

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The role of women in Nigerian politics has been a subject of intense discussion and critique for several decades. Nigeria, as a diverse and populous nation, has a rich cultural and historical context that shapes the participation of its citizens in political processes. Women make up nearly half of the Nigerian population, yet their involvement in the political sphere remains disproportionately low, particularly in leadership positions. According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2021), women represent about 49% of the total population, yet their participation in political offices and decision-making processes remains marginal. This gender disparity is a clear manifestation of the broader societal norms and institutional barriers that continue to place women at a disadvantage in political and public life.

The underrepresentation of women in political offices and decision-making bodies is not simply the result of personal choices, but is deeply rooted in Nigeria's historical, cultural, economic, and political structures that perpetuate gender inequality. Despite women's active roles in other spheres of life ranging from business, education, and healthcare their political influence has been severely limited. This exclusion is largely driven by cultural and religious factors that view men as the primary decision-makers in both public and private spheres. For example, Senator Remi Tinubu and Senator Daisy Danjuma are among the few female Nigerian senators, highlighting the challenge women face in attaining significant positions in political leadership (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2015).

In addition to cultural constraints, women face significant economic barriers in accessing the resources necessary for political campaigns. These include funding, networking, and access to political patronage, which are often dominated by men. The cost of running for public office in Nigeria is prohibitively high, and women typically lack the financial backing and political networks necessary to compete effectively. A good example is the experience of Prof. Dora Akunyili, the late former Director-General of NAFDAC, who, despite her qualifications and achievements, faced considerable challenges in securing political office due to entrenched gender biases and the political patronage system (Duru, 2020).

Moreover, political violence, harassment, and intimidation have disproportionately affected women candidates and activists. In the 2019 General Elections, there were reports of women being harassed or attacked while campaigning, which resulted in many women retreating from the political arena. According to a report by The Situation Room (2019), the 2019 elections saw a significant decline in female candidates due to security concerns and the risk of violence. This situation has further perpetuated women's exclusion from political participation.

Despite these barriers, there have been significant efforts to address gender inequality in politics. The National Gender Policy adopted by the Nigerian government in 2006, advocates for 35% women's representation in all political offices. However, the implementation of this policy has been slow and uneven. The African Union's Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), ratified by Nigeria, calls for gender equality in all spheres of life, including political participation. The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) also commits countries to increasing the participation of women in decision-making, yet the progress in Nigeria has been modest.

The underrepresentation of women in Nigerian politics has far-reaching implications for political development. The lack of female voices in political offices not only diminishes the representation of women's interests but also weakens the overall political system. Policies and laws may not fully reflect the needs of women or marginalized groups, leading to an exclusionary governance structure. For example, women's exclusion from political decision-making during the 2014 National Conference (which was supposed to address issues of national unity and development) meant that critical gender issues, such as maternal health, education, and economic empowerment, were not given the attention they deserved (Ezekiel, 2015).

In 2019, Nigeria's 9th National Assembly had only 8 female senators out of 109, making up a meager 7.3%. Additionally, in the House of Representatives, only 22 women were elected out of 360 members (INEC, 2019). These statistics reflect the substantial gender gap that persists in Nigeria's political landscape and its implications for the inclusiveness of the political process. This study aims to critically assess the state of women's participation in Nigerian politics, explore the challenges they face, and analyze the impact of their limited participation on the political development of the country. The research will evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies, such as the National Gender Policy and gender quotas, and suggest ways to improve women's

involvement in political processes. Through this, the study intends to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the need for more inclusive and equitable political systems in Nigeria.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, women have persistently faced significant challenges in accessing political power, despite their numerical strength in both the population and the electorate. Women constitute almost half of Nigeria's population, yet their representation in political offices remains significantly low, particularly at the legislative and executive levels. This gender disparity raises concerns about the inclusiveness of the political system and the extent to which it reflects the broader interests and needs of the population. According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2021), women make up about 49% of the population, but their representation in political offices is dismally low. The 2019 general elections, for example, saw only 8 women elected as senators out of 109 (a mere 7.3%), and 22 women elected to the House of Representatives out of 360 members (INEC, 2019). These figures reflect the systemic barriers that women face in accessing political power and influence.

The limited participation of women in political offices, particularly in high-level positions, is primarily due to several interconnected factors. Cultural norms play a significant role in shaping the political landscape in Nigeria. Traditional gender roles often place men in leadership positions, while women are expected to remain in domestic and support roles. This cultural expectation restricts women's involvement in politics and leadership. For instance, in many regions of Nigeria, especially in the north, patriarchal practices dictate that women are not suited for leadership roles, and these societal norms are deeply embedded in everyday life (Duru, 2020).

