

Women as a Minority Group in Governance in Nigeria: A Critical Discourse

¹Adebajo Adeola Aderayo, PhD, ²Adebajo Abraham Olatomiwa, ³Omojowo, Sunday Toyin,
⁴Osikoya Adepelumi Funsho, ⁵Owolola Oluwakemi Yusirat

^{1,3,4&5}Department of Political Science, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State,
Nigeria

²Faculty of Law, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Email: adebajoade@gmail.com /adebajoaa@tasued.edu.ng, adebajoabraham@gmail.com
omojowotoyin770@gmail.com, osikoyafunsho@gmail.com,
owololaoluwakemi2017@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper notes that women constitute part of the minority groups in Nigeria despite their numerical strength and contribution to national development. According to the paper the allusion that women play merely second fiddle in governance is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. Since time immemorial women have contributed immensely to the development of their societies but that has not translated into proportionate representation in governance. The feminist theory was used as an explanatory framework while the desk research method was employed to obtain secondary data. The paper has identified some of the factors responsible for inadequate representation of women to include and are not limited to cultural/religious factor, monetization of politics, patriarchy, political violence, first ladyism, godfatherism, consensus candidacy, constitutional provisions, among others. Based on the findings, the paper recommends possible ways of involving women in governance to include implementation of affirmative action, gender character principle, desocialisation of negative attitudes that perpetuate gender inequality and unity among the women.

Keywords: Governance, majority group, minority group, politics, women

Introduction

Women participation in politics can be taken as an index of level of democracy and development in a country. Women in virtually every society constitute a ‘minority group’ in political leadership despite the fact that they constitute half of the population and make contribution to nation building. Right from ancient Greece to the present time, the history of democracy has demonstrated that it evolved as a political process characterised by exclusionary and hierarchical distribution of power. It is only in the recent times that democracy seems to be associated both in theory and practice with majoritarian principles and equality. Power distribution had excluded the majority of people on account of being women, servant/slaves, foreigners and other non-propertied groups in a given society. Virtually all political institutions in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular, historically

share the common characteristics of relegating women's involvement in governance to ancillary organs and maintaining the centre where the most critical decisions are made by and for the males. While African countries like Seychelles (43%), Rwanda (62%), Senegal (43%) and South Africa (46%) have made progress in terms of appreciable number of women in their parliament, Nigeria (6.4%) is still moving at a very slow pace (Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) (2021); International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) 2021).

Governance and political participation in Nigeria have been male- styled and dominated by the male gender. Governance as the exercise of political authority and use of resources to manage society's problems and affairs, should be a channel for both male and female genders to contribute to decision making process that affects the generality of the people. With return to the present democratic dispensation, despite the large number of women that contested for one elective post or the other, very few emerged as winners. It is interesting to point out that since the return to the Nigeria's Fourth republic, political representation of women is 6% (Kareem, 2021). It is also noteworthy to state that Nigeria ranks 139th out of 156 nations with the largest gender gap in the globe (Kareem, 2021). In 2011 general elections, women candidates constituted 9.1% of the total number of candidates who contested in the April 2011 polls, leaving 90.9% across political parties. This simply shows that only very few women passed through the primaries to make candidates list. Among the six geopolitical zones, South West had the highest number of female candidates in 2011 general elections with 15.5% of the 2116 candidates who contested across political parties. South East had 11.9% of the 1611, South South with 10.5% of 1624 and North Central with 8.5% of 1371 (Nwankwor & Nkereunwem, 2021). The North East and North West had the least gender representation with 4.2% of 1187 and 2.3% 2088 respectively (Agbalajobi, 2010). In the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan, thirteen women, less than 35% were appointed into his cabinet. Only a handful of them were elected into legislative houses across the states. The political space tends to be narrower for women than men. The paper therefore argues that gender equality will not solve the problem of female marginalisation in politics but gender justice, fairness and equity. Ceding of seats to women might not work out as envisaged but qualified men and women can be encouraged to take active part in politics and governance.

