

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS AND LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

Nigeria has been recording low participation of women in both elective and appointive positions. Women, who are a major stakeholder in the developmental project of any society globally, have been marginalized, and their low participations in political leadership have been attracting a lot of attention from scholars. This paper, examines the challenges hindering Nigerian women's effective participation in politics and leadership for sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. The paper adopts a multi-dimensional method which makes use of questionnaires, interviews and observation for collection of data and analysis. The study revealed that women are marginalized and feature minimally in government because Nigeria lacks a legislative framework that secures quotas for women in political parties. Patriarchal attitude, poor informal networks and mentoring, finance, religion and educational status were found to militate against women's participation in Nigerian politics and leadership. To overcome these problems, the study recommends, among others, that there is need for the development of electoral reforms that would promote equitable representation of women and respect for due process, empowerment of women to ensure their access to credit facilities, improve the various economic, political, religious and systematic practices that would serve as obstacles to effective participation of women in politics and governance as well as institutionalized varieties of programmes and politics by the government and other stakeholders that would empower women politically, socially, religiously and economically for greater participation in politics and governance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Women, Leadership, Politics, Participation, Governance, Democracy, Marginalization, Policy, Prospects.

Introduction

Women's involvement in politics and leadership, their participation in politics and the democratic process has become an integral part of contemporary discourse on development and governance. In spite of the clamor for women's political empowerment by international organizations, research consistently shows that in many parts of the world, women still linger the fringes of political realm and their participation in government structures and democratic leadership remains low (Vissandjee et al, 2006). In Nigeria, although women constitute nearly half of the population of the country, and 51% of voters in elections, yet they are not given recognition. They do not enjoy their full rights as their male-center parts (Ofong, 2002).

This is due to some cultural stereotypes, abuse of religion, traditional practices and Patriarchal societal structures. More so, women have been defined in so many ways as, the weaker vessel, feeble minded being, child bearer, emotional being, man's helper, caretaker, man's better half, man's wealth preserver, man's soul mate, home managers, among others (Okereke, 2010). The stereotypes views and lack of awareness about the role of women in nation-building has denied the full participation of women in political leadership in Nigeria. Available statistics reveal that women overall political representation in government is less than 7% (Agbalajobi, 2010). Also, women have not still attained the recommended 30% seats in government as prescribed by the Beijing platform of Action to which Nigeria subscribes. It was not until 1979 that women in Nigeria, especially in Northern parts of the country had the franchise to exercise their voting rights. This implies that they could not contest for political position nor participate in choosing their political leaders until 1979 (BAOBAB, 2003).

Currently, although the right to democratic governance is an entitlement conferred upon all citizens by law, implying that there is no legal exclusion of women from governance in Nigeria; other barriers still impede their full participation. The increased involvement of women in the democratic process is essential to broadening and deepening the Nigerian government's commitment to democratic governance which by definition allows for diversity and participation of different groups. Women can therefore only make meaningful impact after they have reached the critical mass needed. It is within this context of subsisting

marginalization of women that this paper examines the role of women in politics and leadership in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

a. Women

The term woman (singular), women (plural) refers to female human being(s), is usually reserved for adult(s), with the term girl being the usual term for a female child or adolescent. The term woman is also sometimes used to identify a female human being, regardless of age, as in phrases such as women's right. Women with typical genetic development are usually capable of giving birth from puberty until menopause. With regards to gender, a woman may also be a person whose sex assignment does not align with their gentle identity or those who have sexual characteristics that do not fit typical notions of male or female.

b. Leadership

Leadership is a concept that is easier described than defined. It is often confused with the leader but both of them are not synonymous, though an understanding of the former can aid our understanding of the later. Olaleye (2008) opines that leadership is a concept applied to the personality environment relation to describe the situation when a personality is so placed in the environment that his will, feeling and insight direct and control others in the pursuit of a common cause. Atado (1991) describes leadership as:

A process tending toward accomplishment of a social system's goals through the use of some people or group's influence, authority, and power under the conditions of social exchange then prevailing.

Onwobiko (2012) described leadership as the office or position of a leader or the art of leading. Alan (1993) defines leadership as the capacity to influence, induce and activate others to pursue a common goal or purpose, while maintaining commitment, momentum, confidence and encouragement. Burns (1993) describes leadership as the process of social influence in which one person enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task. Munroe (2001) opines leadership is ultimately about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen, with the approach of providing direction, implementing plans and motivating people. Haynes (1996) describes leadership as influencing people by providing purpose,

direction, and motivation while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization. Pitcher (1994) posited that leadership is the quality in a leader that instill sufficient confidence in his subordinates as to be willing to accept his views and carry out his commands.

Olaleye (2008) believes that great leadership depends on interaction between personal qualities and development of skills of a leader. This in effect means that effective leadership requires a sense of purpose which gives a careful guiding vision that engenders persistence and perseverance even in the face of setbacks and failure. Integrity is also very essential and this involves self-knowledge, candour, good character, maturity, trust, ability to interact with others, self-discipline, determination and strong will power (Yahaya, 2012). These qualities are necessary for a leader to accomplish his objectives and motivate the people. This above understanding of leadership situate the meaning of leadership in clear perspectives as a co-relative concept which implies the twin concept of "leader" and "follower" while one makes decision and coordinates collective efforts, the other is carried along.

Thus, a leader is defined by the Encyclopedia World Dictionary as "one who or that which leads, a guiding or directing head". Atado (1991) describes a leader as one who offers those under him or her clear course of action which will gain their commitment and serve their individual objectives as well as the higher objectives of the organization. Although these meanings implied in the term leadership, the latter concept which is broader in connotation denotes someone who wields power over the people (Luka, 2011). He is one who guide by influence or directs by going before or along with others (Ritzer, 2008). Lerner (1986) affirmed that a leader is a person who has first submitted willingly and learned to obey a discipline imposed from without, but imposes on him a more generous discipline from within. As a leader, he leads himself first and by so doing, inspires others to follow him.

Yomi (2007) has listed three ways people become leaders. These include: birth, hereditary and through choice or by appointment. Some personality traits may lead people naturally into leadership roles. This is called the trait theory. Important events(s) or crisis may also cause a person to rise to a situation which brings out extraordinary qualities in an ordinary leader. This is known as great event theory (Atando, 1991). Furthermore, a person can be chosen to become a leader. By this divine choice, the person

learns leadership skills. This theory is known as the Transformation Leadership theory (Chiejina, 2011). Political leadership in the context of this study therefore refers to:

Decision of a leader or his/her ability and willingness to co-ordinates collective efforts of the people; govern them and to be accountable for the use of societal resources for the attainment of common good of the society. Leadership refers to the situation where by a personality is so placed in the environment and his/her will, felling and insight direct and control others in the pursuit of a common cause (Tashi, 2000).

The words leadership and authority are synonymous and are often use interchangeably. Authority is an inescapable aspect of leadership. Authority simply put, is “a right” or “power” a person has because of rank or office, to issue command and to punish for violations” (Muoghalu and Abrifor, 2012). According to Ofong (2002) authority is not blind order giving or naked assertion of dominion over others, but the ability to issue communications which are capable of reasoned elaboration. Philips (1975) defines authority as “a right granted to a manager (leader) to make decisions, within limitations, to assign duties to subordinates, and to require subordinate’s conformance to expected behaviour”. Hence, the strength of a leader’s authority depends primarily on the acceptance of his followers to tell them what to do. As long as those acceptance procedures are not followed, a leader can usually exercise authority with minimum difficulty. Adewale (1997) posits that without this relationship between leadership and authority as an individual may possess formal authority, but such possession is meaningless unless that authority can be effectively used.

c. Politics

The word politics in its original Greek roots “polis”, which means “city” and “technique”, meaning “method”, refers to the “art of organizing men in a society to live and interact with one another for the realization of social structures such as: the establishment of legal and government systems to facilitate this interaction” (Lasiele, 1999). In the wider context, the term politics refers to “the different forms of organization and direction of interests at various levels of the society, including the family, village, church and the university for the purpose in view” (Aper, 2007). In the modern usage, politics can be defined in the negative sense as a “game of smartness” which does not go together with morality.

Fundamentally, politics deals with creation and distribution of wealth (Ushe, 2010).

d. Governance

Pratt (1947) provided a simple definition of governance in an extensive detailed analysis of its major components. Here the Bank contends that governance consists in the exercise of authority in the name of the people while governance is doing so in ways that respect the integrity and needs of everyone within the state. Governance, according to this conception, is said to rest on two important core values, namely: inclusiveness and accountability. Orhungur (2005) contends that governance is tied to the ethical grounding of governance and must be evaluated with reference to specific norms and objectives as may be laid down.

Salim (2002) opined that before one discusses governance, it is first necessary to examine the context of the term governance. According to him, governance denotes how people are ruled and how the affairs of the state are administered and regulated. Governance refers therefore, to how the politics of a nation is carried out. Public authority is expected to play an important role in creating conducive environment to enhance development. On this premise, Kaur (2002) viewed governance as encompassing a state's institutional and structural arrangements, decision-making process and implementation capacity and the relationship between government officials and the public. Governance can therefore, be good or bad depending on whether or not it has the basic ingredients of what makes a system acceptable to the generality of the people.

The ingredients of good governance include freedom, accountability, and participation (Lerner, 1986). The basic features of governance include the conduct of an inclusive management wherein all the critical stakeholders are allowed to have a say in the decision-making process. Accordingly, governance is the process through which a state's affairs are managed effectively in the areas of public accountability, financial accountability, administrative and political accountability, responsiveness and transparency, all of which must show in the interest of the governed and the leaders (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2014). It, thus, means that governance thrives in a democratic setting; hence to achieve good governance, there must be a democratic system in place. By this, it means where there is no democracy there cannot be governance, which explains

why democracy as a system of government commands such popular appeal among the countries of the world today. Although, the concept of governance lacks any precise single definition that commands universal acceptability, there is little disagreement over its defining elements, which include accountability, transparency, predictability, the rule of law, and participation (Akintola, 2007).

e. Democracy

Democracy may be a word familiar to most, but it is a concept still misunderstood and misused in a time when totalitarian regimes and military dictatorships alike have attempted to claim popular support by pinning democratic labels upon themselves. Yet the power of the democratic idea has also evoked some of the most profound history and moving expressions of human will and supreme power vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system. The word "Democracy" is coined from Greek words: "demos" (people) and "Kratos", meaning "people's rule" (Mbakwe, 2007). It is said to be one of the concepts in political science in which there is no agreement on definitions. Schumpeter defined democracy as "a system for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquired the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people vote".

