastructure and technology will ensure that they are available, affordable, easy to use, efficient and maintainable.
6. **Promotion of Collaboration:** Everyone should have the right to engage earnestly, efficiently, and purposefully in scheming and decision-making procedures that affect temperature and global climate. Women's participation may involve the right to receive a prior consideration of or be enlightened on the effects of the intended actions on human rights and climate change.
7. **Promotion of Health and Family Planning:** More importantly, the government should add to its environmental conservation strategies the provision of women's health, well-being and family planning. This will enable synergy between women's health and environmental protection.
8. **Right to Land and Financial Resources:** Impediments on the right to land must be lifted, and gender-responsive approaches to climate financing should be promoted. Socio-cultural limitations on the right to assets must also be eradicated.
9. **Stakeholder Partnerships:** Efficient collaborations to address gender and climate can be initiated by climate stakeholders, as no single person can establish gender-friendly climate supply chains for women. Such collaborations need joint efforts by various organisations from suppliers, cooperatives, national and worldwide investors, and international buyers. Innovative associations that tackle climate change issues must cover the country's urban and rural areas.
10. **Agricultural Empowerment:** Empowering women in agriculture can impact climate adaptation by providing appropriate technology and resources (Government of United Kingdom, 2022). This way, more sustainable farming and conservation practices can be promoted.
11. **Education and Scientific Awareness:** Many Nigerian women are unaware of their roles in eradicating climate change. Also, women make up

just 27% of the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) workforce. Various systemic barriers contribute to these gaps, but awareness and sensitisation on protecting the environment will undoubtedly avail the situation. This can help attract women into climate science and climate policy fields nationwide.

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Chapter 30

Women in Top-Echelon Positions and their effects on Carbon Emission Disclosure in Nigeria

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Abstract

Gender diversity in top-echelon positions and the disclosure of carbon-related information are two topics of increasing importance for corporate entities. Corporate disclosure of carbon emissions has become increasingly encouraged to monitor and address the issue of climate change mitigation. Hence, this study aims to examine the impacts of women in top-echelon positions on carbon emission disclosure of Nigerian companies during the years 2012 to 2021. Content analysis was employed on the annual report and sustainability report of 12 sampled listed deposit money banks in Nigeria to capture data on carbon emissions. The data collected were analysed with the aid of the generalised least squares (GLS) multiple regression technique. Using 120 firm-year panelled observations, the result of the GLS showed that both board gender diversity and CEO gender have a significant positive impact on the disclosure of carbon emission information. This study concludes that carbon emission disclosure is promoted in firms with a female presence in their top-echelon positions, which means that gender diversity is an important indicator of effective monitoring and oversight of carbon emission disclosure. The findings have significant implications in theory and practice, as they contribute to the ongoing discussion about the advantages of female representation in governance. The study suggests that banks should use the appropriate proportion of female directors in their board composition and appoint females as CEO to enhance their sustainability responsiveness.

Keywords: Board Gender Diversity, Carbon Emission Disclosure, CEO Gender, Environmental Sustainability, Women on Board

Introduction

Climate change has become an increasingly important political and business issue for most countries, making environmental sustainability a global concern. Governments and regulatory agencies around the world are constantly making efforts and trying to figure out the solution for deterioration and preventive measures of environmental problems such as carbon emission. This is evident in the climate change conferences and summits where leaders from various countries have convened to discuss environmental sustainability. The most recent conference was the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) held in Egypt in 2022, where leaders of over 100 countries (Nigeria inclusive) committed to reducing carbon emissions and achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015).

Nigeria, amongst others, has been identified as one of the countries with a high degree of environmental pollution that contributes significantly to global environmental problems. The total CO₂ emission in Nigeria increased by 214.04% from 1990 to 2020 (IEA, 2019). In addition, according to the 2022 World Bank Global Gas Flaring Tracker report, Nigeria is the world's seventh highest gas flaring nation (World Bank, 2023). The Global Methane Tracker 2022 ranked Nigeria ninth amongst the world's top ten emitters of methane (IEA, 2022).

These low scores have led to intensive growth in investor demand and agitations for mitigation and disclosure of carbon emissions. Many of these environmental challenges arise because of companies' actions and activities aimed at meeting their financial obligations. In response, many initiatives and agendas have emerged to promote sustainable development goals and the transition to cleaner energy. To monitor and support these efforts, corporate disclosure of carbon emissions has become increasingly encouraged. In 2021, Nigeria enacted the Climate Change Act, which emphasise reporting of climate change action by corporate entities in Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2021).

Concern for the disclosure of carbon information makes it important and necessary to know the factors influencing management's decision to disclose such information to stakeholders. This study goes beyond demography and opens the black box of board executives by drawing upon theories of gender differences; the Upper-Echelons Theory. The theory proposes that the top executives' decisions are influenced by their

individualised perspective, which is shaped by their unique experiences, values, personalities, and other human factors that could be linked to the gender of the executives. By diversifying the composition of boards, firms can benefit from the unique perspectives and experiences of women directors, who tend to be more attuned to environmental concerns. Existing research consistently suggests that women are more inclined towards sustainability initiatives and are likely to promote greater awareness of the importance of developing environmental disclosure strategies (Agarwal, 2010; Bannò et al., 2023; Hossain et al., 2017).

In contrast to previous studies (for example, Desai, 2022; Chithambo, 2013; Meiryani et al., 2023), our study investigates the impact of women in upper-echelon positions on carbon emission disclosure. Notably, we differentiate between the roles held by women within the firm – such as board of directors, chief executive officer (CEO), and board committees – which has received limited attention in existing literature. In addition, there is less evidence in the literature globally as to the relationship between female CEOs, gender diversity of the audit committee, effect on environmental disclosure in general and particularly carbon emission disclosure (Bravo & Reguera-Alvarado, 2018; Ararat & Sayedy, 2019; Wang & Sun, 2021). As such, this study is one of the first to provide evidence on the impact of women in upper-echelon positions on carbon emission disclosure in a developing nation. Addressing the concerns raised regarding how to measure disclosure, our study improves upon the limitations of previous research by adopting a scoring system and checklist that aligns with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) guidelines, as recommended by scholars (such as Muhammad & Aryani, 2021). Furthermore, this study is amongst the pioneer studies using Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards 305: Emission checklist to measure carbon emission disclosure in a developing nation context (GRI, 2016).

Therefore, in an attempt to bridge gaps and overcome the limitation in literature, this study investigated the impact of women in top-echelon positions on carbon emission disclosures in the context of a developing nation context. This study is motivated by the dearth of studies in this research area in Nigeria, even though the country is amongst the countries with serious environmental problems.

On this note, this study raises the following questions.

1. Does board gender diversity affect carbon emission disclosure?
2. Does CEO gender diversity affect carbon emission disclosure?
3. Does audit committee gender diversity affect carbon emission disclosure?

Literature review

Gender diversity is considered one of the most intriguing human aspects that have been the focus of numerous studies (Fernandez-Feijoo et al., 2014; Galbreath & Tisch, 2020; Liao et al., 2015). Gender diversity can be evaluated at various levels within an organisation, and a growing body of research has examined the impact of gender diversity on organisational outcomes, including studies focused on board gender diversity (Cucari et al., 2018; Dang & Nguyen, 2016), gender diversity within board committees such as audit committees (Bravo & Reguera-Alvarado, 2018; Ararat & Sayedy, 2019), and gender diversity amongst CEOs (Smith et al., 2006; Glass et al., 2016). The underlying reasoning behind this is that boards, board committees, and CEOs can influence organisational decisions and strategies. For the purposes of our study, gender diversity is defined as the active participation of men and women on both the board and its committees.

Board gender diversity

The concept of board diversity can be examined from the perspective of Resource Dependency Theory, which Pfeffer and Salancik proposed in 1978. This theory explains how an organisation's behaviours such as environmental sustainability practices are influenced by its need to acquire external resources from its environment. Carter et al. (2010) contend that diversity on a firm's board, which improves decision-making, can be justified based on the Resource Dependency Theory. The theory suggests that gender diversity, particularly with respect to traits traditionally associated with women, represents a crucial resource for promoting an environmentally responsible approach (Fernandez-Feijoo et al., 2014).

Kim (2022) conducted a study on the impact of female directors on the voluntary disclosure of carbon emissions information. The research utilised a sample of 9,406 firm-year observations spanning from 2014 to 2020 in South Korea. The results indicate that female representation on the board significantly improves the voluntary disclosure of carbon emission information. Using a sample of 215 publicly listed firms on the London Stock Exchange, Tingbani et al. (2020) investigated how board gender diversity affects greenhouse gas disclosures. The result indicates that board gender diversity strongly impacts greenhouse gas disclosures. Ben-Amar et al. (2015) reported similar empirical findings, as they discovered that an increase in the proportion of female directors enhances the probability of voluntary greenhouse gas emissions disclosure. The study utilised 541 quoted Canadian companies covered in the CDP Canada annual survey from 2008 to 2014.

Charumathi and Rahman (2019) conducted a study and found that board gender diversity positively impacts climate change-related disclosure in India. Hollindale et al. (2017) arrived at a similar finding, as they discovered that several female directors were more likely to provide higher-quality GHG emissions-related disclosures in Australia. Using global data of 331 companies from 33 countries from 2011 to 2013, Hossain et al. (2017) found that women on boards significantly and positively impact carbon emission disclosure. Carbon emission disclosures were captured using carbon emission disclosure scores from the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) Index (CDP, 2024). Using data from 329 of the largest corporations in the United Kingdom for the year 2011, Liao et al. (2014) found that gender diversity is significantly and positively related to the propensity and level of carbon emission disclosure.

Contrary to the above, by using data of 72 sampled listed firms in Indonesia from 2017 to 2019, Astuti and Setiany (2021) provide empirical evidence that board gender diversity has no significant impact on carbon emission disclosure. In addition, using data of non-financial firms listed in Borsa Istanbul from 2011 to 2015, Kılıç and Kuzey (2019) found that board gender diversity has an insignificant relationship with carbon emission disclosure. Using CDP data of Turkish firms' data from 2010 to 2019, Ararat and Sayedy (2019) found that female representation on the board has no significant impact on the likelihood of voluntary climate change disclosure.

Drawing on the principles of Resource Dependency Theory, we propose that the inclusion of diverse genders on the board can enhance the quality of board discussions and bolster the board's ability to supervise the company's disclosures and reports effectively. As a result, we contend that a greater representation of women on the board increases the likelihood of carbon emission disclosure. Based on this reasoning, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Board gender diversity has a significant positive impact on carbon emission disclosure.

CEO gender diversity

According to the Upper-Echelons Theory proposed by Hambrick and Mason (1984), the values and cognitive bases of powerful actors in an organisation shape its strategies and effectiveness. Carpenter et al. (2004) emphasise the need to examine gender as a characteristic that influences upper-echelon research. This assertion is supported by several scholars who have found a connection between the gender of CEOs and the adoption of environmentally friendly practices, particularly the reduction of carbon emissions (Kassinis

et al., 2016). This aligns with the argument that female CEOs prioritise positively, impacting society and the world (Spencer et al., 2019).

Using Upper-Echelons Theory, Tran (2022) investigated the impact of CEO gender on corporate environmental performance in Vietnam. Data used were sourced from a sample of 1,508 cooperatives spanning from 2014 to 2016. The hypotheses were tested using the OLS (ordinary least squares) regression model. The result shows that CEO gender has an insignificant association with corporate environmental performance. Using 836 sampled companies from 16 developed countries, Caby et al. (2022) arrived at a similar conclusion, as they discovered that the sex of the CEO did not affect any of the climate change management scores. Using data from the Australian wine industry, Galbreath and Tisch (2020) investigated the effect of female CEO on environmentally sustainable practices. The study was grounded on Stakeholder Theory. Findings show that a female CEO has no significant impact on environmentally sustainable practices in Australian. In contrast, Pan et al. (2020) contend that female managers have a positive impact on a company's sustainable competitive advantage. This includes their ability to discourage unethical environmental behaviour and encourage proactive environmental strategies.

From an Upper-Echelons Theory viewpoint, CEO gender diversity is expected to foster environmentally sustainable practices such as carbon emission disclosure. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: CEO gender diversity has a significant positive impact on carbon emission disclosure.

Audit committee gender diversity

Stakeholder Theory is one of the most applied theories of environmental disclosures amongst scholars. Individuals or groups of persons who have a special interaction with an agency as a consequence of their daily operations are referred to as stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2004). In line with Stakeholder Theory, multi-stakeholder governance considers adopting monitoring mechanisms to mitigate management opportunism and resolve information asymmetry issues (Rupley et al., 2012). The audit committee serves as one such monitoring mechanism to ensure that information reported to interested stakeholders is of high quality (Collier, 1993). Gul et al. (2011) contend that gender diversity improves the ability of board subcommittees, such as the audit committee, to provide more effective oversight of a firm's disclosures and reports, while also enhancing the dissemination of information to board stakeholders.

Using observation data of 375 firms quoted on the Madrid Stock Exchange from 2012 to 2015, Bravo and Reguera-Alvarado (2018) examined the link between audit committee gender diversity and ESG (environmental, social and governance) reporting. The study's multiple regression analysis found that gender diversity in the audit committee improves the quality of voluntary sustainability reporting, both in terms of comprehensiveness and relevance. This is attributed to the monitoring role that women can play in fostering a greater stakeholder orientation and increasing the commitment to provide valuable sustainability information. In addition, using Turkish firms' data from 2010 to 2019, Ararat and Sayedy (2019) found that the presence of women on the board committee enhances the likelihood of voluntary climate change disclosure. CDP data were used to measure the climate change disclosure of the sampled firms. Wang and Sun (2021) arrived at a similar conclusion, as they discovered that female members of the audit committee are more successful than male members in increasing the extent of environmental disclosures. Their study was based on a panel dataset of Chinese energy firms from 2012 to 2018. Their findings support the positive role of gender diversity in enhancing environmental disclosure. Appuhami and Tashakor (2017) found similar findings that AC (audit committee) gender diversity positively impacts CSR (corporate social responsibility) environmental disclosure. However, both studies did not use any theory to institutionalise the study's variables. In contrast, Said et al. (2020) found that AC gender has no significant impact on sustainability disclosure in Malaysian listed firms.

From a Stakeholder Theory viewpoint, the audit committee acts as an oversight tool for improving the level of information provided to interested parties (Collier, 1993). Based on these arguments, it can be inferred that gender diversity in audit committees enhances the monitoring effectiveness of the committee and leads to an increase in the level of carbon emission disclosure. Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Audit committee gender diversity has a significant positive impact on carbon emission disclosure.

Methodology

This study used an expo-factor research design to investigate the impact of women in top-echelon positions on carbon emission disclosures. This study's population included all 14 listed deposit money banks (DMBs) in Nigeria as of 31 December 2022. The study's sample comprised the 14 DMBs with their annual reports and other relevant information accessible during the research period. The banking industry is responsible for a significant

portion of the global carbon emissions because of their large numbers of bank offices and branches. Banks are expected to mitigate emissions associated with their financing and investment activities, known as their 'financed emissions.' Data were extracted from their annual report or stand-alone sustainability report from 2012 to 2021. The dependent variables, which is carbon emission disclosure (CD), was measured using content analysis (Muhammad & Aryani, 2021; Sudiby, 2018). Unlike prior studies that relied on the CDP questionnaire to construct an assessment or scoring index (such as Matsumura et al., 2014), we utilised the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards 305: Emission (GRI, 2016) because it is the most commonly used index for disclosing carbon-related activities by firms in Nigeria, making it a more suitable tool for evaluating carbon disclosure in Nigeria, compared to the CDP questionnaire.

The measurement of carbon emission disclosure in this study involved three steps: First, a structured checklist was developed based on the GRI Standards 305: Emission indicators. Second, a coding system was used, with '0' indicating the absence of disclosed information and '1' indicating its presence. Third, the carbon emission information disclosure was calculated using a content analysis approach, with a simple unweighted average formula. Consequently, an index was created using the above three steps to measure carbon emission disclosure in this study (Muhammad & Aryani, 2021).

CD =

where: -

CD = Carbon Disclosure,

CQ = Carbon Information Scores,

MX CQ = Maximum disclosure scores for this study is 10.

Table 50: Variables Measurement

Variables	Types of variables	Measurement	Sources
Carbon emission disclosure	Dependent variable	Based on GRI Standards 305: Emission checklist. A score of 1 was assigned to each disclosed item on the checklist, and a score of 0 was assigned to each undisclosed item. The total number of disclosed items was then divided by the total possible items to obtain the disclosure score for each company.	Muhammad and Aryani, 2021
Board gender diversity	Independent variable	Proportion of women on the board	Hossain et al., 2017
CEO gender diversity	Independent variable	Equal to 1 if CEO is female and 0 if male	Tran, 2022
AC gender diversity	Independent variable	Proportion of women in the AC	Bravo and Reguera-Alvarado, 2018
Firm size	Control variable	Firm's year-end total assets	Tran, 2022
Profitability	Control variable	Net income divided by the firm's total assets at year end	Hossain et al., 2017

Source: Authors' own

Model specification

Gujarati and Porter (1984) suggest that a regression model can be developed to account for relationships between variables in general. In this study, the following model was created to estimate the link between women in top leadership positions and carbon emission disclosure:

$$CD_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BGEN_{it} + \beta_2 CEOGEN_{it} + \beta_3 ACGEN_{it} + \beta_4 FSIZE_{it} + \beta_5 PROF_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

where:

- CD** = Carbon Emission Disclosure
- β_0** = Intercept
- β_1 to β_8** = Regression Coefficients
- ϵ** = Residuals
- it** = Panel Data Indicator
- BGEN** = Board Gender Diversity
- CEOGEN** = CEO Gender
- ACGEN** = Audit Committee Gender Diversity
- FSIZE** = Firm Size
- PROF** = Firm Profitability.

Results and discussion

Descriptive statistics are used by researchers to effectively summarise and organise data in order to enhance understanding of the data.

Table 51: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
CDIS	122	0.183	0.183	0	0.8
BGEN	122	0.221	0.114	0	0.455
CEOGEN	122	0.05	0.219	0	1
ACGEN	122	0.158	0.153	0	0.6
FSIZE(billions)	122	2,357	2,010	156	9,660
PROF	122	0.016	0.018	-0.095	0.061

Source: Author's computation using Stata13 output

Carbon emission disclosure (CD) is a ratio that ranges from 0 to 1 and can also be expressed as a percentage. Based on the mean CD value of 0.183 presented in Table 51, the average CD during the study period was found to be low, at 18.3%. Additionally, the highest average disclosure rate was 80%, while the lowest was 0%, indicating a wide range of CD activities amongst the sample firms. The average female board gender is 22.1% and the standard deviation of 11.4% shows moderate variance from the mean. The highest board gender diversity is 45.5% and the lowest is 0, indicating some sampled firms have no women on their board within the period covered in the study.

Table 51 also shows informative figures for the dummy variables. On average, only 5% of the sample corporations have a female CEO, implying that a low proportion of firms appointed a female CEO. The audit committee gender diversity mean rating is 0.158%, indicating audit committees of the sampled companies have a comparatively poor degree of gender diversity in general. The standard deviation is 15.3% which is close to the mean, showing that the gender diversity ratio of the observed companies cluster around each other. The highest AC gender diversity is 60% and the lowest is 0, indicating that some sampled firms have no women on their audit committee within the period covered in the study.

Profitability as indicated shows that the average ROA (return on assets) has a mean of 1.6%, with a standard deviation of 0.018 (1.8%), indicating a low level of variability in the return on total assets amongst the firms sampled during the study period. The most profitable DMBs earn N0.06 income from N1 of asset invested and the max loss incurred is negative N0.095 on N1 of asset invested. Finally, with respect to firm size, it has a mean value of N2.3 trillion. The min asset value amongst the firms sampled is N156 billion, while the max value in terms of size is owned by a firm with assets worth N9.6 trillion.

Table 52: Correlation matrix

Variables	CDIS	BGEN	CEOGEN	ACGEN	FSIZE	PROF
CDIS	1.000					
BGEN	0.211	1.000				
CEOGEN	0.153	-0.077	1.000			
ACGEN	0.146	0.124	0.114	1.000		
FSIZE	0.469	0.094	0.142	0.108	1.000	
PROF	0.113	0.138	0.402	-0.136	0.441	1.000

Source: Author's computation using Stata13 output

All the independent variables (BGEN, CEOGEN, ACGEN) and control variables (PROF, and FSIZE) have a positive correlation with CD of listed DMBs in Nigeria. This means that they move in the same direction with carbon emission disclosure. Table 52 also shows the association amongst the independent variables themselves. Gujarati and Porter (2004) consider a correlation coefficient of more than 0.80 to be excessive. All correlation coefficients amongst the explanatory variables are below 0.80, which indicate the possible absence of harmful multi-collinearity. This was further validated using variance inflation factor.

Residuals test

Several diagnostic tests were conducted, including multi-collinearity, linearity, auto and serial correlation, heteroskedasticity, normality, and Hausman specification tests. Based on the results presented in Table 53, it can be inferred that there are no multicollinearity issues because all the variables' VIF values are below 10, as Hair et al. (2006) suggest. Furthermore, the Hausman test was performed to determine the appropriate model between random and fixed effects. As shown in Table 53, the probability value is 0.1179. This indicates that the random effect model is supported. As the test was insignificant, the Lagrange Multiplier test was conducted to determine the best model to interpret between the random effect model and the pooled OLS. The result obtained showed that the random effect model is the most appropriate as the result is significant.

However, the result also shows the presence of auto-correlation and heteroskedasticity because the *p*-value of both tests is significant. This indicates that the random effect regression is not appropriate as the panel regression estimators may be biased (Hausman & Kuersteiner, 2008). To address the limitations of the random effects model in the presence of heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation, this study utilised the generalised least squares (GLS) model, as recommended by Westerlund and Narayan (2012). The study presents the GLS regression result in Table 53.

Table 53: GLS Regression Result

CDIS	Coef.	St.Err.	z-value	p-value
BGEN	0.012	0.005	2.56	0.011
CEOGEN	0.214	0.103	2.07	0.039
ACGEN	0.028	0.149	0.19	0.852
FSIZE	0.106	0.017	5.92	0.000
PROF	-0.054	0.025	-2.18	0.029

Constant	-3.150	0.546	-5.77	0.000
Number of obs	120	Hausman Test		0.1179
Wald-chi	49.48	LM test		0.0000
Prob > chi2	0.0000	Hetest		0.0000
Mean VIF	1.28	Auto Correlation Test		0.0140

Source: Author's computation using Stata13 output (2023)

Interpretation of the model

The Wald chi-square value of 49.48 for the model presented in Table 53 exceeds 2, indicating that the model is appropriate for estimating the impact of independent variables on carbon emission disclosure. Additionally, all the explanatory variables in the model are statistically significant based on the probability of the Wald chi-square, which is significant at the 1% level. Therefore, the model is well-suited for examining the relationship between women in top-echelon positions and carbon emission disclosure.

From the findings thus, the model of the study is:

$$CD_{it} = -3.150 + 0.012 BGEN_{it} + 0.214 CEOGEN_{it} + 0.028 ACGEN_{it} + 0.106 FSIZE_{it} - 0.054 PROF_{it}$$

Interpretation and discussion of findings

Board gender diversity has a positive impact on the carbon emission disclosures of listed deposit money banks in Nigeria, as shown by the 0.012 coefficient, which is statistically significant at 5% (from the p -value of 0.011). The finding that carbon emission disclosure is positively influenced by board gender diversity supports the notion that female directors are more environmentally conscious than their male counterparts. This is because women exhibit a higher inclination towards sustainability initiatives and are more likely to advocate for disclosure of carbon emission information. This finding is consistent with the Resource Dependency Theory, which proposes that the presence of women on boards can increase firms' attention to environmental issues and encourage the adoption of proactive strategies to address stakeholder demands for greater transparency in carbon emission reporting.

Therefore, increasing the representation of women on boards can be an effective strategy for promoting greater attention to environmental

concerns and enhancing the transparency of carbon emission reporting. The finding is consistent with previous studies (Kim, 2022; Ben-Amar et al., 2015; Hossain et al., 2017) that females enhance the carbon emission disclosure of environmental information, but dissimilar to those of Astuti and Setiany (2021) and Ararat and Sayedy (2019). Since the p -value is less than the 5% significance level, this study supports the first hypothesis that board gender diversity has a significant positive effect on carbon emission disclosure.

CEO diversity also has a positive impact on carbon emission disclosure of listed deposit money banks in Nigeria, as shown by the 0.214 coefficient, which is statistically significant at 5%. This confirmation that a female CEO significantly improves the carbon disclosures than a male CEO. This finding may be explained by the fact that female CEOs tend to be more environmentally conscious than their male counterparts. Research has shown that women in leadership positions often prioritise social and environmental issues and advocate for sustainable business practices. As a result, female CEOs can positively influence companies in the long term by bringing a new perspective to the disclosure environment and promoting greater transparency in carbon emission reporting. The results support the Upper-Echelons Theory but it contradicts with the findings of Tran (2022), Galbreath and Tisch (2020) and Caby and Ziane (2022), who found that a female CEO has no significant impact on environmentally sustainable practices. Since the p -value is less than 5%, this study supports the second hypothesis, that CEO gender diversity has a significant positive effect on carbon emission disclosure.

The audit committee gender diversity variable has a Z-value of 0.19, a coefficient value of -0.028 and a probability value of 0.852, which is insignificant. This shows that female representation in the AC has no significant effect on carbon disclosure amongst listed DMBs in Nigeria. In this respect, the low degree of females on the ACs of the sampled banks during the study's time span could explain the statistically insignificant association with carbon disclosure. This finding of the study supports the study of Said et al. (2020). However, the results do not support the Stakeholder Theory and it is in contrast to the findings of Bravo and Reguera-Alvarado (2018), Ararat and Sayedy (2019) and Wang and Sun (2021). The p -value is more than 5%, hence this study rejects the hypothesis that audit committee gender diversity has a significant positive impact on carbon emission disclosure.

Conclusion and recommendations

Gender diversity in top management teams and adopting environmental sustainability strategies are two critical topics gaining momentum on

corporate agendas. There are increasing pressures from diverse stakeholders, such as the stock exchanges, national governments, employer lobby groups, and shareholders, amongst others, for women's representation in top positions. Drawing from Upper-Echelons, Stakeholder, and Resource Dependency theoretical frameworks, this study provides novel insights into the connection between women in top-echelon positions (board gender diversity, female CEO, and AC gender diversity) and carbon emission disclosures from an emerging nation perspective. Content analysis was utilised on the annual report and stand-alone sustainability report of 14 listed DMBs in Nigeria from 2012 to 2021. The carbon emission disclosure was measured based on Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards 305: Emission checklist. The result shows that board gender diversity and female CEO significantly improves carbon emission disclosure, while AC gender diversity has no significant impact on carbon emission disclosure.

Our study extends both the Upper-Echelons and Resource Dependence theories and contributes to ongoing debate about the role of women in top positions by demonstrating that a female CEO and the presence of women on the board has a positive relationship with the carbon emission disclosure score. The study's findings indicate that gender diversity can improve the effectiveness of boards in managing stakeholder relationships and drive the adoption of sustainability initiatives, including disclosure practices that promote transparency and accountability. This research adds to the growing body of literature on the role of gender diversity in promoting sustainable business practices and sheds light on an area that has received little attention in previous studies – the impact of gender diversity in audit committees on carbon emission disclosures.

Our results contribute to the growing body of literature highlighting the potential significance of female representation in top positions. The research findings present implications for both regulatory bodies and corporate practice. The study's findings are relevant to policymakers who are implementing gender quota legislation and other initiatives aimed at promoting gender diversity in corporate governance. The study's results provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of women in stakeholder management and reinforce the efforts being made globally to increase the representation of women in leadership positions. Furthermore, the study's results can help build a case for the importance of diversity and inclusion in corporate decision-making, leading to better business outcomes and greater social and environmental impact.

The study recommends that banks should use the appropriate proportion of female directors in their board composition and appoint females as CEO to enhance their sustainability responsiveness as they aid in

enhancing the disclosure of material carbon-related information. Finally, regulatory bodies should take the necessary measures to require corporate bodies to minimise their carbon emissions and disclosure of relevant carbon information through annual reports or stand-alone sustainability reports.

Despite the contributions of the study, it has some limitations similar to other empirical studies. The study suffered some limitations amongst which the study only focused on listed deposit money banks in Nigeria. Secondly, this investigation focused solely on the content analysis of the information presented in annual reports and stand-alone sustainability reports; thus, some firms may disclose their carbon emission information via other outlets like magazines, newspapers, or corporate websites. Future research may consider using these other ways to collect information other than annual reports. Although this study has some limitations, the value of the research is still validated by the rigorous methodology employed in measuring the variables, the careful establishment of the findings, and the adequate observation of the research context. While the limitations of the study cannot be ignored, they do not detract from the overall validity of the research findings. Instead, they provide opportunities for future studies to improve on the research design and methodology.

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Chapter 31

Patriarchy, Human Rights and Development in Ebonyi State Nigeria

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Abstract

Women have been subjected to societal values and beliefs that they are second to men. Thus, they have to submit themselves to their male counterparts' dictates and desires. African society has in one way or another contributed to the development of a patriarchal system and male domination. First, house chores and economic activities are divided along gender lines. Furthermore, the females are taught that their place in society is below the male folk, which has led to the violation of their rights in many African societies, because in most situations, as will be discussed in this chapter, their fundamental human rights are stripped off them. It is said that women's rights are human rights, yet daily, women are victims of human rights violations as a result of patriarchy. This research draws a nexus between patriarchy and development. It analyses the impact of patriarchy on the economic activities of women in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, as well as the male factor in women's development in the state. Using a qualitative method of data analysis, the chapter historicises patriarchy in Eastern Nigeria and how this has impeded women's rights as well as the development of the Ebonyi State.

