Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Men and women should have equal access to and use of resources, as well as equal participation in relationships, the home, the community, and the political spheres. They should also be safe from violence. These are general operationalizations of gender equality[1]. Therefore, it goes without saying that there is still gender inequality and that women are still subjected to discrimination when it comes to their access to economic resources, employment opportunities, education, and, most importantly, government involvement. Women are denied equal participation and power sharing in political organization of society. Gender and class discrimination and oppression naturally continue in this process all over the world.

Africa is one of the continents where the least changes directed at combating these oppressive inequalities are taking place in spite of the fact that African countries have ratified the agreement on the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women, which became effective in 1981 in the African Declaration of human and people's right in African charter. However, article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) clearly provides that "All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination". According to Article 26 of the ICCPR, "All individuals are equal before the law and are entitled without discrimination to equal legal protection. In this respect, the legislation shall ban any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any grounds such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status[2].

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The Constitutive Act of the AU enshrines the principle of the promotion of gender equality while The Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa upheld it and included copious measures to eradicate all types of discrimination against women in article II, VII and XII. On the other hand, Article 18(3) of the African Charter of Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) states unequivocally that "The State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of the woman and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions," whereas article 28 of the ACHPR states that "Every individual shall have the duty to respect and consider his fellow beings without discrimination, and to maintain relations aimed promoting, safeguarding and reinforcing mutual respect and tolerance." However, the entire provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) provides a comprehensive definition and broad guide to combating sex-based discrimination and improving women's human rights conditions, which are highlighted as Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender equality), because non-discrimination is fundamental to the concept of equality[3].

It is pertinent to point out that every person has the right to be recognized as an individual before the law. Every individual has the right to enjoy human rights without discrimination. Everyone is equal before the law and has the following rights: Freedom of opinion, freedom of movement, freedom of expression, freedom of speech, the right to public assembly, democracy, social security, workers' rights, etc. In a nutshell, gender equality and women's political participation and representation in Nigeria could be linked to an agreement with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has given human beings the right to enjoy civil and political freedom, as well as freedom from fear and want, which can only be achieved if appropriate conditions are

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created that enable everyone to enjoy civil and political rights, including economic, social, and cultural rights.

However, it is worthy of note that for societies to develop on sustainable basis there must be equal opportunities for all. It is impressive to note that democracy is based on freedom, fairness, and equitable treatment of all citizens [men and women] alike by the society[4]. This is because democracy entails an equal opportunity platform for political involvement and decision-making process[5]. Since equitable political participation is sin qua non for democracy, suffice it to say that women political participation for the most part of the world for all intents and purposes is a matter of fairly human right and gender equality, inclusive growth and basically general development. In other words, a society cannot be truly democratized without the full and active participation of women who form approximately half of the population of every country in the whole world[6]. Accordingly, incorporation of gender perspective in policy making process is quite crucial for sustainable democracy[7]. Gender equality is widely recognized as an essential component for fostering development and democratic governance that grants men and women equal rights in decision making, policy implementation, and realizing the Millennium Development Goals[8].

Interestingly, the sustainable development goals & Agenda 2030 which replaced millennial development goal with effect from 2015 has gender equality as one of the 17th interrelated goals of the United Nations which was set as the global development framework in the global world which is to be achieved by year 2030 which shows that it is very essential and phenomenal both at the continent and Nigeria being a United Nation member state.

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Preferably, men and women globally supposed to exercise equal rights and equal opportunities in all their activities universally with special reference to women political participation and representation. It could be rightly said that Women make up almost half of the world's population, and their contribution in the society has been so tremendous and quite enormous. The key roles that women play in the society has been quite notable in the area of national development as they control most of the non-monetary economy such as subsistence agriculture, child bearing, domestic labour and what have you. Women are also mothers, workers or producer outside the home, producer inside the home, wife, king woman, community member, socio-cultural and political activists and individual woman. All these activities performed by women vary among cultures. It is so surprising that despite all these roles played by women in the society they are yet to be given deserved recognition in the political sphere that would make it possible for them to thrive in the field of politics.

This could be adduced to certain factors that determine their level of political activity. They are cultural stereotypes; abuse of religion; traditional practice; patriarchal structure; finance; media portrayal; and nature of politics in Nigeria. It is important to note that the Beijing women conference in Beijing China convened by the United Nations in 1995 and the Vienna declaration of human rights which reaffirmed the universally accepted principle of equal human rights by men and women in 1993 have the No 2 item as equal opportunities for participation in political and economic decision making.

By and large it has been observed that about 51% of women actively take part in voting during elections in Nigeria, but the number of women in elective and appointive positions is nothing to make reference to; this indicates that Nigeria has not achieved 30% affirmative action as prescribed by the Beijing platform.

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In fact, low participation of women has been recorded in this regard in Nigeria. Consequently, despite the historic achievement recorded in politics before 2015 when the ruling party People Democratic Party (PDP) lost to the opposition All Peoples Congress (APC) and there was peaceful transition to new government without any rancour or agitation which suggested deepening of democracy in the country. However, the pathway to democratic consolidation bolstered by the 2019 elections is hampered by the lack of improved political involvement or an increasing degree of political representation for women.

It is instructive to note that the involvement of women to participate in politics in Nigeria becomes very important for the general development and peace of the country. This is because Nigeria has the highest population in Africa, with over 206 million (National Berais) statista. Com: world meters, with about half of the population being women (girls inclusive). This makes it imperative that any discussion concerning Nigeria's development and peace of the country will definitely be centred on feminine gender which encompasses their all-important role in the society and the challenges confronting their efforts in making their input in the development of the nation, most especially in the political sphere.

Additionally, Nigeria's National Assembly's recent rejection of five gender equality initiatives that attempted to modify the constitution is really quite disheartening and needs an urgent attention provided by civil society groups, concerned members and disgruntled members of the society that engaged in protest towards forcing the National Assembly to reconsider these bills which recommended the implementation of 35% affirmative action and that of Beijing 30% affirmative action which is practically seeking for a more inclusive representation of women even in public service of the federation[9].

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Research has shown that Nigerian women continue to be under represented in all structures of power and decision- making and equally lag behind in positions of power especially in the political sector.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

From time immemorial women have been marginalized in politics for the following factors: social economic, poverty, cultural and religious making women perception of politics or the way politics is regarded by women to be at a very low level. This made most women lose interest in participation in politics. It is noted that even when women register as members of political parties as gateway to the political space, they are frequently assigned specific responsibilities that do not convey power or require leadership qualities, such as the 'Woman leader' post. As a result, women remain on the fringe of political parties and do not participate in policymaking.

This is clear denial of access to the political space which resulted in lack of interest or non-regard for politics by women thereby making Nigerian political terrain male dominated as women are routinely at a disadvantage. These impediments combine to discourage female politicians from political participation, resulting in a low ratio of women in elected and appointive positions in the country generally and in Southern Nigeria in particular. There is need for connection in the Nigerian society that is designed to the male force, patriarchy.

This pledged to underrepresentation in position of leadership of women in appointive and elective positions.

In addition, the sustainable development goal (SDG) or Agenda 2030 which replaced the millennial development goal MDG which was rested in 2015 marked gender equality as Goal 5

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or milestone in its agenda set up by United Nations which is among the seventeen interrelated goals that should be achieved by year 2030 by all its member states[10].

The statement of the problem of this research focuses on the low participation of women in politics and their representation in strategic position of governance in Southern Nigeria.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the rate of women's political representation in Nigeria in order to determine the level of women political participation in Southern Nigeria. However, the specific objectives were to:

i. assess the implications for women in politics in Southern Nigeria;
ii. examine the roles of women of Southern Nigeria in assisting Nigeria towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 by the year 2030;
iii. how much women aspirations have been met in Nigeria's politics and;
iv. make policy recommendations towards enhancing the political representation of women in Southern Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

1. To what extent do women participate in Southern Nigerian politics?
2. How can the role of women in politics in Southern Nigeria assist towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 by 2030?
3. Has women aspiration in politics been met?
4. Which policy recommendation should be made towards the enhancement of the political representation of women in Southern Nigeria?

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1.5 Significance of the Study

The study intended to explore the rate of women's political participation and representation in Southern Nigeria in order to ascertain the level of their involvement and to identify factors that impact their level of engagement in politics. The research added to existing literature on the operation and organization of women towards dealing with the case of low political participation and representation of women in four states of Southern Nigeria which are Lagos, Osun, Delta and Anambra that was used as case study.

This study benefited the world at large, international organizations (both IGOs and INGOs), government of different countries, and policy formulators in knowing their roles and decision making towards the attainment of the sustainable development goals.

Lagos, Osun, Delta and Anambra were the states selected from the three geo-political zones of the country for this study. The study also benefited researchers who are interested in filling gaps in the literature and carrying out similar studies as it contains key concepts and background information about the subject.

The findings and recommendations of the research contributed immensely by adding new information to the subject domain which enabled researchers in political science to update their knowledge to relearn and unlearn certain facts regarding women political representation in the country in general.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This research attempts to examine women political representation and gender equality in Southern Nigeria with the Sustainable development goal 5. Men who support the participation of

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women in politics as allies of women leaders that were selected from 3 geo - political zones that made up Southern Nigeria which includes; South West – Lagos and Osun state, South- South - Delta state and South East - Anambra state.

The Nigerian government, political parties, women groups and in particular men and women that are in various occupation such as traders, farmers, workers, teachers etc. from the four states of Lagos, Osun, Delta and Anambra that was used as case study. This is because it brought to bear the challenges facing women's political representation and proffer solutions towards achieving high women's political participation and representation in Nigeria by 2030. The research is targeted to bring about positive social change and the students of higher institutions who wish to know more about the concept of Gender Equality with special reference to women political representation will find it valuable. The choice for this study is the realization of the crucial roles of women in the society that is very critical to national development and growth of the Nation which calls for recognition. From the foregoing, the justification for the selection of Southern Nigeria for this study can be seen thus,

Southern Nigeria

Established in 1900, Southern Nigeria was a British Protectorate situated along the coast of present day Nigeria. In 1914, Sir Lord Laggard combined the protectorate of the North and the South. The region was formally designated the colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria once the Lagos colony was established in 1905. To create a single Nigerian colony, Southern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria protectorate were united as one. The Southern region of Nigeria has a concentration of Christians and practitioners of African traditional religions than the Northern region where we have a large concentration of Muslims.

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It was the Southern and Northern protectorate that Sir Lord Lugard amalgamated in 1914. The Lagos colony was later added in1906, the territory was titled the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. Southern Nigeria and Northern Nigeria Protectorate were merged to establish a single Nigerian colony. Southern Nigeria refers to the Southern part of Nigeria, where there are mainly Christians and African traditional religionist.

In general, what Southern Nigeria is noted for is that it is rich in oil deposits and is located at the tail end of river Niger. Southern Nigeria is made up of three geo – political zones which are as follows;

1. South – South States: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers.
2. South West States: Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, Ondo, Kwara.
3. South East States: Anambra, Enugu, Abia, Imo, Ebonyi.

The southern states are predominantly Yorubas, Igbos, Edos, Efiks, Calabars, Ibibios e. t. c. and they have over 500 different languages which they speak. The South- South states have their own culture and tradition and their special way of dressing that they are known for. The South West states also have their different way of dressing that depicts their Yoruba culture. Equally, the South East states popularly known as Igbos have their own traditional dressing that depicts their culture.

Nigeria

Nigeria is an English-speaking country located in the West African sub-region which became independent in 1960 from the British. The country is called the giant of Africa because it is very popular having a very huge population which is made up of 200 million people or more in the

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continent and has about 500 different languages and all identifying with different cultures. Nigeria is known for being very rich in African continent with its capital in Abuja.

She gained her independence formally on 1st October, 1960 and battled a civil war between 1967 and 1970. There was succession of military dictatorships which was followed by democratically elected civilian governments up to the year 1999 when a stable democracy was achieved via a presidential election.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

The major limitation encountered by the researcher during this study was the difficulty encountered in arranging the meetings with the people of the four communities visited. The researcher had to visit the community first to meet with the village head/community leaders requesting for their permission to meet with their people for discussions.

The researcher encountered the challenge of delay by some communities visited. For instance, the day the researcher arranged to have the discussion with the community of Amuwo-Odofin in Lagos, there was serious delay because the researcher had to arrange for a hall for the meeting and paid before the hall was released and other logistics was taken care of before the meeting was allowed to hold after a long period of waiting.

The researcher also encountered a problem of rescheduling of meeting. For instance, at Agbor in Delta state, the meeting was rescheduled because the date for the meeting was mistakenly fixed on the crucial market day of the community and the researcher had to wait till the next day to meet with the people. At Osogbo in Osun State, the researcher encountered the problem of language barrier because the researcher does not understand Yoruba language and it was only few members of the community that understands and could speak English language that were

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able to discuss with the researcher. Having meetings with women leaders of various political parties was equally an issue because the researcher had to visit the women leaders and get a date for their women meetings before coming to meet with them on their meeting days.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Development: It is an enhancement and a process that generates expansion, advancement, favourable change, or a significant addition of elements related to the physical, economic, environmental, social, and demographic domains.

Gender Equality: Gender equality, also known as sexual equality of sexes, is the state in which all people have equal access to resources and opportunities and possibilities regardless of gender. This includes the ability to participate in the economy and make decisions, as well as the equal value placed on all behaviours, aspirations needs and desires regardless of gender.

Gender Stereotype: Gender Stereotype refers to oversimplified and mostly beliefs and assumptions that are inaccurate and regarding the characteristics, traits and behaviours of men and women which can be harmful and limiting perpetuating gender-based discrimination and inequality. Example of common based stereotype is that men are stoic and strong while women are weak and fragile not capable of leadership. This can lead to gender- based violence. It is important to note that if gender stereotype can be broken-down, we can work towards a more inclusive and equitable society, where individuals are valued and respected regardless of their gender.

Gender Quotas: Gender Quotas refers to policies or plans that aim to increase the representation of woman in various fields, example politics, education, employment, leadership positions which can take different forms like; legislative quotas which are laws that require a minimum

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percentage of women in certain positions. Another form is voluntary quotas which have to do with organizations and political parties that are committed to increasing women's representation without legal requirements, and lastly reserved seats which means designated specific positions or seats for women mostly in legislative body. The roles of Gender Quotas include; increase women representation, promote gender equality, challenge gender stereotypes, enhance diversity and inclusion and address historical discrimination. The benefits of Gender Quotas include; economic benefits from increased women's participation, improved representation and voice for women, reduced stereotyping and gender bias, leads to more diverse and decision-making bodies and role models and inspiration for young women and girls. A good example of successful gender quota implementation is Rwanda's legislative quota which is 30% women in parliament. Gender Quota can be a powerful instrument for promoting gender equality and increasing the representation of women but its effectiveness is highly dependent on careful implementation, effective monitoring and complimentary efforts to address deeper structural barriers in the system.

Geo-political Zone: Geo-political zone is a type of administrative division grouping the geographical areas of the country's states into different zones which is used in sharing the country's resources economically, politically and educationally. Nigerian nation is divided as geo-political zones numbering six altogether which were created during the regime of General Sani Abacha. These zones known as geo- political zones include North Central, North West, North East, South West, South South and South East.

Inclusivity: Inclusivity is about creating an environment where everybody is valued, respected, and supported irrespective of their background, identity, or characteristics. Inclusivity involves promotion of diversity actively, equity and accessibility, and addressing systematic barriers and

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biases. Various aspects of inclusivity include; diversity, empathy, equity, cultural sensitivity and accessibility. Inclusivity is beneficial to individual, organizations and society in general. By embracing inclusivity, a more just, equitable and thriving world can be created for everyone.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): The MDs or Millennium Development Goals actually are the goals that the United Nations member states in the year 2000 unanimously agreed to achieve in 2015 which are eight in number. Each of the goals had fairly specific targets and indicators which literally were used to track the progress and development of the goals.

Patriarchy: A Patriarchal social structure is one in which men dominate society and hold positions of power that are frequently harmful to women and other marginalized groups within the society which are often detrimental to women and other groups that are marginalized and this can be manifested in various ways such as gender roles and stereotypes, unequal distribution of resources and opportunities, limited access to education and employment for women etc. It can be visible in family structures and dynamics, religious and cultural institutions, political and economic systems, language and interactions. If patriarchy is dismantled it will create a more equitable society, where everybody will have equal opportunity and will be respected and valued which will lead to a more just and inclusive society.

Political Party: It is an organization that coordinates candidates to compete in a particular country's elections or an organized group of people who share similar political ideals and purposefully operate together to obtain control of machinery of government and creates public policy.

Politics: It refers to actions involved in running a nation, region, or particularly the discussions between the powerful parties. It may also be known as actions used to gain authority in public

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and have an impact on decisions that can impact a nation or a community. Also, it can be referred to the acts involved in acquiring power in public life and influencing decisions that affect a country or society.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Sustainable Development Goals known as Agenda 2030 are set of 17 interrelated goals of the United Nations which was set in the year 2015 as replacement to Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and also the International Development Framework in the world at large aspires to acquire by year 2030.

Women Political Representation: The presence and participation of women in political institutions, decision- making processes, institutions and positions of authority that enable women to actively participate in public decision – making is known as women political representation. It is also seen as women's full and equal participation in all facets of society. and complete involvement in all spheres of society. Numerous facets are covered such as numerical, substantive, symbolic and participatory representation.

Women Political Participation: Gender equality and true democracy are fundamentally dependent on women's political engagement. It is a crucial element needed to guarantee the legitimacy and stability of any democratic system, allowing women to participate directly in public decision- making and improving accountability to them. It is the fundamental requirement of democracy to provide equal opportunities for men and women to realize their own potential. In summary, it characterizes the degree to which women participate in, share, or get involved in the activities within their own community. Women political participation is essential for true democracy to exist.

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Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter discusses the relevant conceptual, theoretical and empirical cases relating to gender equality, women's political participation and representation and United Nations sustainable development goal5. It represents the relevant literature which spurs the empirical investigation of this study. The review is presented in conceptual review, theoretical framework, review of empirical studies, conceptual framework, and summary of gap in the reviewed literature

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Gender

Gender, as a concept, extends beyond the binary understanding of male and female. It encompasses a complex interplay of cultural, social, psychological, and biological factors that shape individual identities and societal roles. This paper seeks to outline key elements in the conceptualization of gender by exploring its definitions, social constructs, implications for identity, and its evolving nature.

Gender refers to the roles, behaviors, activities, and expectations that a given society considers appropriate for men, women, and non-binary individuals. Unlike sex, which is rooted in biological differences (such as reproductive organs and chromosomes), gender is a social construct influenced by societal norms and cultural contexts. Judith Butler, a prominent gender theorist, argues that gender is performative, suggesting that it is not an inherent identity but rather something that individuals actively create through their actions and interactions[1].

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The social construction of gender manifests in various ways, including language, dress, and professional roles, which vary significantly across different cultures and historical periods. The concept of masculinity and femininity often dictates how individuals are expected to behave, leading to the perpetuation of stereotypes. Michael Kimmel, in his work on the sociology of masculinity, notes that traditional masculine norms often valorize traits such as aggression, stoicism, and dominance, while femininity is frequently associated with nurturing and submissiveness[2]. These constructs can influence career choices, interpersonal relationships, and personal self-esteem.

Understanding gender is essential in recognizing its dynamic nature. Over recent decades, the discourse surrounding gender has evolved, with increased acknowledgment of diverse gender identities and the rejection of rigid binary classifications. Activism, scholarship, and cultural shifts have played pivotal roles in this progression. For instance, the inclusion of gender studies in academic curricula and the advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights reflect a broader societal understanding of gender as a spectrum rather than a strict binary. Authors like Raewyn Connell have extensively discussed the notion of multiple masculinities, highlighting the idea that masculinity is not monolithic and can be expressed diversely across different contexts[3].

2.1.2 Gender Equality

Gender equality refers to the concept of providing equal rights, opportunities, and treatment to men and women in the society. It is the belief in the equal value and worth of all genders, and the recognition that everyone should have the freedom to express their gender identity without facing discrimination or barriers. At its core, gender equality aims to eliminate the disparities and biases that exist between genders in various aspects of life, including social, economic, political,

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and cultural spheres. It means that no gender should be favoured or disadvantaged based on societal expectations, stereotypes, or norms.

Gender equality is key to sustainable development[4]. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) established sustainable development goals known as the 2030 Agenda in 2015. The agenda included seventeen Sustainable Development Goals. Gender equality is one of the five goals that all countries must strive for. The aim urges states to 'promote equality and empower women and girls'[5]. In other words, achieving gender equality via the empowerment of women and girls is critical to sustainable development. In 1980, the Brundtland Commission popularised the concept of sustainable development. The Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development was founded this year by the United Nations. The commission defined sustainable development in its report as "development which meets the requirements of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The United Nations has separated sustainable development into three pillars: social, economic, and environmental factors. Gender equality is crucial to fulfilling the three pillars of sustainable development.

Gender equality is a significant barrier to human growth. The United Nation Sustainable Development Goals states that the "gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world"[4,5]. A large number of authors have focused on topics in gender equality in the world. In their work titled, "Women's Assessments of Gender Equality", They have mostly concentrated on global indices of gender disparity between men and women, which are based on gender inequality surveys conducted in 150 different countries worldwide[6].

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According to gender inequality surveys, women are considered unequal by worldwide gender inequality indexes in education, health, labour force participation, and political representation. According to them, the gender inequality index varies depending on the countries polled, with industrialized countries having a lower index and less developed countries having a higher index. According to the Human Development Report program, the Gender Inequality Index (GII) ranked each country from 1995 to 2010[4]. According to Gallup International Association Surveys, countries with equal index results for men and women were regarded to have gender equality. Countries having high values of indices measuring gender inequality were referred to as gender unequal.

Gender inequality, or discrimination against women, is a significant issue in Nigeria. The presence of traditional and cultural practices that discriminate against women has a negative impact on development[2]. Harmful cultural practices including female genital mutilation (FGM), underage marriage, and forced marriage are especially humiliating to society. These activities have a negative impact on the growth of the female kid. For example, female genital cutting (FGM), often known as female circumcision, can harm a woman's genital organs. Such cultural norms affecting women's health in society will have a significant impact on overall growth. Because of the numerous problems that women encounter as a result of their gender, the United Nations proclaimed gender equality a sustainable development target. Lack of education has been identified as a major driver of gender inequality, which in turn impedes growth.

According to the World Bank's assessment, most developing nations have gender disparities in education, employment, and health sector[7]. More women are denied an education, particularly in developing nations. This is because families who are unable to send all of their children to school opt to send boys instead of girls. The boys are considered superior to the girls. According to UN

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statistics, 31 million female children are not in school, and 17 million may never see a school wall. Furthermore, the statistics indicated that '774 million illiterate people in the world are female'[8]. Some women aged 15 to 24 have never completed primary education, particularly in developing nations like Nigeria. They will be unable to work if they do not complete primary school. Proper education translates to improved opportunities for employment[2]. Women who lack the necessary education may be unable to exercise their human rights. Women who have received an education are more likely to be able to combat prejudice and cultural views that violate their rights as women. In Nigeria, children who cannot attend school are married at a young age, putting the unborn child at risk of death. Girl education is an important aspect in development since it helps to minimize birth and mortality rates. As a result, gender imbalance in girls' education has been found to influence investment decisions. According to the World Bank projections, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa would have experienced an improvement in economic growth if their educational system had been gender balanced[7]. Similarly, 'gender inequality in employment in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa may have reduced growth by another 0.3%, compared to East Asia.

The need to promote gender equality is attributed to the recognition that gender equality is an essential building block for sustainable development socially, politically economically and environmentally[9]. The global recognition of the essentiality of gender equity in sustainable development came in September 2015 when the United Nations General Assembly in New York, adopted gender equality as the fifth out of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda expected to be achieved by all countries by 2030[10]. Gender equality for sustainable development in all spheres of a country whether socially, politically or economically calls for policies, investments, and initiatives that promotes and recognizes women's ability, capacity, and

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knowledge to contribute to development in leadership and decision-making positions. The goal is to recognize and empower women and girls as essential pillars of sustainable development. This implies that when women are empowered, they are equipped to contribute and solve societal challenges that affect them and the society as a whole. The rejection of the gender bill is a testament to the lack of political will of the male dominated national assembly to create an enabling environment for the inclusion of feminine gender in the political affairs of the country.

Study conducted on Women's Participation, and Gender Issues in Local Government in Nigeria to ascertain the obstacles to women political participation, found out that lack of support coupled with men, cultural and religious biases, political violence, and the disunity among women were the major hindrances to the better participation of women in the political space[11]. Interestingly, the proposed gender bills which could have pave way for a more inclusive gender participation in the political affairs of the country was rejected on the grounds of religion and culture. A study established that the culture and traditional practices of subjecting women to male dominance has hindered gender inclusiveness and equality in the Nigerian political space[12]. The patriarchal characterization and nature of the Nigerian society is a driving force that is visible in all facet of the society especially in leadership and politics. The "patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society which is characterized by the masculine domination of politics, power, authority, inheritance, and even social pedigree has sorely created a great power imbalance to the detriment of the women gender"[13]. The Patriarchal system is so entrenched in the society that attainment of the 35% affirmative action to foster gender inclusiveness in the political space which was formulated in 2006 by the National Gender Policy (NAP) has become an uphill task.

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2.1.3 Legal Barriers to Gender Equality in Nigeria

The provisions of Nigerian law do not safeguard the rights of women. The penal code authorizes the husband to use force on his wife for the purpose of correction. Section 55(1d) of the penal code states that 'Nothing constitutes an offence which does not amount to grave damage against a person and which is done by a husband for the intent of correcting his wife, such husband and wife being subject to any customary law in which the correction is regarded as lawful.' According to this clause, hitting a woman does not amount to grave harm. In other words, if a man beats his wife in order to correct her, he is acting legally. This section explicitly encourages domestic violence, which violates a woman's right not to be subjected to torture or any harsh or demeaning punishment[47].

Furthermore, no form of violence against a person, no matter how minor, is acceptable. Similarly, the criminal code discriminates against women in terms of penalties for unlawful violence. Section 353 of the Nigerian criminal code imposes a three-year term on anyone who unlawfully assaults a male, whereas section 360 imposes a two-year sentence on anyone who assaults a lady or girl. These provisions of the criminal law are discriminatory against women. Similarly, the penal law does not recognize a woman's right to refuse sexual intercourse when married. Marital rape is therefore not considered a crime in Nigeria. According to Section 282(2) of the penal code, 'Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife is not rape if she has attained puberty.' Also, sections 357 of the criminal code states that 'Any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl, without her consent, or with her consent, if the consent is obtained by force or by means of threats or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm, or by means of false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or, in the case of a married woman, by personating her husband, is guilty of an offence which is called rape.'

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However, the new law, the Violence against Persons (VAP) (Prohibition) Act of 2015, which has been commended for addressing all types of violence in Nigeria, does not recognize marital rape as an offense. Furthermore, under section 221 of the criminal code, a male cannot be convicted of raping a girl under the age of sixteen based only on the uncorroborated testimony of one witness. This aspect of the statute makes it difficult to get a conviction against the Act's violators. Rape is becoming increasingly common as criminals go unpunished. In Nigeria, minors are the most common victims of rape. Sustainable development cannot be achieved in a country that promotes violence against women, both legally and in reality. Based on the foregoing, it is deemed that various provisions of Nigerian law fail to conform to international standards.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the most comprehensive international legally binding agreement on gender equality to which Nigeria is a signatory. And Article 2(a) of the convention stipulates that state parties are 'To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle.' The provisions of the criminal code and penal code discussed above do not embody the principles of equality and inadequate to protect the rights of the woman.

2.1.4 Political Participation

Basically, participation is a process by which individuals, groups and organizations could become actively involved in a project or programmer of activity. Political participation, therefore, is the active involvement of persons in political activities in a country. This is not the

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case of electoral participation which in the strict sense is possible when an individual has reached the age of 18 years and above.

Political engagement is critical to sustaining the stability and legitimacy of all political systems. Political engagement is one of the foundational concepts of a democratic society. It is the sine qua non of democracy because it is a commitment to provide men and women equal opportunities to develop their particular capacities[48]. Political engagement is defined as voluntary behaviours such as holding public or party posts, attending election campaigns, voting, and being exposed to political stimuli[20]. However, political involvement refers to a range of ways in which people attempt to exert influence over the political process[49].

This consists of involvement in decision making in which individuals, either alone or through group organization, strive to influence decision making or modify the manner in which power is allocated and the principles under which it is utilized in a specific society. Political participation, as a principle of democracy, is shown to be liberal and non-restrictive.

Subscribing to this, political participation is perceived to be "freedom of expression, association, right to free flow of communication, right to influence decision process and the right to social justice, health services, better working condition and opportunity for franchise"[50]. Political engagement is a critical component of genuine democracy. Taking the conceptualization of democracy into consideration, democracy provides the equal opportunity platform for political participation and fairness in such competition, thus: a system of government that meets three essential conditions: meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and groups, especially political parties, for all effective use of government power, at regular intervals and eliminating the use of force; a highly inclusive level of political participation[51].

