

The Politics of Gender Discrimination in Nigerian Fourth Republic: A Gender Analysis

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Abstract

The vicious circle of men-women dominance in political leadership has been the major attraction of most studies on gender politics in Nigeria. Women constitute a substantial percentage of the country's population, yet they occupy a secondary place in relation to men politically, economically, socially, and culturally. This study departed markedly from this research bias and delved into the proportion of males to females in public agencies of the federal government in the Fourth Republic. The framework of analysis in this study was the Gender and Development (GAD) model which emerged in the 1990s as a grassroots-based framework. The case study research design was adopted with a qualitative approach which enabled data to be derived from a variety of sources, including documentary records and semi-structured elite interview. The findings reveal that women make up a huge population, but they are not heard politically in terms of elective and appointive positions in Nigeria due to certain structural and cultural impediments, ignorance, and poverty. The results confirmed patriarchal dominance as a reality in federal government agencies with evidence in both number and occupation of managerial leadership positions. The study, therefore, advocated investment in women administrative leadership by reserving some managerial positions exclusively for women, as well as building confidence and courage in the women to eliminate the inherent fear of male dominance. Also, government should review all discriminatory practices, the economic empowerment of women, support from family, fellow women, and media, equal representation in governance, and proper perception of women in politics.

Introduction

The global political economy in recent times has been dominated by a discourse focused around participation of women in politics, as the entire world is moving towards adopting democracy as the most acceptable form of government, in which citizens participate irrespective of their country. This discourse was informed by the incessant and continued global neglect, segregation, and marginalization of women in the political sphere of nations. The UN Generally Assembly in 2011 acknowledged the fact that "women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from political sphere, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low level

of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women". Women make up a huge population worldwide, but they are marginalized.

The neglect and marginalization of women in the political scene is worst in the developing countries of Asia, Latin America, and Africa, where women are treated like inferior creatures due to some structural and cultural constraints. Nigeria, being a developing country, has poor records of women political participation. In fact, women were nearly absent from the political sphere of the country in the First Republic established in 1963, in the Second Republic from 1979, and the aborted Third Republic from 1993. And the Nigerian Fourth Republic which was ushered in on 29 May 1999, after nearly twenty years of military rule, has witnessed women's participation in the democratization process. The present participation of women in the democratic governance, like all the previous ones, is lesser than that of men. In other words, male monopoly of power has not only continued to exist but has also become consolidated. The involvement of women in political participation in Nigeria differs in time and space (Gairoonisa, Sambo, Ibrahim, 2008).

Gender politics biases one of the prominent issues that have received global attention. Scholars, practitioners and policy makers have expressed deep concern about discrimination against women and emphasized gender diversity, inclusion and balance in all spheres of human activity, in line with the Gender and Development (GAD) approach to development, as well as various declarations on human rights reinforced by the numerous global conventions on women's rights and advancement.

Nigeria subscribed to and ratified all the conventions and therefore promotes gender equality and women empowerment (Nyenke, 2004). To this end, several political, economic, and socio-cultural initiatives, as well as institutional mechanisms and reforms, have been introduced by the women's organizations (both local and international), the government and the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to engage and encourage women to participate in governance and the development process (Aina, 2015). The National Women Policy of 2000 which was later transformed into the National Gender Policy (NGP) of 2006 which encapsulated 30% and 35% of the Affirmative Action (AA) respectively, is among the numerous government interventions aimed at mainstreaming women in governance and advancing their course in order to eliminate gender disparity. Gender mainstreaming in Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) is a cardinal requirement posed by the NGP of 2006.

In spite of these policies and programmes, there still abound bitter complaints and overt expression of dissatisfaction or discontentment voiced by women suffering the utter male dominance and sustained underrepresentation of women in positions of public trust on the one hand and low representation of women in the public service of Nigeria on the other, seemingly orchestrated by their male counterpart. There exists a social stigma which deters women from participation in the labour market (Esteve-Volart, 2004). Onyeji (2018) reports that despite the transition to democratic governance, women are yet to occupy 15% of elective positions in the country. Agbalajobi (2010) puts women political representation in Nigeria at as low a level as 7%. *The Guardian* (2016) reports that only 24% of federal civil servants are women while a meager 14% of women hold the public sector management level positions. Adejugbe, Adejuge (2010) assert that women have low access to employment opportunities and face disadvantages in job promotion and career

advancement. For instance, during 50 years of existence, the Supreme Court of Nigeria has produced only eight female justices with only one attaining the rank of Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN). Similarly, Usoro (2020) laments that out of 86 justices of the Court of Appeal only 23 are female representing a paltry 30% of the total number of justices of that judicial arm.

Earlier studies on gender have dwelt more on the need to invest in women leadership and have decried the poor representation of women in elective or appointive positions in the Nigerian political space and public sector. A number of studies like that of Centre for Democracy and Development (2019), have also focused extensively on the participation of women in electoral politics in terms of seeking elective offices while a few researchers investigated the ratio of women to men in the federal civil service. There is, therefore, scanty literature on the proportion of women to men and on the career progression of women in parastatal organizations or public sector agencies in Nigeria. This study departs from the research bias of the previous studies on women political participation and leadership. Its contribution to the gender literature is intended to illuminate the men-women dominance controversy as well as bridge the gap particularly in the research on the ratio of female to male managers and career progression of women in federal government agencies. It tries to establish whether women marginalization is perceived or actual and attempts to unravel the nature and extent of the marginalization as well as the circumstances that provoke it in order to show whether the marginalization is deliberate or driven by women's capacity deficits or other factors.

The study reflects the entire spectrum of Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Statement of the research

Women constitute 50% of Nigeria's population and they are known to play vital roles as mothers, wives, time managers and community organizers. They make an essential and largely unacknowledged contribution to economic life and play a crucial role in all spheres of the society. Despite all that, women are relegated to the background and have suffered exclusion from politics (Daniel, Faith, 2013; Afonja, 1996) reported that Nigerian women have been marginalized in the formal political systems owing to traditional beliefs and practices which inhibit their advancement and participation in politics and public life. Several hurdles hinder Nigerian women's successful participation in politics. Lack of internal democracy in the political party machineries wields excessive power and displays preference for male candidates. There is large scale discrimination against women within the political parties culminating in a very few women holding offices in party decision-making structures. This manifests itself in the similar way candidates are maltreated at all levels. The established cultural practices and other constraints have restricted women's participation in politics and thus restrained them to take advantage of their numerical numbers and positions so as to significantly influence the decision making processes. As a result, the potential of the majority of the Nigerian population remains unexplored and the scope of labour, energy and human resources available for national development is restricted and wasted.