Keywords: Abuse, Development, Human Rights, Violence, Women

Introduction

Patriarchy has played out in many African societies for years, and it has become a usual way of life, posing a challenge to the present generation. Patriarchy is the "manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general" (Lerner, 1986:239). This has relegated

women to the background and has portrayed the males as all-round leaders, while the females are followers - who have to be overly submissive. Patriarchy has downplayed women's rights since some of the fundamental human rights do not manifest fully in the lives of women who are subjected to the dictates of patriarchy. Most of the evidence of patriarchy is manifested in gender-based violence (GBV) or violence against women (VAW), which play out in many Igbo societies. As a result of patriarchy, feminism has become the order of the day in this contemporary time. Hence, feminists desire to eradicate patriarchy and fashion out a world with better inclusion and practical equality between the two sexes (Farrelly, 2011).

Women's rights are human rights, yet violence against women in many Nigerian communities often goes unnoticed, and women continue to be marginalised and oppressed by their spouses, guardians, and community members. Much of this violence against women is successfully exhibited because of the availability of 'might over right' - a form of manifestation of patriarchy. However, most of these 'might exhibitions' are performed by the women themselves against their fellow women who are following the masculine dictates of societal values and culture. Likewise, patriarchy is not focused on the physical and psychological might alone, but on both physical and psychological, which has contributed to the deprivation of the human rights of vulnerable women in various societies, especially in Eastern Nigeria. Some of the violence vented out on women and children include women and girl children trafficking, domestic violence, female genital mutilation, widowhood rites, and girl child abuse, amongst others.

Conceptual clarification

Development: Development can mean a process that leads to a change in situation, which is usually intended as something positive and desirable (Ihuoma, 2017a). It can be said to be obtainable through economic growth, which is a rise in the total productivity of a society within a given period (Ihuoma, 2017b). This study sees development as the manifestation of a positive increase or growth in the life or status of an individual in any given society, which ultimately affects the societal economic improvement and growth, leading to a better economic and living standard of the given society.

Patriarchy: The term 'patriarchy' has been applied and defined in various forms. To most feminists, patriarchy is used to represent a male-dominated society. However, patriarchy is a connotation that hides differences because some communities exhibit more male dominance than others (Henry, 2003). Patriarchy also implies "a relationship of dominance.... sturdier than any form of segregation and more rigorous than class stratification, more

uniform, certainly more enduring” (Millett, 1970:20). Patriarchy is “a useful descriptive tool for discussing social patterns” (Joseph, 1996:14), which is often seen to evoke an overly monolithic conception of male dominance (Kandiyoti, 1988). For years, patriarchy has been regarded as male domination of the power relationships by which men dominate women (Millett, 1970). It could also be said to be “the prioritizing of the rights of males and elders (including elder women) and the justification of those rights within kinship values which are usually supported by religion” (Joseph, 1993:452). In addition, patriarchy can be said to be the “systematic domination of women by men and the domination of men by other men” (Chapman, 1995:98). For this study, patriarchy means the dominance by the male population of a given society over the female population in social, economic, political, and religious aspects of their societal life. This is because patriarchy manifests in social, economic as well and religious forms. To this end, patriarchy plays out in all the sectors at a particular place in time.

Human Rights: These are rights intrinsic to human beings regardless of race, background, social status, sex, nationality, gender, religion, tribe, age, ethnicity, and other discriminatory factors that they are expected to enjoy just for being human beings and for being alive. These rights are contained in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) of 1948 (UN, 1948).

Patriarchy and human rights

Patriarchy in many concepts refers to specific principles essential in perpetuating the oppression of women. Hence, feminists of different orientations utilise its existence while explaining the various feelings of domination and subordination (Beechey, 1979). Ideally, the national and international fight for the achievement of women’s rights is a vital part of the fight for the achievement of human rights (Wiseberg & Scoble, 1981). Hence, many international human rights organisations and other humanitarian organisations have mainstreamed their activities to make women’s rights ‘human rights’ (Miller, 2004; Heise et al., 1994). Patriarchy violates the human rights of women who find themselves in a patriarchal society. This has manifested in communities where the elderly male dominates the younger male either in exercising rights over their son’s wealth or in exhibiting strong dominance over family assets through instigating micro conflicts or by making family alliances that involve the sale (marrying off) of daughters to the sons of other patriarchs (Henry, 2003).

Ideally, the concept of patriarchy extends beyond emphasis on specific experiences and expressions of the oppression of women. It also formulates

some rational theories to explain the foundation of such subordinations that lie therein (Beechey, 1979). Patriarchy has downplayed the enjoyment of human rights of the women who are subdued under patriarchal homes, and this has affected the individual development of most of these women. Different manifestations of patriarchy are evident with distinctive “rules of the game” and emphasis on different approaches to enhance life options (Kandiyoti, 1988). These patriarchal exhibitions violate women’s rights, which are their human rights, and to this effect, there have been demands for the improvement of the human rights and welfare of women under patriarchal societies.

Manifestations of patriarchy and the violation of women’s rights

As opined by Kandiyoti (1988), amongst all feminist-oriented policies, patriarchy probably remains the most referenced and, in some cases, under-theorised. However, the manifestation of patriarchy has played out in different ways as have already been established briefly above; most of these manifestations which would be discussed are not strictly gender-sensitive but are majorly unleashed on the female groups in society. These acts of VAW, which in many cases play out as a result of patriarchy, have significant negative effects on the individual development of the victims and this has affected their contribution to the societal development of their various societies at large. These include the following:

Trafficking: According to the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (UN, 2000), amongst other things, entails obtaining, transporting, transferring, or harbouring persons (children) through coercive means or with force. It also connotes abducting, fraudulent, and deceptive acts, misuse of power, or the manipulative use of one’s position of defencelessness (UNICEF, 2003). Human trafficking therefore is any activity that involves the coercive or forceful movement of persons either nationally or internationally against their will for the manipulative purposes of their transporters (Ihuoma, 2019).

There exists a direct link between patriarchy and human trafficking. Trafficking of women and girl children remains on the high side in Africa (a large number of victims are recruited from Eastern Nigeria), and many of the victims remain vulnerable and, in most cases, submissive to their traffickers; thus, freely presenting themselves to be exploited without a fight. According to NAPTIP (2022), between 2019 and 2021, the South East geopolitical zone accounted for the second highest percentage of trafficked victims recalled, at 20% while the South-South occupied the top position at 24%. However, of

the 20% from the South East, only 11% originated from Ebonyi state, while Imo had the highest percentage (27%), then Enugu (22%), Anambra (21%), and Abia (19%) made up the remaining figures (NAPTIP, 2022). Also, NAPTIP notes that victims of trafficking were moved within and beyond the borders of Nigeria for different reasons which include prostitution, organ harvesting, domestic child workers, slaves, pornography or brothels, sexual exploitation, as a commodity for other purposes, forced labour, agents in the trafficking chain, illegal adoption, forced marriage, amongst others. A NAPTIP 2021 report on trafficking of humans indicated that of the 1,112 reported cases (of which 36 persons, 2.5% were from Ebonyi state), the highest number of persons - 223 (20.1%) relocated for prostitution-related reasons. While 164 (14.7%) persons migrated with reasons related to sexual exploitation, 124 (11.2%) persons were moved for child trafficking-related issues, and 93 (8.4%) persons were moved to serve as domestic child workers who later experienced severe injuries and maltreatment.

Most times, the recruiters or traffickers are closely related to the trafficked victims who have been observing them for some time and studied their family background in order to present a reason that will be strong enough to persuade parents to release their children to them (Agha, 2018). These trafficked girls and young women become victims of circumstance, and their fate is often a negative one, which includes defilement, sexual exploitation, and exploration. It is a fact that poverty drove these children from home and the children have no other option but to stay with their guardians or traffickers to be sure of their daily meals or education. In many parts of the world, particularly in Eastern Nigeria, cases of trafficking have taken up the newspaper and news headlines and continue to make waves in the news. As was gathered from Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Centre, Juvenile Welfare Centre / Human Trafficking, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State during this research; on September 2017 fourteen children (11 girls and 3 boys) were intercepted along Abakaliki / Enugu expressway in a Transport of Anambra State (TRACAS) Sienna bus, en route to Anambra state. It was gathered that two of the underaged children (11-14 years) had been working as child labourers in Amansea (Anambra State), where they found the job lucrative and decided to go back home and bring more children from their home town to share in this benefit. There are also other stories attached to the recruitment of trafficked victims but that is not the major focus of this study.

The relationship between trafficking and patriarchy is evident in the fact that trafficking violates the human rights of victims, because often, victims are coerced to give in to the bidding of their traffickers or exploiters (most of them are male). In such a scenario, their rights as protected by the UN Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) (UN, 1948) are violated and

stripped off them and they are subjected to a state of life that is equivalent to slavery and servitude. The victims' rights as contained in the following articles are violated:

- Articles 1: All men are born free and equal in dignity and rights;
- Article 3: Right to life, liberty, and security of person;
- Article 4: No one shall be held in slavery or servitude, and slave trade shall be prohibited in all their form;
- Article 5: No one shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; and
- Article 21: Everyone has the right to work, free choice of employment, and favourable conditions of work.

Likewise, these victims do not realise that Article 8 of the UNDHR grants them the right to an effective remedy by the component national tribunals for acts of violating the fundamental rights granted by the constitution or by law. However, where there are a few intelligent ones, they are afraid to follow up on their rights because they have already been coerced or manipulated into signing an agreement with the traffickers.¹ This has automatically subjected the trafficked victims to manipulation, as well as human rights exploitation. Most of the trafficked victims are faced with sexual exploitation and manipulation; some are recruited into prostitution and are expected to satisfy and please their male exploiters who explore their bodies as they deem fit without their consent. As reported by NAPTIP, its analysis on trafficking from 2019 to 2021 showed that the major reason for both internal and external trafficking was for sexual exploitation which was reported at about 49.4% of the overall cases reported. Other reasons include child labour and abuse (28.5%), forced labour (13.0%), and others ranging from abduction and human commercial transactions (buying and selling of humans) for several other reasons (9.1%) (NAPTIP, 2022).

Domestic violence: Violence can be self-directed (self-abuse), and collective (warfare or structural and economic violence) (Allen, 2001). It can include the use of force or power which can be physical or non-physical (intimidation and neglect), sexual manipulation, or inter-personal (intimate partner violence, girl child abuse and maltreatment, and abuse of the elderly) (Cooper et al., 2008; Schechter et al., 2009). Additionally, domestic violence may include rape, sexual assault, negligence, exploitation, and psychological and/or emotional (Krug et al., 2002). In a nutshell, violence has to do with inflicting harm, damage, pain, and inhuman or harsh treatment on another person by

¹ Interview with a trafficked victim in Abakaliki, Ebonyi state, 24 July 2018.

an individual or group of persons. It is an intentional harsh treatment against an individual or group of people irrespective of the outcome of such an act. It is an act intended to cause injury or harm. Acts of violence can be in the form of physical and non-physical (Krug et al., 2002), psychological, emotional, or sexual (Ihuoma, 2019).

Domestic violence is another type of VAW that is necessitated by the degree of 'might over rights' or patriarchy. In the actual sense, domestic violence forms part of the basis of social structures and patriarchy because most men use violence to reflect the degree of the power they wield over their women (Walby, 1989). Hence, male-championed domestic violence manifests in the following: wife-beating, rape, father on daughter incest, and sexual harassment or assault, amongst others. A report by UNICEF revealed that women experience domestic violence in the following forms: female genital mutilation, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse from husband or partner (intimate partner violence (IPV), controlling behaviours, and physical or sexual violence against minors (Momentum, 2022).

Domestic violence comes up in large numbers at the Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Centre (HRCRC), Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (MWASD), the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other related crimes (NAPTIP), the Juvenile Welfare Centre / Human Trafficking, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, amongst others. Most of the women who face domestic violence often do not report it to the appropriate authorities simply because they are afraid of losing their marriages. Many lose their lives as a result of this, and die without exposing their violators. A few lucky ones open up when it is at the extreme. The reason they present this is that they do not want the community to see their husbands as bad men, but they do not know that if they die when being abused, the whole world will hear the story, but it will be too late (Okafor, 2017).

On the part of domestic violence involving the girl child, the major form of domestic violence meted out on the female child is rape and because of its high increase rate, the international humanitarian law system had to "re-characterize rape as a form of violence" (instead of a crime against community or honour) (Miller, 2004:22). Rape is a form of sexual harm, and this is an act of violence and the abuse of the victim's fundamental human rights. It is a form of exploitation which the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, defined to include at a minimum, the prostitution of others or forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs (UNICEF, 2003; WHO, 2012).

Rape is a global challenge facing women and girl children and as Miller (2004) holds,

this necessitated its consideration at the Geneva Conventions 1949, which saw women as entitled to special protection as mothers, or entitled to protection from “attacks on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault”...(also) the Seventh UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders made an important link between VAW (Violence Against Women) and international human rights law when it said that domestic violence and rape ‘jeopardize(d) the personal and social development of women and are against the interests of society (Miller, 2004:23).

Girl Child Abuse: Violence against the girl child in many communities often goes unnoticed by the public as girls continue to be marginalised and oppressed by their fathers, male guardians, teachers, and community members. According to the World Health Organization Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention, child abuse includes all kinds of emotional and/or physical maltreatment, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or other manipulation resulting in potential or actual harm to the child’s survival, life, health, or development (WHO, 1999). According to Okeke,² physical abuse is the highest-reported child abuse in Nigeria, while emotional, sexual, or psychological abuse is rarely reported. Various abuses against a child include disfigurement or physical injury, emotional ridiculing and bullying, quarantining and social restrictions, or neglect, amongst others (Finkelhor, 1986). However, of all the cases available globally, the most-reported abuse on female children reported to the Juvenile Welfare Centre / Human Trafficking Centre, Abakaliki, includes disfigurement or physical injury and sexual assault and rape. Data available showed that a child might not openly confess to being abused by an elderly male relative or neighbour because the perpetrators often threaten victims.³

Female child abuse is often not reported in Nigeria. Most families prefer to cover up cases of child violence and abuse in a bid to protect the family image. Some women whose children face domestic violence often do not report it to the appropriate authorities simply because they are afraid of losing their marriage, an institution that solidifies their position in their communities. The reason most of the women give is that they do not want the community to see their husbands or family members as bad people, while

2 Interview with Mrs Okeke Mary, conducted at the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (MWASD) Abakaliki, 2017.

3 Field work at the Juvenile Welfare Centre / Human Trafficking Centre, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State

some reported that they were obeying their husband's instructions of keeping the family business away from the prying eyes of the public.⁴ Also, the victims of child abuse are seen to be timid and lackadaisical with reporting violence exhibited on them to another member of their family or community because, some are told by the perpetrators, that if they let an outsider know about the act of violence, they will be severely punished. Most of the time, these victims are house help moved from the village (rural areas) to the urban areas, and in many cases, their salaries are sent home to their poor parents. Hence, when a threat is issued to send them back to the rural area from which they came, these children automatically refrain from speaking up. Sadly, where official reports are made, sexual abuse of the girl child often takes up a good number of spaces. Abuse of male children is not often recorded and there are no concrete reasons as to why it is so. However, despite the dearth of statistics, cases of child abuse are found at the Nigerian Police Force Juvenile Welfare Centre / Human Trafficking Centre and at the Human Rights and Conflict Centre (HRCRC), a non-governmental organisation that is actively soliciting victims of child abuse and persecuting the perpetrators of such violence. According to the records documented by the Juvenile Welfare Centre / Human Trafficking department of the Nigerian Police Force in Ebonyi state, some of the child abuse cases reported include the following:

Table 54: Child Abuse Record in Ebonyi State 2012–2017

Victim's Age	Case Description	Year of Incident	Age of Accused
15 years	Sexual Abuse	2012	42 years
13 years	Sexual Abuse	2012	23 years
13 years	Sexual Abuse	2013	30 years
12 years	Sexual Abuse	2013	14 years
5 years	Child Abuse	2013	35 years
12 years	Sexual Abuse	2013	14 years
6 years	Sexual Abuse	2013	45 years
5 and 6 years	Sexual Abuse	2013	20 years
3 years	Child Abuse	2014	18 years
9 years	Sexual Abuse	2014	16 years
7 years	Sexual Abuse	2014	29 years
6 years	Sexual Abuse	2014	45 years
8 years	Sexual Abuse	2014	25 years

4 Extracted from interviews with some women in Abakaliki who requested to remain anonymous.

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Victim's Age	Case Description	Year of Incident	Age of Accused
8 years	Child Abuse	2014	29 years
13 years	Sexual Abuse	2014	17 years
12 years	Sexual Abuse	2014	42 years
4 and 7 years	Child Abuse	2014	30 years
7 years	Sexual Abuse	2015	25 years
14 years	Sexual Abuse	2015	23 years
9 years	Sexual Abuse	2015	17 years
12 years	Child Abuse	2015	28 years
3 years	Sexual Abuse	2015	17 years
15 years	Child Abuse	2015	35 years
13 years	Sexual Abuse	2015	28 years
5 months	Child Abuse	2015	20 years
8 years	Sexual Abuse	2015	25 years
13 years	Sexual Abuse	2015	20 years
9 years	Child Abuse	2015	29 years
8 years	Child Abuse	2017	29 years
1 year and 8 months	Sexual Abuse	2017	12 years
12 years	Sexual Abuse	2017	12 and 12
12 years	Sexual Abuse	2017	20 years
13 years	Sexual Abuse	2017	13 and 12
17 years	Sexual Abuse	2017	19 years
14 years	Sexual Abuse	2017	19 years
15 years	Sexual Abuse	2017	45 years
13 years	Sexual Abuse	2017	17 years
16 years	Sexual Abuse	2017	19 years
15 years	Child Abuse	2017	20 years
10 years	Sexual Abuse	2017	28 years
16 years	Sexual Abuse	2017	20 years
6 years	Sexual Abuse	2017	21 years
15 years	Sexual Abuse	2017	21 years
2 years	Sexual Abuse	2017	18 years
6 years	Sexual Abuse	2017	60 years
4 years	Sexual Abuse	2017	21 years

Victim's Age	Case Description	Year of Incident	Age of Accused
2 years and 10 months	Sexual Abuse	2017	10 years

Source: Juvenile Welfare Centre / Human Trafficking, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State (2018).

Patriarchy and development in Ebonyi State

Patriarchy and its practice in Eastern Nigeria (*Igbo* land) have directly and indirectly affected development in the region, but this is an aspect of developmental study that receives little or no attention. Many have failed to see the nexus between the two, but this work will analyse how patriarchy affects development in Ebonyi State, all other factors being equal. It is a fact that development occurs when there is a positive change that is not gender-based; how then does patriarchy affect the women's role in contributing to the development of their society or community?

First, to understand the impact of patriarchy on development, there is a need to understand the role that the position of a man in the *Igbo* traditional marriage and family plays in instilling patriarchy in society. In Eastern Nigeria, the male has always been placed above the female; this is most times manifested in boy child preference to the girl child and this makes them feel more important than the female. To this effect, when a woman gives birth, the first question the family members ask is – “What is the sex of the baby?” and when it is a boy child, the joy cannot be hidden as relatives make comments like “congratulations, you now have someone to carry on your name” “Thank God, your lineage shall not die with you” and so on. Most of the boys are named *Azubuike*, *Ahamefule*, *Onochie*, *Ikemefula*, *Amaechina*, *Ikenna*, *Ikenga*, *Lotana*, *Obinna*, *Nnamdi*, and so on (all these names depict the fact that a son has come to continue their father's lineage). This does not mean that female children are not appreciated, but a typical *Igbo* man would prefer to have just one male child than five female children. This is why it is common to see a family that has seven daughters and will keep giving birth till they have a male child even if he is the tenth child; though this practice is going into extinction, it is still the reason for the existence of polygamy in *Igbo* land. This is because of the fear of many childless, middle-aged people who may regret the life choices that are leading to the extinction of their family lines (Longman, 2009).

A woman who is unable to give birth to a male child feels that her marriage is threatened and that her in-laws might bring in another woman for her husband just to continue the husband's lineage. In most cases, as has been observed in some communities like *Uburu* and others around the

Abakaliki cluster of Ikwo, Izza, Izzi, Mgbo, and others,⁵ it is the wives that marry another wife for the husband to increase his chances of having a male child. Also, in most families in these communities, when a man dies without having a son, his first daughter is advised to become pregnant and when she gives birth to a son, he takes up the father's name as his surname and continues his lineage.⁶ When a man dies without a male child to his name, the wife may decide to stay back but is free to become pregnant from any man, and the children she gives birth to; whether male or female, take up the dead husband's name (although in many communities, many widows prefer not to birth a child at their husbands' demise). Although in some cases, the wife may decide to stay if the late husband's family do not support such a decision. In places like Uburu and its environs, when someone dies without being married, a wife could be married posthumously and the children would be culturally considered his legitimate children. However, Afikpo culture is usually slightly complicated because of the dual-descent society they run.

Nwokocha (2007) notes that male child preference remains one of the most-lasting cultural practices amongst the Igbo people of South East Nigeria, and this is evident in many communities where a male child is bestowed special acknowledgment or greater status than a girl child. As a result of this, such communities disassociate their females (daughters and wives) from owning or inheriting family properties, while their male counterparts are treated as the foundation of family lineage and sole owners of family assets. This importance placed on the male child in Igbo society makes it impossible for a female child to inherit her father's land. Historically, in Igbo land, land is often associated with men, this is why when a man without a son dies, his land automatically goes to his brothers, no matter how many daughters he had. Also, even though women work on the land belonging to their fathers or husbands, they are not expected to have land to their name. However, this is not applicable in a few Igbo communities, but in contemporary times, despite the level of adoption of Western cultures, some Igbo communities still frown on a woman inheriting her father's or husband's land. In some communities in Ebonyi state, if a man has no male child, whatever property he owns would be shared amongst the brothers, and this is culturally acceptable but it is still dependent on the understanding of the woman and the mother-in-law. Afikpo runs more of a matrilineal than a patrilineal society, so their cultural takes are usually askew. They inherit properties from their mothers' side.

5 Collated from interviews with indigenes of Ebonyi who wish to remain anonymous.

6 Collated from interviews with indigenes of Ebonyi who wish to remain anonymous.

The effect of this on development is that women have been relegated to the lower level in Igbo society; the sub-consciousness of so many of them has been twisted to the extent that they have begun to see themselves as inferior to their male counterparts. Goldberg (2008) notes that when the male gender performs functions, acts in certain ways, or engages in certain occupations, then the whole society will automatically regard those with utmost importance but when such is performed solely by females, then they automatically become less important. This has resulted in a feeling of inferiority complex on the female part, and this plays out more amongst the rural women. It has also led to over-dependence on the males by the women. Most of these women are so dependent and submissive to their husbands that they do not believe in themselves anymore. They see themselves as commodities and properties of their husbands. Thus, their priority should be to please them by playing the role of caregivers, baby producers, and submissive wives to the extent that they care less about their importance in societal development that is not gender-based.

A look at the manifestations of patriarchy in Igbo land reveals that they have played a major determining role in the development of the region. Trafficking, which is one of the manifestations of patriarchy and which plays out in Ebonyi state, has affected the contribution of women towards the development of their societies. These people would have contributed to the development of their local communities but are taken to foreign locations and when they even return, which happens in most cases, it is difficult to reintegrate and rehabilitate them into the community. The state spends resources equipping the rehabilitation centres that would have been used for its development on rehabilitation and reintegration (managed by the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (MWASD)). Most of the victims do not freely contribute to legitimate economic activities in their home countries and this disorganises the home economy and slows down foreign investments and their linked advantages (Swadogo, 2012; Ihuoma, 2019).

The second point to note is that the world is becoming a global village – the world viewed as a community in which distance and isolation have been dramatically reduced by electronic media (such as television and the Internet) – and migration is the order of the day; thus, people are constantly leaving the borders of their countries of origin. Migration has led to the presence of expatriates, who send remittances home, but in the case of trafficked victims, no remittance is sent home as all they make is released to their masters who may or may not give them a token for their upkeep. In a situation where an individual leaves her country to work abroad, there is either the intention to send remittances home to support family members back home or to invest back home, but this situation is lacking in the story of a trafficked victim.

Third, it is the output of members of a society or country that contributes to the country's gross domestic product and when the potential workforce is taken away forcefully, illegally, or cunningly, society is deprived of what that individual can contribute to the country's development. On the other hand, the income of the citizens of a country abroad contributes to the home country's gross national product, but this does not apply to trafficked victims.

Fourth, when victims of trafficking are recalled and reintegrated (a major agenda of the government-run rehabilitation centre in the state), there is always the problem of stigmatisation; their societies stigmatise them and most of them go into depression (Ihuoma, 2019). The majority of them return with some serious diseases that may prevent them from being truly reintegrated by society members because of fear of contracting the disease from them. Some of the health challenges common amongst trafficked victims include virginal injuries, gum diseases, traumatic brain injuries, tuberculosis, hepatitis B and C, HIV/AIDS, coronary diseases, liver damage, neurological problems, early onset of dementia, cancer (cervix, ovary, pancreas, uterus, throat, liver, bone, and colon). Most of these health challenges prevent them from reproducing, contributing to the workforce of their various societies, or actively playing a developmental role in their communities.

In addition, abused female children show signs and tendencies of psychological, physical, mental, and interactive disorder, and if not well-managed, hinders the ability of the child to effectively utilise her potential for the development of herself and her community at large. On the flip side, if not adequately managed, in many cases, the victim ends up causing a social nuisance and can easily influence other female children around her. In some extreme cases, these girls rely on drugs to find succour (Okeke, 2018).

Conclusion

The government of Ebonyi State has domesticated the National Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act by establishing the State Violence Against Persons Prohibition Law in 2018. This law was enacted to reduce and subsequently eradicate all forms of domestic violence (emotional or psychological, physical, and sexual) against women who had been promoted and sustained by harmful and socio-cultural or traditional practices against women and girl children. This law defines domestic violence as any action performed in a domestic setting that harms an individual or causes impending damage to the well-being of any individual (Government of Ebonyi State, 2018). The law defines emotional, verbal, and psychological

abuse as patterns of humiliating utterances or acts towards any individual. They include frequent insults, mockery, or verbal abuses, as well as recurrent threats of emotional pain or frequent displays of infatuated possessiveness that result in a severe invasion of an individual's privacy, thereby causing a violation of such person's freedom or security.

Likewise, the state Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (MWASD) is the major arm through which the state intervenes in matters that have to do with women and girls. Amongst the numerous duties and agenda of this ministry, it focuses on strengthening the overall well-being of women or girls and improving and encouraging them to utilise their capacities and potentials in various spheres of human endeavour. The ministry also promotes and drives policies centred on the survival of women or girls in various communities as well as policies on the enhancement of their standard of living (health, education, and income). While providing a place of succour to women or girls who were victims of socio-political practices that violate women's or girls' rights, the ministry provides rehabilitative and re-integrative as well as guidance and counselling services (Agu, 2020). There is also the Ebonyi State Child Rights Law of 2003 that protects the rights of children and the family court where the rights of girls who had been violated are protected. There is a direct partnership between the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and the family court in Ebonyi State, where a good number of female lawyers take up pro bono cases to make sure justice is served in human rights and cases related to females in the state.

This study concludes that while patriarchy manifests in trafficking, child abuse, and domestic violence, it is a major reason for the violation of human rights. The study notes that the economic roles of women have in many times been undermined, women from time immemorial have played the role of 'subsistence' they engaged in economic activities aimed towards the upkeep and sustenance of their families and society at large. As the breadwinners of their families, they engaged in economic activities like farming and trading. However, a woman's active economic role can be altered when she is unnecessarily manipulated by her male counterpart. As a result, many are forced to play the role of observers, motivators, cheerleaders, sisters, wives, or mothers who cheer and applaud the exploits of the men folk.

Patriarchy in places or families where they played out has affected the contribution of women to the development of their societies and this has affected the development of society. It should be pointed out that development occurs when the individuals and the system progress positively in all aspects and when the individuals are morally and psychologically prevented from actively utilising their potential; society suffers. This chapter has outlined some of the effects of patriarchal practices on development. It

posits that if women are seen as equal, from the micro level (family), their developmental role will reflect on society. This is because development can occur at the individual level, which manifests and affects the societal development of any society.

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PART 7

Women's Representation in Governance: Cross-Country Experience

Chapter 32

Nigeria's Constitutional Provision and Liberal Feminist Theory: Lessons from Rwanda

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Abstract

The Liberal Feminist Theory has gained prominence in the Constitution of most countries of the world, with Nigeria and Rwanda not left out. Liberal feminism states that every individual, regardless of gender and sex, has equal access to opportunities, benefits and privileges. Using a doctrinal approach, this chapter examines the application of the Liberal Feminist Theory, in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999). Using the Rwandan Constitution as a case study, the chapter explores the domestication of the Liberal Feminist Theory and lessons that Nigeria can learn. In order to accomplish the set objectives, literatures were reviewed on the existing legal frameworks in both Nigeria and Rwanda. It was revealed that the application of the Liberal Feminist Theory in the Nigerian Constitution is not significant, while the Rwandan Constitution embraces the Liberal Feminist Theory extensively by granting every woman all rights and privileges. The chapter submits that the poor adoption of the Liberal Feminist Theory in the Nigerian Constitution accounts for low women's political participation and representation.

Keywords: Constitution, Feminist Theory (FT), Governance, Human Rights, Women

Introduction

Feminist analysis begins with the principle that objective reality is a myth. It recognises that patriarchal myths are projections of the male psyche (Scales, 1993). The most pernicious of these myths is that the domination of women is a natural right, a mere reflection of the biological family (Smith, 1983). The patriarchal paradigm of the will of the father informs rationality at every historical moment. Smith (1983) points out how that paradigm is centrally driven by the need to subjugate women and all that is womanly. This is violently reflected in the myth of Perseus.