The Concept of Minority

The concept of minority is a nebulous one. It can imply numerical strength in which case a minority group is one whose population is less compared to the other group(s) as the case of numerous ethno-cultural and religious identities. The concept of minority can also denote class strength and this is demonstrated in the politics of exclusion where a class or an ethno-cultural/religious group, though, numerically less, is able to control state machinery to the exclusion of the other group(s). For the purpose of our analysis minority is conceptualized to denote the dominated status of the Nigerian women in the political and decision making processes despite their numerical strength and contribution to the socio-economic development. The concept of 'minority' was adopted by Donald Young in 1932 to denote groups whose members shared certain racial/ethnic similarities

that were considered to be different from the traits of a dominant group and were thereby singled out for differential and unequal treatment. A minority group is therefore any group that is assigned an inferior status in society, that is, any group that has less than its proportionate share of wealth, power and/or social status. In Nigeria, therefore, the men are seen as the majority/dominant group who control virtually all strata of social life including governance, while women constitute the dominated/minority group despite the internationally domesticated policy instruments to correct this notion.

Governance is the exercise of political authority and use of resources to manage society's problems and affairs. This means a process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced. It also implies formulation and implementation of policies, respect of citizens and institutions that govern social and economic interactions. Governance is described as building and proper functioning of institutions, policies and their acceptance by the public. Governance can also be defined as the systems and processes concerned with the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of an organization, a nation or society many organizations see effective governance as the route to reduced poverty and more equal, democratic, corruption free societies. Others consider governance to promote social justice and gender equality, popular participation and the realization of the rights of all citizens. In Nigeria, there has been gross inequality between men and women, especially in political representation, economic management and general leadership. The male gender dominated in government and socio-economic spheres, thereby holding the reins of power relations and existing sole authority over resource allocation and control (Akinboye, 2004; Nwankwor & Nkereunwem, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

Literature exists on gender issues, women oppression and subjugation at public realm and strategies for intervention. As a result, there emerged different theoretical explanations seeking to explain the causes of women marginalisation in the society and ways of solving the problem. The theories are generally regarded as feminist theories with different variants. The feminist theory is generalised and has a wide-ranging system of ideas about social relations between men and women, their experiences developed from a woman-centred perspective. Feminism is an ideology is the belief in equal rights of men and women in terms of politics, decision making, career, reproduction and other areas of social life (Asnani, 2020 cited in Mohajan, 2022). Feminism is a form of advocacy of women right based on the belief in the equality of the sexes. In a broad sense, it means any explanation that attempts to seek an end to women's subordination in any way and for any reason. The various strands of feminism are liberal, social and radical. Liberal feminism was the earliest type; which deals with equal rights, extension of liberty and justice to women through legal and social reforms.

The radical feminism argues that women's oppression is as a result of patriarchy, which controls and socialises reproduction of people through marriage and motherhood. The socialist feminism provides the most insightful ideas about women's oppression and therefore calls for the abolition of class, gender and the social order that gives rise to such oppression. The paper adopted the

liberal feminism. The liberal feminism is of the view that all the people (males and females) are born equal, therefore, equal opportunities should be provided for them and that the existing women marginalization arose as a result of the non-recognition and implementation of the principle. The theory believes that social exclusion is derived from the socialisation process of men and women into the different roles in the society. The present position of women is perpetrated by men, the family, the state and its agencies (Adebajo, 2022).

The liberal feminists are of the opinion that the gender disparity affects both males and females because the potentials of both genders are suppressed. The liberal feminists advocated for an organised mass movement and coordinated struggle to ensure representation of women in the public domain. The liberal feminism is unlike the social and radical feminism that advocated for the revolutionary changes in the society. However, liberal feminism has attracted criticisms such as its inability to deal with the root causes of women oppression and inequality and non-recognition of the systemic nature of women's oppression in the society. Relating the theory to the Nigerian situation, equal opportunities are not provided for women when it comes to governance. This situation is a result of socio-cultural factor that have been existing since time immemorial. Even with the gender policy, affirmative action (35%) and other international instruments to which Nigeria is a signatory, women still constitute the minority group in governance.

