Gender, Political Participation and Representation: The Nigeria Story

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author NPK designed the study, analyzed the data, partly searched, wrote the literature review and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author KW processed and calculated the raw data, partly searched, wrote the literature review and edited the draft. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

Aims: This article aims to examines women's political participation and representation in Nigeria. The study employed the 2019s Nigeria general election data with an emphasis on the number of men and women candidates for various seats and posts.
Study Design: The study implemented quantitative and qualitative research approach.
Place and Duration of Study: The study was held in Nigeria between February and March 2019 within the duration of the General Elections (GE).
Methodology: Data dwelled more on the secondary data from the Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) such as Final List of Senatorial Candidates, Final List of Governorship Candidates, Final List of Presidential Candidates, Final List of State House of Assembly Candidates, and Final List of Candidates for House of Representatives followed by interviews.
Results: The findings indicate that even though women in Nigeria are politically active, they are

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not considered equal to their men counterparts - a product of patriarchal inclination. Certainly, Nigerian society still subscribes to the senseless connotation of: 'women', what do they know? A common phrase employed even in an ordinary family conversation. Besides, women participants lack financial backup and social support for political positions.

Conclusion: Women's low proportion of political representation at the highest levels of politics is a persistent issue in gender stratification in Africa, but paramount in Nigeria. Despite advances in women's educational level and economic participation, the findings in this study have shown that women in Nigeria have little or no significant progress with respect to political representation in the country's political sphere.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Women's ability to make an impact on male-dominated institutions will be limited until they are represented in numbers large enough to have a collective voice until they reach a 'critical mass" [1].

This article examines women's political participation and representation with the 2019s Nigeria general election. The notion of political participation and representation is vivid to any with well-informed political discourse. Those with little or no political circumstantial understanding will either misinterpret them or simply assume anything or many things. Yet, both notions are anything but similar. Essentially, political participation among other things includes voting, campaigning, participation in political rallies, adhering to the political ideology, slogan, using languages or speeches that will influence or sway other people's political views or voting patterns.

Political participation, however, is a basic concept in political science understood differently by scholars and others alike. [2] view it as the actions of private citizens seeking to influence or support government and politics. These writers noted that this is a relatively broad definition since it also includes ceremonial and supports activities [2]. Yet, in broader understanding, [3] concerning Hong Kong, states:

"Political participation refers to lawful or unlawful activities of support, making demands, debates, and other forms of expression communicated verbally and/or through the media targeted at the People's Republic of China (PRC), Republic of China (ROC) and Hong Kong Governments. Acts of political participation also include political activities that are targeted at private institutions, such as university administrations and business, and that they are designed to pose challenges to existing rules, norms, and practices."

Political participation can be voluntary or obligatory. In democracies, however, [4] maintains, it is in most cases, 'voluntary'. Thus, in a democracy, one is not obliged to participate either politically or socially. Nonetheless, one of the most important principles of a democracy is the freedom to decide autonomously whether one participates or not.

On the other hand, political representation is making sure there is someone, ensuring your right, voice, demands, ethnicity, religion, or gender is embodied in a political sphere. According to [5],

"The normative theories of democracy suggest that elections perform two essential functions. First, elections should ensure that governments are accountable for their actions to the citizens who elected them. Second, elections should perform a representative function, by ensuring that the legislature broadly reflects the distribution of opinions within the electorate."

These writers noted that there is a dynamic relationship between governments and voters. Their study suggested that democracy is based on a process of on-going representation that occurs through retrospective as well as prospective evaluations of government performance. Besides, [6] stressed that an essential feature of political representation is that a mediating assembly is set between the citizenry and political decision making. They observed that representation involves indirect

decision making or agency. They argued, rational actors of political theory often assume representation to focus on problems of a principal-agent kind but offers only a relatively weak argument for representation. Often, this is because of gender inequality in politics and fails. [7] observed it is unfortunate that the most readily available data on women's political leadership - the number of women occupying seats in the national legislature, leading executive ministries or serving as heads of state, or the percentage thereof - does not sufficiently capture the complexity of gender equality in politics and fails to represent the full scope of the gender gap. [7] explains:

> "When discussing women's political leadership, the term representation has often been used simplistically - referring to the number of women in decision-making processes, and thus focusing on their presence. However, when we define a representation as 'a person or group that speaks or acts for or in support of another person or group', we shift the concept from focusing on women's presence to focusing on their actions on behalf of the group they are representing. Thus, the term 'representation' includes many variations in scale, and in itself does not conclude the influence of women's political leadership."