The Beijing Platform for Action obliged governments and international agencies to ensure the advancement of women in 12 critical areas, one of which was political participation. One of the political rights of the adult citizens, according to the Nigerian constitution, which also includes women, is the right to vote and be voted for which qualifies all citizens to directly participate in the national political process. However, women's low participation, underrepresentation, marginalization and subordination in politics and governance is almost a global phenomenon. Various cultural prejudices have continued to be used to undermine women's adequate and effective participation in politics. The situation in Nigeria is alarming as women are subordinated in almost all spheres of life. According to Aina (2015) cultural values that exist in Nigeria include: the subservient role of women to men, the traditional household roles of mother and wife while also contributing manual labour by working alongside the husband in agricultural endeavors, the culture of silence when men are talking, polygamy and religion, etc. This restriction is common in all the regions of Nigeria. Women thus continue to play a subservient role to men and are restricted in political activities.

This subservient role of women in the society has raised global and national concern. According to Afonja (1996), researchers and policy makers are now paying attention to women's participation in politics due to two important advances in the area of development. Firstly, several global initiatives, since the UN Declaration for women, are promoting women's participation in politics to improve the global agenda for development. Secondly, development analysts have adopted the participatory approach and are mobilizing the grassroots, including women, to plan, monitor and implement their own programmes of development in order to ensure adequate coverage, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability. Similar actions are undertaken by the Federal Government of Nigeria on its own through the offices of various First Ladies. These include: The Better Life Programme for Women launched in 1986 by the late Mrs Maryam Babangida, the initiation of the Family Support Programme (FSP) in 1993 by Mrs Mariam Abacha, the establishment of the National Council for Women's Societies also during the late Mrs Maryam Babangida's tenure and even the Ministry of Women Affairs. All these initiatives are geared towards the advancement of the concerns of women in Nigeria.

Democracy, as pointed out by Olowu in Afonja (1996), is about popular governance. The masses must constitute the focus of the new political culture and every effort must be made to integrate both formal and informal political structures. Women are an important part of the masses. Their development in other sectors depends on their involvement in the policy making processes for their interest to be represented, considering the fact that women constitute over 50% of the population in Nigeria. Oloyede (2017, p. 1–12) sums up the problem of less participation of women in politics in Nigeria this way: "the nation's political landscape is agog with activities. Each day, more aspirants are coming out to declare their intentions to contest the 2011 general elections. As most of the aspirations are men, this is furling the question: Where are the women in the scheme of things in the country popularly called the 'Giant of Africa'?" The women are actually available as evidenced by their population as stipulated by the 2006 census report but are however caged by cultural beliefs and practices which has made the women inactive in political activities.

Conceptual and theoretical issues

Gender is a set of variables that is socially and culturally constructed. Gender characteristics, such as power, autonomy, rationality and activity are stereotypically associated with masculinity, while their opposite – weakness, dependence/connection, emotionality, passivity are associated with femininity.

Gender social life includes three distinct processes: assigning dualistic gender metaphors to various perceived dichotomies, appealing to this gender dualism to organize social activities, and dividing necessary social activities between different groups of humans. All these three could further be referred to as:

1. Gender symbolism,
2. Gender structure.
3. Individual gender.

Tickner (1992) contends that women seldom make it up to any top level government position in any country, but even if they do, they suffer from negative or stereotyped perception by men. She argues further that it is widely held by both men and women that the military and the foreign policy are areas of policy making the least appropriate for women and that strength, power, autonomy, independence, and rationality are typically associated with men, whereas naivety, weakness and even being unpatriotic are associated with women. Imagine an emotional woman who is the President of the United States with her finger on the nuclear button!

Brand (1998) also argues that political liberalization does not suddenly lead to state's recognition of the importance of women, but that the vast literature on the state shows that if it has long had an interest in women, in managing and controlling them, the lack of an explicit policy or institutional structure would not pose a problem notwithstanding.

Brand (1998, p. 3) also averred that: "Women's invisibility in the political process (either on the national and often the municipal and communal levels) should not be seen as lack of state interest but as deliberate policies of states, groups or institutions allied with it. For instance, in some states, as a result of domestic, economic, political or social structure, or ideology of the ruling class, and/or state legitimacy, women have persistently been excluded from politics or the public sphere".

In support of Brand, it could be argued that gender inequality in Nigeria might be the handwork of the decision makers, and unless one is able to strike at the root, propagating policy changes to uplift women would remain superficial. This is because gender is simply a way of disaggregating society into male or female.

Judging from that perspective, we could say that civil society is then not egalitarian, it does not promote welfarism, and it is gender biased. Civil society merely reflects the male biases (Basu, 2000). Ascribing lower status to women, thereby personifying subordination and exploitation, has left women de-empowered. In other words, "women belong, they do not exist" (Basu, 2000). However, all these are the effects of social norms and values perpetuated by customs and traditions.

Gender discrimination has generally been accepted to be the establishment of structures that favour and promote the progressive growth and development of men vis-à-vis women in the society

(Oloyede, 2017; Aina, 2015). The International Labour Organization (ILO) refers to discrimination as “socially constructed roles and responsibilities assigned to a particular gender” (cited in Adejugbe, Adejugbe, 2010). The structures so erected confer on or create privileges for men while inhibiting, depriving of or denying the same or similar privileges to women.

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) describes discrimination against women as any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference made with the intention, purpose or effect of inhibiting, impairing or nullifying the expression, recognition, enjoyment, or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms of women in the political, economic, socio-cultural, civil or any other sphere of human activity. Section 452 of the amended Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) explicitly opts against any form of discrimination, be it on ground of sex, ethnicity, and religion or otherwise. Any arrangement that gives rise to or promotes the existence of inequality or the absence of equality denotes discrimination.

Discrimination may be direct or indirect. Direct discrimination is the overt unequal, unfavourable or unfair treatment of persons on account of sex, race, religion, disability and so forth while indirect discrimination is implicit in the laws, policies, practices or criteria that appear, though, as neutral with equal application across board, and its outcomes are unfavourable, disadvantageous and unpalatable to a particular group (Adejugbe, Adejugbe, 2010). Thus, in spite of the numerous international, regional, sub regional and national instruments deployed against women discrimination in Nigeria, available data indicate that women still suffer deprivation in nearly all spheres of human endeavor, but more in politics, economic activities, and public service employment.

