

GENDER AND PARTY POLITICS IN AFRICA WITH REFERENCE TO NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Gender as a concept and its related issues have been attracting scholars' interest globally across the different disciplines. Politics, as one of the major pillars that uphold any given society sociologically known as social institution is an act of governance is a very important activity in every society of mankind. In an ideal society, it ensures that all the citizenry are governed in such ways that there is absolute peace, security, orderliness and development in society across board. This will facilitate adequate control of human, natural and economic resources by few conscience and God fearing people (men and women) who are knowledgeable in modern day acts of effective and efficient administration and management for the sake of the generality of people irrespective of their social status. To attain this goal in any society, there is need that both men and women are part of the decision making at all levels of government. This will guarantee, confirm, and certify the representation of gender issues or matters as it affects both sexes so other goals can be achieved easily in governance. In developing nations especially Nigeria, the political institution is over 80% tower over or govern by the men even issues that pertain women and surprisingly to the detriment of their female counterparts. It is against this back drop that this write up takes us through memory lane on the importance of women, the history of women

participation in decision making in Nigeria right from the pre-colonial era to date. The paper will further take a look through factors responsible for women's low participation in politics especially in Nigeria. It wraps up by discussing the possibility of the realization of the 35% affirmative federal government decision.

INTRODUCTION

Literatures on Nigeria's national development are relatively silent on the contributions of women. However, 1975 (the International Women's Year), was a period of ferment in ideas about the status of women (Ogunsheye, 1988). In Nigeria, awareness about the role of women in development gained momentum in the later half of the 1980s (Omu and Makinwa, 1987). Awareness was further enhanced in 1995 as a result of the effective participation of Nigerian women in the International Conference on Women in Beijing, China. In spite of these efforts, it is appropriate to state that the role of Nigerian women in development has not been sufficiently emphasized. In highlighting the Nigerian experience, three periods namely, the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial, will be briefly looked at.

PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD

During the pre-colonial era, Nigerian women contributed to the sustenance of the kin groups. Pre-colonial Nigerian economy was basically at a subsistence level, and Nigerian women participated effectively in this economy. Apart from being mothers and wives and taking charge of the domestic sector, women contributed substantially to the production and distribution of goods and services. In the agricultural sector, the women farmed alongside their husbands and children. In south eastern Nigeria, women also took part in the production of palm oil and palm-kernel. They also participated in local and long-distance trade in different parts of Nigeria and were fully involved in the procurement and sale of various food items and related commodities. Women in pre-colonial Nigeria were fully involved in food processing, for example, fish drying (especially in the coastal areas of Calabar, Oron and the Niger Delta area), garri processing etc. In eastern Nigeria, the women of Okposi, Uburu and Yala were very active in salt production.

Women were engaged in pottery making, especially in Afikpo in present day Abia State, and in weaving. In northern Nigeria, even the women in purdah were involved in food processing and also traded with the aid of their children. Most often, these women supplied the means of sustenance for entire households.

Pre-colonial Nigerian women also provided health care and spiritual services, extensively. Most traditional religions feature immortal females as goddesses. Most goddesses in Nigeria were portrayed as river goddesses, fertility goddesses and earth goddesses. In the Niger Delta area, women provided music, songs and dances required during religious activities. Women also officiated as priestesses, diviners, healers, traditional birth attendants, and oftentimes as custodians of sanctuaries for gods and goddesses.

The legal status of Nigerian women in pre-colonial times needs highlighting. Under the pre-colonial customary laws in most Nigerian societies, women were considered free adults. At the same time, certain limitations were imposed which subordinated them to male authority. Women had independent access to income. Since land was usually owned communally, whoever worked or tilled the land, whether male or female, derived the benefits. Nevertheless, women in many societies could not inherit land.

Education in pre-colonial times was functional. It enabled women to obtain a skill in order to earn a living. Ogunshyeve observes that "a woman who was without a craft or trade, or who was totally dependent on her husband, was not only rare, but was regarded with contempt" (Aliyu, 1992). As regards politics, women in pre-colonial Nigeria were an integral part of the political set up of their communities. Most often, they carried out separate functions from the men. These functions were fully complementary.

In pre-colonial Bomu, for instance, women played active parts in the administration of the state. They held very important offices in the royal family, including the offices of the Megira (the Queen mother) and the Gumsu (the first wife of the Mai or King) (Ola, 1978).

Women also played a very significant role in the political history of ancient Zaria. The modern city of Zaria was founded in the first half of the 16th century/, by a woman called Queen Bakwa Turuku. She had a daughter called Amina who later succeeded her as Queen. Queen Amina was a great and powerful warrior. She built a high wall around Zaria in order to protect the city from invasion and extended the boundaries of her territory beyond Bauchi. The people of Kano and Katsina paid tributes to her. She turned Zaria into a very prominent commercial centre. The story was not different in ancient Yorubaland. The Oba ruled with the assistance of a number of women refereed to as the ladies of the palace. The ladies of the palace consisted of eight titled ladies of the highest rank.

The significant role played by prominent women such as Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin and Omu Okwel of Ossomari in the pre-colonial history of Nigeria cannot be ignored. Moremi and Emotan were great amazons who displayed tremendous bravery and strength in the politics of Ife and Benin respectively, while Omu Okwei dominated the commercial scene of Ossomari in present day Delta State (Omu and Makinwa, "1976).