Historically, issues or discourse on political participation or representation in many instances revolves around the men hegemony, placing women in the periphery or margin. Although many western states have strived to ensure gender equality in the political and socio-economic spheres, that may not be the case in most developing or underdeveloped states of the world. Definitely, that is not the case in Nigeria democratic system.

The Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in September 1997 stipulates: 'The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work inequality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences'. Unfortunately, these presupposes genuine partnership between men and women are merely on the books and proclamation, but never or hardly practiced in many West African countries like Nigeria and Ghana. [8] in the article - political theory and

African Politics; concluded that 'the subject-matter of African politics has always presented a special challenge and special problems to a political scientist'. [9] writes:

> "As Africa's most populous country, oil-rich Nigeria ranks with South Africa as one of the most influential countries on the continent. Since its return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria has made some progress in strengthening government institutions and fighting the corruption engendered by its oil wealth. But political violence, intimidation, money politics and more importantly, political gender disparities have continued to be the political dimension."

A rough estimate of the Nigerian population indicates that half of the population is women. Yet, gender disparity has been a common phenomenon in the Nigeria society. Unfortunately, as [1] pointed out; 'women's ability to make an impact in male-dominated institutions will be limited until they are represented in numbers large enough to have a collective voice until they reach a critical mass'. To make sense of Powley's view, it is vital to explore the differences between political representation and participation with women and politics in Nigeria, especially in the just 2019 general election [1]. The reality is political parties in Nigeria hardly entrust high profile portfolios to women. In many instances, it is an insignificant number to conjure women voters or simply put tokenism. This is to ensure minimal pressure or criticism from the public.

1.1 Background of the Study

Nigeria gained independence in October 1960 from the British government. The prior and aftermath of this independent history comprise a peaceful negotiation of independence with her colonial master to achieve self-governance, a three years' civil war, a seven military coup d'états, some failed civilian government until 1999, chronic ethnic rivalries and disdain or the misunderstanding of the two main religions in Nigeria. Thus, these two elements - religion and ethnic differences have been exploited by the political class to sow the seed of hatred and distrust. Unfortunately, in many instances, women political actors find it difficult to navigate issues created through religious and ethnic conflicts.

None of the above themes are the subject matter of this paper. The core theme of this article is the question; to what extent are Nigerian women politically represented or they merely participating in the political schemes of this huge country? And, if lacking in participation or representation what is/are the root cause? As stated above, based on Nigeria's unverifiable population data or census, women made up half of the country's population. Education wise, from 1970 to 1994, the enrolment of girls in primary education steadily increased from 30% to as high as 80%. The dropout rate of girls is higher than boys and participation in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics classes are lower for girls than boys. In 2002, the combined gross enrolment for primary, secondary, and tertiary schools for females was 57% compared to 71% for males [10,11,12]. Nigerian women are as adventurous as their men counterparts. Yet, it is worth mentioning, that culture has placed a huge wag on most Nigerians by connoting; 'a husband is a crown on a woman's head'. Consequently, even though, almost all Nigerians' higher institutions graduate 10 to 20% more women students than men, men dominate economic and socio-political spheres in Nigeria. This is partly because of gender discrimination, cultural limitation, but more often, as most women graduates focus more on marriage and making babies, rather than jobs or political office.