Historical Overview of Women Minority Representation in Pre-colonial Governance

In pre-colonial Nigerian societies though women's political participation was not equal to that of men, the position of women in traditional political governance was complementary rather than subordinate (Awe, 1992; Adebajo, 2008). The complimentary role was however embedded in sex segregation, which determined gender position, status and power in the society. Despite the fact that women enjoyed some level of authority and freedom, they were subjected to communal government in which they played peripheral roles. In the ancient Zaria, Queen Bakwa Turuku established the modern city of Zaria, which was later expanded by her daughter, Queen Amina, who succeeded her mother Queen Bakwa Turuku. Queen Amina expanded the frontiers of Zaria beyond and changed it to a commercial nerve centre. In Yorubaland, female traditional leaders played prominent in governance by assisting the King. However, there was no woman in the various grades of chiefs that dominated the different craft guilds and market agents of the Bini Kingdom, the only important female figure was the King's mother with her cult at Uselu, but could not sit in Oba council and as such did not take part in decision making (Adeleke, 2004). Also, after the reign of Queen Amina in the pre-Islamic past of Zaria, women would not be seen in the public spheres. In terms of political offices, women were not equal to men in most Nigerian societies. Although, there were some women who possessed political power such as Queen Amina of Zaria, Kambazza of Bonny, Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura of Yoruba, Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin, Madames Efunroye Tinubu, Omu Okwei of O ssomari of Delta, and Olajumoke Obassa, etc.

Since then, women seemed to have vacated the centre courts for men and accepted the secondary roles in political affairs. This was properly entrenched during colonial administration. The colonial administration, its gender policies and economic interests were patriarchal in nature. In the Northern Nigeria, the change of government from the Hausa aristocracy to Fulani/Muslim

hegemony totally excluded women from the public sphere. The legislative council created in 1922 though with limited African representation for instance, is noteworthy in Nigerian political development. Yet the colonial government consciously excluded women from its council (Oni, 2012). While women in South Western Nigeria voted for the first time in the nation's electoral history in the 1959 general elections, their Northern counterparts did not enjoy franchise rights until 1976, fifty-four years after the elective principle was introduced to Nigeria. Women political activism such as the Aba women riot against colonial tax policies of 1929/1930, the Ngwa women's opposition against the municipalisation of their community in 1954, the Eastern Region women's opposition to new school fees in 1958; and the series of protests between 1946 and 1958, the limited gains made by women did not translate into participation in decision making during the colonial period. Women did not feature in the first political parties (the Nigerian National Democratic Party, NNDP), National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), Nigeria Youth Movement (NYM) and other parties during the nationalist era and after independence (Adeleke, 2004; Akinboye, 2004; Adebajo, 2019).

Women Minority Representation in Governance in Post Independent Nigeria

Women minority representation in governance after independence was also fostered by the nature of post-colonial politics. The ethnic and personality based, paternalistic and acrimonious politics of the post-independence era were detrimental to women's participation (Adebajo, 2008). Insignificantly, only two women were appointed into the Eastern House of Assembly such as Chiefs (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu in the 1950s. Also, Mrs Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti was appointed into the Western Nigeria House of Chief. During this period, Nigerian women began to play very active roles. Also, in 1960, Mrs. Wuraola Esan from Western Nigeria was elected as the first female member of the Federal Parliament in Nigeria. In 1961, Chief Margaret Ekpo was elected into the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly till 1966. Also, Mrs Young became a member of the Eastern House of Assembly through election. Both the President and Prime Minister were males, there was no female minister and only three (3) were women legislators (Aluko, 2011). There was no female minister in any of the regional governments. No woman was part of the political party executive, only few women in the Southern part of the country contested for seats in the House of Representatives while no woman contested and voted in the Northern part of the country.