With specific reference to Nigeria, Ezeigbo (1996) expounds that the participation of women in politics together with their contribution to the political culture in Nigeria was for a long time hardly ever discussed by historians, political scientists, and the various arms of the media. The reason commonest among many is that the participation of women in politics and their contributions have remained minimal and insignificant. This minimal and insignificant participation in politics by women in Nigeria, according to her, is not the result of nature but nurture. She divides the political history of Nigeria into different phases, pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial. She argues that these three phases provoked changes that may have occurred in the course of the women’s wielding political power. However, she puts forward the act that in the pre-colonial Nigeria, women actively participated in politics, but colonialism in the 19th century changed the role and status of women drastically from what it used to be. Brand went further to lament that:

The system by the colonial government favored men whose political and economic advancement was pursued at the expense of women who became subsequently marginalized. Education was made available to men but unavailable to women (Brand, 1996, p. 69).

Even when women are educated, the scholarship prepared them for domestic duties, professions, such as nursing and teaching, which actually enhanced the nurturing and caring roles. In such a situation, Brand argues, women are bound to be marginalized even in contemporary political settings in Nigeria, having been totally relegated and handicapped. In a similar vein, Ashworth (1996)

concludes that in an analysis of how women have fared in their cultural and domestic setting, conservatively and progressively, the general view about women will be that of men. This problem is not only particular to Nigeria but has become today a global concern.

The African American Policy Forum (2011) also shared the same view. The above mentioned constraints, it is believed, have eroded the selfconfidence needed by women to make them available to participate in politics. However, FIDA observed that the high level of apathy, that characterized women participation in the 2011 general elections, can be mainly attributed to the above challenges. The absence of women in political debates and the decision making process distorts the appreciation of women's interests. Women's interests are not clearly articulated because male representatives and their interest groups do not possess adequate and appropriate knowledge or interest, or both.

Pre-colonial era

Politically, in the pre-colonial era, Nigerian women were an integral part of the political setup of their communities. For instance, in pre-colonial Bornu, women played active roles in the administration of the state, complementing the roles played by their male counterparts. Women also played a very significant role in the political history of ancient Zaria. The modern city of Zaria was founded in the first half of the 16th century by a woman called Quern Bakwa Turuku. She had a daughter called Amina who later succeeded her as a Queen. Queen Amina was a great and powerful warrior. She built a high wall around Zaria in order to protect the city from invasion and extended the boundaries of her territory beyond Bauchi. She made Zaria a prominent commercial centre. The story was not different in ancient Yorubaland, where Oba ruled with the assistance of a number of women referred to as female traditional chiefs. There were eight titled ladies of the highest rank. The significant role played by the prominent women such as Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin, and Omu Okwei of Ossamari, cannot be ignored. Moremi and Emotan were great amazons who displayed wonderful bravery and strength in the politics of Ife and Benin, respectively, while Omu Okwei dominated the commercial scene of Ossamari, i.e. in present day Delta State (Bassey, Toyo, 2003; Oloyede, 2017).

A similar tradition among the Igala of Northern Nigeria holds that the Igala kingdom was founded by a woman, Ebele Ejaunu. In other societies, however, there was much greater sex differentiation. When this sex differentiation resulted in women forming their own strong organizations, as among the Igbo and Ibibio, women controlled their own affairs and possessed political influence on the basis of their collective strength. Where such female organization was lacking, as among the Ijo, Kalabari, Efik, Edo, and Itsekiri women, their political power as a collectivity was negligible, though individual women of high status could exercise political power as a collectivity. Individual women of high status could exercise political power either through the office of the queen mother (Benin) or through their personal relationships with the male rulers. In socially stratified societies, women of high ascriptive status always occupied a higher social status position than the "commoner" men as well as women. The Yoruba wars demanded extraordinary services from both men and

women; where women were able to rise to the occasion, they were rewarded with greater political responsibility, as in case of the Egba and Ibadan Iyalode. The disturbances and dislocation in Efik and Itsekiri societies at mid-century enabled two women to wield unprecedented political power, while the Omu of Onitsha in the 1880's tried to capitalize on her office to support the new Christian religion in Onitsha. The end of the century initiated another sequence of historical events which were to affect women's political roles adversely. Pre-colonial African women occupied a position complementary, rather than subordinate, to men. As has been shown, the sex segregation which existed in many spheres of society often enabled women to control their own affairs.

Colonial period

Colonialism affected Nigerian women adversely as they were denied franchise. It was only in the 1950s that women in Southern Nigeria were given franchise. Three women were appointed into the House of Chiefs, namely Chief (Mrs) Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti (appointed into the Western Nigeria House of Chiefs), and Chiefs (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo and (Mrs) Janet Mokelu (both appointed into the Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs). The women's wings of political parties possessed very little functional relevance (Kolawale et al., 2013).

Post-colonial period

During this period, Nigerian women began to play very active roles. In 1960, Mrs Wuraola Esan from Western Nigeria became the first female member of the Federal Parliament. In 1961, Chief (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo contested and won the elections, becoming a member of the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly, a post she held until 1966. Mrs Janet N. Mokelu and Miss Ekpo A. Young also contested elections and won, they became members of the Eastern House of Assembly. In Northern Nigeria, however, women were still denied the franchise, even after independence was regained, until 1979, that is, the return of civilian government. As a result of this denial, prominent female politicians like Hajiya Gambo Sawaba in the North could not vote and be voted for.

The Second Republic (1979–1983), saw a little more participation of women in politics. A few Nigerian women won elections into the House of Representatives at the national level and also a few women won elections into the State Houses of Assembly. During the same period, only two women were appointed Federal Ministers. They were chief (Mrs) Janet Akinrinade, Minister for Internal Affairs, and Mrs Adenike Egun Oyagbola, Minister for National Planning. Mrs Francesca Yetunde Emmanuel was the only female Permanent Secretary (first in the Federal Ministry of Establishment and then in Federal Ministry of Health). A number of women were appointed Commissioners in the states. In 1983, Mrs Franca Afegbua became the only woman to be elected into the Senate. Also, very few women contested and won elections into the Local Government Councils during this period.