Diamond (1999), defines democracy as "government of the people by the people, and for the people". According to him, democracy is government by the people in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system. This definition of Diamond which is reference to that of Abraham Lincoln shows that in democratic government, the masses determine who should govern and have a say in the governance of their country by their elected representatives. They have a say in the passing of the laws of land and can to some extent control and contribute to the decision taken by their elected leaders.

In a democratic setting, there should be freedom of speech, of the press and of opinions, as people are used to expressing their views and questioning decisions taken by their leaders. Aper (2007) asserts that freedom and democracy are often used interchangeably, but the two are not synonymous. Democracy is a set of ideas and principles about freedom, but it also consists of a set of practices and procedures that have been moulded through a long tortuous history. In short, democracy is the

institutionalization of freedom which makes possible to identify the time tested fundamentals of constitutional human rights and equality of the law for any society to possess before it is properly called democratic. Democracy is broadly categorized into two basic principles, namely, direct and representative.

In a direct democracy, all citizens, without the intermediary of elected or appointed officials can participate in making public decisions. Such a system is clearly only practical with relatively small numbers of people in a community organization or tribal council. A typical example is the local unit of a labour union where members can meet in a single room to discuss issues and arrive at decisions by consensus or majority vote. While, representative democracy is the most common form of democracy practice today in most countries of the world, whether for a town or nation. It is the system of democracy in which citizens elect officials to make political decisions, formulate laws, and administer programs for the public good. Whatever the method used, public officials in a representative democracy hold office in the name of the people and remain accountable to the people for their actions.

Olanipekun (2007), drawing inspiration from Thomas Jefferson says the term democracy is cumbersome, slow and inefficient, but it is due in time. He defines democracy as “the government of people, by the people for the people”. According to him, this definition is of universal applicability because both the mighty and lowly make it their anthem. This notwithstanding, it can be argued that the term “democracy” may not lend itself to an easy definition, as it has been ascribed different meanings and interpretations. Thus, Thomas Jefferson in a speech delivered in Maryland in 1809 asserts that the care of human life and happiness are the legitimate objects of good government. He further argued that democracy is a charming form of government, full of variety and disorder and dispersing a kind of quality to equals and unequal alike. One basic truism that permeates each of these definitions or any definition of “democracy” is that if truly analysed and practiced it should be a government in which the people through elections freely choose their leaders who will represent and govern them well.

Thus, “democracy” is a philosophy of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly (Kaur, 2002). Salim (2002) posits that democracy can be described as a country that has a

government that people vote to elect their leaders and make decisions. It is a way of life that concerns itself with how power is acquired and lost exercised and shared. Democracy ensures social, political and economic equality, periodic elections, freedom of the press, participation of people in social and political activities, enjoyment of fundamental human rights, rule of law, respect for government opposition and free judiciary which are basic features of true democracy. Jason in Orhungur (2005) asserts that democracy as “the rule of the people, by the people, for the people. By “the rule of people”, he meant that the people are supreme and sovereignty resides in them always.

Democracy involves a social process which means people-centered system of rule (Kukah, 1999). It exists when the adult citizens of any state freely elect a group of people from among their members to represent them or be their agents for the purpose of administering public affairs for the benefit of the entire populace. Pratt (1947) opined that democracy is a system of government in which every citizen in the country can vote to elect its government officials. The central tenet of democracy is the active participation of people in governing themselves (Diamond, 1999). A civilian government cannot claim to be a democracy unless it is produced truly as the choice of people and there is respect for the rule of law. This shows that democracy is a system based on comparative-parties in which the governing majority respects the rights of minorities.

The rise and widespread acceptance of democracy as a universal system of governance is largely as a result of the 20th century enlightenment and its growth was fascinated by the final collapse of communism. It is obvious that people from various cultural backgrounds have come to admit democracy as “government of the people, by the people, and for the people” (Olanipekun, 2007). Salim (2002), further states that democracy is a political process in which power it’s conducted and limitations are determined by the majority of the citizens of the state through the established political institutions. Sholdfield (1975) explains that democracy implies there should be a sustained degree of equality among men in the sense that all adult members of the society ought to have measure of equality as far as possible.

f. Marginalization

Marginalization is the process of pushing a particular group or groups of people to the edge of society by not allowing them an active voice, identity, or place in it (Edelen, 2005). Through both direct and indirect

processes, marginalized groups may be relegated to a secondary position or made to feel as if they are less important than those who hold more power or privilege in society. Individuals and groups can be marginalized on the basis of multiple aspects of their identity, including but not limited to: race, gender or gender identity, ability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, sexuality, age, and/or religion. Some individuals identify with multiple marginalized groups, and may experience further marginalization as a result of their intersecting identities.

g. Policy

A policy is deliberate system of principles to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. It is a statement of intent, and is implemented as a procedure or protocol. Policies are generally adopted by a governance body within an organization and can assist in both subjective and objective decision making. Policies assist in subjective decision making and it usually assists senior management with decisions that must be based on the relative merits of number of factors. Thus, policies are often hard to test objectively (Haynes, 1996). The term policy applies to government, private sector organizations and groups, as well as individuals. Presidential executive orders, corporate privacy policies, and parliamentary rules of order are all examples of policy. Policy differs from rules or law. While law can compel or prohibit behaviours, policy on the other hand, refers to the process of making important organizational decisions, including the identification of different alternatives such as programs or spending priorities, and choosing among them on the basis of the impacts they will have. Policies therefore, can be understood as political, managerial, financial, and administrative mechanisms arranged to reach explicit goals.

h. Prospects

Prospect is from the Latin word *prospectus* which means a “view or outlook.” A prospect is still a way of looking ahead and expecting good things. It is like potential in that it is something that might be but is not yet. There is also the potential for something bad to happen, but prospects usually look good. This implies that prospect is the direct opposite of challenge which is an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group. Challenge does not simply involve a person expressing a point of view; rather, they are an attempt to remove material from the curriculum or library, thereby restricting access of others.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of assessing participation of women in politics and leadership in Nigeria includes:

1. To explore the characteristics of politicians and their academic needs on the low participation of women in politics and leadership in Nigeria.
2. To provide historical background to women participation in politics and governance in Nigeria.
3. To highlights women contributions to politics and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.
4. To examine the benefits of women's participation in politics and leadership in Nigeria.
5. To discuss the factors affecting women's participation in Nigerian democracy and decision-making.
6. To state strategies adopted by women in breaking the barriers

Theoretical Framework: Theories of Gender Oppression - Patriarchy and Liberal Feminism theories

There are many theories that deal with gender oppression, however, in this study; we shall restrict our self to only two, namely, Patriarchy and Liberal Feminism theories. This is because, the present state of women's low participation is to several factors such as socio-cultural practices, marginalization in political party, poor access to education, lack of women's empowerment, lack of political funding and so on, which has a serious implication for leadership, good governance and development of any country such as Nigeria and for us to better understand the issue in question, there is need to apply the two theories appropriately.

Patriarchy Approach to Women's low Participation in Leadership in Nigeria

Theories of gender oppression describe women's situation as the consequence of a direct power relationship between men and women in which men have fundamental and concrete interests in controlling, using, and oppressing women – that is, in the practice of domination. By domination, oppression theories mean any relationship in which one party (individual or collective), the dominant, succeeds in making the

other party (individual or collective) the subordinate, an instrument of the dominant's will. Instrumentality, by definition, is understood as involving the denial of the subordinate's independent subjectivity (Lengermann and Niebrugge- Brantley, 1995).

In spite of the international declarations affirming the rights and equality between men and women, of which Nigeria is a signatory, the available literature shows that women still constitute a disproportionately small percentage of those participating in political decision-making and leadership (Kasomo, 2012). Many global conferences, including the Cairo Conference on Population and Development (1994), the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), and the World Summit for Social Development (1995) have recognised that, despite the progress made globally in improving the status of women, gender disparities still exist, especially with regard to participation in electoral politics. Women's situation, for theorists of gender oppression, is centrally that of being dominated and oppressed by men (Ritzer, 2008). This pattern of gender oppression is incorporated in the deepest and most pervasive ways into society's organization, a basic arrangement, and a basic arrangement of domination most commonly called patriarchy, in which society is organized to privilege men in all aspects of social life.

Patriarchy is not the unintended and secondary consequence of some other sets of factors – be it biology or socialization or sex roles or the class system. It is a primary power arrangement sustained by strong and deliberate intention. Indeed, to theorists of gender oppression, gender differences and gender inequality are byproducts of patriarchy. In Nigeria, the low participation of women in these positions affects their progress in improving the legal and regulatory framework for promoting gender equality since very few women are influencing the legislative process. The rationale for promoting women's participation in political dispensation is based on equity, quality and development (Kasomo, 2012).

Given the nominally higher population of women (49%) in Nigeria, it is only right for them to equally participate in political decisions on matters affecting them. There are two major variants of gender oppression theory: psychoanalytic feminism and radical feminism. Like all oppression theorists, psychoanalytic theorists see patriarchy as a system, in which men subjugate women, a universally pervasive system durable over time and space, and steadfastly maintained in the face of occasional challenge.

Distinctive to psychoanalytic feminism, however, is the view that this system is one that all men, in their individual daily actions, work to create and sustain.

Women resist only occasionally but more often either acquiesce in or actively work for their own subordination. This theory then explains women's oppression in terms of men's deep emotional need to control women, a drive arising from ambivalence toward the women who reared them (Lengermann and Niebrugge, 2008). Several factors have been identified as generally prevent women from advancing to political spheres in Nigeria. Olaleye (2008) identifies socio-cultural beliefs, attitudes, biases and stereotypes as major barriers. These emphasize the superiority of men and the inferiority of women. They form the integral part of socialisation process in form of gender education and training that men and women are exposed to from childhood (Kasomo, 2012). Radical feminists see in every institution and in society's most basic stratification arrangements-heterosexuality, class, caste, race, ethnicity, age, and gender—systems of domination and subordination, the most fundamental structure of which is the system of patriarchy.

Not only is patriarchy historically the first structure of domination and submission, but it also continues as the most pervasive and enduring system of inequality, the basic societal model of domination (Lerner, 1986). Through participation in patriarchy, men learn how to hold women in contempt, to see them as non-human, and to control them. Another formidable barrier is the institutional framework guiding gender division of labour, recruitment, and vertical mobility. Available studies have shown that women are particularly disadvantaged, with their labour often under-valued and under-utilized. Women are more likely to be employed than men, yet their average income is lower (Kasomo, 2012). Another factor confronting women's participation in leadership is lack of enough participation and empowerment in decisions that affect their lives in political and social processes.

