

## **Increase in Gender Imbalance in Governance: Implications for Sustainable Development in Nigeria.**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper x-rayed gender imbalance in governance in Nigeria. Efforts were made to conceptualize gender, gender imbalance and governance. The paper also examined the history of women participation in governance, the scope of women participation in governance and the challenges confronting women participation in governance in Nigeria. The paper established that while women's role in governance dates back in history, their participation in politics has been historically hampered by their socio-economic status, cultural bias, lack of party support, the patriarchal system, poor public perception of women in politics, zero sum nature of politics in Nigeria and absence of a deep democratic structure, amongst others. Against these findings, some recommendations were made. Support network and prospective role models; Through the identification of aspirants and pairing them with established women politicians; Playing a mentoring role and providing capacity building training to young or aspiring female politicians; Building a Coalition of NGOs and Grassroots women associations that coordinate the support and advocacy for women aspirants; Creative environment that allows women to engage in decision making processes in a sustainable and effective way free from political harassment and violence; and Establishment of legal funds to enable women politicians to challenge electoral malpractices. Finally, there is the need to identify and engage relevant stake holders such as the Independent National Electoral Commission and political parties in introducing quota for women in the democratic process.*

### **Introduction**

Gender relations are part of social relations, referring to the ways in which the social categories of men and women, male and female, relate over the whole range of social organization, not just the interactions between individual men and women in the sphere of personal relationships, or in terms of biological reproduction. In all aspects of social activities, including access to resources for production, rewards or remuneration for work, distribution of consumption, income or goods, exercise of authority and power, and participation in cultural,

political and religious activity, gender is important in establishing people's behaviour and the outcome of any social interaction.

The issue of gender imbalance in governance in Nigeria in particular and the African continent in general cannot be over emphasized. It has become a dominant issue for public discourse in contemporary times. Political participation as one of the key elements of democracy provides the justification for inclusion of marginalized groups such as women and youths in electoral competition. Participation of women in politics will be meaningful only if the process is just, fair, permissive and a level playing ground is guaranteed for possible ascension of women politically. Politics has a strategic importance for women because the ultimate success of women's movements will rest heavily on the effective use of the political process (Lynn, 2008). Women's ability to effectively use the political process to get to political positions may increase their representation in elective positions and effect public policies. However, it is very clear from Nigeria and indeed Africa's experience that the political process is male dominated.

Momodu (2003:48) submitted that the issues of women's political participation and representation in politics and governance should be seen from four perspectives: Access, Participation, Representation and Transformation. Access to political institutions, participation (which includes control of power within such institutions), quantitative and qualitative representation and the end result will be social and political transformation in the polity. Women's political empowerment can be enhanced when these four conditions are fulfilled. The view that women in politics matter is sustained by three reasons: First, politics is an important arena for decision making. Individuals who hold official positions in government get to decide how to allocate scarce resources such as tax revenues. Politicians make political decisions that may help some people at the expense of others. Decisions by politicians often affect people's individual choices by encouraging some behaviours and outlawing others. Second, political power is a valuable tool. Politicians hold power over other social institutions such as the family. Thirdly, holding a political position is to hold a position of authority (Paxton, 2007). Women in positions of authority and power can influence decisions on issues that bother on women and impact positively on the lives of the female gender.

Today, women account for approximately one half of every country's population, yet they are not equally represented in the government of various countries. Nwankwo (2006), provided miserable figures concerning their involvement in politics. The United States and the United Kingdom, among the world's oldest democracies, had just 9.1% and 9.0% representation respectively in their legislatures in 2006. Yet, these figures are a major improvement considering

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that in 1992, they were 2.9 and 3.7 percent respectively. Although some countries such as Norway and Sweden had as high as 35% to 60% representation of women in parliament, others like Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Kenya and Ethiopia had less than an aggregate of 5% as at 2011. It is interesting to note that society recognizes the value of women as voters in a democratic process, yet they are perceived as incapable of governing, hence their limited acceptance to ascend to the pinnacle of decision – making and participate in the power structures. This situation has affected the overall contributions of women to the development of society. This paper gives an insight into the increasing gender imbalance in governance in Nigeria and its effects on development.