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

The colonial economy was an export oriented one and it seriously undermined the prestige of the traditional occupations of Nigerian women. While it placed women at a great disadvantage, it enhanced the economic status of the British, Lebanese, Syrian and a few male Nigerian merchants. Many of the smaller markets hitherto dominated by women gradually disintegrated as a result of the emergence of expatriate firms such as John Holt, United African Company (UAC.), Lever Brothers et cetera. Women were denied access to medium and large scale loans which were vital in operating at the bulk purchase level of the colonial economy. In agriculture, cash crop incentives, technology and innovations were restricted to men (Curtin, 1964). Colonial policies and statutes were clearly sexist and biased against women.

During the colonial period, education was functional. The curricula emphasised religious instruction and clerical skills for boys and domestic science for girls. Technological and scientific based education was not encouraged. The curricula for girls enabled them to become good housewives, rather than income earners.

As regards politics, colonialism affected Nigerian women adversely as they were denied the franchise and very few of them were offered any political or administrative appointments. For instance, it was only during the 1950s that three women were appointed into the House of Chiefs, namely Chief (Mrs) Olufunmilayo RansomeKuti (appointed into the Western Nigeria House of Chiefs); Chiefs (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu (both appointed into the Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs). It was also only in the 1950s that women in Southern Nigeria were given the franchise. The women's wings of political parties possessed very little functional relevance.

THE POST-COLONIAL PERIOD

During this period, Nigerian women began to play very active roles in various aspects of the nation's development, and assumed a more critical role in traditional agriculture. Particularly as a result of the large scale exodus of able bodied men to wage labour; Nigerian women took over an increasing portion of the burden of food production, contributing between 50 per cent and 70 per cent of Nigeria's food requirements.

While the situation in the public sector remained unsatisfactory, it was markedly different from what had obtained during the pre-colonial and colonial times. Five years after independence, only 6.9 per cent of the salaried workforce was women; by 1970, 8.7 per cent of the total number of established staff in the Federal Civil Service was women. In 1980, the percentage of women had risen to 12.6 per cent. Similar patterns were maintained in State Civil Services.

In 1979, women constituted 4.9 per cent of agricultural manpower in Nigeria, 1.4 per cent of artisans and craftsmen, and 1.6 per cent of the professional/sub-professional group. It was only in the medical sector that women constituted 84.3 per cent of dieticians and 80.2 per cent of nurses. The position of women in education in post colonial Nigeria has not improved much. According to the Population Reference Bureau, in 1981, only 6 per cent of adult Nigerian women were literate. By 1979, 72.9 per cent of urban girls and 80.08 per cent of rural girls were not attending school.

University admission figures also reflect a low percentage of female entries in the new era. Successive postcolonial governments have encouraged female education and expanded educational facilities for g

iris. In spite of these efforts, however, the impact on women is still low. Some of the factors that militate against women's education in the country include the perception that women needed to be educated only to be good housewives and the high dropout rate amongst women.

The economic recession since the mid1980s is also affecting women's education in Nigeria. As a result of increasing cost of education, most parents, especially in the rural areas, prefer withdrawing girls from school, instead of boys. To stem this tide, some State governments have passed edicts granting free education to girls up to certain levels, in other states, women with children are allowed to attend school and it is considered an offence to withdraw a female child from school before a stipulated age. Early marriages by girls are frowned upon by many States and women's organisations. A Women's Education unit was established at the Federal Ministry of Education to encourage women education. Subsequently, all State Ministries of Education did same.

The legal system inherited from the colonial era placed many obstacles on the way of women's self advancement and participation in national development. For instance, married women had to obtain their husband's written permission to obtain inter national passports. Until very recently, women were not allowed to stand bail for a suspect. The statutory provisions still do not favour women in many respects, including divorce and inheritance.

The role of women in Nigeria's post1960 politics has not been reflected sufficiently, in terms of appointments to policymaking posts. In spite of massive support given to various political parties by women, women organisations, market women movements etc., until recently, very few women benefited from political patronage. In Southern Nigeria, women already had the franchise by 1960; thus in 1960, Mrs. Wuraola Esan from Western Nigeria became the first female member of the Federal Parliament. In 1961, Chief (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo contested elections in Aba Urban North constituency under the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) platform and won, becoming a member of the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly until 1966; Mrs. Janet N. Mokelu and Miss Ekpo A. Young also contested elections, won and became members of the Eastern House of Assembly. In northern Nigeria, however, women were still denied the franchise even after independence. As a result, prominent female politicians like Hajia Qambo Sawaba in the North could not vote and be voted for. It was only in 1979 that women in northern Nigeria were given the franchise, following the return to civilian politics.

During the Second Republic (1979-1983), there was further progress. A few Nigerian women won elections into the House of Representatives at the national level. Some of these women were Mrs. J. C. Eze of the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) who represented UzoUwani constituency in former Anambra State, Mrs V.O. Nnaji, also of NPP who represented Isu and Mrs Abiola Babatope of the Unity Party of Nigeria (LJPN) who represented Mushin Central II of Lagos State. But, on the whole, very few women won elections into the State Houses of Assembly during the Second Republic. During the same period, only two women were appointed Federal ministers. They were Chief (Mrs) Janet Akinrinade who was Minister for Internal Affairs and Mrs Adenike Ebun Oyagbola, Minister for National Planning. Mrs Francesca Yetunde Emmanuel was the only female Permanent Secretary (first in the Federal Ministry of Establishment and later Federal Ministry of Health). A number of women were appointed Commissioners in the states. In 1983, Ms Franca Afegbua became the only woman to be elected into the Senate. Also, very few women contested and won elections into the Local Government Councils during this time.