Kasomo (2012), Pateman (1999) posits that, since men dominate public leadership positions, it is the male values that are reflected in the decision-making bodies. Nigeria's development record and its demographic composition suggest a need for active involvement of women in key decision-making bodies. There is a clear indication that, even though women form the majority votes in Nigeria's last general elections, they are still under-represented in leadership positions. Women's participation in

electoral politics since Nigeria's independence in 1960 has been limited to providing support to male politicians. With the new political dispensation in Nigeria, there is a greater need for equal gender participation in acquisition and exercise of political powers.

Liberal Feminism Approach to Women's Low Participation in Leadership in Nigeria

The major expression of gender inequality theory is liberal feminism, which argues that women may claim equality with men on the basis of an essential human capacity for reasoned moral agency, that gender inequality is the result of a sexist patterning of the division of labour, and that gender equality can be produced by transforming the division of labour through the patterning of key institutions – law, work, family, education, and media (Friedan, 1963; Bem, 1993; Lorber, 1994; Rhode, 1997; Pateman, 1999; Schaeffer, 2001). Historically, the first element in the liberal feminist argument is the claim for gender equality. This claim was first politically articulated in the Declaration of Sentiments drafted at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848, with the express purpose of paralleling and expanding the Declaration of Independence to include women.

Women are a major force behind people's participation in the life of society today. Not only do they comprise the majority in terms of population, but they also play a crucial role in society as procreators of posterity as well as producers of goods and services. Although women have made great strides in obtaining a vote and right to be elected to political offices in many countries, they comprise less than 15 percent of the members of parliament, and less than 5 percent of heads of state worldwide. They hold only a fraction of other leadership positions nationally and internationally. In Nigeria, traditional perceptions of women as inferior to men prevail, as many people uphold cultural practices which enhance the subordination of women.

Consequently, men continue to dominate women in political, economic, social, and religious realms. The latter's political endeavours, achievements and roles in society are hardly recognised or acknowledged. This situation has necessitated the clarion call that women should be empowered by giving them due status, rights, and responsibilities to enable them participate actively in decision making at the political level (Kasomo, 2012).

Implications of Women's Status for Participation in Politics and Leadership

Women constitute half of Nigeria's population. They are essential and largely unacknowledged contribution to economic life and play a crucial role in all spheres of society. However, the restrictive practices and constraints have not allowed them to take advantage of their numbers and position in order to significantly influence the decision-making processes. As a result, the potential of half of the Nigerian population remains unexplored and the scope of labour, energy, and human resources available for national development is restricted. Nigerian women have been marginalized in the formal political systems owing to traditional beliefs and practices which inhibit their advancement and participation in public life. In spite of constitutional guarantee of equal access to education for all, nationwide campaigns for the enrolment of all school-age children and programmes for mass adult and non-formal education, women's political empowerment continues to be impeded by traditional obstacles to female education.

The choice of the path of educational training made early in life by young girls under the strong influence of families, peer groups and so on often closes many opportunities to women and propels them towards the direction of traditionally socially-approved female careers; this situation has a social implication for national development in Nigeria. This has profound consequences for women's role in politics because it dictates not only their presence, but also the type of role they can actively play. This is the most pervasive type of barrier facing Nigerian women. Better educated women are more likely to be politically active, to be employed, and likely to avoid situation of conflict. With the population of women exceeding half of national world's population, one would have thought that they would normally dominate the political scene, especially in democratic system of government.

But most women are kept in perpetual abject poverty because they render either unremunerated or poorly remunerated services. It is imperative to note that political powerlessness is a product of other improvised condition of Nigerian women. There is surely no gainsaying the fact that the women folk are more or less absent from the political scene. Solutions should be sought to improve their participation through empowerment process for transformation at family and grassroots level. This has a positive implication for national development as a whole.

Methodology

The present study was a survey of the challenges and prospects of women participation in politics and leadership in Nigeria. Data of women participation in politics and governance for sustenance of democracy in Nigeria was collected using qualitative approach in order to capture views of female politicians and leaders in Nigeria. The use of qualitative approach helps to provide researchers with a real-life translation of what is being conveyed (Agbalajobi, 2009). Interviews were effectively employed to understand people's individual experiences and to suggest useful explanations or interpretations of collected qualitative data. Fifty open questionnaires were distributed to randomly selected politicians and out of these, thirty-one were returned. The questionnaires were geared at collecting written accounts of politicians and later on, twenty politicians (10 males and 10 females) were interviewed.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. However, the data analysis did not take male into account as the aim of the study was in collecting views on women participation in politics and governance in Nigeria without any emphasis of gender distinction. Apart from the politicians, nine academic staff was interviewed. The interviews for staff used a similar interview guide as all had a mutual interest in knowledge production (Rhoda, 1997). Interviews enable the participants to freely discuss their interpretations of the democratic process in Nigeria and to express how they regard situations from their own points of view. For those who participated in the interviews, the interview sessions lasted for 20 to 30 minutes. To safeguard the identities of participants, political affiliation rather than names appeared on the interview transcripts and the research report. The transcript of each interview was given to the interviewee for validation. In order to study the attitudes of politicians on the level of participation of women in politics and leadership in Nigeria, a questionnaire was developed with ten items designed to measure women's attitudes and perceptions on the level of participation in politics and democratic governance.

A five point Likert Scale with strongly agree; undecided; disagree, and strongly disagree was used from main items. This approach is commonly employed in political research (Ainabor, Eregha and Ovbiagele, 2006). Data was collected from a stratified random sampling of 140 politicians made up of 20 politicians, age range 30-60 years selected from each of six

geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The questionnaires were distributed to participants during the political campaign and their responses were guaranteed confidentiality. The data of this study was gathered by means of a paper and pencil survey. The respondents of the survey were politicians from different states in Nigeria. The questionnaires were collected at the end of one month in January, 2018. The data collected was processed and analyzed by using percentages of the responses of participants obtained through the questionnaire.

Historical Background to Women Participation in Politics and Leadership in Nigeria

The question of women participation in politics and leadership has been a topical issue since pre-colonial time, when women were an integral part of the political set up of their communities. In Bornu for instance, women played active roles in the administration of the state, complementing the roles played by male counterparts (Abalajob, 2010). Also, in Zaria, women played very significance role in the formation of the modern city of Zaria in the first half of the 16th century by Queen Bakwa Turuku. She had a daughter called Amina who later succeeded her as a Queen (Kolawole, Adebato and Abubakar, 2013). Queen Amina was a great and powerful warrior that built a high wall around Zaria in order to protect the city from invasion and extended the boundaries of her territory beyond Bauchi and made Zaria a prominent commercial centre (Nigerian Centenary Country Report on Women, 2013).

In ancient Yorubland, the story was not different; women were also an integral part of administration their communities. Yoruba Obas were ruled with the assistance of a number of women referred to as “female traditional chiefs”, consisted of eight titled ladies of the highest rank (Agbalajobi, 2009). The significant role played by prominent women such as Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin and Omu Okwei of Ossomari, cannot be ignored. Moremi and Emotan were great amazons who displayed wonderful bravery and strength in the politics of life and Benin respectively, while Omu Okwei dominated the commercial scene of Ossomari in presents Delta State. The table 1 below shows the statistics of women traditional rulers in pre-colonial days in Nigeria.

Table 1: Statistics of women traditional rulers in pre-colonial days in Nigeria.

S/N	Name	Town/ Village	LGA	State	Type of Rule	Date
1	Luwo Gbadiaya	Ife	Ife Central L.G	Osun	Ooni of Ife	Pre-colonial days
2	Iyayun	Oyo L.G	Oyo L.G	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
3	Orompoto	Oyo	Oyo L.G	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
4	Jomijomi	Oyo	Oyo L.G	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
5	Jepojepo	Oyo	Oyo L.G	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
6	Queen Amina	Zauzau	Zaria	Kaduna	Emir	Pre-colonial days
7	Daura	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
8	Kofono	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
9	Eye-moi	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent- Monarc h	Pre-colonial days 1705-1735 AD
10	Ayo-Ero	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent- Monarc h	Pre-colonial days 1850-51 AD
11	Gulfano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
12	Yawano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
13	Yakania	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
14	Walsam	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
15	Cadar	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
16	Agagri	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
17	Queen Kanbasa	Bony	Bony L.G	Rivers	Queen	Pre-colonial days

Source: Kolawale et al (2012)

However, during the colonial era, colonialism affected Nigerian women participation in political leadership adversely as they were denied the franchise. It was only in the 1950s that women in the Southern part of Nigeria were given the franchise. Three women were appointed into the House of Chiefs, namely, Chief (Mrs) Olufumilayo Ransome-Kuti (appointed into the Western Nigeria House of Chiefs; Chiefs (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo and Jenet Mokelu (both appointed into the Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs. The women wings of political parties possessed very little functional relevance (Kolawole, et al, 2013).

In the post-colonial era, Nigerian women began to play very active roles. However, in the first Republic, there were only four female legislators in the whole of Nigeria, a number that was so negligible to give women the necessary influence in political leader in Nigeria. In negligible number of women participation in political leadership and the imposition of military rule, an era that followed this period from 1966, did not foster women participation in elections and very little was heard of women in politics and leadership (Samuel and Segun, 2012). The only few women that participated in politics and leadership were Mrs. Wuraola Esan from western Nigeria (the first woman of the Federal parliament in 1961), Chief (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo elected member of the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly in 1966, Mrs. Janet N. Mokelu and Miss Ekpo A. Yong (both elected members of the Eastern House of Assembly in 1966).

In Northern Nigeria, however, women were still denied the franchise even after independence, until 1979 which marked the beginning of a new dawn as Nigeria returned to civilian government after the demise of military rule. As a result of the denial, prominent female politicians like Hajia Gambo Suwaba in the North could not vote and be voted for. The second Republic which started from 1979-1983 with Olusegun Obasanjo as the president made a clear departure from the past and more women participated in politics and governance. Some women won elections into the House of Representatives at the National level and the State House of Assembly. However, only 2 women were appointed Federal Ministers. They were Chief (Mrs) Janet Akiminade, Minister for Internal Affairs and Mrs. Adenike Egun Oyagbola, Minister for National Planning respectively.

Mrs. Francisca Yetunde Emmanuel was the only female permanent Secretary (first in the Federal Ministry of Health) Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2015). A number of women were appointed Commissioners in the states

also. 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 Council during this period. However, with the return of military rule in 1983, led by General Muhammadu Buhari, the first formal quota system was introduced by the Federal Government as regards to the appointment of women into governance. He directed that at least one female must be appointed as a member of the executive council in every state. All the states complied with the directives, some states even had two or three female members.

In the early 1990s, two women were appointed Deputy Governors. They were Alhaji Latifat Okunu of Lagos State and Mrs. Pamela of Kaduna State. There was however, no female minister and no female member of the defunct supreme council or the later Armed Forces Ruling Council (National Bureau of Statistics (2010) Report of National Literacy Survey). The third republic saw few women emerge as councilors during the transition elections into Local Governments in 1990. However, 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. They included Alhaja Sinatu Ojikutu of Lagos State and Mrs. Cecilia Ekponyong of Cross River State.