#### **Conceptual Definition**

**Gender:** The terms “gender” and “sex” have often been used interchangeably to mean one and the same thing but differences exist between the two words. Oakley (1985) in Fadeyiye (2005:227) defined sex as “biologically determined characteristics of men and women”, while referring to gender as “all the characteristics of men and women which any society uses in determining and assigning roles to each sex based on the biological features bestowed by nature” (UNICEF, Nigeria, 1998) in Akpochafor (2009:3). Hornby (2001), on the other hand, saw gender as the fact of being male or female. To him, gender is a social construct which connotes the differentiated roles and responsibilities of men and women in a particular society. Ossai and Iwegbu (2011) asserted that gender comprises a range of differences between men and women, extending from the biological to the social. They went further to say that discussions of gender cut across role differentiation, role placement to and role assignment in the entire human society. Similarly, Okeke (1999) said gender refers to the many social and/or culturally constructed characteristics, qualities, behaviour and roles which different societies ascribe to females and males. Also, the World Bank (2006) saw gender as “socially constructed roles and socially learned behaviours and expectations associated with males and females” These roles create gender identities, behaviour and relations that are usually unequal in terms of control over decision making, assets and freedom of action.

**Gender Imbalance:** Imbalance means a situation in which two or more things are not treated the same way or in an unfair manner (Hornby, 2001). Therefore, gender imbalance refers to an unequal treatment or a perception of individuals based on their gender. It means lack of balance, the state of being out of equilibrium or out of proportion. Gender imbalance also refers to the differences in the status, power and prestige women and men have in groups.



**Governance:** The concept of governance is as old as human civilization and has been used in political and academic discourse for a longtime. Governance, as a concept, has been defined from different perspectives by different scholars. This presupposes that there is no one generally acceptable definition of governance. Jerome (2004) in Agidi (2013) opined that governance is often used as an umbrella concept under which elusive and ill-defined political processes are defined. Ejumudo (2010:105) noted that issues relating to governance have come to occupy the centre stage in the development literature. Furthermore, he stated that more recently, governance gained in the literature of African development. Governance is also seen as the science of government behaviour and performance, including the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels and it provides the framework on which citizens and groups exercise their rights, meet their obligations and articulate their interest (Agidi, 2013).

#### **Historical Analysis of Women Participation in Governance in Nigeria**

Historically, a woman's life situation has always been the cause of worries and concern in Nigerian society. In spite of their irresistible numerical strength, and despite serving as the anvils of labour and productivity, these efforts have never been converted into real power for women in society (Kukah, 1999). Women's struggles in post-colonial States have therefore, been typified by an abundance of the recognizable elements of wars, sweat, tears and blood (Kukah, 1999). Women's participation in Nigeria's public life has been difficult, and society has not appreciated this struggle. Women were able to succeed in their protests because of their strong unions and effective market associations with women in other communities. From the protests, women gained the prevention of taxation, the dismissal of many warrant chiefs (some of whom were put on trial), the power to select new chiefs, and the appointment of several women court members (Kukah, 1999). In 1959, other protests included the Ngwa women's opposition against the municipalization of the communities the Eastern Region women's resistance to a new school fee in 1958 and other chains of women's protests between 1947 and 1958 led by the Abeokuta Women's Union (ABU). However, women's official organizational movements in Nigeria came about in 1953 after the National Women's Union changed into the Federation of Nigeria's Women Societies (FNWS). In 1959, the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS) became an umbrella organization holding women's dreams for the future (Kukah, 1999).

The extraordinary increase in the way many Nigerian women came to education in the 1970s and their resulting mobility with the practical system have

gone a long way in civilizing the profile of the Nigerian woman. However, the flash stop seems to have come about in the mid-1980s with the United Nations' Declaration of 1985 as Women's Year. In addition, new drifts in the international movement of women, and the association of Nigerian women with such international organizations like the International Federation of female lawyers, International Federation of University Women (IFUW), Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), World Council of Catholic Women (WCCW), and so on, have added to the urgency in the struggle of women for a more important role in the public sphere (Kukah, 1999).