Economic barriers further hinder women's political participation. The cost of running for office in Nigeria is prohibitively high, and many women lack the financial resources to fund political campaigns. For example, in the 2019 elections, the average cost for a senatorial candidate was estimated at over ₦100 million (about \$200,000), a sum beyond the financial reach of most women (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2015). This financial exclusion, compounded by limited access to political networks and patronage, makes it difficult for women to mount competitive campaigns.

Additionally, political violence and harassment disproportionately affect female candidates and political activists, further discouraging women from entering politics. In the 2019 General Elections, numerous reports highlighted the harassment of female candidates, with some experiencing threats of violence and intimidation. The Situation Room (2019) reported that many women withdrew from the political race due to concerns over personal safety, particularly in volatile regions. For example, Mrs. Olufunke Adedoyin, a female candidate in Kwara State, reported being attacked by political thugs during the election campaign, a situation that led to a decline in the number of women running for office.

The lack of legal frameworks that enforce gender quotas or provide affirmative action for women in Nigerian politics has also played a significant role in the underrepresentation of women. Despite the National Gender Policy adopted in 2006, which set a target of achieving 35% women's representation in political offices, the implementation of this policy has been slow, and there has been no legislation to enforce gender quotas in elections. The 2019 Elections were marked by a continued absence of significant legal and institutional support for increasing female representation in politics (Akinyode-Afolabi, 2015).

This underrepresentation affects the diversity of policies and laws enacted in the country. Key issues such as maternal health, gender-based violence, child marriage, and women's economic empowerment often do not receive the necessary attention in policy-making processes. For example, gender-based violence in Nigeria continues to be a significant issue, but it is often overshadowed by other political concerns. The lack of female representation in decision-making bodies means that policies addressing such issues are frequently overlooked or inadequately addressed. Women's exclusion from the political process also results in gender-blind policies that fail to address the specific needs of women in sectors such as health, education, and economic development.

Given that political development depends on inclusive representation and the realization of democratic ideals, the lack of women's participation poses a major challenge to Nigeria's political progress. The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles contributes to weak democratic processes, as decision-making bodies do not fully represent the diverse interests of the population. It also limits the effectiveness of governance, as critical perspectives on issues such as women's rights, healthcare, and social justice are left unaddressed. Political development hinges on the integration of all segments of society, and women's exclusion from political leadership undermines this principle. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the challenges women face in Nigerian politics, the implications of their limited participation on the country's political development, and ways in which these challenges can be addressed to ensure more inclusive political processes in Nigeria.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

- i. To identify the factors that affect women's participation in Nigerian politics.
- ii. To analyze the level of women's representation in political offices in Nigeria.
- iii. To examine the impact of women's political participation on governance and policy outcomes in Nigeria.
- iv. To assess the role of legal frameworks and political party structures in women's participation in politics.

1.4. Research Questions

- i. What are the factors hindering women's participation in Nigerian politics?
- ii. To what extent are women represented in political offices in Nigeria?
- iii. How does women's participation in politics impact political development and governance in Nigeria?
- iv. How effective are legal frameworks and policies in promoting gender equality in political participation?

5. Significance of the Study

The study will provide valuable insights into the barriers faced by women in politics, offering evidence-based recommendations to enhance women's participation in governance. By identifying challenges such as economic barriers, cultural norms, and political violence, the study will help policymakers design targeted interventions that can increase women's involvement in political processes and ensure their representation at all levels of government. The study will contribute to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Nigeria by raising awareness about the gender disparities that persist in political participation.

The research will advocate for institutional changes that can support women in overcoming obstacles and advancing in politics, aligning with national and international goals of gender equality. By examining the relationship between women's participation in politics and democratic development, the study will highlight the importance of inclusive governance for the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. Inclusive political participation is essential for strengthening democracy and ensuring that diverse perspectives are represented in policymaking.

The study will make a significant academic contribution by adding to the growing body of literature on gender and political participation in Nigeria. While there has been considerable research on Nigerian politics, less attention has been paid to understanding the specific challenges women face in entering politics. This study will fill this gap and provide a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and opportunities for women's political involvement, offering valuable insights for scholars, students, and policymakers. Through these contributions, the study will play a vital role in shaping both theoretical and practical perspectives on gender equality in Nigerian politics.

6. Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study will focus on the political participation of women in Nigeria, specifically examining national and state-level politics. It will explore various factors influencing women's participation, including legal frameworks, party structures, and socio-cultural barriers. The study will cover the period between 2000 and 2023, providing an analysis of key electoral events and political developments that have shaped women's involvement in Nigerian politics during this period. By examining this timeframe, the study aims to highlight significant milestones and challenges faced by women in their political journey.

However, the study may be limited by several factors. Data accessibility could pose a challenge, particularly in obtaining comprehensive and reliable data on women's political participation at local levels, where much of the detailed information may be unavailable or underreported. Additionally, the study may encounter political sensitivities, as some political actors and parties may be reluctant to share information on gender-related matters due to the complex nature of gender politics in Nigeria.