In the senatorial election held in 1992, Mrs. Kofo Bucknor Akereke was the only woman who won a seat in the senate. Very few women won election 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 Aiki Mhokuede and Mrs. Laraba Dangash. 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 (June 9th, 1998-May 29th, 1999) there were two women in the Federal executive council, namely, Chief (Mrs) Onikepo Akande (Minister for Commerce, and Dr. Laraba Gambo Abdullahi (Minister of Women Affairs) (Kolawale, et al, 2013).

The fourth republic which witnessed the return of democracy in May, 29th, 1999 gave hope for new dawn in the struggle for more participation of women in Nigeria politics and leadership positions. Democracy is about fair representation of all interest groups in the society and the two representations of women is a violation of the principle of democracy. Thus, between 1999 and 2015, there have been five administrations, President Umaru Musa Yaradua (2007-2010), President Goodluck Jonathan (2011-2015) and President Muhammadu Buhari (at present). The position of Vice-President in Nigeria followed the same trend as that of the president. Four males have dominated the seat since the return of democracy in 1999.

The Senate and House of Representative

The senate has been dominated by males. There were only 3 women out of 109 members, representing 28% of the members of the senate. In 2007, the members increased to 8 (7.3%). However, there was a decrease from 8 women members in 2007 to 7 in 2011, which is 6.4% and 8 (7.3%) in 2015. While, the number of House of Representative was 12 out of 360 members which was about 3.3% but increased to 21 (5.8%) in 2003. It was 26 (7.2%) in 2011, in 2015 the number of women in the House of Representative decrease to 19 (5.3%) out of 360 members as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Elective Positions of Women in 1999-2015

	1999		2003		2007		2011		2015	
Office	Seat Available	Women		Women		Women		Women	Women	Seat Available
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(6.4)
House of Reps	360	12(3.3)	360	21(5.8)	360	26(7.2)	360	19(5.3)	109	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
State House of Assembly	990	12(1.2)	990	38(3.8)	990	52(5.3)	990	62(6.3)	990	
SHA Communities Chairpersons	829	18(2.2)	881	32(3.6)	887	52(5.9)	887	—		

ns										
L.G.A Chairpersons	710	9(1.2)	774	15(1.9)	740	27(3.6)	740	—		
Councilors	8,810	143(0.02)	6368	267(4.2)	6368	235(3.7)	6368	—		

Source: *Hundred Years of Nigerian Woman, Nigeria Centenary Country Report on Women, December, 2013.*

Men without Women: An analysis of the 2015 General Election in Nigeria
by Nse Etim Akpan

2. Participation of Women in Politics and National Development

One of the most serious problems faced by the Nigerian development is none active participation of women in politics and national affairs. Women had tangible records of economic activities, largely in peasant societies where women made large contributions to community and national development. However, these contributions are not really recognized, but the truth is whether one holds a pragmatic or a humanistic view of development, the participation of women is necessary in politics and national development. The analysis of women's traditional and preservation responsibilities demonstrated that they played significant roles in economic and society, such as cultivation, food processing, food preservation, animal husbandry and marketing, in addition to caring for their homes and families (Okereke, 2010).

Opinions are still divided on the role of women in national development despite the awareness created by the international organizations and conferences such as the International Women's Year (1975) and the decade that followed (The United Nation's Decade for Women, 1975-1985), as well as subsequent United Nation Conferences like the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development, the 1993 Vienna Human Rights Conferences, the 1995 Copenhagen Summit on Social Development in many parts of the world like Margaret Thatcher (the Iron Lady), former prime-Minister of Britain; Indira Ghandi, former Prime-Minister and the Beijing World Conference, which Nigeria affectively participated and signed its legal instruments to produce a blue print for participation of women in sustainable development.

The gender imbalance has for long time hindered women's full development of their potentials and consequently affected their

contributions to national development. The following areas had been identified as potent avenues by which women have collectively contributed to national development. These include: grassroots solidarity, food production, food preservation and storage. Thus, in the last four decades, the role of women in national development has assumed a center stage in public debates in Nigeria. However, are counter arguments on whether the role of women is best suited in the home fronts or they can also engage in the socio-economic and political activities like the male counterparts (Luka, 2011).

The overwhelming majority of the labour that sustain life-growing food, cooking, raising children, caring for the elderly, maintaining a house, hauling of water-is done by women, and universally this work is accorded low status and no pay (Onwobiko, 2012). In the same vein, the ability of women as mothers to plan, organize, direct and coordinate all resources at home to the benefit of all members of the family contributes to stability and peace at the home front which promotes national development. Coleman in Onwulbiko (2012) further states that the role of women in national development go beyond the narrow customary conception of the role in family keeping and procreation and permeates all facets of the nation's economy. Women in most societies are regarded as currency with which political and economic alliances are cemented.

In social anthropology, the transfer of women between lineages and clans is regarded as a medium of communication more potent and clearer than language itself. From this perspective, it is needless to state the invaluable contributions of women in fostering unity and cohesion among the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria through inter-ethnic or inter-tribal marriages. This however, indicates that women have collectively contributed to national development areas such as:

i. Grassroots solidarity

Women's grassroots initiative is highly functional and supportive to communities and nations. Women's capacity for co-operative action is a large part of the reason for identifying them as the "backbone of rural development" (Okereke, 2010). They organize themselves for wide-ranging purposes, mutual savings and loan systems, house construction and improvement, cooperative farming and marketing, mobilizing funds for development of the society. Despite the substantial accomplishment of women groups, women are still regarded as not contributing meaningfully to national development.

ii. Food production

The contribution of women to food production in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. Over time, women have paid their dues immensely both as individuals and as groups in Nigeria in the food production process. They clear the land, till, plant and tend crops. They harvest, store, preserve and even ensure that produced food ends up edible on the dining tables. In Nigeria, women work the land and feed the population. Women are instrumental to the development of most prosperous agricultural regions in different parts of the country and Africa in general. The devaluation of women's work done in sustainable economies is the natural outcome of a system constructed by capitalist patriarchy. These roles are not accorded their rightful recognition in the society but seen is mere on times.

iii. Food preservation and storage

Apart from roles women play in the cultivation of crops and livestock domestication, they preserve and store food crops such as African bread fruit, cassava, palm oil, cocoyam, among others that are specially preserved by women. These foods that are preserved and stored provide food especially during planting seasons when food is in short supply. It provides food security for the family and community. Women have continued in their struggles to be relevant in the development process of the nation though their efforts are neglected in the nation's planning process. In professional technical occupations, they are found mostly as teachers and nurses. Some are also found in clerical occupations. Generally, women dominated the nonwage sectors. Okogie in Ker (1999) observed that women make their greatest contributions to the economy in the agricultural sector. Trading is another area women contribute to the economy of the country. Many are engaged in both local and cross border trade which boosts the economy.

Efforts Made so far Towards Woman Empowerment

Women over the years have made several efforts to change their conditions but such efforts have been sporadic, uncoordinated and unsustainable. Deliberate organized efforts aimed at changing the status quo of women is a recent phenomenon. World conferences with women issues top on the agenda have been held at various times. There was the 1975 conference at Mexico City, 1980 at Copenhagen, 1985 at Nkrobe, 1995 Beijing conference and even the recent women summit held on 18th October, 2014 at Abuja at the instance of Dame Patience Jonathan, the wife

of the Nigerian president, all geared towards women improvement. These conferences have succeeded in bringing gender issues to global attention. The international conference gave the problem of women a global outlook and emboldened them to articulate the issues of critical concern and lobby for attention and assistance.

This however, made the International and National Institutions and agencies more responsive to women's needs and aspirations. The international conference on population and development held in Cairo in 1994 was a major breakthrough in the empowerment of women. It identified the empowerment of women and improvement of their status as essential to the realization of the full potential of economic, political and social development of any given human society.

The Beijing conference recognized the need for the empowerment of women and equality between men and women as prerequisites for achieving political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security among all the peoples of the world. In Nigeria, several bodies and organizations emerged with the objective of empowering women, protecting and promoting their interest. The establishment of Women Political Empowerment Office, Nigeria Women Trust Funds, Women Lobby Group, the Institution of INEC Gender Policy, the National Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue, the Initiation of several interventions to actualize affirmative action and the convening of the Nigeria women strategy conference, National Center for Women Development in collaboration with National Bureau of Statistics. The defunct Better Life for Women Programme, the Family Support Programme (FSP), Family Economic Advancement programme (FEAP), the National Women's Commission (NWC) and the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS), are Governmental Organizations (G.Os) that were all geared towards women empowerment.

There are also non-government bodies with similar targets. Many African countries have formulated policies to promote women empowerment and development. Nigeria has adopted a "National policy on Women". This is to promote and protect the rights of women and increase their participation in government. The National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) document expresses governments' commitment to 30 percent representation for women and the Federal Government is trying to keep to that policy. All these and other efforts put in place have not yet yielded enough fruits as „majority of women remain

un-empowered even though some have received the supposed vehicle (Education) through which empowerment could be conveyed. This is mainly due to some variables that constitute obstacles/barriers to empowerment that have not yet been removed and the *Modus Operandi* of the exponents of women empowerment.

Challenges Hindering Nigerian Women Effective Participation in Politics and Leadership

Women in Nigeria no doubt belong to the disadvantaged group in the society when compared to their male counterparts for reasons beyond their making and control. There is obviously no deliberate policy of discrimination against women in Nigeria, yet some obnoxious traditions, habits and ideas about women inhibit their progress and active participation in national affairs. In spite of the seemingly remarkable achievements recorded by women world over, Nigerian women remain severely constrained in their efforts to play a major and decisive role in the social-political and economic development of the nation. Agu (2007) blames the colonial authorities for setting the dangerous stage and precedence for the weakening of the influence and role of women through what has been described as the “abrogation of the social stability” which the Nigerian society had enjoyed before the coming and intrusion of the British Colonialists.

Such cultural beliefs and practices are found in the idea that men are superior to women and this has helped to deny women of their rights as human beings. These disparities between Nigerian women and men have hindered the Nigerian women from contributing meaningfully to the development of the nation. The problems include:

a. Patriarchy

It refers to a society ruled and dominated by men over women, which in turn has given rise to women being looked upon as mere household wives and non-partisans in decision making process in households not to talk of coming out to vie for political positions.

b. Illiteracy

Education is basic to a person’s ability to maximize any opportunity that may arise from development. Education, whether formal or informal constitutes a vital instrument for socio-economic development of any society as well as the upliftment of the individual concerned (Ainabor &

Ovbiagele, 2007). Unfortunately, the problem of gender disparity in Nigerians educational development as is the case of other parts of the world remains the basic constraint to women development in Nigeria. The importance of literacy and women empowerment in promoting gender a quality and the advancement of women was further stressed by the Millennium Development Goals (2000).