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2.1.5 Gender and Democracy: A Conceptual Discourse

The relationship between gender and democracy are complex. It is necessary therefore, to make a conceptual clarification of the terms gender and democracy in order to enhance our understanding of the subject matter. Gender has been viewed as the socially constructed attributes, opportunities and relationships associated with being male and female and which determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context[14,15]. Gender is the qualitative and interdependent character of women's and men's position in society[16]. Gender relations are constituted in terms of the relations of power and dominance that structure the life chances of women and men. Such relations are not necessarily biological but a matter of social convention[16]. Thus, gender roles are referring to behaviour patterns which are differently displayed by the sexes[16]. These patterns are also established through socialization and determine attitudes and life styles for men and women. Gender roles are therefore matters of socio-cultural determination and are subject to change[17]. We are all trying to pass as a gender which is decided by cultural systems, not our biological sex[18]. Gender division are not biologically fixed, but constitute an aspect of the wider social division of labour and in turn, is rooted in the conditions of productions and reproduction and reinforced by the cultural, religious and ideological systems prevailing in a society[18]. Historically, these attributes, opportunities and relations are skewed against women in favour of men[19]. Thus, the universal asymmetrical pattern of gender relationship in which women are subordinated to men is cultural and not biological or immutable.

Democracy is a political system in which power is vested in the people, who exercise that power directly or through elected representatives. It is characterized by several key features, including free and fair elections, the rule of law, the separation of powers, protection of human rights, and

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the presence of a vibrant civil society. Democracy though not a new phenomenon, has emerged as the most significant trend in world politics over the past decade. Democracy entails equal opportunity for men and women to get involved and determine the control of power of a society[20]. It is predicated upon freedom, justice and equal treatment of all citizens– men and women alike, by the society[21]. It presupposes equal opportunity platform for political participation and decision making process[22]. Political participation is therefore germane to democracy and fundamental to the stability and legitimacy of every political system[20,23]. It occupies a vital place, thus combination of three political orientations -parochial, subject, and participatory, result into a routine, stable and democratic system[24]. Since equal political participation is sin qua non to democracy, a society cannot be truly democratized without the full and active participation of women who constitute about 50% of the population of each country. The incorporation of gendered perspective in politics and policy making process is thus imperative for democratic. Giving men and women equal voices in decision making and policy implementation is therefore a requisite for achieving democratic governance.

2.1.6 Sustainable Development Goals 5 (SDG 5)

In September 2015, world leaders came together to discuss and agree on the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 new SDGs[25]. They are underpinned by a human rights-based approach to development, which "seeks to analyse inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress and often result in groups of people being left behind"[26].

Accordingly, in addition to being a goal in itself, gender equality was recognized as a cross-cutting priority that would need to be addressed if the other SDGs were to be achieved. The 2030

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Agenda Declaration, which was agreed by Heads of Government, specifically recognizes that: "Realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals and targets. The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities.

SDG 5 specifically focuses on gender equality, and all three Goals i.e., achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, reduce inequality within and among countries and promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies have dedicated targets prioritizing laws that promote gender equality and non-discrimination in law[25]. Several SDG targets and indicators call for gender-responsive law reform, to provide women and girls with effective legal rights and protections in relation to discrimination, access to health services and economic resources, land rights, financial services, and inheritance. Parliaments must look to Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) which specifically focuses on promoting gender equality, calls on States to: "End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere", while indicator measures: "Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination based on sex". These targets recognize that, in order to achieve the SDGs, it is critical to have an enabling environment that supports their implementation, including national legal frameworks.

Most countries are now integrating the SDGs into national and sectorial development plans, including plans relating to gender equality and women's rights[25]. These plans can be important sources of local analysis regarding the specific issues affecting a country. They also often provide useful baseline data and, in some cases, help to disaggregate issues at the subnational level – which can be useful for parliamentarians representing different areas of the country.

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National SDG progress reports often include specific analysis of the current legal frameworks relevant to achieving the SDGs, including areas for law reform.

One among the 17 SDGs is Gender Equality. The Sustainable Development Goals are a universal call to action to finish poverty, protect the earth and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. The 17 Goals were received by all UN Member States in 2015, as a piece of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[27]. Today, progress is being made in many places, but, overall, action to satisfy the Goals isn't yet advancing at the speed or scale required. 2020 must inaugurate a decade of ambitious action to deliver the Goals by 2030. With just ten years left to understand the Sustainable Development Goals, world pioneers at the SDG Summit in September 2019 included a time of activity and conveyance for practical turn of events, and promised to assemble financing, upgrade national execution and fortify establishments to understand the Goals by the deadline of 2030, abandoning no one[27].

2.1.7 Gender Equality and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG5)

Gender equality is one of the 17 numbers interrelated goals that the whole countries of the world that are members of the United Nations came together to endorse as the 17-point Agenda mapped out to be achieved by the year 2030 in continuation of the millennium development goals (MDG) from 2000 to 2015[28].

It metamorphosed from millennium development goals to sustainable development goals in 2015. This was endorsed by the UN-Member states as Agenda 2030 for sustainable development to serve as a shared blueprint for people and the world to live in peace and prosperity now and in the future. It comprises of 17 articulate goals, 169 targets and 230 key performance indicators (KPI) as the major variable at the core of sustainable development goals (SDGS). These goals

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acknowledge that any attempt to eradicate poverty with initiatives to promote gender equality, education and drive economic growth is worth it globally[29].

Gender equality is recognized as the 5th on the list of sustainable development goals and its purpose as the sustainable development goal five is to achieve gender equality across the world by 2030. The UN together with other development partners and in collaboration with other country is working hard to see poverty come to an end within a stated period. Gender equality was slated as the fifth goal on the 2030 Agenda to be achieved because achieving gender equality will lead to equal access to and utilization of services for all and women and men are equally involved in decision making and governance which will tantamount to national development and at the same time boosting economic growth, with the hope of a better future for all.

Gender equally implies that the interest needs and priorities of women, men, girls and boys are taken into consideration. In recognition to the diversity of different groups and that all human beings are free to develop and harness their personal potentials and abilities and are able to make their choices without encountering any limitations or marginalization. Gender equality, women empowerment and girls is unique in the sense that if achieved will bring to an end to gender violence against women and discrimination which has been a reoccurring decimal over the years. Gender equality entails more and is not only limited to the fundamental rights of humans, but also has to do with the necessary foundation for free and a peaceful mind, and a world which is prosperous and sustainable.

Presently, 1 out of every 5 girls and particularly women aged 15-49 have cases of physical and sexual violence reported by an intimate partner within a period of 12 months 49 countries lack laws protecting the women and girls from this domestic violence. More efforts are made

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regarding harmful practices like female genital mutilation - FGM and child marriages which declined in the decade past by 30 percent. Yet, there is still more to be done to eliminate these harmful practices in the world. Providing girls and women with equal access to health, employment, education, and representation in economic and political decision-making processes will help to boost sustainable economies and for the benefit of humanity and society at large[30].

It is pertinent to note that implementation of new legal framework in the work places in respect of women equality and the prevention of harmful practices to female is the only panacea to gender-based violence and discrimination against women[31]. In all, the purpose of sustainable development goal 5 is to achieve gender equality across the world by the year 2030.

Women's full and effective political participation is a matter of human rights, inclusive growth and sustainable development[32]. The active participation of women on equal terms with men, all levels of decision-making and political involvement is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy and the inclusion of their perspectives and experience into the decision-making processes. Despite this, in the twenty-first century, women are facing obstacles in their political participation worldwide[23]. Women around the world at every socio-political level find themselves under-as noted in the millennium development goals[27].

2.1.8 Patriarchy, Gender and Democracy

Patriarchy is a social system in which the role of the man, as the main authority person, is fundamental to social groups and associations. It is a social construct passed down from generation to generation and most pronounced in societies with traditional cultures and less economic development[33,34]. Patriarchy is best defined as control by men of a disproportionately

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large share of power. In a patriarchal system fathers hold authority over women, children, and property. It implies the institutions of male rule and privilege and is dependent on female subordination. Patriarchy explains how societies control women, who must constantly fight for their rights and sometimes struggle just to survive without being threatened by the power and domination of men. The patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection[35].

Patriarchy is a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them which enables them to dominate women[36]. The material base of patriarchy is men's control over women's labour power, a control maintained by excluding women from access to necessary economically productive resources and reducing their sexuality[36].

In feminist theory, the concept of patriarchy often includes all the social mechanisms that reproduce and exert male domination over women. Most forms of feminism characterize patriarchy as an unjust social system that is oppressive to women[37]. Radical feminists emphasize the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women and think that society is an oppressive patriarchy that primarily oppresses women. Put differently, they emphasize the social domination of women by men.

Radical feminists perceive patriarchy as dividing rights, privileges and power to the disadvantage of women. Thus, they view it as the root cause of most serious social problems and are sceptical of political action within the prevalent social system. For a radical feminist, '[m]ales and males only are the originators, planners, controllers, and legitimators of patriarchy'[38].

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Patriarchal theory observes that not only are women controlled by dominant men using aggressive hierarchical social power, they are also controlled by non-dominant men. Moreover, according to this theory, while the man is more often than not the dominant party, the exploited party is generally the woman. This contention is validated in Nigeria, where the marginalisation of women has become standard practice in the political system. Indeed, '[t]he evolution of women's participation in party politics presents a pattern, where women are often pushed to certain positions that are in reality practically and strategically redundant'[39].

According to historical records, despite the fact that pre-colonial Nigeria was patriarchal, women were not entirely left out of the political system[40]. Generally, women's political power varied from one place to another; while in some society's women shared responsibilities with men; in others, their roles were complementary or subordinate. Successful women had access to political power on merit and, in several communities; women emerged as leaders or rulers. This political set-up changed significantly during the colonial era. Women were ignored by the colonial authorities in the eventual redistribution of positions and power and the marginalization of women became standard practice.

In spite of being constrained by the repressive colonial state, women activists in Southern Nigeria engaged in vigorous struggles against the violation of their interests and those of their communities. Before independence in 1960 Nigerian women, through movements led by great women like Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, Margaret Ekpo and others, questioned the colonialists' arbitrary manner of governance and their socio-economic policies. The response of women activists to the colonial programme 'was tailored to the demands of the political systems that were imposed on them, hence the confrontations between local despots and women who resisted marginalization'[41].

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Women's marginalization during the colonial era inspired Eastern Nigeria's first mass protest movement, the 1925 Nwaobiala movement, which culminated in the well-known Aba women's riots. Women in Western Nigeria challenged the colonial authorities' political and economic programs through the Abeokuta Women's Union, which was led by Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti. Interestingly, the founding of a Women's Party in 1944 was a significant milestone in women's political development during the colonial era. The party was not organized in the style of an active political party as 'it did not have a political program as such, but its leaders shared certain definite political views' that led them at a later stage 'to support another political party, the Action Group'[42]. Thus, despite the limitations of a colonially dictated political system, the political arrangement during this period allowed for women's participation, although in limited manners - women's access to political power was restricted, and they were denied opportunities to exert authority.

The emerging political organizations of the colonial era were led by men, who 'welcomed and encouraged the involvement of women only to the extent that they would be foot-soldiers in the struggle to de-radicalize power'[41]. 'There were foundations for the cooperative struggle against colonialism and nation building' to the degree that women's groups were willing to join nationalist organizations as members of their women's wings. When women refused to be absorbed under male-controlled party rule, they were excluded in a manner comparable of the colonial state.

In Nigeria's political history, including prior attempts at democratic leadership, women were significantly underrepresented in government. Independence from colonial authority did not always result in the rearrangement of political power, and the political structures remained strikingly similar to those of the colonial era. The essence of women's political participation has

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remained consistent over time. A casual study at articles in party constitutions relating to boards of trustees, party caucuses, and congresses, all of which are major organs of the party, reveals that few women are represented, and quotas allotted to women are merely symbolic.

According to Article 12.76(1) of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) constitution, the board of trustees will consist of: (a) The party's founding fathers and mothers; (b) Two women from each of the six geopolitical zones; (c) Three members, one of whom must be a woman from each of the six geopolitical zones; Former Senate Deputy Presidents and House Deputy Speakers who continue to be party members. These sections illustrate some of the areas where the PDP has specifically affirmed quotas for women. While the sections are excellent, they are still insufficient to promote gender equity in the party system. A deeper look at some of the provisions reveals that some of the significant jobs named are really held by men rather than women. For example, the composition of the Board of Trustees disadvantages women. How many women have previously served as presidents, governors, or senators as stipulated? The Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) constitution allows for female leaders in all party organs and state congresses. For example, in the case of state congresses, the constitution stipulates in Article 7.12 that there should be: '(xiii) 5 delegates from each Ward of the State elected for that purpose at least one of who must be a woman; (xiv) The local government Youth Leader and Woman Leader if [she is] from the local government.'

Article 4.12 states that: '(ii) The Board of Trustees shall consist of 3 members from each State of the federation at least one who shall be a woman and one member from the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. A chairman shall be appointed by them from their number.'

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The preceding could be seen as implying that the protections for women are indirect rather than specific. As a result, the status of women members remains unclear. In general, women have never held party posts other than vice-chairpersons. Women's limited involvement in institutionalized politics is shown in their poor participation as party executives, elected officers, and political appointees. Under the guise of postcolonial democracy, women were given a symbolic presence in essentially male systems. Their political influence in decision-making remained limited. The marginalization of women persisted into the Fourth Republic.

2.1.9 The Gender Equality Status of Women in Nigeria

Gender inequality, commonly referred to as gender discrimination, can be described as any circumstances where certain rights and privileges are awarded or denied a person on the basis of sex, which may have a binding effect of law or be a practice judicially recognized[43]. The practice of using a person's gender as a determining factor before presenting a benefit to someone is discriminatory. Discrimination can take several forms. It can be found in a variety of domains, including education, job, marriage, and religion. Discrimination based on gender is a severe issue, especially in the international community, which strives to eliminate all forms of discrimination. Gender discrimination violates the principles of human rights. International human rights focused on achieving equality between men and women and eliminating all types of discrimination, particularly against women[44].

Gender equality in Nigeria has a long history dating back to the patriarchal society. Nigeria is a male-dominated society. Women are marginalized in Nigeria's traditional system. Nigerian courts have consistently ruled customary law practices that discriminate against women, such as custody and inheritance rights, to be incompatible with natural justice, equality, and good

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conscience[45]. Despite the banning of discriminatory inheritance practices, women are still not treated equally with males in Nigeria. It is vital to investigate some of the discriminatory behaviours that violate a woman's rights in Nigeria.

2.1.10 Legal/Constitutional Guarantees and Women's Representation in Government

Nigerian women, like their counterparts around the world, experience prejudice, limiting their ability to reach their full potential on an equal footing with males. According to the Declaration of the Summit of All Women Politicians in Nigeria held in Abuja on June 28, 2002 and coordinated by Global Rights in partnership with the Centre for Population and Development Activities and the Gender and Development Action, the 'women of Nigeria have noticed with utter dismay the almost complete deterioration of our political and social values, born out of more than three decades of continued male-dominated and -oriented misrule'.

Societal hurdles such as religion, custom, and other beliefs must not be permitted to impede women's advancement; women should not be domesticated; and they should have the same rights to employment and associated benefits as men. They, like men, must have access to free and functioning education and health care, and the voting process must not be dominated by the wealthy. Certainly, 'if the definition of democracy allows for diversity of opinion and the participation of different groups, then it cannot thrive by excluding women, which effectively constitute half of the world's population and half of each and every single national population'[39]. The Constitution's purpose is unquestionably to encourage the progress of the democratic process. Indeed, all Nigerian people are entitled to democratic administration under the law.

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Section 40 of the 1999 Constitution states that:

> Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his interests: Provided that the provisions of this section shall not derogate from the powers conferred by this Constitution on the Independent National Electoral Commission with respect to political parties to which that Commission does not accord recognition.

Section 42 states further that:

> A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination.

These sections of the Constitution confirm that each Nigerian, regardless of gender, has the right to seek redress in court if his or her franchise is violated. The Constitution forbids gender discrimination and makes it clear that women are not barred from participating in politics. What appears to be uncertain is whether the democratic process can thrive in the current environment, when constitutional safeguards for women's participation in politics are limited. Another point of interest is the Electoral Reform Committee (ERC), which was established by the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. The ERC, which was tasked with reviewing and ensuring the quality and standard of general elections, addressed several issues concerning the country's electoral system. The committee, directed by retired Chief Justice Muhammed Uwais, addressed women's perspectives and initiatives for gender democracy, and made some gender-sensitive recommendations worth noting[46].

For example, the ERC proposed that the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) chair and deputy chair not be the same gender, and that two of the six geographical representatives be women. A woman's organization representative should also be present. The ERC also recommended that two of the six geopolitical zonal representatives on the parties'

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registration and regulatory commissions be women, as well as 20% of the members of the governing bodies of political associations, while political parties nominate more women and youths as candidates and make sure that women have equal representation in leadership opportunities within party organizations.

The committee advised that political parties propose at least 30% female candidates and 2% physically challenged candidates for legislative elections to ensure proportional representation. The National Assembly's only possibly gender-friendly proposal for the 2010 Electoral Act was a new section permitting candidates to run as independents, which was later rejected by the state houses of assembly. This development is an instance of 'the failure of the Nigerian state ... to put a legal framework in place to support a gender friendly electoral system[46]. The experiences of women throughout the last four general elections, particularly in 2011, demonstrate that political parties have refused to incorporate women's interests and concerns into the business of democracy.

Political parties' attempts to establish a gender agenda through public announcements at campaign rallies and references to women's political development in their manifestos are merely gimmicks aimed at attracting female votes. There is a disrespect for women's political contributions and gender challenges. There are barely a few women on the national executives of political parties in Nigeria, and when women do make it to this level, they occupy inferior positions like welfare and the organization of social events or ex-officio, which usually indicates politically redundant. As seen by the manifestos and constitutions of several parties, practically all political parties in Nigeria at best make lip service to women's political development because they are still regarded 'outsiders' in the game of politics.

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While Nigeria's democratic transition in 1999 created opportunities to politicize gender identity, and women's representation in public office increased between 2003 and 2007, there is still a lack of political opportunities for women and severe self-reinforcing constraints on gender participation. Although the number of women in politics continues to rise, they are still significantly underrepresented. An examination of Nigeria's electoral system indicates that there was a significant rise in the number of female candidates in the 2003 and 2007 elections, and women in general were encouraged to participate and run for political office, but only a few women made it to the end. The number of women in government increased marginally following the general elections of 1999, 2003, and 2007, although fewer women were elected in 2011 than in 2007. As of 2011, just around 8% of individuals in political office were women.

Nigerian women have not advanced beyond their status under the military, staying underrepresented in current democratic governance and occupying fewer than 8% of elected positions at all levels of government. This is despite the government's pledges on an international, regional, and national level. Thus, Nigeria supported both the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA), which advocates for affirmative action, and Millennium Development Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment. It also established a National Gender Policy.

The BPFA specifically enjoined political parties to:

(a) Examine party structures and procedures to eliminate discrimination against women's participation; (b) Develop initiatives to promote women's full participation in internal policy-making, appointment, and electoral processes; (c) Include gender issues in political agendas and ensure women can lead political parties. Many gender activists and

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civil society organizations in Nigeria are aware of the need for change and have developed lobbying, training, and research programs on affirmative action for women political party leaders. They have been successful in pushing a considerable number of women to run for political office with the objective to ensure that women hold at least 35% of all appointed and elected positions in Nigeria, as per the country's National Policy on Women. Despite these attempts to raise awareness and advocate for women's representation, the government is yet to achieve its goals. According to UN Women (2011) statistics on the current number of women holding political office in the country, in order to achieve the 35% outlined in the National Gender Policy and the international target of 30%, women would have to occupy 536 and 460 positions, respectively, of 1,533 (excluding the posts of president and vice-president). Political parties have to create an enabling atmosphere if these targets are to be attained.

2.1.11 Women in Politics and SDG 5

In the Beijing Platform for Action, stemming from the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995, the prioritization of women's leadership was outlined in sections G.1 and G.2: "take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making" and "increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership", respectively. Two decades later, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasized the need and urgency to accomplish gender parity in leadership through SDG Target 5.5, highlighting "women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.

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"The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (Articles 7–9) emphasizes women's political equality and equal participation at all levels (Article 7b): “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women on equal terms with men, the right to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government” (Part II, Article 7b). These agreements jointly indicate that women's right to equality cannot be attained without equality in political decision-making positions[52].

The presence of women in political leadership has been proved to have numerous societal benefits, such as inequality reduction, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines, and increased prioritizing of social issues such as health and education parental leave, and pensions[53,54]. Additionally, women’s political participation has been shown to be particularly influential to women in their communities. Factors such as female voter turnout, female political participation, and public service responsiveness towards women have a positive relationship with the presence of women in decision-making positions across the public and private sectors[55].

2.1.12 Women Political Representation

Political involvement (or participation) refers to citizens' levels and kinds of involvement in governance and related societal institutions such as the economy and culture[56]. It comprises citizen participation in political campaigns and debates, attendance at political party strategy meetings, voting during elections, running for office, and holding key government and political party positions[57]. Democracy requires justice, equal participation, and equal treatment of all individuals, male and female, in the representation and control of power in a society[58]. Political

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participation benefits democracy, yet all democracies are beset by systemic inequities in participation[59]. In the same vein, one of the most persistent discrepancies is gender-based, with women participating less than males, implying that half of the population's interests are underrepresented. Several scholars have found complexities and disparities in the links between gender and engagement in politics[58].

Several countries have reported low degree of female engagement and representation in public and political institutions. Gender inequality is prevalent in Kenya, which ranks 145th out of 186 nations in the 2012 Gender Inequality Index[57]. Nigeria's political system is male-centric, as evidenced by both military dictatorships and growing democratic civilian governance structures and practices[60]. The military era offered women the least opportunity to challenge the structure of gender inequalities because it promoted female subordination in society through the 'First Lady' syndrome (a process that prevented the 'woman's question' from being addressed within mainstream development praxis)[61]. Under such arrangements, the 'women's issue' was resolved within the private interests of wives of political leaders (A attitude that is extremely impossible to eradicate even inside party politics and democratic governance).

One of the most important goals of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 was to ensure women's representation in all decision-making bodies[62]. It was stated that any representative body should have a 'logical balance' of men and women to voice the society's issues collectively. Good leadership and governance imply participation, accountability, predictability, and transparency, all of which suggest a need for gender balance in political decision-making. It is well acknowledged that women's perspectives and ideals in governance can improve and enrich the overall decision-making process. It is also frequently noticed that women on the local level are more responsive to community issues[62].

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The country has yet to implement its pledge to increase women's political involvement under the 30% affirmative action mandate established in the National Women Policy in 2000, which was subsequently increased to 35% in the National Gender Policy in 2006. Women's political participation remains restricted by societal constraints that push women to the margins of leadership discourse and decision-making processes. Thus, massive gender disparities in administration and politics have been blamed for the massive discrimination experienced by Nigerian women, regardless of regional/urban-rural location, ethnic background, or religion[61]. Women had previously played an important role in the political process at the national, regional, and local levels.

However, in the 1960s, a noticeable absence of representation of women's participation became apparent, which can be attributed to the larger socio-cultural and politico-religious components of Nigeria's structural reality. This meant that, in a democratic system where numbers were essential, women and their interests were always neglected. The increasing pattern of women's low engagement in leadership is the result of young women being compelled to drop out of school to marry young (as is the case in Northern Nigeria) and becoming subsistence farmers or traders. Furthermore, the discussion of women's participation in leadership roles must be placed in a global context. Women are deemed inferior, and involvement in all levels of governance is discouraged. In fact, some cultures consider it forbidden for women to hold active roles in government.

Many qualified women are forced to play subordinate roles on the outskirts of society or are barred from entering politics. This is despite various institutional conventions and accords promoting women's participation in economics, politics, and governance[63]. Notably, corruption undermines public resources and diverts funding away from national economic development and

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social services, disproportionately affecting women and the poor, who rely extensively on these structures. Women may also be in a less powerful position to confront corruption when it arises. They may also experience gendered kinds of corruption, such as the demand for sex in exchange for specific services or resources[61].

Gender-responsive governance and anti-corruption practices in public office are gradually establishing a relationship. There is an argument that women may be more relationship-oriented, have a higher standard of ethical conduct, and may be more concerned with the common good than men. Gender differences are attributed to socialization, differences in access to networks of corruption, or knowledge of how to engage in corrupt practices, among other things[61].

2.1.12.1 Factors that Promote Women Political Representation

In general, most African nations' governance is masculine, with women working as supporters and frequently being exploited by men. Women would require concerted exposure and training to fully comprehend the rules of the game and complexities of governance[60]. There are several elements that are likely to encourage women to participate in politics. These are discussed below:

1. **Reducing Extreme Poverty:** This could be accomplished by guaranteeing equal factors that promote women's engagement in politics. Access to essential resources for both men and women, as well as reducing extreme poverty among women, include ensuring gender equity in capital and large-scale investment opportunities, eliminating gender discriminatory practices in acquiring landed properties, facilitating women's access to improved technology, and developing women's entrepreneurial skills[60]. Involve women in the implementation of empowerment initiatives. The government could improve the

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business atmosphere by providing infrastructure and accounting for the value of women's work in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Building the capacity of the women and men in low-poverty groups on investment opportunities, by 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.

2. **Eliminating Employment Discriminatory:** This is achievable by building the human capital of women to allow comparable opportunity in the modern labour market by 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.

i. **Empowerment of Women in Politics:** So as to increase the level of women participation in politics, there is the need for sensitization of women to political participation, creating enabling environment for women to participate in politics by economic empowerment

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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. To increase the number of women in elective positions and decision-making processes, 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 decision-making, 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 both executive, legislative and judiciary arms of government. For instance, 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.

ii. **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[60]. 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. Quotas do not

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discriminate but compensate women's actual barrier that prevent women from pursuing a political career[60]. 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.

iii. **More Enrolment of Girls into Schools:** Over the last three decades, there has been greater enrolment of the girl-child into higher institutions in some parts of Nigeria. For instance, 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 boys' secondary schools 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.

iv. **Inspiration for Women Occupying Positions of Authority:** Some of the few women (Dr Okonjo-Iweala, Prof Dora Akunyili, Mrs. Margaret Ekpo, and Mrs. Obiageli Ezekwesili and so on) that have occupied political and decision-making position since in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era have demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities and outstanding track records of achievement. This will enhance, build women and put women 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

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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.

2.1.13 Status of Women in Nigerian Politics

It is pertinent to note that the problem of under representation of women in politics is not unique to Nigeria or Africa. It has been observed that even in developed countries where matured democracies such as the United States of America still experiences this marginalization of women in politics. Contrary to the above, it seems that African women in some countries are relatively empowered politically in terms of the proportion of women in parliament, ministry positions, and the number of years a country has had a female president over the last two decades. For example, while America is yet to elect a woman president, Liberia, an African country, becomes the first to have Africa's first elected female president, Ellien Sirlieaf Johnson, in 2005, and Ethiopia in 2018[64].

Nigeria has continuously retrogressed in politics in spite of the increasing statistics across the continent. She has not made any major improvement in female representation in parliament and ministry nominations. In 1999, three females were elected to the Senate and twelve to the House of Representatives. Later, in two terms of elections, the total number of women in the Senate increased to eight (2007) before dropping to seven in 2011. In 2015, seven females were elected to the Senate and 20 to the House of Representatives. Incredibly, four years after the number of women in the House of Representatives reduced to eleven.

More so, the global average of women in parliament in 2020 was 26%, with 23% in ministerial positions. Rwanda now ranks first in the world in two categories: 61% of female parliamentarians and 55% of ministers. Between 1993 and 1994, Rwanda had a female prime

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minister, Agathe-uwilingimams. It is worth noting that Rwanda was ranked sixth on the political empowerment sub-index of 155 countries questioned in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Report.

Women's political participation in Nigeria has been inconsistent throughout the country's history. Women's political participation in pre-colonial Nigerian communities was not equal to that of men, but their role in traditional political governance was complementary rather than subordinate[65,66]. The complementary function, however, was imbedded in sex segregation, which dictated gender position, prestige, and power in society while also giving women their own realms of operation and control[67]. However, the introduction of colonial authority disrupted Nigeria's traditional methods of political engagement for women[19,49]. The colonial administration's establishment of patriarchal government, gender policies, and commercial interests strengthened and generalized patriarchal ideals, perpetuating gender disparity in the country[66]. The legislative council established in 1922, despite having low African representation, is notable in Nigerian political evolution. However, the colonial authority deliberately excluded women from this council[39]. These activities signified the emergence of masculinity in politics as well as women's isolation from mainstream Nigerian politics[17]. In fact, while women in South-Western Nigeria voted for the first time in the country's electoral history in the 1959 general elections, their Northern counterparts did not gain franchise rights until 1976, fifty-four years after the elective concept was adopted in Nigeria[18]. Women's political involvement, such as the Aba women's riot against colonial tax policy in 1929/30, the Ngwa women's protest to municipalization of their village in 1954, and the Eastern Region women's objection to new expenses for school in 1958;

The Abeokuta Women's Union, led by Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, staged a series of protests from 1946 to 1958 that were invaluable in the country's struggle for independence; however, the

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limited gains made by women did not translate into participation in decision making during this colonial period[68,69]. Men governed the early political parties. Women did not hold important positions in the leadership of the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), or other parties during the nationalist era or after independence. In the 1958 elections, only Wuraola Esan was appointed to the 36-member Senate, but no woman was elected to the 312-member House of Representatives or the federal cabinet[68].

The character of post-colonial politics contributed to women's low political participation. The post-independence era's ethnic and personality-based, paternalistic, and contentious politics harmed women's participation[70,71]. In the first republic, there were only four female lawmakers in the entire country, which was insufficient to give women the essential authority, and they were unable to participate actively in decision-making[19,68]. The establishment of military rule, which began in 1966, did not encourage women's engagement in politics, and there was little mention of women in positions of power[72]. Women played only a minor part throughout military rule, which was entirely male-dominated[73].