1.2 Problem Statement

A Case Study of the Legislative Assembly and The Executive 1999 – 2007, even women in the villages have become aware of the changes going on around them [13] The writer notes the regime under review and its concerted efforts have initiated programmes to check the abuse of women's rights and a good percentage of elective and appointive positions were reserved for women. [13] further asserts:

> "To further empower the participation of women in politics, the regime under the leadership of Olusegun Obasanjo of the People's Democratic Party, scrapped all fees required by women political contestants to enable them to participate in future elections. Nigerian government still under the regime the 4th republic has been encouraging women to come out of their shell and join other women the world over in the full participation in politics and administration".

The above declaration and other similar assertions or programmes (these include prior and after) enhanced women's political participation in Nigeria. Besides, political parties and actors understand the power of women's votes and voters. As noted above, political participation is any role an individual played that shape, affects, or involves the political sphere. These could range from voting to attending a rally to sending a letter to a representative, to campaigning, electoral officer or even financing or raising funds for a candidate or political parties. In most of these acts noted above women unequivocally partake in Nigeria and other regions of the world. Indeed, the issue of women and politics in Nigeria is not on 'participation' but rather on 'representation'. For example, according to United Nations statistics on women in parliament as of 1 January 2017, Nigeria is ranked 180 over 190 countries. According to this data, at the lower house (Legislative) out of 360 seats, women merely occupied 20 (that is a mere 5.6%). Also, in the upper house (Senate), out of 108 seats, women occupied just 7, representing miserable 6.5%. Although, the Nigerian constitution abhor gender discrimination and upholds social and gender equality, it is obvious women are not effectively represented. As of March 16, 2017, the United Nations Women listed on its website, women hardly achieve the so-called 30% propagated.

The issue(s) of women's political representation in Nigeria beckons several questions [14]. Such as what are factors impeding women's political representation in Nigeria; to what extent is/are factor(s) ingrained in the cultural or non-cultural dimension of the Nigerian society? Is there a solution to such issues? To make sense of these questions, it is vital to outline the scope of each question. The first question aims to explicitly ascertain or identify the stumbling blocks impeding women's political representation in Nigeria, and critically evaluate these factor's role in women's insignificant political representation. Secondly, it is an insignificant representation at both the legislative and senatorial or even the executive branch of Nigerian government. Understanding these factors will enhance the possibility of future prediction on whether women may remain underrepresented, partially, or fully represented.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is no doubt that over the last two decades, the rate of women's representation in national

parliaments globally has incrementally increased from 11.8% in 1998 to 17.8% in 2008 to 23.5% in 2018. Hence, the [15] a Non-Governmental Organisation stressed in their online publication, 'there is growing recognition of the untapped capacity and talents of women and women's leadership'. Though, this publication it pointed out that:

> *"The total global representation is still well below the 30% benchmark often identified as the necessary level of representation to achieve a 'critical mass' - a considerable minority of all legislators with significant impact, rather than a token few individuals - not to mention falling short of women's representation as half of the world's population"* [15].

According to [16], women's low rate of participation at the highest levels of politics is an enduring problem in gender stratification. The writers argued in previous cross-national research on women in national legislatures has stressed three explanations for differences in women's political representation: social structure, politics, and ideology. The writers argued that despite strong theory suggesting the importance of all the three factors, only political and structural explanations have consistently found support in cross-national statistical studies. The authors maintain that in-spite of strong theory suggesting the importance of ideology, it has not found support in previous cross-national statistical studies. But ideology has not been measured as well as structural and political factors. In their conclusion, [16] explained that gender ideology strongly affects the number of women in national legislatures. Nevertheless, [15] argue that slow progress with women's political representation in Nigerian is intimately connected with the diagnosis of the problem - how the problem of women's underrepresentation is perceived and understood as well as the strategies. The writers' essential holds, the problem of women's political underrepresentation in Nigeria is seen, strictly, as a question of women's lack of resources. These writers wrote:

> *"Scholars argue that women find it difficult to break into political positions because they are generally disadvantaged by gender ideology, cultural patterns, and predetermined social roles assigned to women and men as well as low literacy,*

> *poor childcare, inadequate health care, and poverty"* (16).