Finally, while the study provides in-depth insights into the Nigerian context, its generalizability to other countries may be limited, as the socio-political dynamics of other nations may differ significantly from those in Nigeria, making it difficult to directly apply the findings in different contexts.

7. Definitions of Terms

- i. Political Participation: The act of engaging in political processes such as voting, running for office, campaigning, or influencing policy decisions.
- ii. Political Development: The process of improvement in political institutions, processes, and culture that facilitates democratic governance, public accountability, and inclusive participation.
- iii. Gender Equality: The state in which women and men have equal rights, opportunities, and responsibilities in all spheres of life, including politics.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature related to women's political participation and its implications for political development, with particular focus on the Nigerian context. It examines scholarly works, policy documents, empirical studies, and international frameworks that highlight the challenges and opportunities associated with women's involvement in politics. The review is structured around key themes including historical trends in women's political engagement, socio-cultural and institutional barriers, gender policies, and the impact of female political participation on democratic development.

Furthermore, this chapter presents the theoretical framework underpinning the study, providing an analytical lens through which the issue of women's political participation in Nigeria can be examined. The aim is to identify gaps in the existing literature and justify the relevance of the current study within the broader discourse on gender and governance.

2.2 Conceptual Clarification

i. Women's Political Participation

Women's political participation refers to the active engagement of women in various dimensions of political life, including voting, contesting elections, holding public office, influencing policy decisions, and engaging in civic activism (Ballington & Karam, 2005). It encompasses both formal arenas such as electoral politics and public appointments and informal processes like political mobilization, advocacy, and civil society engagement. Women's participation is vital for representative democracy and is often used as an indicator of gender equality and social inclusion (UN Women, 2023). The absence of equitable participation results in policies and laws that may not reflect women's needs and interests.

ii. Politics

Politics involves the structures, processes, and activities associated with governance and decision-making at various levels of society. According to Lasswell (1936), politics is "who gets what, when, and how," reflecting the competition for power and resources. It includes both formal government actions and informal mechanisms through which groups or individuals influence governance outcomes. In democratic societies, politics also entails citizen engagement, accountability, and public participation (Heywood, 2013).

iii. Political Development

Political development refers to the process through which political systems evolve to become more participatory, institutionalized, stable, and responsive to citizens' needs. It includes the establishment of effective institutions, adherence to the rule of law, increased citizen engagement, and the promotion of democratic norms (Huntington, 1968). A politically developed society ensures the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as women, in governance, thereby strengthening democratic consolidation and national development (Diamond, 1999).

iv. Gender Equality

Gender equality is defined as the state in which individuals of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in all areas of life, including political, economic, and social spheres (United Nations, 2020). In politics, gender equality means that women and men have equal opportunities to participate in political processes, to be elected to public office, and to influence policy and decision-making. Gender equality is both a fundamental human right and a cornerstone for sustainable development and inclusive governance (UN Women, 2023).

v. Socio-Cultural Barriers

Socio-cultural barriers are norms, traditions, values, and belief systems within a society that constrain or limit individuals' behavior based on their gender. In Nigeria, such barriers often reinforce patriarchal views that associate leadership with masculinity and domestic roles with femininity (Arowolo & Aluko, 2021). These barriers include societal perceptions that women should not engage in politics, family pressures, religious constraints, and negative stereotypes that undermine women's leadership potential.

vi. Legal Frameworks

Legal frameworks refer to the system of laws, regulations, policies, and institutional mechanisms that govern political participation and representation. For women, this includes gender equality clauses in the Constitution, electoral laws, political party regulations, and affirmative action policies like the National Gender Policy (2006), which advocates for a minimum of 35% representation of women in public positions. However, the weak enforcement and non-binding nature of such policies in Nigeria limit their effectiveness (Chukwuemeka & Eze, 2021).

2.3 Empirical Review

UN Women Nigeria (2023) reported a decline in female representation in Nigeria's National Assembly, with women occupying only 4.47% of seats (20 out of 469) after the 2023 general elections. This represents a sharp drop compared to the 2019 elections, where women held 21 seats. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) ranks Nigeria among the lowest in female parliamentary representation globally, highlighting the country's failure to meet the 30–35% affirmative action quota set by the Beijing Platform for Action and Nigeria's National Gender Policy.

Arowolo and Aluko (2021) investigated the role of internal party democracy in women's political exclusion and found that party primaries are often marred by financial inducements and male dominance, creating an uneven playing field. Their study showed that the cost of nomination forms and campaign funding requirements serve as major deterrents to female aspirants. Further, Oni and Olowojolu (2020) examined women's political participation at the grassroots level, specifically in local government elections in southwestern Nigeria. Their findings revealed that while women are active in mobilization and campaign roles, they are rarely nominated for leadership positions. The study concluded that political parties often relegate women to supportive roles, undermining their leadership potential and violating the spirit of gender equality.