Nigeria had a fresh dawn in 1999, when it restored to civilian government following the end of military dictatorship. Women's political participation has improved throughout time; yet, in this new period, women continue to participate in Nigeria's political process at a low rate. In the 1999 general elections, women held only 181 of the 11, 881 positions accessible across the country[39]. In the same elections, just five (4.6%) women were elected to the Senate, while 13 (3.6%) women were elected to the House of Representatives, which has 360 seats, resulting in 6.3 percent female participation in the national parliament[17]. There were 36 governorship seats, yet no female candidates. Nigeria had only one female deputy governor, Chief Kofoworola Akerele-

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Bucknor, who served as the deputy governor of Lagos State from 1999 to 2003, and only 12 (1.21%) of the federation's 990 State House of Assembly seats were filled by women[69]. At the local level, only 9 of the 774 local government chairpersons in the country were women, and 143 of the 8,700 councilors were female[20].

The International Human Rights Law Group, Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), and Gender and Development Action (GADA) organized a national summit for all female politicians on June 28, 2002 in Abuja with the goal of increasing women's active participation in Nigerian politics[39]. However, the 2003 elections revealed no substantial improvement. In these elections, just 21 (6.1%) of the 339 House of Representatives members represented women. Similarly, of 109 senate seats, only three (2.7%) women were elected to the Senate[70,74]. There were no women in the 36 governor positions in the federation, and only 38 (3.84%) of the 990 seats available in the country's States House of Assembly were won by women[69]. The April elections in 2007 featured 7, 160 candidates (both men and women). Only 628 women, or 8.8% of all candidates, took part. A total of 3,141 individuals ran for seats in the National Assembly. Women made up only 209 of this total or 6.7%. In these elections, 25 (6.9%) women were elected to the House of Representatives, while 9 (8.3%) women were elected to the Senate, resulting in 7.3 percent female participation in the national parliament. While no woman was elected to any of the 36 gubernatorial seats available, there were only six women among the country's 36 deputy governors.

Only 54 (5.5%) of the 990 seats available in the country's States House of Assembly were held by women[75,76]. In the 1999, 2003, and 2007 elections, the percentages of women in the national legislature were 2%, 4%, and 6%, respectively, while in the State Houses of legislature across the country were 1.21%, 3.84%, and 5.5%. In terms of ministerial appointments, just four of the

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49 ministers were women in 1999, six in 2003 and seven in 2007. The growth in female political representation identified in the study above was an outcome of the President Obasanjo government's deliberate positive attempts to incorporate more women in political administration. As a result, political parties decided to waive for women the payment of preregistration charges for political candidates in the country.

Furthermore, the International Human Rights Law Group, CEDPA, and GADA organized a national summit for all female politicians on June 28, 2002 in Abuja with the goal of increasing women's active participation in Nigerian politics, and awareness campaigns by these and other gender-related organizations and NGOs encouraged women in the federation to run for political office in the 2003 and 2007 general elections[39,69]. This analysis, however, clearly shows that women's political participation in the country remains low, despite the government's affirmative actions and institutions designed to promote their participation, falling short of the intended result of providing women with opportunities and access to political advancement. Women's representation in the National Assembly is currently 6.9 percent in the House of Representatives and 8.3 percent in the Senate, significantly below the 35 percent minimum required under the National Gender Policy. Thus, nine years of civilian governance has not confirmed the belief that democracy would immediately increase women's political engagement.

Table 2.1: Seat Held in the House of Representative in Previous Elections

	2007		2011		2015	
Items	**Number**	**Percentage**	**Number**	**Percentage**	**Number**	**Percentage**
Female	26	7.2	22	6.1	14	3.9
Male	334	92.8	338	93.9	346	96.1
Total	360	100	360	100	360	100

Source: [77]

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Table 2.2: Women Representative in Senate 2013 -2019

Year	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
	N	N	N	%	%
2003	105	4	109	95.8	4.2
2007	101	8	109	92.92	8.08
2011	102	7	109	92.86	7.14
2015	102	7	109	92.86	7.14
2019	102	7	109	92.86	7.14

Source:[77]

Overall, women's participation in elective and appointive roles has been around 6%, which is lower than the West African sub-regional average of 15%. In January, Nigeria has 10.3% of women in ministerial positions. This resulted in her being placed 149th out of 155 nations on political employment in the 2021 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report[77].

2.1.14 Historical Exploration of Women's Political Participation in Nigeria

The increasing awareness on politics and recognition of women's roles in politics had been shaped through various historical periods[78].

Pre-Colonial Era

Before Nigeria's colonial experiences, records abound about women who distinguished themselves in various administrative and political positions. They played active roles in their respective traditional political governance. Although most traditional societies were dominated by men who rule without concern about women, there are however records of societies in which women played significant roles in leadership[79]. Studies revealed that the following women that possessed power in the pre-colonial Nigeria[79]. Quite a few women were initiated into traditional cults like Ogboni, Osugbo, Ekpo, Ekpe, and Eyo. Notable women in traditional political

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government in South West Nigeria include the Erelu, Ayaba, and Olori (King's Wives), Iyalode (Women's Leader), Iyalaje (Market Women's Leader), Yeye Oba (King's Mother), and Iya-olosa (Goddess Priests), Moremi of Ife, Efusetan of Ibadan, and Emotan. Iya Afin, Iya Agan, and Iya Abiye played important roles in the royal administrations of numerous kings. Similarly, Queen Amina of Zaria's impact and achievements to the political development of the Northern Nigerian emirate, as well as Kambasa of Bony's accomplishments in the blurred pre-colonial past, are not to be disregarded. The transition from Hausa aristocracy to Fulani/Muslim hegemony, however, completely barred women from the public realm. After Amina's reign in Zaria's pre-Islamic period, no Hausa ruler's court included a woman[78].

Despite the domestication of women's roles in the pre-colonial era, women nevertheless wielded significant power in politics, economics, and other related fields. The virtues demonstrated by several female Amazons, such as Queen Amina of Zaria, Moremi of Ife, and Queen Kampa in Opobo Kingdom in pre-colonial society are attestations to this fact. From inference, we could safely assume that elder women in the pre-colonial era passed on economic and political development skills in addition to instructing the younger ones in child care and home management. During the pre-colonial era, women all over the world, particularly in Africa, made enormous contributions to farming, trading and distribution, including local craft and industry. Aside from that, women in the pre-colonial period learned political skills that empowered them to perform some political duties and helped shape pre-colonial political infrastructures.

Nigerian women during the pre-colonial era participated actively in politics. There are numerous examples of Nigerian women actively participating in politics. Some examples are as follows: Among the Igbos, the institution of Umuada has definite rituals and political role to play in the village; among other Ika Igbo women and Ossamari, there was unique involvement in local

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politics; among the Yorubas, women actively participated in politics; for instance, Moremi stepped into political warfare single-handedly and saved her society, and Idia king's mother was the first to have her own separate court with the same royal paraphernalia as the Oba, in Lagos and Abeokuta, Queen Kampa was economically powerful to the extent of controlling her own settlement in Kampa in Opobo Kingdom. In Bonny Kingdom, the exploits of Queen Karibasa (Kambasa) have not been forgotten (Jaja, 1999). Madam Tinubu demonstrated the authority of the traditional Yoruba woman in her society's political life before 1914. In Hausa land, there exist records of women holding titles and offices such as Iya, Magajiya, and Mardani. As title holders, they anchored prominent positions in society alongside their male counterparts[80]. According to the above experiences, while society stereotyped female roles to be entirely household and childbearing, women in the pre-colonial period did not limit themselves to those stereotypes, but instead competed with their male counterparts in economic, social, and political spheres. This is undoubtedly due to experiences gained in their surroundings that were passed down to younger women.

Colonial Era

The colonial period covers the period of women's poor participation in politics, like many other problems in Nigeria. It occurred during colonial period when men hijacked most of the positions left for the natives. The era witnessed Lack of recognition of Nigerian women's political and leadership roles in mainstream Nigerian politics[79]. This was compounded by the policy implemented, which held that males had the ability for active participation in society, and those who were fortunate enough to get an education were recruited into the colonial overlords. Despite the fact that women were excluded from the mainstream of Nigerian politics during

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colonial administration, Nigerian womenfolk became relevant through their participation to nationalist movements that served as vanguards against colonialism[78].

It is worth noting that, over time, few educated men who worked as teachers, clerks, and catechists who understood the importance of western education in human growth pushed their wives to attend school. To encourage girls' enrolment in schools, some school owners and missionary institutions first allowed them to attend for free, while others permitted them to pay half the costs paid by boys. Girls' schools were founded solely to teach women to be good mothers and wives and to avoid public life. Despite the stereotyped status of women in traditional society, they continue to compete with their male counterparts in numerous facets of life. On the contrary, Western education created a clear dichotomy or conflict in women's roles. This, however, elevated men on the social ladder while relegating women. This trend constituted a setback for Nigeria.

Development cannot be tied to a particular sex or measured separately with regard to the different sexes. No one sex is too important in the issue of development and no sex should be excluded. The values instilled in women at birth, if properly fostered, will contribute significantly to the development of society as a whole.

Given African women's intrinsic talent, it is safe to believe that the colonial master chose to disenfranchise them by denying them access to education. During the colonial period, women were unable to contribute to the growth of their society. It is worth noting that economic and political repression of women during the colonial era sparked Igbo women's protests in Eastern Nigeria in 1929. However, the situation is such that socioeconomic improvement of nations can be achieved through education and extensive empowerment of women. Despite the arrogant

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actions of the colonial authority, women passionately opposed the entire colonial rule. The political and economic power of women in the colonial era was described as follows:

"These women employed their traditional organization…to mobilize all women in most part of Aba, Owerri and Opobo etc; in order to assert their rights politically as had been during the pre-colonial era"[79]. The active role played by Madam Tinubu, Mrs Ransome-Kuti and others in mobilizing women against taxation cannot be forgotten.

Post-Colonial Era

The postcolonial period witnessed a gradual integration of women into mainstream politics. Although there is still apathy on the part of women in political participation, the postcolonial era witnessed a rising trend of political participation among women. There is continuous awareness on the roles of women in politics. From 1960 -1965 there were just two female lawmakers in the federal parliament, with three more in the Eastern House of Assembly[79]. There were only four female legislators in the entire country, which provided women with the required influence over decision-making. The imposition of military rule, which began in 1966, did not encourage women's engagement in politics, and there was little mention of women in positions of power. The return to democracy in 1999 opened another epoch in women participation in politics. Women became increasingly aware of politics and showed increased interests in governance[78].

Education is viewed as a vital tool for national development[79]. In this sense, education is not gender or sex-specific. This is because the type of growth discussed in this paper necessitates the active engagement of all members of society, men and women alike. The task of nation-building requires all hands n deck to begin ideas, establish plans, and engage in their practical implementation. To make the greatest contribution to national technological growth and achieve

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the best results, both men and women should be equally interested in science and the arts subjects[81]. Both sexes (male and female) are highly relevant in national development. This is why "gender equality and women empowerment continue to be a central theme in global treaties, covenants and declarations because they are now acknowledged as important to people-centred development.

On seeing that education is one of the powerful instruments of empowering women with the knowledge and skills that would help them to participate actively in the development process, Nigeria became a signatory to the United Nations 1979 convention known as Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)). This convention has variously been described as the "Bible of women empowerment" and "Women's International Bill of Rights". Despite the effort of various governments to close the gap created by gender discrimination, there still exists wide gap between men and women in public life and in all sectors. A lot of traditional and cultural factors have been claimed to be limiting women educationally and economically among other opportunities. These cultural practices that constituted a lot of barriers to women educational opportunities are all embedded in political, economic and religious realities of the people[82].

Women form Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to fight obnoxious economic policies that are against women such as political participation, legal status, child marriage and "osu" (caste) system. One of such important women groups is the National Council for Women Society (NCWS), made up of educated and influential women. Their objective is to assist women groups in the rural areas and equip them with basic education on how to be self-reliant and thereby play important roles in their homes as mothers and contribute to nation building. The council set up scholarship schemes and skill acquisition centres for indigent girls of school age. They have

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done a lot to enable the present generation escape the unfortunate experience of their predecessors by setting up hostels for young girls to make school accessible to them. The NCWS saw education as a potent tool for the upliftment of women socio-economic status, thus the NCWS became the "spokesman" on matters affecting women in Nigeria. The women on their part have embraced the opportunity given by both Federal and state governments by attending adult education classes at the centres established by the government to learn how to read and write and acquire other skills.

Some women groups especially in the rural areas undertake and complete such projects as pipe borne water schemes, bore holes, and repair of toilets in their locality. It could be said without much contradiction that in the post-colonial era the status of women has fairly improved. Women have strived to overcome discrimination through education. It is a common feature in Nigeria to see women in very highly placed positions. Some are medical doctors, pilots, pharmacists, architects, university dons of all ranks including professors, bankers, media women and even business tycoons. Nigerian women have indeed ventured into male dominated professions which include aviation, armed forces among others. In fact, in all spheres of life women are there working both in Nigeria and in many other countries contributing to socio-economic development. Access to education has gone a long/way in making Nigerian women realize their potentials. In the informal sector of the economy, the rural women have made impact in food crop production, processing, distribution and animal husbandry.

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2.1.15 Women in the Goodluck Jonathan Presidency 2011 – 2015

Even though Nigerian women have had a colourful history of achievements that could rival that of the men, female participation in governance has been far from satisfactory. Nigeria could be

seen as a male-dominated, chauvinistic society, stifled by culture, tradition social rankings that make the Indian caste system look feeble. Women are still looked upon as second-class citizens, objects of desire or mere domestic helps. Social, economic, cultural and religious factors are largely responsible for women's marginalization in politics, particularly in the Muslim-dominated part of the country where politics is seen as a men's exclusive preserve.

In a bid to implement the 35% affirmative action provided for in Nigeria's National Gender Policy, gender activists and civil society organizations such as the National Coalition on Affirmative Action have organized program on advocacy, training and research on affirmative action to encourage female political participation set an unprecedented record in governance, by implementing a feminine gender-friendly policy. Since the inception of the Jonathan administration, there has obviously been a paradigm shift to favour the active participation of more women in key government positions. To fully appreciate the magnitude of this positive development made under President Goodluck Jonathan, we only need to compare the levels of women participation in governance before his administration and now. The implementation of Jonathan's Gender Policy has also resulted in an increase in women's representation in Government from 10% in 2011 to over 33% 2013, with the appointment of 13 female Ministers out of 42, representing 31% and 4 Special Advisers out of 18, representing 23%. These appointments have set the stage for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target number three on Gender Equity and Women Empowerment[83].

Outside politics, two micro-credit schemes have been set up to assist women: (1) the Women Fund for Economic Empowerment (WOFEE), in collaboration with the Bank of Agriculture and the State Governments and (2) the Business Development Fund for Women (BUDFOW), in collaboration with the Bank of Industry. The two schemes are revolving facilities with an interest

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rate of 10%. In addition to these efforts, 77 skill acquisition centres have been constructed and equipped across the country to increase income generation, through job creation, for women, especially at the grassroots level. A recent study conducted and published in a book, titled Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, Champion for Women, shows that Nigeria was 23rd out of 188 countries studied, in terms of women mobilization, appointment into positions, participation in governance and women empowerment.

President Jonathan's passionate drive to transform the lives of Nigerian women and improve their welfare and opportunities is tied to his marriage to a remarkable woman, Dame Patience Jonathan, who is endowed with some of the greatest human attributes and who is a natural mobilizer of women. The President has, in his private and public life, benefitted immensely from his wife's virtues. It is generally acknowledged, for instance, that it was Dame Jonathan's mobilization efforts that secured Jonathan the massive votes of Nigerian women during the 2011 Presidential election[83].

The 2011 experience was enough for Jonathan to consolidate his faith in the qualities of Nigerian women. He did not entertain any doubt whatsoever about their character, capacity and competence in playing any role in the land, whether political, technical or administrative. That is the reason behind Jonathan's Policy of Gender Equality and why, as some Nigerians would say "the President has surrounded himself with women and entrusted them with some of the most critical and sensitive positions."

The good thing is that Jonathan's confidence in Nigerian women has not been misplaced. Some of his administration's greatest achievements, since he came into office, have been in Ministries, Parastatals and Departments manned by women. For example, since the inception of the

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Jonathan administration, the national economy has been strong and steady. A recent forecast by the IMF has it that the Nigerian economy will grow by an average of 7.3% in 2014, which is an improvement on the 6.7% average of 2013. The person who has been working hard to ensure this resilience of the national economy is a woman, Dr Okonjo-Iweala, the coordinating minister for the Economy and Minister of Finance. Another success story of the Jonathan administration is the Aviation Sector, which has been remarkably transformed all over the country. Again, this monumental feat was achieved by yet another woman, Mrs. Stella Oduah, former Minister of Aviation. Nigerian women, serving in various other capacities, have not been less successful in performance.

Several news media around the globe have carried reports on the increasing level of women empowerment in Nigeria; this is to the president's credit. Under this administration, women in Nigeria have achieved an impressive level of participation in our socio-economic life. Even more encouraging is that this achievement has extended towards politics as well. More and more women are getting involved in politics these days. We have more women aspiring for public office and even more women actively forming a remarkable body of the electorate. More women lobbyists and activists are springing up too; giving expression to the needs of the people, but that is just an aside.

On the side of governance, the federal government, under Jonathan ensured that entrenched in his Transformation Agenda is a National Gender Policy in which women empowerment in politics forms a crucial constituent. The government has so far ensured that there is growing awareness among women on the possibilities that lie ahead of them in active participation in politics and governance. To further encourage women to actively get involved, a Political Trust Fund has been established to support women aspiring for political position.

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President Jonathan was a leader with such implicit faith in Nigerian women; and Nigerian women have delivered. With the execution of his Gender Policy, we have witnessed an increase in women's representation in government from 10% in 2011 to 35% in 2013. He employed three female Justices in the Supreme Court; 16 female heads of ministries; nine female special advisers; 12 female permanent secretaries, 26 female heads of federal government parastatals; 29 female federal commissioners; 16 female heads of federal tertiary institutions; four female representatives in international multi-lateral organizations and 12 female ambassadors and high commissioners. This is commendable indeed[83].

The Jonathan administration also recorded a number of "firsts". Under his tenure, Nigeria witnessed first female Rear Admiral- Itunu Hotonou; first female Air force pilot- Blessing Liman. It is also of note that the Nigerian Defence Academy began admitting females for the first time since its inception, during the Jonathan administration. Undoubtedly, President Jonathan is genuinely interested in development of the average Nigerian society through the empowerment and emancipation of the women.

President Muhammadu Buhari Administration (2015-2023)

The first tenure of President Muhammadu Buhari began in 2015 and the second tenure started in 2019. The administration of President Buhari is characterised with women inclusion in politics. Like the regimes of former Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan, the present regime has featured women in wider dimension. It is observed that:

Amina Mohammed, Khadija Bukar Abba Ibrahim, Aisha Jummai Al-Hassan, Kemi Adeosun, Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed, Hajia Hadiza Abdullahi and Aisha Abubakar, all female, finally made it to the cabinet of President Muhammadu Buhari as ministers. There was a glimpse of hope

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when the first ministerial list was released and with the belief that the President would increase the number in the second list, Nigeria women were optimistic that the 35 percent affirmative action they yearned for would be achieved. The National Policy of Women that was adopted in 2000 reserved 30 percent for women under the affirmative action guidelines. In 2011, former President Goodluck Jonathan administration's cabinet had women occupying about 33 percent of the positions and there were calls for him to make it up to 35 percent as obtainable in some African countries[84].

2.1.16 Political Party and Women Inclusion in Politics

Political party is an integral element of any electoral process in both developed and developing countries. It is an association of individuals that engage in electoral struggle for the control of administration of government[85]. Essentially, political parties are platform for competitiveness among groups seeking political positions and give opportunities for masses to participate in political process[85]. Giving women opportunity to participate in the political process provides an enabling atmosphere for their empowerment[86]. Political parties, therefore, are essentially the platform that promote women's development and contribute toward achieving their political empowerment.

However, women have continued to be underrepresented in all political positions irrespective of efforts made to overcome such challenges. Political parties mainly use women whom they place as women leaders to mobilize their fellow women for political activities[85]. The consequences are usually disadvantageous, ultimately render women powerless and tend to exclude them from mainstream party politics. In its limited sense, women play minimal roles in parties, party chairperson or secretary general are the exclusive position of men. Men and women are not

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proportionately represented by political parties for electoral contests especially in Nigeria. Data from four major political parties during the 2011 general election shows a low representation of women in party list. The All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) presented the highest number of women candidates for election. Women represented 12 per cent of the total candidates which stood at 640. This was followed by the Labour party which presented 91 women candidates representing 11.7 percent out of 775 candidates. All Nigerians Peoples' Party (ANPP) had 77 of 1293 representing 6 per cent, while People's Democratic Party (PDP) had the lowest percentage of women candidates among the four major parties with 84 women out of 1510 candidates representing 5.6 per cent[87].

A total of 3306 candidates participated in the 2011 general elections across the nations. Of this number, 3004 candidates representing 90.9 per cent were males and 302 candidates representing 9.1 per cent were females[88]. Specifically, out of the 20 presidential candidates in contest for the seat, there was only one female and out of 353 vice-presidential candidates, there were only three candidates and none of these females won. At the national assembly, out of the 890 candidates that contested for senatorial seats, 90 were women and only seven emerged victorious out of the 109 available seats while 2,408 contested the House of Representative seats with 220 female candidates and 26 females won out of available 360 seats (International Republican Institute (IRI) & National Democratic Institute[88].

More so, there were only 10 states with female governorship candidates of which 13 females out of a total of 384 candidates participated in the election yet none of them emerged victorious[89]. Political parties that presented women for the governorship contest include African Democratic Congress (ADC), All Progressives Grand Congress (APGA), People's Redemption Party (PRP), African Liberation Party (ALP), Action Party of Nigeria (APN), Better Nigeria Progressive Party

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(BNPP), Fresh Democratic Party (FRESH), Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN), Mega Peoples Progressive Party (MPPP) and Labour Party[88]. Among these political parties, only two of them presented more than one candidate across the 10 states, the ADC with 3 candidates and APN with 2 candidates.

All others had only one candidate. It is worthy to note that none of these 10 political parties were among the top three most popular political parties during this period. One may argue that these political parties due to their presumed low popularity may have envisaged the party's incapability to win seat and hence decided to present women as their party's flag bearers. This goes a long way to show case how political parties undermine women in their candidacy selection for electoral contest in Nigeria. Political parties with high popularity hardly field women candidates especially for high profile offices such as president, vice-president and governorship seats. This is because they have high tendency of emerging victorious since party popularity takes precedence over individual popularity in elections in Nigeria.

In 2015 general election, out of the 26 registered political parties, 14 political parties presented presidential candidates of which there was only one female candidate by name Remi Sonaiya of Kowa party. While four political parties nominated females as vice presidential candidates. However, these political parties only appeared on the ballot paper as only two political parties namely, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC) actually contested the presidential poll[90]. At the national assembly, 746 candidates contested for senatorial seats, out of which 128 were females and only 8 out of the available 109 seats were secured by women.

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These women included Stella Oduah (Anambra North), Rose Oko (Cross River North), Abiodun Olujimi (Ekiti South) and Fatimat Raji-Rasaki (Ekiti Central), Oluremi Tinubu (Lagos Central), Binta Garba (Adamawa North) and Alhaja Monsurat Sunmonu, Oyo, and Uche Ekwunife, Anambra Central[91]. While a total of 1,777 candidates vied for seat in the House of Representatives, 270 of this number were women and only 17 out of 360 seats were won by women (IRI & NDI, 2019). At the state level, the governorship race had a total of 380 candidates out of which 23 were women and none of emerged victorious in the election. Hence, none of the major political parties had a woman as the governorship candidate in the election as they mainly presented few deputy governorship candidates. The deputy governorship contest had also 380 candidates for which 64 were women but only 4 out of the 29 available seats were won by women. There were 51 female members in the State Houses of Assembly and there were no female members in 14 states[91].

Majority of political parties in Nigeria do not inculcate the principle of democracy which result in political tension and violence in the electoral system[85]. The author further noted that political godfathers exhibit domineering attitudes by determining who take which position in the political scene. These attitudes of godfathers create discontent in the political system due largely on party's inability to abide to legal procedure for party nominations. Civil society reported that female aspirants often faced gender-based intimidation, violent attacks and substitution by men on the final list of party candidates despite their victory in the primaries[91]. This behaviour of political parties towards women denotes that they lack the ability to change women's political status by preserving seats for them in party affairs and party structure[85].

There is basically no serious improvement in the level of women participation in politics especially looking at their output in terms of occupying elective offices since the return of

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democracy in Nigeria, even when there has been an increase in the number of female candidates in past elections such as 2011 and 2015 as clearly shown above. An exploration of the 2019 party candidacy selection and election would further assist in explaining the undermining factor to women's political underrepresentation despite increase in the number of women-candidacy by political parties in recent times.

2.1.17 Women Participation in Elective Positions

1 **The Presidential:** Professor Oluremi Sonaya, the first woman to ever qualify as a presidential candidate in Nigeria came on board in the 2015 general elections. She was involved in a primary with three other aspirants (all male) emerged as the party's nominee as the presidential candidate of the party. The presidential result revealed that women participation can actually influence the politics of the country. The only female candidate polled some votes in all the states of the country. The result showed some reasonable votes where male candidates were unable to get as much. For example, in Nasarawa State where Citizens Popular Party (CPP) candidate polled four votes, she polled forty-eight votes. Also, the total number of votes she secured surpasses that of HOPE Democratic Party and United Democratic Party (UDP) parties during the election. While the total number of votes for HOPE was 7,393 and UDP was 9,147 votes, KOWA party had 12,524 votes[92]. With this development, experts and gender activists have continuously advocated the active participation of women in governance for the good of the society. The result of the 2015 general elections in the country have not shown improved women representation in elective positions in the country. It should be noted that out of the fourteen candidates that contested for the seat of the president, the only woman amongst the contenders came out in the twelfth position[92]. Just as men have

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always dominated the National Assembly, the 2015 election result does not present a different picture in the number of women who will represent their constituencies in the next four years. However, many Nigerians saw in the audacious candidacy the possibility of real change and a clear departure from what the country experienced so far as a nation.

2 **The Gubernatorial**: The gubernatorial candidate of the All Progressive Congress, APC in Taraba state Aisha Jumai Al-Hassan would have made history in the last gubernatorial election in the state as the first woman to scale the hurdles of electioneering campaign and break the jinx that has befuddled Nigerian women over the years from emerging successful at the polls as governors, but for the outcome of the election which was not in her favour in the gubernatorial election[92]. Mama Taraba as she was fondly called, almost made it but then, the near success syndrome that has been the lot of many Nigerian women in politics cut short her joy. Her expectations were high that she would emerge successful considering the direction of some results earlier reeled out by INEC. But suddenly, the result of the election was declared inconclusive and then, a re-run that finally dashed her hope when the PDP candidate was declared winner.

3 **Deputy Governorship Position**: The gubernatorial elections produced four women deputy governors. They are Oluranti Adebule (Lagos State), Mrs Yetunde Onanuga (Ogun State), Ipalibo Banigo (Rivers State) and Cecilia Ezeilo (Enugu State)[92]. It is disheartening to observe that only few women emerged winners in the various positions they contested for both at the party primaries and in the general elections. Despite improved political consciousness of women and the various objectives of the National Gender Policy, it is disappointing that women still occupy less than eight percent of elective positions at all levels of governance in the country. The "domino theory" of

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patriarchy and masculinity which predominantly characterised the Nigerian society is still a dominant force that controls the entire polity[78]. Men still exclusively dominate Nigeria's political landscape and this reflects in the gap in the number of seats won in general elections from 1999 till date on the basis of gender as captured by the tables above. Be that as it may, women have benefitted more in selective or appointive positions since 1999 and in fact, in some instances, they have been compensated with 35% inclusion in all appointive positions[78]. Women have occupied many sensitive appointive positions which have expectedly improved their voices in public affairs. For example, Dr Okonjo Iweala (who served as Minister of Finance and coordinating minister for the Nigerian economy), no doubt, has played significant role in not only the political economy of Nigeria, she has also set a pace at the international scene. In a nutshell, the empirical evidences as given above depicts the potency or otherwise of the contribution of women in the formation and restructuring of the Nigerian economy and politics in general. It then means that women can play active roles in shaping the direction of Nigerian politics even far beyond the imaginations of the male folk.

By any standard, however, women participate in politics as voters, party supporters and usually attend political rallies in large number. Some even run for top political offices (the example of Sarah Jibril and Professor Oluremi Sonaya of the KOWA Party who contested for the office of President with Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari respectively and Hon. Mulikat who unsuccessfully (albeit robustly) vied for the seat of Speaker, House of representative is apt in this direction)[93]. The 2006 census puts Nigerian women at about half the population of the entire country. Despite this numerical advantage and the massive participation in voting, less than 20% of political offices are held by women. For all intents and purposes, it appears that the Nigerian

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situations seem to defy the political theory that political power derives from political participation because women participate fully in elections in Nigeria but without full representation[78].

Nigerian women have about the lowest representation of 5.9% in the national legislature when compared to most other African countries. For example, Uganda has 34.6%, South Africa (43.2%), Ethiopia (27.7%), Cameroun (20%), Niger (12.3%) and DR Congo (8.0%). For Nigeria women, particularly in areas of political representation in governance the percentage is 7%, the lowest in the world[78]. Women representation in Nigeria politics has, over the years, been less than encouraging. This poses a challenge and narrows the chances of getting more women in decision-making structures. Women have actually proved their strength and competence in the society in all spheres even in male dominated professions but women involvement in public decision-making processes in the emergent Fourth Republic in Nigeria has been characterized by low representation.