Women's participation in national life has been informed by the changes in Nigerian society. For instance, post-independence Nigeria shaped a neo-colonial choice that flourished in imitation of western way of life. In fact, the apparent role of a woman was a mixture of the conventional types of traditional and religious worldviews: women were to be seen and not heard. They were significant only to the point that they added to their husbands' achievement or position in society. This tendency has dominated the interaction between women and society, and it explains the role of women as mainly ceremonial, helpful and flattering (Currell, 2003).

In the 1950 elections, the northern men resolutely refused the enfranchisement of their women. In the south, many voted, but few women contested for seats in the House of Representatives. These women in the East and the North did not participate publicly in bringing in the First Republic. Nwankwo (2006), commenting on the full participation of the Southern women, noted that the best they could get was one person, Wurola Esan, who was appointed to the senate of 36 members. No woman was elected to the 312-member House of Representatives and none joined the federal cabinet. In the 1961 general elections, three women were elected to the Eastern House of Assembly. There were no women ministers in the regional governments. The two southern-based parties had women's wings, but there were no women in the top positions in the party. However, several women were elected to local government councils in the South. In fact, women were totally unnoticed when selecting the 50 persons to draft the Constitution in the return to democracy, and women reacted with extensive censure to their exclusion from the Constitution Drafting Committee. Later five women were eventually included in the 250-member constitution assembly that drew up the Constitution. Also, in the process to fulfilling its promise to return to democracy in 1933, the military government held local government and governorship elections in 1990, and out of 1,297 local positions all over the country, women won 206 local positions. None was elected as governor, but two were chosen as deputy governors. In fact, only one woman got into the 90-

member senate in the 1992 National Assembly election and 12 women won seats in the 638- member House of Representatives that same year. The 1993 presidential election was believed to be the most free and fair in the history of the Nigerian political system. Many Nigerians were surprised when the military annulled the elections for supposed indiscretions that were not specified. As it happened, three women contested for that election but it is unclear whether they won because of the annulment (Toyo, 1999).

The overall result of the annulment of the 1993 election was the intensity of women's marginalization. In the May 1999 election, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) sources pointed out that in the National Assembly elections, only 3 women were elected out of 109 senate members, 13 women gained the House of Representatives, no women were elected out of the 36 governors, nor were any interested in contesting for the presidency (Toyo, 1999). The situation remained unchanged from 2003. Men dominate most public offices till date. Female gubernatorial candidates have emerged but none has ever won and same goes for the Presidency. Legislative representation has witnessed the presence of women yet they remain under-represented when compared to their male counterparts. Following two decades of military rule, statistics revealed that women only secured 3% representation in contested positions in 1999, 4% in 2003, while in 2007, they made only 6%. A few and an almost insignificant number of women were elected into various posts in the past four general elections held in the country between 1999 and 2011. The result of the survey showed that no woman was elected as governor of any state in the federation. We only had few women as members of Houses of Assembly across the country and as members of the upper house (Senate) and lower house (House of Representative) of the National Assembly.

**Table 1.** Comparison of women representation in 2007 and 2011 general elections.

SN	Position	No. of available and elected seats	No. of women elected and % total in 2007-2011	No. of women total in 2011
1	Presidency	1	0	0
2	Senate	109	9(8.26)	8(7.34)
3	House of Rep	360	25 (6.94)	21(5.83)
4	Governorship	36	0	0
5	State House of Assembly	990	38(3.84)	54(5.45)

Source: Gender Audit and IPU PARLINE database (2011).

From the table, we see that 8(7.34%) out of the 109 senators elected in 2011 were women compared to 9(8.26%) in 2007, while only 21(5.83) out of the 360 members of House of Representatives were women, down from 25(6.94) in 2007. Out of Nigeria's 36 states, only one - Lagos State - voted in a woman deputy governor, but no woman was elected governor. In a related development, the first and only female Speaker of any House of Assembly in Nigeria, Mrs. Margaret Ichen, was frustrated out of office in Benue State. Women have not received much support from the men because those who have found themselves in one position of authority or the other were frustrated out of office or forced to step down