ActionAid Nigeria (2022) noted across six states, including Lagos, Borno, and Enugu, over 70% of female respondents indicated fear of political violence and intimidation as reasons for not participating in elections or contesting for office. These findings align with Ogundipe and Obiyan (2019) who argued that political thuggery and the militarization of elections disproportionately affect women, who are more vulnerable to physical threats and social backlash. Idike et al. (2018) explored women's political participation in the South-East geopolitical zone and observed that cultural stereotypes remain deeply rooted. Their study emphasized that traditional beliefs often confine women to domestic roles, with leadership seen as the preserve of men. Even educated and qualified women are discouraged from entering politics due to fear of being labeled as "wayward" or "unfit" for leadership.

Makama (2013) provided a regional perspective by examining the success of gender quotas in other African countries such as Rwanda and South Africa. The study argued that Nigeria's weak legislative commitment to enforce affirmative action explains the country's stagnation, while countries with constitutional or statutory gender quotas have made significant progress. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022) data reveals that although women represent approximately 49% of the voting population, they remain underrepresented in political appointments and elective offices. For example, out of 43 ministerial positions appointed in 2019, only 7 were women, falling short of the 35% target. This mismatch between political participation as voters and actual representation in leadership illustrates the systemic gender imbalance in Nigerian politics.

Additionally, Bawa and Suleiman (2020) explored youth and women's involvement in the "Not Too Young to Run" campaign and found that while the legislation reduced age barriers, it did not address gender-based obstacles. Many women, especially young aspiring female politicians, continue to face challenges related to access to funding, patriarchal gatekeeping, and inadequate mentorship networks.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a multi-theoretical framework to explain the low level of women's participation in Nigerian politics and its implications for political development. The selected theories help to illuminate structural, cultural, and institutional dynamics that affect gendered political engagement.

i. Feminist theory

Feminist theory serves as a foundational framework for analyzing gender disparities in political participation, positing that society is inherently structured to privilege men while disadvantaging women. It highlights how gender inequality is deeply entrenched in patriarchal ideologies, cultural practices, and institutional norms that systematically exclude women from access to power and decision-making roles. In the context of Nigerian politics, this theory sheds light on the marginalization of women within political parties, their underrepresentation in elective positions, and societal norms that frame leadership as a male domain. The relevance of feminist theory lies in its capacity to expose the structural and cultural factors that hinder women's political engagement, thus offering a critical perspective for addressing gender imbalance in governance.

However, the theory is not without critique. Scholars such as Crenshaw (1991) have argued that feminist theory often fails to account for the intersectionality of women's experiences overlooking how factors such as class, ethnicity, and religion compound gender-based exclusion. Moreover, critics contend that feminist analysis can sometimes be more prescriptive than explanatory, especially in diverse socio-political contexts like Nigeria. Despite these limitations, feminist theory remains highly applicable to this study, as it enables a nuanced exploration of how institutional and societal biases operate to maintain the exclusion of women from politics. By foregrounding issues of power, representation, and equality, the theory provides a critical lens through which to evaluate the implications of women's political marginalization for Nigeria's broader political development.

ii. Patriarchy theory

Patriarchy theory posits that societies are fundamentally organized around male dominance, with power concentrated in the hands of men across political, economic, and social spheres, while women are systematically subordinated. This framework is particularly relevant for examining the Nigerian context, where cultural norms and traditional values often reinforce male authority and restrict women's access to political leadership and public decision-making spaces. Patriarchal structures manifest in political party hierarchies, electoral processes, and socio-religious institutions that frequently marginalize female voices. These entrenched systems contribute to the persistent underrepresentation of women in Nigeria's political landscape, despite their numerical strength in the population and electorate. However, the theory has been critiqued for its deterministic outlook, which can underplay the agency of women and the potential for reform or resistance within patriarchal systems. Scholars argue that it may overlook how some women navigate and challenge patriarchal norms to attain political influence, especially in localized or informal contexts (Kandiyoti, 1988). Nonetheless, patriarchy theory remains highly applicable to this study as it provides a foundational lens for understanding the societal expectations that shape and constrain women's political behavior. By revealing how these cultural dynamics contribute to structural inequality in governance, the theory supports a deeper inquiry into the barriers to gender-inclusive political development in Nigeria.

ii. Political Opportunity Structure (POS) Theory

Political Opportunity Structure (POS) Theory suggests that political behavior is influenced by external factors, particularly the openness and accessibility of political institutions, the legal framework, and the availability of resources or allies. The theory posits that the success of political actors, including women, depends on the opportunities provided by the political environment, which can either enable or hinder their participation. In the context of Nigeria, POS theory is highly relevant as it highlights how institutional structures such as political parties, electoral systems, and legal frameworks affect women's political engagement. For example, weak enforcement of gender quotas, limited political party structures that are often exclusionary, and the lack of strong political will to support gender equality create substantial barriers for women seeking to enter politics.

