Gender and the Imperative of Women Participation in Governance: Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract

Nigeria is a multicultural and populous country, whose resources should be channelled to enhance the development of the country, However, a valuable partner in progress such as the female gender has been side-lined in governance and decision-making positions. This means a critical part of the country whose issues and voices should be heard in order to address their concerns have been side-lined to the margins of the corridor of power where far reaching decisions can make meaningful impact to their lives. This paper focus on mainstreaming strategies has not borrowed the rich socio-cultural contexts that are not related to the country's intellectual environment. The first section of the paper argues that certain factors have been attributed to this sorry situation of woman such as; social, political, socioeconomic, identity politics and gender dynamics have significantly affected the active participation of women in governance. Scholars tend to Present African cultures and traditions as the reasons for the prevalence of poor responsiveness to gender mainstreaming and social acceptance of the concept. With relevant illustrations and cases this paper demonstrates the need for Nigerian's mainstreaming strategies and programmes to consider economic, social, religious and cultural realities of women which keep them at the margins of power. It is against this background that the paper concluded these challenges can be harnessed as opportunities to change the narrative and involve the women in governance.

Keywords: *Gender, Governance, Participation, Prospects, Strategy*

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Background to the Study

The paper is guided by the hypothesis that Nigeria's main streaming strategies have failed to take account of other socio-cultural contexts that are not related to Nigeria's intellectual environment. The paper argues that the importation of western approaches into the country was a deliberate social process by Western scholars and development practitioners, who, driven by the logics of modernization and westernization, present African cultures and traditions as the reasons for the prevalence of gender in balance and a telling lack of women's presence in significant numbers in governance in Nigeria. It was in this context that a number of policies and laws were 'imported' into Nigeria without contextualizing them to address the peculiarities of the Nigerian intellectual environment. With relevant illustrations and cases this paper demonstrates the need for addressing the gender gaps to consider the economic, social and cultural realities and women's experience in governance. The paper is divided into seven sections. The first and second section introduces the problematic. The third section looks at theories of gender and their implication for bridging the gender gaps. The fourth section reviews a number the trends and pattern of gender and governance in Nigeria. The fifth identifies challenges and prospects. Section six brings out the key requirements in strategy formation and implementation while section seven concludes the analyses by underscoring the need for research community and policy makers in Nigeria to support the incorporation of African social values, women's contribution in politics and orientations into the country's governance for sustainable development.

Justification

Women face several obstacles to participating in political life. Structural barriers through discriminatory laws and institutions still limit women's options to run for office. Capacity gaps mean women are less likely than men to have the education, contacts and resources needed to become effective leaders. As the 2011 UN 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.

There are two schools of thought on women and leadership issues. The first school believes women in the past had demonstrated leadership qualities in various strands of life but gradually their power was eroded, while the second school believes women have not been given opportunity to demonstrate their leadership prowess, that only quite recently, women have access to leadership. It is our beliefs that both positions are true, because we can support the two assertions from historical records.

According to the 2006 Nigerian population census figure, women constituted 49% of the total population, yet, there has been a gross gender gap between men and women, especially in political representation, economic management and leadership. Political equality is still obscure in African countries, although some progress has been made. As men have control over assets and have relatively better education, they have a dominant position in terms of political power. For instance, men councillors may not necessarily be highly educated but such

positions are not given to women who have the same low educational level with them. Lack of awareness leads to situations where they become dependent on male political positions or political parties. Men's participation in leadership will focus more on issues of men's interest than on women's concerns. In some cases, women are elected into a leadership position in the arm of government without actually participating in actual leadership. In Nigeria, a lot of women lack effective power or influence, especially in federal government structure. Many of them do not have the necessary skills to present ideas effectively. Lack of awareness of political participation means inadequate contribution to public affairs and women's empowerment. When women are given the opportunity of participation in governance, they will recognize these problems and address them to accommodate full participation of women in governance at all levels of the arms of government. One of the important reasons why women have not received adequate benefits from years of planning and development is their inadequate representation, non-participation and non-involvement in the preparation and execution of plans for their economic development and social justice through decentralized institutions Okafor, Emeka and Akokuwebe, Monica, (2015).