Instructively, women have particularly demanded the implementation of affirmative actions towards the integration of at least 35% of women in all elective positions and in fulfilment of United Nations agenda for gender mainstreaming. Women political empowerment and development as enshrined in Nigeria's National Gender Policy should be adopted. It is useful to mention that globally, women representation has increased from 13% to 18%[94]. But it is worrisome to note that while increase in Africa is phenomenon from 10% to 17%, the growth rate in Nigeria remains stunted and even declining. The clamour for the attainment of the 35% affirmative action for women political integration has remained a far cry from what is obtainable in other continents. Igbuzor attempted a comparative assessment thus: Burundi has 30% quota for women representation in the constitution while there is 50% local representation in South

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Africa Local Government. African National Congress (ANC) has 30% women representation enshrined in the party's constitution[94].

A comparative study of election results from 1999-2015 reveals vividly that elective positions still elude women despite huge investments in mobilization, advocacy, lobbying and many others. However, it is impressive to observe that women public consciousness has improved significantly in the Fourth Republic[79]. More women have put themselves forward in virtually every position to be contested for in the current political dispensation unlike the situation previously. Women political consciousness was particularly fascinating and impressive in the 2015 general elections. But this has not translated to meaningful inclusion in the political process as expected[79]. As a result, it would be necessary to look into the challenges facing the involvement of women in the Nigerian politics and which has also affected their representation in the 2015 general elections. The challenges facing the Nigerian Women in Politics Over the years, Nigerian women have continued to record very poor performances in elective political offices. This is largely due to the sentimental attachment on feminine gender. Although they have been playing crucial role in political life of the country, this has not yielded results in terms of their performances when it comes to elective offices[79].

2.1.18 Challenges against Women's Active Participation in Politics

Several impediments have been identified as limiting the participation of women in the social, economic, and political scenes. These barriers are cultural, economic, and legal amongst others. This intervention would focus on some distinctly Nigerian variants of these barriers[95]. Observation and empirical evidence point to and reveal that a number of factors have facilitated or contributed to the second fiddle role women are playing in political activities in Nigeria. Some

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of these factors are identified as a function of natural status of women, while others are man-made deliberately designed by their male counterparts to further confine women to sedentary activities. These factors include, but not limited to, the following:

1. **Religious and Socio-cultural Factors:** The social, political, and economic constraints that these groups must contend with are actively supported by religion, which also works to promote gender stereotypes that are discriminatory against women[95]. For instance, in some northern parts of Nigeria, women are in Purdahs out of reverence for Islam. This suggests that they are segregated in their rooms and that only their spouses have full access to them. The spouse is the only one who must satisfy their requirements. It is best to let rumours about how people are living since the majority of homes are below the poverty line. Religion ensures that a significant majority of women are excluded from economic and political activities, including voting and running for office[96]. Islamic edicts are frequently cited as justification for practices like the state's practice of keeping women in "Purdah," giving girls away in early marriages, denying them an education, and limiting their ability to participate effectively in politics in general and when selecting candidates of their choice[95]. The majority of Muslim-populated states in the north observe "purdah," which involves excluding women from the public eye. In purdah, women must always have a male companion with them when they are out in public and are not permitted to leave their homes without their husbands' permission. Further restricting the flexibility of attire for women under purdah is the requirement for Muslim women to cover their faces in public. There is a cultural presumption that women are abominable when they lead men and cannot lead but must be guided. Many women are

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unable to be found in high-hierarchy positions due to religious and cultural philosophies that work against gender equality and employment prospects for men and women[97].

2. **Violence and Threat:** Political violence is another element that lowers women's political participation in Nigeria. Due to the involvement of thugs before, during, and after elections and the ensuing insecurity, which involves the loss of lives and property, politics is generally out of the question for women[95]. Female candidate Dorathy Nyone described her own experience by saying, "A ward chairman was shot dead; all the women and most of the males fled the scene." My partner picked me up and drove me home. I was afraid since, to determine the winners by hand, only men who were well equipped for the bloodshed remained behind[96]. Even though this tale typically represents electoral violence in Nigeria, many women now fear politics due to the recent spate of political murders, ongoing political intimidation, and other violent acts.
3. **Cost of Election:** In Nigeria, both genders are equally affected, although women suffer more damage quickly. An important obstacle for women is the high expense of contributing to political parties and campaigns. The least expensive governor's campaign would probably cost 200 million naira. How many men are capable of raising the same amount of money for women, and how many women are capable of raising such a sizeable amount of money? Given that she would have had little impact on party funding and formation, which political party would select a woman for that position?[98]. In a system where lots of money is needed to purchase votes and compromise conscience, candidates without deep pockets and money bags as support cannot achieve their goals of running for public office.

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The majority of parties charge hefty fee for nomination forms to run for elective positions. Their average wealth can be partially blamed for Nigerian women's reluctance to actively participate in politics. The high costs charged by political parties for candidates to run for office may be properly attributed to the cheerleader and clapper positions that women have chosen in these collectives. Women's hopes to participate are also dashed by their limited access to credit and money on the economic front[96]. Few women have the financial means to sustain themselves in politics, which forces them to rely on their husbands or other immediate family members, which is not always simple. The average woman finds it expensive to buy nomination forms, rent campaign offices, engage staff, print posters, buy vehicles, outfit those vehicles with potent sound systems, buy fuel, etc. Nigeria has a capital-intensive political system, which makes it difficult for average women to participate in politics[95]. The high cost of financing political parties and campaigns is a big obstacle to women. The minimum cost of gubernatorial election could go as high as 200 million naira. How many women can mobilise such huge amount of money and how many men can mobilise such amount of money for women? Which political party would nominate a woman for that post considering her very small contribution to party finance and formation?[98].

4. **Discriminatory Customs and Laws:** The customs of many modern countries are discriminatory because they devalue women and treat them as men's property. Women feel generally inferior to men and are at a disadvantage in the socio-political environment, even in urban regions, as a result of gender stereotyping cultural norms, and behaviors[95]. Because of these socially constructed standards and stereotype roles, women overemphasize their "feminist" because they accept their status as "weaker sexes,"

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overemphasize the sensitive element of their sex and equate high performance with men. For instance, most traditions place more value on sending the boy to a school than they do on the girl, who is expected to care for the siblings and find a husband. This makes it more difficult for women to compete with men in politics because there are a few more illiterate women than there used to be[23].

5. **Women's Conception of Politics:** There has been some broad consensus that the foundation of Nigerian politics is high political virility; these are individuals with the skills to compete in an unstable environment, the capacity to take it by force when force is necessary, and the ability to march violence with violence[95]. Women are viewed as being too passive to participate in politics and governance, whereas men are viewed as being more competitive, strong, independent, and willing to battle in political undertakings. This consensus is also influenced by social conventions and ideas that, via socialization, defined various gender roles under biological distinctions. Due to their perception of traditional politics as a filthy game and their dread of violence, women are more alienated from it. In Nigeria, there seems to be a lack of critical understanding of the difference between a visible agenda for women and an agenda that has an impact on women. Even though the importance of women's numbers has been underlined repeatedly, it has been difficult for women to rise to positions of power since, in contrast to their male counterparts; they are viewed as "supporters clubs, squads of cheerleaders and clappers." The majority of female politicians believe that to succeed, they must behave like males; they seek office under the impression that they are unique. Furthermore, women's modesty does not help them during the political confrontation[23].

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6. **Lack of Interest by the Women:** The majority of women have little interest in participating in politics. Women's lack of interest in politics can sometimes be attributed to a variety of social factors, including their socialization, the idea that politics and leadership are not for them, their disinterest in political competition with men in any party, social stigma, socio-cultural issues, and religious beliefs, among others[95]. Most women would appropriately prioritize their efforts if there were justice in the world by getting married, having children, and doing solely domestic duties rather than engaging in politics[97].
7. **Prospects of Women Leadership in Nigeria:** There was no gender parity on problems of leadership in the public and private sectors of the economy during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras[95]. There have always been problems with male domination in Nigerian leadership, and the lack of female involvement in public affairs hurts the expansion of organizations. The Beijing conference in 1995, also known as the fourth international conference on women, which emphasized equal participation of women in decision-making bodies, marked the beginning of the golden age of women. It also implied that difficulties facing society should be balanced between men and women. The main metrics for measuring effective leadership - participatory leadership, accountability, and transparency - call for gender parity in leadership opportunities[60].
8. **Political Violence**: Nigerian elections have always been characterized by one form of violence or another since the return of democracy[79]. Female aspirants of various political parties cannot withstand political violence; therefore, women participation in politics is drastically reduced. Competing for political positions in Nigerian requires huge financial backup. Most Nigerian women who seek these positions could not afford meeting the

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financial obligations therein, despite the wavers giving to women aspirants by some of the political parties. And so, they could do little or nothing to outweigh their male counterparts.

9. **Political Godfatherism** is one of the concepts that open narrow doors when it comes to deciding who gets what in the political scene. However, it has effect on women participation. Political Godfatherism is one of the concepts that open narrow doors when it comes to deciding who gets what in the political scene[79]. However, it has effect on women participation in Nigeria politics. Literarily because Godfathers are seen in Nigeria to be men who have the power personally to determine both who gets nominated to contest elections and who wins an election. Godfathers are people of questionable wealth and influences who robbed political parties of their conventional and legitimate functions of presenting clear and coherent programs on the basis of which the candidates presented by them are chosen by the voters.

To ensure that women have the chance to engage in leadership, Nigeria has ratified a variety of international, regional, and national legislation; yet, these laws are only put into practice on paper. Despite the 30% and 35% affirmative action offered to women in the National Gender Policy in 2006 and the National Women Policy in 2000, respectively, Nigeria has not been able to show its commitment by electing women to posts[60]. The high level of poverty among women is a result of their lack of access to resources like microcredit programs, capital for large-scale investment, and land for agricultural pursuits. This can be lessened, though, by providing equitable access to resources, advancing technology, empowering women in their entrepreneurship, enlightening women about investment prospects, and assisting women in the development of small,

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medium, and large-scale businesses. Taking leadership positions in private and public organizations becomes challenging when women and girls are not given equal opportunities and access to education. Changing the perception of most Nigerian parents, especially those in rural areas, on the role of women in society will help in achieving this[60].

10. **Socioeconomic Development**: This focuses on economic development and considers increases in democracy and human choice as direct outcome of economic development[79]. It implies that a country's level of development correlates with women's participation in politics and decreases existing barriers to political activity and participation. Developmental measures such as increase in per capita, gross domestic product, women in the work force and women literacy positively influence the percentage of women's political participation.
11. **Historical Legacies**: A country's developmental trends of social modernization create cultural and institutional legacies that affect societies' abilities to improve women's lives[79]. This influence can take the form of an inertial tendency where institutions affect relevant phenomena that would have otherwise changed due to other social forces.
12. **The Institutional Design Factor**: This view holds that a country's institutional characteristics either enable or constrain women's political participation. Three aspects of the political system find support in this literature: the strength of democracy, the electoral system, and gender electoral quota systems. The impact of institutional variation within democracies on women's political involvement has also been considered[79].
13. **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

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in decision making process in households not to talk of coming out to vie for political positions[99].

14. **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[99]. Therefore, women aspirants who ventured into politics are looked upon as shameless and promiscuous.
15. **Low Level of Education:** The low participation of women in education is also part of the shortcomings. The National Adult Literacy Survey, 2010 published by National Bureau of Statistics revealed that the adult females do not engage in active politics[99].
16. **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[99]. A number of barriers are imposed on women active participation in politics by cultural practices. Nigerian society is permeated by patriarchy whereby women are expected to conform to and confine themselves to male dominance and female subservience. Women are seen to belong to the home, be incapable of making sound decisions and it is unbecoming of women to expose themselves in public for political activities such as campaign rallies. Men often find it incredible and impracticable to see their participating in politics[98]. 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.
17. **Discriminatory Socio-cultural and Religious Practices**: The entrenched socio-cultural and religious practices in Nigeria skewed in favour of men and against women constitute

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serious challenge to women active participation in politics. Women (including Nigerian 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 virtuous woman defined as quiet, submissive who should be seen and not heard[100].

18. **Unhealthy Political Environment**: Unhealthy Political environment is another challenge to women active participation in politics in Nigeria[100]. The political terrain in Nigeria is do-or-die affair fraught with violence, maiming, assassinations, threats, blackmail, intimidation, humiliation, etc. which are used by mostly men to scare women away from active participation in politics in Nigeria.
19. **Political Party Discrimination**: In Nigeria, political party is the framework for the attainment of political ambitions by politicians. Its hierarchy, membership, and funding are still male dominated which made it possible for them to be influencing the party's internal politics and often sideling women. The manifestos and constitutions of political parties in Nigeria rarely mention Affirmative Action for women, and when they do, their commitments are lower than the benchmark set by regional and international conventions[100].
20. **Lack of Family, Fellow Women and Media Supports**: Lack of family support is a critical challenge to women active participation in politics in Nigeria. Because of the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society, it is culturally assumed that women must seek permission from the men/husbands before venturing into politics[100]. However, if such permission is not granted, the only option for such women is to drop their political ambitions. Thus, most family members especially husbands even among the educated

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ones do not allow women wives to participate actively in politics in Nigeria. Many poor women political aspirants do not enjoy family support financially, socially, and otherwise.

21. **Violence, Thuggery and Intimidation**: Other impediments preventing women from actively participating in politics and governance are: patriarchal dominance in political parties, godfatherism, indigeneship, intra-party rigging, political violence, thuggery and high level of intimidation[75].
22. **Nature of Political Party Formation:** At the level of political party formation, it is usually in form of club and informal meetings initiated by male friends and business partners[100]. Other members of the society, including women, are contacted for membership at a much later stage when party structures are already put in place. So, women are naturally excluded from the formation stage of political parties thus denying them of benefits accruing to foundation membership.
23. **Inadequacy of Willing and Educated Women:** Some women in Nigeria naturally subject themselves to domestic activities and the need to prevent broken homes. This inevitably reduces the number of qualified and willing women for both appointive and elective positions.
24. **The Issue of Indigeneity**: This is another major barrier that militates against active women participation in politics. Women who are married outside their constituencies of birth (but who contest elections in their marriage constituencies) are usually regarded as non-indigenes by the people from that constituency (at least by birth). This is a worse case if the woman is married from entirely different ethnic group. Such a woman will be regarded as being over ambitious and may be prevented or discouraged.

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25. **High Rate of Maternal Mortality:** The Nigerian health sector is plagued by a number of problems including mal-distribution of health facilities, poor management of the health systems, poor referral systems and the neglect of the rural areas, where a larger proportion of the population resides, especially women and children[61]. The issue of women's health did not attract much attention both in health policies and in health research until in the recent times, when maternal mortality ratio (MMR) is 545 per 100,000 live births[61]. For a long time, health research, especially in the area of maternal and child health in Nigeria, focused more on child health to the neglect of the woman's health. Even when the health of the woman is targeted, it remains at the level of reproductive health, with particular emphasis on family planning.

2.1.19 Women Organizations and the Leadership Question

Women appeared to have more descriptive representation in politics and decision-making arena than substantive representation. However, descriptive representation of women is the widely acceptable share of seats in parliamentary and decision-making arena showing political inclusion in the society for women. The descriptive representation is the representation which depends on shared characteristics and experience. That is representing someone because of gender or class such as representation of the women folk[101, 102]. However, substantive representation of women concerns the interest of women, gender equality and reason for the representation of women in political and decision making. If women are not substantively represented in politics, governance and decision making, certain interests and concerns that arise from the experiences of women would likely not to be adequately tackled in political arena that is filled by men only[101]. Equality between men and women could not be achieved simply by disregarding gender-related differences in societies[103].

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Many authors have itemized reasons for the descriptive rather than substantive roles of women in decision making arena. In African countries, including Nigeria, obnoxious social norms, political exclusion, economic lopsidedness, social and systemic practices dictated the tune of women participation in politics and their voice in decision making arena[104]. Many authors argued that the number of women in any political body was not important, what matters was their critical act or substantive role[104]. United Nations indicated that sex stereotype was part of the entrenched obstacles responsible for denigration of the role and the importance of women in the society including political participation and governance[105]. Minor or descriptive representation of women in governance stemmed from the barriers that female political candidates usually face such as sex stereotyping, political socialization, lack of preparation for political activities and balancing of work and family[106]. The obstacles to women's participation in politics to include political, socio-economic, ideological and psychological barriers.

Several stories depicted women as disloyal, disagreeable, untrustworthy, stupid and even gullible, hence, their minor descriptive role in decision making processes[104]. Women continued to be left out of official records and when recognized, they were addressed as people who needed welfare assistance rather than actors in the historical process which accounted for their under-representation in political life and most decision-making processes[104]. Lack of government incentives and assistance, lack of resources, information, education, cultural values and discrimination against women were the most important factors contributing to their passive involvement in development and governance[107]. There were evidences that female politicians faced gender stigma from male members of the political parties which undermined the ability of women to reach or maintain leadership role. The challenges that hindered women's substantive political participation and recommended training for women candidates[108]. Education, quota

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legislation, financing, research, data improvement, grassroots women's empowerment movement as the way out of women descriptive representation in decision making and governance in Nigeria[106]. In the same vein, the descriptive roles of women and recommended strengthening and advancing women political inclusion through education for aspiring women into politics and governance[109].

The activities of some women in politics and governance appeared not to be different from those of their male counterparts especially in the area of corruption and abuse of power. Corruption is misuse of entrusted power for private gain[110]. There was little to be gained by assuming that female gender generated higher probity[111]. Women politicians and public officials were not necessarily less corrupt than men. Never the less, increasing the number of women was likely to improve the gender responsiveness of government which was critical in order to alleviate the effect of corruption on women. On the issues of the relationship between gender and corruption in politics and governance, the focus was on whether having more women in public offices could curb corruption. Some people argued that women in power were less prone to corruption because they were innately socialized to be less corrupt than men. A study examined gender in perception and discovered statistically significant differences between men and women in almost all regions of the world including Nigeria, with women generally perceiving higher level of corruption than men[112]. Moreover, women were more intolerant of corruption and more affected by corruption in public spheres, especially, in developed regions and established democracies.

Previous study found out a correlation between low levels of corruption and more women in government that including women in political processes, engendered political benefits[109]. Increasing the number of women in parliament, curbed corruption, improved policies outcomes and promoted the inclusiveness of minority groups in public spheres. In the same vein, in the

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short and medium term, more women in public life would lower the level of tolerance for corruption and that gender tolerance to corruption existed globally[113]. World Bank Report indicated that firms owned or managed by men were likely to give bribe than those owned or managed by women[114]. Also, having more women in parliaments or private management correlated to lower level of corruption. It could be deduced from the above, that women in power could not be ruled out of engaging in abuse of power or corruption, but corruption and abuse of power were more common among men decision makers than women.

Despite government's efforts at enhancing increased involvement of women at political/decision making arena, women were still at subordinate position and still had low status at all levels of the society. Their involvement in policy formulation and decision-making process appeared low and insignificant. If women lack economic, political, legal and social empowerment, the hope of achieving democracy and prosperity could be lost. The manifestation of democracy which gave rise to varied opinion and involvement of women and men could not be enhanced by excluding the women group. Therefore, democracy would grow and develop effectively if people were given equal support to exercise their democratic rights[115]. Hence, women could experience benefits equally with their male counterparts. Increased involvement of women on equal terms with men at all levels of decision making was key to the achievement of equality and development, peace as well as democracy.

It also encouraged incorporation of women's perspectives and experiences into decision making that could enhance satisfactory solutions which might have other benefits and solutions that were better and appropriated for political, legal and economic problems[115]. However, in view of the foregoing, the aim of the study was to investigate how visible and substantive were the roles

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played by women's organizations in decision making arena in Nigeria and whether their roles were appreciated.

2.1.20 Profile of Ten African Women Leaders that are Admired around the World and their Inputs

Present day women leaders are at the forefront of leading the change such as mobilizing the climate movement globally, canvassing for social protections, supported the fight against covid-19 pandemic, and dismantling racial discrimination in the system all over the globe. Women leaders work towards improving lives of everyone and equally working towards a better future for everyone across the continent most especially trying to work towards realizing gender equality.

Despite the effort of women leaders yet, equality has not been realized, and the level of progress in women participation in decision-making and representation is still very slow. The perception that men are better leaders than women is still very high. As a result of this several institutions are put in place to fight the course propel men's leadership while the funding for women's campaigns and programs is still suffering from lack of sponsors and support. Looking at the rate of things currently one will say that it will take many decades to actualize gender equality in the highest position of power where majority of women will become president of many countries of the world.

To this effect, the core of feminist leadership advocates that change is inevitable in the present scenario, where leadership and political sphere is dominated by male without allowing women to assume positions of leadership. To achieve equality power must be shared equally, made transparent and accountable, at all levels. To lead with principles of feminism means that value

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and success must be redefined, power must be shared and not left in the hands of the male genders alone.

Also, community and relationship must be built and firstly, roots of oppressive structures and social norms/ culture that has been inhibiting progress for all inclusive of women and girls must be tackled. It is imperative to note that we need transformative feminist leaders to battle with the current unprecedented challenge we are facing presently. Here come ten African women leaders among many others whose voices has been a source of wonderful inspiration regarding feminist leadership. They are as follows:

Damilola Odunfuwa and Odunayo Eweniyi

These are two young women that are successful entrepreneurs' and feminist leaders from Nigeria. They were amongst the Bloomberg 50 list of people who changed business globally in 2020 and the time next 100 list in February 2021.

Odufuwa and Eweniyi collaborated in 2020 to create the feminist coalition, which its focus on women's rights and safety, economic empowerment and political participation of women in Nigeria. The first project of this organization was the support to the #EndSARS protest which took place in Nigeria in 2020 and organized a food drive for low-income women and their families by ensuring that these families are supplied food stuff that kept them all through the period of lockdown. A feminist leader will recognize that all women and all men deserve equal opportunities to pursue fulfilling careers and lives, and put structures in place to help others live up to their potential and drive meaningful change"[116]. "A feminist leader is empathetic and understand the importance of intersectionality[117].

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Odufuwa asked this question what can leaders do to lead with feminist principles and his answer is:

> Employ more women into leadership roles and pay women fairly, be willing to unlearn biases and listen to constructive feedback- then effect change and be conscious of intersectionality[117].

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

She is the first African woman president democratically elected who guided Liberia through healing and rehabilitation after a decade-long civil war. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf received an international prize for her administration's economic, social, and political achievements. She sharply responded to the Ebola crisis of 2014-2015 and was an awardee of noble peace prize in 2011 for her work of women empowerment.

Presently, she is an influential women speaking for expansion of women's political participation and involvement in decision-making process and representation. Increasingly there is recognition that full gender equity will ensure a stronger economic, a more developed nation a more peaceful nation. And that is why we must continue to work[118].

Emiti thal Mahmoud

She is a world-renowned slam poet and refugee rights activist. Emi was born in Khartoum, Sudan, and emigrated to the United States of America as a child with her family. Emi uses her talents to shed focus on the plight of millions of refugees worldwide.

I utilize my words to raise awareness about current situations. In the hope that someone will hear something that moves them[119].

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Emi in 2016, was given the title of a UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador and she visited refugee camps teaching poetry workshops and inspiring and encouraging many refugees to share their common story in some of the refugee camps she visited such as Jordan, Uganda, and Greece.

Meaza Ashenafi

She is Ethiopia's first female chief justice and has become a trailblazer in many ways, most notably as a legal champion through her work with the Ethiopian Women's Lawyers Association (EWLA), an organization she co-founded with young female lawyers of similar minds. After graduating from Addis Ababa University as the only female graduate that year, she worked as a criminal court judge, where she learned firsthand how the laws discriminated against women.

When we founded EWLA 20 years ago, we did historic work of getting discriminatory laws, such as family law, citizenship law, and pension law repealed. We brought the word 'sexual abuse' and sexual harassment' into the Amharic language, as there were no words to describe them then[120]. She also, co-founded the first bank in Ethiopia known as Enat bank which was founded by a female majority shareholders which was co-founded after observing that there was lack of financial provision for women in that region.

Leadership for me is having a vision and striving to achieve it. Women need to believe that they can achieve whatsoever they are set to achieve by themselves despite the society pressure and people telling them otherwise. You can only have the power to be a change maker if you believe in yourself[120]. Meaza Ashenafi Zone Ziwoh mbodgulo-wondieh she is a Mbondgulo, a feminist blogger and humanitarian correspondent from Cameroon, founded the non-governmental organization Women for a Change. She also serves on the Civil Society Advisory Group for the Generation Equality Forum.

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As an activist and reporter, she provides voice to Cameroonian female opinions on the country's advancement. We must not lose focus towards accelerating efforts like never before in increasing women's voices, leadership and agency. The Generation Equality Forum provides us all an opportunity to ensure that we be the first generation to be serious about realizing an equal future for all[121]. Zonziwohs remarks at the United Nations, commemoration of International Women's Day 2021.

Glanis Changachire

She is a Zimbabwean women's rights activist, founding director of the Institute for Young Women's Development (IYWD), and coordinator of the African Women Leaders Forum. She also serves on the steering committee of the Zimbabwean chapter of the United Nations Women Supporting African Women Leaders Network. She founded IYDW at the age of 26 as a young woman, inspired by her experiences growing up in Zimbabwe's largely patriarchal, rural province of Mashonaland Central. Her motivation came from the pain she felt when attempting to claim that females were equal to males and deserved similar educational opportunities and professional prospects.

As young women we need to redefine ourselves, both to ourselves and also to the society they need to see a young woman in a different way altogether[122]. Changachirere earned the National Endowment for Democracy's Under 30 Democracy Award in 2013 for her pioneering work on young women's political involvement. IYWD is currently a movement of 7,000 young women members from Zimbabwe's rural and mining communities, and it is collaborating with the Zimbabwe Gender Commission to introduce a gender equality bill to address the cultural disparities and discrimination that young women encounter in Zimbabwe.

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Farida Charity

She is a 36 years old lady who is a community leader, a peace advocate supporting peace movement programs in the conflict affected district of Yunbe in Northern Uganda. Farida took part in the peace talks with the Uganda National Rescue Front, which ended in a formal ceasefire agreement between the rebels and the government in 2002. Farida has been the mouthpiece speaker of the Yunde district council for the past five years, and she utilized her position of leadership to push for regulations that promote peaceful coexistence between refugee and host communities, as well as health services for women and girls. She also encouraged women leaders to begin discussing initiatives aimed at school-age girls in host and refugee communities that are focused on reducing sexual gender-based violence, managing conflict, and keeping girls in school.

The things that women need sound simple but they are big issues especially in rural communities. Women need peace and access to health care services. The most important thing is to have peace and to look at ourselves as human beings, regardless of gender, political, religious and ethnic backgrounds[123].

Munnira Katongole

She is a young South African human rights activist advocating for social transformation and equitable climate change. She is a member of Youth@SAIA, the South African Institute of International Affairs' youth development and programming project. Munirra views climate change as a wake-up call to dismantle exploitative structures that continue to discriminate against young women of colour. She advocates for renewable energy, sustainable food, and collective ownership. We cannot especially now in the face of climate change be excluded from

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policy-making settings to all the young girls of colour reading this you have every right to take up space. Occupy fill and cement unapologetically[124].

Alice Banze

She was born and raised in Maputo, Mozambique, and trained as a social scientist with 25 years of experience in civil society groups. She is the executive director of the Gender and Sustainable Development Association and a member of the UN Women-supported African Leaders Network. She was just elected to the national elections commission with the assistance of the women's forum, a coalition of Mozambican women's rights organizations. The fact that the panel is made up of only three women out of seventeen should not cause anxiety. She opined that:

> Things are changing, similar to the changes in the government, in parliament, in the judicial system and other areas of public life; the commission will also have a fair representation of women soon[125].

She has sacrificed most of her career in training women into leadership and vowed not to stop until Mozambique women will have equal representation. More women in public life are critical because women play such an important role in the development of a country, adding that, there are protocols, treaties, conventions signed by the government to ensure there is high percent representation of women in all decision-making processes at all levels, this commitment must be fulfilled[126].

Furthermore, it is imperative to note that Nigerian women have in various Sectors distinguished themselves by doing things that earned them special recognition in different sphere of life. These women have done excellently both locally and internationally. A handful of women who were given the opportunity have proved their worth and shown that they are ready to serve, remained focused and delivered result. The likes of late Dr. Dora Akunyili who was the Director General

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of National Agency for Food and Drug Administration (NAFDAC), the incumbent World Trade Organization President, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iwela and the past Minister of Environment in Nigeria and the current Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations Amina Mohammed [Mrs.] has made women proud, The question now is if these women can pull weight both locally and internationally while serving in different capacities what stops them from doing same in Politics[126].