The 1990 transition elections into local governments heralding the Third Republic saw few women emerge as councilors and only one woman emerged as Chairperson of a Local Government Council in the Western part of the country. During the gubernatorial elections, no female Governor

emerged in any of the states. Only two female Deputy Governors emerged, namely Alhaja Sinatu Ojikutu of Lagos State, and Mrs Cecilia Ekpenyang of Cross River State. In the Senatorial elections held in 1992, Mrs Kofa Bucknor Akerele was the only woman who won a seat in the Senate. Very few women won elections into the House of Representatives. One of these few was Chief (Mrs) Florence Ita Giwa who won in the Calabar Constituency.

President Babangida's Transitional Council appointed two women in January 1993, namely Mrs Emily Aig-Imoukhuede and Mrs Laraba Dagash. In the Interim National Government of Chief Ernest Shonekan, two female ministers were appointed into the cabinet. General Abacha administration also had a number of female ministers at various times in his cabinet, including Chief (Mrs) Onikepo Akande and Ambassador Judith Attah. During the military regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar (9 June 1998 – 29 May 1999), there were two women in the Federal Executive Council: Chief (Mrs) Onikepo Akande, Minister for Commerce, and Dr Laraba Gambo Abdullahi, Minister of Women Affairs (Kolawale et al., 2013).

A review of women representation in general elections in Nigeria in 1999

In Africa, women have neither played a significant part in the creation of the modern state system on the continent, nor have they been able to establish regular channels of access to decision makers. States' policies towards women have exhibited varying degrees of discrimination and coercion. In Nigeria, women have not been adequately represented in public and political affairs. Traces of history, right from the First Republic, has shown that women only played marginal and negligible part in politics. During the past seven military regimes, women played no significant role in the central government. The Second Republic only saw three women in the House of Representatives, and one woman in the Senate. Again, in the truncated Babangida's transition programme, only 27 women out of 1,172 state legislators nationwide were women.

The transition programme that ushered in the Fourth Republic was conducted in a hurry. Notwithstanding, women jumped and embraced it as a political group. This was the end product of the consciousness and necessity to ensure participation, changed into polity. In order to create this awareness, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to the course of gender equality, gender activists, and civil society organizations in Nigeria took it upon themselves to run advocacy programmes and undertook training and research on affirmative action for women. Furthermore, based on the 35% affirmative action in all countries, the Nigerian women were determined to make a difference in the Fourth Republic, given a level playing ground with the men. This was also in line with the Nigeria's National Policy on Women.

To start with, the political parties formed from 1999 onwards excluded women, they were not part of the formation processes, and none featured any female prominently.

According to Simbine (2003), the three political parties generally claimed in their manifestos that they would uplift the lot of women. A manifesto is a document containing political intentions on the basis of which parties and candidates attract voters during elections (Coles, Beverly, 1991; Simbine, 2003). Based on these manifestos, women who constitute the majority of the voters, voted for parties that were ready to uplift and empower women. Although in the Fourth Republic

the story may be different, politics has become an endemic problem; hence the outage and cry by different women organizations and governments with sympathy for gender equality.

However, Simbine (2003) also observes that these political parties, for various reasons and factors, did not perform creditably. In fact, it was observed that even within the parties few positions were given to women. For instance, in the People Democratic Party (PDP) women occupied only a paltry 8% or 13% out of the sixty party positions (Simbine, 2003). Therefore, women were still not on equal footing with men.

As a consequence, it was observed that the nature of Nigeria's transition to civil rule negated the very basis of democracy as practiced in other parts of the world. The Nigerian system of transition fostered and created artificial impediments which blocked new entrants to the political process, most especially women (Brody, 2009). It is noted that the 1999 general elections had 47 million registered voters of which 27 million (57%) were women. Women membership in political parties stood at 5% in 1999; there were 7% female party executive members, and only 8% qualified as women party delegates (Brody, 2009).

The above statistics demonstrate that women formed the bulk of voters in the 1999 elections and invariably were good at voting for candidates, but not to be voted for. However, prior to the 1999 elections, there was a general clamour by women groups for the implementation of the Beijing Plan of Action and the adoption of the Affirmative Action clause, demanding that at least 30% of the positions are reserved for women at all levels (Brody, 2009). This was not to be the case in the 1999 general elections, and even at the party levels. The 30% Affirmative Actions was not met, and women were still marginalized in the first dispensation of the Fourth Republic.

Brody (2009) again observe that Nigeria's return to democracy after 16 years of military rule did not prepare citizens for the exploitation of the political elite who were inclined to alienate them from the system. Accordingly, the new political elites who have many years of experience and involvement in politics, made it ultimately clear through public utterances and actions that women should be kept at bay and not involved in mainstream politics. Aside the above factors, the growing unrest by the youth seeking consideration in the polity also militated against the incursion of woman. This, consequently, gave rise to political thuggery, violence, rigging as well as the emergence of ethnic militias, explaining why there was a low level of women participating especially in the 1999 elections. It was noted that the system of selection at the party hierarchies, which enabled women to be kept where they should belong, made possible every effort at entry into the party or going past the primaries difficult (Morrison et al., 2003).

The political context of women discrimination in Nigeria

The deprivation of women from accessing political power in Nigeria's polity is the most pervasive, frequently and extensively discussed issue in the country. Women have grudgingly expressed dismay over the unrestrained male dominance culminating in their under representation. A brief historical reflection on women political representation shows that in the First Republic the Western Region produced the first female parliamentarian in 1960 in the person of Mrs Wuaola

Esan. Between 1961 and 1966, the Eastern Region House of Assembly delivered three women representatives: Mrs Margaret Ekpo, Mrs Janet Mokelu, and Mrs Ekpo Young. The Second Republic (1979–1983) produced one woman Senator in the person of Mrs Franca Afegbua. Similarly, the Babangida Transition elections in 1992, which marked the onset of Third Republic, equally produced one female Senator, Mrs Kofo Bucknor Akerele. Available data indicate that since the return to democratic governance, women have found themselves at the rear seat in the elective and appointive political offices, occupying less than 10% of both office categories across all levels of government. A report by the African-American Policy Forum (2011) state that the Nigerian Senate has had 654 members since 1999, among them 618 men and only 36 women, which means 94.5% men to 5.5% women.