Reacting to the above myth, feminist scholarship strategised amongst discursive practices operating to resist and subvert the commonplace assumptions of the dominant masculine culture (Morrison, 1997). Feminist scholars acknowledge that they must struggle to live and rise as women while existing inside a social world heavily structured and imbued with masculine practices. They claim the right to develop specifically, critical perspectives to affirm and change for the better of the position of women.

Feminists concentrate on addressing three important areas. The first is the concrete reality of oppression repeatedly legitimated by legal regulations; the second is the issue of patriarchy, or the system of male authority; and the third is the question of women's sense of justice (Morrison, 1997). It is with the aim to tackle these three areas that feminists come up with varying ideas.

Aside from these varying ideas about feminism, there are also feminists' theories which address the relations between the two sexes, relations within each sex, and the relations between subjects and objects and between subjects and the world in terms of the differences between the sexes, whether those differences are understood as comparative and measurable and in need of some kind of equalisation (as a mark of the project of so-called difference feminism) (Grosz, 2010).

Feminist Theory (FT) addresses, amongst other things, the conditions for the equality of men and women (historical, political, economic, ontological, and so on). It articulates a belief that Feminist Theory is not only about addressing the rights and wrongs of women, whether in the past or present, it also addresses how these wrongs can be transformed, how to better social structure and how social structure might be brought into a better existence than what is currently available (Grosz, 2010).

Feminist Theory is about addressing new ways of thinking about subjects and objects, about a new way of understanding what is in terms, more relevant to women and their interests than previous models offered. Feminism is a diverse, competing and often opposing collection of social

theories, political movements, and moral philosophies, largely motivated by or, concerning the experiences of women, especially in terms of their social, political and economic inequalities (Smith, 2018). One institutionally predominant type of feminism focuses on limiting or eradicating gender inequality, while another focuses on earning, and establishing equality by and for women.

Hence, as with any ideology, political movement or philosophy, there is no single or universal form of feminism that represents all feminists. Instructively, people who believe in the Feminist Theory have so many different views, which seem to suggest that feminist theories are not uniform theories. Although they differ widely in other respects, these theories share three central commitments. Rhode (1990) opined that

On a political level, Feminists seek to promote equality between men and women. On a substantive level, feminist critical frame work make gender a focus of analysis; their aim is to reconstruct legal practices that have excluded, devalued, or undermined women's concerns. On a methodological level these frame works aspire to design the world in ways that correspond to women's experience.

These commitments trigger this present study, wherein the authors juxtapose an instance where Nigeria, through the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) can recognise the Liberal Feminist Theory (LFT), thereby taking a clue from the Rwandan Constitution (Republic of Rwanda, 2003).

Methodology

The use of a doctrinal research, also known as pure legal research, was employed in the course of this study. The data obtained from this type of research are evidence in words which are obtained in the library. The kind of research that brings forth a systematic exposition of the rules governing or determining a particular legal category, analyses the relationship that exists between rules, explains areas of difficulties and perhaps, predicts future developments, is a doctrinal research. Hence, in order to showcase the idea of Liberal Feminist Theory as evidenced in the Rwandan Constitution, this study took an in-depth analysis of rules and norms associated with liberal feminists', while at the same time identifying areas of compliance with Liberal Feminist Theory within the Constitution of Rwanda. This work employed the use of reviewing extensive literatures having bearing with Liberal Feminist Theory, the Constitutions of Nigeria as well as that of Rwanda.

Conceptualisation of Liberal Feminist Theory (LFT)

The first wave of feminism was of a liberal nature (Morrison, 1997) for it focused on the calling for equality under the law. The first wave of feminism argued for equality of treatment for both men and women. Liberal feminists presented women as autonomous beings naturally endowed with the same basic rights and privileges as men and objected to the structural denial to women of the full array of rights and privileges of citizenship that men experienced. The jurisprudential aim was to attain equal legal subjectivity for women as with male citizens (Morrison, 1997). According to Morrison (1997):

Liberal feminism claims that gender differences are not based in biology and therefore women and men are not all that different. Their common humanity super cedes their procreative differences. To them, if women and men are not so different, then they should not be treated differently under the law. Women should have the same legal rights as men and the same educational and work opportunities. Liberal feminism accepts and works with gender system, with the goal of purging it of its discriminatory effects on women. Today, this goal is termed undoing gender. A parallel current goal is main streaming gender by ensuring that government or organizational policies address women's needs.

Instructively, liberals hold the view that freedom is a fundamental value, and that the just state ensures freedom for its citizens. Liberal feminists share this view and insist on freedom for women.

There is however a disagreement within liberal feminism. This disagreement is between two forms of liberal feminism, in other words, (i) classical liberal or libertarian feminism and, (ii) egalitarian liberal feminism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2023).

Classical liberal or libertarian feminism conceives of freedom as freedom from coercive interference. It holds that women and men both have a right to such freedom because of their status as self-owners. It holds that coercive state power is justified only to the extent necessary to protect the right to freedom from coercive interference. Egalitarian liberal feminism, on the other hand, conceives of freedom as personal autonomy – living a life of one's own choosing – and political autonomy – being co-author of the conditions under which one lives. Egalitarian liberal feminists hold that the exercise of personal autonomy depends on certain enabling conditions that are insufficiently present in women's lives, or that social arrangements often fail to respect women's personal autonomy and other elements of women's flourishing. They hold that women's needs and interests are insufficiently reflected in the basic conditions under which they live, and that those

conditions lack legitimacy because women are inadequately represented in the process of democratic self-determination.

The recent attempt in Nigeria to recognise the LFT in the CFRN was thwarted by the National Assembly in its rejection of the five gender-sensitive bills that would have enhanced women's representation in governance, lends credit to the above assertions of egalitarian liberal feminism. The five gender-sensitive bills could not sail through because of the inadequate representation of women in the National assembly.

Egalitarian liberal feminists hold that autonomy deficits like these are because of the 'gender system,' or the patriarchal nature of inherited traditions and institutions, and that the women's movement should work to identify and remedy them.

Under the banner of liberal feminism, women won most of their legislative and judicial victories (Turnier et al., 1996). In chiding the suffrage, equal pay benefits access to the suffrage, equal pay benefits access to employment and education (Ackerly, 2001), the right to service as juries and the limited right to choose to terminate a pregnancy. Leading adherents to this school included Wendy Williams, Herma Hill Kay and Nadine Taub. Although its most prominent representative is Justice Ruth Ginsburg, who, with the co-operation of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), participated in a number of law suits that challenged gender-based discrimination in a variety of contexts and gained a considerable set of victories all based on legal liberalism.

For emphasis, in the case of-

Reed v. Reed 404 US 71, 77 (1971), where the court invalidated a statute that preferred men over women as administrators of estates; Frontiero v. Richardson 411 US 677 (1973), where the court held that the families of female military offices were entitled to housing and benefits on the same basis as were the families of male offices; and Weinberger v. Wisenfeld 420 US 636 (1975) where the court demonstrated a universal approach by striking out portions of the Social Security Act that awarded child care benefits only to mothers and not to fathers caring for minor children.

Given that the notions of legal liberalism are those of neutrality, impartiality and universality, liberal feminists constantly insist that arguments and legislative provisions had to be framed in such a way as not to contradict these ideas.

Nigerian constitution on Liberal Feminism

From the onset, one must recognise the fact that the CFRN reflects several principles, ranging from the common law, customary or ethnic law, as well as the Islamic law principles. All these, including the just emerging ideas of constitutionalism must also come into relevance, as an aspect against which the CFRN must be assessed (Chegwe, 2013).

Feminists' theories, especially those of liberal feminism, have been shaped to reflect on the political, socio-economic and legal status of women; that is, how women's status can be raised politically, socially and economically. This theory is aimed at the rejection of all categories of women's subjugation and oppression, as well as the marginalisation of women in every area of social and political life (Tong & Botts, 2017).

The question then arises: how has the CFRN been able to apply this theory?

The legal framework for women's rights in Nigeria is primarily based on the CFRN (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), although there are some other legal foundations, like international treaties based on women's rights which are ratified by Nigeria.

The CFRN provided, *inter alia*, that every citizen of Nigeria shall be free from all forms of discrimination whether as to sex, religion, ethnic group, place of origin or political affiliation or opinion (Section 42, CFRN, 1999).

It would have been expected that women in Nigeria should be accorded the full benefit of the above-quoted section of the CFRN in Nigeria, and thus, enjoying all the advantages provided by the LFT. It is unconstitutional that women in Nigeria are discriminated against despite the provisions of the CFRN and the principles of liberal feminism. In elective and appointive political positions, women's participation in Nigerian politics is less than 7%, which is below the 22.5% of the global average and 23.4% of regional average (Oluyemi, 2016).

The CFRN is expected to form the basis and backbone of the rights inherent in every citizen of Nigeria. These inherent rights have been granted by Sections 33 to 44 of the CFRN. Furthermore, in the application of international laws as well as treaties relating or having bearings with the human rights of women in Nigeria, the CFRN is the forerunner and primary source of law, because it is the ground norm from which every other kind of law derives its validity. Hence, any law seen as inconsistent with the CFRN shall always be void to the extent of its inconsistency (Section 1(1), CFRN, 1999).

The CFRN, as the supreme law of the land, permits a system where every international law and treaty is ratified into law by parliament, to become part of the accepted law of the land (Section 44, CFRN, 1999). Thus, all international laws and treaties related to promoting women's rights are seen to be part of Nigerian law, as long as they are ratified. Problems with the application of this, however, occur in Nigeria because of the refusal of many states in the Federation to adopt most of the treaties ratified by the Nigerian government (AU, 2009).

The Federal Government, on its own part, is yet to domesticate some of these international laws and treaties that have been ratified. However, the CFRN has empowered the National Industrial Court of Nigeria to make use of ratified treaties in ensuring that Nigeria meets with the standard of international labour practices as far as matters relating to labour are concerned (Section 254(1)(f)(g)(h), Section 254(2), CFRN, 1999).

Despite the provision of the CFRN regarding the prohibition of all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex, ethnicity, religion and political affiliation or opinion, reality has revealed that the provision has not been followed to the letter. It also shows that the ideals of LFT have no firm root in Nigeria. This can be seen in the number of female representations in the Nigerian parliament, which has led to the rejection of five gender-sensitive bills in 2020. These rejected bills would have put more political power in the hands of Nigerian women, thereby creating an avenue for the propagation of the LFT in Nigeria.

Hence, the creation of an enabling environment for LFT legally has the potential of strengthening the five bills into law, gender quotas in Nigerian legislative houses, which should be enforced by the Constitution, will enhance the successful passages of gender sensitive bills.

Rwandan constitution on Liberal Feminism

The unique nature of liberal feminism in Rwanda has continued to attract global attention. With the view of securing meaningful political power, women in Rwanda have, within the span of nineteen years, rewritten feminism in the liberal way and form. In terms of unity, integrity, love and dedication towards themselves, the women in Rwanda have become a reference point for women's inclusion in political participation (Shubhra, 2013).

Beginning in 2003, when women accounted for 48.75% of the representation in the Rwandan lower house of parliament, Rwanda became the country with the highest number of women in parliament globally (Wallace et al., 2008). Even across other levels of government, the women in

Rwanda are seen as visible stakeholders, because these women agitated for a strong gender equality in the political agenda.

The question that comes to mind here is: - how did the Rwandan women achieve this great feat?

Rwanda is a small landlocked country in the Great Lakes region of East Africa. Regarding gender balance, 52% of the population are female (Powley, 2006). Rwanda is mostly popular all over the world, mainly because of the 1994 genocide which left the whole country war-torn. More than 20 years after, the country has grown to become a force to be reckoned with, both in terms of reconciliation as well as women's rights (Tripp, 2015). The war in Rwanda, that is, genocide, can be said to be a change catalyst, which has set up a brand new and unique era for the country.

After the 1994 genocide, Rwanda experienced an increase in the feminist movement which was largely because of the fact that: (i) after the war, 56% of men were reported dead (De Walque & Verwimp, 2010), while 80% of women were displaced. This created a gender imbalance in the country, leading to a vacuum in the area of male representation (Rwanda National Census Services, 2003); (ii) because of the loss of many men in the course of the war, women now assume the role of men in the labour force, prompting an immediate reconceptualisation of the way and manner that women are being viewed in the country. About 80% of displaced women, who are now responsible for male-dominated activities, and living in refugee camps, gradually became accessible to international aid in terms of financial aid and grants (Ho & Palvish, 2011). This economic power was to become the reason for the re-conceptualisation of gender laws and economic access for women; and (iii) after the war, ethnic division of the country was eradicated, and subsequently, women were seen as peaceful and progressive actors of post-war Rwanda.

The President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, was determined to bring forth a united, democratic and an all-inclusive Rwanda, without discrimination amongst its citizens. This was captured in the President's Vision 2020 (Nimusina et al., 2018). In the main, and in relation to this research, the Vision 2020 aimed at, amongst others, gender equality. In relation to gender equality therefore, Rwanda has reached an admirable feat with 64% of female representation in parliament in 2013.

Since 2003, Rwanda has continuously had a gender-sensitive Constitution, with women enjoying equal inheritance rights. Besides the Constitution, Rwanda has also striven to include gender institutions, leading to the creation of the Ministry of Gender and the Promotion of Family. This

ministry has taken it upon itself to ensure that gender is always considered in the entire developmental process of the country (Holvoet & Inberg, 2010).

Redrafting the 2003 Constitution of Rwanda took into cognisance the entire Vision 2020. In the 2003 Constitution, legislative power was divided into two organs: the chambers of the deputies with 80 seats, and the senate, having 26 seats (Republic of Rwanda, 2003). This Constitution made provision for at least 30% minimum representation of women in every decision-making body in all governmental institutions (Burnet, 2008). According to several scholars around the world, this Constitution was tagged the 'Gender Sensitive Constitution'. The 2003 Constitution of Rwanda can be said to be the real transformation which saw to the transitional process from the aftermath of the 1994 genocide. The 2003 Rwandan Constitution became a reference point in terms of equalitarian feminism worldwide. This Constitution saw to the establishment of gender quotas in all governmental organs and public administration.

Aside from the minimum 30% constitutional mark in terms of women's representation in all decision-making bodies, the Constitution of Rwanda also makes provision for representation in the chamber of deputies, where 53 seats are directly elected according to the proportional closed party list, 27 seats are indirectly elected, with 24 seats reserved for women elected by district-level women's councils.

Hence, in Rwanda, the genocide had an economic, social, as well as psychological impact on women, which can be seen in the number of women in representative positions, household heads, as well as the emergence of self-help groups leading to the formation of more than 15,000 women's organisations (Newbury & Baldwin, 2000).

Lessons from Rwanda's constitution

Without mincing words, the representation of women in Rwanda's parliament is premised on the genuine commitment of the government to gender equality, empowerment of women and promoting women's rights (Newbury & Baldwin, 2000). Gender issues in Rwanda are advocated at the highest level with the president advocating for gender equality in his 'Vision 2020' in the 'HeForShe' initiative (Redifer et al., 2020; UN Women Africa, 2015).

In Rwanda, gender equality is a key issue as far as Rwanda's policymaking is concerned. Gender equality is visible in all policy strategies and areas. The National Gender Policy (Republic of Rwanda, 2021) becomes the guiding principle for every public policy choice, enabling the interpretation of gender issues within their respective socio-cultural,

economic and political programmes and plans (Redifer et al., 2020). Within the government's development framework, gender equality and women's empowerment have been mainstreamed as important issues. The 'Vision 2050' (Republic of Rwanda, 2020), which is the government's long-term plan is aimed at achieving upper-middle-income status by the year 2035, with equity, including gender equality, as one of the key issues (Redifer et al., 2020). Furthermore, the National Transformation Strategies (NTS) (2017–2024) (Republic of Rwanda, 2017), which portrays the seven years' mandate where the president made special recognition of gender as a key issue and upholds that gender inclusion, women's empowerment as well as family promotion shall be sustained (Redifer et al., 2020). Gender budgeting is another strong tool employed by policymakers in Rwanda to see to the operation of the gender agenda. Thus, the fiscal budget assists in the evaluation of how the fiscal policies affected men, as against women (Redifer et al., 2020). Another important area where Rwanda is tackling the issue of gender equality is in the area of social protection, where protection strategies have been put in place in order to reduce poverty and inequality. This is also in line with the 'Vision 2020' (Republic of Rwanda, 2012; Redifer et al., 2020).

Rwanda's legal framework must be commended for creating a solid foundation in order to ensure the eradication of gender inequality. The legal framework, through the commitment of the president, has provided equal treatment for women, and has laid down solid goals in order to achieve this (Redifer et al., 2020). The 2003 Constitution, as revised in 2015, has enshrined fundamental principles of gender equality and has further provided a platform for gender inclusion in every sector of the economy (Redifer et al., 2020).

Besides these, several institutions and departments were established in order to see to the smooth running of the gender agenda of Rwanda. Some of these institutions are:

- Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MGFP), which is solely responsible for the coordination and management of every policy relating to the implementation of gender, family, women's empowerment and children's issue.
- Gender Monitoring Office (GMO), which has the mandate to monitor trends relating to gender-based violence in the public sector, the private sector, or in civil and religious society. This office liaises with the Rwanda National Institute of Statistics; National Women's Council (NWC), which has the mandate to build capacity in terms of gender advocacy. It represents women's interests at all levels of government.
- Forum for Rwandan Women Parliamentarians (FRWP), which oversees and advocates for gender-sensitive laws.

- National Gender Cluster (NGC), which comprises Rwandan government, development partners and civil society. This is where gender policies are first discussed.

It is not surprising therefore, that having in place all these numerous institutions, coupled with a sound and strong gender-sensitive Constitution, and genuine commitment regarding gender equality, Rwanda, as a country regarding gender equality, is setting the stage for numerous countries of the world to follow, Nigeria in particular.

Conclusion and recommendations

The important role that women play in the development of policies cannot be overemphasised. Investing in females, therefore, enhances economic development by increasing productivity and the promotion of more efficient use of resources. It can also bring about significant social returns and improve child development and survival (Ging-Dwan Boyd, 2016).

There is the argument that when women are educated, human capital is enhanced. It should however be noted that gender inequality is an economic matter, and can always be resolved through market forces (Ging-Dwan Boyd, 2016). Hence, gender equality is reduced to women's opportunity and empowerment. Also, it should be noted that these women's opportunities are always limited to market opportunities and empowerment is constricted to economic empowerment which has bearing with individual human capital development and job attainment (Ging-Dwan Boyd, 2016).

Thus, in the Rwandan feminists' polity, whenever economic goals enter into competition with the gender equality agenda, there is always a preference for the former as seen in the reduction of maternity leave payment from 12 weeks to 6 weeks, despite the number of women in parliament.

Firstly, because, women are in abundance in Nigeria, just like they are in Rwanda. Not allowing women to participate fully in governance is tantamount to a waste of human resources. Rwanda has taken the bull by the horns by not allowing this to happen. Secondly, just like what obtains in Rwanda, the government of Nigeria should identify gender equality in terms of women's opportunity and empowerment. because as seen in Rwanda, several women in their parliament were not able to stop the reduction of maternity leave payment from 12 weeks to 6 weeks. This is mainly so because, gender inequality was reduced to an economic matter, which was resolved through market forces (Ging-Dwan Boyd, 2016).

Rwanda is a proactive nation, armed with brilliant initiatives and ideas which has, in the long run, minimised the gender gaps. Thus, Rwanda

emerged as a world leader in the gender agenda leading to it, being an enviable global leader when it comes to gender equality. The gender agenda in Rwanda has led to visible profits for growth and development.

These researchers, having a strong belief in the present dispensation of Nigeria, are of the opinion that the gender agenda in Rwanda, through President Paul Kagame using the Rwandan Constitution, can as well be replicated in Nigeria through President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's gender agenda using the CFRN as a soft landing. To achieve this, however, the president of Nigeria must be prepared to, first and foremost, develop a genuine commitment towards gender equality in every sphere of the Nigerian polity. This is the very foundation that will culminate into the inclusion as well as recognition of the LFT within the CFRN. As seen in the Rwandan example, President Paul Kagame was determined to bring forth a united, democratic and an all-inclusive Rwanda without discrimination amongst its citizens.

The CFRN needs to be worked upon to include women's participation and representation in governance as well as in all areas where decisions are made, at least, to take an insight from Rwanda. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is implored to look into this as well. It is pertinent to note that the CFRN should provide for the creation of more ministries and departments in Nigeria that will be responsible for gender issues. This will further inculcate the spirit of LFT within our Constitution.

The CFRN should, in line with LFT, adopt the equalitarian feminist mode, just like Rwanda, by establishing some sort of gender quotas in all governmental organs and public administration. This has become very necessary, because the advancement of women is very critical to good governance, social and economic development and an active civil society (Carlson & Randell, 2013).

Considering that the Liberal Feminist Theory advocates for the equality of all persons, regardless of sex, colour, race or gender, the Nigerian Constitution supports the Liberal Feminist Theory. However, the authors posit that the main issue stems from the implementation of this constitutional standing in ensuring gender equality.

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Chapter 33

Women's Participation in Governance: Legal and Practical Challenges in Realisation of Transformative Governance in Tanzania

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Abstract

Women's participation in governance is a shared global challenge as there is no single country that has completely achieved it today. There is no doubt that comprehensive legislation, policies and effective implementation of the same, are crucial to ensure attaining transformative governance with full women's participation. Tanzania has subscribed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 and African Union Agenda 2063 as well as various global legal instruments which call for equal participation in governance and attaining gender parity in all spheres of life. Moreover, the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania (CURT) recognises the right to equality, non-discrimination and freedom to participate in public affairs. Despite the emphasis on equality between men and women in Tanzania, it is evident that women's participation in governance is still insignificant. This study employed a doctrinal research methodology, involving a comprehensive review of relevant documents, to analyse the legal and practical challenges hindering women's participation in governance. It argues that the mere inclusion of provisions recognising women's participation in governance is insufficient. There is a pressing need to ensure the effective implementation

of policies and laws, as well as to foster a societal transformation in perspectives to enhance women's participation in governance in all spheres.

Keywords: AU Agenda 2063, Network Governance Theory, SDG 5, Transformative Governance

Introduction

Women's participation in governance is vital to attain inclusive governance, representative decisions and healthy democracy. A country report on the implementation of the Beijing Action Plan (UN, 1995) contends that amongst the areas that Tanzania accorded priority is women's political empowerment and decision-making (UN, 2005). Much has been achieved in Tanzania to empower women to governance. The rationale behind the efforts is the unchallenged truth that transformative governance is inevitably linked to inclusion and women's participation in the decision-making process. The government of Tanzania realises that women have a great potential in the development of the country because of their higher number compared to men – in 2023, Tanzania's female population amounted to approximately 34.1 million, while the male population amounted to approximately 33.34 million inhabitants (O'Neill, 2024).

Despite the constitutional foundations and commitments to international instruments to promote women's participation to governance, the continued social, legal, and cultural impediments affect full engagement of women in governance, rendering their participation relatively low. Although women make up 51% of Tanzania's population, numerous studies reveal that just 30% of women have held positions of authority in the political, governmental, legislative, judicial, or other decision-making domains (Mwakasungula et al., 2010). Only 36.7% occupied parliamentary seats in 2020 and 27.5% are employed in senior and middle management (UN Women, 2023). Without a doubt, Tanzania is undergoing change, with a particular emphasis on decentralisation to guarantee efficient local governance and broad involvement.

However, because of the patriarchal attitudes that permeate many Tanzanian societies, women's contributions are invisible despite the significant and valuable roles that they play, they are considered unable to take on significant roles in society (Mwakasungula & Msabila, 2007). The patriarchal system makes women more occupied with household activities such as cooking, cleanliness, farming and the like to the extent that they are neglected in political affairs such as leadership in local and national governance. Women are usually ignored in making decisions on important matters that concern the development and resource allocation. They are

usually the implementers of decisions that are made by men and their ideas, though important, are usually ignored or sometimes are not given chance to contribute. According to Stacey and Price (1981), if at all they are given a chance, they are more likely to be found in less important and in less influential positions.

The patriarchal attitudes that permeate many Tanzanian societies have rendered women's valuable contributions largely invisible (Mwakasangula & Msabila, 2007). Within this patriarchal framework, women are often considered incapable of assuming significant roles in society to the extent that they are marginalised from political affairs, including leadership positions in local and national governance.

Women are typically relegated to the role of implementers; their ideas and perspectives frequently ignored or dismissed, despite their importance. Even when provided the opportunity to contribute, they are more likely to be relegated to less influential and consequential positions (Stacey & Price, 1981). This systemic marginalisation reflects the deeply entrenched gender biases that continue to hinder women's full and equitable participation in the decision-making processes that shape the development and resource allocation within Tanzanian communities. The persistent patriarchal norms and attitudes that pervade these societal structures effectively diminish and obscure the valuable roles and contributions of women, denying them the recognition and agency they deserve.

This chapter analyses the extent to which Tanzanian women participate in governance at the local and national levels. The legal and practical challenges hindering women's full participation in governance are discussed and the ways forward towards achievement and full participation in governance are recommended.

Governance, transformative governance and Network Governance Theory

Scholars have defined the word governance in different ways. However, most of them agree on the aspect that governance, as opposed to government, involves interaction between the state and other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, in attaining the common goal. It is a transformation from the hierarchical government to stakeholders' involvement in governing which takes into account an interdependence between actors, both governmental and non-governmental (Christin, 2017). It entails "a system of government concentrating on the effective and accountable institutions, democratic principles and electoral process, representation and responsible structures of government to ensure the

open legitimate relationship between the civil society and the state” (Asaduzzaman & Virtanen, 2018). As such, very important aspects of governance including accountability, democratisation, free and fair elections, representation, as well as the involvement of stakeholders in governance, are covered. Further, the World Bank points out that ‘people’s participation in the affairs of the state and access to the administration’ is amongst the elements of governance. This commends that people’s participation is vital in governance.

In this chapter, therefore, the term ‘governance’ is defined to mean a sharing regime where the state works together with other stakeholders including civil society, the private sector, citizens including women and men, to achieve a common goal for the public good. Good governance encompasses amongst other things, participation, transparency, accountability and the rule of law. It ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources. As such, governance has three legs: economic, political and administrative aspects, whereas economic governance includes decision-making processes that affect a country’s economic activities and its relationships with other economies. This clearly has major implications for equity, poverty and quality of life. Political governance is the process of decision-making to formulate policy. Lastly is administrative governance, which is the system of policy implementation. Encompassing all three, good governance defines the processes and structures that guide political and socio-economic relationships. This chapter is centred in all three legs of governance, political economic and administrative.

Transformative governance is referred to as fundamental reforms or restructuring of the basic structures of governance. It refers to “a mandate for a radical structural and fundamental arrangement and reordering of the building blocks of the nation with the purpose of changing the status quo” (Osisioma, 2011). It is not a mere change of the wording of the provisions of the law but a change that goes to the fundamental structures of the state. It is therefore a substantial change in society. Transformative governance therefore entails sharing of the responsibilities between governmental and non-governmental organisations, the private sector and other stakeholders.

Network Governance Theory encompasses interdependencies between public and private actors. It emphasises collaboration amongst stakeholders, both public and private, in addressing ‘complex problems’ affecting society which cannot be addressed by the government alone. It focuses on ensuring collaboration between public and private actors in achieving development. The theory engages non-state stakeholders both in decision-making and

action (Kapuku & Quian, 2020). This theory calls for a transition from government to governance where there will be engaging of non-government stakeholders in the governing process. Amongst the basic elements of this theory include: interdependence between actors; the complex interaction and negotiation patterns; the institutionalisation of the relationship between actors which results in the emergence of rules to regulate actors and manage their interactions (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2012).

This chapter is based on Network Governance Theory and focuses on women as actors in governance. The authors centre the discussion on the role that women play in governance and hindrances to their participation in governance as key stakeholders.

Women's participation in governance and its history in Tanzania.

Political space and women's political participation

The history of women's participation in governance in Tanzania can be traced far back, even before independence. One of the most renowned women who fought for independence was Bibi Titi Mohammed, who was a politician and a freedom fighter. She was a leader of the women's wing in Tanganyika's African National Union; a chairperson of "*Umoja wa Wanawake Tanzania*" (UWT) in 1955. She was also appointed a top political leadership position of a Minister in the early independence government. However, since independence all parliamentary women including Bibi Titi, entered that position through special seats. Therefore, it was not until 1982 when the first woman, by the name of Martha Wejja, entered parliament through election. The fight to winning that position included petitioning from the court, as her opponent wanted to use her identity of being a woman to rob her of her influence. Studies reveal that from 1985 to 2000, 95% of women entered parliament through special seats. In the 2005 constitutional amendments the percentage of special seats had to be increased from 15% to 30 % but even with that amendment in the 2010 election, there was an increase of only 6% of women parliamentarians from the 30% which existed in 2005 (IRI, 2015).

Currently, notable women have succeeded to hold top administrative and political positions at the international and national levels. For example, Dr Asha Rose Migiro held the position of Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations from 2007 to 2012, Honourable Samia Suluhu became the first female President of the United Republic of Tanzania after holding the position of Vice President in the 2015 and 2020 general election, Dr Tulia Akson holding a position of a Speaker of the National Assembly of Tanzania,

just to mention a few. This shows that there is a huge step that Tanzania has taken in transforming women into leadership.

Women in the legislative branch

We cannot deny the truth that with time the number of women in parliamentary seats from the constituencies increased from 1 in 1982 to 21 in 2010. More significant evidence of the increase of women's participation in governance is uncovered in the Tanzania COG (Commonwealth Observer Group) report where it shows that more than 1,000 women contested various political positions and for the first time a woman who won a parliamentary seat against her opponent who was a man in a typical patriarchal society (Mara) (The Commonwealth, 2015). Admittedly, that is a great step. However, it cannot blind us from seeing the truth that despite the fact that women are more than 50% of the total population in Tanzania, they occupied only 36.7% seats in parliament in the 2020 general election (UN Women, 2023).