With the return of military rule in December 1983, the first formal quota system was introduced by the Federal Government as regards the appointment of women into governance. The Buhari administration directed that at least one female must be appointed a member of the Executive Council in every state. All the states complied with this directive; some states even had two or three female members. In the early 1990s, two women were appointed Deputy Governors. These were Alhaja Latifat Okunu of Lagos State and Mrs Pamela Sadauki of Kaduna State. Chief (Mrs) D.B.A. KLiforiji Olubi served as Chairperson of a bank, i.e. the United Bank for Africa PLC. Later on, Dr Simi Johnson and Eniola Fadayomi served as Chairpersons of Afribank International Nigeria and Allied Bank Nigeria PLC, respectively. There was, however, no female minister. There was also, no female member of the defunct Supreme Military Council or the later Armed Forces Ruling Council.

In the 1990 elections into local governments heralding the Third Republic, very few women emerged as councilors and only one woman, Chief (Mrs) Titilayo Ajanaku, emerged as Chairperson of a Local Government Council in the West. During the gubernatorial elections, no female governor emerged in any of the states. Only two female Deputy Governors emerged, namely: Alhaja Sinatu Ojikutu of Lagos State and Mrs. Cecilia Ekpenyong of Cross River State. In the Senatorial election held in 1992, Mrs.

Kofo Bucknor Akerele was the only woman who won a seat in the Senate. Very few women won election into the House of Representatives. One of these few was Chief (Mrs) Florence Ita Giwa who won in the Calabar Constituency under the banner of the National Republican Convention (NRC). Amongst the members of the Transitional Council appointed by President Babangida in January 1993, only two were women, namely Mrs. Emily Aiklmhokuede and Mrs. Laraba Dagash.

In the Interim National Government of Chief Ernest Shonekan, two female ministers were appointed into the Cabinet. General Abacha had a number of female Ministers at various times in his cabinet, including Chief (Mrs) Onikepo Akande and Ambassador Judith Attah. During the military regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar (June 9, 1998 May 29, 1999), there were two women in the Federal Executive Council: Chief (Mrs) Onikepo Akande (Minister for Commerce) and Dr. Laraba Gambo Abdullahi (Minister of Women Affairs).

In the Fourth Republic which started on May 29, 1999, the Nigerian political terrain has witnessed an increase in the number of women political appointees, even though women did not perform well at the elections. In the elections held before May 29, 1999, few women emerged as Chairpersons of local government councils. A number of women won elections as Councilors. There is no female Governor in any State of the Federation. Only Lagos State produced a female Deputy Governor in the person of Senator Bucknor Akerele.

In the National Assembly, there are only three women in the Senate, namely: Chief (Mrs) Florence Ita Giwa representing Cross River State South Senatorial District; Mrs Stella Omu from Delta State and Hajiya Khairat Abdul-Razaq (now Hajiya Gwadabe) representing the Federal Capital Territory. There are only 12 women In the House of Representatives and these are: Barrister Iquo Minimah, Mrs. Patience Ogoto, Lola Abiola Edewor, Patricia O. Etteh, Dorcas Odujinrin, J.F. Adeyemi, Binta Garba Koji, Gbenni Saraki, Florence Aya, Linda Ikpeazu, Temi Harrinnan and Mercy Almona Isei.

In the State Houses of Assembly very few women emerged as members. While in some States, one or two women emerged in the Houses, most other states have virtually no females in their legislatures. States like Cross River, Akwa Ibom State, Rivers, Lagos and many others do not have female members in their State Legislatures. Women have been appointed as Commissioners and therefore members of

the Executive Councils in all the states, but while some states have one female, others have two females in the Executive Councils. President Olusegun Obasanjo has appointed a number of women into the Federal Executive Council. They are Dr. (Mrs) Kema Chikwe (Minister of Transport), Mrs. Dupe Adelaja (Minister of State Defence), Dr. (Mrs) Bekky Ketebuigwe (Minister of State, Ministry of Solid Minerals), Dr. (Mrs) Amina Ndalolo (Minister of State, Federal Ministry of Health), Mrs. Pauline Tallen (Minister of State, Federal Ministry of Science and Technology), and Hajia Aishatu Ismaila (Minister of Women Affairs). Chief (Mrs) Titilayo Ajanaku is the Special Adviser to the President on Women Affairs.

From the foregoing, it is evident that only very few Nigerian women have participated and emerged in Nigeria's political landscape, in spite of the pioneering efforts of women like Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and Margaret Ekpo since the 1950s. Today, the number of women in top jobs is still nearly insignificant. This is the situation in Africa at large although using Nigeria as a yard stick for Africa. It is worthy of note that women and party politics in Africa is not different from what we have seen in Nigeria. Therefore, Nigeria will always be referred as a case study in looking at women and party politics in Africa. We could see from the above facts and figures that women are very few in politicking in Nigeria and Africa at large. It is important and pertinent to take a vivid look at reasons why women are low represented in politics and decision making in Africa/ or Nigeria.