[17] propagates that traditions continue to emphasize women's primary roles as housewives and mothers to restrict them from political and economic roles. [17] argues that a traditional strong, patriarchal value system favours' sexually segregated roles and 'traditional cultural values' militate against the advancement, progress, and participation of women in any political process. The writer observed that according to this ideology, women should only play the role of working mother, which is generally low-paid and apolitical. Indeed, the author maintains, 'cultural ideas about women can affect women's levels of representation throughout the political process, from an individual woman's decision to enter politics to the party's selection of candidates, to the decisions made by voters on election day'. [17] and [18] strongly argued that women face prejudice as leaders because people tend to assume that leadership is a masculine trait. And when women do lead, they face a problem. People evaluate autocratic behaviour by women more negatively than the same behaviour by men. [17] noted the issue of gender discrimination and inequality as strong factors deterring women's political representation. Ironically, gender equality can act as a litmus test for the level of inclusivity of a political system. Besides, the existence of inequalities related to gender representation within government institutions often hints to further, deeper inequalities beyond gender [7]. As [7] stressed:

> *"Women's increased presence in the legislature contributes to the adoption of social policies that favour women and other marginalized groups. The inclusion of women in politics enhances democracies through achieving justice, promoting gender-sensitive policy issues, and making use of women's resources for the betterment of society."*

> *"The first step toward supporting a more equitable level of political participation and leadership for women is to understand both descriptive representations - the commonly cited data on the number of women parliamentarians - and substantive representation - the ability for women to influence the political process."*

This was buttressed by [19] work which stated that:

> *"A critical evaluation of Nigeria's political history shows a great marginalization of women in politics and appointments. Right from the period after independence up to the present political dispensation in Nigeria, the domain of politics seems unfeminine because women substantially do not participate in politics."*

Another writer [20], echoed a similar undertone. She argues that:

> *"The poor presentation of women in elective positions has been a major social development issue since the beginning of the current democratization process in Nigeria."*

It is understandable to argue here, that these factors itemized above in many ways have contributed to the low number of women's political representation. Each or some could be applied to a specific state or states. In relation to the study area, it is pertinent to state that Nigeria is a huge state, and her political institution has been muddled up with regional sentiments, traditional complexity, culture indoctrination and religious zealousness. Therefore, to make sense of the core issue to women's low political representation, it is essential to view it from a holistic perceptive.

3. METHODOLOGY

Mix-methods were used for this study. Both primary and secondary data were employed. This is essential to ensure quality and verifiable conclusion. However, data analysis dwelled more on the secondary data, while the primary enriched the quality of the discourse in the subsequent section. This article used a secondary data obtained from the Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The data were obtained in accordance with the 2019 Nigeria general elections between February and March 2019. These data are verifiable as the source Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was purely established mainly to organize and conduct elections in Nigeria. Indeed, Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission is made up of a Chairman, and 12 National Commissioners. The Commission was established in accordance with section 153(f) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The functions of the Commission as stipulated in Part I of the Third Schedule to the 1999 Constitution includes:

i. Organize, undertake and supervise all elections to the offices of the President and Vice-president, the Governor and Deputy Governor of a state, and the membership of the Senate, the House of Representatives and the House of Assembly of each State of the Federation.
ii. Register political parties in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution and an act of the National Assembly.
iii. Monitor the organization and operation of the political parties, including their finances.
iv. Arrange and conduct the registration of persons qualified to vote as well as prepare, maintain, and revise the register of voters for the purpose of any election under this Constitution.

Data were obtained through observation and interview techniques. One of the researchers visited Nigeria between January to February 2019 prior to the election date. He was meant to observe the voting process of 16 February 2019 but failed to do so, as the election date was postponed. However, rich and quality data were gathered during the fieldwork activities from January to February 2019. Data were gathered from the campaign processes, mobilization activities and posters and advertisements through the media and individuals' interviews. During this visit, the researcher visited several states and local government areas in both northern and southern Nigeria. The fieldwork experience is priceless. As expected, the research population is Nigeria populate. These are the main adults, and eligible voters and candidates for the Nigerian 2019 general election.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nigeria Africa's largest oil producer and the most populous black nation held a presidential, state, and parliamentary elections in 2019. The general elections were on 23 February 2019 to elect the President, Vice President, House of Representatives, and the Senate. The elections' initial date was 16 February 2019; however, it was rescheduled by the Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The main