#### **Challenges of Women's Participation in Governance in Nigeria**

Historical and cultural factors have undermined women's roles in public life throughout the world. In Nigeria, their access to the political system is more incomplete because of their conditions of poverty and low educational skills. Moreover, many women do not associate with politics; they often appear to decline the current practice of power, authority and leadership. Nigerian women panic when faced with demanding political campaigns, the aggressive media, and the uncovering of a history of their private lives. A woman's minimal impact on economic and social life is reflected in the political system. Representation of Nigerian women in high-level fora is unreasonably low. No woman has attained the status of a head of state or government. Nigerian women are practically absent from the deliberative political bodies that influence the development programmes of the country. Many factors have been adduced to explain these situations. Among these factors are:



**Lack of Confidence:** This is one of the major reasons for Nigerian women's under representation in formal political institutions, including legislatures, governments, and political parties. According to Wilma (2001), "with confidence and determination Nigeria woman can attain the highest levels in the political procedure. In fact, women should learn to believe in themselves and drop the extensive view that men have to be their leaders". Women are equal to and have the same potential as men, but only they cannot fight for their rights. Women are very good campaigners, fundraisers, organizers, supporters and mobilizers, but they never contest for presidential posts.

**Culture:** Almost all of the 250 different tribes in Nigeria share the same concept that the woman's position is in the home. The most important roles of women are defined as wives and mothers. How well she performs these roles gains her society's recognition and respect. If a woman is considered not to be a good wife or mother, she accounts for nothing despite whatever she does in other areas of her life. In the Nigerian mentality, only married women are respected in society. For them, a woman's dignity lies with her husband. Obviously, a woman without a marriage cannot fit into the well-respected position of a wife. Motherhood is also regarded inside the tradition of marriage. Single mothers are scorned and children born outside of wedlock are the objects of nasty jokes (Nwankwo, 2006).

Furthermore, throughout Nigerian history, women have been valued variously as property, cheap labour, and child bearers. The tradition of women as property dates from the earliest tribes when women were a kind of money used in exchange for cattle and land (Heilbroner, 2000). Furthermore, Ahern (2006) noted that the whole institution of ownership began by ownership of women. Even today, in Nigerian cultures, the tradition of dowry continues to place money on women. Although placing a price on a woman is considered inhumane, the idea of women as signs of their husbands' wealth and status carries on, but in more slight and complicated forms. Tribal warriors fought wars and women were the prizes of triumph. The most successful warriors possessed the most beautiful and industrious female captives. Many women who produced goods were signs of prestige for their husbands (Ahern, 2006). Consequently, most Nigerian cultures still operate under the assumption that a woman will be married and will be dependent on the husband for the rest of her lifetime. This dependency today forms a more complex web affecting women's political lives because they are not only dependent as individuals, but as groups and as a society. The culture has made it a woman's responsibility to stay at home, it does not consider her schedule in other jobs outside her home. Usually, when a man helps in household activities or childcare, it is at his own freedom of choice. Most of the time,

interested husbands may be disheartened from helping with housework, especially if his friends and relatives see it as a sign of weakness on his part. Furthermore, customary laws deteriorate women's position in most Nigerian communities. For example, women are not permitted to own land or other important property. Akin Ibidapo-Obe (1990) commented:

*In some traditional societies among the Ibos, Ibibio, Annang Oron, Obaloko, Abua, and Oga the inheritors of man's property and his successors are his sons, brothers, father and uncles excluding daughters, wives, sisters, and mother". The seclusion of women by the Muslims is another political obstacle for women. Although it is practised in the Northern and Western parts of Nigeria, the practice started after the Fulbe take over of the Hausa states in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This resulted in the slow introduction of seclusion among all classes. The major reason for the practice of seclusion is that Islamic tradition views women as sexual creatures, who, if they were not controlled, would distract men from the polite and grand quest for religion.*

Stobel (2004) added that "where seclusion was strictly followed, it could inhibit a woman from actively pursuing her own economic interests and force her independence on male representatives". However, the cultural assertion of women's inadequacy and inability to rule has become so intensely ingrained in the minds of so many Nigerian women that they do not consider politics and also avoid any effort to change their positions. Nigerians believe that if women were permitted to manage the seat of power, their society would be destroyed. So, the inept male leader is preferable to a strong female counterpart (Matland and Michelle, 2007). In addition, part of female inferiority is the dual norm of the ethical practice placed on them. A woman is expected to be pure and chaste until marriage, while it is accepted that men should gain sound sexual knowledge before marriage. It is now contentious if some communities still want the circumcision of females in order to restrict their sexual desire, while others authorize early marriage for the girls before they reach puberty (Nwankwo, 2006).