WOMEN AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA

Modern politics started in Nigeria in 1960 when the British colonial masters handed over power to Nigerians. Before this period, there were local political systems which people used to govern themselves. (Mba, 1982; Afonja, 1989; Awe, 1992; Johnson-Odim and Mba, 1997;). In the old traditional setting, there were traditional councils. In these councils women representation is usually not more than one or two in the cabinet. The function of these women is to take care of the interest of women. In Yorubaland the women representative may be Iyalode (representative of women in general) or Iyaloja who is the head of the market women. Sometimes the two roles are combined in one woman. In the Hausa and Igbo settings women play minor or no roles in the administration of the society. So marginalization of women in politics is old in Nigeria.

Evidence however shows that in pre-colonial traditional societies, women were given responsibilities and they took part in political affairs in society as is evident in table 1.

Table1: Statistics of Women Traditional Rulers in the Pre-Colonial Days

SN	Name	Town/ Village	L.G.A	State	Type Rulership	Date
1	Luwo Gbadiaya	Ife	Ife Central L.G.	Osun	Ooni of Ife	Pre-colonial days
2	Iyayun	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
3	Orompoto	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
4	Jomijomi	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
5	Jepojepo	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
6	Queen Amina	Zazzau	-	Zaria	Emir	Pre-colonial days
7	Daura	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
8	Kofono	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
9	Eye-Moin	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent/Monarch	Pre-colonial days (1705-1735AD)
10	Ayo-Ero	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent/Monarch	Pre-colonial days (1850-51AD)
11	Gulfano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
12	Yawano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days

13	Yakania	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
14	Walsam	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
15	Cadar	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
16	Agagri	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
17	Queen Kanbasa	Bonny	Bonny L.G.	Rivers	Queen	Pre-colonial days

Source: Olasupo, F.A. 2006

However in national politics and the governance of the people beyond traditional, local levels women are largely marginalized. In the three tiers of modern day governance (local, state and federal) women are rarely featured.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR LOW PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN NIGERIA GOVERNANCE

According to Olasupo (2006) noted that in an empirical research recently conducted on “*Engendering Local Governance for Sustainable Development in Nigeria*” sponsored by International Development Research Centre (IDRC) establishes the fact that women in Nigeria governance are marginalize at all tiers of government.

The study revealed the conception of power by women, men and even youths. The general belief of women playing subsidiary roles was manifest. In the new dispensation, women also believe that they should be given equal chances as men. They believe that women are more liberal, kind, transparent, accountable, efficient and compassionate than men. One of their major reasons for participation is dissatisfaction with men in power. The men are supposed to represent women’s interests or know the strategic needs of women. Women look to role models who are already existing to establish that women are better administrators, and more serious and capable of making positive changes.

Table 2: Comparison of Elected Women and Female Ministers in Nigeria 1999 and 2003

Office	No. Available	No. of Women in 1999	% of women in 1999	No. of women in 2003	% of women (2003)	No. of women in 2007	% of women in 2007	No. of women in 2011	% of women in 2011
President	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Vice President	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Senate	109	3	2.75	4	3.67	9	8.25	7 (out of 88)	6.4
House of Representative	360	12	3.3	22	6.11	26	7.2	12 (out of 218)	3.3
Governors	36	--	--	1	2.77	--	---	--	--
Deputy Governors	36	1	2.8	4	11.11	6	16.7	1	2.77
Speaker – State House of Assembly	36	1	2.8	2	5.6	-	-	-	-
Ministers	38-42			3		5	12.5	13	31.0
Member of State House of Assembly	990	12	1.2	38	3.8	54	5.5	-	-

Source: Kolawole, T.O., 2011

From the report it is clear that there is marginalization of women in political representation in Nigeria. Where only one female governor (Anambra state) she was able to get to power due to impeachment of the substantive governor. Presently there are three female deputy governors in Ogun, Osun and Ekiti states. Lagos state was one of such states before the impeachment of the female deputy governor. A critical look at the above table 2 shows what is called *arithmetic progression* in most of the political positions women contested but it is still worrisome. This

increase was as a result of the growing political consciousness of women, team work and the activities of women organizations and civil society organizations. It was not in any way due to any deliberate government policy geared towards enhancing women participation in electoral politics under any regime especially Obasanjo's political era which was said to be gender friendly, (Uche-Ukonne, 2011). It is unfortunate to note that this political momentum and revolution cannot sustain in 2011. If care is not taking, this may continue in future elections, (Iloh and Ikenna, 2009).