issue, according to the Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was logistical challenges in getting electoral materials to the polling stations on time. Yet, in some places, the vote was delayed until 24 February 2019 due to electoral violence. Election polling in some areas was subsequently delayed until 9 March 2019, when voting was carried out alongside gubernatorial and state assembly elections. However, the above-stated issues are not the main concern of this article. As stated above, this article examines women's political participation and representation in Nigeria using the 2019s Nigeria general election as an analytical framework to grasp women's political position or place in Nigeria politics. Thus, below are important facts about the 2019 Nigeria general election.

According to Fig. 1, the registered voters in the 2019 general election in Nigeria are 84,004,084 people. The gender representation 52.86% of males and 47.14% of females. A difference of 5.72%. Yet, it is commendable on the part of the women population given the historical and the gendered nature of the Nigerian social institutions. Historically women entered the political realm in Nigeria recently. In the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, women were objectified as mere wives and relatives of the political class. Only to be seen as ushers, political ceremonial dancers or by the over-glorified name - First lady. Thus, fact that the data shows about 47.14% registered voters

are females it is progressive and participation in the political system. Yet, this figure is not even reciprocated by the number of women representatives either at the federal or state level of the Nigerian government. Further details on the issue of representation will be analysed in the subsequent section of this article.

Fig. 2 shows the federal seats contested for the 2019 Nigeria election. The Senate has 109 seats and 360 seats for the House of Representatives, while the President and Vice President are one seat each. These are federal seats and the three branches of the government have equal power and act as a check and balances of power. Thus, while the President heads the executive branch, the senate president directs the business in the upper house and the speaker ensures legislations are carried out in the lower house. These three branches of government are so important, and an equal representation would ensure laws and policies are not tilted to one side. Unfortunately, as Table 1 and Table 2 showed women were outnumbered 4.58% (female) to 95.41% (male) in the senate, and 2.5% (female) to 97.5% (male) in the lower house. Table 2 also displayed the number of state governors in Nigeria. However, about 4 states' governors were not contested during the 2019 general election. Yet, it was evident that all the state governors' in Nigeria are men even though about 355 women candidates entered for the election.
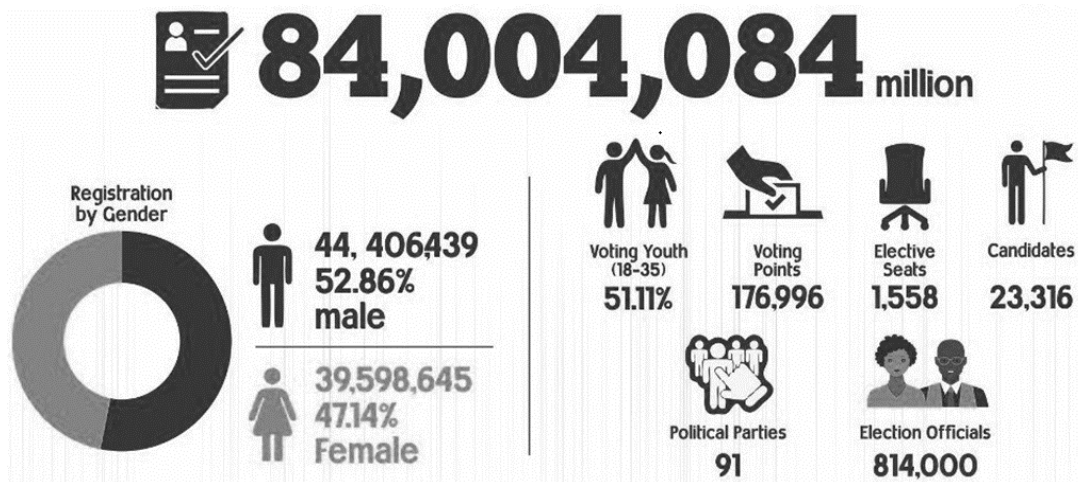
Fig. 1. Number of registered voters
Source: Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)
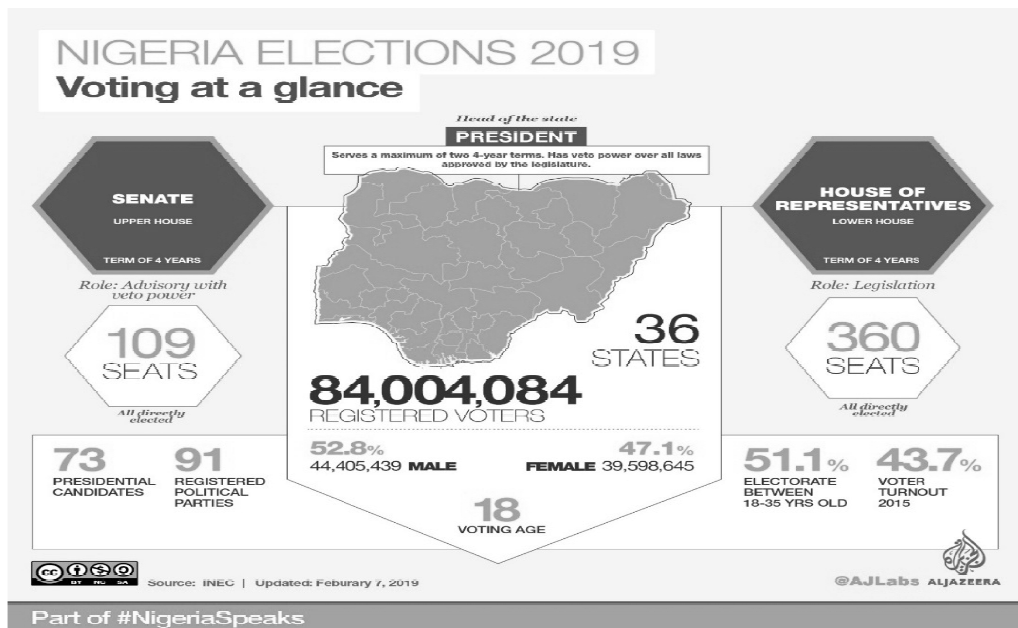
Fig. 2. The election or voting details
Source: Aljazeera (2019)