In the Second Republic (1979-1983), it is instructive to point out that with the adoption of the American presidential system, ban was lifted on political activities in 1978, women came out with full force to participate. There was little improvement compared to what used to happen in the past in the Northern part of the country. There was presentation of a woman by the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) as the Vice-Presidential candidate during the 1979's election. In the 1979 general elections, no woman contested for the position of President and State Governor in any of the 19 states, only four (4) contested for the 45-member Senate, none of them emerged a winner (Eme & Onuigbo, 2015). In the House of Representative, seventeen (17) women contested, only three (3) of them won and in the States House of Assembly, 42 contested, only 5 won. Also, only six 6

women were appointed as ministers during the period (Dantake, 2011). In the 1983 general elections, only three (3) seats were won by women in the National Assembly elections, and two (2) seats for the House of Representatives. Only 10 were women out of 2000 candidates presented for the Federal House of Representatives. Two women were appointed Federal Ministers including Chief (Mrs) Janet Akinrinade and Mrs Adenike Egun Oyagbola, Minister for Internal Affairs and Minister for National Planning respectively. While the only female permanent secretary appointed was Mrs. Francesca Yetunde Emmanuel, who served in the Federal Ministry of Establishment and later Federal Ministry of Health.

In the Third aborted Republic, a few Nigerian women contested for elective positions. Only 5 were elected as chairpersons at the local government level out of 591 candidates. Elections for local and state governments were held and the winners sworn in 1990 and 1992 respectively. According to Adebajo (2008), out of a total of 1,297 positions nationwide, women won only 206. No woman made it to the governorship position. The result of the National Assembly indicates that out of a total seat for the Senate, only one woman was elected while a total of twelve won elections into the 638 members of the House of Representatives. For the 30 state houses of assembly, only 27 seats were won by women (Adebajo, 2008). In the same vein, only two women were elected as the Deputy Governors. It is instructive to state that opportunities were not provided for women to be represented in governance as a result of the authoritarianism of the military government and too many activities of the first ladies that were subversive of democratic ideals. Their activities were mainly jamborees to propagate the military rule and squander national resources to the detriment of the masses.

During the Fourth Republic in 1999, there was an unprecedented increase in the number of women that ventured into the murky waters of politics. There was an increase of women representation from less than 3% in the previous republics to 3% in 1999, 4% in 2003 and 6% in 2007 (Osimen, Anegbode, Basil & Oyewole, 2018). Out of 1990 seats in the 36 houses of assembly across Nigeria, 1966 (98.8%) were men while women won only 24 (1.2%) seats in 1999 (Osimen, Anegbode, Basil & Oyewole, 2018). It is noteworthy to point out that 3 females out of 109 won in the Senate and 13 out of 360 won in the House of Representatives. One female emerged as the Deputy Governor and only 12 won out of 990 in the Houses of Assembly and one woman was elected as the Speaker (Agbalajobi, 2010). Only 9 females were elected as chairpersons out of 774 local governments in the country. In relation to political appointments during Obasanjo' administration, only 2 women were substantive ministers while the remaining 4 were state ministers (Adebajo, 2019). Only 9.5% constituted women in Obasanjo's political appointments. During the second tenure of office of President Olusegun Obasanjo, only two women emerged as the Deputy Governors, 3 out of 35 women made their way to the Senate, 21 out of 1,736 were elected into the House of Representatives while only 38 made it in States House of Assembly (Adebajo, 2022). As a result of the opportunity provided by the civilian administration of the former President Olusegun Obasanjo, an increase was also experienced in 2007 election when more women made inroad into politics. In 2007 women occupied 9 seats out of 109 seats, a percentage of 8.3%. Similarly, on appointment, there was improvement even with a woman (Honourable Patriacia Olubunmi Eteh)

emerging as the Speaker, House of Representatives. Though, she was removed as a result of the prebendal nature of Nigeria's politics. Sooner than expected, she was engrossed with corrupt practices that brought about her removal (Adebajo, 2022; Osimen, Anegbode, Basil & Oyewole (2018).