Furthermore, according to Umeha (2011) who lamented over the poor performance of women in the just concluded elections, statistically maintained that 88 women contested for Senate and 218 vied for the House of Representatives. Only five women were on the ballot for governor in various states on April, 26 and many male gubernatorial aspirants had women as running mates. There were 495 female candidates in the 36 State Houses of Assembly. Comparatively, the statistics show declining success for women since Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999. This is because just 631 women surmounted the challenge of party primaries to contest the roughly 1,900 positions in the 1999 elections. Only 181 actually made it into office. The number and percentage of women who were successful at the polls in 2011 was less than the figures in 2007 and 2003. In the 2007 elections, 660 women made it through party primaries, but only 93 gained offices nation-wide, (Umeha, 2011 and Irabor, 2011). Following the 2007 elections, Patricia Olubunmi Etteh was named as Speaker of the House, the highest political post achieved by a woman in Nigeria, who was later impeached, (Umeha, 2011). None of the big 4 political parties had a female vice-presidential candidate, (Irabor, 2011). In 2003 the number of deputy female governors increased to 2 (5.5%), it increased to 6 (16.6%) in 2007. In 2011 there is only 1 female deputy governor in the person of Mrs Adejoke Orelope Adefulire of Lagos State who contested under the platform of Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN).

With all the efforts made by the United Nations Organisation for equal participation in politics, patriarchal notions of male responsibility for decision-making and leadership still exist within the family, in the community and even in the wider society in Nigeria. There is low level of women participation in politics, administration and government. Though women empowerment has been described as "a dynamic process with four major stages namely, access, conscientization, action and equity" (CEDPA 1997), Nigerian women rarely utilize or understand it as such. Traditionally, the

Nigerian society is ordered by a clear gender division of tasks, as well as by strong sense of hierarchy, in which social superiors, (within the nuclear family and extended kinship unit as well as wider social structures) enjoy respect and obedience from subordinates, while also receiving priority in resource allocation. The seniority principle confers a high degree of authority in elders, mostly men. Jegede (1994) attributes women's political deprivation to socio-cultural, economic, legal and educational factors. His explanation further establishes the Nigerian women conception of their barriers to empowerment and participation. Compared to men, women have less access to crucial resources such as information, education, skill, training, health (especially reproductive health and family planning), cash income, and credit, all of which are necessary for survival within the prevalent stifling economic depression in Nigeria.

Table 3: Shows Discriminations against Women in National Parliaments in Africa

Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
1	Rwanda	9 2008	80	45	56.30%	10 2003	26	9	34.60%
2	South Africa	4 2009	400	178	44.50%	4 2009	54	16	29.60%
3	Cuba	1 2008	586	253	43.20%	---	---	---	---
4	Mozambique	10 2009	250	98	39.20%	---	---	---	---
5	Angola	9 2008	220	85	38.60%	---	---	---	---
6	Costa Rica	2 2010	57	22	38.60%	---	---	---	---
7	Uganda	2 2011	375	131	34.90%	---	---	---	---
8	Nepal	4 2008	594	197	33.20%	---	---	---	---
9	Trinidad and Tobago	5 2010	42	12	28.60%	6 2010	31	8	25.80%
10	Ethiopia	5 2010	547	152	27.80%	5 2010	135	22	16.30%
11	Afghanistan	9 2010	249	69	27.70%	1 2011	102	28	27.50%
12	Portugal	6 2011	230	61	26.50%	---	---	---	---

13	Sudan	4 2010	446	114	25.60%	5 2010	46	5	10.90%
14	Namibia	11 2009	78	19	24.40%	11 2010	26	7	26.90%
15	Lesotho	2 2007	120	29	24.20%	3 2007	33	6	18.20%
16	Senegal	6 2007	150	34	22.70%	8 2007	100	40	40.00%
17	Czech Republic	5 2010	200	44	22.00%	10 2010	81	15	18.50%
18	Malawi	5 2009	192	40	20.80%	---	---	---	---
19	Nicaragua	11 2006	92	19	20.70%	---	---	---	---
20	Bangladesh	12 2008	345	64	18.60%	---	---	---	---
21	Burkina Faso	5 2007	111	17	15.30%	---	---	---	---
22	Zimbabwe	3 2008	214	32	15.00%	3 2008	99	24	24.20%
23	Gabon	1 2009	116	17	14.70%	1 2009	102	18	17.60%
24	Zambia	9 2006	157	22	14.00%	---	---	---	---
25	Cameroon	7 2007	180	25	13.90%	---	---	---	---
26	Sierra Leone	8 2007	121	16	13.20%	---	---	---	---
27	Niger	1 2011	107	14	13.10%	---	---	---	---
28	Central African Republic	3 2011	92	12	13.00%	---	---	---	---
29	Chad	2 2011	188	24	12.80%	---	---	---	---
30	Colombia	3 2010	166	21	12.70%	3 2010	102	16	15.70%
31	Dominica	12 2009	32	4	12.50%	---	---	---	---
32	Liberia	10 2005	64	8	12.50%	10 2005	30	5	16.70%
33	Madagascar	10 2010	256	32	12.50%	10 2010	90	10	11.10%
34	Paraguay	4 2008	80	10	12.50%	4 2008	45	7	15.60%
35	Togo	10 2007	81	9	11.10%	---	---	---	---