Table 1. The breakdown of positions contested by gender (political participation)

Position contested	Men candidates	Women candidates	Total	Men (%)	Women (%)	No. of seats
Governorship candidates	1777	355[1]	2132	83.3	16.65	29
Senatorial candidates	1670	234	1,904	87.97	12.02	109
House of representatives	4137	543	4,680	88.39	11.39	360
Presidential candidates	45	28[2]	73	61.64	38.35	2[3]
State assemble[4]	14,850	1871	16,725	88.78	11.21	742

1. These include women candidates running as deputy governors.
2. These include women candidates running as vice president for men candidates.
3. These include both the President and the Vice President.
4. For some reason, Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) did not release the state assemble result in their website, which happened to be our source of data collection for this article.

Data released by Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on the electoral candidates for the 2019 general election, shows 22,479 (or 88.11%) of the total number of those running for the positions are men candidates. The women candidates are a far cry from that of males, a mere 3035 candidates which are 11.89%. As noted above and detailed in Table 2 only 4.58% or the equivalent of 5 women candidates were elected into the senate. It is even more disheartened in the lower house as only 2.5% or 9 women candidates were elected. These figures of representatives were a far cry from the previous election four years ago. Indeed, in both houses, women are the minority (totalled a mere 14 representatives as against

455 men representatives). The 14 women representatives' voices can hardly produce the sound of a single raindrop as they will be drowned by the voices of their men counterpart in any policy or programme presented or tabled in the house floor.