For women to be integrated into development process, they need quality education, in order to become co-partners in national development. The problem of gender imbalance in access to basic education in this country has not been fully addressed going by gender disparities in school enrolments (FMWA, 2006 & FME, 2007). Preference for male education and anti-women education traces which are still visible in some parts of Nigeria, particularly in the far North contribute to women's less access to basic education (Ainabor, Eregha and Ovbiagele, 2006). This gender imbalance to access to educational development opportunities has for a long time hindered women's full development of their potentials and consequently affected their contributions to national development.

c. Cultures and Tradition

Various cultures and traditions in Nigeria restrict the role of women to domestic activities, such as keeping the home clean, bearing children, cooking food for the entire family members among others. The society as at today sees these roles as less important as they require less extensive formal education for one to be able to perform them. Most cultures and traditions in Nigeria depict male dominance in all situations and as such females are inferior. These unfortunate belief systems have been a major obstacle to women development in Nigeria and as such constraints to their contribution to national development.

d. Women's Perception of Politics

Nigerians are awash daily with tales and news of dishonest and disreputable practice of some politicians. Thus, the common perception of politics is that it is a dirty trade that is reserve for people of questionable integrity who have little regards for the rule of law and due process. Therefore, women in politics are seen either as partners in crime or abettors of the vile committed by the political class. In order to avoid the discoloration or blot associated with politicking, some women prefer to stay out or take a backseat.

e. Stigmatization

Following the way politics in Nigeria is played, it is being perceived that it is for individuals that have no regards for human right and are quick at compromising their virtue for indecent gains. Therefore, women aspirants who ventured into politics are looked upon as shameless and promiscuous.

f. Sex Stereotype

During the period of socialization females are usually trained to believe that there are different roles for males and females as well as the superiority of males over females. Adults also discourage competition between males and females and as such the female feel inferior to the males. Yomi (2007) also raised another challenge which he described as the “patrilineal system of descent” in which generations are identified through male off-spring. The responsibility for the preservation and continuity of the “family tree” rests on the male children and special recognition are accorded them than the females in the preparation for their adult roles. This mentality formed from childhood hinders the woman from aspiring to great heights and as such cannot exhibit Gods potentials in their lives and hence cannot contribute enough to the development of the nation.

g. Illiteracy or low Level of Education

A major social disadvantage for women in politics is mass illiteracy or low levels of education. A UNICEF, Nigeria survey in 2004 revealed that only 60% of women aged 30-45 years manage to complete their elementary education and only 26% proceeded to the secondary level. Similarly, a survey by the National Planning Commission indicates that 50% of women had no formal education. This invariably translates to why comparably few numbers of women qualify for jobs in the formal sector. The limited number of educated women also account for why only few women present themselves as candidates for elective positions.

h. No Sufficient Power

Nigerian women are generally not “aggressive or assertive” enough to seize leadership mantle from their male counterparts (Lasiele, 1999). People who lack power drive will find it difficult to assume leadership position. This impediment may be attributed to low self-concept on the part of Nigerian women most of whom believe that males are better than them in human endeavors. This notion hinders them from trying to

compete with their male counterparts which would have given them the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to national development.

i. Meeting Schedules

The time scheduled for caucus meetings to strategize and map out political plans either for the pre or a post- election period are odd and is not conducive for responsible and family women. The slated time are often time which women are expected to take care of their children and family. This method of schedules is viewed as an attempt to side-lining women from engaging in political process.

j. Religious Beliefs

The different religions in Nigeria have different views as regards the position of women in worldly affairs. Some religions strongly believe that women should only be seen and not heard while some view men as superiors; few others see them as equal. This difference in beliefs adversely affects the way women are treated and opportunities provided to them. As such what they believe in affects their effort towards national development.

k. Funding

Politics, particularly seeking elective office in Nigeria as it is elsewhere is an expensive venture requiring huge financial involvement. The generally poor financial disposition of women in Nigeria is a serious militating factor which account in the most part for women's political defeat. The lack of financial muscles has placed womenfolk either as subordinate or weak players in the political game. About 90% of women in Nigeria currently live below poverty line, so in spite of concession granted by some major political parties like the PDP and ANPP which lowers the cost of obtaining party nomination forms for women into elective office, nonetheless, the cost of realizing electoral ambition is still far beyond the reach of even the most highly placed women in the absence of godfather who is willing to "foot the bill in exchange for unlimited favour when the seat is eventually secured" (Yahaya, 2012). The relatively pathetic financial status of Nigerian women is a major limiting factor for their effective participation in politics.

l. Low Participation of Women in Politics

Women do not often see themselves as viable instruments of political participation and national development (Okemakinde, 2014). The level of women's participation in politics is still very low in Nigeria. Very few

women in Nigeria contest for elective post, rather, they limit their political activities to voting or appointment into political positions. The complacency of women in several aspects of national life not only reduces their capacity for manoeuvre in a male dominated society but also helps in perpetuating the culture of reducing women to positions and roles of second fiddle. This was why Agu (2007) believed that women see politics as a dirty game, a business which involves intimidation, rigging, assassination, kidnapping of opponents and all sorts of electoral violence which they cannot cope with. This attitude of women may be related to their level of education and poor economic base a situation that hinders them from contributing meaningfully to national development.

m. Political Violence

Nigerian elections have always been characterized by one form of violence or another since the return of democracy. Female aspirants of various political parties cannot withstand political violence; therefore, women participation in politics is drastically reduced.

n. Lack of Self-Confidence

Most women lack confidence in their own ability and capacity to lead is one of the major challenges facing women in politics and leadership in Nigeria. In most cases, they feel the game of politics is an exclusive reserve of men and dare not venture into it; and those who manage to venture are usually content with the back seat. Similarly, many women do not have confidence in the leadership abilities of their fellow women. Although, factors like envy, jealousy, and other problems associated with interpersonal relations are common with women, generally, most women would rather vote or support men to win election than their fellow women in spite of their numerical strength. This has often given the men an upper hand when it comes to mobilizing support for elections. A classic example of this scenario was the case of Mrs. Sarah Jubrin, who contested against the President Goodluck Jonathan and former vice President Atiku Abubakar in the PDP presidential primaries preparatory to the 2011 general elections. At the end of the exercise, Sarah Jubrin pulled only one vote-obviously an own vote. This shows that even her closest female supporters did not vote for her.

o. Poor Economic Base

Most Nigerian women are poor. This situation may be related to their low level of educational attainment. In business, most women do not often involve themselves in high profile ventures. They prefer instead to engage in petty trading where the gains and losses are articulated at the end of each day (Okemakinde, 2014). The access of women to finance is so minimal that woman is generally disadvantaged in terms of economic stability and independence. With poor economic base of most women their contribution to national development will be less substantial. Nigerian women like their counterparts in other developing countries of the world, suffer from undue discrimination, marginalization and exploitation by the men folk through the instrumentation of their cultures and traditions and as such cannot contribute their quota to national development.

p. Women's Marginalization in Political Party Leadership

Most political party hierarchy in Nigeria is dominated by men. The comparably poor financial status of women to finance or support party activities have fundamentally limited their influence in the political party structures. Hence women are not likely to be voted into key positions in the political party hierarchy. These also affect the extent of their powers and influence within the party structure. Thus during party nomination they are usually unable to assert themselves or even push for the interest of women leading to the marginalization of women during elections.

q. Religious and Cultural Barriers

Both Christianity and Islam do not accord women much role in public life, and same is obtainable in most cultural values, where women are seen culturally as quite submissive and image of virtue. However, they are not to be seen in public domain. And so it is a challenge to women participation in politics, more so, women found in the corridor of politics are not often religious in practice.

r. Cultural and Religious Discrimination

Women are discouraged from participating in public life from childhood through adulthood by authority figures such as husbands, fathers, mothers and other relations due to cultural image of a virtues woman define as quite, submissive who should be seen and not heard (Muoghalu and Abrifor, 2012). Therefore, partisanship is seen as ventures that are beyond the limit of societal expectation of a descent feminine behavior thus leading to stereotyping. These cultural orientations constitute

disincentives for women participation in politics. Similarly, religion is also used as instrument of stereotype against women who venture into politics or as barriers to prevent them from public life. For example, Pudah- which is the restriction of women to their quarter predominantly in practice among Muslims in Northern Nigeria ensures that they are barred from participating in politics either as voters, aspirants or even participation in economic activities. Likewise, the Christian faith also does not accord women much role in public affairs.

Empowering the Nigerian Women towards Participation in Politics and Leadership for Sustainable Democracy

One major way by which women could be empowered is acquisition of vocational skills education. The right of women to be self-reliant and self-employed can be achieved through the acquisition of vocational skills that are related to their environment. This will enable them to engage in small scale enterprises, which is one of the ways of reducing the incidence of poverty and unemployment among women and consequently become, empowered enough to participate in politics and governance in Nigeria. Okemakinde and Tijani (2009) are of the view that the major pre-requisites for empowering women in the society include:

- Being sensitive to issues of gender and other aspects of humanity and interaction where social inequality can emerge;
- Endeavour to utilize existing resources in the given location in a productive manner whenever possible;
- Giving people who live and work in the given community an active role in a decision making process regarding the delivery of services;
- Giving opportunities to excluded groups to participate in public policy matters;
- Formalizing, disseminating and enforcing legal rights among others.

The above reveals that the income generating programmes are a practical solution to empowering women and strengthening their positions in political leadership in the society (Okemakinde, 2014). Kester, Okemakinde and Ejerenwa (2005) are of the opinion that women can be empowered to sustain the economy through education. They further stated that the Nigerian government should emphasize the importance of education of female population not only in arts, the humanities and social sciences but also in science and technology. Also there should be

sensitization of the parents and key stakeholders about the importance of female students in learning. Teachers should equally assign female students to leadership positions, and use female educators and professionals as role models for career talks and guest lecturers.

Women can be empowered orally, by the use of inspiring words that will awaken the inner being of a woman to the realization of the potentials she has and inherent abilities that can make her actualize great things. Written empowerment that one receives from written materials like books, magazines, articles among others will bring back fresh ideas and push one to accomplish her task. Women need it to integrate into national building. It helps them to actualize gender equality and claim their rights, has access to resources technology and needed services. This will help them influence policies. Women therefore deserve “Literacy Empowerment”. Empowering women financially is one of the most powerful ways of empowering women. Okereke (2010) defined money as a defense, security, prime move, strengthener, life giver and god of the universe. Money gives a person power, authority and influence.