According to Shamim and Kumari, (2002), most political parties do not even maintain data on their women membership and few women are granted tickets for elections. Since politics is traditionally a male domain and all financial, economic, commercial and political negotiations conducted outside the home are made by males. Nigerian women have very limited access to decision-making process, and they have a severe lack of access to and control over financial resources. This effectively reduces women's chance of contesting elections. The challenges and issues of women marginalisation and low participation in political leadership and decision making have been attracting a lot of attention from scholars. Although women and men have different biological and physiological make-up, women may share common features with men in terms of educational qualifications, socio-economic status and occupation, among others (Shamim and Kumari, 2002). Inspite of political parties making concessions for female candidates such as free nomination forms for contesting elections to encourage women participation in politics, women lack the political structure and enormous resources required to win a party's ticket not to mention winning the final election. Most selection process are done at the party level which is mostly dominated by men with a women leader title which is usually a lone voice at the party power table. This has made things difficult for women to scale through the most basic huddles to acquiring access to governance. This is contrary to provisions of the National Gender Policy, (2006) which specifies that 35% affirmative action be taken so that at least 35% of elective and appointive positions be given to women. But this is not the case; an example in point shows how dynamics of gender power relations and who gets what tend to be played out. I was involved in a recent advocacy visit to Legislators at the House of Assembly in Plateau State to support the participation of women in the fourth coming elections. A Legislator in response to the call for more women participation noted that the positions are very juicy and profitable if women want a share of the spoils they will have to hustle and wriggle their way in, as no one was going to give away his seat just like that. So, he suggested that women should brace up and fight for what they want as advocacy alone will not yield any fruitful results.

Theoretical Framework

Patriarchy theory: The theory of patriarchy was advocated by scholars such as Millet (1969), and Beauvoir, (1953). The theorists of patriarchy laid emphasis on male dominance of the female folks. Males are seen as controlling access to institutional power and it is argued that they mould ideology, philosophy, art and religion to suit their needs. According to Millet, (1969) in her book titled sexual politics, she argued that:

> *Our society, like all other historical civilization is a patriarchy. The fact is evident at once if one recalls that the military, technology, universities, science, political office and finance-in short, every avenue of power.... Including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands.... What lingers of supernatural authority, the deity, his ministry, together with the ethics and values, the philosophy and art of our culture is of male manufacture Beauvoir (1953).*

This shows that the power of the male permeates everything, it is diffuse and concrete, symbolic and literal, universal and expressed with local variations which obscure its universality. Nigerian society is a patriarchy one where men dominate everything, including the political arena. Women are marginalized in national and local politics and more generally in the public and private life of our nation despite their numerical strength (over 50%) in terms of population (NPC, 2006). Women were conferred with subordinate position relative to men's and as such they are expected to play second fiddle roles in the society Anifowose, cited in Akuboye, (2004). The materialist conception recognises that capitalism and patriarchy reinforce each other. Similarly, some radical feminists locate patriarchy in men's control of women's sexuality and procreative functions. Also, culture and the construction of language and words are heavily influenced by patriarchy (Igbuzor, 2009).

Structural Functionalist Theory: Functionalist's analysis has a long history in sociology. It is prominent in the study of August Comte 1798-1857 and Herbert Spencer 1820-1903. It was developed by Emile Durkheim 1858-1917 and refined by Talcott Parsons 1902-1979 (Rizer, 1992). This study utilized Talcott Parsons structural functionalism. Talcott Parsons used his AGIL (A-Adaptation, G-Goal attainment, Integration, L-Latency/pattern maintenance) scheme to relate to how the society functions together. It was these functional imperatives that promoted inter-dependence of various parts working harmoniously together to promote order and balance in the system (Rizer, 1992). Accordingly, therefore, political participation should be everybody's business irrespective of gender and not an exclusive function of men. Women have largely been left out of the political system. This marginalization contradicts the position of Talcott Parsons structural functionalism which seeks to encourage everyone to participate in society to ensure social order. Value consensus provides for cooperation among various interest groups, since common values produce common goals. Members of society will tend to cooperate in pursuit of goals they share Haralambos and Holborn, (2008).