36	Morocco	9 2007	325	34	10.50%	10 2009	270	6	2.20%
37	Democratic Republic of the Congo	7 2006	500	52	10.40%	1 2007	108	5	4.60%
38	Mali	7 2007	147	15	10.20%	---	---	---	---
39	Equatorial Guinea	5 2008	100	10	10.00%	---	---	---	---
40	Guinea-Bissau	11 2008	100	10	10.00%	---	---	---	---
41	Kenya	12 2007	224	22	9.80%	---	---	---	---
42	Cote d'Ivoire	12 2000	203	18	8.90%	---	---	---	---
43	Benin	4 2011	83	7	8.40%	---	---	---	---
44	Ghana	12 2008	230	19	8.30%	---	---	---	---
45	Botswana	10 2009	63	5	7.90%	---	---	---	---
46	Gambia	1 2002	53	4	7.50%	---	---	---	---
47	Congo	6 2007	137	10	7.30%	8 2008	70	9	12.90%
48	Sri Lanka	4 2010	225	13	5.80%	---	---	---	---
49	Nigeria	4 2011	352	13	3.70%	4 2011	109	4	3.70%

The above Table 3 depicts a clear picture of the status of women in politics revealing the number of contestant, number and percentage of women who won in lower and upper house election in Africa at large.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR WOMEN LOW PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA POLITICS

The major feature responsible for women low participation in Africa and most especially in Nigeria is marginalization mostly during party nominations, (Ako-Nai, 2005, Mohammed, 2006; and Okoosi-Simbine, 2006). Bruce (2005) noted that even during the 2003 elections, the experiences of women at party primaries were not by any standard better than what it had been in

previous elections that evidence abounds as to deliberate maneuvering and proclivity for preferences for male aspirants over their female counterparts by party loyalists and stalwarts. In the same vein, the out come of the survey conducted by IDRC as argued by Afolabi (2006) reveal constraints faced in achieving participation and representation of women in decision making through effective and gender evenly distributed governance. Firstly, the traditional beliefs, traditional society was ordered by a clear gender division of responsibilities as well as a strong sense of hierarchy, in which social superiors (men) enjoyed respect and obedience from subordinates (women), (Haralambos, 2002). This allows men to be in control of resources allocation. Family system in Nigeria is patriarchal in nature; men are responsible for all important decisions in their household, (Haralambos, 2002; Hamilton, 1978). One major reason behind this is the custom of bride wealth payment which subjects women to partial slavery. The bride price/ or bride wealth which men pay on their wives makes women to be seen as property with productive and reproductive roles. As a form of property themselves, married women in some Nigerian societies have no property or inheritance rights, in fact in some instances, the women suffers a lot when it comes to the issue of inheritance most especially among the Yorubas. Since social ranking of women depend on age, lineage and achievement, women outside the ranks mentioned above are seen to be subordinates, (Haralambos, 2002).

Women are generally not expected to participate in community discussions as they are not seen as potential sources of leadership (Haralambos, 2002). Above all, they are regarded as properties which have no right of their own except as directed. Though these attitudes are being forced to change gradually, women politicians are a rarity/ or paucity. Education is another major hurdle that needs to be addressed. Partly because of their lower level of education, many women could not wake up to the participation call. The effect of this is that much of the many benefits associated with participation are missed by them. These are in terms of employment, self reliance, skills and even income. Education plays important determinant roles. So women have more limited employment opportunities than men. This results to concentration of women in low-skilled and low-income jobs. Some men feel insecure when their wives are progressing, especially when such wives are educated. They tag them as bookish

women who will not be ready to play subordinate roles as culture expected. This creates a kind of insecurity in matrimonial homes.

Traditionally, women depend on men for decision-making, which result to women not having confidence in themselves. Women are sources of labour, wealth and even social security in old age, to men in traditional rural society. Political violence is another aspect that reduces women participation in Nigerian politics. Involvement of thugs before, during and after elections, the insecurity that is involved, turning politics to cultism, midnight meetings, attendant destruction of lives and properties, etc. are unfortunately, still features of Nigerian politics. All these make politics seems unreachable for decent members of the community, especially women, (Ann Oakley in Haralambos, 2002).

Money is the main ticket for participation or representation in Nigerian politics. The introduction of N5 million for nomination forms for election shows that political participation is meant for few Nigerians. There is need for a more practical approach, if women have to join the race. Nigerian politics is not based on morals, competence, ability, sincerity, patriotic commitment, loyalty or compatriotism, but on money power, embezzlement plan, personal benefits, oppression motives and future wealth acquisition for generations to come. With the help of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) launched by the government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, more of these are revealed. Women of low income would not venture into the political arena. All these are some of the inclement hurdles that need to be removed for effective participation of women in politics.

It would be erroneous not to mention the effect of early marriage and Purdah, known as *kulle* in Hausa which is a religious practice in Islam of secluding women from the sight of men. All these have major implications for women participation in politics. They work to the detriment of women's physical and psycho-social development. Irabor, (2011) argued that Nigeria's democratic culture is characterized by assassinations, lawlessness, illegalities, rigging, oppression, manipulation, marginalization and violence. Other issues are male dominated party executives, labeling, money politics, and innumerable social, cultural and religious factors. These constitute barriers to women aspiring and contesting for elective positions in Nigeria. Iloh and Ikenna, (2009), pinpoint zoning formula, the indigeneity ploy, violence, thuggery and intimidation and culture as the reasons for women poor participation in politics. Besides the above factors are religion, women as their problem, lack of humility and respect and

industrialization. In religious matters, where we are meant to believe that God created everybody (man and woman) in His own image and likeness, women are also discriminated against. In fact, gender discrimination in the house of God was institutionalized right from the early days of Christianity. In St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (1Corinthians 14:34-35), it is stated in the Bible (version is necessary) that:

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. Verse 35: And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: *for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.*

This is a great limitation for women participation in many activities in all the social institutions. What is wrong in women taking active participation in religious activities like their men counterparts? Funny enough, this is not practice or obeys in all denominations. In some contemporary churches, women are the founders or general overseers. In the Pentecostal churches, women are given the opportunity to actively participate in church activities only when it is time for women convention. In other words, a particular sex is created more in the image and likeness of God than the other sex. If not for the religious revolution that occurred in the 20th century, which led to the springing up of the new generation Pentecostal churches, women would still have continued to occupy the back seat in all churches. Even though the orthodox churches have refused to give women prominence in their affairs, so many women today hold sway in some Pentecostal churches as Pastors and Evangelists. On the other hand, among the Muslims religious faith, they are not allow to do or participate in any aspects of their religion at all. They are totally cut off from all their religion practice. Among the Muslims, the age long purdah system will not allow women to be exposed and see what is going on in the society, this is religious oppression of African women, (Iloh and Ikenna, 2009).

Also, one other major factor is women themselves. It is important to mention this. Women are problem to themselves thereby constituting backwardness to the women fold globally. It is very difficult for women to support themselves in any form. It all starts from tender age, they don't like staying or partnering themselves like the men. That is why you hear some ladies saying they prefer to be friends with boys than female, some don't have female friend at all, and such ladies prefer to live under the

same roof with boys than girls. Among the adults, it is the same thing, they don't support themselves especially in politics, hear this, "A woman instead of nominating a fellow woman will nominate a man either behind you or openly. Some will tell you to your face they don't have any business with women", (Taiwo, 2011). This simply, is an indication that women create the crack on them which gives men the opportunity to get at them any how and any time. According to Taiwo (2011) she has this to say in the interview granted Hon. Nkiru Onyejeocha when she was asked whether women are their own enemies. She replied saying, "You are absolutely right. It is time we start telling ourselves the truth, women do not cooperate with one another.

Another factor is lack of humility and respect by women to their husband. Most women especially those that are successful will not see any reason for respecting or obey the voice of their husband. This makes most husbands in this category to be hostile to their wife and will do everything possible to frustrate them in their desire ambition ion life. For instance, Mrs. Sella Oduah minister of Aviation was queried by her husband Mr. Chris Oghiemworiyi on honoring the appointment, why?, (City People, 2011).

Finally, industrialization played a vital role in low participation of women in decision making because the source women empowerment in the industry was totally blocked and this has immensely contributed to the detrimental position African women found themselves, women were subjected to quite a number of pressure from 1841 to the advent of the First World War in 1914, the male workers and philanthropic reformers restricted female employment in industry. Women were seen by many male factory workers as a threat to their employment. As early as 1814, committees of male factory workers called for the "gradual withdrawal of all female labour from the factory". In 1842 the Mines Act banned the employment of women as miners. In 1851, one in four married women was employed; by 1911 this figure was reduced to one in ten. Helen Hacker states that with the employment of women as wage earners, "Men were quick to perceive them as a rival group and make use of economic, legal and ideological weapons to eliminate or reduce their competition. They excluded women from the trade unions, made contacts with employers to prevent their hiring women, passed laws restricting the employment of married women, caricatured the working woman, and keep them there", (Oakley in Harlambos, 1980). An average African woman cannot do or take decision on her own expect with permission from the husband which may in most cases not granted.

THE REALIZATION OF THE 35 PERCENT (%) AFFIRMATIVE OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT

Nigeria is a complex state where things are not done in the right way unlike other nations. The 35% affirmative may be a tall dream if care is not taking urgently. The reality on ground did not show any seriousness from the government at all tiers on the fulfillment of the 35% affirmation of women participation in active government. According to Oham (2011), argued that women were shortchanged in the zoning arrangement being put in place in the next administration. The consideration for Hon. Mulikat Adeola Akande Jokodolu, a PDP member in the House of Representatives representing Ogbomoso North, South and Orire federal constituency as the next Speaker is still shrouded in controversies. Instead, someone from Northeast was considered for the position. This is party gender biased. In the last general elections, only seven (7) women reportedly made it to the Senate, 12 to the House of Representatives and one (1) deputy governor was considered among the 36 states of the federation. This situation, the women said can only normalize to achieve gender balance in the country if 35 per cent positions of appointments in the new government are conceded to them. Statistics also show that 88 women contested for Senate and 218 vied for the House of Representatives seats in this year's elections. Only five (5) women were on the ballot for governorship race across the country in the elections and many male gubernatorial aspirants had women as running mates. There were 495 female candidates in the 36 State Houses of Assembly. Comparatively, these statistics further show declining success for women since Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999. About 631 women surmounted the challenge of party primaries to contest the roughly 1,900 positions in the 1999 elections. Only 181 actually made it into office. The number and percentage of women who were successful at the polls in 2011 was less than the figures in 2007 and 2003. In the 2007 elections, 660 women made it through party primaries, but only 93 gained offices nationwide.