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Feminist Theory

According to feminist theory, women's inferior status stems from societal inequality, which is caused by political, economic, and social power dynamics, and women should have equal access to all kinds of power[127]. Feminist analysis, like the concept of empowerment, helps women recognize how they are oppressed and dominated, and it frequently inspires them to participate in efforts to bring about greater societal change[128]. Feminist papers and theories have served as the foundation for empowerment theories. The women's empowerment technique is one of the most important theories offered in recent years, both theoretical and empirical[129]. According to this concept, one of the most important markers of women's empowerment is their representation in parliament[129]. Scholars have argued that a growth in the average level of human capital implies an increase in inclusive incentives and policies for women's labour market participation and higher education enrollment[130]. Essentially, the ultimate goal of women's empowerment, which is a political process, is to transform not only hierarchical gender relations but all hierarchical interactions in society[128]. According to feminist philosophy, women's inferiority stems from societal inequality, which is created by political, economic, and social power relations, and

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women should have equal access to all types of power[127]. To investigate gender inequality, feminist theory looks at gender politics, power dynamics, and sexuality. While feminist philosophy criticizes these social and political ties, it also emphasizes the enhancement of women's rights and interests[128].

Feminists believe that civilizations value men's perspectives, and that women are treated unfairly within such communities[132]. Efforts to modify this include challenging gender stereotypes and ensuring that women have equal educational, professional, and interpersonal opportunities and results as males. Feminist movements have advocated for women's rights, such as the right to vote, hold public office, work, earn equal pay, own property, obtain an education, enter into contracts, have equal rights in marriage, and take maternity leave[132]. Aside from increasing women's rights and interests, the empowerment theory is crucial for understanding how empowering women can assist ensure gender equality. Feminist ideology, like empowerment, benefits women acknowledge how they have been oppressed and dominated, and it often motivates people to take part in efforts to effect wider societal change.

The empowerment paradigm of social work emphasizes the use of intervention tactics to help people gain a sense of control. People may feel weak for a variety of reasons, but empowerment theory emphasizes how oppression contributes to this feeling. In feminist theory, patriarchy frequently refers to all of the social systems that reproduce and maintain male dominance over women[133]. Most types of feminism see patriarchy as an unjust social system that oppresses women[37]. Radical feminists highlight the patriarchal foundations of inequality between men and women, believing that society is an oppressive patriarchy that predominantly oppresses women. Put another way, they highlight men's societal dominance over women[133]. Radical feminists see patriarchy as a division of rights, privileges, and authority that disadvantages women. As a result,

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they consider it as the underlying source of the majority of important social problems and are suspicious of political action under the present social structure. For a radical feminist, '[m]ales and males exclusively are the originators, planners, controllers, and legitimates of patriarchy'[38]. The idea is used within the paper under evaluation Women Political Representation and Gender Equality because feminism strives to evaluate the social position of women, explain their seeming secondary function in history and proffers the basis for reform and the advancement of women in all areas of society which the whole essence of this study captures.

2.2.2 Liberal Feminism

Feminism as a theory has different strands such as Liberal, Radical, Cultural, Difference, Lipstick, Marxist, and Equity Feminism among others. Liberal feminism originated from the works of First wave feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill and Helen Taylor, as well as Second Wave Feminists such as Betty Friedan, Gloria Steine, Simone de Beauviour and also Rebecca Walker, (Third Wave Feminist) [134].

Liberal feminism is defined as a worldview that claims that gender disparity stems from women's lack of access to civil rights and certain social resources such as education and employment[135]. Liberal feminists often turn to altering legislation to find solutions and safeguard people's rights are protected[135]. Liberal feminism is "gradual improvements through advocating for equal rights for all, and legislation and policies that promote equality"[136]. This demonstrates that women have an equal right to participate in politics, run for office without fear of repercussions, and make political decisions that benefit society[95]. It is appropriate for men and women to enjoy equal rights. They should not be prevented from actively participating in societal activities because of their education or cultural background.

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Liberal feminists believe that what women want is the same as what men desire: an education, a respectable living, and the ability to support their families. They emphasize workplace equality, education, and political rights[58].While acknowledging that there may be biological differences between men and women, liberal feminism does not support the argument that biologically-based differences are sufficient justification for inequality, such as the gap between men and women in regards to the occupation of political offices and decision-making positions, the disparity in salaries between men and women, etc.

In general, liberal feminists hold that "female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that block women's entrance to and success in the so-called public world"[137]. They advocate for sexual equality through pragmatic political and legal reforms. Existing gender inequalities benefit no one; both men and women suffer as the potential of both genders is suppressed. In Nigeria, followers of this theoretical orientation believe that long-standing myths and even jokes that misrepresent or degrade women should be eliminated to make way for a new and better socialization process in society that does not deny women their rightful place or position.

Followers of this theory are sensitive to men's language, style, and general attitudes toward women[58]. The Liberal feminist theory adequately highlights the imbalanced political participation by questioning all aspects of power relations between men and women. Disparities in political engagement are explained by gender. It also includes advice for how women can improve their position. In this regard, the idea is useful for tackling the barriers to women's political engagement. The theory is suitable in this study because first, it helps expound the rationale for women's lagging behind in political participation as compared to their male counterparts; secondly, it assists in evaluating the existence of socio-cultural determinants, which

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established women's domain in the private sphere and decreased involvement of women in the public sphere by contextualizing their activities as a function of certain historical occurrences, thus proposing corrective measures, Based on infiltration of the male-dominated society, a variance that is shaped by the social environment instead of being natural phenomenon[58].

The theory is based on the following assumptions:

1. Women are often discriminated against in society due to the mistaken perception that they are not as capable as men.

2. Female subordination stems from societal and legal barriers that prevent women from succeeding in the public sphere.

3. Women's personal autonomy requires certain enabling conditions that are not always available in their life.

4. Social systems often undermine women's personal liberty and growth.
5. The State should support the women's movement and promote their autonomy. Liberal feminism emphasizes women's power to uphold their equality via their own actions and decisions[134].

It centres on the core ideas of women's autonomy, universal rights, equal citizenship, and democracy[134]. Liberal feminism is a movement to achieve equal opportunities for women and men in every area of life. Women believe that whatever opportunities men can have, women must be able to have them too. In terms of gender equality, liberal feminists advocate for a society in which women enjoy political equality with men. They also want to eliminate the patriarchal nature of societal institutions (particularly in politics) that force women to ignore

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their innate femininity. Liberal feminism aims for individuals to use their unique skills and the democratic process to help women and men become more equitable in the eyes of the law in society by setting up women into larger groups capable of speaking at a higher level, influencing legislators, and raising awareness of issues; they use accessible resources and tools to advocate for modification[134].

2.2.3 The Equity Theory of Leadership

The theory was propounded by J. Stacy Adam. The theory holds the assumption that an individual is motivated by the desire to be equitably treated in his or her work relationship[78]. The equity theory hinges on the fairness at workplace in which a person accepts position with an organization and expects some good relationship with the organization[78]. Applied in the context of women political participation, the equity theory, first, identifies a glaring gap between men and women degree of integration in Nigerian politics. This gap was widened by the age-long patriarchal domination in politics.

Women have been relegated to the background as subordinates to men in politics. Marginalization of women is reinforced by patriarchy, poverty, illiteracy, religious and cultural norms. This marginalization has resulted in gaps in representation of sexes in Nigerian politics. Equity refers to fairness in actions and treatment of others or a general condition characterized by justice, fairness, and impartiality. Women representation in politics is gradually becoming recognized in the developing countries. Marginalization of women is not peculiar to Nigeria[88]. As seen on the next slide, most advanced democracies today have historically marginalized women in political participation and decision making. Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was adopted by

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the UN on December 18, 1979, and ratified by Nigeria on June 13, 1985, requires Nigeria to "take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country…"[78]. This is consistent with Article 4 of CEDAW, which deals with Temporary Special Measures to Accelerate Equality between Men and Women. It is also in accordance with Article 2 (11) of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance, which provides that the Charter's purpose is, among other objectives, to promote gender balance and equality in the governance and development process[88].

2.2.4 Liberalism and Patriarchy Theory

Liberalism is a political theory or worldview centred on the concepts of liberty and equality. Liberals hold a variety of positions depending on their primary understanding of these, but in general, they support programs and ideas such as free speech, the press, religion, civil rights, free markets, democratic societies, international cooperation, gender equality, and secular governments[138]. Gender equality, which is one of the beliefs endorsed by liberals, is a state of equal access to opportunity and resources on gender, decision-making, and involvement in the economy, appreciating the stature of diverse behaviours, equal needs, and goals regardless of gender[139]. Equality on gender, or equality between men and women, refers to the idea that all human beings, men and women, can develop their particular abilities and make choices without being constrained by fixed gender roles, stereotypes, or discrimination. Gender equality means that the diverse objectives, behaviours, and needs of men and women are considered, appreciated, and favoured equally[139]. The UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals include a specific objective for gender equality, which aims to abolish discrimination and cruelty toward girls and women while also promoting equal opportunity and active engagement in all aspects of life. Increasing female political engagement is an important step toward achieving the SDGs.

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It is amongst the Targets for Goal Five that "Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life"[105]. This theory is pertinent to this study because it emphasizes the relevance of women being involved in politics so that they can advance their agenda and thereby better their social and economic reputation.

Studies identified two major dimensions for male dominance and control over a wide range of household and societal activities[9]. The first one was the men's superior strength. According to Hartman, men's financial dominance and women's economic dependence on them identify men as superior and women as inferior because of their dependent on men. The second portion serves as the foundation for the work division, which acknowledges women's roles in the home while males assume command of the modern economic system in the outside world. Women's household responsibilities consume the majority of their energy and time, leaving them with insufficient energy, leisure, and mental freedom for participating in the creative tasks that men in the public arena always do[139]. As a result, males maintain a monopoly over important socioeconomic hierarchies and major institutions of contemporary society such as law and politics[140]. As a result of this, male dominance and the confinement of women to domestic duties are the foundations of women's oppression and subjugation. This idea of patriarchy will be used in the study to illustrate how men's material power has contributed to their supremacy over women in society, and thus their dominance in political leadership[141]. Gender stereotypes, particularly those that describe women as incapable of leading and serving, have affected social attitudes toward women[142]. When women are excluded from essential roles, democratic development principles are weakened, stifling societal and economic growth.

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2.2.5 Systems Theory

Many political scientists see systems theory as a useful instrument for analysing multicultural political phenomena. Applying system theory across disciplines offers a human-centric alternative to Eurocentrism, allowing for a shared past and multicultural expression in a global system[79]. According to this viewpoint, academics in the social sciences have demonstrated the application of this method to the study of political geography, development studies, gender, ethnic and race relations, international relations, and international political economy.

Thus, another scholar contends that systems theory is all-purpose in that it considers multiple systems that interact with other systems, which enable a researcher to focus attention on essential components that could have otherwise been disregarded. The study claim that systems theory provides a holistic perspective of a certain field of human activity, including the environment in which a phenomenon is observed[79]. David Easton, on the other hand, was the first to propose systems theory for the study of politics in 1953[79]. The study continued the pursuit by social scientists for accurate forecasts, employing general rules with universal application for a comprehensive explanation of society, which had begun with sociologist Karl Manheim. According to Estonian systems theory, a political system is composed of interconnected elements that work together to create a whole. His view of political life is that of a set of behaviours firmly established in an environment to which the political system is exposed and, in turn, reacts[79]. As a result, it is impossible to fully comprehend a single component of the political system without first studying the other interconnected units. At the very core of Estonian systems theory is the development of a general framework, a focus on the entire system rather than just its pieces, and an awareness of its environmental impact on the system. Thus, a system is a collection of regularized interactions that are designed or bounded in such a way that they distinguish and

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separate from the other activities that comprise the system environment. Systems theory is defined as the study of a set of interrelated variables as distinguished from the environment of the set.

The idea views political activity as basically including the political system, input and output, and the environment. Easton regards the political system as the fundamental unit of study, with the intra-system behaviour of diverse systems serving as the most important subjects of investigation. He defines the political system as the set of interactions in any community that determines and enforces binding or authoritative allocations. The environment is made up of objective conditions and factors that generate demand and support input[79]. Demands are expressions of opinion on whether or not individuals in charge of making authoritative decisions on a specific subject matter should do so. Supports are behaviours or orientations that encourage or oppose a political system. In addition, negative entropy allows the system to adapt to its surroundings by growing and elaborating its structure. Such a system is also self-regulating via feedback loops, which the decider or system decision-maker uses to fulfil its objectives and maintain a state of dynamic equilibrium.

Eaton's systems theory is also known as input-output analysis[79]. This implies that the output in the form of decisions, policies, and actions within the political system is primarily determined by the inputs (demands and supports) applied to the political system. Although the viewpoint suggests that some output may be a function of the political system, input from the environment cannot be fully disregarded. It is worth noting at this point that Gabriel Almond's structural-functionalism approach shares a few similarities with Estonian systems theory in that both focus on the whole system as the unit of analysis and discover a society as a system of mutually interdependent parts, with modifications in one segment resulting in corresponding changes in

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other segments. However, structural-functional teleological assumptions that cannot be empirically tested, as well as its implicit philosophy with a conservative tendency toward system maintenance and order over change, represent some departures from systems theory. Critics argue that Almond's structural-functionalist model provides a static vision of society, which cannot account for change, and that it overemphasizes integration, failing to address dysfunction[79].

Furthermore, according to systems theory, political involvement is an open system that can be influenced by certain characteristics entrenched in its surroundings - the society. Thus, the political engagement of women is influenced by specific environmental factors, such as socioeconomic characteristics such as per capita income and GDP, access to educational and occupational resources, and so on[79].

Systems theory thereby provides a framework for understanding complex social phenomenon by examining the interrelationships and interactions between various elements within a system. The application of this theory to the context of women political representation and gender equality in Southern Nigeria, systems theory helps to illuminate the multifaceted factors that contribute to this issue. The key aspects to put into consideration in this regard are as follows;

i. Structural Factors; Systems theory emphasizes the significance of structural factors that shape gender inequality. In the Nigerian political system, there are several structural barriers that hinder women's participation and representation. They are discriminatory laws, patriarchal norms, culture/traditions, and limited access to resources and opportunities which creates an unequal playing field for women thereby making difficult for them to actively engage in politics.

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ii. Institutional Dynamics; Systems theory underscores the importance of institutions within a system. In the case of political participation and representation, institutions such as political parties, electoral systems, and legislative bodies play a crucial role.

These institutions often reinforce gender biases and maintain male dominance in politics. Limited representation of women within political parties, absence of gender – sensitive policies, and the failure to implement existing gender equality measures are some of the institutional dynamics that perpetuate gender inequality.

iii. Interconnectedness; Systems theory highlights the interconnectedness of various elements within the system. Gender inequality in Political Participation is influenced by a complex web of social cultural economic and historical factors. For example, traditional gender roles and stereotypes, economic disparities, educational disparities and cultural beliefs about women's roles are interconnected to create barriers for women's political engagement. This interconnected dynamic is to be recognized in addressing gender inequality in the system.

iv. Feedback Loops; Systems theory acknowledges feedback loops that perpetuate existing patterns in the context of gender inequality, it can maintain the statuesque by reinforcing discriminatory practices and attitudes, for instance the underrepresentation of women in political positions may make people to continue in their belief that women are less capable on interested in politics, leading to further exclusion.

It is imperative to note that in addressing gender equality in political representation in Nigeria using a systems theory lens systemic reforms are to be considered. This may involve implementing gender quotas, promoting women's empowerment and leadership development, fostering a supportive institutional environment, revising discriminatory laws and policies and

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challenging cultural norms and stereotypes. Taking a comprehensive approach that addresses the structural, institutional, and interconnected aspects of the system is crucial to achieving sustainable change.

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

A study on how Nigerian women contributed to political engagement in the country, as well as the barriers that prevent them from fully engaging. The study used Liberal Feminism theory to explain incremental gains by pushing for equal rights for all, as well as legislation and policies that encourage equality. The study used content analysis and gathered data from secondary sources. The study discovered many barriers to women's political engagement. Cultural, economic, and legal constraints have all had an impact on women's political engagement. The study revealed that, while women may perform at the highest levels in both the public and commercial sectors, a vicious cycle of hurdles frequently impedes their potential to lead. These individuals' success as leaders has been greatly affected by both internal and external barriers, including as societal and cultural prejudices, patriarchy, the struggle of juggling parental and professional obligations, and a lack of networking.

According to the study, in order to develop the necessary leadership skills, women should decide to pursue positions of leadership in both the public and commercial sectors, as well as further their education. To minimize illiteracy and groom female students for potential leadership tasks, parents, particularly those in remote areas, should be encouraged to enrol their female offspring in school. The study further suggested that the present women's empowerment policy be re-examined to reflect the current circumstances, and that the government develop a network of women leaders to allow women to share their leadership victories and struggles in order to

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inspire other women who aspire to be leaders[95]. Women's participation in social development is critical for achieving social fairness and alleviating poverty. Supporting a better role for women results in to economic growth, increases child survival and general family health, and lowers fertility, all of which serve to limit population growth rates.

However, studies reveal that women are underrepresented at all levels of decision-making throughout the world, making it impossible for them to achieve their goals unless they are in politics to influence or push their agendas. Thus, the goal of this research was to determine the impact of politics on women's participation in social development in Turkana Central Sub-County, Turkana County, Kenya. Liberalism and patriarchy theory were used to guide the research. The study's target population was 630 women from 31 officially recognized organizations.

The sample size of the study was statistically calculated based on a confidence level of 95%, a margin of error (confidence interval of 2%), and a population percentage of 50%, resulting in a sampling frame of 500. The sample size was created by selecting numbers at random from a five-point interval. Data were collected via questionnaires. Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical approaches. Descriptive analysis used frequency, percentages, means, and standard deviations, and inferential statistics used linear regression analysis to determine the relationship between variables. It was discovered that the political elite valued women's participation in development and believed that women were politically equal to men. It was also highlighted that there are women in community development projects who compete for elective seats, and that the political class considered women's engagement in social development.

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The investigation also found that the county legislature has implemented the two-thirds gender rule through affirmative action. The study's findings revealed a positive correlation between women's participation in social development and politics. According to the report, public authorities should provide equal political space to men and women, and the climate should be conducive to women participating in political activities[139].

The role of political parties in recruiting, selecting, and promoting candidates for elections, as well as the consequences for women's political advancement was reviewed. The male-dominated political party structure and control have a significant impact on women's candidacy selection and election to political positions. In Nigeria, political parties' attitudes on candidate selection for elections are undemocratic, and this is a major contributor to women's underrepresentation in governance. The study contends that equality for all, regardless of gender, is critical for political equity, better legislation, effective governance, and national improvement. Data for the study were gathered from secondary sources, and data analysis demonstrated that political parties' candidacy selection and support have been disproportionate in favour of men at all levels of political competition. The report offers policy initiatives to encourage more women to enter politics, as well as party candidacy lists aimed at achieving good governance and national development[143].

Another study explores women's political participation in Nigeria's democratic process between 1999 and 2019. It noted a decline in women's participation and representation in Nigeria's political system. Secondary data was employed in the study. Descriptive statistics were used, with a bar chart indicating women's representation in politics from 1999 to 2019, with a special emphasis on the National Assembly, which includes the House of Senate and the House of Representatives. The study discovered a significant variation in women's political participation

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and representation between 1999 and 2003, during the transition to a new democratically elected administration. In addition, women's participation in politics in the National Assembly increased from 2007 to 2015. However, during the 2019 general election, women's representation in both the House of Senate and the House of Representatives was significantly lower than in previous years. The study thus proposes strategies to ensure more females are actively involved in politics in Nigeria, such as adequate education for women, specific positions for women, economic empowerment of women, family support, equal representation in governance, a healthy political environment, and proper perception of women in politics, among others[144].

Research conducted on 64 persons selected using a multistage sample technique looked into the sociodemographic predictors of gendered political participation. Data was collected through eight focus group discussions (FGDs), each with eight discussants, and thematic analysis was applied. The findings revealed that political engagement is gendered, and women are not equally represented. There are various socioeconomic and political predictors of women's political participation, and poor female political participation has some ramifications for Nigerian government. Social professionals are consequently advised to use a variety of approaches to alleviate the implications of women's poor engagement in politics[132].

Examining party politics and gender disparities in Nigeria's national assembly from the 1999 to 2019 general elections, the study investigates party politics and gender disparity in Nigeria's National Assembly from 1999 to the 2019 general election in Nigeria, with the goals of determining the role of party politics in perpetuating gender disparity in Nigeria's Federal Legislature and the effects of gender disparity in Nigeria's National Assembly on women's political development in the country. We used an ex-post facto study design and a documentary mode of data collection. Liberal feminism was used as an analytical framework. The study

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discovered that the incapacity of Nigerian political parties to reserve some proportion of elective positions for women contributes to gender disparities in the National Assembly. The study suggests that political parties in Nigeria reserve a proportion of electable seats for female candidates during National Assembly elections. This would ensure that women receive adequate representation in the country's parliament[145].

The language of leading characters in chosen Pakistani dramas to see how women are projected and what linguistic elements are used to perpetuate gender inequality. Fairclough's three-dimensional model of "Critical Discourse Analysis", serves as the theoretical foundation for this investigation. The study employs a qualitative research design, with the researchers gathering a sample of 15 episodes from three selected Pakistani dramas using the systematic sampling design. The sample was chosen using "relevance sampling" based on its recognized contribution to the primary research questions. Following consultation with earlier literature and based on the issues in these episodes, the selected dialogues of the main female and male characters, as well as the linguistic qualities used, are categorized into eight groups. The data is analysed using a three-dimensional CDA model. The analytical results are consistent with earlier findings, and they suggest that Pakistani dramas convey a negative picture of women and represent characteristics that contribute to gender inequality[146].

Another study looked at gender inclusivity in Nigeria's political sphere, as well as difficulties, challenges, and opportunities. It discussed the rejection of gender measures by the male-dominated parliament, which would have been a historic opportunity to align the country in the path of gender inclusivity and equality toward the achievement of the United Nations' sustainable development objectives demonstrates a lack of commitment and political will to align with the 2030 United Nations agenda. The purpose of this article is to reiterate the United Nations'

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perspective on sustainable development, which emphasizes that sustainable development in any community is the result of the combined efforts of all members of the society, both men and women[9].

Based on modern social movement theories, the study employs computer-mediated discourse analysis to qualitatively examine the content of these groups' websites and social media platforms. The findings reveal that social media gives women's advocacy groups a voice that extends beyond intimidation and old patriarchal preconceptions in demanding women's rights to political leadership and economic empowerment. Protest discourse frameworks include urgent statements or direct activities that demand change by any means necessary. Advocacy groups use internet activism to publicize their voices and actions to broader national and global audiences and communities of people, as well as to the most vulnerable rural women and those with limited resources. However, only a small minority of metropolitan women have Internet access, restricting online advocacy to cities and urban centers[147].

In a study titled participatory democracy, local government elections and the politics of the states‟ ruling parties in Nigeria. This study examines the role of the state's ruling party in Nigerian local government elections, focusing on the 2017 and 2019 elections in Ekiti State. It depended on both primary and secondary data collection methods. A questionnaire was used to collect primary data, while textbooks, related journal articles, and newsprints were used for secondary data. The report used elite theory to explain states' dominance and 'illegitimate' influence over local governments in Nigeria. It was shown, among other things, that local government elections in Nigeria have always been under the control of state governors and their political parties, who design and define the contours of the polls as well as the operations of the electoral umpire. The research suggests, among other things, that state autonomous electoral

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commissions should be abolished and replaced with the national electoral umpire (INEC) across the country in order to enhance democracy, promote good governance, and contribute to grassroots development[148].

The gender inequality index compared to certain key measures of gender disparity in social, economic, political, and educational aspects was conducted. The study's goal is to represent variations in gender inequality using the gender inequality index for 2013-2020 in relation to critical indicators like reproductive health, which includes maternal mortality per 1000 live births and adolescent fertility rates. Another statistic is empowerment, which comprises the percentage of seats in parliament on a comparative basis between genders and gender-specific secondary or higher education completion rates. Another measure is the labour market, which includes the level of involvement. Specifically, we examined the index of gender inequality between men and women in relation to these variables and the annual periods considered in this study.

Measuring gender inequality is critical since it reveals various issues with a country's social, economic, political, and educational growth. INSTAT (Albania's Institute of Statistics) provides the data, which is based on gender-specific social surveys and administrative resources. The study is based on the descriptive approach, from which comparative statistical analysis connected to the gender inequality index are obtained by data processing, by years and major indications discovered during the study. This study also focuses on advocating some critical policies to be implemented by the government to enhance the gender inequality index in connection to the indicators we have taken into consideration in our study[4].

Given the prevalence of discriminatory behaviours and violence against women, gender equality has been internationally acknowledged as one of the sustainable development goals that state

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parties must attain by 2030. The most pressing human rights issue in Nigeria, however, is establishing gender equality. The goal is to demonstrate that women are crucial in fostering sustainable development. However, certain aspects of Nigerian law discriminate against women. According to the study, sections 221, 353, 357, and 360 of the Criminal Code, as well as sections 55 and 282(2) of the Penal Code, discriminate against women and girls. Furthermore, despite Nigeria's adherence to a number of international conventions, including CEDAW, gender discrimination continues to pose a significant danger to the country's future development.

The minimal number of women selected to the Senate demonstrates the extent to which women are marginalized in Nigeria. For example, Nigeria's United Nations human development rating is poor because women hold just a few percent of seats in parliament compared to men. As a result, the findings of this study will help policymakers implement long-term practices that promote gender equality in Nigeria, which includes revising related sections of the criminal and penal codes that discriminate against women. Finally, considering bringing back the gender equality law, which was rejected for second reading on the Senate floor in 2015.

Another comparable study examined women's rights to active involvement in political governance and difficulties in post-Beijing Nigeria. The study investigates the opportunities for equitable participation as well as the cultural barriers inherent in indigenous legal heritage and the patriarchy system. It focuses on the society that denies girls the education they need to work in politics. With the exception of the constraints given by cultural practices, global visioning on women's political engagement is a viable experience. The prospects and challenges are assessed on the basis that if the majority of Nigerian women lack the necessary education to be fit for political office, and those who are qualified and suitable to run for political office do not have the funds to finance their political activities, women's political integration remains an ideal[149].

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A study evaluates the effect of governance indicators (corruption control, accountability, and government performance) on women's engagement in the Nigerian economy, utilizing annual time-series data from 1990 to 2019. The Autoregressive and Distributive Lag (ARDL) Bounds test reveals a long-run cointegration link between accountability, corruption control, government performance, and women's labour force participation. The empirical findings demonstrated that, both in the short and long run, accountability and the percentage of female employment had a positive and statistically significant impact on women's engagement in Nigeria. Although the efficiency of governance has a negative and insignificant statistical influence in both the short and long run, the control of corruption has a negative and statistically significant impact in both the short and long term. As a result, the report proposes that the government at all levels ensure that accountability prevails in every sector, allowing fair play in representation, employment, and decision diffusion to deepen and revitalize women's engagement[150].

A comparative analysis of women's political participation throughout the administrations of Presidents Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari. Because of men's patriarchal dominance in Nigeria, the role of women in politics has always been a source of debate. The study was founded on the equity theory of leadership, which assumes that an individual is driven by a desire to be treated appropriately in his or her workplace relationship. The study used a combined method of content/document analysis and interviews. The content/document analysis evaluated the manifest content of appointments, while the interview provided a face-to-face encounter with chosen political stakeholders. Among other findings, the survey indicated that both the Jonathan and Buhari governments supported women's political participation at various levels. This is backed equally by the findings of interviews with political stakeholders.

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According to the findings, while women participated in both governments, there is a need to increase the percentage of women awarded ministerial posts and other political appointments[78].

Gender equality is fundamental to a country's success. In the research conducted on gender equality, it was found to significantly boost economic growth, which is critical for low-income countries. Gender equality refers to women and men having the same rights, obligations, and opportunities as boys and girls. Fairness is not an indication that women and men will become the same, but that women and men's rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not be determined by whether they are born male or female. Gender equality emphasizes that both men's and women's passions, desires, and priorities are considered, while also acknowledging the diversity of diverse groups of men and women.

The report effectively explains the notion of gender equality in the SDGs and its importance to a country's well-being[27]. Another study explored gender, political engagement, and representation in the Nigerian story. This study looked at women's political participation and representation in Nigeria. The study used data from the 2019 Nigeria general election, focusing on the number of male and female candidates for key seats and positions. The study used a quantitative and qualitative research approach. The study was conducted in Nigeria between February and March 2019, during the General Elections (GE). The data focused mainly on secondary data from the Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), such as the Final List of Senatorial Candidates and the Final List of Governorship Candidates, interviews will be held following the release of the Final Lists of Presidential Candidates, State House of Assembly Candidates, and House of Representatives Candidates.

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The findings show that, while women in Nigeria are politically involved, they are not treated equally with their male counterparts, which is a result of patriarchal attitudes. Certainly, Nigerian culture continues to adhere to the absurd notion of 'women'; what do they know? A typical term used in everyday family conversations. Furthermore, female participants lack financial and social backing for political roles. It determined that women's low fraction of political representation at the highest levels of politics is a long-standing issue in African gender stratification, particularly in Nigeria.

Despite gains in women's educational levels and economic engagement, this study's findings indicate that women in Nigeria have made little or no meaningful progress in terms of political representation in the country's political sphere[151]. Policy research named Gender-sensitive post-legislative evaluation investigates the intersection of post-legislative scrutiny and gender analysis. The case study's goal is to help parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, policymakers, parliamentary development experts, and civil society activists construct or support methods for identifying gender-based repercussions in legislative implementation. The policy study is part of a larger effort by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy on gender analysis and post-legislative monitoring.