However, one critique of the theory is its focus on macro-level structural opportunities, which may overlook the role of individual actors or grassroots movements in overcoming barriers. Critics argue that grassroots actions, local networks, and individual agency can also create significant political opportunities, even in restrictive environments (Tarrow, 1998). Despite this, POS theory is applicable to the study of women's political participation in Nigeria, as it explains how the political environment, including the lack of inclusive legal frameworks and political spaces, systematically limits women's political involvement and opportunities for leadership.

iii. Representation Theory

Representation Theory (Descriptive and Substantive), as articulated by Pitkin (1967), posits that effective democracy requires both descriptive and substantive representation. Descriptive representation refers to the presence of representatives who physically resemble the demographics of their constituents, while substantive representation pertains to the actions and policies

that these representatives enact to address the interests and needs of their constituents. In the context of Nigerian politics, this theory is highly relevant as it justifies the need for greater female participation not only to ensure that women occupy political positions but also to ensure that they influence policy decisions in favor of women's rights and marginalized groups. It underscores the importance of having women in political offices to better represent their perspectives and advocate for policies that address gender inequality.

However, a key critique of the theory is that descriptive representation does not automatically guarantee substantive impact. Critics argue that merely increasing the number of women in office does not necessarily result in gender-sensitive or progressive policies, as women in politics may still conform to patriarchal structures or face challenges in effecting real change (Pitkin, 1967). Despite this critique, the theory remains applicable to this study, as it provides a framework for understanding why increasing women's political representation in Nigeria is essential for fostering inclusive governance and promoting more equitable political development.

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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in this study to assess the participation of women in Nigerian politics, examining the factors influencing their political engagement and its implications for political development. Given the nature of the topic, secondary data analysis was employed to gather comprehensive insights from existing literature, governmental reports, academic articles, and other relevant sources. This methodology ensures a thorough exploration of the historical and contemporary dynamics of women's political participation in Nigeria, based on previously collected data and documented evidence.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design, which allows for the exploration of existing data and the identification of trends, patterns, and challenges related to women's political participation in Nigeria. By analyzing secondary data, the study aims to present a detailed overview of women's involvement in political processes, focusing on both electoral and non-electoral participation from 2000 to 2023. This approach is particularly suitable for understanding the impact of political and cultural factors on women's participation.

3.3 Secondary Data Sources

Secondary data refers to data that have been collected and documented by other researchers, institutions, or agencies. For this study, secondary data were sourced from a range of academic journals, government publications, reports from international organizations such as the United Nations and the African Union, as well as data from Nigerian political parties, electoral commissions, and civil society organizations. These sources provided a comprehensive view of the barriers to women's political participation, the progress made in gender equality, and the implications for political development.

Secondary data sources include the National Gender Policy Reports (2006, 2016), which outline the governmental framework for promoting gender equality; the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) reports and election results, offering detailed data on women's participation in elections; United Nations Women reports on gender and political participation, providing a global perspective on women in politics; World Bank reports on gender equality in governance, which offer insights into the broader socio-political context; Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) data on women's political representation, providing statistical information on the number of women in political offices; and various academic articles, dissertations, and books addressing gender, politics, and governance in Nigeria, which contribute theoretical and empirical insights into the topic. These data sources are essential for examining the evolving landscape of women's political involvement and its implications for Nigeria's political development.

3.4 Data Collection

The data collection process involved reviewing existing literature, archival documents, and publicly available reports from Nigerian government institutions and international bodies. The analysis of these secondary data allowed for the identification of key themes regarding the challenges and opportunities for women in Nigerian politics. The process included conducting a comprehensive Literature Review, which involved gathering information from academic studies on the political participation of women in Nigeria, offering both historical and contemporary perspectives on the issue.

Additionally, Reports and Publications from government agencies such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), non-governmental organizations, and international bodies provided quantitative data. These sources offered insights into the number of women elected to political offices, the representation of women in political parties, and the legal frameworks related to gender equality, such as policies promoting gender equity in political processes. Furthermore, Election Data from national and state elections, along with information on political appointments, were analyzed to track trends in women's participation between 2000 and 2023. This approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of women's political involvement and the underlying factors shaping their participation in Nigeria.

3.5 Data Analysis

The secondary data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of women's political participation in Nigeria. Qualitative Analysis involved the use of thematic analysis, which helped to identify recurring themes and patterns in the literature and reports. This approach facilitated an exploration of the socio-cultural, political, and institutional barriers that limit women's participation in Nigerian politics. By examining the narratives and arguments within the collected data, the analysis highlighted the persistent challenges women face, such as gender stereotypes, cultural norms, and structural inequalities within political institutions.