Money answers nearly all things, gives one boldness and confidence. Financial empowerment is very vital to a woman because she needs it to start a business, finance projects, run organizations, and get involved in politics among others. With enough finance, the woman will contribute immensely to the national development of a country. To empower women financially they should be allowed to have access to loans and mortgages. Women empowerment will remain a mirage if women themselves are not fully involved. To ensure full and sustained participation, women should eschew petty jealousy, envy, greed, gossips, slandering, belittling and not having confidence on their fellow women some vices that destroy women bonding.

Prospects of Women Participation in Nigerian Politics and Leadership

The deepening of democracy and democratic institutions is inevitably leading to the gradual revision of laws and provisions that are antithetical to the interest of women. This development is further galvanized by the role of transnational institutions and agencies in creating awareness and advocacy for expanded role for women in national development particularly as it affects political participation. These efforts have yielded a lot of positive outcomes. In many quarters the hitherto existing prejudices and discrimination against women in public affairs is

gradually ebbing as emerging societal institutions are being transformed to officially accord women equal privilege and status with men in line with constitutional provisions.

In spite of the current low level of women participation in politics and leadership, the numbers of women in elective and appointive positions have progressively risen since 1999 when democracy was reintroduced in Nigeria; and despite the poor performance of women in the 2011 elections, there have been comparatively significant growths in the interest of women in politics and leadership as reflected in the number of women who indicated interests or vie for the various elective positions in the 2011 general elections as we can see in table 3 below.

Table 3: Participation in Elections in Nigeria by Gender in April, 2011

Office Contested	Gender		Total
	Female Candidates	Male Candidates	
President	1	19	20
Vice President	3	17	20
Governor	13	340	353
Deputy Governor	58	289	347
House of Reps	220	2, 188	2, 408
Senatorial	90	800	890

Source: British Council (2012)

As indicated from table 3 above, there were 13 female governorship candidates, 90 women contested senatorial seats, 220 women for seats in the House of Representatives and “493 for the various Houses of Assembly” (Chiejina, 2011); and more importantly, a woman contested a presidential primary for the first time, under the banner of the PDP. This development gives women a glimmer of hope that they can actually do more and better in future elections and occupy important decision making positions. Some of the few women that have occupied political

and decision making position since 1999 have demonstrated sterling leadership qualities and outstanding track records of achievement. The contributions of such women as Mrs. Abigail Ukpabi, Dr. Okonjo-Iwela, Prof. Dora Akunyili, and Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili has not only increased the visibility of women in the national polity but also led to the general appreciation of the potentials of women to serve as catalyst of social change (Chiejina, 2011).

The role of these women and many others too numerous to mention in different spheres of their professional callings in both public and private sectors have put women on a good pedestal thus giving a promising signal of high prospects of more roles for Nigerian women in public affairs.

The need to reserve certain quotas for women in appointment into political and decision making position including political parties is gradually gaining recognition and acceptance. In Europe and other Western countries tremendous advancement has been made in this respect. In Africa, countries like South Africa and Rwanda have taken the lead in this direction. Since the enthronement of the present democratic regime in Nigeria, women have been given reasonable concession by successive government.

The appointment of women by President Goodluck Jonathan in his administration accounting for 31% is a positive indication that the traditional barrier against women participation in public affairs is receding and government commitment to implement the 35% affirmative action may be realized. Women are known to possess certain important qualities that are suitable for leadership. This includes hard work, dedication, patience, endurance, tolerance, thoroughness, honesty and transparency all of which are great assets in public relations and public acceptance (Tashi, 2000). With the crisis of leadership that have bedeviled the Nigeria society since independence and against the backdrop of the outstanding performance of women in public capacities in recent decades, there seem to be a growing consensus among scholars and observers of this trends that women could fill the critical leadership gap in providing the much desired good governance in Nigeria.

This seems to be translating into concrete action with the key roles being assigned to women by the present government of President Goodluck Jonathan in his administration. There is a comparatively higher increase

in girl child school enrolment today in Nigeria than ever before even though more needs to be done. Since 1990 there has been a progressive growth in the rate of girl child school enrolment in Nigeria. The Universal Basic Education programme introduced by former president Obasanjo in 1999 and other educational reform policies by subsequent government also impacted positively on the rate of school enrolment for the girl child especially at the primary and secondary education levels as shown in the table 4 below:

Table 4: Net Primary and Secondary Enrolment Ratio 1990-2009 in Nigeria

Year	All		Female%		Male%	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
1990	51	24	48	22	54	26
1993	60	35	57	33	64	38
1999	61	44	58	44	64	44

Source: National Population Commission (2011)

Also, the number of educated women has correspondingly increased and still increasing by the day. This increase is fast translating into more number of women that are empowered educationally and materially to occupy public office. Women who are educated are better suited to participate in decision making. Women who are empowered economically have less difficulty in playing active roles in politics as they can assert themselves and are unlikely to become pawns in the hands of political godfathers with sinister ends (Luka, 2011). Thus the growth in the number of educated women in Nigeria is not only increasing their access to opportunities in the formal sector but also access to other resources that would enable them participates effectively in politics.

Ekpe, Aloba and Egbe (2014) noted that for Nigeria to allow full participation of women in politics and leadership there are some factors which are likely to help them. These factors include:

i. Reducing extreme poverty and economic empowerment of women

Access of the woman and man to critical resources and reducing extreme poverty among women, including ensuring gender equitable access to capital and large-scale investment opportunities; removing gender discriminatory practices on access to landed properties; facilitating

women's access to improved technology; building women's entrepreneurial skills would help the participation of Nigerian women in politics and leadership. Women should be involved in the execution of empowerment programmes. Government should enhance the business environment through provision of infrastructures and accounting for the value of women's work in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Enlightenment on investment opportunities, providing access to institutional credit facilities, supporting and encouraging the development of small medium- and large-scale enterprises, and providing extension services for those in poverty group to enhance information would build the capacity of the women and men in low-poverty groups on investment opportunities.

ii. Eliminating employment discriminatory practices against women and addressing labour issues affecting women

This is achievable by building the human capital of women to allow comparable opportunity in the modern labour market, encouraging equal access to education and skill acquisition for women to increase their participation at the managerial level, and making vocational education and adult literacy programmes available to all. It is necessary to eliminate all discriminatory practices against the employment of women in the public and private sectors of the economy, that is, by eliminating all gender-based discriminatory practices in recruitment, wages and promotion, with particular reference to the private sector. Personnel policies and practices must comply with the principle of equitable representation of both sexes to ensure effective implementation of national and international labour laws, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on Equal Treatment for men and women workers. Government should create reward systems for organizations in the public and private sectors of the economy that operate based on gender equity and equality principles.

iii. Empowerment of women in politics

To increase the number of women in elective positions and leadership in Nigeria, there is need for affirmative actions in politics (for example, 30% of political posts to be reserved for women). The existing traditional structures which exclude women from participating in politics and governance should also be reformed. Since the return to democracy in Nigeria in 1999, women have made a lot of impact on the political landscape of the country. They have occupied and continue to occupy high and sensitive positions in executive, legislative and judiciary arms of

government. Under the current democratic dispensation, the first woman Speaker of House of Representative, Hon. Patricia Ette, was produced. The first woman governor, Dame Virgy Etiaba was produced in Anambra State. Also, the current Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN) Aloma Mariam Mukhtar is a woman.

There is the need for sensitization of women to political participation, creating enabling environment for women to participate in politics by economic empowerment and adequate education of women for political participation. It is important to eradicate all discriminatory policies against women, by reviewing the structure and operational guidelines of political parties. Financial support should be provided for women political aspirants.

iv. Constitutional Provisions

This could be done by ensuring that women and men have equal legal and human rights by eliminating all gender discriminatory clauses in existing laws and legislations including, by persons, organizations and enterprises. It is also achievable through customary laws with gender equality principles through advocacy, sensitization, equal access to the laws, irrespective of wealth and gender. Introducing human rights education into school curricula at all levels and building the capacity of the legislative, the judiciary and other law enforcement agencies to uphold gender justice and gender equality principles are also crucial. The use of quota and proportional representation assists in the promotion of gender balance in public life. Phillips (1995) notes that quota systems do not discriminate but compensate women's actual barrier that prevent women from pursuing a political career. Relevant stakeholders, such as Independent National Electoral Commission and political parties should be engaged in introducing quota. Related to the above is the necessary legal framework that guarantees the rights of women especially in achieving the provision of international and domestic instruments for more participation in social, economic and governance processes.

v. Greater enrolment of girls into educational institutions

Over the last four decades, there has been greater enrolment of the girl-child into higher institutions in some parts of Nigeria. In the eastern part of Nigeria where most male children have gone to the lines commerce and trading even at quite early age, girls have taken over the spaces left by male. As a matter of fact, most secondary school boys have been changed

into girls' secondary schools or community secondary schools to accommodate high enrolment of girls into the schools. This has been made possible by the changing positive perception of most Nigerian parents on the role of women in the society. Also, there has been greater enrolment of the girl-child in both private and public universities in Nigeria.

vi. Inspiration for women who occupied and are occupying positions of authority

Few of the women that have occupied political leadership positions since the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era have demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities and outstanding track records of achievement. This has enhanced women and put them on a good pedestal, thus, giving a promising signal of high prospects of more roles for Nigerian women in public affairs. These women exhibited exceptional qualities that endeared them to the hearts of most Nigerians, thereby giving credence to that maxim that whatever positive thing a man can do a woman can do even better. Notably among these women are: Dr. Okonjo-Iwela, Prof. Dora Akunyili, Mrs. Margaret Ekpo, and Mrs. Obiageli Ezekwesili and so on

Table 5: Representative Sample of Respondents who participated in the Study

Geopolitical Zones (convenience sampling) Women (stratified random sampling)

North-East Geopolitical Zone	20
North-West Geopolitical Zone	20
North-Central Geopolitical Zone	20
South-East Geopolitical Zone	20
South-West Geopolitical Zone	20
South-South Geopolitical Zone	20
Total	140

Results and Discussion

The results of this study reveal the intricacies underlying the under representation of women in Nigeria politics and leadership scene as well as what they have done and still doing to sustain the democratic process in Nigeria.