**Education:** Nigerians received proper education from the early missionaries who set up schools to train Catholic clergymen, nuns, and teachers for the early Church in the 1900s (Oyekanmi, 2006). Early education was copied from the education of the English public school system towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, there were fewer schools for girls than for boys, and the syllabus for the



girls comprised singing, dancing, cooking, and other activities to train them to become wives and mothers. Additionally, the emphasis on missionary education in Nigeria for girls was on character and marriage training and domestic affairs. The ratio of girls to boys in that system was tremendously low. For example, in 1920-1925, the ratio of girls in secondary school was 1:35 (Mba, 2002). Thus, the smaller numbers of females who received any education were intentionally being pushed away from any public life. Many females were not sent to school because it was believed that the best women could do was to become accustomed to the traditional household tasks for which formal education was not needed (Nwabueze and Ndukaeze, 2000). At the higher levels of education, women's chances were few. When Nigeria's first university, the University College of Ibadan, opened in 1948, the admission report said that out of the 104 students admitted, only 3 were females (Oyekanmi, 2006). Although the situation has significantly improved over the years, and presently, the female population in the universities has grown from the ratio of 1:4 around the 1980s to 4:5 in 1999, women still lag behind, especially in such areas as engineering, medicine, computer science and chemistry (Oyekanmi, 2006). Furthermore, access to education and employment are basic components for individuals in a modern Nigerian society if they are to acquire or want to attain political power. Both formal and informal education of individuals allows people to have access to job or career opportunities that ensure economic control of some resources. These resources, tied to organizational support, build leadership skills and self-esteem. From a psychological point of view, self-esteem enables an individual to attain political power and to use it efficiently when it is required.

**Ideological and Psychological Factor:** In Nigeria, traditions continue to accentuate the woman's basic roles as a mother and a housewife. A customary, strong, patriarchal value system favours sexually separated roles, and cultural values count against the progression and participation of women in any political procedure. Nigerian societies are dominated by an ideology about a women's position. According to their view, women should only play the role of "working mothers" and that is usually low-paid and apolitical. In addition, men can even tell women how to vote and who to vote for. Women in Nigeria are faced with an ideological situation, one in which a certain common image of women in traditional and political roles continues to overshadow any other role they may play. A woman leader image requires that she be genderless in her speech and manner and recognized as a woman only through companionable individuality. Most of the time, it is not acceptable and is even shameful, according to the majority, for women leaders to open up their feminine nature (Tibajuka, 1997).

Tibajuka (1997:90) noted that the more reliable and "manly" Nigerian women are, the more they are involved with the tacit male systems of the political game. So, Nigerian women politicians had to conquer the complexity of their uncomfortable feelings in the political field. In fact, Nigerian women maintained these ideas and ended up feeling guilty when they could not match this nearly unbearable image. There was a feeling of guilt strongly tied to leadership that made women feel apologetic, that they were betraying their sense of womanhood when they were supposed to be proud of both. Moreover, Nigerian women should know that they never cease to be women when they become politicians. Their womanhood can now hold different creative potential and intellectual strength. Women's capabilities to make decisions and to apply them is not a masculine or feminine specific attribute, but it is common to both genders. To be more precise, holding power is natural to men and women in Nigerian society, and worldwide (Tibajuka, 1997).

**The Nature of Politics in Nigeria:** Historically, Nigerian men controlled all aspects of the political arena. They formulated rules of the political game and described the principles for evaluation. This system of male-dominated ideals results in either women declining to participate in politics or rejecting the male method of politics. Furthermore, the Nigerian political life is prearranged in line with male norms, values and lifestyles. For example, the political ideal is based on "winners and losers, rivalry and opposition" instead of mutual respect, teamwork and agreement. The situation is unfamiliar to women, both to their nature and experiences. Therefore, when women do participate in politics, they do so in a small number" (Swaraj, 1997). In fact, the fundamental nature of the ever-changing political system in Nigeria had been caught up with women's political participation. For example, the country had been independent for 40 years but the military took control of the government for 27 of those years. However, the meaning of politics in Nigeria made politics a "winner-take-all" situation, and those in power did not feel compelled to change the lives of the people and the voters. Therefore, elections had been seen as a do-or-die business and if people had the impression that once they lost an election they had lost everything, they would definitely do anything to win. So, the national existence of "electoral frauds, bribery, violence and unnecessary control of money and ethnicity are recognized by every Nigerian as the most horrible problems with politics".