Women in the executive branch

So far in Tanzania, few women hold positions in the executive branch. After about sixty years since independence, Tanzania has succeeded in having the first woman to hold the topmost position in the country. Although, since 2015, Tanzania started to take a new dimension on an aspect of women holding higher executive positions by electing the first woman to the position of the Vice President, having Her Excellency Samia Suluhu Hassan as the First Female President in Tanzania in 2021 is landmark progress. Apart from that, there are also other women holding positions in the executive branch who are appointed to the position of Ministers, including: Honourable Ummy Mwalimu, Minister of Health; Angellah Kairuki, the Minister of Local Government; Joyce Ndalichako, Minister of Labour; Honourable Dorothy Gwajima, Minister of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children; as well as Jenista Mhagama, Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office (Policy, Parliamentary Affairs, Labour, Youth, Employment and Persons With Disabilities). Considering that trend, the authors are of the view that, despite the above success story of Tanzania having women in the topmost political positions in the executive branch, still the number is very minimal in the context of attaining gender parity.

Women in the judicial branch

It is established that the number of women face formidable difficulties in terms of qualifying as candidates and being elected as judges to the court of appeal and the high courts in Tanzania. It is further observed that traditional gender roles impact the equal participation of women in the judiciary in

Tanzania (JICA, 2016). Despite the incursion of women into the practice of law and law schools of Tanzania, many women are yet to make it because of discriminatory stereotypes of women that impair them from participating in these professions or pursuing judicial careers. According to the Tanzania Women Judges Association's (TAWJA) report of 2019, there are only seven women judges in the Court of Appeal, twenty-seven women in the high court of Tanzania and 17 women deputy registrars, as opposed to men (TAWJA, 2019). The report went further, stating that in the law arena at the academic institutions in Tanzania, even in the admission process the number of women and men differs. A noticeable existence of pronounced differences in the academic and professional disciplines between men and women, is that law schools are primarily male-dominated, which poses hurdles for women's access to judicial bodies (TAWJA, 2019).

Local Government and the transforming power of women in governance

The democratisation of local governments has opened channels for the participation of women at this level. The increased political legitimacy of elected positions, as well as the growth in skills and resources available to municipal governments, made local governments more accessible to women's political participation. This is because local government is closely tied to the spaces of everyday community life. It is further established that women in their communities in Tanzania, work as community leaders, managers, activists, and powerful promoters of social change at the municipal level (UN, 2005). Recently, the Women's Network of Human Rights Defenders announced Flora Masoy, coordinator of Morogoro Paralegal Centre, as a hero and a front activist and human rights defender (IPP Media, 2021).

Women in higher learning institutions

Women working in higher learning institutions (HLIs) find their profession quite challenging (Morley, 2014). The main issue of women in HLIs is being unacceptably under-represented, especially in senior administrative positions (Forest & Altbach, 2010). Studies show that female academics are disproportionately represented in male-dominated institutions (Mwaipopo, 2015). In general, the holding back of women from leadership, initially described as the glass ceiling, is the symbolic wall that women hit at mid-management levels, blocking women to advance (AAUW, 2020). Additionally, the perception and gender stereotype that women are inferior to men, because of their lack of masculinity, is a challenge. However, society views women as performing multiple roles as a working woman, daughter, wife and

mother, in addition to the expectation of being humble, respectful, attentive, understanding and discreet.

The situation is similar in Tanzania. It is indisputable that women's leadership in higher learning institutions has remained in the shadow of male domination. There is a little transformation of women's leadership in higher learning institutions in Tanzania. This chapter established that from five public institutions in Tanzania, just to mention, the University of Dar-es Salaam, the University of Dodoma, Mzumbe University, the Open University of Tanzania and Sokoine University of Tanzania, there is only one woman in the top management, that is to say, Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors and Deputy Vice-Chancellors. In all the five public universities, only one university has a woman holding the top position. It is only the University of Dodoma that has recently received an appointment of the first woman in the post of the University Chancellor, which is Dr Stergomena Tax. It is therefore unfortunate that women have been left behind in this aspect. Likewise, in academic ranks, few women are holding higher academic ranks in the public higher learning institutions, for example in the University of Dodoma there are only two women holding the rank of Professor or Associate Professor.

While women have moved towards gender equality at home and in the workplace, it is still not an easy task to be appreciated, and their work is acknowledged in higher learning institutions. With more flexible gender roles, more awareness and global changes, women can navigate life more easily and freely. Despite the positive changes, women working in the male-dominated environment have few people to collaborate with hindering collegiality and collaboration within the workplace. Hence, much still needs to be done to increase women's leadership and participation.

International, regional and national scholarship on gender equality and equal participation of women and men in governance

Equality and equal participation of women and men is a current global trend. The international community, regional groups, as well as individual states have considered it as an issue of priority. Gender refers to the social meaning given to being a woman or a man. The idea reflects social characteristics rather than biological differences in defining a woman or a man. The definition has three effects: firstly, it defines the boundaries of what women and men can and should be and do; secondly, it shapes and determines the behaviour, roles, expectations and entitlements of women and men; and thirdly, it provides rules, norms, customs and practices. Gender equality is an essential expression of human rights, a precondition for sustainable,

people-centred development. Women's rights are human rights (UNESCO, 2014). It means that women and men enjoy the same status and have equal opportunities to realise their full human rights and potential to contribute to political, economic, social and cultural development and to benefit from the results. It indicates that society values equally both the similarities and the differences between women and men and the different roles that they play.

There is no doubt that promoting the rights of women and girls will not only help achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (UN, 2000) but also will bring about equality in the leadership arena. Women play active roles in reducing poverty and hunger. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen commitments to empower women at all levels of decision-making. Although progress has been made in empowering women, such as mainstreaming gender equality in national policies addressing gender disparities and social injustices against women and girls, it remains unbalanced and uneven. Still, education, access to resources, employment opportunities, and representation in decision-making levels are key areas that can transform the lives of women in Tanzania and globally to contribute to the achievement of the MDGs. As such, Tanzania should accelerate the advancement of women's rights and gender equality, underscoring that these achievements will positively contribute to the fulfilment of the other MDGs. It is imperative to point out that women's participation in governance is an important aspect in contemporary discourse just as it has been for about a while (O'Connor & Yanus, 2014).

Women's participation in governance derives its legal bases from international, regional and national laws and policies. At the international and regional level, there are various conventions and soft laws which call for gender equality and women's participation in governance. These have also influenced the frameworks to entrench gender equality in the Constitution and other national laws. The discussion in this part covers international, regional as well as national laws relevant to women's participation in governance in Tanzania. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) recognises equal rights of men and women and provides for equality before law and non-discrimination.

The Convention on the Political Rights of Women (UN, 1953) is a short treaty of eleven articles. It provides for the rights of women to be elected to all publicly elected bodies established by national law, based on equality of men and women, without discrimination (Article II). Furthermore, this Convention provides for the right of women to "hold office and to exercise all public functions, established by national law, on equal terms men, without discrimination" (Article III). On its part, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UN, 1979), provides,

about public affairs, that states' parties should take measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country, and ensure on equal terms with men, inter alia, the right of women "to vote in all elections and public referenda and be eligible for election to publicly elected bodies", and "to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government" (Article 7(a) and (b)). Moreover, the Convention enjoins states' parties to give women, based on equality of men and women and without any discrimination, "the opportunity to represent their governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations" (Article 8). It should be mentioned that to achieve de facto equality, Article 4 permits positive discrimination in favour of women – the adoption of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women. The measures must be discontinued when the objective of discrimination has been achieved.

The ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) (UN, 1966) deals with civil and political rights of all, without distinction on grounds of sex. Of particular interest to us presently, Article 25 provides for the right of every citizen, without distinction as to sex, to participate in the public life of their country, to vote or be voted for, and, generally, to have access to the public service of his/her country.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (adopted in Beijing, China on 15 September 1995) (UN, 1995) is another important women's rights-related instrument and one of the most recent global-level instruments touching on women's rights to public participation. Amongst others, this document notes that the empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's political status are essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration. It points out that achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. It adds that "women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account". Importantly, this document further notes that "despite widespread movement towards democratization in most countries, women under-represented at most levels of government, especially in ministerial and five bodies, and have made little progress in attaining political power in legislative or achieving the target endorsed by the Economic and Social Council of having women in positions

of decision-making levels by 1995". To promote women's participation in public life, the Beijing Platform enjoins governments to, *inter alia*:

1. Commit themselves to establish the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, as well as in public administrative entities, and in the including, *inter alia*, of setting specific targets and implementing measures to substantially increase the number of women to achieve equal representation and men, if necessary, through positive action, in all governmental and public station positions.
2. Take measures, including where appropriate, in electoral systems that of political parties to integrate women in elective and non-elective public positions in the same proportion and levels as men.
3. Protect and promote the equal rights of women and men to engage in activities and to freedom of association, including membership in political trade unions; and
4. Aim at gender balance in the lists of national candidates nominated for appointment to United Nations bodies, specialised agencies and other autonomous organisations of the United Nations system, particularly for posts at the senior.

Furthermore, the Platform for Action enjoins political parties to take the following to achieve gender equality and non-discrimination:

- a. Consider examining party and procedures to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate participation of women,
- b. Consider developing initiatives that allow women to fully participate in all internal policymaking structures and appointive and electoral nominating processes; and
- c. Consider incorporating gender issues in their political agenda: measures to ensure that women can participate in the leadership of political parties on an equal basis with men.

As if the above is not enough, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SD) (UN, 2015), calls for gender equality and women's participation in governance. According to SD Goal 5, women should have full participation in leadership and decision-making. That is, states should ensure women's effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making. It calls for states to adopt and strengthen policies and enforceable legislation for promoting gender equality and empowerment of women as well as ending all forms of discrimination in all spheres of life including in governance. It requires the states not just to have laws in place, but such laws should include the mechanisms for enforcement.

At the regional level, Article 4(2) of the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing Economic Community Relating to the Pan-African Parliament

2001 (AU, 2001) provides that “each Member State shall be represented in the Pan-African Parliament by five members, at least one of whom must be a woman”. On its part, Article 9 of the recently adopted Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women (AU, 2023) provides for women’s rights to participate in political and decision-making processes of their various countries. To ensure this, states’ parties are obliged to take positive action to promote participative governance and equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling legislation and other measures. Specifically, women should be enabled to participate without discrimination in all elections; they should be represented equally at all levels with men in all electoral processes, and they should be treated as equal partners with men at all levels of development and implementation of state policies and development programmes (Article 9(1)). Moreover, states’ parties are required to ensure increased and effective representation and participation of women at all levels of decision-making (Article 9(2)).

In addition to treaty provisions, there are political commitments from several international-regional forums by African countries to involve women in governance. There have been several such commitments over the years. Importantly, these commitments are not merely moral codes; they partake of legal commitments in character, being the outcome of conferences or international-regional meetings and may be regarded as evidence of state practice – a major requirement in the formation of customary international law.

Keeping with the above statement, the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women at the Third World Conference on Women held at Nairobi, Kenya, 15–26 July 1985) (UN WomenWatch, 1985) contains extensive commitments by the participating nations to promote women’s passion in public affairs and governance of their countries as well as in international regional communities. Amongst others, this instrument provides that governments take all appropriate measures to ensure that women are on equal terms with men, the opportunity to represent their government at all levels on sub-regional, regional and international meetings. Moreover, it calls for more women to be appointed as diplomats and to decision-making posts within the United Nations including posts in fields relating to peace and development activities.

Furthermore, paragraph 86 states that governments and political parties should make efforts to stimulate and ensure equality of participation by women in all national legislative bodies and to achieve equity in the appointment, election and promotion of women to high posts in executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. Local level strategies to

ensure equality of women in political participation are pragmatic, and should bear a close relationship to issues of concern to women and should take into account the suitability of the proposed measures to local values.

Moreover, at the Fifth African Regional Conference on Women held from 16 to 23 November 1994 (UN Economic Commission for Africa, 1994), the Ministers and the representatives who participated adopted an African Platform for Action. There can be no equality and development without peace and that peace with the full involvement of women as equal partners with men at the making, amongst others. They also expressed a determination to support women fully so that they can contribute to and participate more effectively in all the political and economic changes now taking place in Africa. More importantly, they declared their commitment to forging a new ethic for sustainable development based on the equal and active participation of women as agents of change at the family, community, national and international levels.

Furthermore, the AU Agenda 2063 aspires for good governance, democracy and respect of Human Rights. In its Aspiration Six, it calls for people-driven development. It requires recognition of the critical role of women in Africa's transformation. It emphasises women's empowerment to attain equal access and opportunity *inter alia* to managerial positions in the government and private sector. It further looks forward to breaking hindrances to women's progress. On good governance, the AU Agenda 2063 calls for transformative governance at all levels entrenching universal principles of human rights and gender equality in governance. Above all, undeniable progress has been made on the continent of Africa. The continent is undergoing a period of remarkable economic growth. As such, women have been economically and socially empowered, equal access to opportunities and resources, more safety, greater prevention and efficiency of the justice system against gender violence, as well as more guarantees to achieve the realisation of women are promoted. These factors have brought a greater impact on women's participation in governance.

Thus, it is indisputable that seventy-two years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) and twenty-five years after the Beijing Declaration and plan of action (UN, 1995) that are enshrined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) (AU, 2023), there is much progress on women's rights to be celebrated.

At this point, it is important to acknowledge the African Union's efforts in pushing the agenda of women's leadership. It is imperative to point out that the AU has maintained gender parity at its highest decision-making

level. In keeping with the above, this chapter commends such an effort, and it is established that currently, there are five female commissioners and five male commissioners - including Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson. Moreover, efforts are made for the gender parity principle to percolate other AU organs and institutions.

To illuminate more is that the AU's vision to silence guns by 2020 (AU, 2021), has paid precise attention to women's voices not only as victims but as partners and active contributors to all stages of the management, prevention and resolution of conflicts in Africa in the process of peacebuilding, democracy-building and nation-building.

To enhance that, the AU Department of Political Affairs, in collaboration with UNDP, is leading the development and implementation of an action plan to promote women's equal representation and participation in governance through facilitating the effective implementation of related global regional and national relevant policy and legal frameworks. It has been found that women's leadership in the response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is also of importance as the impact of COVID-19 disproportionately affects women. Young women and girls are particularly those in vulnerable conditions including those living in crises and conflict-affected areas. The objectives were to address the ecosystems, institutions and structures that hold women in leadership back. It will shape the progress that African countries have made so far, and the positive attitudes towards women's leadership in some countries to boost women's role in leadership and political participation including in the relief and recovery decision-making process concerning COVID-19.

To this end, it is important to state that the proposed initiative on women in governance and political participation contributes to the governance pillar of the joint AU-UN African Women Leaders Network (AWLN). This initiative of African women leaders from across sectors is aimed at enhancing African women's leadership in transforming the continent in the context of Agenda 2063 (AU, 2013) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (AU, n.d.). The AWLN supports the advancement of African women in leadership through flagship projects, peer learning, and experience sharing as well as cross-generational dialogue in six thematic areas: (a) governance; (b) peace and security; (c) finance; (d) youth; (e) agriculture; and (f) social mobilisation. Since it was established in June 2017, the network's achievements range from multiplying the voices of African women leaders to enhancing their representation, participation and leadership in key decision-making processes.

Moreover, the evaluation of the MDGs has shown that there is progress in promoting women in leadership positions. However, according to the MDGs, despite the progress, there is a lack of female representation in local governance that is an overarching concern across the African continent. This is due in part to institutionalised gender roles in many societies which discourage and inhibit female participation in governance. As one of Africa's underutilised resources, increasing females in governance is a key to achieving many of the developmental goals set for Africa.

Being a part of the SADC (Southern African Development Community), Tanzania has also experienced a shift of paradigm. This has been through the adoption of the Protocol on Gender and Development providing for equal representation and participation in governance and aimed at attaining parity 50/50 in 2015 (SADC, 2023). Even though 50/50 parity has not yet been reached, studies show that there is significant progress in women's representation and participation in governance when it comes to SADC member states in general and Tanzania in particular.

The Treaty Establishing the East African Community (EALA, 2000) also provides for gender equality and non-discrimination based on, inter alia, sex, which is the major cornerstone to development. It goes further to the inclusion of the special provision on the role of women which, amongst other things, calls for empowerment of women to enable them to effectively participate in social-economic development at all levels especially in decision-making.

The East African Community has also adopted a Gender Policy (EAC, 2018) that requires mainstreaming of gender issues in programmes and strategies in the community. The community has gone further to introducing the East Africa Community Gender Equality and Development Bill of 2017 (EAC, 2017). This Bill was intended to consolidate and harmonise regional and international commitments on gender equality in the context of the East African Community to ensure uniform promotion and protection of women's rights to equality and equal participation inter alia in governance.

Apart from the international and regional efforts, Tanzania as a country has taken various measures to increase the participation of women in governance in achieving equal participation of men and women in governance. Various legal and policy reforms have been undertaken to enhance gender equality and women's participation in Tanzania since independence. Below are a few examples:

First, the inclusion of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania in the year 1984 (United Republic of Tanzania, 1984) paved a way for equality between men and women, equal participation, non-

discrimination based on sex and freedom to participate in public affairs and decision-making. This was a very necessary step in ensuring gender equality as it offers room to enforce equality as a right, therefore, allowing women room to go to court in case of its violation. Despite the existence of claw-back clauses and other challenges to the enforcement of human rights in Tanzania, the inclusion of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania was a significant change as it opened up a state's commitment to the protection of human rights, including equality and non-discrimination, which are important elements to attaining inclusive governance. Therefore, if only other existing challenges in the enforcement of the Bill of Rights could be addressed, one cannot hesitate to say that the inclusion of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution was a crucial step to ensuring gender-inclusivity in governance in Tanzania.

Second, the introduction of the quotas system. This is one of the mechanisms introduced temporarily to ensure the increase of the number of women in parliament. It involves constitutional or legislative reserved seats for women (which regulates the number of women elected) or setting a minimum number of women. For example, the establishment of constitutional special parliamentary seats in Tanzania was the adoption of the quotas system. This was introduced in Tanzania in the 1980s, whereby the law required 15% of women to be afforded special parliamentary seats and the percentage increased to 20% in 2000. Finally, in 2005 the percentage was increased to 30%. This mechanism has increased the number of women in parliament from 16.5% in the 1995 election to 37% in 2015. Although this mechanism has produced positive results by drastically increasing the number of women parliamentarians, it is questioned on its effectiveness in empowering women and has generally received critics from various writers. On the other hand, reserved seats from the appointees of the President, whereby the Constitution requires the President to appoint ten members of parliament as his/ her appointees but five of them should be women. This increases the number of women in parliament.

Third, adopting gender policies, the Policy on Women in Development in Tanzania (1992) and the National Strategy for Gender Development (2000) which shows the commitment of Tanzania as a state to attain gender-inclusive governance. All these included efforts to increase the number of women in governance. In turn, they have enhanced the number of women participating in governance and influenced reforms in the legal regime advancing women's participation.

The National Development Vision 2025 (United Republic of Tanzania, 2023) includes the commitment of the state to empower women amongst other areas in the political arena. It calls for ensuring the participation

of women in decision-making by advancing gender issues economically, socially and politically.

As discussed above, Tanzania also ratified various international conventions and regional treaties which aim at attaining equal participation of women and men in all areas including governance. Apart from that, Tanzania has undergone a domestication process to ensure implementation of the ratified conventions at the state level. Most of the initiatives to enhance gender equality in governance have been influenced by these international treaties. The obligations within them have been the catalyst for change in Tanzania through mainstreaming gender issues in policies and laws of the land.

Other initiatives include the role of civil society; women have formed various non-governmental organisations aiming at, amongst other things, empowering women into governance including the Women Fund Tanzania Trust (WFTrust, 2024), which funds activities aiming at empowering women to political representation, others like Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA, 2020), Tanzania Women Lawyers Association (TAWLA, 2024) and Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF-AO, 2022) empower women to leadership and career development. They also play a part in raising consciousness and awareness to women and society in general on empowering women through advocacy.

Despite the undeniable gains in terms of legal and institutional progress towards more women in decision-making, pervasive structural factors still hinder or limit the full exercise of women's governance rights. In Tanzania, women's participation in governance is still minimal, led by cultural attitudes based on patriarchal models, gender stereotypes and traditional roles of men and women, deficiencies in women's political and economic empowerment, as well as the dramatic data available on gender violence.

Tanzania is experiencing a historical moment with a gradual increase in women's participation in governance and decision-making. However, the agenda is still unfinished, particularly concerning women's leadership participation because of some challenges in the economic, social and political arena. More commitment and strong substantive equality and parity are still needed and be observed at the national legal and policy level.

Legal and practical challenges in women's participation in governance in Tanzania

It is acknowledged that significant progress has been made concerning women's governance participation in Tanzania. These advances in some

point, though as little as it is, have helped to clear the way to an inclusive democracy, in which women's voices are increasingly heard in the crafting of governance, legislation and public policies with their interests and needs in mind.

However, cultural prejudice against women still exists (Msuya, 2017). Women are often viewed through the cultural lens. In Tanzania, the cultural expectations of women are generally childbearing and taking family responsibilities. Different research has shown that traditionally in Tanzania, women are expected to take on more family responsibilities than men. With changing times, more flexibility for women from such traditional roles has taken place, providing women with the freedom to work, in addition to family responsibilities. There is no doubt that despite efforts made to ensure that female representation is achieved at all levels of governance, women are still under-represented in many government and nongovernment organisations, particularly in positions of power and leadership in Tanzania. Therefore, this section discusses persisting challenges hindering women in attaining leadership positions in Tanzania

Legal status and framework

Although the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania of 1977 provides for gender equality, non-discrimination based on sex and equal participation of all persons including men and women in governance, special seats and reserved seats to increase the number of women in parliament, these provisions are inadequate to ensure equal and effective participation of women in governance. This is because there are no specific women's rights included in the current Constitution. Even on the special seats, although this helps in increasing the number of women in parliament, this has its shortfalls. This is because the issue of special seats for women in parliament is not a permanent intended objective but a temporary one while preparing women to be able to compete and be elected in their constituencies.

However, this (existence of special seats) has been used as a reason that sometimes-political parties do not give room to women to contest in constituencies because they can use special seats to be parliamentarians, something which defeats the intention of the provision. Lack of harmonised rules and regulations providing for the procedures to nominate women for special seats and lack of transparency has led to occasional appointment of women who are not competent enough to stand for that position or appointing women who are just favourites of the top party leaders.

Studies have revealed that women who reach parliament through special seats are considered as 'second-class' members of parliament. This,

therefore, makes them inferior compared to the members of parliament elected in their constituencies (Wang & Yoon). In an extreme case, apart from the Constitution, the rest of the laws governing elections in Tanzania including the Political Parties Act 2002 (United Republic of Tanzania, 2002), the Election Act cap 343 RE 2010 (United Republic of Tanzania, 2010a), and the Election Expenses Act, 2010 (United Republic of Tanzania, 2010b) have no gender-related provisions. Even in the composition of the National Electoral Commission, there is no mandatory requirement for the inclusion of women.

It is worthy to note that the legal framework offers room to enforcing the rights, if violated, therefore having an inadequate legal framework advancing inclusive governance and establishing effective mechanisms to advance women's participation in governance, creates a large stumbling block to attaining full democracy. The Constitution as a mother law expresses the state's vision and gives a roadmap to the future of the state, therefore the inclusion of adequate provisions which are clear, enforceable and effective in protecting women's rights shows the state's commitment to gender equality and achievement of full democracy. Therefore, although Tanzania has adopted policies that advance gender equality the legal and regulatory framework are yet to be aligned with these policies.

There are laws which foster inequality amongst men and women and through that, hinders women's empowerment and that affects their participation in governance. For example, the Law of Marriage Act (Parliament of Tanzania, 1971), which allows females to marry at 15 years old and males at 18 is discriminatory and fosters the tendency of violation of the right to education of female children (Section 13 Law of Marriage Act). It is obvious that education is the best tool to empower women into leadership since it increases exposure and gives access to information. Therefore, any law of this kind which is likely to infringe on the right to education of a female child reduces her chances of becoming involved in governance in her future. Another example is the laws relating to succession and inheritance applicable in Tanzania including the Indian Succession Act of 1865, the Islamic Laws as well of customary law which limit women in inheriting properties at the death of their spouse.

Frankly speaking, these laws subject women to acute poverty instead of empowering them economically to enable their participation in governance. It has to be remembered that amongst the main setbacks to women's participation for instance in political contests is lack of funds to support them in the process. Therefore, economic empowerment is one of the pillars in ensuring full participation of women in governance, especially in the political sphere. Thus, any law of this nature subjecting women to poverty and acute

need encumbers the advancement of women's participation in governance, and needs to be reformed.

Administrative positions require hard work, long hours

Administrative or leadership positions require hard work, long hours and are stressful. Insofar as women and governance is concerned in Tanzania, this burden is added on to their child-care, home, and family responsibilities, a phenomenon referred to as the 'double shift'. This is also true of women in higher education. In addition to issues of family responsibility that make it difficult for women to advance, cultural beliefs about the roles of men and women inhibit women's advancement to top leadership as much as it does in politics (Pandor, 2006). It is also noted that there is a common statement (often not taken seriously) that women at senior level positions are not always supportive of other women and tend to want to maintain the status quo. Of course, institutional culture and micro politics do act as barriers for women implicitly or explicitly influencing the research environment that ultimately breeds professors and executive leaders. For many women, the time demands of such positions conflict with the demands of the family, and this in itself is a barrier.

Structural challenges beyond culture and religion

Furthermore, is the organisational culture in management which has been referred to as the myths, values and practices accepting women's positions in the lower levels of the organisation and portrays managerial positions in the hierarchy as masculine. It is further found that masculinity pervades organisational processes and creating gender segregation by marginalising women (Moore, 2014). As a result of misconceptions of gender, it leads to the belief that women cannot be good leaders as they lack masculine leadership qualities, and perhaps lead to less chance of women being promoted to higher positions in the organisation. Insofar as political issues are concerned it has been noted that in all the political parties registered in Tanzania since independence, none has a woman as a chairperson of the party. This may have been influenced by the structure of their political manifesto. The political manifesto defines the vision of the political party and what the political party is committed to achieving. Except for the ACT (Alliance for Change and Transparency), all other political parties' manifestos have no provision on advancing women's participation in governance. They may have provisions of empowering women in other fields including economically but none focus on governance. Even for the ACT *Wazalendo* manifesto lacked such provision

previously but included it in its 2020 party manifesto. This shows a need for political parties to reform their manifesto if equality is to be fully achieved.

In Tanzania specifically, conversely, it is possible to change those same structural factors that exclude women precisely through the quantitative and qualitative increase in women's participation in governance and leadership in areas of political decision-making. Their involvement in decision-making is a precondition for the public agenda to incorporate new dimensions in public policies that contribute to putting an end to the vicious circle of discrimination and gender inequality.

Stereotyping leadership styles and gender discrimination

In this section, gender positioning is associated with marital status, presence of children and distribution of work at home. In the Tanzanian context, the work and family dichotomy are filled with many contradictions for women that provoke stress (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2015). Tanzanian women have certain expected roles to play. They are expected to bear and nurture children, as well as manage the home. Cultural expectations binding women to family responsibilities are a huge challenge for academic women. While feeling deeply conflicted about leaving children behind to pursue their careers, women comply with policies that accurately do not value their sacrifices. The assumption that women with young children are not on a fast-track prevents women from reaching leadership positions. However, balancing family responsibilities and work is found to be one of the most challenging obstacles for women aspiring to become leaders. At the same time, today's Tanzanian woman is expected to earn a living and contribute to the running of society (Kamwaga, 2020).

However, if it happens that women win and access leadership positions, discrimination and stereotyping are inevitable. This is largely because of society's attitude towards appropriate male and female roles. For a long time, society has been considering men more as task-oriented leaders than women, who are perceived more as social leaders than men. Because of the demands of leadership positions, it became a socially accepted tendency for men to assume leadership because their task-oriented style was more accepted in Tanzania.

The deep-rooted gender inequalities and societies' attitudes towards implementation of equal rights have caused women to be less persecuted for seeking an executive position, therefore, compromise women's involvement in governance. For example, in the 2020 election, only thirteen women were able to become members of parliament through direct election from the constituencies. In order for women to obtain top jobs in politics they have to

come from a more privileged social background than men. In addition, the difference in career paths between male and female leaders, is that men are being recruited for a wider spectrum of jobs than women. Although on the one hand there is significant transformation of society's attitudes and currently most of the women have been able to come into power, most of them are using the quotas system rather than direct election from the constituencies. This is what it was referred by Mikell (1997) to contemporary African women as walking a political / gender tightrope, but it is also a leadership and gender tightrope (Mikell, 1997). This is to say that women face direct consequences on traditional and customary as are perpetuated as minors and inferior beings to men. Compared to men, women receive little or no encouragement to seek leadership positions.

Conclusion

In the governance sphere, access to high positions between men and women continues to be manifestly unequal. Remarkably, apart from being in Constitutions, laws and/or policies of Tanzania, there is still much room for discrimination. The powers are still based on a patriarchal model that originates and reproduces the subordination, oppression and/or exploitation of women by men. Women's voices are not heard equally, nor do they have the same opportunities to influence decision-making. More importantly, it has been seen that in recent years, women in Tanzania have recorded gains or have made progress in the field of participation in governance and public life. To be sure, an increasing number of women has been elected to electable bodies, and some have been appointed into high political and other managerial offices. In the present years, it will be incorrect that Tanzanian women have achieved equality with men in the field of participation in life and governance. The truth is that while women in Tanzania have made significant progress, the fact remains that most Tanzanian women are excluded from governance.