In addition, Quantitative Analysis was employed to assess numerical data, particularly the number of women elected to political office, over time. This involved analyzing statistical data related to women's political representation, tracking trends across different election cycles, regions, and political parties. By comparing this data, the study was able to identify significant changes or persistent gaps in the representation of women in political offices. This quantitative approach provided a clearer picture of the progress or lack thereof in achieving gender parity in Nigerian politics, offering valuable insights into the effectiveness of policies aimed at promoting women's participation in governance.

3.6 Justification for Using Secondary Data

Secondary data was chosen for this study due to reasons that made it an ideal choice for addressing the research objectives efficiently. Firstly, cost-effectiveness and time efficiency were significant factors, as primary data collection through surveys or interviews can be both costly and time-consuming. Secondary data allowed for a more efficient analysis of the topic, saving both time and financial resources. Secondly, there is ample availability of data, with extensive reports and publications on political participation in Nigeria, including historical election data, legal reforms, and women's roles in politics, making secondary data an easily accessible and valuable resource. Secondary data offers a breadth of coverage by providing access to a wide range of perspectives, including government statistics, expert analysis, and global assessments. These diverse sources would be difficult to compile through primary research alone, allowing for a richer, more comprehensive understanding of the barriers and opportunities surrounding women's political participation in Nigeria.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

As the study relies on secondary data, ethical considerations primarily involve the responsible and accurate use of existing data. Care was taken to ensure that sources were appropriately cited, and that all data used adhered to ethical standards of data sharing and confidentiality. Furthermore, the study ensures that it critically analyzes the available data without misrepresenting any findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes the secondary data collected for this study on women's political participation in Nigeria. The data, gathered from a range of sources such as government reports, academic articles, election data, and international organization publications, are analyzed to provide insights into the key barriers, opportunities, and implications for women's involvement in Nigerian politics.

4.2 Results and Discussion of Findings

i. The factors that affect women's participation in Nigerian politics

Women's political participation in Nigeria is influenced by a range of socio-cultural, political, economic, and institutional factors that collectively create barriers to their involvement in the political process. Socio-cultural factors, including patriarchal norms and gender roles, play a critical role in limiting women's access to political leadership. In Nigerian society, leadership is

often viewed as a male prerogative, which discourages women from pursuing political careers. Gender stereotypes, which perceive women as less capable or assertive than men, further exacerbate these challenges, reinforcing the notion that politics is a male-dominated sphere (Sule, 2014). Additionally, the lack of familial and community support for women in politics reflects deep-rooted cultural attitudes that restrict their political engagement (Oladeji & Ogunnaike, 2019).

On the political front, party structures in Nigeria are largely male-dominated, with women struggling to secure party nominations or gain access to political leadership roles. Political violence and intimidation also disproportionately affect women candidates and politicians, often deterring them from participating (Ebohon, 2012). Furthermore, the absence of robust political mentorship programs for women limits their ability to navigate the political system and access the necessary networks for political success (Ogunyemi, 2019). The economic barriers that women face also impede their political participation. Political campaigns in Nigeria are costly, requiring significant financial resources that many women lack due to economic disempowerment and limited access to wealth and resources (Awe, 2020). Without financial backing, women find it difficult to run competitive political campaigns, reinforcing their underrepresentation in political offices.

Institutionally, the legal frameworks intended to promote gender equality, such as the National Gender Policy, often lack effective enforcement mechanisms, limiting their impact on women's political participation (Nigerian National Gender Policy, 2006). Additionally, gender-based violence, including harassment and intimidation during political campaigns, continues to be a significant barrier for women in Nigerian politics (Ibrahim & Ige, 2015). Despite these challenges, international pressure from organizations like the United Nations and the African Union has contributed to some policy reforms. However, these efforts have often been insufficient in overcoming deeply entrenched patriarchal structures (United Nations Women, 2017).

Women's limited access to education and political awareness restricts their ability to fully engage in the political process. While there have been improvements in female literacy rates, many women, particularly in rural areas, still face barriers to education, which in turn limits their capacity to participate effectively in political decision-making (World Bank, 2019). Media representation also plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of women in politics. The Nigerian media often portrays women in stereotypical roles, undermining their credibility and suitability for leadership positions (Ogunyemi, 2019).

ii. The level of women's representation in political offices in Nigeria.

Women's representation in political offices in Nigeria has historically been low, despite their significant presence in the population. Over the years, women have made gradual progress, but they continue to face substantial barriers that limit their access to political power. At the national level, women's representation in Nigeria's National Assembly (both the Senate and the House of Representatives) has been minimal. As of the 2019 general elections, women held only 4.4% of seats in the Senate and 5.6% in the House of Representatives (INEC, 2019). This figure is far below the global average of 24.3% for women in parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020), and it reflects the deeply entrenched gender inequalities in the political structure of the country.