It is important to state that in 2003, 4 (3.7%) out of 109 were elected into the Senate. 21(5.8%) women made their ways into the House of Representatives, only 2(5.5%) were elected Deputy Governors, 38(3.8%) women were elected into the State Houses of Assembly, 15(29%) became Local Government Chairpersons while 267(4%) women out of 6368 became councillors (Popoola, Egharevba & Fayomi, 2021). In 2007, there was no significant improvement in the numbers of women elected into various public posts. 8 (7%) women were elected as the senate members 23 (6%) were elected into the House of Representatives, no woman was elected as Governor, 6(16%) emerged as the Deputy Governors, 52(5%) made it to to the State Houses of Assembly, while 15(2%) out of 740 became the Local Government chairpersons (Popoola et al, 2021). In 2011 elections, 7(6%) women were elected into the Senate, 26 (7%) in the House of Representatives, 3 (8%) became the Deputy Governors, 62 (6%) women were elected into the State Houses of Assembly, 27 (3.6%) became Local Government Chairpersons while 235(3.7%) were elected as Councillors (Oni, 2014). In 2015 general elections, 8(6%) were elected into the Senate, 19(5%) to the House of Representatives, 4 (11%) emerged as the Deputy Governors (Kareem, 2021). While 37(3.7%) were elected into the State Houses of Assembly across the federation (Kareem, 2021). In 2019 election, 7(6.4%) women were elected into the senate, 11(3%) emerged as the members of the House of Representatives, 4 (11%) were elected as the Deputy Governors and 40 women were elected into the various State Houses of Assembly (Onyeji, 2019).

With the emergence of President Jonathan's administration, women still constitute the minority group in governance, as less than 35% (13 women) were appointed as the ministers (Adebajo, 2019). In the House of Representatives, women were able to garner a mere 9% (Adebajo, 2019). Women did not fare better in 2015 general elections as only 14 of them were elected into the Green chamber. While only seven (7) women were elected into the red chamber which included Binta Masi Garba, Uche Ekwunife, Stella Oduah, Rose Oko, Fatimat Raji-Rasaki, Oluremi Tinubu and Monsurat Sunmonu. Virginia Ngozi Etiaba acted briefly as the governor of Anambra state in 2006 after Governor Peter Obi was impeached for corruption. Senator Aisha Jummai Al-Hassan of Taraba state was almost elected as the governor but could not make it due to the entrenched patriarchy in the state (Ibrahim, 2015). The 2019 general elections were abysmally low in the political participation of women which did not impactfully influence governance process. Women who showed interest in contesting for the presidential post later backed out of the race. Out of 235 women that contested for senate, only 6.4% were elected. All Progressive Party Congress (APC) fielded 7 women while Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presented ten candidates for the senatorial election (Kareem, 2022). 533 women contested for House of Representatives, only 3% got elected (Adebajo, 2019). Of the 275 women who contested for the post of deputy governor, only four women emerged from Ogun, Enugu, Kaduna and Rivers states. For House of Representatives, out of 360 candidates that contested, only forty women were elected. It could be deduced from the

above that women still constitute the minority group in political and decision making processes in Nigeria while the male counterparts still play dominant roles.

Why Women Constitute a Minority in Governance in Nigeria?

First, one of the governance issues in Nigeria is that of political representation and inclusion. In order to solve the problem of political representation, the federal character principle was adopted and enshrined in the 1999, constitution. The 1999 constitution like the previous ones, has not integrated women's needs, concerns and human rights. The constitutions only operate in principle but fail to bring about a functional and inclusive federal system. As determination of diversity question is linked to federalism, this lack in the constitution weakens Nigeria's democracy. The application of federal character rather than gender character formula, citizenship and capacity, women are made to face marginalization in governance. The federal character negates the protection of gender concerns under section 42 of the 1999 constitution which significantly limits women's access and participation in governance. The Nigerian state has repeatedly demonstrated its incapability of addressing the emerging crisis of identities and the structural imbalances in the system. Key political appointment into government offices are always done to favour the male dominant group. The distribution of political appointment in Nigeria shows that the minority groups and women have not been in the mainstream but are peripherally side-lined as the minority ethnic groups clamour for inclusion and access to power, so also the women.