More importantly is an example from higher learning institutions in Tanzania; one will support the argument that women are excluded in a leadership position and this calls that something needs to be done to increase women's representation in the management and administration arena.

In summary, it can be concluded that although Tanzanian women have made some progress in recent years in education, the field of participation in public life and governance is not yet complete. As mentioned above, there are certainly still many miles to go before gender equality in governance can be achieved in Tanzania. As has been seen, there is an enormous international, regional instrument which Tanzania has ratified and some were domesticated

into a national law, which seems good on paper; however, all these have remained largely a paper tiger.

To realise the goal of gender parity in governance, it is suggested that the pertinent legal instruments should be implemented with greater fortitude and vigour. It is high time to discard the prejudices against women under the guise of culture. Thus, humanity, in general, should realise that gender is no more a valid reason for discrimination than race, creed or religion. There has been an increase of capacity-building to women to enable them to take part in governance but also laws and policies should recognise the role of women attaining transformative governance in Tanzania in particular and Africa in general and enhance their full participation. Mechanisms should be set to implement the policies and laws in place to advance women's participation. All the above discussed challenges have to be overcome if full and equal political and governance participation of men and women is to be achieved in Tanzania.

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Chapter 34

Women in Leadership: Envisaging the Role of Women Leaders on Digital Inclusion for African Women

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Abstract

Statistics have revealed substantial growth in some African countries on women's parliamentary representation. Today, Africa represents one of the global leaders in this rank. This is a progressive and impressive stride on gender political empowerment in Africa. However, despite this progress, women and girls still belong to the marginalised and disadvantaged groups in Africa, with the selected few being liberated. Hence, there is a concern about the gender gap on digital inclusion on the continent. Drawing on existing literature, the study investigates how Africa's women leaders and diplomacy relates to other global players. It further examines international players' strategies to embrace global women's empowerment campaigns on digital inclusion, leadership, and governance. And lastly, present the lessons learned from the US, one of the international players on factors that influence trends, perspectives, and attitudes towards women's empowerment. The study suggests three countries' case studies in Africa (South Africa, Rwanda, and Nigeria) relating the countries with the US's case study. The aim is to present the challenges, opportunities, and constraints addressing gender equity within the public diplomacy sector. The findings pose significant policy directions in that each economy should ensure sustainable gender representation in diplomacy and proffer shared approaches that may be useful for the struggling economies in Africa.

Keywords: Africa, African Women Diplomatic Forum, Digital Inclusion, Women in Diplomacy

Introduction

Globalisation has led to general debates on women's empowerment and inequality in technology, government, science, amongst many institutional sectors. However, even though some have recorded progress, there is still a massive gap for women in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Significantly, the current global pandemic, coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), has revealed the persisting gender gap in technology and digitalisation.

Women's parliamentary representation has grown worldwide; aside from the landmark made by developed economies, Africa has interestingly made giant strides on women's representation as Rwanda took the global lead in 2019 with a percentage of 62%. The United Nations attest to 143 countries successfully imbibing gender equality and women's empowerment into their legislation. This led to the UN commission on women's status, emphasising the importance of empowering women and girls for full equal participation and leadership in the economy to promote sustainable development. To achieve this, diplomacy is recognised as one of the essential keys of governance to strengthen, promote, and protect the national interest, fortifying relations with other states. Many pieces of literature have been written on diplomacy and international politics as a discipline, but minor works on women in diplomacy's participation and successes on international diplomacy, foreign policy, and digital policies in the country.

The study explored a qualitative research study focusing on the African Women Diplomatic Forum (AWDF) role with their governments on gender digital inclusion. The forum aims to unify all-female diplomats for moral, social, and professional support and work with different stakeholders to promote gender-emancipated programmes in diplomatic service. In addition, the forum encourages partnerships and collaborations with African institutions relating to several issues on gender-emancipated programmes. All the countries fall within the African Women Diplomatic Forum.

The chapter intends to present women's diplomacy's role in ensuring gender digital inclusion within the public service and unravel the progress made. The report further conducted a comparative study between the US and three African countries (Rwanda, Nigeria, and South Africa), presenting the instruments and interventions used in addressing gender equality. The choice of countries is based on their unique association to the Women in Diplomacy Forum, which has a head office based in Canada. Attaining gender equality and women's empowerment has become a political and economic imperative needed for sustainable development.

Women leaders - diplomacy

Enforcing gender inclusion in diplomacy and mandating equal representation has become an innovative, fresh debate perspective amongst scholars. In addition, globalisation has evoked several interests in female diplomats and their roles in advancing digitalisation for their economies. Women's exclusion as a global trend has led to power structures reinforcing gender inequalities and establishing policies against discriminatory practices in several fields. Today, women in diplomacy's roles range from international relations on human rights, health, peace and security, education, science and technology and currently embraced digitalisation because of the global pandemic, coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Rwanda is an exemplary African state that made national directives before 1994 to allow women to be ranked and be representatives of the country's diplomatic force. Despite the increase in women's representation in political decision-making on all structural levels (international, continental, and national), UN (United Nations) Women still predicts that gender equality will only be achieved in another 130 years (UN, 2021). As of 2021, only 21% of government ministers globally are women, and to date, only 14 countries out of the global 195 nations have 50% or more women representatives in parliament. As a result, the context of gender equality continues to be an essential debate for women's inclusion. Women must be incorporated into critical political institutions, and their participation as leaders in global governance cannot be understated. Mlambo et al. (2019) argue that promoting equal participation in political decision-making facilitates a true reflection of the societal system and enhances the legitimacy of the political processes democratically and responsively. Women diplomats are mandatory for full participation in global governance as representatives of foreign service officials' heads of multilateral institutions (International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Health Organization (WHO), amongst others). Their duties are to promote the transformation of critical policies on gender emancipation and direct the affairs of states and institutions in the successful implementation of global governance. Another argument is that women's total representation in diplomacy reforms the male-dominated nature of international relations (Townes et al., 2020). Most importantly, with the historic shift in global digitalisation, it is paramount for women in global affairs to guarantee that adequate policies ensure digital inclusion for women and girls in all sectors of the economy.

The digital age has identified the considerable gender gap in digital inclusion in most African states. This chapter presents women's diplomacy role in ensuring gender digital inclusion within the public service and

unravels the progress made so far. This was a comparative study to compare three African countries and the US's women diplomats.

Part of the arguments made on women diplomats' constraints was that most female ambassadors are usually posted to economically insignificant duty stations in South Asia and other parts of Africa. In contrast, male ambassadors are deployed for key global political posts such as Beijing, New York, Addis Ababa, France, London, Vienna, and Brussels, to mention a few. As a result, most women feel unappreciated and excluded from significant economic diplomacy policies.

The IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union) (2021) submitted reports on a critical interview with women diplomats suggesting that women are often appointed to be deputies under male ambassadors' key duty stations for administrative work, supporting the men's several economic engagements. As a result, the African Union (AU) has initiated campaigns, strategies, and policies to include women leaders within the AU system and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). This initiative is also imbibed in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) 2018 to 2028. Since diplomatic appointments are made by presidents of each country based on their perceptions of their allegiance to the leader in question, most often, male heads are seen as better suitors for such positions. However, as mentioned above, women cannot be excluded from participating as global drivers.

Rwanda, regarded as one of the highest population densities in Africa, is located in East Africa with 13.78 million people. The history of genocide against the Tutsi in 1994 shattered the economy, leaving most women readjusting as heads of households and collaborating on economic recovery. As a result, the country recognised women as prominent leaders in economic recovery and development. This has become the most significant landmark in the country. Women were transformed from being mere victims of war to leading actors of economic recovery. Scholars have argued that Rwanda's success on gender equality and women's empowerment could be attributed to the strong political will present at the highest leadership level. The result made Rwanda to be ranked number 1 globally for female representation in parliament. The country has a 30% minimum quota for female representation in key decision-making stratum, has 64% women in parliament, 40% in the cabinet, 50% in provincial mayoral seats and the judiciary, 43.6% in the district advisory councils, and 32.2% of women in diplomacy.

South Africa, like Rwanda, has a more significant percentage of women population with a percentage rate of 51.3% women. After the colonial era, several policies have been implemented to address racial equalities, gender

inequalities and women's rights. Women's rights and gender empowerment were enshrined into the South African Constitution.

The Women Matter Africa report in 2016 attests that Africa has more women in parliament and cabinet globally. This notion was affirmed by Chidera et al.'s (2020) information on women in diplomacy, highlighting the results that Rwanda ranks first globally on women's representation in parliament. The credit for this growth may be attributed to targets set for a female model initiated by regional parliaments and political parties in the different countries. Table 55 summarises the countries' case studies used in this study.

Table 55: Women in National Parliaments. Statistical Archive

Global Rank	Country	Seats	Number of Women in Diplomacy	Percentage of Women
1	Rwanda	80 – Lower or Single House 26 – Upper House or Senate	49 – Lower House or Senate 10 – Upper House or Senate	61.3% – Lower House or Senate 38.5% – Upper House or Senate
10	South Africa	393 – Lower House or Senate 54 – Upper House or Senate	168 – Lower House or Senate 19 – Upper House or Senate	42.7% – Lower House or Senate 35.2% – Upper House or Senate
180	Nigeria	359 – Lower House or Senate 109 – Upper House or Senate	20 – Lower House or Senate 7 – Upper House or Senate	5.6% – Lower House or Senate 6.4% – Upper House or Senate
77	USA	433 – Lower House or Senate 100 – Upper House or Senate	102 – Lower House or Senate 25 – Upper House or Senate	23.6% – Lower House or Senate 25.0% – Upper House or Senate

Source: Adapted from the IPU (2019b): *Women in National Parliaments*. Statistical Archive.

From Table 55, Rwanda tops the ranks, followed in 10th place by South Africa; the US was ranked 77th and Nigeria was the last African country on the list. The result shows that gender parity is a global issue, and even the developed economies can learn from the developing world on ensuring gender equity. However, despite being the most populous country on the continent, Nigeria still has low women's representation in parliament and diplomacy. Irrespective of the increase in women in parliament or diplomacy, the gender digital divide – the gap between those who have access to technology, the Internet and digital literacy training and those who do not – is a different story angle. The gender gap in African states is too prominent and reflects several challenges in need of urgent policy redress.

Women's under-representation as a leading factor for digital divide

The gender digital divide is a concept that represents women's inequality and inaccessibility to digital technologies such as smartphones, computers, and the Internet. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) report attests that men remain 21% more likely to be online than women, amounting to a 52% gender gap in the world's least-developed countries. In addition, women have often been confined and discouraged from accessing full Internet support because of online violence, trolling and cyber-bullying (ITU, 2020).

Digital access has become an essential context in the global economy because of the present COVID-19 pandemic. All states, institutions and stakeholders have collaborated to ensure that policies and initiatives are set in place for digital accessibility, especially during the lockdown period in 2020. However, the gender digital divide was prominent in most African countries, predominantly rural areas, despite all these efforts. For example, in Nigeria, the report presented by Digital 2021: Nigeria report (Kemp & Childers, 2021) highlighted more than 108.75 million Internet users (50.01%) in a populated country of 208.8 million. The percentage is expected to grow to at least 143.26 million users by 2026 as the world translates into the digital age. In addition, the Internet penetration in Nigeria reached 51.44% of the population and is set to increase to 59.92% in 2026. In terms of mobile Internet users, Nigeria has 187.9 million (90%) of its population owning mobile phones but there are only 102 million mobile Internet users in Nigeria. Nigeria is popular with the wide mobile phone Internet usage and described as a 'mobile-first market' where online tools and usage development went straight to mobile Internet usage via the inexpensive smartphones rather than the regular wide-ranging desktop and PC adoption. Nigeria was ranked top of the list of countries with mobile tariffs and ranked 26th out of the 65 global markets for Internet freedom. The government also occupies the 4th position of Internet freedom in Africa; however, it still has strong libel laws confining citizens from fully expressing their freedom. The social media scarcity in Nigeria is 15.8%, amounting to 33 million people. Even though the number of people in Nigeria using social media increased to 22% early this year, the average social media user in West Africa still stands at 16% of the population in the continent. Table 56 presents the total population, Internet, and mobile users in each country's case study.

Table 56: Percentage of Population, Internet Users and Mobile Users.

Country	Population	Female Population	Male Population	Internet Users	Mobile Users
US	332 million	50.5%	49.5%	90%	108%
Rwanda	13.11 million	50.8%	49.2%	31.4%	73.9%
Nigeria	208.8 million	49.3%	50.7%	50%	90%
South Africa	59.67 million	50.7%	49.3%	64%	168.5%

Source – Author's composition. Adapted from Kemp (2021).

The findings portray the data from the case studies in the paper. The US, as a developed economy, despite having a considerable population, has successfully initiated digital access to its people. The total figure for Internet users in the US is 90%, and mobile users are 108%. South Africa ranks first of the African countries, from the table presented; as per the Digital 2021: South Africa report, 64% of the population are Internet users and 168% mobile users. Aside from being the most populous country on the continent, Nigeria only has 50% of its population with digital access. Rwanda is yet to reach an average percentage of 50%. Despite the success of gender parity, only 31.4% of Rwanda's population has digital access and 73.3% are mobile users. As Table 56 presents, the gender gap for Internet users was too broad as men had a higher percentage than women.

Many factors have been highlighted as challenges confining gender access. The first challenge is the poverty rate that limits the poor and the marginalised from owning mobile phones and purchasing mobile data. These are critical issues emerging in African countries. Secondly, Africa lacks sufficient data on gender inclusion, making it difficult to ascertain the full extent of the gender digital divide in Africa. Statistics have reflected that African women are 14% less likely to own mobile phones and 34% less likely to own smartphones that can connect to the Internet. Internet accessibility is essential across all sectors and individual life. For instance, many people rely on the Internet to access government, health, and education services. When Internet access becomes indispensable to everyday life, individuals without access are isolated socially, economically, and politically (Turianskyi, 2020).

Furthermore, the under-representation of women in critical decision-making on policies affecting women's digital access are also vital issues promoting the digital divide. Women continue to be absent key players on policies affecting gender emancipation issues which affect most African economies. Figure 22 presents the gender digital divide.

GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE

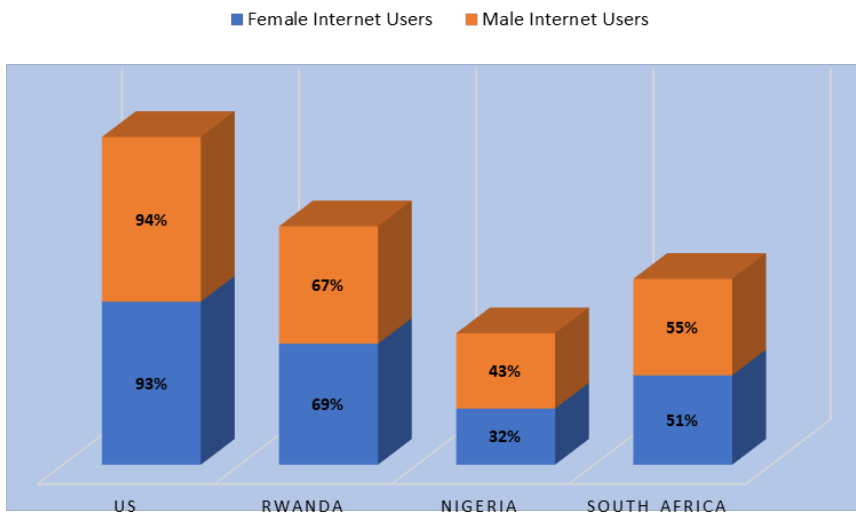


Figure 23: Gender Digital Divide. Source: Adopted from Lardies et al. (2019).

Figure 23 shows a substantial digital gap between African countries and developed economies. The US has implemented adequate measures for digital inclusion in the country. Rwanda tops the list on the gender digital divide, and the government has 67% active male Internet users and 69% active female Internet users out of the 31.4% Internet populace in the country. South Africa ranks second on the African case studies on 55% male active Internet users and 69% active female Internet users from the 64% populace who are active Internet users. Nigeria ranks in the last position, with 43% active male Internet users and 32% active female Internet users from the 50% populace who have access to the Internet. The analysis projects a redress on digital inclusion policies for easy access to all African states and societies. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to plague the economy. Most African countries struggle to adjust to this significant digital age where access to all sectors and walks of life depend on digitalisation.

Discussion

In the case of the US, gender equality and the advancement of women and girls are the core foundation on which the country's three pillars of foreign policy rests - diplomacy, development, and defence (ITU, 2021). The three pillars are embedded in the 'President's National Security Strategy', 'the Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development', and the '2010 and

2015 US Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Reviews (QDDR)' (ITU, 2021). The US has always been top-notch on technology and innovation. The Office of Women's Issues (2017) stated that 21st-century diplomacy depends on "science, innovative technology, and access to an open, interoperable, consistent and reliable Internet." However, the gender digital divide in the US also threatens social, political, and economic progress. The US has successfully achieved gender parity on digital inclusion, as presented in Figure 23. Enforcing gender equality and women's empowerment are essential tools for a democratic society and building resilience. Gender parity also supports an open and accountable government that fosters regional and international peace and security and aims to end extreme poverty. In addition, it addresses gender equality, and women's empowerment initiatives assist in growing a vibrant economy which also addresses educational and healthcare systems within society (ITU, 2021). While the African continent has recently started addressing digital inclusion because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the US has been intensifying its efforts to facilitate digital inclusion since 2000. The former US Secretary of Commerce, Norman Mineta, stated that:

"No more talk about the 'digital divide'; I want us to start talking about how we can go from a digital divide to digital Inclusion" (Rohde, 2000).

The report submitted in 2000 in the US tagged a theme on 'Towards a Digital Inclusion'. Twenty-two years down the line, significant progress has been made to bring more and more citizens into the new digital economy. In addition, the country has tried to include the black Americans and the Hispanics, who initially had a digital gap to access data. The objective for digital inclusion was to create economic and social progress for all Americans as the Internet becomes the key for learning and communication. As reflected in Figure 23, this is an objective that has reached almost the top global rank with 94% men included and 93% women included for digital access.

Rwanda is dedicated to building an inclusive digital economy like its American counterpart. This objective serves as a core economic development for the Rwandan government. Accordingly, the country has encouraged and facilitated initiatives that promote rapid digital transformation and has embraced the digital economy as a force for accelerated growth, effective service delivery, and providing further work opportunities for Rwandans, especially the younger populace.

The COVID-19 pandemic has fast-tracked the necessity for digitisation. As a result, the government has sought alliances with several partners to keep up with the global trends. Paula Ingabire, the Rwandan Minister of ICT and Innovation, in a current interview, stated that:

“Data-driven policymaking is fundamental to our digital transformation journey”, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve seen digital payments grow more than tenfold. It’s these gains that we want to build on and unlock further growth and adoption of digital payments”.

The minister stated that the government would require mobile data insights that will initiate cashless policy outcomes to achieve this. The needed mobile data insights would also unlock barriers and proffer solutions to adopting digital payment channels, tracking digital responses and their impact on the proposed interventions that drive the cashless agenda.

This was affirmed by Rica Rwigamba, Ghana Country Head at the Mastercard Foundation, in an interview given with digital leapfrogging in Africa:

“Unlocking significant, long-lasting efficiencies in financial inclusion and productivity for young men and women will help to increase their access to employment opportunities and entrepreneurship. Therefore, we must support the sustainability of that transition as well as other innovative interventions in the digital space”.

In an interview with Doubell Chamberlain, Managing Director and Founder of Cenfri, an organisation that partnered with 71point4 (a South African-based industry working with Rwandan agencies on mobile data and policy insights), an interview was given with digital leapfrogging in Africa, also stated that:

“We are excited to be embarking on this journey to leverage [mobile] data to build towards a flourishing and inclusive digital economy. Over the last five years, our work in Rwanda as part of the insight2impact (i2i) programme highlighted the power of [mobile] data to advance financial-sector development and improve economic and financial inclusion. This partnership presents an opportunity to build on our learnings and achieve real impact together over the coming years,” said Doubell Chamberlain, Managing Director and Founder of Cenfri.

The initiative between Cenfri and 71point4 aims to support the Rwandan government in realising its vision through a three-pronged approach: the first intends to make mobile data and trend analysis easily accessible. The second wants to keep several applications of mobile data to policy actions. The last strategy encourages the public sector to utilise data-driven approaches. Finally, the programme aims to provide accessible mobile data to local entrepreneurs and start-ups to facilitate new business strategic ideas.

Small-medium entrepreneurs require mobile data to access information for innovation limited within Rwanda entrepreneurs' public domain; hence the initiative aims to address this. Furthermore, the affiliation intends to address other sectors in Rwanda's economy, such as the agricultural and trade sectors, amongst many. The project will work closely with other regulatory bodies such as the National Bank of Rwanda and the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority to facilitate easy mobile data access to achieve a cashless national economy.

All the initiatives mentioned above collaborated with Ambassador Valentine Rugwabiza's statement, which she said in an interview with the Africa Review in the UN, New York. According to her, "women inclusion ranks above all other priorities, concerns, and perspectives", for her:

"Inclusion must be from inception on government initiatives and programs. Gender equality and women empowerment continue to be important issues in achieving gender inclusion. For example, Rwanda has consistently remained amongst the 'HeForShe' campaign (a UN campaign on gender equality). Also, Rwanda, co-chaired with the Permanent Representative of Qatar, a program on "Group of Friends on Gender Parity", brought together more than 150 countries on gender emancipating issues. My aim as a diplomat is to ensure that gender parity is limited to the UN Secretariat senior-level positions and cut across all sectors, especially the middle management levels, for proper integration and equity.

The ambassador also made a notion on the context of digital inclusion; according to her:

"Rwanda is often referred to as the 'digital country' of which digital inclusion continues to be a priority within the country".

The country has strived to ensure that policies and strategies promote digital inclusion for all in society. Hence 'inclusion', 'sustainability', and 'resilience' are the main issues for sustainable development (Musau, 2021).

For its part, Nigeria's women diplomats and women leaders have also strived to suggest and influence policies that promote digital inclusion. In collaboration with the Minister of Communication and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Pantami, the leaders established four new economy projects across each province to promote digital inclusion in the country. The four new projects include: the National Policy on Virtual Engagements in the Federal Public Institutions; Emergency Communication Centre, Akure, Ondo State; the Digital Economy Centre, Federal University Gashua, Yobe State; the Digital Economy Centre, Delta State University Abraka, Delta State; and

the Digital Economy Centre, Government Secondary School, Rigasa (main) Kaduna State.

The minister affirms that these projects, which ranked 10th in its batch, were commissioned to accelerate its digital economy. According to him:

“The projects are outcomes of a carefully thought-out and executed plan which is efficient for promoting the sustainable growth of the digital economy.”

The aim is to ensure the rapid development of Nigeria’s digital economy towards a digital Nigeria. The projects fall in line with Nigeria’s Constitution and the Federal Government’s key objectives: improving security, reducing corruption, and expanding the economy.

According to the minister, the National Policy for Virtual Engagements in the Federal Public Institutions, developed in collaboration with the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation and approved by the Federal Executive Council, aims to make provisions for the significant transition from physical meetings to online meetings, the sequel to the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in the public service rules.

The National Policy for Virtual Engagements in Federal Public Institutions was developed to institutionalise frameworks and standards within ministries, departments and agencies of government as well as government-owned companies using virtual engagement as an administrative procedure in service.

“The effective implementation will tremendously improve service delivery and reduce the cost of governance as overhead cost elements such as avoidable local and foreign tour/travel for training and capacity building meetings will be reduced. It will also cut down expenditure on hosting and servicing of meetings,” he said.

He further called on all government heads, stakeholders, and citizenry to familiarise themselves with the policy’s provisions and ensure full compliance. In an interview at the NITDA’s Digital Economy Centre (DEC), The minister further emphasised that:

“The four projects are all solar-powered IT centres equipped with computers, Internet access and tools aimed at enhancing skills development, bridging the digital divide and promoting innovative digital solutions that would address challenges facing the country, adding it supports economic

growth by ensuring digital inclusion for the underserved/unserved communities and supports capacity-building efforts” (Isaac, 2021).

According to him, the emergency communications centre (ECC) arranged by the Nigerian Communications Commission aims to ensure an effective emergency response that caters for the needs of the people and attaining the Departments’ objectives to establish at least one ECC in each state of the federation, including the FCT Abuja (Isaac, 2021). The ITU report (2021) affirms that women represent the more minor part of the population accessing digitalisation. Factors such as lack of education, gender biases and socio-cultural norms, lack of technical skills in the ICT (information and communication technology) sector and unaffordability has plagued and hindered many women from being included. And, as highlighted in Figure 23, women diplomats and women in parliament are limited in Nigeria’s legislative framework, making it difficult for women leaders to be involved in strategic decisions affecting women within the country. In addition, women are still confined because of the patriarchal belief that women should be involved in household issues rather than socio-economic issues. However, Nigerian women global icon leaders such as Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Director of the World Trade Organization) have shown the right path that women can be achievers and be successful both at home and in any career. Women in the rural regions of Nigeria, as against the urban dwellers, are highly disadvantaged in terms of access to digitalisation. This assertion supports the reports given by USAID (2013), which highlighted the notion that Internet usage in an urban settlement is higher with good network coverage and service quality, which is readily affordable by urban dwellers since there is higher income and education.

In South Africa, the women leaders, in collaboration with President Cyril Ramaphosa, have strived to influence and adopt strategies that facilitate the country’s digital policies readiness, yet the digital divide persists. The spokesperson from the Department of Women, Youth and Disabilities (2020) stated that:

“The South African government is ready to take a tremendous quantum leap into the future, and in so doing, to ensure that technological advances benefit all citizens and not just the selected few in the society”.

The country aims to have advanced technological innovation that supports the growth and development of the economy. To achieve this, President Cyril Ramaphosa set up a presidential commission of digital stakeholders to provide the government with an integrated national response strategy and

continuous reports which addresses the Fourth Industrial Revolution in all economic structures (Ramaphosa, 2020).

In addition, the South African government intends to establish initiatives that advance the scientific and technological sector in the country. The President stated that the government is ready:

“to ensure that citizens are mentally conscious of technological change. The primary aim is to develop a technological innovation system that revolutionises all sectors of the economy, including the manufacturing and industrial processes. Adopting the right specialised approach will advance science, technology, and innovation and provide more strategies to provide food, water, and security for humanity’s sustainable growth and survival” (Ramaphosa, 2020).

Lessons from the US on digital inclusion

According to the NTIA in the US, digital inclusion represents a social programme allowing people accessibility to ICT, computing, and information technology, an essential economic imperative in all communities. Great cities can only be robust if they provide digitalisation, innovation, and a streamlined supply chain that enables opportunities for its populace and industries or organisations. Most importantly, investment in technology broadband planning has increased several benefits in the educational, healthcare, agriculture, transportation sectors, and individual life quality.

The US NTIA is mandated to oversee the policy and economic initiatives at the federal, state, and local levels. The office further conducts structure planning, programme integration, library modernisation and performance measurement. The primary aim is to streamline regulation and create incentives for broadband infrastructure investment. In addition, the office implemented five key trends driving broadband access and digital inclusion in the United States:

- Planning Initiatives for Digital Inclusion – All states and several coalitions within the country collaborated to create city-wide, regional, and state-wide broadband, including planning programmes on digital inclusion. Examples are Chicago and Philadelphia cities that merged to form city-wide digital inclusion coalitions. As a result, almost every city, town, and state engage with this vision. Furthermore, the Kansas City Coalition for Digital Inclusion has established initiatives to ensure that each household in the metropolitan region has access to the Internet, have the resources or equipment needed to access the Internet and possesses the skills required to access the Internet. Charlotte (North

Carolina) further developed a Digital Inclusion Playbook that shares actionable strategies which improve digital access and skills. The NTIA's role is to work with different states and communities on several digital inclusion planning strategies and aids.

- The second initiative was the issue of programme integration. The NTIA, together with Federal agencies realises the importance of merging broadband access and digital literacy to achieve digital inclusion. As a result, the federal agencies include broadband and digital inclusion as eligible expenses in government programmes and funding streams. In addition, several state initiatives were implemented to help residents connect and access Internet facilities. For example, Charlotte made an inclusive digital alliance that allows the city, county, public schools systems, libraries and other non-profit organisations to decrease the gender digital divide from 19% to 9% by 2026. They intend to achieve this through technology, digital literacy and providing an opportunity for the residents.
- The third initiative was Library Modernisation – The United States has successfully invested in establishing a robust network of libraries. The country has 9,000 public libraries with 17,000 library outlets, enough for almost one in every community, which offers free computer access and digital literacy training for the community members. The libraries further provide 3D printing and Wi-Fi hotspots, allowing patrons to connect to the Internet using wireless services. The lesson learnt from US libraries is that libraries are community hubs for digital access, research, and content creation.
- The fourth initiative is Performance Measurement – The NTIA also initiated measuring programme performance through data collection and research. This is performed by conducting surveys on geography and income for Internet accessibility. In addition, US states and localities continue to plan and complete new surveys to map the broadband adoption state-wide for planning state broadband.
- The fifth initiative is Leveraging of Assets – Despite the country initiating broadband-based Internet to most regions and states, some rural states still lack access to broadband service. However, the US Government has intensified efforts to bridge the broadband gap. For example, the government issued an executive order to allocate federal infrastructure supporting rural broadband deployment. In addition, the state and local governments have collaborated to streamline permits, leverage assets and build effective partnerships with stakeholders and telecommunications companies.