1. Demographic Characteristics

Research Question 1: Characteristics of women participation in politics and leadership in Nigeria

Table 6: Summary of respondents' demographic data

Marital status	Frequency (%)
Married	580 (82.8)
Single	45 (6.4)
Divorced	75 (10.7)
Total	700 (100)

Educational status

Secondary school certificate	310 (44.2)
Bachelor's degree	290 (41.4)
Total	100 (14.2)
Religion	700 (100)
Christianity	420 (60)
Islam	188 (26.8)
African traditional religion	92 (13.1)
Total	700 (100)

The data on the demographic characteristics of the respondents as contained in Table 6 reveals that 82.8 percent of the respondents were married, 6.4 percent were single while 10.7 percent were divorced. Although marriage is a concept in explaining gender inequality in the political sphere, this result indicates that in Nigeria, women are beginning to break this cycle because more married women are venturing into politics. Data on the educational status of the respondents indicate that 44.2 percent of them had basic secondary school education, 41.4 percent possessed Bachelor's degree, while 14.2 percent had higher degrees. Although the figures indicate that majority of the female respondents are literate, women still constitute a larger percentage of the illiterate group in Nigeria.

This is because the patriarchal set up of the country permits a situation whereby parents promote the education of their male children but relegate that of the females to the background, particularly when financial resources are scarce in such families. In respect of religion, 60 percent of

the respondents indicated that they were Christians, 26.8percent were Muslims while 13.1percent were African traditional worshipers. It should be noted here, that the women who indicated that they were Muslims were predominately from Northern Nigeria. The fact that they constituted just 26.8percent of the study population is not surprising, because it was not until 1979 that women from that region (Northern Nigeria) could exercise their voting rights, while their counterparts from the south who are predominantly Christians had the franchise to vote immediately after independence in 1960.

2. *Gender Participation in Politics and Leadership in Nigeria*
3. *Research Question 2: Gender Participation in Politics and Leadership in Nigeria*

Table 7: Participation in State Houses of Assembly, House of Representatives and Senate by Gender (1999-2007) N %

Year	Total No. of Seats	Men (%)	Women (%)
House of Assembly			
1999	978	966 (98.8)	12 (1.2)
2003	951	912 (96.0)	39 (4.0)
2007	990	936 (94.5)	54 (5.5)
House of Representative			
1999	360	347 (96.4)	13 (3.6)
2003	360	105 (94.0)	21 (6.0)
2007	360	100 (93.0)	25 (7.0)
Senate			
1999	109	106 (97.2)	3 (2.8)
2003	109	105 (96.3)	4 (3.7)
2007	109	100 (91.7)	9 (8.3)

Table 7 shows the participation rate by gender in the Nigerian State House of Assembly, House of Representatives and Senate, between 1999 and 2007.

Figures on the table reveal that in 1999, out of the 978 contestable seats in the 36 State Houses of Assembly, men occupied 966 (98.8 percent) while women occupied 12(1.2%). In 2003 out of the 951 available seats, women occupied 39(4%) and men occupied 912(96%). Although there was an

increase in 2007 where out of 990 seats, women occupied 54 (5.5%) and men occupied 94.5% (936), there still remains a yawning gap in the participation rate of women. The observed low levels of political participation by women are explained partly by societal norms that consider politics as a public affair reserved exclusively for males. The low pattern of female participation seems to replicate itself at the national level in the House of Representatives and Senate. The table shows that in 1999 women occupied 13 (36%) out of the 360 seats in the House of Representatives, while men occupied 347 (96.4%) seats.

In 2003 women occupied 21 (6%) seats and men occupied 105 (94%), while in 2007 women occupied 25 (7%) seats and men 100 (93%). In 1999, women won just 3(2.8%) out of the 109 seats in Senate, while their male counterparts won 106 (97.2%). There was a minimal increase (3.7%) in the participation of women in 2003, while in 2007 the increase was a little bit more significant, as they occupied 9(8.3%) seats. In spite of this, there remains a significant gap in the participation rate of women when compared with their male counterparts. In addition to the above figures, gender statistics from the independent electoral commission, a body charged with the responsibility of conducting the 2007 elections in Nigeria revealed that only 6 women emerged as deputy governors, while none was elected as governor in the whole of the 36 states in Nigeria.

Agbalajobi (2010) further confirmed that women occupied 26 out of the 145 positions in the presidency between 2007 and 2010. Although figures in tables 2 reveal a gradual increase in the participation rate of women in politics and government, they are still far behind competing effectively with their male counterparts and reaching the internationally recommended 30 percent benchmark of female representation in government and politics.

The observed low trend in female participation in politics is not unconnected with the fact that more males constitute the membership of most political parties and are therefore readily available to be voted for. Also this trend demonstrates the social construction of female and male roles in Nigeria such that males rule, while the females follow. As a patriarchal society, political activities in Nigeria fall outside the boundaries of social norms and socially acceptable activities of women. Due to such widely held views on the appropriateness of political activities for women, their participation is constrained. The other various

factors that affect women's political participation in Nigeria are discussed in the subsequent section.

Factors affecting participation of women in politics and Leadership in Nigeria

Research Question 3: Factors affecting participation of women in politics and Leadership in Nigeria

Table 8: Percentage distribution of respondent's opinions on factors that affect female participation in politics and Leadership in Nigeria

Factors	Yes	No	Total
Finance	445 (63.5%)	255 (36.4%)	700
Lack of adequate mechanisms for monitoring electoral outcomes and protecting women's mandate	395 (56.4%)	305 (43.5%)	700
Multiple roles of women	450 (64.2%)	250 (35.7%)	700
Exclusion from informal political party network	640 (91.4%)	60 (8.5%)	700
Religion	120 (17.1%)	580 (82.8%)	700
Education/Training	390 (55.7%)	310 (44.2%)	700
Lack of mentors	150 (21.4%)	550 (78.5%)	700
Patriarchy/cultural barriers	465 (66.4%)	235 (33.5%)	700
Biologically inherited weakness	32(4.5%)	668(95.2%)	700 (100)

Table 8 above shows respondents' opinions on the various factors that affect women's effective political participation in Nigeria. The report of this data is supported by comments and extracts from the interview schedules. The data on the table reveals that the greatest factor that affects women's political participation is "Exclusion from informal political party networks" (91.4%). This is followed by the problem of patriarchy and cultural barriers (66.4%), the multiple roles of women (64.2%), finance (63.5%), education/training (55.9%) and lack of adequate mechanisms for monitoring electoral outcomes and protecting women's mandate (56.4%). Others are: lack of mentors (21.4%) religion (17.1%) and biologically inherited weakness (4.5%). The fact that a large number (91.4 percent) of the respondents indicated that exclusion from informal political party networks affect their participation in politics confirms the fact that women

are discriminated against in the Nigerian political scene as revealed by Anifowose (2004).

One of the females interviewed confirmed evidences of discrimination by reporting that the political parties and their existing networks are male nominated and that they do not promote the interest of women, nor provide them with sufficient information that will empower them. Thus, the various political parties promote issues that are in the interest of men. In support of this, another interviewee stated that because of the structures of the political parties, with many sub-groups within each one, women do not get a chance to network nor build relational ties that can advance them in politics. Also the men exhibit a chauvinistic disposition and affirm that decision-making positions are exclusively for men, while women are to be instructed. This puts women off.

Most of the female respondents also indicated that exclusion from political party network is accentuated by the fact that most political party networking and caucus meetings are held in the night. Such nocturnal meetings held at unsociable hours are not conducive for the female folks. Due to the prevailing gender division of labour in Nigeria and the multifaceted roles of women, they are unable to attend such meetings where very crucial decisions are taken. In addition to this, the belief that politics is a 'dirty game' only meant for men is a strategy for excluding women from political party network. In respect of this, one of the females interviewed reported that meetings of most parties and activist take place at night and in locations such as hotels and clubs which are regarded by society as places exclusively reserved for men. Therefore, most women would not want to attend such meetings for lack of time and for the fear of being regarded as "irresponsible" to be in such places.

Consequently, women are unable to position themselves to participate effectively in taking decisions that affect them and in entrenching themselves in the democratic process because they are denied access to the 'old boys' networks. In view of this, the respondents acknowledged the importance of informal networks in advancing women's political career and in increasing their participation rate in the democratic process. The data on the table further reveals that respondents acknowledged patriarchy and cultural barriers (66.4%) as major factors that hinder women from effectively participating in politics. The political landscape in Nigeria is replete with the history of male dominance, which is largely

underscored by the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society dictated by culture. In addition to this, there are obnoxious cultural beliefs and practices that deny women access to positions. Such practices include: restriction of movement, early marriage and discrimination against women under various traditional values and customs.

In almost every part of the Nigerian society, men are perceived as superior to women. This has permeated the political scene and has given rise to the masculine model of politics in Nigeria, such that men formulate the rules of the game and define the standards for evaluation. This results in women either rejecting politics altogether or rejecting “male style politics”. A female respondent confirmed this with the following expression most of the political parties have no definite policy on women. Rather, they prefer to relegate women and use them as supporters in the parties. Women are therefore made to continue to “cheer up” the male, than engage them in the activities that will uplift their status within the parties and in government. Another respondent added that when women are elected into positions, they are often assigned to Ministry of women Affairs, Culture or Education, none of which can be described as very strategic Ministries in terms of their capacity to influence government policies that can entrench development and promote female participation in politics and the democratic process.

In Nigeria, politics is seen as a ‘dirty game’ which exposes women to close interactions with men. Such interaction is culturally unacceptable and is regarded as an indication of lewdness. Consequently, opportunities for the forms of social interaction intended to build women’s confidence and garner solidarity is hampered by cultural norms (Akiyode-Afolabi and Arogundade, 2003). The data on Table 3 further reveals that the multiple roles of women (64.2%) which include reproduction, production and social reproduction impact on their capacity to effectively participate in politics in Nigeria. It should be noted that the dynamics of family life and women’s responsibility for integrating the family impact on their social mobility which is a very vital factor in politics. One respondent affirmed this in the following expression social mobility is indeed a vital factor in politics.

This implies that women must be ready to make several trips to campaign and to attend caucus meetings which are sometimes held in the night. Furthermore, since legitimate authority is naturally assigned to male members (husbands) in the family, women’s ability to effectively

negotiate political life is dependent upon men's consent" The study gathered that, the burden of family responsibilities combined with the demands of political career (which includes excessive travels and night meetings) is stressful for women, particularly those with young children. This is why the few female politicians are usually well advanced in age. Results on the Table further reveals that 63.5% of the respondents indicated that finance is a major challenge to their participation in politics. This implies that the cost of engaging in electoral politics in Nigeria is capital intensive, particularly as some of them lack access to resources and credit facilities. The study also found that inadequate political party financing legislation, lack of fund raising skills and access to funds hinder women from effectively participating in politics.