The president and the vice presidents were both won by male. Although, this result was never a surprise, especially when the only hopeful women candidate was conjured to step down. Oby Ezekwesili of the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria made a dramatic announcement on the 24 January 2019 to step down. The announcement was complete disbelief to all her

supporters and others alike. According to the candidate; 'I have decided to step down from the presidential race and focus on helping to build a Coalition for a viable alternative to the All Progressive Congress and People's Democratic Party in the 2019 general elections. However, according to many Nigeria political commentators, she was forced to step down to give a men presidential candidate better chance of winning the election. The gloomy feelings of her supporters were captured by this statement in the Aljazeera 16 February 2019.

"I feel sad that she has stepped down, I am however happy that the national good is what she is thinking about. Her decision to step down and promote a coalition of all the small parties, as we prepare for the 2019 presidential elections, shows true leadership', a gender advocate Josephine Effah-Chukwuma told Al Jazeera".
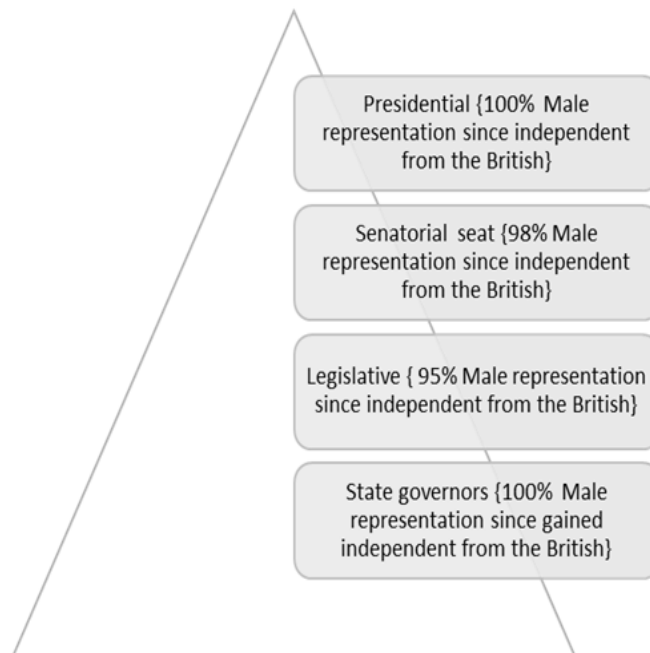
The accuracy of the Political Pinnacle of Nigeria Political System is undoubtedly precise (Refer Fig. 3).

Table 2. The 2019 election result by gender (Political representation)

Position contested	No of Seat	Won by male	Won by female	Total of (%) of women participants	Total % of men participants
President (and Vice president)	2	2	Nil	0	100
Senate	109	104	5	4.58	95.41
House of representatives	360	351	9	2.5	97.5
State governor[5]	36	36	Nil[6]	0	100

5. Due to political issues some states did not hold governorship election on the same day. For example, Anambra state, Kogi and Bayelsa States, but their current governors are male.
6. Three women were elected deputy governors in three different states.

Fig. 3. The Political pinnacle of Nigeria political system

Essentially, women's political status in Nigeria remains at the lowest level of the political pinnacle of the Nigerian political structure. What is more, data obtained prior to the election, revealed several obstacles to women's political representation. At the core of this obstacle are the socio-economic disadvantages of women in Nigeria. For instance, culture, especially the religion has been used to schooled women as to what is expected of 'perfect' women - daughter, sister, wife or sister-in-law, and the acceptable feminine behaviour. For example, a women member of the ISU (ISU is one of the 21 local governments in Imo state Nigeria) local government council noted:

> *"As an elected member, it is very hard to be a good mother to my children and a devoted wife each time I attend church services it's like my pastor is directly admonishing me - be a good a mother to your children and a good wife to your husband, and leave the men's job to men"* (R1. Amaka).

While an aspirant to a state legislative seat explains:

> *"It is very difficult for a woman candidate as a societal expectation of women has not altered, nor the traditional roles changed marriage is still viewed as the most important achievement of women. It is still believed that the husband is the crown on a woman's head. Pastors will not hesitate to remind women like me even though your husband supports your political aspiration, in many instances that does not include his or relatives' personal or financial commitment"* (R3. Sandra).