The US approach highlights an essential strategy for African countries. To close the digital divide and facilitate digital inclusion, objectives and plans should be well articulated, with influential professionals and total funding to accelerate access. Embracing this approach enables communities to initiate and attract the necessary expertise for sharing, learning, and integrating digital aid programmes at all structural levels (local, regional, and state levels). Local libraries, community-based centres, and educational institutions serve as digital expertise and access hubs. Many communities use performance measurement and data collection to evaluate their effectiveness and Internet service delivery to the localities. The last point is that most communities take advantage of the regional and federal assets to attract broadband infrastructure investment.

Conclusion

Gender digital exclusion persists in Africa. Even though women in diplomacy and women leaders have initiated different efforts and strategies to influence gender digital parity, the gender digital divide remains problematic. In Africa, women in diplomacy act more as mere assistants and mere representatives with no power to implement gender-emancipating decisions or policies. Challenges such as literacy, lack of technical skills, unaffordability, cyberbullying, and socio-cultural norms are constraints causing digital exclusion. Despite the US, (against which the study conducted a comparison) having low women's representation both in diplomacy and parliament, the country has achieved gender parity on digital inclusion. The majority of its population (both male and female) are digitalised. This is an essential lesson for African countries. The study concludes that women's position in diplomacy or parliamentary should not deter any country from catering to its citizenry's needs, especially the female population. The US ensures equal rights for all genders, and no one is discriminated against.

African countries need to reach the stage where patriarchy is set apart, and women's needs are taken into consideration irrespective of how many leaders are involved. Dialogue and collaboration should be placed with local communities to ensure all poor and marginalised women are catered for and assisted. The governments need to implement policy interventions that address gender disparity and enhance safe and affordable digital tools. Advancing digital technologies allows women to earn additional income, increase employment opportunities, and access knowledge and information. Furthermore, schools should encourage more girls to participate in ICT modules and gain more skills, especially encouraging more female models in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

Aside from the younger generation, adult education on Internet access is crucial for the older population who fall behind in the current digital era. In addition, there should be flexible opportunities for adults to upgrade their skills in several institutions, organisations, and government sectors.

Many African countries are following gender equality initiatives and awaiting the policies underway in G20¹ economies, but more needs to be accomplished. African countries need to learn how to coordinate amongst different industries, scale-up, learn from successful and unsuccessful programmes, and build on lessons learned to ensure digital inclusion in their economies. An important notion is that the structural root causes of the gender digital divide should be addressed and redressed to narrow the gender gap. The study concludes that there are limited data on digital inclusion in African countries. Studies comparing the actual figure and issues on the ground are limited. Suitable action will be constrained until enough evidence-based policies, including identified priorities, monitor critical activities. Women in diplomacy and heads of institutions of global governance must intensify their efforts to promote women's inclusion in parliament and cabinet spaces. It is essential to ensure female diplomats are engaged in knowledge production spaces rather than having a mere increased number of women diplomats with no power to influence policies.

In the same vein, developed economies need to set an example for gender parity in government and diplomatic positions. It is not enough to have fewer female figures ascending to positions in international organisations or parliaments whilst men continue to make up most critical players in global politics.

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1 The G20 or Group of 20 is an intergovernmental forum comprising 19 sovereign countries, the European Union, and the African Union. It works to address major issues related to the global economy, such as international financial stability, climate change mitigation and sustainable development

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PART 8

Gender Equality, Governance and Women's Empowerment

Chapter 35

What Drives Entrepreneurship Amongst Female- and Male-Owned Firms in Kenya?

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Introduction

The participation of men and women in domestic trade is critical for widespread income generation in Kenya. The sector has immense potential for job creation, income generation, poverty alleviation, welfare improvement, and contribution to economic growth and development. Article 27(3) of the Constitution of Kenya (Parliament of Kenya, 2010) provides that women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in the economic sphere. Nonetheless, numerous factors disproportionately influence the harnessing of domestic trade opportunities by men and women in the country. The establishment of gender-responsive trade policies is central to the development of an efficient and competitive domestic market that supports domestic trade as envisioned in the Kenya Vision 2030 (Kenya Vision 2030, 2008) and other relevant trade frameworks. The Vision puts emphasis on policies that empower vulnerable groups, such as women, with an aim of unlocking their potential to contribute to the country's development.

Over the past decade, Kenya has embraced policy reforms to support domestic trade,¹ creating incentives for male- and female-owned firms to embrace domestic trade. The 2017 National Trade Policy for instance, aspires to transform Kenya into a competitive and prosperous trading nation that harnesses opportunities in the domestic, regional, and global markets to accelerate the contribution of trade towards the realisation of the Big Four Agenda on Manufacturing, Food and Nutrition Security, Universal

1 See the National Trade Policy, 2017, Integrated National Export Development and Promotion Strategy, 2018, Kenya National AGOA Strategy, 2018, Buy Kenya-Build Kenya Strategy, 2018, and Kenya Trade Remedies Act, 2022.

Health Coverage, and Affordable Housing (Republic of Kenya, 2022b), and Vision 2030.²

In particular, the country's trade policy aims at improving the trade environment with a focus on wholesale, retail, and informal trade (Republic of Kenya, 2017). However, domestic trade's contribution to Kenya's GDP has been shrinking,³ implying a decreasing size of domestic trade today than it was a decade ago. This is partly because of Kenya's policy environment being gender-insensitive. Domestic trade currently contributes an average of 7% to Kenya's GDP, down from 10% between 2003 and 2006, before averaging 10% between 2007 and 2011. The 2012/2013 period saw a high of 20% share before falling below 10% for 2014 to 2019.

The decline in domestic trade activity linked to a multiplicity of factors that include complex licensing and regulatory frameworks, high costs of transportation, insufficient logistics and information, poor technological skills, inaccessibility of affordable credit, inadequate business management skills, weak supply chains, and poor servicing of business premises. Further, disparities in levels of education attainment between men and women inhibit unlocking the full benefits of domestic trade. The majority of female-owned enterprises in East Africa encounter challenges with business regulation, inadequate skills and limited training, and credit inaccessibility. Moreover, female-owned firms hold less than 10% of credit available for trade expansion (UNDP, 2019; World Bank, 2016).

The 2017 National Trade Policy observes that creating an enabling environment for domestic trade to thrive requires addressing challenges on legal and regulatory frameworks, trading structures, access to credit, and access to capacity building opportunities like training (Republic of Kenya, 2017). These factors disproportionately affect the likelihood of women and men to start enterprises, formalise them, and subsequently engage in meaningful domestic trade.

Against this background, we undertook to explain how various factors could be hindering participation in domestic trade by female- and male-owned firms in the country, and to understand how mainstreaming gender in domestic trade policy could incentivise the firms to participate more in economic activity. Particularly, we hypothesise that these factors disproportionately influence the likelihood of participating in domestic trade by female- and male-owned firms in Kenya.

2 Vision 2030 envisages trade as critical in growing the economy and thus creating jobs for Kenyans.

3 See Annexes 2 and 3.

The rest of the chapter is organised as follows: Section 2 presents the context for gendered participation in domestic trade; Section 3 undertakes a review of relevant literature; Section 4 presents the methodology of the study; Section 5 presents findings; Section 6 discusses the findings; Section 7 summarises and concludes the work; and Section 8 presents recommendations.

Context

Domestic trade plays a significant role in job creation and contributes significantly to household livelihoods and resilience. Domestic trade can be categorised as wholesale and retail trade, and is dominated by micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Though the sector contributes to the country's GDP, it still faces numerous challenges, including: multiple charges, fees and levies by both national and county governments, raising the costs of conducting business; inadequate storage facilities for perishable goods; limited access to credit; inadequate spaces for traders; low value addition in production; poor record keeping and stock management; low uptake of digital technologies; and inefficiencies in value chains (KIPPRA, 2019).

The majority of firms in Kenya are owned by men, even though data shows that there are more women than men in the country (KNBS, 2019). Female-owned firms tend to engage in roles that have traditionally been associated with women, namely hairstyling, restaurants, hotels, retail shops and wholesale outlets. According to the 2016 MSMEs Survey (KNBS, 2016), out of 24,164 firms surveyed, 11,932 firms (49.38%) were male-owned, 6,509 firms (26.94%) were female-owned, and 5,723 firms (23.68%) were both male- and female-owned. However, the 1999 National Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) Baseline Survey (KNBS, 2019) shows that female-owned firms accounted for 47.4% of all MSEs in Kenya. This shows that women's participation in domestic trade had considerably declined in the past two decades.

The 2016 MSMEs Survey (KNBS, 2016) showed that male-owned firms had several advantages over female-owned firms, especially on earnings, employment in firms and access to credit. For instance, a male-owned firm earned average monthly revenues of Ksh 200,058 compared to Ksh 41,167 average for female-owned firms. Male-owned firms and female-owned firms earned 2,623% and 948% more in 2016 respectively than they earned in 1999. Male-owned firms were on average 1.3 times larger than female-owned firms in terms of number of employees in 2016. On the other hand, only 6.89% of male-owned and 5.78% of female-owned firms had access to credit in 1999, compared to 25.09% of male-owned firms and 30.97% of

female-owned firms in 2016. This was partly because of women participating more in domestic trade as it is relatively less complex and men participating in relatively more complex economic activities.

Access to, and expenditure on, water and electricity is critical to understanding the divergent performances of male-owned and female-owned firms. The average water expenditure for male-owned firms decreased from Ksh 877 in 1999 to Ksh 459 in 2016, while that for female-owned firms dropped from Ksh 514 in 1999 to Ksh 183 in 2016. On the other hand, electricity expenditure by male-owned and female-owned firms in 1999 was Ksh 2,131 and Ksh 1,863 respectively, compared to Ksh 3,869 and Ksh 448 in 2016. In terms of firm registration, 26.7% of the male-owned firms were formally registered compared to 16.5% of female-owned firms, which are significant improvements since 1999. While an overwhelming share of both male-owned and female-owned firms were members of a trade association in 1999 – 96.97% and 97.3% respectively, the situation changed drastically by 2016 when respective membership stood at 17.6% and 34.4%. Training support for both male-owned and female-owned firms was overwhelming in 1999 – standing at 97.8% and 97.5% respectively, compared to 2.7% and 3.1% respectively in 2016. These observed differentials are explained by a multiplicity of factors that inform the chapter's focus in subsequent sections.

Literature review

This section reviews specific factors that influence participation in domestic trade by female- and male-owned firms in Kenya. They include firm-specific factors (size), regulatory factors (tax regime, licenses, and firm registration status), support factors (credit, water, electricity, trade associations, road status, Internet, mobile money platform, on-job-training, and nature of the trading structure), owner-specific factors; education attainments (whether primary, polytechnic, secondary, college, undergraduate and postgraduate levels), and geographical factors (county regional economic blocs).

Support factors

Networking differences

Networks embody information as a resource that bridges and links firms to available domestic trade opportunities. They are a resource embodied in formal organisations. Membership to trade associations, for instance, provides firms with information on trade opportunities and reforms in government regulatory frameworks. While information is crucial in decision-making for both female- and male-owned firms, it is usually costly to

obtain. Networking has a positive effect on domestic trade participation after controlling for education, age, and firm size (Watson, 2012; Coleman, 1990).

Networking is beneficial to female-owned and male-owned firms participating in domestic trade because the firms gain support, references, and goodwill that consequently promote participation. Trade networks provide market information and advice to female-owned and male-owned firms on where to sell their goods and services. Further, access to competitive trade information is important for firms in making informed decisions that translate to enhanced participation in domestic trade (Sengupta, 2010; Shaw, 2006).

Nature of trading structures

Over 63% of Kenyan MSMEs trade in permanent formal worksites, while 37% trade in semi-permanent or temporary informal premises.⁴ A sizeable number of MSMEs trade in fear and uncertainty of anticipated demolitions. The temporary informal worksites may be explained by the inadequate funding of the Micro and Small Enterprises Act (MSEA), which has a mandate to support the provision of trading structures for MSMEs. The other explanations for the informal worksites include inadequate land for the developing trading structures, the location of formal trading structures far away from popular market centres, and the cost of renting trading premises which make them unaffordable and inaccessible. Further, over 78% of formal firms trade in permanent structures, mainly in rented structures at commercial centres and residential areas. Further, 40.6% of the informal firms trade in open areas compared to 44.1% which trade in either temporary or semi-permanent structures (KIPPRA, 2019; KNBS, 2016).

Physical infrastructure in the form of trading structures is important in supporting domestic trade. If differences exist between female-owned and male-owned firms in accessing trading structures, then participation in domestic trade could be inhibited, with adverse consequences on job creation, poverty reduction and welfare improvement. Unreliability of trading structures is a main concern amongst Kenyan firms owned by women and men as it limits their expansion in terms of domestic trade participation. Long-term strategic planning is also difficult when firms trade in temporary or semi-temporary structures, as risks and uncertainty of participating in domestic trade are high (KIPPRA, 2005).

4 A firm is deemed to be trading formally if it is licensed, and informal if it is not licensed.

Internet, mobile money

Access to mobile money platforms plays an important role in reducing transaction costs and potential risks in economic activities like trade. Mobile money platforms create convenience and enhance efficiency and effectiveness of firm operations. Particularly, access to mobile money platforms enhances domestic trade payments. Differentials in accessing mobile money platforms between female-owned and male-owned firms could thus be a source of disparities in domestic trade participation. Mainstreaming gender in domestic trade policies with a view to minimising disparities in access to mobile money platforms could foster domestic trade participation for improved welfare and development of the country (Jack & Suri, 2014).

Firms' access to the Internet improves market information access, and the coordination of delivering goods and services to the market. The absorption capacity for the Internet also supports performance of firms for improved participation in economic activities, especially domestic trade. The Internet significantly reduces transactions costs, enhances performance and productivity, and the trading efficiency of firms. Differentials in Internet access and absorption between female-owned and male-owned firms are likely to foster disparities in domestic trade participation. Further, firms that have access to the Internet are likely to have better knowledge of requirements for participating in domestic trade and are more likely to make well-informed decisions that enhance participation in domestic trade (Paunov & Rollo, 2015; Zhong et al., 2020).

Access to credit

Female-owned firms are less likely to apply for credit, and less likely to secure credit compared to male-owned firms in the same sector. The gender gap in accessing credit is because of the double standards driven by unconscious discrimination. In Italy, for instance, women pay more for credit than men despite there being no evidence that females are riskier borrowers than males. Particularly, financial institutions charge different rates to women and men after controlling for business type, the structure of the financial market, and the individual characteristics of the borrower (de Andrés et al., 2020; Alesina et al., 2013).

Female-owned firms experience tighter access to credit. The gender of the loaning officer influences access to credit in that female officers are more likely to be risk-averse or less self-confident compared to male officers, thereby constraining access to credit for new and unestablished female borrowers. Female-owned firms are significantly smaller than male-

owned ones over sales, assets, and employment, and are much younger in terms of years in trade. They are more likely to trade as sole proprietorships as opposed to corporations, more likely to be in retail trade and services as opposed to construction, manufacturing, and wholesale trade, and have fewer banking relationships. Female firm-owners are also more likely to be inexperienced and less educated (Bellucci et al., 2010; Cole & Mehran, 2018).

Road status

In Colombia, for instance, transportation infrastructure influences performance of manufacturing firms with output elasticities of road infrastructure ranging between 0.13% to 0.15%. Road status plays an important role in influencing firms' decisions to participate in domestic trade, especially in developing economies. Public expenditure on *core* infrastructure that comprises streets, highways, airports, mass transit, sewers, and reliable water systems, bears the highest explanatory power on productivity of female- and male-owned firms (Barzin et al., 2018; Aschauer, 1989).

Distance between cities, which is a major factor in determining cost of transportation, is a major trade barrier. With an elasticity of up to 0.20%, better roads raise the value of goods and services traded by female- and male-owned firms. Expenditure on road networks by the government reduces transport costs and incentivizes industries to agglomerate (Duranton, 2015; Thompson & Chandra, 2000).

Access to electricity

There are significant time and cost differences associated with electricity connections amongst small, energy-intensive female- and male-owned firms. The connection costs in low-income countries are more than 70 times higher than in high-income countries. The procedures, time, and cost of obtaining electricity connections are correlated with firm income levels as they increase costs incurred by firms thereby eating into profits. Further, the poor quality of supplied electricity connections, and bribery for connections, increase operational costs, eating into firm cash flows (Geginat & Ramalho, 2018).

In countries where regulatory processes are complex and excessively bureaucratic, procedures for electricity connections are so cumbersome that they drive up costs incurred to secure electricity connection. Simpler, less bureaucratic, and less costly connection procedures are associated with better performance of firms with higher electricity needs. Because of increased costs of electricity, own firm power generation in sub-Saharan Africa has risen to 20% of the installed power capacity with a higher concentration amongst

larger firms compared to small ones. Electricity shortages reduce revenues earned by female- and male-owned firms with producer surplus shrinking by 10%. Shrinkage in revenues because of power outages are lower amongst firms with generators compared to firms without generators. Issuance of interruptible retail electricity contracts could reduce the adverse impacts associated with electricity shortages (Foster & Steinbuks, 2009; Allcott et al., 2016).

Owner-specific factors

Human capital

Human capital comprises education, innate capability and skills acquired from training, knowledge, and experience of female-owned and male-owned firms. Firms whose owners have lower stock of human capital are less likely to participate in domestic trade compared to those with higher human capital stock. Higher human capital signifies higher capability, experience, knowledge, and skills. Obtaining the necessary training supports female-owned and male-owned firms with essential abilities and skills that promote making informed managerial, operational, and strategic decisions for enhanced participation in domestic trade. As such, differentials in human capital stock - education attainment, skills acquired from training, knowledge, and experience amongst female-owned and male-owned firms in the country could inform government action to mainstream gender in domestic trade formulation (Unger et al., 2011; Khan & Quaddus, 2018; Shrader & Siegel, 2007; ILO, 2009; Kabukuru & Afande, 2016).

A firm's age in years is an important measure of the firm's experience. Young firms are characterised with high failure rates and exhibit sub-par performance and growth compared to older ones, and as such, they need support to grow to older firms. Inexperience is a contributor to the higher failure rates amongst female-owned and male-owned firms participating in domestic trade. Particularly, young firms are likely to have poor trade networks and are likely to make uninformed management, strategic, and operational decisions compared to older firms (Ouimet & Zarutskie, 2014).

Firm-specific factors

Firm size

Compared to large firms, SMEs are less likely to withstand crises, because of liquidity challenges that constrain participation in domestic trade. Size is a significant factor in explaining firm performance. In part, large firms enjoy

scale economies, have extensive experience from specialisation, and have larger social capital stock than smaller firms. Because of economies of scale, larger firms are likely to have lower costs of engaging in trade compared to smaller firms, a factor that enhances participation in domestic trade (Lawrenz & Oberndorfer, 2018; Raguseo et al., 2020).

Firm size is positively related with ISO 14001 certification (ISO, 2015) and financial performance. Larger firms are more likely to perform better financially compared to smaller firms. Larger firms are also likely to have boards of directors and better governance structures which support making informed decisions on which trade opportunities to invest in for higher fortunes. The size of firm effectively influences the slack-performance relationships that support innovation. Larger firms are more likely to create innovations that support and enhance the likelihood of participating in domestic trade compared to smaller firms (Wang & Zhao, 2020; Raguseo et al., 2020; Medase, 2020).

Regulatory factors

Registration, licenses, and taxes

In Tanzania, high consumption and sales taxes and bureaucracy in business registration constraint the potential of female- and male-owned SMEs to grow. Taxes influence the direction and size of trade flows. Further, higher taxes raise firm production costs, decreasing the volume of goods and services available for trading domestically. Firms leaving informality by obtaining registration report a significant effect of 20% on annual value-added compared to the less significant effect on the smallest firms. Further, registration unlocks access to better trading equipment, expands operation scale, and makes the trading environment more competitive. However, higher registration costs may hinder formalisation of firms and consequently disincentivise domestic trade participation (Mashenene & Rumanyika, 2014; Whalley, 2002; Beck & Chaves, 2011; Demenet et al., 2016).

Governments issue licenses as an indication that firms have met certain requirements to engage in a certain trade activity. They create confidence and trust amongst consumers that goods and services traded by firms are lawful and do not pose adverse health effects. If efficient, licenses could then nudge firms to engage in trade. If licensing is inefficient, such as being too expensive or excessively bureaucratic, then this could deter firms from trading. Licenses influence how traders behave, the economic activity they engage in, and the predictability and transparency of the trading process (Hersoug et al., 2019; Inderberg et al., 2019).

Geographical factors

Economic geography concerns itself with the allocation of factors of production in space and specialisation across regions for a given distribution of productive factors. At the core is spatial allocation of economic activity and how the same could serve as a signal for demand for goods and services in various regions and the resultant improvement of trade activity. There is a connection between geography, location of industries, and concentration of trade activity. Further, there exists immense advantages in specialisation and concentration of economic activities in regions based on economies of scale and returns from trade (Ohlin, 1933; Krugman, 1999).

Specialisation that is driven by differences in factor endowments is further reinforced by the incentive to enjoy benefits of large-scale production. Geographical availability and mobility of productive factors as well as final tradeable goods and services may thus drive interregional domestic trade in Kenya with differing outcomes amongst male- and female-owned firms.

Findings

Table 57 details the results discussed in this section. Only those factors that had significant influence on domestic trade participation were considered. We find that membership to trade associations, road status, access to the Internet, access to electricity, firm size, the county economic blocs, education attainment, gender, tax obligations, licensing obligations, firm registration status, access to credit, access to mobile money, nature of the trading structure, and on-the-job training had significant influence on participation in domestic trade amongst female- and male-owned firms in the country. The results are interpreted as relative risk ratios.

Owner-specific factors

Male-owned firms were 1.91 times more likely to sell goods and services to MSMEs, 4.96 times more likely to sell to non-MSMEs and 832.77 times more likely to sell to the government compared to firms owned by females. This means that male-owned firms are highly likely to sell their goods and services to corporations and the government compared to their female counterparts.

On education, male-owned firms were .81 times less likely to sell their goods and services to MSMEs and .52 times less likely to sell to non-MSMEs if the owners had a primary level of education compared to female-owned firms. This means that if both females and males have a primary level of education attainment, then women have a higher likelihood of engaging in domestic trade compared to men.

Firms owned by males with polytechnic, secondary, and diploma levels of education were .17, .46, and .39 times less likely to sell their goods and services to MSMEs respectively compared to females with the same level of education attainment. For females and males possessing these levels of education attainment, it means that males are highly likely to sell their goods and services to non-MSMEs (corporations) and the government, while firms owned by females are highly likely to sell to MSMEs. In effect, buyers of goods and services from male-owned firms are likely to be large, while buyers for goods and services from firms owned by females are likely to be small.

Firms whose owners were male and had an undergraduate level of education were .48 times less likely to sell to MSMEs, but 1.64 times more likely to sell to non-MSMEs (corporations) compared to those owned by females possessing the same level of education. The implication is that male-owned firms are highly likely to sell to corporations while female-owned firms were highly likely to sell to MSMEs. Lastly, firms whose owners were males and possessed a postgraduate level of education were .29 times less likely to sell their goods and services to MSMEs compared to those owned by females with postgraduate education. This means that males with postgraduate education are highly likely to sell their goods and services to corporations and the government while females with the same level of education are highly likely to sell their goods and services to MSMEs.

Regulatory factors

On tax obligation, male-owned firms were 1.06 and 1.11 times more likely to sell goods and services to non-MSMEs and the government if the firm's monthly tax obligation increased by 1% compared to the amount that they would sell to individual consumers. The implication is that whereas male-owned firms are highly likely to trade with corporations and the government if taxes rose, female-owned firms are highly likely to not trade with corporations and the government. A rise in taxes increases the cost of engaging in trade and in effect, this is more likely to be a constraint to participating in domestic trade amongst female-owned firms than it would be amongst male-owned firms.

On licenses obligation, female-owned firms were 1.84 times more likely to sell goods and services to the government if the monthly obligation on licenses increased by 1% compared to what would be sold to individual consumers. This means that firms owned by women are highly likely to trade with the government if they operate as formal entities with affirmative action to support their operations from the government. In contrast, male-owned firms were 1.12 times more likely and .89 times less likely to sell

goods and services to MSMEs and non-MSMEs respectively if the monthly licenses obligation increased by 1% compared to what would be purchased by individual consumers. The implication is that the licensing burden is highly likely to discourage male-owned firms from trading with corporations and to encourage them to trade with MSMEs.

On firm registration, female-owned firms were 1.89 times more likely to sell goods and services to non-MSMEs if they were registered compared to what would be sold to individual consumers. This means that support to firms owned by women to trade formally is highly likely to enable them to trade with corporations compared to what would happen without the support. Male-owned firms were 2.61 and 14.51 times more likely to sell goods and services to non-MSMEs and the government respectively if they were formerly registered compared to what would be sold to individual consumers. Similarly, firms owned by males are highly likely to trade with corporations and the government if they trade as formal entities.

Support factors

On access to credit, male-owned firms were 2.82 times more likely to sell goods and services to the government if they had access to credit compared to what would be sold to individual consumers. This means that access to credit is important in supporting participation in domestic trade.

On access to mobile money, female-owned firms were .68, .54, and .08 times less likely to sell goods and services to MSMEs, non-MSMEs, and the government respectively if they had access to a mobile money platform compared to what would be sold to individual consumers. In contrast, male-owned firms were .72 times less likely and 2.17 times more likely to sell goods and services to MSMEs and non-MSMEs respectively if they had access to a mobile money platform compared to the amount that would be sold to individual consumers. This means that firms owned by males are highly likely to trade with MSMEs, corporations, and the government if they had access to mobile money platforms compared to those owned by females.

On nature of the trading structure, male-owned firms were 1.35 times more likely and .37 times less likely to sell goods and services to non-MSMEs and the government respectively if they traded in a permanent structure compared to firms owned by females. Overall, the implication is that firms owned by males are highly likely to trade with corporations compared to if they operate in a permanent structure but are less likely to trade with the government compared to their female counterparts. Similarly, male-owned firms were .72 times less likely, 2.17 times more likely, and .28 times less likely to sell goods and services to MSMEs, non-MSMEs, and the government

respectively if they traded in a semi-permanent structure compared to female-owned firms. This means that firms owned by males are highly likely to trade with corporations but less likely to trade with MSMEs and the government if they traded on a semi-permanent structure compared to their female counterparts.

Pertaining to job training, male-owned firms were 0.41 times less likely to sell goods and services to non-MSMEs if employees had undergone on-the-job training compared to their female counterparts. The implication is that on-the-job training is more important amongst female-owned firms compared to those owned by males.

On membership to trade associations, female-owned firms were 1.47 times more likely to sell goods and services to non-MSMEs if they were members of a trade association compared to what they would sell to individual consumers. This means that membership to trade associations would enhance firms owned by females to trade with corporations. Male-owned firms were 1.22 times more likely and .74 times less likely to sell goods and services to MSMEs and non-MSMEs respectively if they had membership with trade associations compared to what would be sold to individual consumers. The implication is that membership to trade associations is highly likely to enable firms owned by males to trade with MSMEs but less likely to support them trade with corporations.

On road status, female-owned firms were 2.08 times more likely to sell goods and services to non-MSMEs if the roads used to transport goods and services were in good condition compared to what would be sold to individual consumers. The implication is that good transport infrastructure is highly likely to support women-owned firms to trade with corporations. On the other hand, male-owned firms were .88 and .60 times less likely to sell goods and services to MSMEs and non-MSMEs if the roads used to transport goods were in good condition compared to what would be sold to individual consumers. This means that if the roads used to transport goods and services are in good condition, then firms owned by males and females are less likely to sell their goods and services to MSMEs and corporations, but highly likely to trade with the government.

On access to the Internet, female-owned firms were 1.08 and 1.32 times more likely to sell goods and services to MSMEs and non-MSMEs if monthly expenditure on Internet increased by 1% compared to what would be sold to individual consumers. Male-owned firms were 1.04, 1.15, and 1.16 times more likely to sell goods and services to MSMEs, non-MSMEs, and the government if the monthly expenditure on Internet increased by 1% compared to what would be purchased by individual consumers. This means that whereas

increased use and utilisation of the Internet is highly likely to enable firms owned by females to trade with MSMEs and corporations, enhanced use of the Internet is highly likely to enhance trading with MSMEs, corporations, and the government amongst male-owned firms.

On access to electricity, female-owned firms were .94 times less likely to sell goods and services to non-MSMEs if the firm's monthly expenditure on electricity increased by 1% compared to what would be sold to individual consumers. Similarly, male-owned firms were .96, .88, and .79 times less likely to sell goods and services to MSMEs, non-MSMEs, and the government respectively if monthly electricity expenditure increased by 1% compared to what would be sold to individual consumers. The implication is that an increase in the cost of electricity is highly likely to discourage firms owned by both females and males from engaging in domestic trade.

Firm-specific factors

Small firms were 2.21 and 1.91 times more likely to sell goods and services to MSMEs, and non-MSMEs respectively if they were owned by males compared to what would be sold by firms owned by females. This means that small firms owned by males are highly likely to trade with MSMEs and non-MSMEs. Similarly, medium-sized firms were 4.24 times more likely to sell goods and services to non-MSMEs if they were owned by males compared to what female-owned firms would sell. This means that medium-sized firms owned by males are highly likely to trade with corporations compared to their female counterparts.

Geographical factors

We find that male-owned firms are 1.92 times more, .57 times less, .43 times less, .35 times less, and 2.73 times more likely to sell goods and services to non-MSMEs if the firms are domiciled in North Rift Economic Bloc, Lake Region Economic Bloc, Narok-Kajiado Economic Bloc, Central Region Economic Bloc, and Frontier Counties Development Council economic blocs respectively compared to firms owned by females. Similarly, we find that male-owned firms from South -Eastern Kenya Economic Bloc are .64 times less likely to sell goods and services to MSMEs compared to those owned by females.

Discussion

Amongst the firm-specific factors, small firms owned by men were more likely to trade with MSMEs and non-MSMEs compared to those owned by women. Further, medium enterprises owned by men were more likely to

trade with non-MSMEs compared to what would happen if they were owned by women.