In terms of executive positions, Nigeria has had a few notable women in leadership roles, such as the appointment of Dame Patience Jonathan as the First Lady during her husband's presidency and Professor Dora Akunyili as the Minister of Information. However, women have largely been underrepresented in state governors and the presidency, positions historically held by men. The 2015 and 2019 elections saw only a handful of women contesting for governorship positions, with none securing victory. In the 2019 elections, only two women were elected as members of state executive councils, highlighting the persistent gender imbalance in executive leadership roles (Akinyemi, 2019).

At the local government level, women's representation is somewhat higher, but still limited. Women constitute only about 6.7% of local government chairpersons, despite the increasing number of women contesting for such positions (NBS, 2020). The lack of gender quotas at the local level and in party nominations continues to hinder the growth of women's participation at the grassroots level. In addition to the formal positions of power, women's representation is also lacking in other political spheres such as party leadership and decision-making bodies. Political parties in Nigeria are often dominated by men, and women are typically relegated to lower-level roles, even though they make up a large portion of the electorate. This gender imbalance in political leadership contributes to the underrepresentation of women's interests in policy formulation and governance.

Despite the challenges, women's representation in Nigeria's political system has seen some positive developments. The introduction of the National Gender Policy in 2006, which set a target of 35% representation for women in all governance structures, has helped to increase the awareness and advocacy for gender equality in politics. However, enforcement mechanisms for these policies remain weak, limiting their impact (UN Women, 2017).

iii. The impact of women's political participation on governance and policy outcomes in Nigeria.

Women's political participation in Nigeria, despite the challenges they face, has contributed significantly to governance and policy outcomes in the country. The involvement of women in political offices, although still limited, has influenced policies that address gender inequality, promote women's rights, and improve the welfare of marginalized groups. For instance, female lawmakers have been pivotal in advocating for the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act of 2015, which seeks to protect women from gender-based violence (Nigerian Government, 2015). This policy has significantly improved the legal framework around women's protection. Additionally, female politicians have championed policies aimed at improving maternal health, education, and economic empowerment, such as the National Policy on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, contributing to better welfare outcomes for women and girls in Nigeria (Akinyemi, 2019).

Moreover, women's representation in political offices has ensured that marginalized and vulnerable groups, particularly women and children, are not excluded from political processes. Women in the Nigerian National Assembly have advocated for policies that address the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and rural communities, which has influenced government actions on housing, infrastructure, and social welfare (Okonjo-Iweala, 2016). Their involvement in local government bodies has also helped improve social services and resource allocation in areas benefiting women and children.

Furthermore, the participation of women in political leadership has contributed to the broader empowerment of women and girls, encouraging them to pursue leadership roles. This empowerment is evidenced by programs like the Girls Education Project (GEP), which has gained support from female politicians to enhance female enrollment in schools across Nigeria (UNICEF, 2018).

However, the impact of women's political participation is still constrained by several barriers. Cultural biases, political violence, and lack of financial resources for female candidates hinder the broader participation of women in Nigerian politics (Akinyemi, 2019). Despite these challenges, the few women who have managed to ascend to political offices have demonstrated the potential for positive change in governance and policy outcomes. Their contributions have been instrumental in pushing for inclusive policies and reforms, which ultimately support the goal of a more gender-sensitive and inclusive political system in Nigeria.

iv. The role of legal frameworks and political party structures in women's participation in politics.

The role of legal frameworks and political party structures in either enhancing or inhibiting women's participation in politics in Nigeria is a critical factor in the ongoing struggle for gender equality in political representation. Legal frameworks in the country, such as the National Gender Policy (2006, 2016), aim to promote gender equality in political participation, including a target of 35% affirmative action for women in political offices. However, the implementation of this policy has been weak, and the absence of legal mandates for gender quotas in elections remains a significant barrier to women's political participation. Without compulsory gender quotas, political parties and electoral systems have been slow to ensure gender parity, leaving women underrepresented in political offices (Ojo, 2018).

Additionally, the Electoral Act (2010) and other constitutional provisions do not explicitly address gender representation, allowing political parties to perpetuate exclusionary practices that marginalize women. Legal reforms alone have been insufficient without strong enforcement mechanisms to ensure that political parties comply with gender equity standards. Political party structures also play a significant role in shaping women's access to political leadership. In Nigeria, political parties are often male-dominated, and leadership roles are traditionally seen as male prerogatives, reflecting deeply entrenched patriarchal values. This cultural bias leads to the underrepresentation of women in political positions, particularly for high-level offices such as the presidency and governorship.

According to Akinyemi (2019), women are often relegated to secondary positions within political parties and face significant barriers in accessing key political networks, resources, and platforms that could support their political ambitions. Moreover, political parties typically rely on patronage systems and financial resources to gain electoral success, but women have less access to these resources, making it harder for them to secure nominations and win elections (Okonjo-Iweala, 2016). This situation is compounded by a lack of gender-sensitive structures within political parties that would otherwise promote women's candidacy and ensure greater political representation.