The situation seems to deteriorate in recent general elections to the extent that in 2019 only 62 women won out of 2,970 who contested both legislative and executive elective offices in the general elections (Olorok, 2019). Onyeji (2019) captures a breakdown of this figure to show that 235 women contested for senatorial seats across the country but only seven were elected, representing 6.42%, while 533 women vied for the House of Representatives seats but only 11 of them won, representing 3.05%. Similarly, out of the 275 women who served as running mates for the Deputy Governorship Office, only four were successful – one for each of the three geopolitical regions in the southern part of the country and one for the whole North. Table 1 presents detailed information on women to men ratio in the Senate at the advent of the constitutional government in 1999.

Theoretical framework

The patriarchal theory has been adopted as the theoretical framework of this study. The rationale behind this theorization is to have an insight into the subject matter of women's participation in politics in Nigeria. The issue of dominance of the male actors still remains common in the traditional or primitive societies like Nigeria, where one's birth determines the role he or she plays in society. The main actor is the man, the father and the head of the family who gives instructions and directions to the family or the entire household.

The patriarchal theory is associated with Sir Henry Maine, who in his books *Ancient law* (1861) and *Early history of institution*, proclaimed the supremacy of male actors over a group. Maine's patriarchal theory is built on the following assumptions: 1. The unit of primitive society was the family in which descent was traced through the male and in which the eldest male parent was absolutely supreme. 2. The single family broke up into more families, which held together under the head of the first family – that was an expansion into tribe. 3. An aggregation of tribes makes the state (Sofola, 1998).

However, the major preoccupation of patriarchal theory is the proclamation of the superiority of the male over the female in the family. Descent is traced through the male child who is the head of the family. He exercises absolute dominion and makes virtually all major or important decisions in the family, while the female child is relegated to the background. The right of the male child (father) is held to be his right to govern his family. In the light of this, all forms of activities,

including political activity, is spearheaded by the male child who is given more attention than the female child and is trusted and entrusted with the political power and authority to decide in the country.

Omodia (2006) observes that one could understand the socio-economic and political discrimination of the female child in families and by extension the state based on the understanding that the modern state emerged from the background where economic and political powers were entrusted into the hands of the male child rather than the female child.

The patriarchal theory creates a kind of family system that is anchored in the supremacy of the male child and the relegation of the female child. This theory is gender biased and does not give room for women liberation. The theory does not consider and accommodate the interest of the girl child or the woman as an equal stakeholder in running the activities of the family and the state. The theory is static as it does not move with time following the society which is dynamic and where things change constantly. The kinds of states we have today, antagonistic to women political participation, are a direct consequence of patriarchy. This is because the state is a combination of families and patriarchal authorities. And the state politics becomes patriarchal, a man's affair, while the women are alienated from the political sphere. In Nigeria women are nearly absent from politics and governance due to the patriarchal nature of the country.

The data in Table 1 show an arithmetic rise of three to four women in the early years of civil rule (1999 and 2003) and a geometric increase between the years 2003 and 2007. In 2011, the number of women in the Senate dropped to seven and the trend remained stable up to 2019. Worse still, only two women held leadership positions of Senate Minority Leader (in the 8th Senate, 2015–2019) and Deputy Minority Leader (in the 9th Senate, 2019–2023), respectively, during this period.

Table 1. Women's representation in the Senate (1999–2019)

Year	Number of men	Number of women
1999	106	3
2003	105	4
2007	100	9
2011	102	7
2015	102	7
2019	102	7
Total	618	36

Source: Onyeji (2018, 2019).

Women's performance in the second chamber of the National Assembly, the House of Representatives, is equally abysmal. Out of the 2,160 members produced during the period under review, women contributed just 117 members representing approximately 5.42% while their men counterpart raked in a whopping 2,043 members which represent 94.4%. Details are contained in Table 2.

Table 2. Women representation in the House of Representatives (1999–2019)

Year	Number of men	Number of women
1999	348	12
2003	339	21
2007	335	25
2011	334	26
2015	338	22
2019	349	11
Total	2,043	117

Source: Onyeji (2018, 2019).

The data in Table 2 reveal a chequered performance of women representation in the lower chamber of the National Assembly. Beginning with a lean figure of 12 members representing 3.33% in 1999, the number increased gradually but steadily up to 2011 which was marked by the peak of 26 members amounting to 7.22%. The membership then took a downward trend to 22 in 2015 and 11 in 2019 representing 6.11% and 3.05% respectively. In this chamber, however, one woman emerged as House Speaker in 2007 but was swiftly impeached before the expiration of her tenure. Since then no female member has occupied a major office in tier.

Across the states, women have equally not enjoyed a fair share of representation in the legislative assemblies since the beginning of the Fourth Republic. Out of a total of 5,940 assembly members produced across the State Houses of Assembly, the females contributed a ridiculous 280 members which form approximately 4.71% as against an astonishing 5,660 seats representing 95.29% registered by the men. The data in Table 3 provide information on women representation across state legislatures since 1999.

Table 3. Women representation in the State Houses of Assembly (1999–2019)

Year	Number of men	Number of women
1999	966	24
2003	950	40
2007	933	57
2011	922	68
2015	939	51
2019	950	40
Total	5,660	280

Source: Onyeji (2018, 2019).

A close examination of the data in Table 3 reveals a gradual increase in the number of women representatives in the State Houses of Assembly from 24 in 1999 to a peak of 68 in 2011 which translates to 2.4% and 6.9%, respectively. Women membership then began to decline and reached 51 representing 5.2% in 2015. A further sharp decline from 51 to 40 women in the state legislative houses occurred in 2019 which Onyeji (2019) describes as the worst electoral performance of Nigerian women in almost two decades of democratic governance. Other details of these data indicate that the number of women occupying leadership positions like Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Majority Leader and so forth in the State Houses of Assembly has been appallingly negligible, amounting to less than 10%.

Women suffer a similar fate in the political executive divide as a woman is yet to win nomination as a presidential candidate in the big political parties in the country, let alone be elected President, Governor or Deputy Governor, and there are no indications that this will happen in the near future. Meanwhile, women started emerging as Deputy Governors during the military rule of the early 1990s. Two women, Alhaja Latifat Okunu and Mrs Pamela Sadauki occupied the office of Deputy Governor for Lagos and Kaduna States, respectively. During the Third Republic, again two female Deputy Governors were elected, one in Lagos State in the person of Alhaja Sinatu Ojikutu and the other in Cross River State in the person of Mrs Cecilia Ekpenyong. In the Fourth Republic, only 15 women, representing 41.7% of the national total, have occupied the office of Deputy Governor since 1999. Table 4 displays data on Deputy Governorship office with regard to women participation.