SMEs are less likely to withstand crises compared to large firms because of liquidity challenges that constrain participation in domestic trade. Firm size is a significant factor in explaining firm performance. Particularly, large firms enjoy economies of scale, have extensive experience from specialisation, and have larger social capital stock than smaller firms. Because of economies of scale, larger firms are likely to have lower costs of engaging in trade compared to smaller firms, a factor that enhances participation in domestic trade. Larger firms are more likely to perform better financially compared to smaller firms. Larger firms are likely to have boards of directors and better governance structures which support making informed decisions on which trade opportunities to invest in for higher returns and are therefore more likely to create innovations that support and enhance the likelihood of participating in domestic trade compared to smaller firms (Lawrenz & Oberndorfer, 2018; Raguseo et al., 2020; Wang & Zhao, 2020).

Amongst the support factors, male-owned firms were more likely to trade with government if they had access to credit. Female-owned firms were found to be more likely to sell goods and services to individual consumers if they had access to mobile money platforms. Male-owned firms were particularly found to be more likely to trade with individual consumers and non-MSMEs if they had access to mobile money platforms. Male-owned firms were more likely to trade with non-MSMEs and the government if they traded in a permanent structure compared to those owned by females.

Female-owned firms are less likely to apply for credit and are less likely to secure credit compared to male-owned firms operating in the same industry. The gender gap in accessing credit is because of double standards driven by unconscious discrimination. In Italy, for example, women pay more for credit than men despite there being no evidence that females are riskier than males. Particularly, financial institutions charge different rates to women and men after controlling for business type, structure of the financial market, and individual characteristics of the borrower. Further, the gender of the loaning officer influences access to credit in that female officers are more likely to be risk-averse or less self-confident compared to male officers. Female loaning officers are more likely to constrain access to credit to new and unestablished female borrowers compared to male loaning officers. As such, female-owned firms experience stiffer credit constraints compared to those owned by males. Female-owned firms are significantly smaller compared to male-owned firms in terms of sales, assets, and employment, are much younger in terms of years in trade, are more likely to trade as sole proprietorships as opposed to corporations, are more likely to operate in

retail trade and services as opposed to construction, manufacturing, and wholesale trade, and have fewer banking relationships (de Andrés et al., 2020; Alesina et al., 2013; Bellucci et al., 2010; Hansen & Rand, 2014; Cole & Mehran, 2018).

In contrast, male-owned firms were more likely to trade with individual consumers, and non-MSMEs if they traded in a **semi-permanent structure**.

Trading in informal worksites is attributable to inadequate land for developing trading structures, the location of formal trading structures far away from popular market centres, and the cost of renting trading premises which make them unaffordable and inaccessible. Physical infrastructure related to trading structures is important in creating an enabling environment that promotes participation in domestic trade (KIPPRA, 2019; KNBS, 2016).

Firms owned by males were more likely to trade with individual consumers if their employees obtained **on-the-job training**.

Training is important in accumulation of human capital. Firms whose owners have lower stock of human capital are less likely to participate in domestic trade compared to those with higher human capital stock. Higher human capital signifies higher capability, experience, knowledge, and skills. Obtaining necessary training supports female-owned and male-owned firms with essential abilities and skills that promote making informed managerial, operational, and strategic decisions for enhanced participation in domestic trade (Unger et al., 2011; Khan & Quaddus, 2018; Shrader & Siegel, 2007; ILO, 2009; Kabukuru & Afande, 2016).

Female-owned firms were more likely to trade with non-MSMEs if they had **membership with trade associations** compared to those owned by men which were both more likely to trade with MSMEs and individual consumers if they had membership with trade associations.

Membership to trade associations provides firms with information on trade opportunities and reforms in government regulatory framework. While information is crucial in decision-making for both female- and male-owned firms, it is usually costly to obtain. Networking has a positive effect on domestic trade participation after controlling for education, age, and firm size. Networking is beneficial to female-owned and male-owned firms participating in domestic trade because the firms gain support, references, and goodwill that consequently promote participation. Trade networks provide market information and advice to female-owned and male-owned firms on where to sell their goods and services. Further, access to competitive trade information is important for firms in making informed decisions that translate to enhanced participation in domestic trade (Sengupta, 2010; Shaw, 2006; Watson, 2011; Coleman, 1990). Those firms owned by women were

more likely to trade with non-MSMEs if the **road** used to transport goods and services was in good status compared to those firms owned by men which were more likely to trade with individual consumers if the road was in good condition.

Transportation infrastructure influences performance of female- and male-owned firms. Road status plays an important role in influencing firms' decisions to participate in domestic trade, especially in developing economies like Kenya. Public expenditure on *core* infrastructure comprising of streets, highways, airports, mass transit, sewers, and reliable water systems, bears the highest explanatory power on productivity of female- and male-owned firms. Distance between cities and markets is a major factor in determining cost of transportation and thus a major barrier to trade. Expenditure on road networks reduces transport costs and incentivizes industries to agglomerate (Duranton, 2015; Thompson & Chandra, 2000; Barzin et al., 2018; Aschauer, 1989).

With access to **Internet connectivity**, female-owned firms were found to be more likely to trade with MSMEs and the government while male owned-firms were more likely to trade with MSMEs, non-MSMEs, and the government. Internet connectivity improves market information access, and the coordination of delivering goods and services to the market amongst female- and male-owned firms. The Internet significantly reduces transaction costs, enhances performance and productivity, and the trading efficiency of firms. Further, firms that have access to the Internet are likely to have better knowledge on requirements for participating in domestic trade and are more likely to make well-informed decisions that enhance participation in domestic trade (Paunov & Rollo, 2015; Zhong et al., 2020).

Female- and male-owned firms were more likely to trade with individual consumers if they had access to electricity.

There are significant time and cost differences associated with electricity connections amongst small, energy-intensive female- and male-owned firms. The procedures, time, and cost of obtaining electricity connections are correlated with firms' income levels as they increase costs incurred by firms, thereby eating into profits. Further, the poor quality of supplied electricity connections, and bribery for connections increase operational costs, eating into firms' cash flows. Cumbersome and bureaucratic regulatory processes and procedures for electricity connections drive up costs incurred to secure electricity connection. Simpler, less bureaucratic, and less costly connection procedures could improve performance of female- and male-owned firms. Electricity shortages reduce revenues earned by female-

and male-owned firms with producer surplus shrinking (Foster & Steinbuks, 2009; Allcott et al., 2016; Geginat & Ramalho, 2018).

Amongst the regulatory factors, the business tax, licensing, and registration regime had a highly disproportionate effect on domestic trade participation amongst firms owned by males and females. Particularly, it is only male-owned firms that were more likely to trade with non-MSMEs and the government if the tax burden increased by one percentage point. In contrast, if the licensing burden increases by one percentage point, female-owned firms were found to be more likely to trade with the government compared to male-owned firms which would be more likely to trade with MSMEs and individual consumers only. Further, female-owned firms were only more likely to trade with non-MSMEs if they were registered, compared to male-owned firms which were more likely to trade with both non-MSMEs and the government when formally registered with the registrar of companies.

High taxes and bureaucracy in business registration are amongst the constraints faced by female- and male-owned firms. Taxes influence the direction and size of trade flows. Higher consumption and sales taxes, for instance, are highly likely to constrain participation in domestic trade than lower taxes. Further, higher taxes raise production costs incurred by firms, decreasing the volume of goods and services available for trading domestically. High tax rates and complex tax regulations are a barrier to formalisation of micro-firms and observe that simplification of tax procedures enhances participation in trade. Female- and male-owned firms leaving informality by obtaining registration report a positive effect on annual value-added. Further, registration unlocks access to better trading equipment, expansion of operation scale, and makes the trading environment more competitive. However, higher registration costs may hinder formalisation of firms and consequently disincentivise domestic trade participation. Licenses influence how traders behave, the economic activity they engage in, and the predictability and transparency of the trading process (Mashene & Rumanika, 2014; Whalley, 2002; Beck & Chaves, 2011; Fajnzylber et al., 2011; Demenet et al., 2016; Inderberg et al., 2019).

Amongst the owner-specific factors, male-owned firms were more likely to sell goods and services to MSMEs, non-MSMEs, and the government compared to those owned by women. Further, firms owned by males with primary, polytechnic, secondary, diploma, and postgraduate education were more likely to sell goods and services to individual consumers compared to those owned by women. Firms owned by males with an undergraduate level of education were more likely to sell goods and services to both non-MSMEs and the government compared to those owned by females.

Education attainment supports accumulation of human capital. Female- and male-owned firms whose owners and managers have lower stock of human capital are less likely to participate in domestic trade compared to those with higher human capital stock. Higher human capital signifies higher capability, experience, knowledge, and skills. Obtaining necessary training supports female-owned and male-owned firms with essential abilities and skills that promote making informed managerial, operational, and strategic decisions for enhanced participation in domestic trade (Unger et al., 2011; Khan & Quaddus, 2018; Shrader & Siegel, 2007; ILO, 2009; Kabukuru & Afande, 2016).

Amongst the geographical factors, the findings indicate that male-owned firms located in the North Rift Economic Bloc (NOREB) and Frontier Counties Development Council (FCDC) are more likely to sell goods and services to non-MSMEs⁵ compared to those owned by females. In contrast, male-owned firms located in the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB), Narok-Kajiado Economic Bloc (NAKAEB), Central Region Economic Bloc (CREB), and South-Eastern Kenya Economic Bloc (SEKEB) are more likely to sell goods and services to individual consumers compared to those owned by women. Spatial endowment of factors of production in space and specialisation across regions not only drives trade activity but also supports agglomeration of industries and firms in certain locations, cities, and markets (Krugman, 1991; Ohlin, 1933).

Summary and conclusions

The chapter finds that owner-specific factors - gender and education, regulatory factors - taxes, licenses, and registration status, support factors - credit, mobile money platforms, trading structure, on-the-job training, membership to trade associations, road status, Internet, and access to electricity, firm-specific factors - size, and county economic blocs significantly influence participation in domestic trade by female- and male-owned firms in Kenya. Overall, the findings support our hypothesis that the examined factors disproportionately influence the likelihood of participating in domestic trade by female- and male-owned firms in Kenya.

Recommendations

1. Evidence supports the significance of the proposed regional county economic blocs. However, the economic blocs are currently not defined by any clear legal and institutional framework. Thus, there is need

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- for Parliament to undertake legislation to accord the blocs legal and institutional status for ease of operationalisation.
2. Evidence indicates that women-owned firms lag those owned by men in domestic trade participation. There is need for the Ministry of Industrialisation, Trade, and Enterprise Development and other relevant ministries to mainstream gender in domestic trade policymaking and implementation with targeted incentives for women-owned firms. The regulatory space is a potential area for reforms to entrench targeted incentives especially in taxation, licensing, and licensing requirements.
 3. There is a need to enforce legal provisions that accord women equal access to land and property as prerequisites to accessing credit. The Ministry of Lands and Physical Planning should fast-track implementation of the Land Laws (Amendment) Act, 2016 with a view to unlocking collateral which is necessary in securing access to credit for enhanced domestic trade participation by female-owned firms in Kenya.
 4. Parliament should review MSEA (2012) to provide incentives to firms within the classification of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) to have membership with the authority. Since the authority is mandated to support and capacity-build MSEs, incentivising membership with the authority could incubate most MSEs to grow in size, gain experience, become more specialised, trade formally by meeting necessary registration requirements, and nurture backward and forward linkages.

Table 57: Multinomial Logistic Regression Results

Variable	MSMEs			NON-MSMES			Government		
	RRR	Robust SE β_i	p-value	RRR	Robust SE β_i	p-value	RRR	Robust SE β_i	p-value
<i>Owner-specific factors</i>									
Gender	1.9112	.6095 (2.03)	0.042**	4.9654	3.1538 (2.52)	0.012*	354.418	832.7665 (2.50)	0.012*
<i>Education #c. Gender</i>									
Primary	.8133	.0931 (-1.81)	0.071***	.5168	.0846 (-4.03)	0.000**	.9624	.5881 (-0.06)	0.950
Polytechnic	.7109	.2263 (-1.07)	0.284	.1743	.1807 (-1.68)	0.092***	2.7151	3.2946 (0.82)	0.410
Secondary	.9251	.0988 (-0.73)	0.466	.4564	.0695 (-5.15)	0.000**	1.4090	.6859 (0.70)	0.481
Diploma	.8811	.1068 (-1.04)	0.296	.3908	.0757 (-4.85)	0.000**	1.6320	.8035 (0.99)	0.320
Undergraduate	.9737	.1351 (-0.19)	0.848	.4781	.1018 (-3.46)	0.001**	3.4609	1.6425 (2.62)	0.009**
Postgraduate	.8342	.1860 (-0.81)	0.416	.2869	.1185 (-3.02)	0.003**	1.6609	1.0778 (0.78)	0.434
<i>Regulatory factors</i>									
Gender #LogTax obligation - females	.9835	.0307 (-0.53)	0.593	.9915	.0733 (-0.11)	0.908	1.0479	.1145 (0.43)	0.669
Gender #LogTax obligation - males	1.0219	.0152 (1.45)	0.146	1.0605	.0260 (2.39)	0.017**	1.1096	.0443 (2.61)	0.009**

Variable	MSMEs			NON-MSMEs			Government		
	RRR	Robust SE β_i	p-value	RRR	Robust SE β_i	p-value	RRR	Robust SE β_i	p-value
Gender #LogLicenses obligation - females	1.0526	.0403 (1.34)	0.180	1.0362	.0901 (0.41)	0.682	1.8377	.4727 (2.37)	0.018**
Gender #LogLicenses obligation - males	1.1159	.0272 (4.51)	0.000**	.8969	.0318 (-3.07)	0.002**	1.0602	.0883 (0.70)	0.483
Firm registration status - females	1.0605	.1387 (0.45)	0.654	1.8971	.4590 (2.65)	0.008**	3.0207	3.1116 (1.07)	0.283
Firm registration status - males	.9023	.0731 (-1.27)	0.204	2.6085	.2777 (9.01)	0.000**	14.5116	6.0068 (6.46)	0.000**
<i>Support factors</i>									
Gender #Access to credit - females	.8949	.0967 (-1.03)	0.304	.9139	.1845 (-0.45)	0.656	2.3538	1.5176 (1.33)	0.184
Gender #Access to credit - males	1.0165	.0777 (0.21)	0.830	.9756	.1556 (-0.16)	0.877	2.8175	.6878 (4.24)	0.000**
Access to mobile money platform - females	.6813	.0707 (-3.70)	0.000**	.5405	.1101 (-3.02)	0.003**	.1256	.0834 (-3.13)	0.002**
Access to mobile money platform - males	.7168	.0495 (-4.82)	0.000**	1.2217	.1343 (1.82)	0.069***	1.0183	.2758 (0.07)	0.947
Firm structure #c. Gender									
Permanent	1.0057	.1511 (0.04)	0.970	3.2699	1.3500 (2.87)	0.004**	.3696	.1466 (-2.51)	0.012**

Variable	MSMEs			NON-MSMES			Government		
	RRR	Robust SE β_i	p-value	RRR	Robust SE β_i	p-value	RRR	Robust SE β_i	p-value
Semi-permanent	.7202	.1140 (-2.07)	0.038**	2.1679	.9082 (1.85)	0.065**	.2766	.1427 (-2.49)	0.013**
Gender #On-job training - females	.8827	.1942 (-0.57)	0.571	.6604	.2757 (-0.99)	0.320	1.2754	1.1726 (0.26)	0.791
Gender #On-job training - males	.9892	.1152 (-0.09)	0.926	.4088	.0927 (-3.94)	0.000**	.5829	.2255 (-1.40)	0.163
Gender #Membership to trade association - females	1.0797	.1059 (0.78)	0.435	1.4709	.2727 (2.08)	0.037**	2.2706	1.6511 (1.13)	0.259
Gender #Membership to trade association - males	1.2229	.0874 (2.82)	0.005**	.7376	.1049 (-2.14)	0.032**	.6474	.2248 (-1.25)	0.211
Gender #Road status - females	1.1482	.1247 (1.27)	0.203	2.0761	.5008 (3.03)	0.002**	1.9989	2.5168 (0.55)	0.582
Gender #Road status - males	.8788	.0636 (-1.79)	0.074***	.6006	.0640 (-4.78)	0.000**	.8701	.2617 (-0.46)	0.644
Gender #LogInternet access - females	1.0808	.0359 (2.34)	0.019**	1.0381	.0687 (0.57)	0.572	1.3237	.1605 (2.31)	0.021**
Gender #Internet access - males	1.0359	.0185 (1.97)	0.049**	1.1509	.0288 (5.61)	0.000**	1.1559	.0595 (2.82)	0.005**
Gender #LogWater - females	1.0111	.0195 (0.57)	0.568	1.0448	.0379 (1.21)	0.227	1.0580	.1664 (0.36)	0.720
Gender #LogWater - males	.9805	.0127 (-1.52)	0.129	.9742	.0234 (-1.09)	0.276	.9901	.0479 (-0.21)	0.837

Variable	MSMEs			NON-MSMEs			Government		
	RRR	Robust SE β_i	p-value	RRR	Robust SE β_i	p-value	RRR	Robust SE β_i	p-value
Gender #Log electricity - females	1.0234	.0198 (1.19)	0.232	.9407	.0331 (-1.74)	0.082***	1.0441	.1375 (0.33)	0.743
Gender # Log electricity - males	.9629	.0130 (-2.78)	0.005**	.8762	.0196 (-5.92)	0.000**	.7984	.0341 (-5.27)	0.000**
<i>Firm-specific factors</i>									
<i>Size #c. Gender</i>									
Small	2.2138	.3982 (4.42)	0.000**	1.9062	.5687 (2.16)	0.031**	1.4305	.6663 (0.77)	0.442
Medium	.8155	.4449 (-0.37)	0.709	4.2447	2.6157 (2.35)	0.019**	1.1124	1.3614 (0.09)	0.931
<i>Other factors</i>									
<i>County Economic Blocs #c. Gender</i>									
NOREB	1.2526	.1915 (1.47)	0.141	1.9196	.4359 (2.87)	0.004**	1.3686	.6134 (0.70)	0.484
LREB	.8286	.1236 (-1.26)	0.208	.5709	.1486 (-2.15)	0.031**	.9694	.4005 (-0.08)	0.940
JKP	1.2227	.1917 (1.28)	0.200	.6560	.1929 (-1.43)	0.152	1.1979	.5126 (0.42)	0.673
NAKEB	1.0055	.2111 (0.03)	0.979	.4347	.1808 (-2.00)	0.045**	.6082	.4656 (-0.65)	0.516
CREB	.7861	.1193 (-1.59)	0.113	.3535	.1026 (-3.58)	0.000**	.5038	.2549 (-1.36)	0.175

Variable	MSMEs				NON-MSMES				Government		
	RRR	Robust SE β_i	p-value	RRR	Robust SE β_i	p-value	RRR	Robust SE β_i	p-value	RRR	p-value
SEKEB	.6423	.1283 (-2.22)	0.027**	.7264	.2424 (-0.96)	0.338	.3846	.4309 (-0.85)	0.394		
FCDC	.8142	.1457 (-1.15)	0.251	2.7288	.5759 (4.76)	0.000**	1.8757	1.1191 (1.05)	0.292		
Constant	.0582	.0116 (-14.27)	0.000**	.0108	.0048 (-10.16)	0.000**	0.0000075	.000016 (-5.42)	0.000		
Observations	18,249										
Wald chi2(120)	1831.36										
Prob > chi2	0.0000										
Pseudo R2	0.0767										

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Chapter 36

Gendered Household Energy Transition in Nigeria: Implication for Regulatory Framework

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Abstract

This study assessed the drivers of household cooking energy transition across genders to gauge the effectiveness of the Nigerian regulatory framework in engendering inclusive energy transition. The study adopts descriptive analysis using the separate waves of the National Living Standard Survey for 2003/04 and 2018/19 by the National Bureau of Statistics. The findings indicate a minimal adoption of modern energy amongst households in 2003/04 compared to 2018/19, but prominent amongst male-headed households. By 2018/19, more rural households, irrespective of the head's gender, consumed traditional fuel compared to 2003/04, possibly because of access to free solid biomass. However, the proportion of urban female-headed households that switched to modern fuel consumption in 2018/19 increased significantly compared to 2003/04. Overall, the socioeconomic environment favoured male-headed households, while location and lack of economic capabilities inhibited female-headed households' energy transition. This situation suggests that national clean energy transition policies favour male-headed households more than their counterparts. Also, the situation is more severe amongst female-headed households in rural areas than their urban counterparts. The empirical evidence may contribute to policymaking in scaling action towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) five and seven and the energy transition in Nigeria. Thus, a regulatory framework that incentivises women can facilitate a just and fair clean energy transition.

Keywords: Energy Transition, Gendered Households, Nigeria, Regulatory Framework

Introduction

Energy transition, encapsulated in Sustainable Development Goal 7 (UN, 2015); entails energy-efficient technology adoption and the integration of clean energy in all sectors, including the residential sector. Nevertheless, the global energy transition is because of the dual need for economic development and climate change mitigation. In developing and energy-poor countries like Nigeria, the energy transition is driven equally by the demand for increased modern energy access. This situation is evident in government commitments in setting strategies that facilitate behavioural shifts towards clean and low-carbon energy consumption. Some of these strategies include the 2017 National Gas Policy (NGP) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2017), with broad objective towards a gas-based economy, giving primary attention to local demand. Further, the Nigerian Gas Master Plan (NGMP) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2020) was initiated in 2020 to enhance investment in the gas sector from 2021 to 2030. The plan is a decade roadmap for domestic gas market utilisation for energy services across relevant activities, including cooking. Also, like previous plans, the 2015 National Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Policy (NREEEP) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015) provides renewable electricity penetration targets through on-grid and off-grid initiatives. The overarching objective is to enhance clean energy penetration for an accelerated transition across relevant sectors, including residential households.

The Nigerian residential sector consumed more energy than the transport and industrial sectors. The residential energy consumption is for cooking, lighting, cooling, and small-scale commercial production from the traditional and modern energy sources. For instance, the Nigerian residential sector accounts for over 70% energy consumption (IEA, 2020). Evidence indicates that household decisions about modern energy transition are complex and based on individual differences across socioeconomic dimensions (Sheng et al., 2018). This situation is also valid in Nigeria since household energy choices depend on individual heterogeneity that may impact their transition. Thus will the socioeconomic and cultural construct of the Nigerian economy enable a just and equitable clean energy adoption, especially amongst the most vulnerable, including women. While the unserved and underserved population may be affected, the impact of the lack of access to clean energy may be disproportional across genders because of differential capabilities and roles played by men and women in the households. In Nigeria specifically, most women are associated with the burden of cooking, which is mainly through traditional solid fuels. This and other barriers of homecare restrict their engagement in productive activities while limiting them to embrace clean fuels. Also, a lack of economic

capability, like income-generating opportunities, could incentivise women to continue indulging in traditional biomass consumption because of its free access and cultural beliefs. Although the environmental cost, often neglected, outweighs the direct monetary benefits of traditional biomass consumption, this knowledge gap may inhibit energy transition, especially amongst women compared to their male counterparts.

In 2013, about 70% of Nigeria's households relied on solid fuel such as charcoal, firewood, and animal dung, amongst others, as cooking fuel (NDHS, 2013). The share declined marginally to about 69% in 2018 (NDHS, 2018). The difference remains wide between urban and rural dwellers in the same periods. Rural households using solid fuel for cooking in 2013 were almost 88% compared to 44% in urban areas. In 2018, the ratio of rural households using solid fuel was 87% against 48% for urban households. Further, the choice of modern fuels like liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and electricity in household energy choice remains less than 30%. The continuous use of traditional energy, such as solid fuels, is associated with environmental and socioeconomic concerns arising from deforestation, land degradation, loss of productive time, and indoor and outdoor air pollution (Mekonnen & Köhlin; 2008; Han et al., 2018). An estimate shows that Nigeria has used 36% of its trees for logging, agricultural activities, and fuelwood (McDermott, 2020). However, access to modern energy is associated with a reduction in time-wasting activities because of the 'liberation effect' enabled by the adoption of time-saving energy technologies, especially amongst women (Coen-Pirani. et al., 2010; Dinkelman, 2010; Grogan & Sadanand, 2013).

Elsewhere, empirical studies have revealed the underlying factors of the transition from traditional to modern energy. This strand of studies was analysed within the energy ladder and stacking frameworks. The theories depict the switching process of households' energy choices (Han et al., 2018). For instance, studies revealed that an increased income level engenders households to transit from traditional to modern energy (Rahut et al., 2014; Wassie et al., 2021). Some households switch between traditional energy and modern energy in response to price changes and accessibility (Leach, 1992). However, some households rely on a combination of traditional energy and modern energy because of their socioeconomic and demographic characteristics (Masera et al., 2000; Wassie et. al., 2021). While these underlying factors of the energy transition are evident in the literature, differences across demographics, such as gender and policy factors may play a dominant role in identifying the method and causes of energy transition in a specific context. The study by Kronsell (2013) revealed that masculine norm is so dominant in the gender landscape and it gives legitimacy to all actions, including permeating energy transition strategies. Also, Musango and Bassi

(2021) show that energy transition policy may support modern energy consumption but not enough to bridge the gender energy-poverty gap.

In Nigeria, existing studies considered the determinant of household energy consumption (Nnaji et al., 2012; Ogwumike et al., 2014; Bisu et al., 2016; Onyekuru et al., 2020; Emodi, et al., 2022) without consideration for the gendered effects. Specifically, existing studies focused on small units, like a single rural community or state, single data, or panel assessment to analyse the drivers of household energy transition; without considerations for heterogeneity that may inform individual decisions. Differently, this study assessed the drivers of household cooking energy transition across gender. Both energy transition and gender inclusiveness are at the core of SDGs five and seven. Thus, the study findings may facilitate the action towards these agenda. Also, this study adopts the separate waves of the National Living Standard Survey (NLSS) to understand the dynamics of gendered household energy transition across time. This is required to assess policy trends and the plausible impact on household energy transition vis-à-vis underlying factors. The analysis becomes pertinent since Nigeria has climate neutrality pathways culminating into various strategies, including energy transition. While Nigeria continues to chart the path for energy transition, conscious considerations for limiting the gendered energy-poverty gap in the policy strategies may engender a just and fair transition. Thus, the outcomes will strengthen existing energy transition regulatory framework and related ones.

Including the introduction, the study is in five sections. Section two presents the literature review. The data and methodology are provided in Section three. The empirical results and discussion of findings are presented in Section 4. The last section concludes.

Literature review

The Energy Ladder and Energy Stacking theories explain the pattern of energy transition in societies. The Energy Ladder Theory, as postulated by Leach (1992), asserts that energy transition occurs in a linear and upward movement from traditional fuels to modern fuels. The framework is an applied version of the Consumer Theory, where a rise (fall) in income shifts household consumption pattern to a high (lower) quality good (Hosier & Dowd, 1987), demonstrating household socioeconomic status (Masera et al., 2000). The energy ladder describes the fuel switching process from traditional fuels to transitional fuels and finally to clean fuels. The progression is driven by income, government policies, energy resource availability, and relative costs (Barnes et al., 2004; Schlag & Zuzarte, 2008). The explicit assumption is that households replaced less efficient fuels through an upward progression

to a more efficient fuel, making the transition a unidirectional and linear process (Mehetre et al., 2017). However, the energy stacking framework entails a combination of fuels in the energy consumption portfolio (Masera et al., 2000; Pachauri et al., 2013). The framework assumes that households only partly switch to a different fuel or accumulate multiple fuels. Thus, households will rely on traditional fuels for certain activities in addition to adopting clean fuels. Fuel stacking occurs because of the high cost of modern energy sources, cultural preferences, resource availability, and concerns around energy security to avoid total dependence on one fuel because of price and supply distortions (Chang et al., 2017; Alem et al., 2016; Leach, 1992; Masera et al., 2000). The household may adopt traditional fuels for base energy needs and some modern fuels to complement demand if accessible and affordable. The situation is a complex decision-making process in household energy transition and the use of multiple fuels (Kowsari & Zerriffi, 2011).

Empirical studies have tested the theoretical assumptions to identify household energy consumption determinants. For instance, Han et. al. (2018) identify the determinants of household energy transition in rural China with province-level panel data for 1991 to 2014. The study finds that household wealth (number of motorcycles), appliances, and size have a positive correlation with advanced energy consumption; while the number of firewood-saving stoves, education, number of energy management institutions, and the price of advanced energy positively correlate with traditional energy consumption. However, education level is correlated negatively with traditional fuel. Their study also realised that energy stacking characterised household energy transition because of consumption inertia effects of the traditional, transition, and modern fuels. In India, Cheng and Urpelainen (2014) assessed the household energy transition between 1987 and 2010. The outcome of their two-stage Probit model analysis revealed that income reduces fuel stacking for lighting in 1987 but not in 2010. Also, the proportion of households using firewood as the primary fuel for cooking reduced as expenditure increased, while the percentage of households that use kerosene rose as households moved to a higher expenditure level. Their results showed evidence of energy stacking.

Wassie et al. (2021) examined determinants of household energy choices in rural Ethiopia using a cross-sectional survey. Their findings revealed that location is a significant determinant of household cooking fuel. Likewise, the household income level positively relates to the choice of cooking fuel. As income increases, household preference for cleaner fuel increases and vice versa, although fuel stacking remains prevalent even amongst the wealthiest households. Household size significantly and

positively influences the choice of fuelwood because of the increase in the availability of family labour.