Second, Nigeria's politics is masculine in nature. Politics is organized around male norms, values and lifestyles. The political milieu of confrontation, violence and assassination is alien to women's collaborative, cooperative and consensus building pattern of interaction (Adebajo, 2019). Political meetings are nocturnal in nature and are held in an atmosphere supportive of acceptable masculine lifestyle. Politics as practiced in Nigeria is not hospitable to women and this places burden on their coping strategies and causes role conflicts in relation to women's other multiple domestic responsibilities. In addition, the society's belief that politics is for men and only immoral women get involved. Women who get involved in it are stigmatized by fellow women and most men as a result would not encourage their wives to be involved in politics.

Third, party insensitivity to women's issues is one of the obstacles to women participation in governance in our nation. Despite the fact that many political parties have always promised to offer 30% position to women, the story has not changed. The higher the number of women presented for nomination, the lower the number that is always elected. The stage at which the gate keepers actually choose candidates is a crucial stage in determining women's inclusion in governance. If parties fail to nominate women like the case of the veteran contestant, Chief Mrs Sarah Jubril, the number of women who will run for elective posts will be too low, which invariably affects their participation in governance. The process of nomination within political parties is biased against women. Women are systematically eliminated in the process by sabotage, deceit, threat and other underhand factors.

Fourth, the greatest obstacle hindering women in participating in governance is lack of finance. Women do not own resources, they are usually co-owners and as such property lies in the hands of men. The few literates among women are usually marginalized and isolated by the society. Consequently, women are unwilling to commit their meagre financial resources to political activities since the likelihood of being supported by their political parties and men counterparts is low. The awareness campaign and other orientation activities of Gender and Development Action (GADA), Civil Liberties Organization, National Council of Women Societies (NCWS) Women in Nigeria (WIN) among others, though have helped to increase the level of women's political literacy this however, has not translated to women's significant featuring in governance. Despite wavering of nomination by some political parties, women are unable to match their male counterparts when it comes to campaign financing even in 2019 general elections. Preclude to 2023 general elections, out of about 17 candidates contesting for the presidency, it is only one woman (Mrs Uju Kennedy) that obtained N100million nomination form (Oritunsin, 2022).

Fifth, the cultural and religious beliefs contribute a lot in reducing women involvement in politics, thereby limiting their contribution to governance. Patriarchal system which recognizes male domination in the society, institutional arrangements that restrict women to family responsibilities and religious orthodoxy are cultural factors that affect women's political participation (Adebajo, 2022). While protestant religion is beginning to encourage women's prominence in public life, religious orthodoxy however, continues to place limitation on the extent of female's featuring in political activities (Oni, & Segun, 2012). The mechanism of sex segregation and pudah are found to restrict women's empowerment by limiting their exposure to interact with male and female constituents and to attend public meetings particularly the Islamic religion. In addition, regional difference and location (rural/urban) are a factor. The rate at which the women are involved in governance in the North is low compared with those in the Southern part of the country. Majority of those who contest for election are based in the urban areas. There are also misconceived religious beliefs that constrain women in partaking in governance coupled with the dominant institutional aspects of the political parties. Many of the political parties' high echelon are male dominated (Adebajo, 2022).

Sixth, inadequate networking among women politicians and organizations limits women representation and participation in governance. It is noteworthy to point out that the difference in women's participation in the 1979 and 1999 elections and the increased consciousness of gender inequality in governance among scholars is connected to the impact of women's organizations civil society groups and international development organizations (Adeleke, 2004; Akinboye, 2004). There is still a need for the women organizations and other broad based group to work together for the enthronement of women in governance process. The few women that have been occupying political offices made it by the virtue of their husbands, godfathers and godmothers which encourages corruption of high profile in the country which erodes the values women are known for.