It was also found that the cost of organizing campaigns and mobilizing support to win elections is high and it is only men who have the kind of money that is required for this process. This is demonstrated in the following remarks by one of the respondents men control state power and use the privilege in diverting funds in facilitating their political activities. Women lack access to such funds and they may not be inclined towards diverting state funds for personal use. Another female respondent says that it is difficult for women to contest and win elections because politics is tied to 'cash and carry' arrangement whereby elections are won by the highest bidder. The electoral process ranging from party primaries, public campaigns, to the election process is monetized and this puts women in a disadvantaged position. Furthermore, the study found that political party money is not equally distributed between the sexes because men are in charge of funds distribution.

These evidences clearly demonstrate the fact that the number of men who have the kind of money that is required to win election outweighs the women. Economic power is therefore a critical factor to women's participation in politics and democratic governance. Data on the table reveals that lack of adequate mechanisms for monitoring electoral outcomes and protecting women's mandate (56.4%) is a major hindrance for securing victory at the polls. This implies that intrigues, rigging and lack of transparency in the electoral process in Nigeria affects women and it is further exacerbated by lack of monitoring mechanisms to protect the rights of women and their votes during elections.

In view of this, Anifowose (2004) suggested the need for government to initiate constitutional and legislative reforms aimed at both protecting the rights of women and eliminating all vestiges of discrimination against them. Results on the table further revealed that women's lack of adequate education/training (55.7%) is another major challenge to women's political aspirations. In Nigeria women constitute a larger percentage of the illiterate group and this translates directly into their inability to have their voices heard in the political sphere. Education is vital because it builds awareness and self-confidence required by women to voice informed opinions. Women who have acquired formal education are regarded with respect and enjoy increased opportunities for political participation. Knowledge is therefore an essential and critical ingredient required by women for meaningful participation in political activities.

Finally, the table shows that lack of mentors (21.4%), religion (17.1%) and biologically inherited weakness (4.5%) were not highly rated as inhibiting women's participation in politics. However, it should be noted that religion mostly affects women in Northern Nigeria from effectively participating in politics because of the practice of purdah (i.e. house seclusion of women). An interviewee from northern Nigeria provided further explanation that some fanatical Muslims clerics mount campaigns on the pulpit, denouncing women's political participation as being against the tenets of Islam". Despite the challenges encountered by women as highlighted in Table 3 and in the preceding paragraphs, women have however, made positive inputs and contributions towards the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.

Research Question 4: Women's Contributions to Politics and Leadership in Nigeria

Table 9: Women's Contributions to Politics and Leadership in Nigeria

Women's Contribution	Yes	No	Total
Women have performed noble roles in government and have served as agents of change	465 (66.4%)	235 (33.5%)	700
Women in government have been accountable and have promoted transparency and good governance.	120 (17.1%)	580 (82.8%)	700
Most self-help development projects in the rural areas in Nigeria were initiated by women politicians in government.	395 (56.4%)	305 (43.5%)	700
Women have contributed to national development despite the limited support and resources at their disposal.	450 (64.2%)	250 (35.7%)	700
The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development produced the National Gender policy Document.	150 (21.4%)	550 (78.5%)	700
Women support Bills that benefit themselves and families than their male Counterparts.	640 (91.4%)	60 (8.5%)	700
The few women in politics use different styles from men to build consensus on issues.	445 (63.5%)	255 (36.4%)	700
Women in politics are taking the lead in pressurizing the government to meet the 30% quota for women in government	32(4.5%)	668(95.2%)	700
Women in political leadership have contributed enormously to politics and the democratic process to advance national development	390 (55.7%)	310 (44.2%)	700(100)

The data in table 9 captures the views of the eight females interviewed on the various contributions of women in government have made towards advancing and sustaining democracy and development in Nigeria.

The data on table above shows that all the respondents with the exception of just one reported that “women have performed noble roles in government and have served as agents of change”. Also, they unanimously affirmed that “the few women in government have been accountable and have promoted transparency and good governance.” One of the interviewee cited the examples of women who have made such impact in Nigeria. According to her, Prof. (Mrs.) Dora Akunyili who was formerly the boss of National Agency for Food Drug and Administration Control (NAFDAC) performed credibly by leading the fight against the infiltration of adulterated pharmaceutical drugs into the Nigerian pharmaceutical markets. Also, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala who was the former Minister of Finance worked very hard and used her expertise in ensuring that some of the nation’s debts with international financial institutions were offset, thereby saving the nation records of billions of naira.

The respondents indicated that as far back as the colonial and early post-colonial era, a couple of female political activist such as Margaret Ekpo worked for equal civil rights between the colonial masters and the ruled, while some others emerged as members of the Eastern House of Assembly. Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was an icon in the politics of the old Western region of Nigeria, while Hajia Gambo Sawaba fought for the political and cultural emancipation of women in Northern Nigeria. Data on the table further shows that all the respondents with the exception of just one of them commented that “most self-help development projects in the rural areas in Nigeria were initiated by women politicians in government”. Furthermore, all interviewees agreed that “women have contributed to national development in their own way despite the limited support and resources at their disposal”.

One of the female politicians further explained that the institutionalization of the office of the First Lady in 1987 during president Babangida’s administration facilitated the launching of the “Better Life for Rural Women Programme”. The programme was a supportive mechanism for initiating and executing self-help development projects for women in the rural areas. In addition to this explanation all the females

interviewed stated that “The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development produced the National Gender Policy Document” which is used as an instrument for facilitating the elimination of gender discrimination and inequality in the Nigerian society.

Majority of the females (with the exception of just three) particularly those in the Houses of Assembly expressed the fact that “women support Bills that benefit themselves and their families than their male counterparts.” Such Bills are those related to health, education and children issues. Data on the table further shows that majority of the respondents with the exception of just two reported that “women use different styles from men to build consensus on issues more easily than men”. They further explained that women adopt a ‘common sense approach’ and are more willing to make a difference and talk from the heart. Finally, data on the table reveals a unanimous assertion that “women in politics take the lead in pressuring the government to meet the 30 percent quota for women in government as recommended by international communities.”

Women who constitute not less than 50 percent of the Nigerian population vote and play key roles during political campaigns, yet they do not enjoy their full civil and political rights as members of the federation. They have not attained the recommended 30 percent of seats and offices in government which Nigeria signed and ratified but which is yet to be implemented. Consequently, women take the lead in pressurizing government so that the gap can be bridged. Generally, the views expressed in Table 4 therefore reveal that women have been playing crucial roles in politics and leadership in Nigeria. These evidences indicate that women have the potentials to contribute meaningfully to national development.

Research Question 5: Strategies adopted by Women in Breaking the Barriers

Table 10 shows the comments of the females interviewed on the strategies women are adopting in breaking the barriers that hinder their participation and advancement in politics and leadership in Nigeria.

Table 10: Strategies adopted by Women in Breaking the Barriers

Women's Contribution	Yes	No	Total
Women in political parties build networks and partnership between themselves.	32(4.5%)	668(95.2%)	700
Women mobilize and build agenda for change through	120 (17.1%)	580 (82.8%)	700
Alliances.	395 (56.4%)	305 (43.5%)	700
Negotiate gender parity through intensifying campaigns for balanced gender-representation.	150 (21.4%)	550 (78.5%)	700
Organize awareness programmes that attract women to government through various groups.	450 (64.2%)	250 (35.7%)	700
The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development produced the National Gender policy Document.	150 (21.4%)	550 (78.5%)	700

The table above shows that all the females interviewed indicated that 'females in politics build networks and partnerships between themselves.' They explained further that they share information and resources within the networks that will strengthen their links with other women in government, nongovernmental organizations and experts.

Furthermore, the table reveals that 'women mobilize and build agenda for change through alliances'. This is because they cannot rely only on quotas to bring real change to their political advancement within their parties. Consequently, women organize for change from within through alliances that include women from other parties as well as gender focused civil society groups and non-governmental organizations. An example of such a group is the forum of Nigerian women in politics (FONWIP), a body that works towards the empowerment of women in politics and the eradication of all forms of violence and discrimination against women. The table reveals that not all the females interviewed reported that "they participate in negotiating for parity through intensifying campaigns for balanced gender representation."

This is because of the existence of the National Gender Policy Document which is a major negotiating instrument for concession for women.

Results on the table also reveal that women “organize awareness programmes that attract women into government through various groups”. According to them, this is done by training and boosting women’s skills to enable them actively participate in elections as candidates and voters. In furtherance of this, the respondents commented that, the Forum of Nigerian Women in Politics (FONWIP), civil society groups and non-governmental groups organize awareness programmes/workshops that enable women understand their democratic rights. It also equips them with the requisite skills needed to access information and negotiate their ways in politics and the democratic process.

Conclusion

Equitable political participation of women is a fundamental prerequisite for genuine and democratic leadership, and higher number of women in government generally contributes to sustainable national development. Although women have been marginalized and under-represented, they have recorded some measure of political achievements and sustenance of the emerging democracy in Nigeria. Since women’s participation in politics and leadership is crucial for good governance, the challenges facing them need to be surmounted in order to create an enabling environment to enhance their participation in the democratic process in Nigeria. It is unfortunate that Nigerian women are still being marginalized due to the style of leadership inherent in the country. Despite the challenges women are facing, women activism and advocacy have positively impacted on the national developmental agenda of the successive governments in all spheres of life. This is an indication that the participation of women in politics and leadership has a bright future. Thus, in order to promote women participation in politics and leadership in Nigeria, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- i. The relevant stakeholders must advocate for the protection of women from abuse, empower them economically and politically and review the necessary legislations to accommodate the growing interest of women in politics both elective and appointive positions.
- ii. There is need for improvement in the constitutional law framework and campaign to promote women’s representation in political platforms in order to address women’s concerns.
- iii. Women should be economically empowered through access to education, employment and credit facilities.

- iv. There is need for creation of gender awareness training for political party members and leadership training for prospective women leaders is also recommended. Gender sensitive and equitable policies in the agenda and operations of political parties.
- v. Government should as a matter of deliberate policy promote gender balance in access to education in Nigeria by insisting on the enrolment of certain percentage of girl children in schools. This is in line with the Affirmative Action that requires about 30 percent of women to be elected to political positions in African countries.
- vi. Government should promulgate laws that remove those artificial and institutional barriers against women based on religion, culture or traditional considerations which have incapacity the ability of Nigerian women to participate effectively and freely in national affairs particularly at the political and economic levels.
- vii. The ministries of Women Affairs all over the Federation should play a great role in bringing to focus the fundamental challenges of the women folk which the government and other institutions of state owe the responsibility to tackle. To achieve this, constant pressure should be brought to bear on the authorities to create positions of responsibility and advancement for the women folk.
- viii. Women on their part should strive to break through development barriers with great determination, perseverance, unbreakable solidarity and genuine desires to conquer the natural challenges of their origin.

Every women forum, whether in the city or rural areas, should be effectively utilized as an avenue to educate the illiterate ones among them on skills, knowledge and values that will help them improve their social, economic and political life style.

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