Many women echo similar pressure and financial limitations of most women candidates. Indeed, most Nigerian women's financial commitment is first and foremost towards their family needs, hence eligible women candidates lack a substantial economic base to pursue a political career. Besides, lacking in personal wealth, most women aspirants can hardly boast of financial contributions from wealthy individuals in their societies. One respondent sums this financial woos with this expression; 'financial contribution to women candidates is like flushing money down the drain people are not ready for women candidates. They're just better off as the first lady'.

5. CONCLUSION

In 2011, the United Nations General Assembly resolution on women's political participation notes:

> *"women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women."*

This quotation captured women's political activities in Nigeria. The above tables and figures are evident in women's marginalized position within the country's political sphere. Although women's political participation in Nigeria has come a long way, women's political representation is yet to begin. It is obvious from the data analysis that 14 elected females to 457 elected males at the federal level of government are an outright political imbalance. These 14 women representatives can hardly create a ripple in the house. What is more, the gender imbalance in the Nigerian body of politics is not new and there is no indication it will be addressed any time soon. As mentioned earlier in the article, the Nigerian socio-economic structures are the product of patriarchal. The patriarchal institutionalized in the core social organizations of this former British colony. Hence, the domination of women and younger men by older or more powerful men is a common phenomenon. Data obtained during my field trip to Nigeria prior to the 2019 election reiterated:

> *'I had to leave the country before the election day, as the election was postponed for a week. Besides, I could not change my flight arrangement'.*

The issue of powerful men in the Nigeria economy and socio-political sphere in Nigeria. These powerful men are labelled political godfathers. The so-called political godfathers are the dominant power brokers. For instance, it is no secret that Oby Ezekwesili of the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria who dramatically step down from the presidential campaign was forced by a so-called godfather.

It is logical to acknowledge that women in Nigeria are by far better off than many women from some developing and underdeveloped nations,

[21] but not progressive in nature. This researchers' understanding indicates that 14 representatives are mere tokenism. The 14 representatives are a mere 3.2% of the total elected representative in the Nigerian government and it is not even one-third of the United Nation's proposition for women's representation in member nations' political status.

In 1995, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) endorsed a 30% target of women participation at decision-making levels. In the African continent, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) formulated recommendations for gender policy and institutional framework, which was later disseminated in the "Declaration on Gender and Development" and adopted in November 1997 in Blantyre by the Southern African Development Community Heads of Government. The Declaration recognized gender equality as a fundamental human 3 right and included a commitment to a 30% quota of women in political decision-making bodies by 2005. The increasing significance of women's political participation was further recognized by its inclusion in the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals target 5.

According to [22] and [23], political participation as a human right granted citizens the right to take part, directly or through representatives, in the conduct of public affairs and government, and to vote at genuine periodic elections based on universal suffrage and the secret ballot. Thus, this principle is enshrined in both the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Furthermore, women's political participation was later integrated with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. The article 7 called for the state parties to take appropriate steps to eliminate discrimination against women in both the political spheres by ensuring women and men has equal rights to vote and to be eligible to vote and to be eligible to hold public office, to participate in the policy formulation and implementation, and to participate in non-governmental organizations. Thus, Nigeria women could be said to be absolutely partaking in political participation. However, cannot be said the same for political representation. This understanding is drawn from the Nigeria 2019 general election data. As noted above, an essential feature of political representation is that a mediating assembly is set between the citizenry and political decision making (Brennan and Hamlin 1999). Therefore, when unequal citizenry representation is the norm, decision-making will fail to address pressing social issues.

In view of the above understanding, women are inadequately represented in the Nigeria political system or body, the following factors (i) encourage gender-responsive governance at the state and national levels (ii) institutionalizing gender equality within party structures, processes and practices (iii) introducing voluntary party quotas that will enhance the women's political representation in both the legislative and senate chambers and (iv) create opportunities that heighten gender-equal access to financial resources and campaign funds could be adopted to address this inadequacy.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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