In addition, the lack of money has been a woman's biggest problem. For instance, in July 1991, the National Commission for Women in connection with the Centre for Democratic Studies held a one-day meeting with women political aspirants to discuss their problems. Women aspirants are minor candidates,

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insignificant because they usually have no money to mobilize. In addition, because of the most perturbing problem of bribery and political violence, women are scared away from political participation. Again, these political vices provided good reasons for the military takeover of the Nigerian government (National Concord, 1991).

**Lack of Party Support:** Nigerian women play significant roles in campaigning and rallying support for their parties, yet they hardly ever occupy decision-making positions in these arrangements. In fact, less than 3% of party leaders in Nigeria are women. Although political parties hold resources for carrying out election campaigns, women do not gain from these resources. For instance, parties do not give enough financial support to women candidates in running their campaigns (Individuals with Disabilities Education Acts (IDEA, 2008). Moreover, both the selection and appointment processes within the three political parties in Nigeria are based on a bias against women in that male individualities are stressed and often become the factor in selecting candidates. So, an "old boy club" ambience and prejudices hinder and forbid politically inclined women from mixing themselves with men's party activities. These consequences make for an underestimation of women as politicians by those who give out money for election campaigns. This prevents women from being nominated. Most of the time, women are placed on the party not to be elected, but to add votes in case their party wins inadequate number of votes in an election. This approach is used as a hook for voters. Women's participation will be better realized when Nigerian government adopts quotas for women's participation in politics (Swaraj, 2008).

**Old Patriarchal Traditions:** Male control over the country's seat of power and women's subordinations in society and the family were mainly the creation of the European colonizers who brought in a patriarchal ideology; instituted a male-dominated state; acknowledged male supremacy in property rights, education and employment; and demoted women's roles as reproducers in a new gender division of labour (Ruth, 1980). Consequently, the male dominance in Nigerian decision-making strengthened and spread during the colonial period. Men dominated post-colonial Nigerian politics and politics was used to keep men forever superior to women, creating obstacles to women who sought to obtain the same power and declare themselves within the society. The persistent bias against women in Nigeria is best explained by the idea of patriarchy (Ruth, 1980). Karam (1997) added that patriarchy is shown in the existing ideology and practices of state and societies, and by male control in kinship, family and ownership of property. The exploitation of women remains a source of benefit for men as heads of the family

and of states alike. In fact, the domination of patriarchy makes it difficult for women's movements to exercise influence over the government which has power to implement policies that would reduce bias against women in Nigerian politics and other public services.

Furthermore, women are subject to the control of their husbands, while unmarried women, divorcees and widows are in worse positions in terms of property and power. In Nigerian and most African countries, single females are considered socially unacceptable and are given few rights to own land and other possessions. So, without substantial assets and social acceptance in society, single women find it very difficult to get into politics, while widowed and divorced women are usually subjected to harassment from the former husbands' families (Ruth, 1980). Nigerians still have an understanding of democracy that somehow does not acknowledge that it means participation of all groups in society, both men and women. Without quotas by the political parties, lifting women's representation in Nigerian politics appears difficult. Since 1976, the average percentage of women members in legislature in Nigeria has never increased beyond three to eight percent (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011). Old patriarchal traditions and quiet restraints are almost certainly the strongest obstacles to increasing women's representation in Nigerian politics. In Nigeria, there are few women candidates for office and few women are elected. Furthermore, due to misconceptions in Nigerian culture, the belief is that women should only be socially involved in the home, looking after the children's education and health, whereas men should be the only participants in public affairs, politics, income generation, decision-making and other public functions. Women who risk upsetting these creeds are regarded as rude and bizarre by their fellow women who prefer to vote for men as they feel more comfortable with their customary ways of thinking (Karan, 2008).