Table 4. Women holding Deputy Governorship office (1999–2019)

Year	Number of women
1999	1
2003	1
2007	1
2011	2
2015	6
2019	4
Total	15

Source: compiled by the author.

At the State level no woman was elected Governor. There were 74 women (3.07%) among the total of 2,412 contestants for this office. Of the 275 (11.40% out of 2,412) women – forming 11.40% of candidates for the Deputy Governorship four (in Enugu, Kaduna, Ogun and Rivers) have been elected, namely: Hon. Lolo Cecelia Ezeilo, Dr Hadiza Balarabe, Eng. Noimot Salako Oyedele, and Dr Ipalibo Harry Banigo, respectively, thereby making 11.11% of the total number of the elected Deputy Governors. Thus, the number of female Deputy Governors has similarly

declined from six in the 2015–2019 regimes to four. While women have consistently held the Lagos Deputy Governorship since Princess Sarah Adebisi Sosan tenure (2007–2011), All Progressive Congress winning ticket fielded a man (Ob afemi Hamzat) for the post, bucking the trend.

The content of Table 4 depicts a constant distribution for the initial three years (1999, 2003 and 2007), and an arithmetic increase from one to two in 2011. However, 2015 witnessed what could be described as a surge in the number of women Deputy Governors to six, representing 16.7% of the national total, a figure which doubled the first three years and so far has represented the peak of women performance in this position. In 2019, the number of women Deputy Governors declined to 4.

Women have also endured underrepresentation in ministerial appointments within the political executive. There was no female cabinet minister in the First Republic, while the Second Republic produced only two women ministerial slots for the Federal Executive Council (FEC). Since 1999, a total of approximately 251 cabinet ministers have emerged, out of which women have bagged approximately 44 slots representing 17.53% of the total, while men have enjoyed the lion’s share of 207 in approximate numbers, representing 82.47%. Details are as presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Women representation in the Senate (1999–2019)

Year	Total number of ministers	Number of men	Number of women
1999	42	39	3
2003	48	40	8
2007	39	32	7
2011	43	30	13
2015	36	30	6
2019	43	36	7
Total	251	207	44

Source: compiled by the author.

The figures in Table 5 denote clearly a rise and fall in the number of women appointed as cabinet ministers. From three women as cabinet ministers in 1999–2003, the number increased to eight in 2003–2007, probably due to the frequent changes of the cabinet, involving split, recombination and reshuffle of ministries and ministers that characterized this period. The number of female ministers dropped to seven when the new administration assumed office in 2007. In 2011–2015, women got what could be described as an appreciable ministerial slot – a boost of 13 ministers, representing 30.2% of ministerial positions that year. The curve then fell below a half of the 2011–2015 figures in 2015–2019 and rose marginally to seven in 2019. A probe of the data further reveal that women have often got a half or less of the positions of senior or substantive minister. For instance, out of six female ministers in 2015–2019, only three were senior cabinet ministers while the remaining four were deputy ministers otherwise known as ministers of state.

Summary of the research findings

The findings obtained from this study demonstrate that women in Nigeria remain relegated in the political theatre, due to cultural beliefs and practices such as being subservient to men, being home keepers, solely raising children and observing the religious practices such as the practice of seclusion or *purdah*. Despite the fact that women have demographic superiority and the capability to participate actively in politics and positively affect the political process, they still remain inactive.

The Nigerian Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) provided some data gathered from all the geographical zones of the country. These data demonstrate that in 1999, women held only 3% of the contested offices. In 2003, this figure rose to 4% and 5% in 2007. Only 909 females contested the elections in 2011, representing about 9.1 of the over 10,000 candidates. The breakdown of women political participation across the geopolitical zones is as follows:

South West recorded 15.5% of 2116 candidates.

South East recorded 11.9% of 1611 candidates.

South Central recorded 10.5% of 1624 candidates.

North West recorded 2.3% of 2088 candidates.

North East recorded 4.2% of 1187 candidates.

North Central recorded 8.5% of 1371 candidates.

In the same vein, findings also bear testimony that across the states, the Federal Capital Territory had the highest number of female candidates, amounting to 24%, followed by Ekiti (20.9%), Osun (20.5%), Lagos (17.8%), Kogi (1.0%), and Ebonyi (16.0%). On the contrary, Bauchi and Yobe recorded 1.1% and 0.8%, respectively while Jigawa did not record a single female candidate.

The study also revealed that across the political parties, All Progressive Grand Alliance (APAGA) had the highest number of female candidates, representing 12.2% of their total of 640 candidates. Labour party, All Nigeria People Party, Peoples Democratic Party and Congress for Progressive Change ranked next in that order with 91 women representing 11.7% of 775 candidates, 77 women representing 6.6% of 1293 candidates, 84 women representing 5.6% of 1510 candidates and 64 women representing 5.5% of 1167 candidates, respectively.

The results also revealed that Nigeria's population is estimated at 200,923,640 (Ali, 2019). Women form 49.4% of this figure, with a total of 99,180,412. However, female political representation in the 2019 elections was negligible relative to the approximately half of the population they constitute. 2,970 women were on the electoral ballot out of a total of 26,137, there by representing only 11.36% of the nominated candidates. Of this number, only 62 women were elected, a meager 4.17% of the elected officials. This represents a decline from the period of 2015–2019, when women formed 5.65% of the elected officials. A breakdown of the figure given by INEC showed that while only seven women were elected into the Senate during the 2019 elections, the House of Representatives acquired 11 women. Whereas four women were elected as Deputy Governors, 40 women were elected into the 36 state Houses of Assembly.

Women fared in the 2019 elections for the presidential ticket witnessed unprecedented increments, with six women vying for the presidential position against 67 men. They are Obiageli Ezekwesili of Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), Angela Johnson of Alliance for a United

Nigeria (AUN), Olufunmilayo Adesanya-Davies of Mass Action Joint Alliance (MAJA), Rabia Hassan of National Action Council (NAC), Eunice Atuejide of National Interest Party (NIP), and Maimuna Maina of Nigeria People's Congress (NPC).