In Nigeria, Ogwumike et al. (2014) investigated household energy use and its determinants using the 2004 Nigeria Living Standard Survey data. The analysis was based on descriptive statistics and a multinomial logit approach. The determinants of household cooking fuels include parents' educational level, per capita expenditure, and household size. Also, Baiyegunhi and Hassan (2014) examined the determinants of households' cooking energy choice using a multinomial logit (MNL) technique to analyse cross-sectional data collected through household interviews. Their results indicate that the age of the household head, educational level, household size, income, type of house, and the price of fuelwood determine household cooking fuel choice. In a mixed outcome, Adamu et al. (2020) found that households at the lowest rung of the energy ladder are there because of the rising poverty level, which makes the result consistent with the energy ladder hypothesis but disagrees with the notion of total fuel substitution.

Ai et al. (2021) used a panel data analysis of the determinants of household energy transition in large countries from 1990 to 2016. Income, urbanisation, demographics, and resource endowment enhances household energy transition. Akrofi and Antwi (2020) studied energy diversification and transition patterns in some of Africa's largest economies. Their results show that most countries fuel-stack. Although there is a gradual adoption of clean energy fuels, conventional fuel still plays a dominant role in the energy mix. The slow pace of clean energy penetration in countries with high energy consumption is mainly because of high fossil fuel dependence and subsidies. Heltberg (2004) examined the determinants of fuel use and fuel switching in eight developing countries using the national household survey. The study finds that per capita expenditure is positively related to the household energy use of clean fuels, but negatively related to solid fuels in all countries investigated. Also, household electrification, usage of tap water, and increasing level of education engender switching to modern fuel in most cases. However, household energy transition to modern fuels is quite predominant in urban areas, except in Ghana. Also, switching to modern fuel is confined to households with higher income in rural areas, hence the use of solid biomass is predominant in rural areas.

Different from the general perspectives, a few studies also considered the gender dimension of energy transition. In Musango and Bassi (2021), findings showed that understanding the changes in urban household energy consumption and gendered measures because of energy transition interventions is essential for urban policy planning. While energy subsidy policy increases total energy consumption, it might lead to socio-

environmental impact that increases inequality. A study by Chicombo and Musango (2022) revealed that existing energy transitional frameworks lack a gender perspective and a theoretical framework to address solid fuels dependence in urban environments.

The above review shows that energy transition occurs because of an interconnectedness of several factors that operate in a context. Even though the two theoretical frameworks explain the energy transition concept, the energy ladder framework suggests a displacement effect, while the stacking model advocates the predominant use of modern energy in the energy fuel portfolio. There is no empirical evidence to show the drivers of energy transition across gender in Nigeria. Existing studies fail to provide a profound basis for the gendered energy switching process. First, while existing studies may identify factors that engender energy transition, lack of gender perspectives and measures in these assessments may limit or obstruct how gender is framed in the energy switching process. How the gendered dynamics of the energy transition evolve is also considered in this study. This approach provides a channel through which policy responses are addressed.

Data and methodology

Data

The data needs for the study were met by utilising the 2003/04 and 2018/19 National Living Standard Survey (NLSS) from the National Bureau of Statistics. The survey represents the large-scale household survey showing the living conditions of the population. The sample is representative at the national and zonal levels, with urban and rural estimates. It obtained a comprehensive and diverse set of socio-economic and demographic data on basic needs, and household housing, energy use and living conditions. The inclusion of 2018/19 data makes the period of observation more recent than what exists in other studies. Secondly, the choice of separate data points allows for capturing changes that occur across time. This is required to understand how the development of national energy transition strategies shapes household energy preferences, especially for clean fuels that are more environmentally friendly.

Methodology

The aim of this study is to identify the drivers of household energy transition across gender. The emphasis herein is on cooking fuel, which remains the dominant type of Nigerian household energy use, accounting for 80% of total consumption (Gujba et al., 2015). Specifically, the study revealed the

underlying factors of household cooking energy transition and the dynamics of the switching process.

The analysis was carried out within the energy ladder and energy stacking frameworks. Following the conventional approach (Heltberg, 2004; Gassmann & Tsukada, 2014; Sabyrbekov & Ukueva, 2019), cooking energy is categorised into three: traditional, transitional, and modern. The traditional energy is solid or high-carbon-emitting fuels. In this study, traditional fuel is the aggregation of all solid fuels comprising firewood, charcoal, straw, crop residue, and animal dung. The selected energy type is the main source of traditional fuel in Nigeria. While the transitional energy is dirty or high-carbon-emitting fossil fuel. The relevant transitional fuel adopted in this study is kerosene. The modern fuel is clean cooking energy including gas (LPG) and electricity. Because of the epileptic nature of electricity supply the analysis is limited to LPG, which represents clean and Nigeria's transition fuel. The gender of the household head is expected to influence the choice of cooking fuel decision. This is particularly true as women are mostly confronted with the time effect of energy access and the burden of cooking; hence, women may probably play a more pertinent role in cooking fuel transition than men (Pachuari & Rao, 2013). Consequently, the study analysed household cooking energy consumption across male- and female-headed households along the three categories of energy forms mentioned above.

The study adopts a descriptive analysis. This study adapts relevant underlying factors identified in extant literature (Han et al., 2018; Cheng & Urpelainen, 2014). Since the NLSS did not collect data on income, following the literature (Rao & Reddy, 2007; Cheng & Urpelainen, 2014), this study adopts household real expenditure (*Expend*) as a measure of income. Other factors are a vector of potential factors influencing household fuel choice, which includes the control for land ownership status, which is also a measure of wealth. Household level of education; categorised along no education, primary, secondary, vocational, and tertiary education are included. A better-educated household head is likely to adopt an advanced fuel given a higher level of awareness. Also, a control for household location is included to capture the role of access and proximity to energy forms. Thus, the study considers transition across urban and rural locations.

Empirical Results

The study utilised the 2003/04 and 2018/19 National Living Standard Survey (NLSS) from the National Bureau of Statistics. The survey represents a large-scale household survey showing the population's living conditions. The sample is representative at the national and zonal levels, with urban and rural estimates. It obtained a comprehensive and diverse set of socio-economic

and demographic data on basic needs, household housing, energy use, and living conditions. The inclusion of 2018/19 data makes the observation more recent than what exists in other studies. Secondly, the separate data points capture changes that occur across time. This is required to understand how the development of national energy transition strategies shapes household energy preferences, especially for clean fuels that are more environmentally friendly.

Empirical Results

The results in this section show the drivers of household cooking energy transition across male and female-headed households. The results in Tables 58 and 59 show the findings of drivers of household transition based on 2003/04 and 2018/19 NLSS data. The distribution of energy consumption indicates most households, irrespective of gender, depended on traditional and transitional fuel in 2003/04, suggesting a negligible consumption of clean fuel (less than 1% across genders). Specifically, amongst the entire households surveyed, about 84% and 15.5% of male-headed households relied on traditional and transitional cooking energy. Likewise, about 82.8% and 15.9% of female-headed households adopted traditional and transitional cooking fuels in the period. By 2018/19, the consumption of traditional and transitional cooking fuel declined across household types; but modern energy adoption became prominent. Overall, the minimal adoption of modern energy suggests that more households have embraced LPG in 2018/19 compared to 2003/04, but prominent amongst male-headed households. The development may be because of increased awareness about climate change challenges and the introduction of domestic initiatives to mitigate the negative environmental impact.

In 2003/04, a significant proportion of male-headed households in urban (79.6%) and rural (81.6%) locations relied on traditional cooking fuel, with the situation severe in rural locations. Similarly, the consumption of traditional cooking fuel is prevalent amongst rural female-headed households (83.9%); however, their urban counterparts relied more on transitional fuel (21.8%). The same pattern subsisted in 2018/19 but became severe as more rural households plunged into consumption of traditional fuels across genders (87.5% male-headed households and 90.7% female-headed households). Firstly, the situation may be because of free access to solid fuel, which enables rural dwellers, irrespective of gender, to embrace these high-carbon-emitting fuels. Secondly, that rural female-headed households use more traditional fuel may align with the notion that women are likely to be financially constrained, thereby engendering more traditional fuel consumption than their counterparts (Ogwumike et al., 2014). The

trend has implications for the environment, being the source of traditional energy. Despite the high emission content and prices, households adopted transitional fuel to complement other fuels in both periods. In 2003/04, the transition to modern fuel was high amongst urban female-headed households (0.53%), although the proportion of households that switched was less than 1%. By 2018/19, the proportion of urban female-headed households that switched to modern fuel had increased by 28.83%. Although the consumption of modern fuel is not as high as other fuels, and the likelihood of adoption amongst urban female-headed households is significant, possibly to lessen the burden of homecare (Pachuari & Rao, 2013).

Interestingly, education seems to influence households' fuel choice decisions, especially amongst female-headed households where a significant proportion of those with no education (101.1%), primary (109.1%), and secondary (84.7%) education depended on traditional solid fuel in 2003/04. Irrespective of the level of education, male-headed households had a higher preference for solid fuel. However, female heads with tertiary education adopted modern cooking fuel more than others in 2003/04 but not in 2018/19. The reason may be because of the one stated earlier or the awareness of the dangers of consuming traditional and transitional energy, engendering clean energy transition (Rao & Reddy, 2007).

Economic factors, such as household income had a negligible impact on household energy transition in 2003/04. Irrespective of households, the adoption of traditional and transitional cooking fuel was predominant amongst households earning less than N500,000. However, by 2018/19, households earning less than N1 million adopted traditional, transitional, and modern fuel. Surprisingly, a significant proportion of the female-headed households at the lower rung of income consumed traditional fuel. While there seems to be some switch to modern fuel across households within the first- and second-income level, the movement is significant amongst male-headed households. This implies that income level facilitates male-headed household energy transition.

Higher income does not engender a clean energy transition, negating the energy ladder hypothesis. Thus, irrespective of gender, income alone may not be sufficient to facilitate energy transition (Mesara et al., 2000). These findings should be taken with caution since the NLSS survey significantly considered low-income earners. However, while about 81.6% of male-headed households with land ownership consumed traditional fuel, 83.9% of their female counterparts without land ownership adopted the traditional cooking fuel in 2003/04. Irrespective of the household land ownership status, more male-headed households consumed modern fuel than their counterparts in

2018/19. Overall, the economic indicators assessed show that female-headed households without capabilities may be affected from adopting modern fuel.

Conclusion

This study investigated the drivers of household cooking energy transition across genders using the 2003/04 and 2018/19 NLSS while drawing implications for the existing and future regulatory framework. Presently, Nigeria is a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement on climate change. Thus, the country has various strategies, including energy transition, towards achieving these agreements while also domesticating the gender-inclusive transformation as contained in SDG five. For instance, the 2022 national energy transition plan and 2017 natural gas policy provide the legal framework for domesticating the global agreements towards climate change mitigation. These national strategies aim to facilitate clean energy access amongst the poorest, including women, and to address the challenge of infrastructure deficit, amongst others. In this regard, the frameworks are to enhance gender-inclusive clean energy transition.

This study empirically assessed the plausibility of heterogeneity between male and female-headed households' energy transition vis-à-vis socioeconomic factors. The analysis provides insights into the effectiveness of clean energy regulatory framework. The findings indicate a minimal adoption of modern energy amongst households in 2003/04 compared to 2018/19, but prominent amongst male-headed households. By 2018/19, more rural households, irrespective of the head's gender, consumed traditional fuel compared to 2003/04, possibly because of access to free solid biomass. However, the proportion of urban female-headed households that switched to modern fuel increased significantly compared to 2003/04. Overall, the results suggest that national clean energy transition policies favour male-headed households more than their female counterparts. Also, the situation is more severe amongst female-headed households in rural areas than their urban counterparts.

Thus, the study suggests a revised gendered-aware energy transition regulatory framework to facilitate clean energy access. Specifically, policies that provide incentives for women can serve as a lever towards the adoption of modern energy. Although some of these strategies are in various national regulatory frameworks, they lack synergy with other related policies and local conditions. Thus, the gap from historical gender inequalities will enable policymakers to consider and implement energy transition strategies that are gender-balanced.

Table 58: Drivers of Household Energy Transition in 2003/04

Factors	Indicator	Male-Headed Households			Female-Headed Households		
		Traditional	Transitional	Modern	Tradition	Transition	Modern
Distribution	Share of total (%)	83.95	15.52	0.11	82.76	15.86	0.13
Demographic	Urban (%)	81.56	18.06	0.09	0.30	21.82	0.53
	Rural (%)	79.62	14.40	0.11	83.90	14.63	0.05
Social	None (%)	81.27	17.89	0.06	101.08	22.60	0.08
	Primary (%)	70.52	19.76	0.05	109.14	12.40	0.05
	Secondary (%)	88.48	11.24	0.07	84.74	24.40	0.07
	Vocational (%)	92.85	6.30	0.67	17.68	9.66	0.20
	Tertiary (%)	91.54	7.37	0.83	12.16	8.53	4.50
Economic	Below 500000 (%)	93.46	168.28	0.12	99.19	18.98	0.16
	500000-1m (%)	6.52	0.21	0.00	0.79	0.18	0.00
	1000001m-5m (%)	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
	5000000 above (%)	0.00	15.52	0.11	0.00	15.86	0.13
	Land ownership _Yes (%)	81.56	18.06	0.09	0.30	21.82	0.53
	Land ownership _No (%)	79.62	14.40	0.11	83.90	14.63	0.05

Source: Author's computation with 2003/04 NLSS data

Table 59: Drivers of Household Energy Transition in 2018/19

Factors	Indicator	Male-Headed Households			Female-Headed Households		
		Traditional	Transitional	Modern	Tradition	Transition	Modern
Distribution	Share of total (%)	74.32	13.58	11.93	77.67	11.55	10.39
	Urban (%)	45.00	57.76	0.00	47.54	24.29	29.36
Demographic	Rural (%)	87.52	8.32	0.00	90.69	6.04	0.33
	None (%)	1.14	0.20	0.18	1.08	0.16	0.08
Social	Primary (%)	35.15	4.99	3.47	32.63	4.65	3.80
	Secondary (%)	27.89	8.55	5.49	24.94	6.99	5.06
	Vocational (%)	11.53	0.34	0.34	12.49	0.23	0.33
	Tertiary (%)	5.03	2.39	5.03	4.83	2.02	4.23
Economic	Below 500000 (%)	11.06	10.87	8.10	76.44	10.39	8.12
	500000-1m (%)	5.64	2.70	3.76	1.23	1.15	2.34
	1000001m-5m (%)	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.00	0.01	0.02
	5000000 above (%)	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Land ownership__Yes (%)	81.90	9.19	8.77	84.36	9.10	7.62
	Land ownership__No (%)	49.10	28.17	22.43	54.52	24.38	20.80

Source: Author's computation with 2018/19 NLSS data

Limitation

The availability of the 2008/09 NLSS may have increased the dynamism and robustness of the analysis presented herein, but this was not accessible because of some biases reported by the NBS. Further, the descriptive statistics from the NLSS indicate that the survey skewed towards low-income households (about 93% in both cases); thus, limiting the level to which the relationship between energy consumption and income was assessed. Nevertheless, the findings conform to similar ones in the literature.

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PART 9

Conclusion

Chapter 37

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations: Enhancing Women's Representation in Governance in Nigeria

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Overview

Over the years, African countries have had to grapple with the challenges of growth and development as it relates to issues of poverty, inequality, insecurity, infrastructural deficiencies and hunger. These challenges cannot be overcome without unlocking the potential and utilising the unused resources and capacity that lie in the hands of African women as the under-representation of one-half of the population not only limits the diversity of governance and development but also contradicts one of the central tenets of representative democracy (Caul, 1999).

Most African countries have not been able to meet the international best practices of at least 35% affirmative action for women's representation. For instance, in a survey of Africa's 54 countries, Nigeria ranks the lowest, coming 54th with a 5.45% female representation, while Rwanda ranks first with 47.95%. On the list of the five worst-performing countries, Algeria came second after Nigeria, with 6.20%; Benin Republic, 7.40%, while the Gambia and Liberia followed with 8.60% and 11.00% respectively. Senegal came in second place in the overall ranking after Rwanda with 44.20%; Mozambique followed with 42.60%, then South Africa and Burundi with 41.60% and 39.60% respectively (IPU, 2020). Thus, the valuable contributions imminent in the potentials of women remained untapped and has been argued by researchers over the years to be responsible for the underdevelopment of

African countries and constitute negations to the importance of participation and representation of women in politics as adduced below:

- First, the absence of members of historically disadvantaged groups such as women from political institutions and governance is increasingly regarded as evidence of injustice. This can be associated with what Stevens (2007) calls the 'agency' argument- since women constitute half of any country's population; that alone reserves them the right to constitute half of the decision-making bodies. Hence, Kangiwa (2015) instructively notes that women cannot advance where there is gender discrimination and injustice. Equal opportunities therefore promote respect for the differences of individuals or a class of individuals just as they enhance their sense of belonging to a particular society and this advances the growth and development of such society.
- Secondly, the fair representation of women is necessary for efficiency as it leads to maximisation of all the resources of the country since inequality and discrimination against women breed underdevelopment. This, Mill (1999) points out, that participation of both the majority and the minority (especially the disenfranchised women) has to be ensured for a government to be competent and efficient. Women bring resources into politics and governance, namely: values, experiences and the unique expertise that differentiates them from men and a political system that does not utilise both genders' experiences and resources is incompetent and failing legitimacy (Myeni, 2014). Efficiency can only result from a situation where society deliberately promotes equal opportunities and creates an enabling environment for people to fully develop without being discriminated against based on differences of religion, gender, ethnicity or race (Olanrewaju, 2018).
- Similarly, women's full and fair representation and participation in decision-making is essential to ensure that they promote and defend their specific needs and interests, promoting gender-sensitive governance and enhancing access to and control over local resources for both (Stevens, 2007). As evidenced from research, discrimination against women fosters low self-esteem and increases the level of poverty with adverse effects on women's empowerment (Anyoha et al., 2015). The full integration of women into society without any form of discrimination should be promoted, since society benefits when everyone can fully contribute to the development of the nation. It was succinctly put that, having women rather than men in office makes government demonstrably more responsive to women's interests (Sapiro, 1981).
- Furthermore, inclusion of women in politics improves the quality of democratic deliberation; public policy can be improved by having a more diverse set of representatives who can influence the political agenda.

Therefore, the extent of women's representation in government has considerable political consequences. The validity and trustworthiness of democracy will be in question if women, constituting half of the population, remain absent from the different institutions of a society (Panday, 2008).

It has therefore become imperative, as evident in extant literatures, that Africa can only achieve the desired growth and development efforts when the continent is capable of harnessing all its resources: material, men and machine; and especially if women are able to participate actively in economic, social and political life. Relatedly, Okoro (2013) recommends that for Africa to witness ultimate peace, discrimination against women in African societies must be ended.

Key gender policy commitments

African governments have made important commitments to gender equality and to closing the gender inequality gap. Some of the policies adopted include amongst others:

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (UN, 1979)

The CEDAW is an international treaty aimed at promoting women's rights by providing equal rights to men and women to enjoy all economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights as well as encouraging countries themselves to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women. This will include the incorporation of the principle of equality in their system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate laws prohibiting discrimination against women, to establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination by persons, organisations or enterprises (UN, 1979).

Article 5(a) of the CEDAW enjoins states to eradicate all social and cultural barriers which perceive men as superior to women, thereby subjecting them to abuse. Okongwu (2021) adds that the Convention affirms that discrimination against women still exists, and it violates the principles of equality of rights (UN, 1948). Therefore, the provision of the conventions covers the protection for the civil and legal status of women and addresses the impact of cultural factors on gender relations such as cultural stereotypes, customs and norms which give rise to constraints on the advancement of women. It also aims to target cultural practices that define the public domain as men's sphere and the domestic field as women's domain. This convention

was signed and ratified by most African countries showing their commitment to the promotion of gender empowerment within the African continent. Part of the criticism of the CEDAW is that it has been insufficient in protecting African women against discrimination and it had Western values which did not address issues faced by rural women in Africa (Akiyode-Afolabi & Amadi, 2008).

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UN, 2000)

The MDGs were a set of eight goals derived from the Millennium Declaration by the World Bank in 2000, which were adopted by all the 191 United Nations Member States (including all African member countries) and pledged to meet the MDGs by 2015. Goal 3 specifically provided for gender equality and the empowerment of women. It specifically called for the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary schools. Indicators of achievement of this goal are the ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary school; the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (African Partnership Forum, 2007). According to MDG Monitor (2016), developing countries have made appreciable progress in this regard; however, there is a lot to be achieved in eliminating gender disparity at all levels of education even after the expiration of the target year of 2015. The next phase therefore is to replicate this success across all fields of human endeavour. The Sustainable Development Goals that replaced the MDGs in 2015 still has gender equality as a critical element (UN, 2015).

Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs replaced the MDGs in 2015 and has gender equality and empowerment as a critical element). Goal five calls on countries to, by 2030, achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Several other goals such as 1, 2, 4, 6, 8 and 11, which respectively cover poverty, nutrition, education, water and sanitation, employment amongst others, made specific reference to gender in their targets. This, to Odera and Mulusa (2020), depicts the fact that a lot of developmental issues require gender specific considerations. Targets one and two of Goal 15 expect countries to eradicate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls in both public and private spheres of life. Cultural practices that cause harm, like female genital mutilation (FGM), widowhood practices and forced marriages should also be abolished (Olusegun & Oyelade, 2022).

Beijing Platform for Action

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) came after the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995 (UN, 1995). The resolutions affirm the commitment to promote an active visible policy of gender mainstreaming in all the policies and programmes of governments in 12 critical areas: poverty, education, health, violence, armed conflict, economic disparity, power sharing, institutions, human rights, mass media, environment and the girl child (African Partnership Forum, 2007). The most far-reaching commitment of the BPFA was that member states agreed to ensure that “each woman and girl can exercise her freedoms and choices, and realize all her rights, such as to live free from violence, to go to school, to participate in decisions and to earn equal pay for equal work” (UN, 1995).

African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights

The African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (‘the Charter’) which was enacted in 1981 to protect the rights of people in Africa including women (AU, 1981). The Charter provides a framework for the protection of human rights in Africa such as civil and political rights, socio-economic and cultural rights, and individual and collective rights (Ekhatior, 2015). On the African continent, the African Union adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women to also guarantee the comprehensive rights to women including the right to take part in the political process, to social and political equality with men, improved autonomy in their reproductive health decisions, and an end to female genital mutilation. The Maputo Protocol, as it is also called, has been signed and ratified by thirty-six of the fifty-four African countries (AU, 2023); however, it has not been ratified by fifteen countries, while three countries have neither signed nor ratified it (AU, 2023). The Charter however was found to be inadequate in addressing in detail the various discriminatory issues that African women encountered in their daily lives such as being victims of harmful cultural and widowhood practices. It failed to address the problems of inequality in laws on property and customs in relation to inheritance and succession. The major limitation of the Charter is that the non-discrimination provision can only be invoked in relation to the implementation of a right under the Charter (Akiyode-Afolabi & Amadi, 2008).

Bottlenecks and operational challenges of gender empowerment policies in Africa

In spite of the existence of the above policies and conventions, gender inequality is still prevalent in African countries. In other words, existing laws

do not protect women from the discrimination that they face in every aspect of their lives. UN Women (2019) put the issue in context when they asserted that these conventions and other efforts have failed to see an increase as a result of barriers such as patriarchy, religion, electoral violence and economic situations which exclude women from participating in politics and the decision-making processes. It is therefore, the contention of this study that gender inequality has continued to hold sway in spite of these legislations or conventions over time because of the following reasons:

Non-Domestication: most of the conventions and treaties have only been ratified but not domesticated, making them inadequate to protect women's rights in African countries. For instance, by virtue of Section 12 of the Constitution of Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), treaties which have been signed and ratified will not have any effect until there is a corresponding law made by the National Assembly. The situation in most African countries is the non-domestication of these conventions mostly because of the absence of sufficient political will (Olusegun & Oyelade, 2022). For instance, the CEDAW, though ratified, does not have any effect and is inapplicable if there is no law addressing the purpose of the Convention. More so, existing laws have not been effective because of the lack of enforcement by the appropriate authorities. Factors which impede enforcement include lack of awareness of the existence and provisions of certain laws, failure of women to seek justice, costs and delay in the justice system as well as inadequate political will to enforce laws (Onyemelukwe, 2018).

Religion: several scholars such as Sibani (2017) and Makama (2013) have explained how gender inequality has been reinforced by religious provisions and practices. For instance, Sibani (2017) observes that the organisational structures of religious institutions as well as doctrines inferred from interpreting religious books have effects on the level of regard accorded to women within African societies. For instance, in Northern Nigeria the political class have misconstrued sharia provision to justify male dominance in political, economic and social spheres which perpetuate the infringement of women's rights on account of this perception (Makama, 2013). In a similar manner, Christian Aid (2015) opines that religion has been found to be a major factor in defining the responsibility of men and the association of men to leadership. Because of this dominance of religion in an African's life, it has been used as an effective tool for the subordination of women. This has largely resulted in the rejection of conventions and treaties that run contrary to these religious beliefs and doctrines. An example in this regard in Nigeria, is the Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill framed to give effect to the CEDAW provisions has been rejected several times since its first introduction in 2010

by some lawmakers who believed that some of its provisions are anti-God and anti-family and has foreign imposition (Iman, 2010).

Patriarchy: Patriarchy has over time constituted a serious bottleneck that exacerbates the inequality of women and is responsible for the non-implementation of gender mainstreaming conventions and treaties in most African countries, especially Nigeria. In supporting this scenario, Makama (2013), drawing from the experiences of Nigeria, opines that Nigerians practice a patriarchal system of stratification that ascribes power to men as heads and leaders in society and families. It provides material advantages to men in terms of inheritance rights and ownership of land, thereby economically empowering a man and deprives women resources making them economically dependent on men (Makama, 2013). Any document that provides otherwise is considered to be antithetical and at variance with African culture and practices, hence its rejections. In furtherance to this, Ekpe et al. (2014) affirm that “cultural stereotype and abuse of traditional practices have created patriarchal societal structures dominated by men.” The patriarchal system normalises the fact that men are leaders in the homes and society and therefore there is a tendency that anywhere a man is seen in a position of power and leadership, it will be viewed as normal while the opposite will be an anomaly (Olanrewaju, 2018).

Poor Access to Financing: Kangiwa (2015) rightly observed that women in Africa are subjected to unequal treatment and are denied access or have unequal access to economic opportunities, status, power and privileges in society. For instance, men have assumed the custodianship of land for agricultural purposes while women who are farmers are largely excluded from modern contract-farming arrangements because they have no land tenure security, thereby affecting their agricultural productivity and economic empowerment (FAO, 2011). African women have not been able to benefit from investment and the expansion of trade in agricultural products because of the obstacles faced in terms of limited access to productive resources (land, credit, transport, extension services and so on) as women produce up to 80% of basic foodstuffs – but a survey of credit schemes in five African countries found that they received less than 10% of the credit given to male smallholders (Africa Partnership Forum, 2007). The devastating effects of poverty, discrimination and lack of opportunity affect women in multiple ways, not just their income levels but also prevents women from having the capacity to protect and fight for their rights especially when infringed upon.

Conclusion

The overall discussion on women in governance in Africa is a deliberate effort and agenda-setting aimed at promoting equal opportunities and rights of women through empowerment and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women emanating from legislations, practices, culture, religious perceptions, traditional values and stereotypes that infringe upon their rights.

Protecting the rights and ensuring adequate participation of women in political, social and economic spheres is linked to the growth and development of a country as the inclusion of women in political representation tend to improve democratic deliberation, public policy, promote justice and fair play. However, it has been agreed that the level of women's participation in politics and governance is abysmal in Africa in spite of the various legislations and conventions that exist to guarantee their fair representation.

It is therefore not surprising to note that until and unless the constraining factors affecting the effective implementation of gender-based policies and programmes are addressed, the calls and efforts to promote women's participation in Africa will be a mirage. The UN Women (2019) was categorical on this when it stated that for African countries to make progress in closing the gender gap they must address the challenges of patriarchy, religion, electoral violence and economic deprivation of women.

Policy recommendations

In view of the observed bottlenecks confronting the realisation of the effective implementations of the gender mainstreaming policies and conventions aimed at promoting gender equality and economic empowerment of women in Africa, the following policy interventions are imperative:

1. An African Inter-country Gender Commission or Committee should be established to monitor the progress of the continent on the implementation of gender mainstreaming legislations, conventions and treaties. They should also be able to strategically and collaboratively support countries challenged in translating into practice the gender policies and programmes within the African continent.
2. African countries should embrace a gender-responsive public financial management system as a fundamental element of good economic governance and democratic accountability and should be a core aspect of budget support. In this way national annual budgets are to be initiated, approved, implemented and evaluated from a gender-sensitive lens. This

- is important to ensure that resources are utilised in ways that help to tackle gender inequality and the empowerment of women.
3. African countries need to adopt non-policy measures such as education and raising awareness as additional measures to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality at all levels of countries' educational sectors; basic, secondary and tertiary. As only enlightened and educated individuals (men and women) who will understand the fallacies of gender stereotypes and how it affects national growth and development.
 4. The National Financial Inclusion Strategy in each of the African countries should be made more robust such that it creates an enabling environment for women in both rural and urban areas to have easy access to and control over financial services including banking, micro-credit and insurance and other financial support services, in order to enable them to develop their full economic potential.

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Despite accounting for 49.47% of the Nigerian population, progress towards gender equity and women's empowerment in Nigeria has remained low, in contrast to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG Target 5.5). In light of this, NILDS, under the leadership of Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman and with support from the management of the National Assembly, is creating a platform for intellectual discourse and engagements on women socio-economic and political empowerment. The NILDS International Conference on Women in Governance provided a platform for experts, government officials, policymakers, and other relevant stakeholder across Africa, to discuss the challenges that women face in political participation and governance in Nigeria and Africa at large. This ultimately led to this evidence-based scientific reader that contributes to the corpus of literature in Africa.

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