Despite these challenges, some reforms have started to create opportunities for women. Certain political parties, like the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), have implemented internal policies aimed at promoting gender inclusivity, including setting aside positions for women and creating mentorship programs for female politicians. Furthermore, civil society organizations have advocated for stronger legal frameworks, such as gender quotas, to compel political parties to nominate more women for elections (UN Women, 2020). However, the effectiveness of these reforms is still limited due to weak political will and persistent institutional biases. The continued exclusion of women from the political process highlights the need for more robust legal reforms, such as the enforcement of gender quotas and incentivized support from political parties for women candidates.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study identifies several critical factors influencing women's participation in Nigerian politics, which are socio-cultural, political, economic, institutional, and media-related. Socio-cultural factors, particularly patriarchal norms and gender roles, significantly limit women's access to political leadership positions. Leadership in Nigerian society is typically viewed as a male prerogative, and cultural biases against women's political involvement persist. Political factors such as male-dominated party structures, political violence, and lack of mentorship programs further hinder women's political engagement. Economic barriers related to the high cost of campaigns, coupled with women's limited access to financial resources, make it difficult for women to run competitive campaigns. Institutional barriers, including weak legal frameworks and gender-based violence, also contribute to women's underrepresentation in politics.

Furthermore, media representation often undermines women's credibility in leadership roles. Despite these barriers, some progress has been made through international advocacy and national gender policies, although the impact has been limited by weak enforcement mechanisms. Regarding the level of women's representation in political offices, Nigeria has seen minimal progress in terms of female representation in the National Assembly and executive positions. As of the 2019 general elections, women held only 4.4% of Senate seats and 5.6% in the House of Representatives, which is significantly below the global average. At the local government level, women's representation is somewhat higher but still limited. Women's participation in executive roles, such as governorship and presidential positions, remains particularly low, reflecting the broader gender imbalances in Nigerian politics.

On the impact of women's political participation on governance and policy outcomes, the study highlights the positive influence of women in political offices, particularly in areas such as gender-based violence, maternal health, and women's economic

empowerment. Women in the National Assembly have been instrumental in the passage of policies like the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP) and the National Policy on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, which have had significant positive outcomes for women and marginalized groups. However, the impact of women's participation is still limited by cultural biases and a lack of financial resources for female candidates.

Lastly, the role of legal frameworks and political party structures is crucial in shaping women's political participation. While legal frameworks like the National Gender Policy aim to promote gender equality, their impact has been limited by weak enforcement mechanisms and the absence of gender quotas in elections. Political party structures are predominantly male-dominated, and women face significant challenges in securing nominations or access to leadership positions. Although some reforms and initiatives have been introduced to promote gender inclusivity, these have been insufficient to overcome the deep-rooted institutional biases.

5.2 Conclusion

The findings underscore the significant barriers women face in Nigerian politics, including socio-cultural, political, economic, and institutional challenges. While there have been some positive developments, such as the introduction of gender policies and the election of a few women to political offices, women's political participation remains limited. Gender inequality in political representation continues to be entrenched due to systemic biases, a lack of financial resources, and weak legal frameworks. Women's underrepresentation in political offices is a critical issue that impedes the development of inclusive governance in Nigeria.

5.3 Recommendations

The government, particularly the National Assembly, should enforce gender quotas for political offices to ensure that more women are nominated and elected to leadership positions. Additionally, gender-sensitive policies must be implemented with clear enforcement mechanisms to prevent exclusionary practices in political institutions. Political party reforms are essential. Political parties, under the guidance of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), should adopt affirmative action policies that allocate positions for women, offer mentorship programs, and create accessible pathways for women to ascend to leadership roles. Political parties should also provide financial support and ensure women have equal access to political networks and resources, which are often crucial in Nigerian elections.

In addition, there is a need for public awareness campaigns to challenge the socio-cultural norms that limit women's political participation. The National Orientation Agency (NOA), in collaboration with civil society organizations, should lead efforts to change perceptions about women in politics through national campaigns that emphasize the value of gender diversity in leadership. Economic empowerment of women is also crucial, and this can be achieved by providing financial resources for female candidates, especially in rural areas, to enable them to run competitive political campaigns. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), in partnership with women's advocacy groups, should create programs that facilitate access to campaign funding and micro-credit for women politicians.

Moreover, improving education and media representation is vital for empowering women to participate in politics. The Federal Ministry of Education should implement targeted programs to increase female literacy, particularly in rural areas, ensuring that women have the knowledge and skills needed for political engagement. Similarly, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and other media regulatory bodies should work with media outlets to improve the representation of women in leadership roles, ensuring that women are portrayed as capable and competent leaders.

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