In 2019, 8.22% of the total presidential candidates were women. Formerly, there was a single female presidential candidate. In 2015, this was Professor Oluremi Sonaiya contesting the position with 13 men. In 2011, it was Mrs Ebiti Ndokrunning against 19 presidential candidates, and in 2007, Major Mojisola Adekunle Obasanjo. In the 2019 elections, a significantly higher number of 22 women (30.13%) were vice-presidential candidates. On the one hand, the disparity between the Presidential and vice-presidential figures could suggest female candidates were being fielded as tokens by the fringe parties. On the other hand, such a phenomenon could also represent shifting societal views on gender norms seeping into politics. Events leading up to the elections should dampen some of the positive sentiments around these figures. Specifically, all six female candidates stepped down before the national elections. Furthermore, the two leading parties did not field a woman for either position on the presidential ticket. Arguably, the most popular female candidate, Dr Oby Ezekwesili, stepped down from the ticket of the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), allegedly over issues of party finance. Almost immediately after her withdrawal, ACPN announced the adoption and backing of incumbent and APC candidate Muhammadu Buhari.

The study showed that from 1999 to date, no woman has been elected President or a Governor of a state in Nigeria, though a few women contested and won elections into the National Assembly and the State Assemblies. The level of female representation is still very low. This is clear in all states of the federation. In 2003, there were no female members of House of Assembly in the following states: Adamawa, Cross River, Ebonyi, Jigawa, Katsina, Kano, Kebbi, Nasarawa, Ondo, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara. This shows that in all political zones of the country women are underrepresented. Subsequently, in 2007, 2011 and 2015, some women contested and won very few seats in the National Assembly and the State Assemblies. This is not enough. Women need greater representation. In 2011 only one woman contested for President, as a PDP candidate, and she could not survive the party primary where she got one vote despite the large number of women that attended the primary elections. In 2015, 5 women out of the 14 persons in total contested the Vice-President position and another 14 contested for President (Ali, 2019).

Moreover, the study revealed that the national women's political participation in Nigeria has remained 6.7% in the elective and appointive positions, which is far below the Global Average of 22.5%, Africa Regional Average of 23.4% and West Africa Sub Regional Average of 15% (Oloyede, 2017). In Nigeria, about 51% of women are involved in voting during elections. Despite these, women are still under represented in both elective and appointive positions. Available statistics revealed that overall political participation in government of Nigeria is less than 7% (Agbalaobi, 2010). However, Nigeria has been showing low level of women groups for the nation not able to meet up with the 30% affirmative action reach at Beijing.

In line with these results, prominent women leaders were mentioned in the study, like Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, a crusader and a scourge of despotic leaders, who led Egba women on a protest against taxation, Margaret Ekpo and Hajiya Gambo Sawaba, who championed the cause

of the oppressed in the northern part of Nigeria, to mention but a few. The legacies of these women are at risk of extinction. Even though an increasing number of women are finding their way into boardrooms and proving leadership for blue chip companies, the modest feats achieved by women in present day Nigeria pales into insignificance in light of the minimal participation of the preponderant population of women. In reality, women participation in decision making in Nigeria is still a far cry from the experience of Rwanda, whose economy rides to recovery on the backs of women.

The study showed the connection between participation of women, a product of economic empowerment and its effect on children, the home, and the society at large. Empowered women take adequate care of their children, ensure education of their daughters and break the vicious cycle of poverty that is to rife in Africa. It is widely reported that the Rwandan economy owes its recovery from coma to the effort of its women. Women are said to be driving that economy. With 50% of Rwanda's Parliament made up of women, Nigeria can take a clue from the Rwanda by empowering its women. Experts say women make better investment decisions than men. Empowering women with the right skills, adequate funding and timely information will no doubt enhance national productivity.

The study also revealed that women constitute over half of the world's population and contribute in vital ways to societal development. In line with global trend, Nigerian women constitute nearly half of the population of the country (Oloyede, 2017). Yet women are relegated to the background in relation to men politically, economically, socially and culturally due to certain cultural, structural, and religious abuses. This situation has engendered in recent times many studies on gender and feminism, like gender and development, feminist theorizing in political science and international relations, political economy, and other disciplines of the social science and the humanities.

The research equally brought to the fore that the Nigerian women are critical stakeholders in the political economy of the country. It is on record that women are responsible for the reproduction of the labor force and production of about 70% of the nation's food supply, but have access to less than 20% of the resources available in the agricultural sector, for instance land, or inputs and credits. They constitute less than 18% of workers in the formal sector and most of them are lower cadre staff such as the cleaners, clerical and secretarial staff (The African American Policy Forum – AAPF, 2011). And records show their 66% representation in contested offices as of 2007; despite they make up a huge population and are widely represented at political rallies and campaigns.

Challenges affecting women's participation in politics in Nigeria

The challenges facing women are enormous. However, researchers have shown that some of them, listed below, are likely to be responsible for the huge marginalization of Nigerian women in politics.

One of them is patriarchy. It refers to a society ruled and dominated by men, which in turn has given rise to women being looked upon as mere household wives and nonpartisans in decision making process, not to mention their coming out to vie for political positions. There is a consensus in the literature that generally in Africa, women are socialized into passive civic and political

roles in the family. This is then subsequently reinforced by the wider society based on cultural precepts that portray publicly active women as cultural deviants. In Nigeria, women political leaders are not just seen as cultural deviants, but there is very little public confidence in their capacity.

Second, Daniel and Faith (2013) observed that one reason behind limited participation of women in politics is financial burden imposed on whoever is a candidate. According to them, women have all the physical, emotional and intellectual strength to participate effectively in politics, but men still dominate the political scene because they have been on the field prior to the nation's independence, which gave them undue advantage in terms of financial strength (Morrison et al, 2007). Another reason is the economic condition of women. The economic condition of women from colonial era has always been an inhibiting factor towards the attainment of equal status with men in Nigeria, most especially in the area of politics. They say "poverty has woman's face", and the situation is made worse here in Nigeria, where in everything you do, you have to bribe your way in or out. An example is what happened in the 1999 and 2003 elections, according to Ali (2019, p. 23).

It is on record that two-thirds of poor adults who participated in the elections were women. In a situation where money decides who wins or loses the elections, the coast was therefore heavily blocked against women's active involvement in politics. The kind of money politics has always been the case in Nigeria, dating as far back as the First Republic, and has always repudiated women's efforts to enter into politics.