**Socio-Economic Factor:** The economic crisis and developing democracy in Nigeria have deepened the risk of poverty for women, and unemployment has become more and more feminized. Socio-economic circumstances play an important role in women's legislative recruitment within both long-standing and new democracies. The lack of similar educational requirements alone means that women cannot compete with men in the job market. In fact, women are not equal to men in any well-paid professional jobs since they are not trained for such jobs (Individuals with Disabilities Education Acts (IDEA) 2011). Similarly, most women are kept in low-paying jobs especially in teaching, healthcare, and service sectors while the rest of the women work as rural farmers, petty traders and house-wives (Henn, 2004). Men are afraid of losing the power to subdue women's

lives if women no longer need their money. "Women suffer countless social drawbacks from not owning financial power. The irresistible barriers for women going into politics are lack of constituents and lack of monetary resources. Nigerian women move from their father's homes to their husband's homes" (Balletbo, 2007). They are like refugees and have no foundation from which to develop links with people or build knowledge and experience about issues. They have no money or land of their own. Everything belongs to their husbands, fathers, or fathers-in-law, and given the increasing cost of running effective political campaigns, this poses another serious obstacle to women in Nigeria (Faiz, 2001).

**The Double Burden:** In Nigeria, women carry an unequal share of domestic work relative to men and their participation in politics is more restricted by poverty, lack of education and access to information. It is difficult for women to participate in political life because of their main concern for family survival, and they have no choice but to spend much of their time trying to fulfil their families' basic needs. However, some women have full-time jobs as wives and mothers as well as other careers like teachers, doctors, and lawyers. To become a member of the legislature in these situations could then be considered a third full-time job.

### **Conclusion**

From the review of existing literature, it appears that there is nothing in the Constitution which excludes women from participating in governance in Nigeria. Yet, when it comes to actual practice, there is extensive discrimination. An almost insignificant number of women were elected into various posts in the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 general elections held in the country. Men dominated most public offices, till date. Female gubernatorial candidates have emerged but none has ever won and same goes for the Presidency. Legislative representation has witnessed the presence of women yet they remain under-represented when compared to their male counterparts. Following two decades of military rule, statistics revealed that women only secured 3% representation in contested positions in 1999, 4% in 2003, while in 2007, they made only 6%. An almost insignificant number of women were elected into various posts in past general elections held in the country between 1999 and 2011. The result of the survey showed that no woman was elected as governor of any state in the federation. We only had a few women as members of Houses of Assembly across the country and as members of the upper house (Senate) and lower house (House of Representative) of the National Assembly. The survey showed a great imbalance in representation of women in the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections.



Throughout recorded history in all parts of the world, women have been subjected to domination by men. This is as a result of a persisting cultural stereotype, abuse of religious and traditional practices, patriarchal societal structures in which economic, political and social power are dominated by men, and the role women have historically played as the followers of male political leaders. This form of discrimination is not simply an African or Nigerian phenomenon but a global one. The only difference is that it has lasted for so long in this part of the world as other developed nations of the world move towards gender equality and equity. Women are unjustifiably discriminated against in many ways. Political participation which is a *sine qua non* of democracy, and allows for diversity of opinions and participation of both men and women cannot thrive by excluding the women folk that constitute half of the world's population. In conclusion, the key point is that discrimination against women has its root in the nature of our societies which celebrate men as being unique, stronger and fit for the public space while women are feeble and weak and meant to stay within the confluence of the private space. This has gone a long way to affecting women's perception of politics and has therefore, led to a very low level of political interest, knowledge and activity of women in politics.

To redress the state of gender inequality in Nigeria policies, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Support network and prospective role models through the identification of aspirants and pairing them with established women politicians, playing a mentoring role and providing capacity building training to young or aspiring female politicians.
- ii. Building a coalition of NGOs and grassroots women associations that coordinate the support and advocacy for women aspirants.
- iii. Awareness of their political and legal rights and to claim them.
- iv. An enabling environment that allows women to engage in decision making processes in a sustainable and an effective way that is free from political harassments and violence.
- v. Establishment of legal funds to enable women politicians to challenge electoral malpractices.
- vi. Identifying and engaging relevant stakeholders such as the Independent National Electoral Commission and political parties in introducing quota.

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