The project contains many deliverables that supplement the current writing and address various areas of the issue. There are three case studies: one on gender-sensitive post-legislative inspection of general law, one on gender-specific legislation, and one on data and gender-sensitive post-legislative scrutiny. The present document begins by discussing the relationship between legislation, sex, and gender, as well as the significance of gender-sensitive legislation as a legislative goal. It then discusses how to pass gender-sensitive policies and integrate gender concerns throughout the legislative process. It then focuses on how post-legislative examination

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might be gender-sensitive, the role of parliamentary committees in this, the scrutiny questions to be asked, the types of data to collect, the stakeholders to speak with, and the process issues. It discusses how to make post-legislative results gender sensitive and what to do afterward[152]. Another study investigated women's involvement in party politics in Nigeria in the context of the 2011 general elections. It investigates the impact of patriarchal attitudes on women's participation, as well as the amount (or lack thereof) to which women are regarded and acknowledged as equal stakeholders in democratic politics and party decision-making bodies. It demonstrates that the marginalization of women violates legal and constitutional guarantees and must be addressed concurrently with patriarchy using the following methods:

Establishing a continual communication between female and male leaders, expanding women's engagement in local elections, Endorsing and incorporating a quota system/mechanism into national and political party constitutions, as well as examining election systems and adopting ones that promote women's involvement (for example, proportional representation). Political parties should create legal money to allow female politicians to contest electoral malpractices in court[133].

In a related investigation on women and political marginalization in Nigeria. According to the study, women's marginalization at the individual level excludes them from significant involvement in society. Women's marginalization is a particular kind of community-level marginalization. Women are excluded from the labour force, and domestic work is not monetarily valued or compensated. Feminist theorists claimed that women should have equal participation in the labour force, both in the public and private sectors. Today, it is stated that women are still underrepresented in executive employment and earn less than men in high management cadres. This study critically examines the issue of marginalization and women's

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political engagement. It also looks at the processes and procedures put in place to encourage women to participate in politics during the Jonathan administration's last democratic term, such as the Women for Change Initiative and the Women Empowerment Programme. The study investigates the challenges faced by women during Nigerian elections as a result of violence, harassment, and electoral malpractices, as well as the performance of various women elected to various offices[12].

A review of the Nigerian Senate and the politics of the gender equality bill's failure to pass. It reported that Nigeria's upper chamber has openly rejected the Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill since 2010. The study relied on secondary sources of data. The paper investigates the crucial elements that have prevented the measure from being passed into law. The analysis focuses on three factors: the patriarchal nature of Nigerian culture, particularly the Senate, the cultural and religious components, and the content of the bill1[53].

Study evaluated the involvement of women's groups in politics, identified their limitations, and investigated the implications for economic growth in Osun State, Nigeria. The study was carried out using primary data from forums and dialogues within women's groups, consisting of an average of thirty (30) members from ten (10) local government areas (LGAs) in Osun state, Nigeria. In addition, exploratory methods based on current research were applied. The study's findings show that women's groups do not have a political objective; most of their goals are not aligned with any political agenda, despite the fact that their members accept positions and receive government patronage.

There was also evidence that there is a high illiteracy rate among members of women's groups, with the majority unaware of any national or international gender equality laws or affirmative

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action programs. As a result, it is difficult for them to actively participate in politics and express their opinions on issues related to politics. The study indicates that the current role provided by women's groups at the grassroots level may not be sufficient in encouraging more women's participation in politics and affecting economic development. As a result, if they want to assist more women get involved and become relevant in politics, they must increase their activities and embrace political problems. The study indicates that more empowerment programs, especially in the area of making decisions and getting involved in politics, should be focused at women's groups at the grassroots level by governments and other stakeholders as a matter of priority[128].

The invisibility of women's organizations in decision making process and governance in Nigeria was conducted in a study. This study delved into how visible and substantive the involvement of women's organizations was in Nigerian decision-making, as well as whether they were valued. To collect and describe data, the study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The findings demonstrated that women's groups played substantial roles in decision-making, but they were neither visible or respected. It was thus urged that women's organizations do everything they can to be more active in government and encourage more women to be fully included in the decision-making process in Nigeria to boost national growth[154].

Another study discussed women and political participation in Nigeria. The study aims to determine the level of women's political participation in Nigeria since the democratic dispensation in 1999, in order to better understand the issues that have impeded their participation. The study indicates that the belief that women are best equipped for household tasks is a harmful mindset that has slowed progress through the years. Nigerian women make up the majority of the population, however they are underrepresented in political and administrative posts. There is hence an urgent need to engender Nigeria by removing the current socioeconomic

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status quo that impedes or restricts women's participation. Women's domestication should also be opposed, while equal representation of both genders and social classes should be promoted.

Until this is done, women's participation in politics will remain a mirage, and they will be unable to contribute to the progress of society, whether socially, economically, or politically. It also proposes, among other things, that the Nigerian government prioritize resources and make a conscious commitment to women's empowerment, growth, and improved integration into the mainstream political system [155].

Another study looked at the obstacles to women's political engagement in selected rural and semi-urban, primarily Muslim, Nupe-speaking regions in central Nigeria. The social survey and in-depth interviews methodologies were utilized with selected respondents, who included women leaders, electoral officers, party chiefs, and a few female candidates and aspirants for political offices. The study finds, among other things, that, on a scale, women in the area have not been significantly involved in politics since the return of democratic rule in 1999, owing mostly to poor financial position, diverse socio-cultural barriers, and an unfavourable political environment. As a result, the study suggests a variety of strategies to reduce women's subordination, discrimination, and stigmatization, as well as increase their political involvement and fortunes[156].

A study examines case studies from 1999 to 2015 to analyse the variables that limit women's engagement in Nigerian politics. These elements include socioeconomic development, the country's cultural heritage, historical legacies, and institutional designs. The study explores secondary sources as a method of data collection. The study demonstrates that the patriarchal structure and male dominance in society, which relegates women to less prominent roles, has

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generated an inferiority mentality and alienated them from mainstream politics in Nigeria. The Nigerian political culture of thuggery and gangsterism has rendered it extremely unsafe for most women to participate in mainstream politics. Furthermore, the stigmatization of female politicians by other females discourages the former's political participation, while religious beliefs and institutional arrangements that limit women to family responsibilities in the country, combined with a lack of genuine and decisive affirmative action to encourage women's political participation, have left a legacy that limits women's political participation in the country as a whole.

This study underlines the importance of addressing the causes that contribute to women's subordination in Nigerian politics. These include, among other things, the reformation of all religious, statutory, and customary laws and practices that perpetuate subordination of women in the country, as well as the explicit specifications and modalities of affirmative action on women's political participation and clear recommendations for implementation in the Nigeria constitution[157].

A study emphasized the challenges facing women in politics. The study stated the vital Women play an important role in society as both creators of future generations and producers of products and services. Despite the fact that women have made significant progress in securing the ability to vote and be elected to political offices in many countries, they still hold just a small proportion of other leadership roles on a national and worldwide level. Nigeria is marked by severe discrimination and inequality. These characteristics are also evident in its politics, particularly in matters of gender equity. This study looks at the barriers that women in Lagos face when it comes to participating in politics. The paper also offers strategies to ensure Lagos women actively participate in politics[158].

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This study seeks to illustrate the relationship between women's empowerment and decision-making, with a specific emphasis on the role of women legislators in the Punjab Assembly from 2008 to 2013. To accomplish the aforementioned aim, the article investigates the proportion of women appointed as decision-makers and evaluates their contribution to the legislative process, with an emphasis on the introduction of bills and resolutions pertaining to women's rights. According to the data, female members of the Punjab Assembly are underrepresented in decision-making positions. Except for a few, most female parliamentarians remained inert and inoperative throughout their tenure. Together, they were unable to fully participate in the legislative process. They remained ineffective in advancing the rights of their gender community[159].

Women's political representation in Nigeria was conducted in a study. The study looks at the fundamental issue of women's political representation in Nigeria. It investigates several reasons of low female representation in Nigeria and employs political theories of descriptive and substantive representation to back up arguments on the gender parity issue. It contends that while women's roles in the country's socioeconomic and cultural environment appear to be growing, this has not resulted in greater inclusion of women in politics. The study relied on secondary data gathered from existing literature. This was supplemented by primary data gathered through the use of survey questionnaires and Key Informant Interviews with current and former politicians and civic leaders. The study finds that women's political representation has increased dramatically over the last two decades, with the global average share of women in national parliaments doubling and all regions making significant progress regarding the goal of 30% women's representation in decision making.

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It also finds that, while the rate of growth in the political representation of women has been rapid in Africa, with four of the world's top ten countries in terms of women's share of the single or lower house of parliament being Sub-Saharan African countries (Rwanda, Seychelles, Senegal, and South Africa), Nigeria has made little progress in this regard. The report demonstrates initiatives to improve women's political underrepresentation in Nigeria have traditionally concentrated on increasing women's political resources and how these efforts have resulted in marginal gains and gradual improvements.

The report goes on to present various stakeholders' initiatives as well as civil society interventions aimed at boosting women's political representation. It examines how many countries have used quotas and how effective they have been. It argues that there is an increasing agreement that Nigeria's federal system, as well as its local and regional settings, provide a platform for emerging female politicians to gain experience in all aspects of political activity, including running for positions, dealing with social and economic stakeholders, and making decisions that affect the life of a community.

The report suggests that stakeholders should recognize women's political underrepresentation as a matter of discrimination against women, rather than a lack of resources for women, the burden for addressing the issue of political underrepresentation of women falls fully on the shoulders of political institutions. It is proposed that electoral gender quotas be implemented for the recruitment and election of female candidates as the most appropriate institutional adjustment to increase women's political representation. This is related to the implementation of strict quota requirements and fines for noncompliance[160].

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Another research carried out on political engagement and gender inequality in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. It demonstrates how women have been consigned to the background, despite the huge effort put forward by government and non-governmental organizations following the proclamation made at the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing It pushed for 30% affirmative action and the National Gender Policy (NGP) guideline of 35% affirmative action to increase women's representation in elective and appointive positions which is worth noting, as this article has proven, that Nigerian women continue to be sidelined as a result of the country's leadership style.

Despite the problems that women face, it has been determined that women's activism and advocacy, women's education, succeeding governments' good attitudes toward women's empowerment, and women's desire to participate in politics are all receiving a lot of positive energy. As a result, it appears that women's political engagement has a promising future. However, it is recommended that key stakeholders lobby for the protection of women from violence, empower them economically and politically, and examine the required legislation to accommodate women's increased interest in politics, both elective and appointive[99].

A similar study, titled Indigenous Communication and Women's Politics in Ado-Odo Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. This study investigated the prospect of indigenous communication enhancing women's political engagement. The survey design was employed as the research approach. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. Of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 394 were useful for data analysis. Data was analysed using percentages and the chi square test. Additionally, 6 interviewees were purposefully chosen. The data revealed that a higher majority of respondents (60.2%) believe indigenous communication provides them with information about electoral activities.

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The results also found that only 10% of respondents have ever run for elected office. As a result, the report proposes that elected women, no matter their political party affiliation, work together to address issues of common relevance to women. Women's caucuses can also serve as educational, communication, and logistical hubs for female lawmakers. This group can make women more effective, both individually as lawmakers and collectively, in acting on women's issues [161].

A related investigation looked at the gender discrepancy in President Bukhara's ministerial nominations and the reactions of the Nigerian press. This study demonstrates that President Muhammadu Buhari's list of ministerial nominees, which was delivered to the Senate for confirmation on September 30, 2015, included twenty-one (21) names, eighteen (18) of which were male and three (3) of which were female. This study intended to determine how the Nigerian press reacted to this gender imbalance in order to streamline their disposition within the framework of advocacy and complacency. Content analysis was used to investigate the manifest content of three national newspapers (The Guardian, This Day, and The Punch) and two national magazines– Tell and Newswatch were specifically chosen for their attitude and spread.

The actual issues of the newspapers investigated were also chosen over a consecutive day period, with October 2015 as the study month. Column centimetres were used as measurement units. The inter-coder reliability calculated using the Holsti formula was 0.91. The findings revealed a lack of willingness on the part of the Nigerian press to constructively criticize the President's lopsided gender distribution in political appointments. The findings also found that the Nigerian press did not actively engage in advocacy aimed at enshrining best practices in accordance with the MDGs and SDGs, particularly in terms of governance and women's empowerment. The inference from the foregoing so contextualized the disposition of the

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Nigerian press as complacent. To this aim, it was suggested that the Nigerian press use editorial content ornamented with advocacy to pave the path for egalitarianism through government policies that maximally integrate women's potentials into Nigeria's sociopolitical repertoire[162].

Another study looks at the challenges women face in leadership in Nigeria. According to the 2006 Nigerian population census, women made up 49% of the overall population, however there is a significant gender disparity between men and women, particularly in political representation, economic management, and leadership. As a result, the study critically examines some of the causes that have contributed to this significant political and socioeconomic gap. Using both historical and descriptive methodologies, inspired by patriarchal and liberal feminism perspectives, according to the study, several economic, political, social, and institutional behaviours impede women's effective engagement in politics, governance, and decision-making in Nigeria. The study concludes that, for the purpose to increasing women's involvement in all aspects of Nigerian society, the government and other stakeholders should engage in activities and policies that empower women politically, socially, and economically [60].

Women's political participation and the development of Nigeria in the Good luck Jonathan presidency was examined in a study. the role of women in the socio-political and economic advancement have often been overlooked or completely ignored throughout Nigeria's history. It is time to continue advocating for women's roles in the reformation of the nation. Previously, women's contributions to the economy, childrearing, and household administration have been documented in several sections of our country. Only a few communities projected women's political contributions to their societies during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. During the early independence period, there was minimal documentation of Nigerian women's political contributions. However, between 2011 and 2015, more women began to play significant roles in

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the nation's political landscape. During the Jonathan administration, women's issues have never been more relevant. This could definitely be related to the education and empowerment of women[83].

Examining gender and political participation in Nigeria, the study which demonstrates that political involvement is a voluntary act that includes a wide range of political actions such as voting in elections, running for political and party posts, attending political rallies, joining political parties, and many more. Although these political activities are considered to be "free zone" to all eligible citizens, especially in liberal democracies regardless of disparities in wealth, education, and gender, experiences in African countries in general and Nigeria in particular show that certain cultural values have methodically over the years prevented female gender from participating in politics, at least to a certain level, which to some extent tends to re-define its principles of participation. With persuasive evidence, the research reveals the extent these cultural attitudes have inhibited females from engaging in politics in Nigeria and proposes alternative suggestions[163].

Illustrating how women's low levels of political participation are becoming disconcerting and disturbing, this prevents women from contributing their full quota to Nigeria's growth. Empirical observations have demonstrated that women in positions of responsibility are known for their hard work and solid decision-making. The study's goal was to identify the particular elements that contribute to women's low political engagement levels. To accomplish this, the study gathered both primary and secondary data. 300 questionnaires were distributed on a 50:50 basis to both men and women. The survey discovered that the biggest constraining factors were sedentary in nature rather than the issue of money politics, violence, and thuggery, which were considered secondary by women respondents[164].

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In a study carried out on gender relations in Nigeria's democratic governance, despite the growing global efforts to promote gender equality, the situation in Nigeria since the end of military rule in 1999 has been dismal, with women's representation in the national parliament in the 1999, 2003, and 2007 elections at 6.3%, 8.8%, and 7.3%, respectively. The study's findings show that four primary elements contribute to women's marginalization in political participation: socioeconomic status, cultural legacy, political acrimony, and institutional designs. This paper contends that any strategy intended toward rectifying the low political participation of women in Nigeria will prove to be superficial as long as the underlying issues that have restricted women's political empowerment in the country are addressed[16].

Challenges and prospects of women political participation in Nigeria was examined in a study. The study looked at the theoretical literature on women and electoral competition, barriers to women's engagement in electoral competition in Nigeria, and potential strategies for encouraging or easing women's participation in political competitions in Nigeria. Although it explored the context, this study did not examine electoral rivalry in pre-Fourth Republic civilian regimes. The study discovered that women confront hurdles in election competitions around the world, including in the most evolved democracies, based on documentary analysis and one anonymous interview.

It also discovered that the situation in Nigeria is bleaker, with women being politically dismembered and used as décor during electoral struggles. A key result of this study is that women encounter social lynching, a kind of blackmail, in their political aspirations. Finally, the study discovered that women's engagement in electoral competition can be enhanced by offering them with high quality education and emphasizing personal trajectories when registering and voting for candidates in Nigerian elections[165].

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The study explored the historical progress, interventions done, and various problems faced by young women in politics in Nigeria since the establishment of democracy 20 years ago. The study intends to contribute to a broader evaluation of women's political representation in Nigeria. The study discovered three primary obstacles that impede young women's political representation: a lack of financial resources since women political aspirants cannot afford the excessive cost of paying for political party tickets, campaign costs, and resource mobilization, a lack of political knowhow, which is because women struggle to navigate the common patriarchal dominance and political violence which is the common occurrence in the country whenever elections are held.

The final element identified is a challenging institutional structure, which includes electoral laws and political party dynamics that do not provide a level playing field for new and young women to achieve success. The study concludes that if Nigeria's democratic landscape is to be participatory and all-encompassing in accordance with global standards, there must be an enabling environment in terms of legal, social, and economic conditions for women, particularly younger women, to fully exercise their agency. This means that political parties must practice internal democratic processes to provide places for women and young women, and that without these changes being in place, Nigeria would become even more of a democracy that undermines the agency and inclusion of women in governance processes which is characterized by the political and moral bankruptcy of godfather syndrome, money politics, thuggery and violence[166].

Investigating Women's Political Agency in Difficult Settings: An analysis of evidence from Egypt, Nigeria, Mozambique, and Pakistan looked into the spectrum of women's political agency and the answers they receive from public authorities in difficult situations. The study highlighted the topic of how and to what extent women exercise political agency in adverse contexts.

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According to the study, examining the range of political agency allows for a more comprehensive understanding of women's political participation. The study highlighted that male gatekeeping and biased social norms in difficult contexts defined by fragility, authoritarianism, and war create barriers for women's political engagement. The study explored the kind of problems that women faced and how they used political agency as activists, claimants, voters, and service brokers.

The approach used in this study was to create a framework to identify the various forms of women's individual and collective agency from Action for Empowerment and Accountability [A4EA], with studies conducted in Egypt, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Mozambique. The method looked at societal norms and male gatekeeping strategies that women use to traverse them and limit backlash, in addition to the changes that occur when women take action. The study discovered evidence that social norms and male gatekeeping impede women's participation in politics and their interactions with different public authorities in challenging circumstances. In addition, women employ gender-specific repertoires to organize protests and make claims against authorities, as well as unique techniques to avoid the risk of retribution from their own communities and security forces. The study also discovered that while there is success in making claims on individual areas and that women feel more powerful on a personal level, this does not necessarily lead to systematic change[167].

Another study Women in executive political leadership in Africa identified attitudes, legal/political frameworks, economic empowerment, and affirmative action are all important factors influencing women's participation in executive political leadership. The survey found that while Rwanda, Senegal, and Uganda have high global rankings for women's representation in parliament, other African countries, such as Nigeria, score embarrassingly low. The study used

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longitudinal qualitative research and comparative case studies in East and West Africa to gather data from reports, feminist literature, and other internet sources, which were then evaluated using themes. The study stated that additional legislation on quotas for women, as well as attitudinal reform and economic empowerment, are required to enable women to gain access to executive political leadership in Africa[168].

Examining young women and political participation: Exploring gender variations in awareness, knowledge, and support for political restructuring among Nigerian youths, with a focus on young women and their role, the participants were comprised of the following numbers: 575 youths, 372 males, 180 females, drawn from the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Collection of data was through the use of questioner to assess awareness, knowledge and support for political restructuring in Nigeria. Analysis of the data was done with the use of Multivariate analysis and chi square. The findings indicate that there is no statistically significant association between gender and awareness of political reform. However, it was discovered that women had more understanding of and support for political restructuring than men[169].

Studying Nigerian Women and Political Participation: The Not Too Young To-Run Law: A New Vista For More Women's Participation in Nigeria's Politics tries to examine the Not Too Young to Run Law signed in 2018 to increase youth participation in politics and political representation, with a focus on the execution of the new Law with the objective to increase women's representation in Nigerian governmental structure by increasing girls or young women's [25-35] years actively participating in Nigerian politics and by lowering the age limit for political offices making it easy for young women politicians to context for political office and take on leadership role. The methodology used was qualitative research method. The study came to a conclusion that women are to a large extent disproportionately represented in Nigerian political structure

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considering that they constitute more than half of Nigerian voters and that Nigerian girls are nearly extinct in representation as compared to the analysis of representation in the Nigerian National Legislature, which consists of the Upper and Lower Houses. The study assessed the potential of not-too-young women to run for office as a means of increasing their representation in politics.

When the proportion of representation of young women in the 2015 election was compared to that of the 2019 general elections prior to the passing of the Law, the study concluded that the new law alone cannot propel young women and girls into politics and political representation. However, a major shift was observed in Nigerian young political representation. The focus group discussion shed light on important causes accounting for modest increases in young women's representation under the Not Too Young to Run Law, including as socio-political variables and a lack of political objectives to include young women in Nigerian politics. In the final analysis, the study recommended a critical consideration of Nigerian girls as a formidable force to increase the overall percentage of women's participation and representation in politics, satisfying Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 10, the Beijing Platform of Action of 1995, and benefiting Nigerian society as a whole[170].

A study titled Women's Representation in Nigeria's National Assembly: An Assessment of Their Contributions to Legislative Activities of The 8TH and 9TH Assemblies noted that since the country's return to democracy in 1999 that the contribution of women participation in National Assembly of Nigeria has brought into new focus questions about the factors inhibiting women's political participation in the country after the return of power from military to democracy because women still remain at the side-line of Nigerian politics and this was prompted the study

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of women's representation and Evaluating the contribution to legislative efforts in the 8th and 9th National Assembly.

The data acquired in this study was analysed and interpreted using both qualitative and quantitative methods, including descriptive statistics analysis utilizing frequency tables and simple percentages. The study's first aim was examined using secondary data, whereas the second objective was analysed utilizing both primary and secondary data collected throughout the investigation. The analysis discovered that women's political representation in the 2015 and 2019 elections was minuscule in comparison to the roughly half of the population they represent, with 2,970 women on the electoral ballot, accounting for only 11.36% of all elected female candidates. The study also found that there were only 7 female Senators that made it to the Senate in 2015 and 2019 elections respectively, while in the House of Representatives in 2015, there were 22 women [6.8%] out of 360 members, the number has dropped to only 11 [3.05%] in 2019.

The survey also discovered that, despite their minor presence in the National Assembly, bills supported by female legislators had a major impact on the lives of all Nigerians. Women's under-representation in legislative processes has had a negative influence on the promotion and enforcement of their rights. A noteworthy example is the Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill, which was introduced in the Senate for a second reading on March 15, 2016 but was not debated. The study found that the argument for the rejection of this Bill by the senate was because only 7 women were Senators out of 109 and men's effort to promote the rights of women was not enough for the fact that they are not direct beneficiaries to this Bill. The study further found that the discrimination against women could be connected to so many components, including tradition and culture, male-oriented supremacy, and preference in resource generation and the 8th

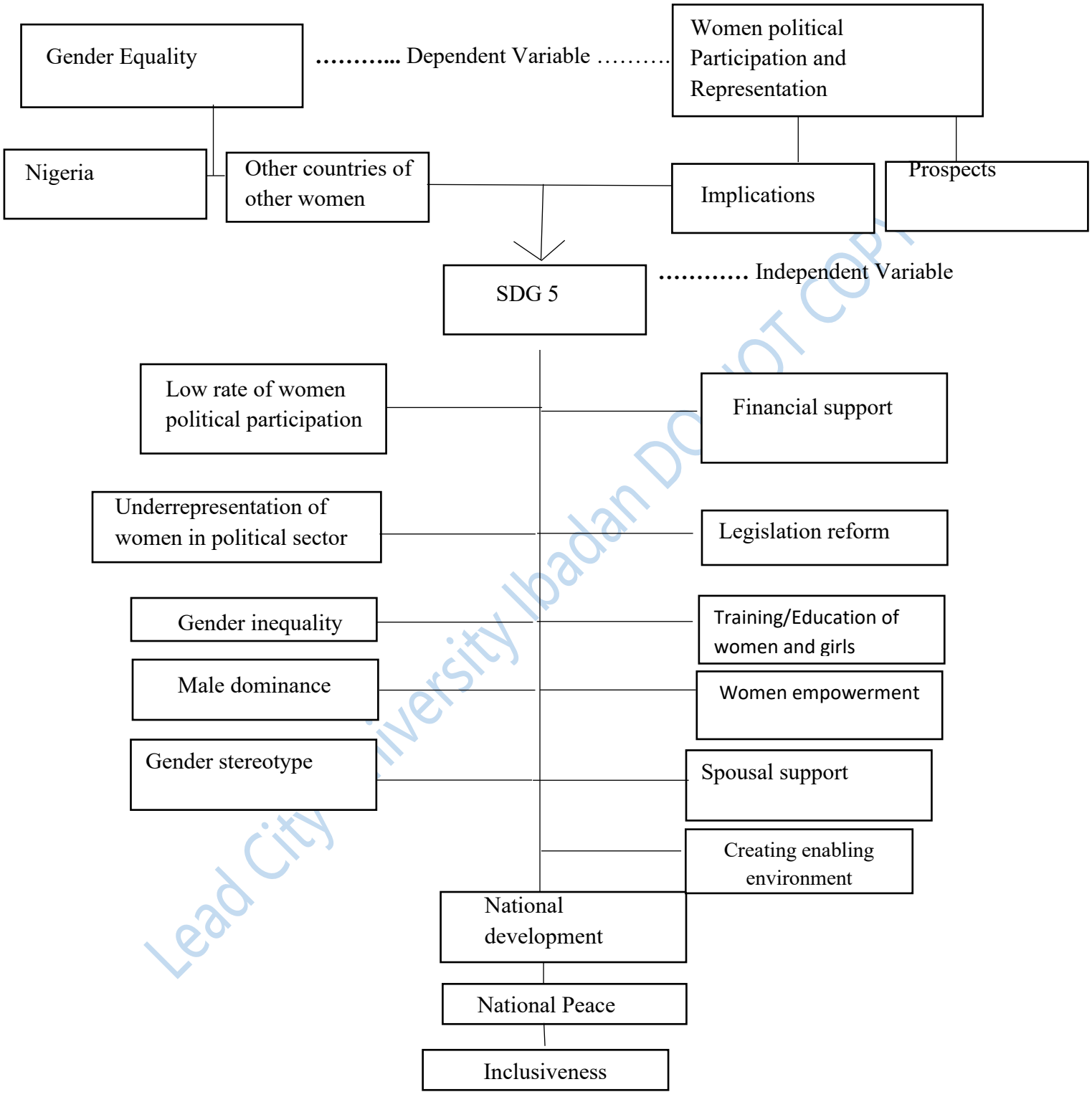
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National Assembly has only 7 women out of 109 seats at the Senate, while the 22 women out of 360 seats in the House of Representative and also in the 9th National Assembly had only 7 women as Senators and 11 in the House of Representative out of 360 which clearly shows a decline in women political participation in the country.

Recommended were made that political parties should create a support network for prospective aspirants by assigning them with experienced and established women politicians to mentor them and provide capacity building/ training for young women in order to prepare them for future leadership position. The study also recommended the introduction of Quota systems at all levels of government, as well as the involvement of essential stakeholders such as the Independent National Electoral Commission [INEC] and political parties, should guarantee thorough adherence. They study recommended that women parliamentarians should attend trainings and workshops organized at National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies [NILDS] to gain more knowledge than will enhance their capabilities towards making more contributions to legislative activities which will result to making more impactful contributions to the growth of the Nation[170].

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2.4 Conceptual Model



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Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework of Women Political Participation in Politics

Source: The Researcher, 2024

2.5 Summary of Gap in Literature Reviewed

While numerous studies have explored women's political participation and gender equality in Nigeria, much of the existing literature tends to focus on national-level analysis, often overlooking regional disparities, particularly within Southern Nigeria. Most research emphasizes legal frameworks**,** cultural barriers, and global gender equality indicators**,** with limited attention to state-specific political dynamics**,** party-level gender practices, and grassroots political mobilization in the Southern region. This study reviewed past literature to come up with a conceptual overview of women political representation and participation and Gender Equality, factors affecting the extent of women engagement in politics and representation in Nigeria, Gender Equality and Sustainable Development Goals 5 [SDG5], The global status of women and politics, Status of women and politics in Africa, the inputs of Ten African women and others around the world that are making waves in the area of women participation in politics and empowerment in the 21st century was highlighted. Also, the status of women political participation and representation in Nigeria was addressed. In line with above, Liberal Feminism being the theoretical framework adopted for this research was equally brought to limelight.

Furthermore, the literature often treats women as a homogeneous group, failing to account for intersectional factors such as education, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and religion that differently affect women's access to political opportunities. There is also insufficient empirical data on the effectiveness of gender-related policies and affirmative action mechanisms within Southern political parties and institutions. Also, the review of empirical studies centred on women political participation and representation in Nigeria with empirical review on women political participation in Africa. In addition, the empirical review of the youth/ young women's

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political representation in Nigeria was carried out. These studies revealed essentially that patriarchy structure in African society impedes women's active political participation[151,160]. In addition, a few studies on Nigeria revealed that the level of women political participation remains low. This interests the researcher to study Women Political Representation and Gender Equality in Southern Nigeria vis a vis the attainment of sustainable development goal by the year 2030.

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Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter focuses on the methodology used to carry out the study under the following subheadings: research design, description of research instruments, method of data collection and method of data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This research is qualitative and descriptive in nature. Qualitative research is defined as research that employs methods such as participant's observation, or case studies to produce a narrative, descriptive account of setting or practice[1].