In another stead, there is also the problem of societal stereotype placed on women, more so on those who tried to gain equal political status with men. They have been labeled all sorts of names, some are called prostitutes with the aim that it will prevent them from having access to political power. Some are rumored to have slept with different men who already have firm grips in power, or are lured to sleep with men in power with the hope it will give them access to political power. This has often been the bane behind fewer women in politics today.

Furthermore, it is also believed by those who want to do away with women equality, that women aspiring in Nigeria to politics act in ways that contradict their culture and as such are seen as culturally deviant. This too is predicated on the general view about the role of women, which has been confined to the context of the home. i.e. that of child-bearing and carrying out domestic functions only. Thus, over the years, women have been deprived, neglected, exploited, and oppressed. And in spite of their potential, the nation has failed to mobilize them, let alone allowing their effective participation in the political process (Aina, 2015).

Writing on the mechanisms used to eliminate women who form political contest, Agbalajobi (2010) also observed that many a times, officials make open or covert allegations that female aspirants were too assertive and independent, and could not therefore be termed players. There are few examples of women who have been marginalized based on societal stereotypes. Hajiya Gambo Sawaba was beaten and incarcerated many times for her role in politics. Honorable Habiba Sabo, who was in the Bauchi State Assembly, had to deal with the contradictory situation of being *kababitsakaninrawuna* ("the headscarf among the turbans"). The implication is that women, who normally wear headscarves in Muslim Hausa society, have no business being among

the male wielders of power. In Igbo land, Onyeka Onwenu and Loreta Aniagolu were confronted with the retrogressive culture according to which women could not be leaders because they were allowed to “break *kolanuts*”, a sacred rite in Igbo society (Oloyede, 2017).

Another factor hindering women’s incursion into politics has been the dirty nature of Nigerian politics which has become a game of violence, thuggery, and ethnic militarism. To put it succinctly, politics in Nigeria is a “do or die” affair. Brody (2009) observed that the dirty nature of Nigerian politics also adds to low level of women participation, but aired an opinion that once politicians eschew bitterness, rancor and cheap blackmail for the purpose of scoring political points, the tread would change. Afolabi (2009) Nigerian politics, as it relates to political practice, have seen large repertoire of bad practices designed to eliminate people from the scene. Again, Oloyede (2017) noted these include godfatherism, zoning, violence and thuggery, prebendalism, and clientelism. These particularly affect women more, as they may not have access to these networks or connections to help shoot them up politically.

Equally, there has also been the issue of disorganized voter’s registration; efforts were made by the political bigwigs to circumvent and discomfort the whole process to their own advantage, not to talk of the adulteration of electoral result to suit the selected candidates, as noted by Gai-roonisa, and Ibrahim (2008). In its analysis of the first term of the Fourth Republic, the democratic process (...) has been fraught with pitfalls and obstacles occasioned by the principle of electoral body’s (INEC) inefficiency, the behavior of politicians and party leaders left nothing to be desired of the whole process. The ruling government and its agencies selfishly designed the system for the exclusion of oppositions and they tried all they could do to avoid popular participation” (Bassey, Toyo, 2003, p. 5).

Lastly, there is still another factor – women themselves are disinterested in politics in Nigeria. However, some observers have argued that it might be caused by the very nature of Nigerian politics, as could be seen from all the earlier mentioned factors which have constituted a hindrance to women’s participation in politics. Others have also argued that it might be the result of some innate reason, i.e. the imbued disdain for politics. In Nigeria, the women have never loved getting involved in politics which may result from a belief, innately imbued in them.

Conclusions and the way forward

The poor representation of women in Nigerian politics to a very large extent can be ascribed to the influence of men. It is an artificial creation of the Nigerian men who steadily keep women subjugated and marginalized in the political sphere. Women are a particular species and need to be respected and dignified politically. They make up a huge population, they constitute a substantial portion of the voters, they are seen politically but they are not heard politically in Nigeria. Their situation is a result of our contact with colonial rule, prolonged military rule, and various structural impediments. Several challenges that the Nigerian women still face in active participation in politics include discriminatory socio-cultural and religious practices, lack of finance, underrepresentation in governance, unhealthy political environment, discrimination of certain

political parties, wrong perception of women in politics, lack of family, fellow women and media support. These factors, among others, have been identified as responsible for this state of affair. Thus, the recommended measures to guarantee women active participation in politics in Nigeria include: a review of discriminatory practices, economic empowerment, support from family, fellow women and media, equal representation in governance healthy political environment, and proper perception of women in politics.

The final conclusions can be formulated in the following eight points:

1. There is need for constitutional provisions of affirmative action for women, especially the quota system. The constitutional provisions should be specific and clearly allocating at least 30% of legislative seats to women in line with the international minimum standard.
2. The constitution should oblige the political parties to introduce the quota system for women in their choice of candidates for all elective positions.
3. Legislation and policies should be adopted supporting a more gender-balanced representation of women in the elected bodies at local and regional levels.
4. The family system should be democratized, allowing a female child to decide who will become her husband and father of her children. This will give a woman a sense of belonging and integration in her community.
5. Government should provide conducive environment to encourage women's participation in decision making process of the country. This can be achieved by making sure some positions are reserved for women since they don't have the economic power, strength and education to compete with their male counterparts.
6. Elimination of all forms of abuse against women and girl child will enhance women to boost their confidence and performance in politics in Nigeria.
7. Discriminatory socio-cultural and religious practices against women's active participation in politics in Nigeria should be positively reviewed by the stakeholders (particularly the traditional/religious rulers and government) who should be educated to be gender sensitive and encouraged to protect women's political and other rights and ensure support of their political ambitions. These stakeholders should ensure that cultural/religious practices that discriminate against women are discouraged and their perpetrators are adequately punished to serve as deterrent measures.
8. Family members (especially husbands) should give the female political aspirants the relevant consent and support to venture into politics and governance. Through awareness campaign and voters education programmes, women should be informed of their political rights to participate actively in politics not only as voters but also to be voted for numerous political positions and be encouraged to support and vote for their fellow female political aspirants/politicians. Furthermore, media should support Nigerian female political aspirants/politicians by publicly projecting their positive images, emphasizing their important roles and contributions to national development, raising their participation awareness in politics and governance, deploring discrimination against them, etc. The gender stereotypes in the media should be discouraged.

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