Seventh, the activities of the first ladies have limited the political aspiration and enthronement of many women in the governance of Nigeria. It is not an overstatement to say that many of the first ladies are more powerful than their ruling husbands. For instance, Patience Jonathan is such a woman that wields power even more than her husband. During the military era, late Mrs Maryam Babangida assumed a powerful position and surrounded herself with clique of women because of her husband position in the society. Many of the first ladies went out of their ways to campaign for their husbands to be re-elected into offices. The activities of the first ladies usually clash with those of serving female ministers, commissioners and top government officials, such as those of women's affairs, social welfare, youth and development whom they expect to exert authority.

Eighth, monetization of politics coupled with the economic constraint women face affect their election to governance position. Money answers all things in Nigeria's politics and this has been responsible for low involvement of women in governance. Politics involves finance, only very few women can stand the financial muscle of men when it comes to canvassing for votes. Money determines who carries the party ticket especially in an impoverished society. The case of PDP presidential primaries is a good example. Standing for political office is a very expensive venture, only the money bags can successfully compete because Nigeria's politics is associated with the culture of vote buying. In addition, electoral corruption/consensus candidacy prevents women from being elected into public offices. During all elections that have been held in the nation, women were rigged out from the primary elections. Consensus candidacy, zoning arrangement, indigineship/place of residency and excessive control of the party machinery by the moneybags have been crucial factors that prevent women from emerging as candidates in elections.

Ninth, institutional designs play a significant role in defining who participate in governance in Nigeria and some other parts of the world. The practice of winner takes all/first past the post system instead of proportional representation, lack of gender electoral quota systems and constitutional provision for equal gender representation in party's political nominees hinder women representation in governance(Adebajo, 2008). Despite being a signatory to many international instruments, no conscious efforts have been made by the government to entrench such constitutional policies for implementation in Nigeria. Tenth, the attitude of women to their womenfolk who hold political office remains uncomplimentary. Women prefer to vote for men rather than voting for their female counterparts during elections. A point of reference is the non-nomination of Chief Mrs Sarah Jubril by the women delegates. The woman succeeded in voting for herself. The proliferation of women organizations has amounted to the pursuit of selfish economic interests rather than advancing the course of women in politics. Many of them rely on foreign donors to enrich themselves and the families rather than pursuing women's course. Though, women election into public, offices experienced a marginal increase, this does not match the number of women organizations supposedly canvassing for more women involvement in governance. There is a widespread of apathy among women themselves which has strengthened patriarchy, probably because of male styled politics that characterize the Nigerian political terrain is not helping matters. In addition, spousal insecurity affects the married women politicians. Most of the spouses of women politicians do not readily support their wife's political ambitions because

of the fear that their wives will be more influential in the society. That is the reason why most of the women politicians are either widows or divorcees or singles. Husbands do not readily support their wives for fear of losing them to men politicians. Other factors include electoral/political violence, socio-cultural attitudes held by the voting public, lack of mentoring and role modelling for young and emerging women leaders, corruption being perpetrated by women who are in governance, little accountability by government towards women as a constituency and gender equality issues and gender blind policies of political parties(Adebajo, 2022) . On the whole, there is need for partnership in governance so that mankind will not be robbed the unique potential for good governance.

Ways of Enhancing Women Participation in Governance

Gender sensitive governance requires that gender equality enhances the realization of women rights in a political system. Equality does not imply that women are aspiring to dominate men, but women will be accorded opportunities to develop their individual talents and to contribute more meaningfully to societal development. Having the same political rights as men does not mean that women will automatically gain equal influence with men in political and economic life or that their differences in political orientations will disappear in addition, policies and legislations should address the differing needs, interests, priorities and social power. The first is to enable more women to participate in governance. It is not only adding women in parliaments but adequate implementation of the 30%. Affirmative action of the Beijing Declaration which enjoined all governments to address inequality between men and women in governance and decision making at all levels.