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised of female politicians, women leaders of political parties, women's rights activists, state legislators, councilors of local government, women allies, and members of political parties, from the 3 geo – political zones of Nigeria: South – West, South – South and South – East which includes; Lagos, Osun, Delta and Anambra states respectively. The researcher conducted structured interview with female politicians selected from 4 states used as case studies and 8 females were interviewed from each state accordingly. Data collected was analysed using content analysis. This is to explore people's thoughts regarding women political participation and representation in Southern Nigeria.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

The sampling technique adopted for this study is purposive sampling. It is a type of non-probability sampling method where researchers rely on their own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in their research. The researcher selected the sample

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from 4 states of the Federation located at the Southern region with thirty-two female politicians. Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to get required information from female political officeholders (current and former) at local, state, or national levels, female political aspirants who have contested in elections. These groups have firsthand knowledge of the barriers, opportunities, and dynamics shaping women's political engagement in Southern Nigeria.

3.4 Description of the Research Instrument

The study relied on primary and secondary sources of data. As a result, the research instrument used were data collected from field work via personal visit to the department of Women Affairs of 4 states selected from three geo – political zones of Nigeria that was used as case studies which included the following:

1. South-West: Lagos and Osun
2. South-South: Delta
3. South-East: Anambra

The researcher conducted 19 structured interviews with 32 women politicians in Southern Nigeria, which comprised of women rights activists, state legislators, women leaders of political parties and councilors of local government. The researcher conducted interviews in person on one-on-one basis and via telephone call. The questions asked by the researcher during the interview session were basically on their background and how they entered the political sphere, their experiences with discrimination and marginalization, the general challenges and hindrances which they face and what should be done to overcome the barriers and challenges facing women in politics. This was to explore their political journeys, perceptions of gender roles and

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suggestions on systematic changes that should be implemented for the promotion of gender equality in Southern Nigeria.

The results found from the structured interview conducted were as follows:

- The researcher found that women face significant challenges to political participation which includes; cultural/traditional factor, socio-economic factor, limited access to resources, education, networks, stereotype and gender -based violence as the major challenges facing women political participation and representation in Southern Nigeria.
- The researcher also found that what should be done to encourage women political participation in Southern Nigeria includes; mentoring of young women politicians by the experienced and successful ones who are seen as role models to the upcoming female politicians, organizing training on leadership/capacity building programs for women, granting women access to education and mapping out quotas for women by reserving seats for them.

Also, Focus Group, Discussions [FGD] approach was adopted in this research and was conducted in different local communities of the 4 states of Lagos, Osun, Delta and Anambra involving different categories of people that are politically inclined.

Additionally, the secondary sources of data and the research instruments used are library documents (both physical and online) where data was collected from textbook, journals, newspapers editorials, articles, reports and magazines.

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3.5 Validity of the Research Instrument

Validity refers to the degree to which a research instrument measures what it claims to measure. This research made sure that the research instrument investigated all its construct of interest, and measured the characteristics of variables which the research intends to measure.

3.6 Reliability of the Research Instrument

The reliability of research instrument in examining women political representation and gender equality in Southern Nigeria, is crucial to ensure the accuracy and consistency of data collection. A pilot test was conducted in some part of Ondo State to establish the competence of the assistants and reliability of the instrument. The researcher got a reliable and uninfluenced instrument from the study or external factor at a value of 0.9.

3.7 Administration of Research Instrument

The researcher visited the department of women affairs of the four states used as case study where she had discussion and dialogues with women appointed as commissioners for women affairs and their assistants from the four selected states in Southern Nigeria and gathered data containing the list of women commissioners and special advisers from these states who were appointed with effect from 2016 till present.

With the support of trained assistances, questionnaires were shared among randomly selected people. The data were carefully documented while the researcher concentrated on the interview and the focus group discussion (FDI).

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3.8 Method of Data Collection

The researcher conducted structured interview with 32 female politicians which were selected from 4 states of Southern Nigeria that was used as case studies for this research. 8 female politicians each were selected from these 4 states and were interviewed accordingly. There was focus group discussion involving men and women politicians, business men and women, workers, and members of political parties which was conducted at 4 locations in Southern Nigeria. The locations include: Amuwo-Odofin in Lagos state, Osogbo in Osun State, Agbor in Delta state and Nnewi in Anambra state.

Also, the selected related papers were used by the researcher to collect data for the study and thereafter, conducted a critical review of the articles while obtaining secondary data through library research from published and unpublished sources[2]. The researcher also organized focused group discussion [FGD] in four communities in Southern Nigeria. Participants were identified and selected through purposive sampling, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives from women actively involved in politics, community leaders, civil society members and policy makers including female local government councilors, leaders of women groups of Non-Governmental Organizations [NGOs], female members of political parties.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

The study made use of qualitative descriptive analysis to examine women political representation and gender equality in Southern Nigeria. The purpose of qualitative descriptive analysis is to summarize the data gathered during the research so that proper analytical methods may be employed to identify further links between the variables. Content analysis was also used to

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analyse the data gathered for this study. Also, a computer software known as Nvivo was deployed for the analysis of data.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

Ethical measures were put in place to safeguard the dignity, rights, and welfare of all research participants. During the administration of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, this research adhered to two fundamental principles of social research ethics: (1) obtaining informed consent and ensuring voluntary participation, and (2) maintaining anonymity and confidentiality.

Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation

For the questionnaires, individuals were randomly selected and verbally asked if they wished to take part in the study. It was made explicit that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any stage while completing the questionnaire without having to provide a reason. The act of completing and submitting the questionnaire was taken as a sign of consent.

For the interviews, potential stakeholders were initially approached in person and invited to take part in the research. Each participant's informed consent was sought, allowing them to decide whether or not to participate. Consent to audio-record the interview and permission to use their names in the analysis (or not) were also requested.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity is a key ethical practice to protect participants' identities and the information they provide. Participants in the questionnaires were given a verbal explanation of the research and informed that the data would be analysed in an aggregated form,

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making it impossible to link responses back to individual participants. Paper-based questionnaires were later transcribed into digital format for analysis.

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Endnotes

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Chapter Four
Results and Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents the results of the analysis and discussion of findings from data collected from 4 states of Southern Nigeria which includes, Lagos, Osun, Anambra and Delta respectively. Data were collected from the respondents through structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGD). This is to provide adequate and reliable answers to the research questions. The use of tables is to depict the States and names of women commissioners and their portfolios with ease.

4.1 Demographic Data Analysis

The sample size of this research is 76, and as such 32 female politicians were interviewed with 19 structured interviews from 4 states of Southern Nigeria and 8 females were selected from each state and interviewed appropriately. Also, focus group discussion was organized in 4 rural communities of Southern Nigeria with 12 participants for each group. Also, data of women that were appointed commissioners and special advisers from 4 Southern states from 2016 till present was gathered during the visit of the department of women affairs of those states. The names of women commissioners and special advisers to the governors of these states were identified carefully and listed inside the tables. The list below contains the names of women appointed as commissioners and special advisers from each state during the period under review.

The table was divided into two sections (A & B). Section A contains the list of women from Four states of Southern Nigeria that served as commissioners from 2016 till present while B contains the list of women that are appointed special advisers to governors of these selected states from Southern Nigeria. This chapter presents the list of women commissioners and the offices they were appointed into as well as the findings of the analysis.

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Table 4.1: List of Female Commissioners in Four Southern States

S/N	Names of commissioners	Position Held	Year	State
1	Mrs. Funke Egbemode Adenike	Commissioner for Information & Civil Orientation	2016	Osun
2	Barr. Olaboopo-Olubukola Rihanat	Commissioner for Women & Children Affairs	2016-2019	Osun
3	Hon. Babalola Idiat	Commissioner for Federal Matter	2016-2019	Osun
4	Mrs. Giwa Latifat-Abiodun	Commissioner for Governor's Office	2016-2019	Osun
5	Mrs. Adenike Folashade Adeleke	Commissioner for Federal Affairs	2022-date	Osun
6	Mrs Ayo Awolowo	Commissioner for Women Affairs	2022-date	Osun
7	Dr. Uju Nwogu	Commissioner for Ministry of Justice	2019	Anambra
8	Prof. Kate Omenugba	Commissioner for Basic Education	2019	Anambra
9	Mrs. Chiamake Nnake	Commissioner for Budget & Economic Pllanning	2022	Anambra
10	Mrs. Ifeyinwa Obinabo	Commissioner for Women and Social Welfare	2022	Anambra
11	Mrs. Patrick Igwebuike	Commissioner for Transport	2022	Anambra
12	Mrs. Folashade Adefisayo	Commissioner for Education	2016-date	Lagos
13	Mrs. Bolaji Dada	Commissioner for Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation	2016-date	Lagos

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14	Mrs. Ajibola Ponnle	Commissioner for Establishment, Training and Pension	2016-date	Lagos
15	Mrs. Uzamat Akinbile Yusuf	Commissioner for Home Affairs	2016-date	Lagos
16	Mrs. Yetunde Arobieke	Commissioner for Local Government and Community Affairs	2016-date	Lagos
17	Mrs. Lola Akande	Commissioner for Commerce and Industry	2016-date	Lagos
18	Mrs. Olufunke Adebolu	Commissioner for Tourism, Arts and Culture	2016-date	Lagos
19	Mrs. Flora Akande	Hon. Commissioner for Women Affairs Community & Social Development	2019-2023	Delta
20	Hon. Dr. Evang. Barr. Mrs. Princess Pat Ajudua	Hon. Commissioner for Women Affairs Community & Social Development	2023-date	Delta
21	Mrs. Rose Ezewu	Commissioner for Basic Education	2023-date	Delta
22	Hon. Joan Onyeamachi-Ada Aniuma	Commissioner for Technical Education	2023-date	Delta

Source: The Researcher, 2024

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Table 4.2: List of Female Commissioner in Four States and the Period they Served

Name of State	Year	No	Total
Osun	2016-2019	4	6
	2022- till date	2	
Anambra	2019-2024	2	5
	2022- till date	3	
Lagos	2016- till date	7	7
Delta	2019- 2023	1	
	2023- till date	4	5

Source: The Researcher, 2024

The above table indicates that the numbers of female Commissioners in each state are as follows;

1. Osun State = 6 females
2. Anambra State = 5 Female
3. Lagos State = 7 Female
4. Delta State = 5 Female

   Total = 23 Females

The Information was also represented on multiple Bar Charts as shown below;

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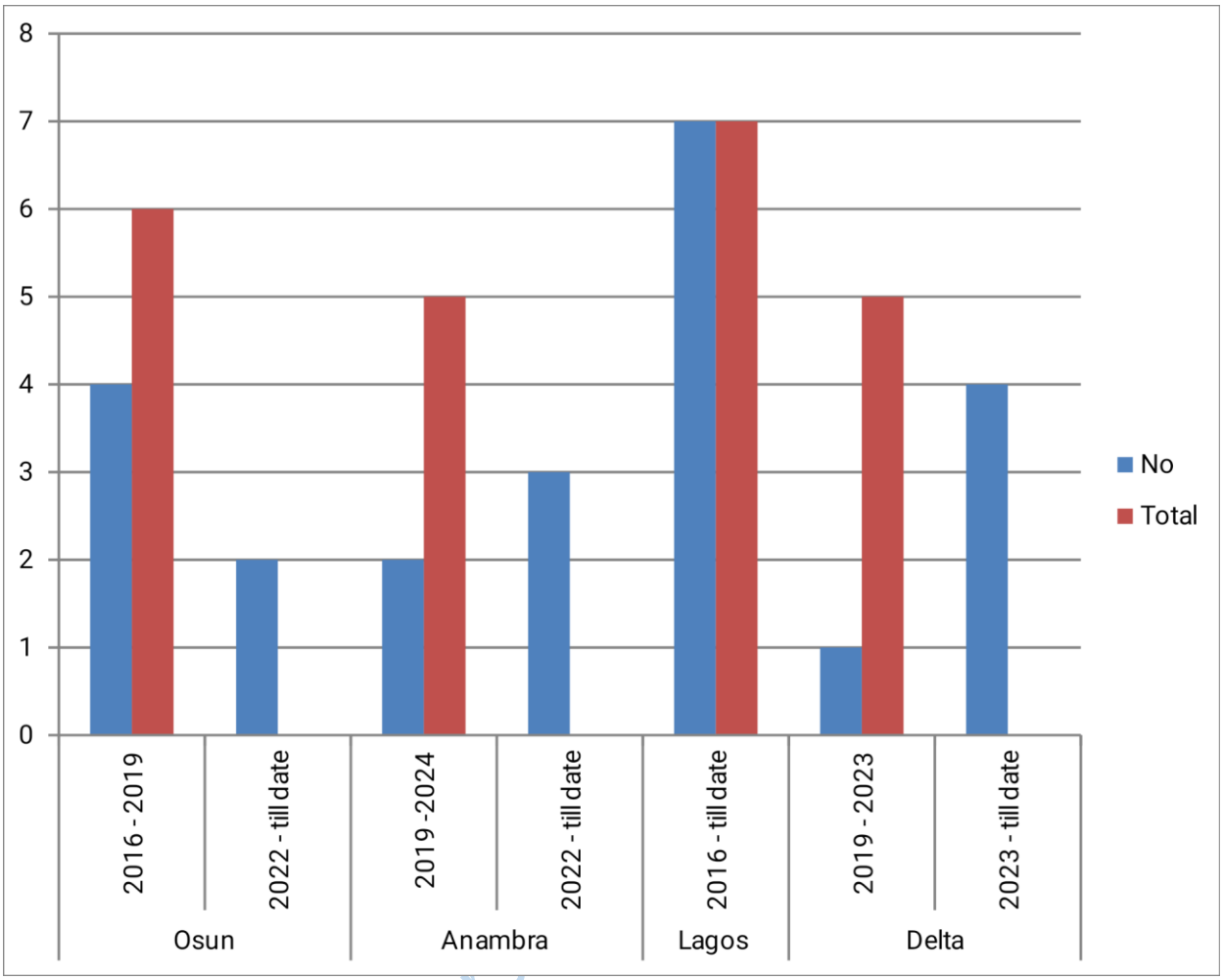


Figure 4.1: Female Commissioner in Four States and the Period they Served

Source: The Researcher's Compilation, 2024

The information on female Commissioners in four states was represented on Pie Chart;

Osun State = 6/23 * 360/1 = 93.91

Anambra State = 5/23 * 360/1 = 78.26

Lagos State = 7/23 * 360/1 = 109.57

Delta State = 5/23 * 360/1 = 78.26

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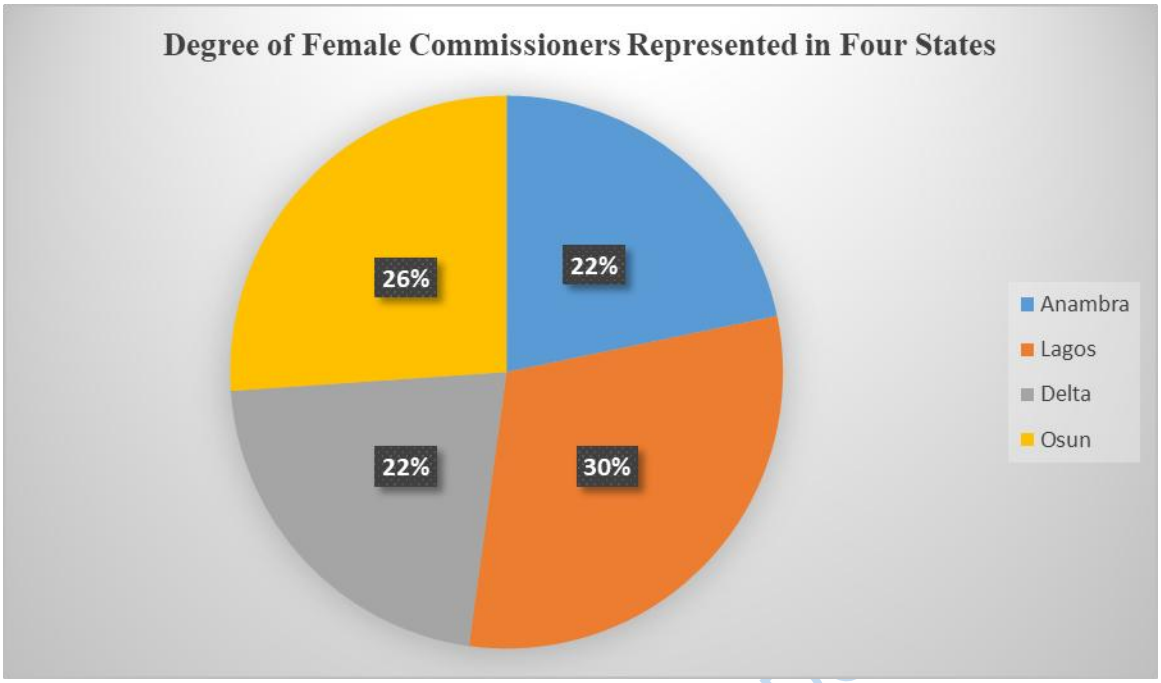


Figure 4.2: Degree at which Female Commissioners were represented in Four States

Source: Researcher's Compilation, 2024

The pie chart above shows the degree at which female commissioners were appointed in four states.

Table 4.3: Year of Service of Female Commissioners represented in Four States

Name of State	Year of Service	Total
Osun	2016 – till date	6
Anambra	2019 and 2022 till date	5
Lagos	2016 – till date	7
Delta	2019 & 2023 till date	5

Source: The Researcher, 2024

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The percentage below for the information above was calculated, and the result was represented on Pie Chart;

Osun State = 6/23 × 100/1 = 26.09%

Lagos State = 7/23 × 100/1 = 30.43%

Anambra State = 5/23 × 100/1 = 21.74 %

Delta State = 5/23 × 100/1 = 21.74%

States	Percentages
Osun	26.09%
Anambra	21.74%
Lagos	30.43%

Figure 4.3: Percentage of Female Commissioners represented in Four States

Source: Researcher's Compilation, 2024

From the analysis above, the percentage of female commissioners in the four states shows that Lagos State has the highest percentage.

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Table 4.4: Statistical Analysis of Female Special Advisers in Osun State

S/N	Names of special Advisers	Post Held	Year	State
1	Hon. Doyin Laoye	Special Adviser on Skill Acquisition and Training.	2016	Osun
2	Eniola Omotosho	Special Adviser on Market Women Affairs	2016	Osun
3	Fausat Sarumi	Special Adviser on Asset Management	2016	Osun
4	Bukola Onifade	Special Adviser on Boundary Matters	2016	Osun
5	Princess Adebimpe Koyi	Special Adviser on Diaspora Affairs	2016	Osun
6	Alhaja Hawa Ahmed	Special Adviser on Federal Affairs	2016	Osun
7	Mrs Halid Sekinat Temilade	Special Adviser on Children Affairs	2016	Osun
8	Princess Oyewale Afolabi	Special Adviser on STOWASSA/Water Regulating.	2016	Osun

Source: Researcher's Compilation, 2024

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Table 4.5: Statistical Analysis of Female Special Advisers in Lagos State

S/N	Name of Special Advisers	Post Held	Year	State
1	Ruth Bisola Olusanya	Special Adviser on Agriculture	2016	Lagos
2	Princess Aderemi Adebowale	Special Adviser on Civil Engagement	2016	Lagos
3	Mrs Toke Benson Awoyinka	Special Adviser on Housing	2016	Lagos
4	Marylin Okowa Daramola	Special Adviser on Girl Child	2016	Lagos
5	Hon. Uyoyou Edhekekepo	Special Adviser on Women Affairs and Social Welfare	2016	Lagos
6	Hon. Omenu Anyisire Sylvia	Special Adviser to Governor on Women Development	2016	Lagos
7	Amaka Akudo	Special Adviser on Continous Voters Registration	2016	Lagos
8	Ngozi Okonkwo	Special Adviser on Efficiency, Trainings and Motivation	2016	Lagos
9	Vera Okonkwo	Special Adviser on Chieftancy & Community Matters	2016	Lagos

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Table 4.6: List of Female Special Advisers in Four States

Name of State	Year	No.	Total
Lagos	2016 – till date	3	3
Delta	2016 – till date	3	3
Osun	2016 – till date	8	8
Anambra	2016 – till date	3	3

Source: Researcher's Compilation, 2024

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The graph showing the list of female special advisers in four states

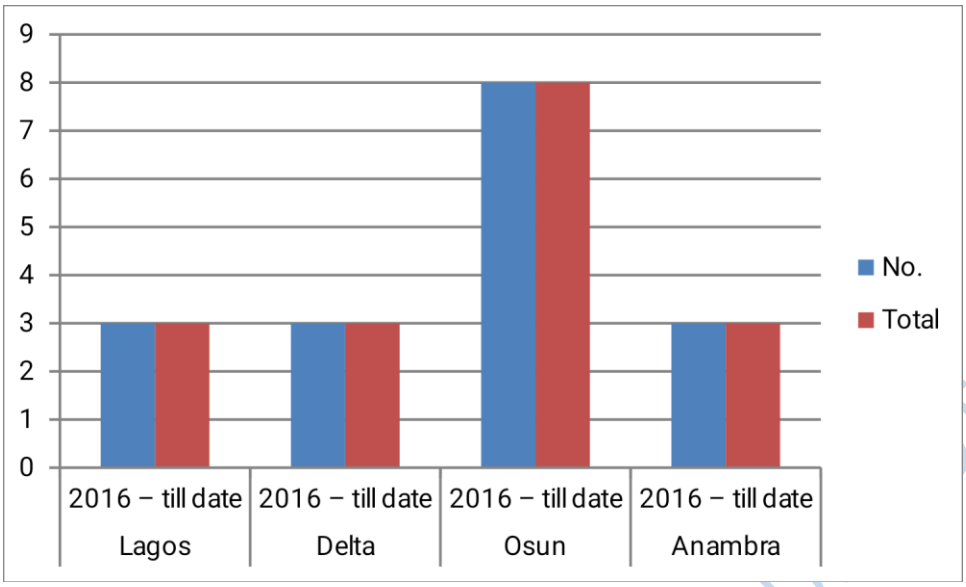


Figure 4.4: Graph showing the List of Female Special Advisers in Four States

Source: Researcher's Compilation, 2024

Statistical Analysis

The Percentage of Each State is Presented Below

1. Lagos State = 3/17 × 100/1 = 17.65%
2. Delta State = 3/17 × 100/1 = 17.65%
3. Osun State = 8/17 × 100/1 = 47.05%
4. Anambra State = 3/17 × 100/1 = 17.65%

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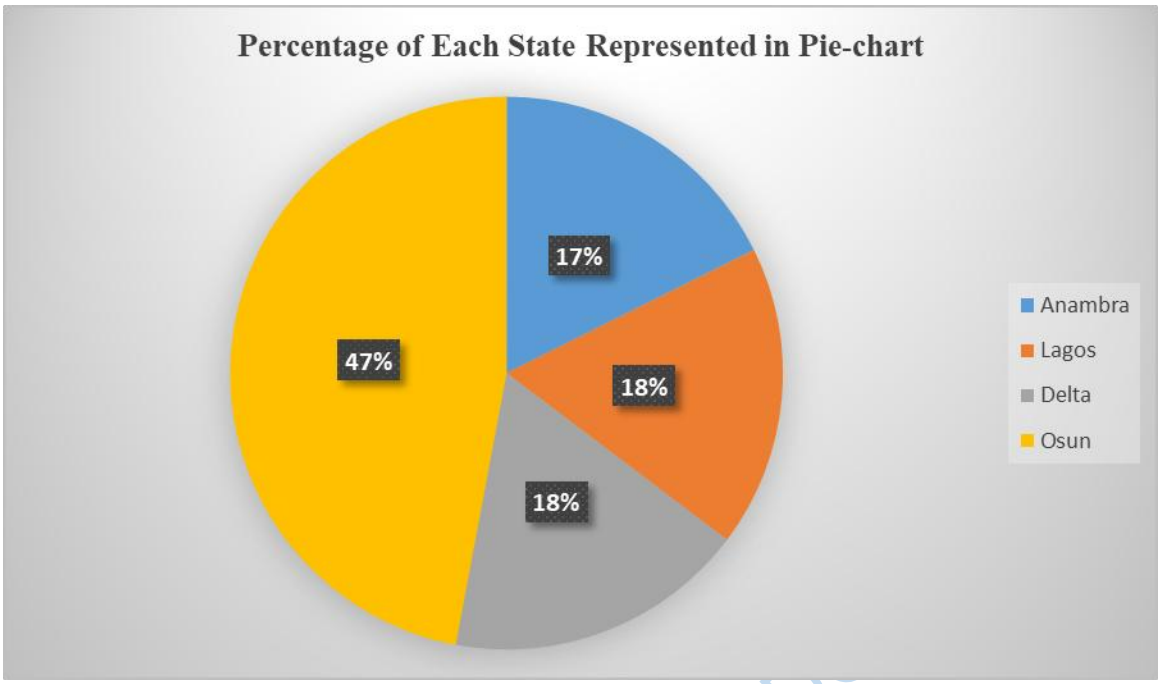


Figure 4.5: Percentage of each State Represented

Source: The Researcher, 2024

From the analysis above, it shows that Osun state has the highest number of women Adviser to the Governor with a higher percentage of 47.05%, which is almost half of the number of Women Advisers in the four State chosen.

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4.2 Presentation of Data

4.2.1 Presentation of Research Questions

Research Question One: Does the exclusion of women in politics in Southern Nigeria have any implication?

Table 4.7: Implications for the exclusion of women in politics in Southern Nigeria

S/N	Statement
1	Exclusion of women in politics has affected women political representation in Southern Nigeria which would have availed more women ample opportunity to be appointed at various levels of government in Nigeria which means exclusion of women from representing at all levels.
2	Women are not adequately represented in decision making process and there is underrepresentation of women.
3	This resulted to discrimination against women and inequality exists in the political terrain giving room to male dominance.
4	The issues concerning women may not receive utmost attention or addressed effectively and are not given priority.
5	The democratic principles and governance are undermined in Southern Nigeria which would have led to more development at that geo – political zone and the nation in general.
6	Excluding women from politics in Southern Nigeria reinforces cultural and social norms which limits their opportunities.

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7	Exclusion of women tantamount to wastage of women's skills because they were not given opportunity to exhibit their skills in the society which resulted to low women representation in politics in this part of the county which amounts to less than 30% analytically.
8	The exclusion of Women can lead to stagnation in the development of Southern Nigeria because women are not given the opportunity to contribute their quota to the development of the region. Young girls are discouraged from taken up politics as their career by this exclusion of women because the representation of women is low.

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From the analysis in Table 4.2, a total of 23 women presented here were appointed into the office of commissioners in 4 states used as case study in Southern Nigeria. This shows that the percentage of women representation in various states of Southern Nigeria is very low from year 2016 till date.

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Research Question Two: How can the roles of women in politics in Southern Nigeria assist towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal5 by the year 2030?

Table 4.8: The role of women in politics in Southern Nigeria towards assisting Nigeria in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 by the year 2030?

S/N	Statement
1	The role of women in politics in Southern Nigeria is responding towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal5 by the year 2030 which has been glaring in the significant contribution to policy and advocacy in the area of gender equality and women's rights.
2	The role of women in politics transcends leadership role which they play from the grassroots level in communities which can ensure inclusive decision-making and policy formulation. Women are driving innovation and entrepreneurship for instance women are seriously involved in [MSMEE] program, creating innovation.
3	The role of women is glaring in advancing participation in governance and planning for the future.
4	The role of women is apparent in women's economic empowerment and education and uplifting women and improving their capabilities which can lead to boosting of the Gross Domestic Product [GDP] and also alleviate poverty.
5	The role of women in the society is seen in their great contribution towards agriculture and food security in the nation, which could be seen in agricultural labor force.

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6	The role of women is paramount in the society which is visible in the care giver and domestic duties that are being carried out at family and community levels.
7	Women's role can also be seen in the area of health care and social mobilization in the community which can lead to social change.

Source: The Researcher, 2024

Research Question Three: Are there factors that constrain women from active participation in politics in Southern Nigeria?

Table 4.9: Factors that Constrain Women from Active Participation in Politics

S/N	Statement
1	Socio – economic factor such as limited access to resources and networks
2	Lack of education or illiteracy among women.
3	Culture and tradition in some parts of the society that prohibits women from appearing in public gatherings which forbids women from being leaders over men.
4	Religious factor example Islamic religion that does not allow women to participate in any activity that will expose them to the public.
5	Stereotype which is people's wrong perception about women's involvement in politics.
6	Political environment which has been unfavourable to women due to violence, thuggery, intimidation, insecurity and suppression by men.
7	Lack of support by men in the family and political party.
8	Lack of support by fellow women out of jealousy, envy and hatred.

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9	Time of meetings often times does not favour women because political meetings are always held at nights.

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Research Question Four: Which policy recommendations should be made towards the enhancement of women political representation in Southern Nigeria?

Table 4.10: Policy Recommendations for Enhancing the Political Representation of Women in Southern Nigeria

S/N	Statement
1	Women should advocate for a gender balance so that women should be included in decision making bodies at strategic positions and governance.
2	Creating an enabling, safe and political environment that will enable women to be actively involved in politics and present themselves during elections to vie for political positions so that they can be appointed into positions that are important.
3	Civil Society Organizations should on their own organize information and awareness creating campaign to support women to vie for key elective positions.
4	The quota system that was proposed should be implemented so that 35% will be set apart to reserve seats for women in key positions in the country.
5	The Government should organize and put in place trainings and capacity building programs to train women on the nitty–gritty of democracy.
6	Women leadership academy or women Institution should be set up which will result to the development of leadership skills in women for future leadership positions.
7	Establishment of institutions/ organizations that can focus in peace building initiative which will be affiliated to international Organizations to ensure that elections run in Nigeria are free and fair and void of violence.
	8. Legislation should be put in place because it will be a serious influencer to women political participation in general and women political representation in Southern Nigeria in particular.