To further buttress the fact that the 35 % affirmative of women participation promised by the incumbent government may not be 100% fulfilled, Odebode, (2011) argued that although Jonathan had during the electioneering promised 35 per cent women representation in his administration and at the Mentorship Summit for African Women, organized by the Centre for

African Women Leaders Think-Thank in Abuja on May 3, reiterated his commitment to his campaign promise of 35 per cent representation of women in his administration, in spite of these public political promises women representation has just 31 % in this government. In the same vein, at party level, the statistics of political parties showed that the only position reserved for women is woman leader out of over 40 positions even though it was suggested that women should be giving 20 per cent representation in the formation of political parties not in an elective position, not in any tangible position; we are saying in the PDP for instance, give 20 per cent representation to women in executive positions but it was shut it down (Taiwo, 2011). In the constitutional review committee which made up of 40 members, women were giving only 10 slots. On the floor of the House, an issue came up, we were campaigning that it should be resolved that if a man heads the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) his deputy should be a woman and vice versa and you cannot believe it that despite the fact that we walked from seat to seat to convince members, they refused, (Taiwo, 2011).

Table 4: 2011 Ministerial Nominees State by State

SN	States	No of Nominee	No. of Men	No. of Women
1	Anambra	10	9	1
2	Bayelsa	10	10	-
3	Delta	10	7	3
4	Edo	10	9	1
5	Ekiti	10	8	2
6	F.C.T, Abuja	10	7	3
7	Jigawa	10	8	2
8	Kano	10	10	-
9	Katsina	10	8	2
10	Kebbi	10	8	2
11	Nassarawa	10	8	2
12	Niger	10	10	-
13	Ogun	10	7	3
14	Osun	10	8	2
15	Yobe	10	9	1
16	Lagos	10	8	2
17	Ondo	10	8	2
18	Oyo	10	8	2
19	Zanfara	10	9	1
20	Cross River	10	7	3
21	Kogi	10	8	2

22	Kwara	10	8	2
23	Taraba	10	8	2

Source: Kolawole, T.O. (2011)

The above table 4 shows the senatorial nominations in 24 states of the country showing the number of men and women in the list per state. From the table, only 4 states nominated 4 women which is a little above 35% but if legislated according to Taiwo (2010) quoting Hon. Nkiru Onyejeocha the chairman House Committee on women empowerment from Abia State in an interview. She believes in the need to legislate on the 35 percent Affirmative action as agreed during the Beijing Women’s Conference 15 years ago. To her, legislating it means signing it into law at all tiers of government. For instance, if a governor is submitting list of ministers, his list must have 35 per cent representation of women or else it will not be accepted; for political parties, they must have 35 per cent women representation when presenting candidates for nomination or else you won’t be allowed to fill candidates. To her she said, “If we like we can start talking from now till eternity, we are not going to achieve anything unless we put it into legislature. The only way out is to legislate on these positions because one, our custom and tradition does not have place for women being visible outside. Your primary purpose or position should be in the home that is our mindset. Even when you are competent and you want to contest, the men unconsciously without knowing it just exclaim, she is woman oh!” What is still not clear in the minds of women in Nigeria, particularly, that are in politics is the reality of the 35 percent affirmative action stipulated by the United Nations and promised by the Nigerian government. This is because rather than the number of women in governance increasing especially as women constitute about half of the population, the political space for women is shrinking as Nigerian democracy advances, (Sarah Jessica Parker, 2011).

In collective peaceful protest by women in January 2003 led by Women Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative, (WRAPA) to Aso Rock Villa on the elimination of women in the primaries of PDP through undemocratic way, former President Obasanjo express his heartfelt of the predicament of the actors but however reiterated that the socio-cultural context of Nigeria was not in defense of women’s participation in governance. He advised that women should work towards a constitutional amendment to facilitate 15% representation for women as, according to him, the 30% international

benchmark is too ambitious for the moment. (WRAPA Newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2003:9). This probably explains why there was little or no effort on the part of different governments before now to implement the international agreements and instruments, concerning women empowerment Nigeria signed and ratified in the past, even now top politics is been played so that the global decision does not come to reality.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, it has been said that women are unevenly treated in African society. And it has also been said that for women to be duly represented in decision making body, they must be heavily empower by eliminating the following factors; the social constraints that makes the political field parity. The ideology of empowerment within the context of this paper goes beyond political empowerment, for it is only those who have the economic power that can compete for any political position. The implication of this is that for an even political structure to be in place, men and women can compete with one another equally, there is the need for a political collective behaviour revolution that surpass the 35% affirmative plan or promise of the present government which already is receiving serious kick from the house of representative. To this end, practically speaking, the future visions of Africa especially Nigeria may not come to fulfillment if African women are not allow to take or occupy their rightful place in all spheres of life. It is important to note that this cannot be attain without African women coming together as one body and speak in one voice. African women will be great the day they sees themselves as one and speak in one voice.

Boutrous Boutrous – Ghali, the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, was quoted as saying during the Conference that:

Without progress in the situation of women there can be no true social development. Human rights are not worthy of the name if they exclude the female half of humanity. The struggle for women equality is part of the struggle for a better life for all human beings and for all societies
(Adeyemi and Adeyemi, 2003).

With this scenario, it seems the world is disposed to ensuring that women achieve reasonable parity with men. A benchmark has been given to all governments to ensure that at least 30% of their political

offices are given to women. In countries like Sweden, women have attained 50% participation in decision making in the public sector, (Iloh and Ikenna, 2009).

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