Third, gender character in the manner of federal character should be enshrined in the Nigerian constitution in view of the numerical strength of the women. This will ensure the representation of women relative to their population vis-à-vis the men. In addition, it is high time Nigeria adopted consociational democracy in order to cater for the minority groups that have been marginalized, of which women is one. Relatedly, there is need for change in Nigerian 1999 constitution in order to discourage perpetual male dominance at all levels of governance (Falola, 2021). Third, the federal character principle can be broadened to include some legal provisions that will cater for gender representation. This could be in the area of allotting a cut off point for inclusion of women in governance either for elective or appointive post. This should be prudently implemented to guide against the enthronement of mediocre in governance. Women of proven integrity who are willing to serve could be given this opportunity. It could be implemented from the local government council to the federal level. It will actually encourage partnership between both genders in governance. This has been practiced in Tanzania and Rwanda where seats are reserved for women of proven integrity and capability.

Fourth, the place of mentoring cannot be over emphasised in achieving gender sensitive governance in Nigeria. Young generation of women need to be mentored and exposed to training in governance issues in order to know that getting involved in governance is not for self-enrichment and gratifying godfathers who wait on monthly basis to receive cut back. That, women

should venture into the political terrain without necessarily relying on any godfather who will put them under duress for patrimonial gains but total commitment towards solving societal problems. Noteworthy is the fact that women should know that for them to be reckoned with in governance, corruption or prebendalised character which is the culture of Nigeria's politics should be avoided, their inclusion/participation should be seen as an avenue to better the lots of the general populace rather for funfair and flamboyancy. The culture of values associated with womanhood should be upheld.

Conclusion

This study has provided a critical discourse on women as a minority group in governance of Nigeria. The study notes that women still constitute the minority in governance in Nigeria despite their numerical strength and contribution in social life. The findings of the study show that although there are few number of women in governance, Nigeria is still one of the countries with low number of women in political offices, whether elected or appointed. Thus, the few ones in parliament are not able to influence the lots of women under the stronghold of patriarchy, poverty and undue possession by the male counterparts. The study argued that it is imperative that there should be dismantling of cultural and religious orientations/attitudes that perpetuate patriarchal tendencies which relegate women from taking active role in political affairs. Labeling women who venture into politics as cultural deviants or prostitutes should be discouraged through more awareness creation and advocacy by the civil society groups.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are made;

- i. Excessive monetization of the political processes should be drastically reduced, particularly nomination fee charged by the dominant political parties.
- ii. Political violence which characterizes political processes should be outlawed, heavily sanctioned and the culprits brought to book in order to drastically reduce the menace in the country.
- iii. There is need for the intensification of affirmative action to ensure proportionate ratio of women in all legislative houses and executive arms at all levels of government, as well as party hierarchy and structures.
- iv. The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the UN in 1979, which spells out internationally accepted principles-and standards for achieving equality between men and women should be domesticated in Nigeria in order to ensure more women occupy political leadership position.

- v. The need for societal desocialisation is paramount and this will involve critical examination of learned behaviour, received values, familiar language, habitual perception, existing knowledge and power relations within a given community. The reason for this is to discourage the traditional and cultural practices and values that hinder women emergence as political leaders.
- vi. Spousal insecurity which primarily constitutes a roadblock to married women in venturing into politics needs to be curtailed through enlightenment programmes by civil society groups to educate men on the positive impacts of allowing women to take part in societal development. Men need to offer support to their women who show interest in getting involved in politics, the fear of seeing women politicians as prostitutes should be allayed right from the level of the family.
- vii. The Nigerian constitution needs to be amended to allow for gender parity and women inclusion in the decision making processes. The use of HE to identify and signify that public office holders should always be men need to be amended in the Nigerian constitution in order to allow gender sensitivity. The generic term to indicate who a public office holder is should be amended to reflect HE or SHE or vice versa.

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