Source: Field Survey, 2024

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4.3 Discussion of Findings

From the analysis in Table 4.1, the Pie chart indicates that the total number of women commissioners in the 4 states is quite low just like the total number of women that were appointed as special advisers to the governors of the four states of Lagos, Osun, Delta and Anambra which indicated in essence that women's appointment in the four states to key elective and appointive positions is so infinitesimal.

From the findings above, it is imperative to note that the disparity that exists in the society between men and women is as a result of the Believe that men make better leaders than women; and that men are born to rule and should not be under the leadership of women in the society. To this effect our society has to be blamed for this assumption because all human beings are created and endowed with leadership abilities and both men and women are to work together to achieve better result.

Women's power in politics should not be underestimated because women handle affairs that they are involved in thoroughly and ensures that everything goes on well just the way they take up their role in the home front and handle it perfectly. To this end, it is important to point out here that the restrictions given by the society are solely man-made, not what God established. for everyone in essence women has every right to enjoy the same opportunity that men are enjoying in the political terrain.

From the research findings which pointed out that the major factors that mitigates women's participation in politics that literarily leads to low women representation in appointments to key position of governance and decision making in Southern Nigeria includes; lack of legislation, Lack of education for girls, lack of financial power, psychological factors, disempowerment, and

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the nature of politics in the country, failure to acquire basic education by women, lack of fund for campaigns, Stereotype, both genders not supporting women, gender based violence etc.

Notwithstanding all these factors that militate against women's breaking even in the political terrain, there is every need for women to take the bull by its horns and exploit every chance accessible and ensure that no opportunity is allowed to slip out of their hands to be recognized bearing in mind that women are the most critical instrument in ensuring that their voices are heard in politics[3].

Objective one was set out to assess the implications for the exclusion of women in politics in Southern Nigeria. From the analysis given in Table 4.3 it shows that Lagos state has the highest percentage of women appointed as commissioners at the rate of 30.43%. The table further indicates that Osun state comes second with 26.09% while Anambra and Delta states has the same number of women appointed as commissioners at the rate of 21.74% respectively.

Also, Table 4.5 shows that Osun state has the highest number of women appointed as special advisers to the governor at the rate of 47.05% and the three remaining states of Lagos, Delta and Anambra has the same number of women appointed as special advisers to the governors of each state at the rate of 17.65% respectively. In general, both analyses indicate low rate of women representation in politics in Southern Nigeria which has seriously contributed to the underdevelopment crises in the country and decrease in diverse policy making[4].

The second objective was set to examine the roles of women of Southern Nigeria in assisting Nigeria towards achieving sustainable development Goal 5 by the year 2030. Looking at the roles of women in the Society which shows their commitment to actualize the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 by 2030 which can be seen in their crucial role in economic

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empowerment, education/capacity building, innovation/entrepreneurship, social organization of the society and their effort to ensure that there is a legislation regarding gender equality and gender quotas for women approved by the National assembly which will enable women to become interested in political participation in the country. Table 4.3 and 4.5 clearly indicates the low rate of women representation in governance and appointment to decision making positions pointing to the fact that women political representation is quite low despite the crucial roles which women plays in the society. From the foregoing, it can be seen that sustainable development Goal 5 is far from being achieved by the year 2030 unless more opportunity for women political representation in Southern Nigeria is created by allowing gender balance[5].

The third objective was to outline the challenges confronting women aspiration to participate in politics in Nigeria. According to the Analysis presented in Table 4.5 which suggests that the rate at which women are given opportunity for political participation and representation is low due to the following challenges: Socio-economic factor, culture/tradition, religion, stereotype, lack of fund, political environment, lack of support by men, time of meetings, lack of support from fellow women, media portrayal, etcetera.

Generally, women's representation in Nigerian politics has since 2011 been very low. This was confirmed by the poor outcomes for women in the 2023 elections which was further buttressed by statistics showing that the total number of women in the country's national Assembly has drastically gone down when compared with the last Assembly where the number of that made it to Nigeria's national Assembly reduced by 19% and women are presently occupying only 3% seats in the Upper House of Assembly and 4% in the Lower House of Assembly[6].

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By and large the 2023 primary elections conducted by various political parties in the country provided knowledge about the obstacles and constraints encountered by female candidates in understanding the reason for the poor performance of women in the last elections. The primary election results of several parties underscore the country's long-standing constraints on women's representation in competitive politics. According to a recent assessment by the Inter Parliamentary Union [IPU], Nigeria ranks in the bottom ten globally when it comes to women's representation in national parliaments[7]. Despite the close parity of voter registration between men and women in previous election cycles thus challenge of representation persists. Women accounted for little over 10% of the more than 15,000 candidates who participated in the 2023 elections for presidential, gubernatorial and state assemblies across all national and subnational categories[6].

The study found steep cost of obtaining nomination forms for various positions during elections as a major barrier to women and this is the true position for larger political parties and as a result of this, many political parties claim that they encourage access for women into the first stage by lowering entry requirements through reducing the fee for nomination or even removal[8].These waiver often granted by some parties to women aspirants usually seems a bit of ease to women but hardly makes any significant difference in the long run in the overall gender composition of candidates. Despite this gesture granted to women bigger parties continue to establish excessively high fees for political aspirants through self-nomination and expression of interest [EOI] forms[6]. During the 2023 election cycle, for instance cost for [EOI] set by the ruling APC for the presidential primary elections was 30 million naira [about #67,269] which resulted to only one woman standing for the presidential primary elections and also the only woman for the

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post of president across all political parties in the election indicating that high cost for obtaining nomination form from political parties is a big challenge to women political participation.

Going by Regional dynamics, women's representation varies greatly across geopolitical zones of the country. Data on women's representation in Nigeria's six geopolitical zones varies, with southern states performing significantly better than northern zones. The overall representation of women candidates running for federal legislative posts in 2023 was 9%, with over 4,200 candidates representing all 18 political parties, which differs by region as well as election. The North West ranked the poorest performing region for women's candidature with women candidates representing only 3% of all candidates that ran for seats in the National Assembly, whereas the South East had the largest proportion of women candidates at 13% for legislative positions at the federal level. In all, Southern states appeared more accessible to women candidates who represented 12% average, compared to the average representation of 5% in northern states[9].

Objective four was to make policy recommendation towards enhancing the political representation of women in Southern Nigeria.

Findings also show that women political representation in Southern Nigeria is low hence, the following are recommended:

- Implementation of the gender bills for women to ensure gender inclusivity.
- Education of women and early registration of girl child into school and organizing trainings on leadership and capacity building
- Providing financial support for women and creating enabling political environment

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- Push for gender neutrality and inclusivity in political representation

Additionally, this research also employed community familiarization visit and focus group discussion approach to examine women political representation and gender equality in Southern Nigeria, using four states from three geo- political zones of the country as case study sites. The focused group discussion comprised of women leaders and women allies in the selected communities who served as the respondents and contributed to the discussions.

Four communities from the three geo- political zones of the country were used for this program in Southern Nigeria.

Focus Group Discussion [FGD]

Twelve Participants [8 women and 4 men] with political and leadership experience that were leaders of political parties, outstanding women leaders in the community, traditional rulers and renowned leaders in the four rural communities selected were engaged for the focus group discussion in each community visited. Also, two participants in the community consultative forum were selected from among women leaders in each community.

Major questions asked during the Focus Group Discussions are as follows:

- What can the political leaders, traditional leaders, religious leaders and the Government do to support women to participate actively in politics?
- What regulations can the Government introduce to encourage women to be actively Involved in politics?
- What should women do to attract the government to avail numerous women the opportunity to be appointed into sensitive and strategic position of governance and decision-making position?

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- From your own perspective what is your view regarding the perception of the society about women vying for political positions and their image?
- What are the challenges facing women in politics in Nigeria?
- From your own experience kindly share the obstacles you've encountered before you were able to navigate your way as a woman in politics?
- How can political violence and discrimination against women be addressed in politics in Southern Nigeria?

There were community familiarization visits to four communities in Southern Nigeria. The communities include the following locations:

- Amuwo-Odofin in Lagos State
- Osogbo in Osun State
- Agbor in Delta State
- Nnewi in Anambra State.

These four communities listed above were selected across the three geo-political zones based on acceptable parameters. The visits included traveling to traditional rulers and community women leaders in these localities. Meetings with women actively involved in politics was a critical component of this research, for instance a discussion was carried out with a female councillor in Nnewi in Anambra state who detailed her experience with gaining party support and facing gender-based discrimination. Also, a state female legislator from Delta state shared her experience in politics regarding discrimination against women and what she passed through in her political party before she was allowed to contest and vie for the position she is occupying. She told the story of how men refused to support her in her locality and she went through her

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women group in the church to campaign and convinced women to support her because men never wanted a woman to win the election and emerge the leader before she gained acceptance and won the election. The discussion provided profound insights into the political journey and specific challenges those women politicians are confronted with and the struggles they go through in garnering support.

Major findings are as follows:

The respondents comprised of business men and women, workers famers, civil servants, teachers, with political interest that attends political gatherings in their communities with good understanding of political environment in the country.

- Two respondents hammered on the lack of financial ability by women to purchase party forms and for campaigns during elections as main setback to women's participation in politics.
- Three respondents hinted that few women are given the opportunity to be appointed to sensitive and popular position of governance and decision making due to the fact that our custom and tradition does not believe that women can lead, hence, male domination in leadership position in Southern Nigeria.
- Two respondents pointed out that style of politics in the society which involves violence, thuggery, intimidation, discrimination, insincerity and suppression of women's political ambition in politics is one of the major factors that discourages women from getting involved in active politics.

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- Two respondents hinged on men and women's wrong perception about women's active involvement in politics because the society sees such women in politics as prostitutes, stubborn and disrespectful women.
- One respondent pinpointed male dominance in politics via financial inducement, godfatherism, violence against women and men's clique in the political terrain as a serious challenge to women participation in politics.
- One respondent intimated the discussion group that it is very important that the government to puts in place legislation regarding gender equality so that certain number of seats will be reserved for women both at the state and national level.
- Two respondents suggested that Nigeria needs to set up a committee to monitor election proceedings from the grassroots to ensure that there is no political violence during elections especially gender -based violence.
- Two respondents pointed out that some women are not supporting women because of jealousy and envy which has served as a source of discouragement to women that intends to contest for top political positions during elections.

Also, discussions of the focus group were further facilitated in a safe and open environment for example a session was held in Amuwo – Odofin community in Lagos and some women political party leaders shared their experiences of facing intimidation and political violence during elections. This helped the researcher gained additional insight into the political land scape and gender dynamics in Southern Nigeria which revealed prevalent gender biases.

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Chapter Five

Conclusion

This chapter presents a summary of findings, conclusion, recommendations, contributions to knowledge and suggested areas for further studies.

5.1 Summary of Findings

Women political representation and gender equality in Southern Nigeria forms the subject of this study. An overview of history of women political representation and gender equality in Southern Nigeria reveals that it has been a story of struggle, progress and ongoing challenges. According to assertions by women activists in the region, women are treated differently from men regarding appointments to political offices, decision-making processes, and leadership positions, The discoveries show that this underrepresentation is not simply a quantitative issue but additionally, a qualitative one, reflecting profoundly dug-in cultural standards and underlying barriers that systematically sideline women in the political sphere.

The first objective of this study was to find out the implications for the exclusion of women from politics in Southern Nigeria. Analysis reveals that this disallowance has significantly impacted women's political representation and participation in the region. The findings suggests that the underrepresentation of women in the political sphere has substantially impeded progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal5 in the region by 2030, thereby hindering the advancement of gender equality.

The study on women political representation in Southern Nigeria reveals an intricate and challenging landscape. The findings indicate a significant disparity in gender equality within the

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political arena despite women comprising a substantial portion of the population. Women occupy less than one-fifth of elected positions, a statistic that has shown no improvement over the last ten years. This stagnation points to a profoundly ingrained gender imbalance in political leadership that will unlikely be resolved without specific, targeted measures.

The research identified multiple interrelated barriers to increasing women's political engagement. These encompass societal, economic and political elements. Ingrained gender stereotypes continue to influence public perceptions, often undermining women's perceived capacity for leadership. Women also encounter tangible obstacles, such as restricted access to essential resources like financial support for campaigns and educational opportunities. The prevailing political environment, which favours male leadership, further exacerbates these issues, creating a self- reinforcing cycle of underrepresentation.

Some political entities have attempted to address these imbalances by introducing gender quotas however, implementing these initiatives have been sporadic and frequently lack effective enforcement, limiting their impact on promoting gender equality. This shortcoming highlights the necessity for more robust and enforceable strategies to achieve meaningful progress towards equitable representation. The study underlines essential requirement for active governmental involvement in supporting and upgrading women political participation and representation. At the same time, it perceives the fundamental drop of non- legislative associations in teaching and preparing women at the community level. These grassroots efforts are crucial to cultivating a pool of potential female leaders and creating an environment encouraging them to participate in politics. However, the study indicates that these initiatives frequently require additional funding

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and coordination, limiting their impact. Upgraded participation between governmental bodies and everyday society, alongside the expanded distribution of assets could fundamentally support the adequacy of these projects.

The fact that women's political representation has decreased overtime is a particularly troubling finding from the empirical analysis. This relapse underlines the pressing necessity for complete and enforceable arrangement to turn around this pattern and advance gender equality in politics. From the analysis of the findings, if specific inventions are not implemented, the gender gap in political representation in Southern Nigeria may continue to grow; putting democratic ideas is in jeopardy and hindering socio-economic development in the region.

The second objective was to investigate how the role of women in Southern Nigeria can contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 by 2030. This study found that women of Southern Nigeria have embarked on a series of women empowerment programs and capacity development training through the women association powered by different nongovernmental organizations and women's group. The study also revealed that from the perspective of support from international development partners, UN women, for instance, have signed a memorandum of understanding [MOU], with the National Institute of Legislative and Democratic Studies [NILDS], an institution embedded in the National Assembly, to serve as a gateway to the National Assembly for advocacy on gender-sensitive legal reform. In addition, the support of the UN women to train and mentor young women via the Young Women in Politics Academy piloted in Benue and Cross River state has also aroused the political interest of several young women with immense potential and capability to become great leaders. The potential of these

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young women is not just a possibility but a promise of a brighter future for women's political leadership in Nigeria.

These comprehensive programs were implemented to provide women with the requisite education necessary to initiate innovation, context-specific changes. The primary objectives are to enhance women's political leadership and representation and facilitate gender-sensitive reform by equipping women with advance knowledge and skills, these initiatives aim to yield substantive improvement in gender parity within political sphere and governance structure. Nevertheless, there is still a significant amount of work to be done in this area; consistent efforts and commitments are essential for achieving and maintaining gender equality. This is a call to action for all stake holders, emphasizing their jobs continuous criticalness, and significance in this crucial mission. It's not a project for the future; instead, it's an obligation we should all take on right now and continue with to ensure bright future for women in politics.

The study reveals a multifaceted approach to enhancing women's political participation in Southern Nigeria. Women in this region actively strengthen their economic foundation through significant involvement in the agricultural sector and informal economy, mainly via micro, small, and medium enterprises [MSMEs]. This economic empowerment is crucial in building financial capacity of women aspiring to political positions.

Concurrently, the research identified a growing trend of political collaboration among women. There is an increasing emphasis on encouraging women to join political parties and support female candidates during elections, creating a more formidable and unified female presence in

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the political arena. This unity inspires a sense of collective strength and determination, encouraging all women to participate in politics.

Furthermore, the study highlights the regions on going capacity-building and leadership training initiative. These programs aim to raise awareness among women regarding the significance of political participation while providing competence and insight which are crucial in ensuring the continued progress of women's political participation in Southern Nigeria, instilling confidence in the future. This combination of economic empowerment, political networking, and targeted educational initiatives represents a comprehensive strategy to enhance women's political participation in Southern Nigeria. The findings suggest that by addressing multiple aspect of women empowerment simultaneously, there is a promising potential for substantial achievement in enhancing women's involvement within the political sphere, offering hope for a more inclusive political landscape.

The third objective of this study is to outline the challenges confronting women political representation in Southern Nigeria. From the analysis several interconnected factors were identified contributing to women's underrepresentation in Southern Nigerian politics, a pressing issue that demands immediate attention. A primary concern is the absence of a legislative framework guaranteeing a minimum female representation quota. However, this is compounded by deeply ingrained cultural and traditional barriers that marginalize women's leadership and opportunities in public life. Socio-economic factors including limited accesses to education and financial resources, hinders women's ability to contest election effectively.

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The research highlights the lack of a unified mechanism for women across political parties to advocate for gender-responsive reform; this impedes progress toward promoting gender parity in the Southern Nigerian political sector. This challenge is heightened by cultural and traditional norms which resulted to persistent patriarchal traditions that vest authority predominantly through men, maintaining their control over women in political sphere. The absence of a suitable political environment for women's political participation which tantamount to gender-based violence, coupled with structural challenges such as the Nigerian political godfather syndrome, create more obstacles.

Furthermore, the study noted a general lack of support from men, with few male champions advocating for gender equality concern. The absence of this support is a significant barrier affecting women's full and equal participation in politics. Media portrayal of women political aspirants often lacks sensitivity, and potentially influencing public perception negatively. The study also points to inadequate coordination among critical partners working to reverse the low representation of women in politics.

Notably, the study emphasizes that vulnerable women, particularly at the grassroots level are often excluded from developing legislature and policies designed for them. This exclusion is especially pronounced for young women, who face significant marginalization in political processes. These complex difficulties adding to apolitical scenes that stays cold to women full and equivalent support. These factors make it hard for Nigerian women to be actively involved in politics. However, there is optimism that there will be a comprehensive and specialized interventions to address these systemic obstacles, this possibility of change gives hope for a

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political future that is more inclusive and motivates everyone to work together with optimism and determination.

Objective Four was to propose policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the political representation of women in Southern Nigeria. The analysis of the data gathered revealed that only a selected few women managed to secure appointment to key leadership and decision-making positions. In-depth case studies from the states of Lagos, Osun, Delta and Anambra confirmed that women's appointment at the state level is notably scant.

A dynamic approach is necessary to address women under representation in politics. First and foremost, political parties should adopt and implement gender-specific quotas to increase women's representation and ensure seat reservations. These structural changes should be complemented by efforts to encourage women's active participation in politics, thereby challenging the male dominated political landscape.

Furthermore, the government should provide incentives to empower women's involvement in political sphere many women will be interested to join politics. Education is another significant factor that plays a crucial role in this transformation. Prioritizing mass enrolment of girls in schools at the state and local level is essential. This should be backed with mass literacy campaign to educate society on the importance of women leadership and combat stereotypes. These educational initiatives will contribute to broader cultural shift fostering an environment more conducive to women's political participation.

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Coordination among women in politics is vital to amplify their collective voice and advocate for their rights. This solidarity should be accompanied by effort to reorient cultural values, dismantling patriarchal traditions that vest political powers solely on men. Political parties must also play their part by incorporating statements on gender equality into their constitution and implement internal quotas for women's candidacy and participation.

To ensure meaningful engagement, women should be invited to participate in decision making processes, working in small groups to provide their input. This approach, combined with provision of a healthy and secured political environment, will create the condition necessary for women to thrive in politics, underscoring the necessity for their involvement.

A promising shift towards addressing gender disparities in National politics has been demonstrated by recent initiatives in Nigeria. A ground- breaking bill that aims to significantly increase women's representation in the National Assembly has passed its second reading and is currently moving through the House of Representative. The proposed regulation is intended to make extra parliamentary seats only for female representatives. If this Bill is signed into law, it could fundamentally alter the landscape of women's political participation and representation in Nigeria. This legislative measure represents a potential leap in achieving gender parity in governance.

While this initiative is promising, the study suggests that measures should be complemented by other inventions, including capacity building, financial support and effort to change societal attitudes towards women in politics. Consequently, this initiative, if implemented is most likely

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to yield expected result which will bring about tremendous change in the political terrain in Southern Nigeria which will result in a remarkable shift that will enhance women's political representation which means gender inclusion where everyone can have an equal and fair chance at representation. The implementation of this initiative can bring about significant increase in women political representation in our polity. This initiative offers several significant benefits which will be a game changer enhancing the overall political landscape. It promises to bring about a balance of power between genders. Women constitute approximately half of the population and their proportional political representation is a hallmark of a developed society.

More so, increased women political representation will likely contribute to building and sustaining solid and vibrant democracies. Perhaps most crucially, involving women in policy – making ensures that decisions affecting women are made with their direct input and this will allow for the capturing of policies that will immensely benefit women, bringing attention to their unique needs and potentially shifting societal attitudes toward gender. By sitting at the table, women can advocate for issues that might otherwise be overlooked or undervalued in predominantly male dominated environment.

5.2 Conclusion

This study has revealed a stark gender imbalance in Nigerian political terrain, particularly in the Southern region. Women's political representation remains alarmingly low, with only 9% of candidates in the most recent national elections being female. This underrepresentation extends to both elective and appointive position, highlighting a systematic issue in the country's political landscape.

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Despite Nigeria's commitment to various international and regional conventions promoting women's rights including Convention on Elimination and Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Maputo Protocol, and the Beijing Platform for Action, the implementation and domestication of these legal frameworks face significant challenges. This conflict is reflected in the political climate in Nigeria where women hold 3.6% of place of House of Representatives positions, and 7.9% of Senate seats with women occupying merely 3.6% of House of Representatives positions. These figures place Nigeria among the lowest ranking nations in Sub-Saharan Africa and the world's lowest ranks in terms of women's political representation.

Southern Nigeria specifically, has for quite some time been characterized by male dominated politics resulting in a severe underrepresentation of women in decision making roles. This disparity not only undermines the democratic principles but also hinders comprehensive regional development. The research aimed to address this imbalance by exploring the multifaceted barriers to women's political representation in Southern Nigeria and pointing out practical ways to overcome them through a comprehensive literature review and rigorous data collection methods, including fieldwork, focus group discussions, interviews, and document analysis, cross checking information from various sources which improved the robustness and credibility of this study results.

The study emphasizes that achieving gender equality in Southern Nigeria politics requires more than structural changes; it necessitates a fundamental shift in cultural perceptions and traditional norms. The sustainable inclusion of women in politics is intrinsically linked to societal attitudes towards their roles and capabilities, making cultural transformation a key factor in achieving gender equality. While the current exclusion of women from politics in Southern Nigeria has significantly hindered their representation and access to elected offices, there is room for

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cautious optimism, Fulfilling the strategic goals and quantifiable outcomes delineated in the Sustainable Development Goal5 by 2030 is possible, but it hinges on concerted efforts from the government, policymakers, and various agencies responsible for women's affairs, political matters, and national development.

In conclusion, this research underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to promote women's political participation and representation in Southern Nigeria. By addressing the identified barriers and implementing effective strategies, it is possible to create a more inclusive and representative political landscape that harnesses the full potential of all citizens, regardless of gender.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings from this study, the followings are recommended:

1. The Nigerian Government Should Strengthen Legal and Policy Frameworks: A two-pronged approach is essential in strengthening legal and policy frameworks to promote women political participation. First, the government must enact and rigorously enforce gender- responsive legislation that explicitly reserves seats for women in both appointive and elective offices. Implementation of gender quotas for women in political parties, legislative bodies and executive positions. This legislative action would provide a structural foundation for increasing women's representation in political sphere. Concurrently, there is pressing need to review and update existing gender policies to accurately reflect contemporary requirements for women's empowerment and leadership development, and sustenance in political processes.

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2. Expand Educational and Capacity Building Initiatives: To increase women's political participation, it is essential to expand educational and capacity building initiatives: The creation and funding of comprehensive training programs specifically designed for women and girls is an essential part of this strategy. Training and mentorship should be provided to build their political skills and confidence in various political engagement skills from grassroots activism to high- level leadership. Also, there should be increased access to education by promoting girls' education and women's literacy to prepare them for future leadership positions.
3. Foster Culture and Social Change: Fostering culture and social change is essential for advancing women's political participation. This approach begins with reforming media representation on stereotypes and showcasing women's leadership capabilities. Simultaneously, promoting cultural reorientation is vital, focusing on shifting societal values to support women's leadership roles. This robust effort should include developing robust programs like cross-party networking and mentorship among women which will involve successful women politicians mentoring the young ones in order to create a supportive ecosystem for their growth and success towards their political ambition.
4. Provide Financial Support for Women in Politics and Enforce Democratic Fairness: Arrangements for provision of financial support for women by implementing funding schemes that provide women with the necessary financial resources to cover for campaign expenses and party nomination fees, including waiver for these costs is essential. Also, government should introduce and enforce regulations that ensure fair and democratic practices during elections to protect women candidates from gender-based violence and being pressured to step down for men.

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5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study has contributed to the existing body of knowledge in the field of International Relations, especially in the aspect of women political participation and representation and gender equality. The literature review includes a review of concepts such as, women political participation and representation, gender equality, United Nation sustainable development goal 5 and young women in politics in Nigeria. This study will be of immense benefit to young women that intends building a career in politics in Southern Nigeria.

This study has also highlighted the areas which required more effort in achieving gender equality in Nigerian political terrain such as women empowerment, increase in the enrolment of girl child in schools, providing enabling environment for women political participation, financial support, legislative reform, spousal support. This will help the policy makers in taking necessary actions towards the achievement of sustainable development goal 5 in Southern Nigeria by 2030.

5.5 Suggestion for Further Studies

The broad objective of this study was to examine the rate of women political participation and representation in Southern Nigeria in order to ascertain the extent of their involvement as well as bringing to bear the factors that influence the degree of women's engagement in politics and make recommendations that will lead to increase in the political representation of women in Southern Nigeria and the achievement of gender equality.

Further studies may consider the following:

1. To study the same research topic with a different methodology.
2. Studying the same topic in another location.

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3. Studying women political representation without the concept of gender equality
4. Further studies can also be conducted on the impact of gender quotas on women's representation in Nigeria's National Assembly.
5. Gender imbalance in Nigerian politics and the strategies for improving women's political participation in Northern region.
6. Young women Political participation in Nigeria.
7. Another area of research suggested is on the transformation of the overwhelming representation of women at political rallies into increased opportunity for women's political appointment.

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Appendixes

Structured Interview Questions on Women Political Representation

Introduction and Background

1. Could you share your experience and background in politics?

2. What inspired you to be actively involved in politics?

3. Has your gender impacted your journey in politics?

4. Did your family encourage or discourage your political participation?

Challenges and Barriers

1. What are the challenges you've faced as a woman in politics?

2. Can you explain how you have overcome obstacles and stereotypes?

3. From your own perspective, what do you think is the biggest barrier to women's political representation?

Policy and Advocacy

1. What are the policies you think that are important for promoting gender equality?

2. In which way have you advocated for women's right in the course of your political work?

3. Please share and experience where you pushed for a gender sensitive policy successfully?

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Leadership and Empowerment

1. Do you think women's leadership style differ from men's?

2. Have you ever mentored any woman in politics?

3. Do you have any advice for young women considering a career in politics?

Party and Systemic change

1. What support can political parties give to women candidates and representatives?

2. In your own opinion, what systematic changes should be implemented to increase women's representation in politics?

3. Have you ever worked with your party or government to the advancement of gender equality?

Personal Expenses and Intersectionality

1. Has your sexuality impacted your political experiences?

2. Could you share your personal experience of how you resisted and persisted in the face of a political challenge?

3. Do you think women representation in politics can address intersectional issues like sex, race, class, etc.?

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Questions for the Focused Group Discussion (FGD)

1. What can the political leaders, traditional leaders, religious leaders and the government do to support women to participate actively in politics?
2. What regulations can the government introduce to encourage women to be actively involved in politics?
3. What should women do to attract the government to avail numerous women the opportunity to be appointed into sensitive and popular position in governance and decision making?
4. From your own perspective, what is your view regarding the perception of the society about women vying for political positions and their image?
5. What are the challenges facing women in politics?
6. Based on your own experience could you share the obstacles you have encountered before you were able to navigate your way in politics as a woman?
7. How can political violence and discrimination against women be addressed in politics?

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Bio-data

A. Personal Data

Full Name:	Harriet Uche NWEKE
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B. Educational Background

Educational Institutions Attended with Dates and Qualifications

- PhD in International Relations – Lead City University — In View
- MSc. in Political Science - University of Lagos — 1997
- B.A(ed) in History - University of Lagos — 1992
- WASC/SSCE - Anambra State Polytechnic, Oko — 1986
- Nnewi Girls` Secondary School — 1984

C. Work Experience with Dates

- Nigerian Railway Corporation (Human Resource Officer) — 1997-Till date
- Loral School Organisation Lagos (Admin Officer) — 1995-1996

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D. Awards and Fellowships

Nil

E. Membership of Academic and Professional Bodies

- Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (Fellow)
- Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (Full Member)

F. Publication(s)

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G. Major Conferences Attended with Dates

Nil

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_____ _____

Signature **Date**

The University Compliance Certification

This is to verify that the thesis written by Harriet Uche NWEKE with the matriculation number LCU/PG/002591, in the Department of Politics and International Relations, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State, is in full compliance with the approved University format and style.

_____ _____

Signature **Date**

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