Legislation

There are certain frameworks and policies that have been put in place to support the participation of all social groups. The importance of women's political participation has found

expression in several international conventions and declarations, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW (1979). CEDAW is an international standard-setting instrument that establishes the universality of the principle of equality of rights between men and women and makes provisions for measures to ensure equality of rights for women throughout the world. Very open in outlook, the Convention seeks to establish equality of rights for women, whatever their marital status, in all fields. The MDGs Goal 3 promotes gender equality and women empowerment 2000. And the Sustainable Global goal 5 aims to achieve gender equality by 2030. Other national policies include the Nigerian National Policy on Women. Most importantly, the Nigerian Gender Policy, (2006), recommends affirmative action as a strategy for improving women's participation in politics by specifically asserting that 35% of all political elective positions and appointments be given to women. But so far elective positions as well as appointments have been marginal especially with the current government in place women have been relegated to the back bench, making nonsense of the gains made from 1999-till date. However, if utilized these policies and guidelines provide a strong frame of reference for a rights-based approach. Participation is a fundamental democratic right. It should be an end in and of itself to remove existing barriers to gender imbalance in political participation.

The Trends and Pattern of Gender and Governance in Nigeria
In the pre-colonial and colonial, Nigeria women never enjoyed parity with men in issues of governance; the same is witnessed in the post-colonial era. The history of political transformation in Nigeria is replete with issues of male domination, and women tokenism in participation in public affairs (Aina and Ukeje, 1998; Aina and Olayode, 2012b).

The political system in Nigeria remains male-centric as witnessed under military dictatorship and in the emerging democratic civilian governance structures and practices. The military era provided women with the least opportunity to challenge the structure of gender inequalities, as military promoted female subordinate position in the society through the 'First Lady' syndrome (a process which hindered the 'woman's question' from being addressed within the mainstream development praxis) (Aina, 2012). Under such arrangements, the 'women's question' was treated within the private interests of wives of political leaders (a mentality which is almost difficult to erase even within the party politics and democratic governance). Today, more women serve as members of their countries legislative bodies at the local, regional and state levels; In Namibia women account for 44% of local government official. In Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, women make up more than 36% of the legislators at the National level, and are making a difference in creating public policy beneficial to women. In the United States, almost 50% of all women of working age work in labour force and career opportunities have expanded for women. On the global level presently, the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel is a woman; the Presidents of Liberia (who recently handed over after two terms) and Malawi, not to be exhaustive, are women. They are proving their mettle. Poland once had a female President in the person of Mrs. Mercy McAlese. Why cannot Nigeria produce a President or even a single governor that is female? Virginia Etiaba was Governor for a brief spell when the incumbent was abducted. She was only elected deputy governor Ayeni and Ajibogun, (2013).

Why have all these female deputies not been able to succeed their bosses, even after serving together two terms of office? One-time Deputy Governor of Plateau State Mrs Pauline Tallen had a daunting challenge when the Governor truncated her ambitions to succeed him as Governor. No woman has won election as a Governor, Vice Preside or President. A woman, Mrs. Patricia Etteh, was the first woman to become the Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives, though she was eventually impeached in controversial circumstances. Plateau State in the north-central geo-political zone also had a female deputy governor in the person of Mrs. Paulin Tallen, until she lost in the 2011 election against her boss, the incumbent Governor Jonah Jang. It was generally considered an unwise political manoeuvre. She was a Minister of Science and Technology in the early years of the current Fourth Republic.

At the same level, women have also held the sway, in a few cases, as Speakers of Houses of Assembly. The future holds promise as more women are being appointed as Commissioners and Heads of Parastatals and they are proving their mettle as they will not want to be seen as inferior members of the cabinet. Women are also doing very well in the private sector. They are becoming heads of banks, the stock exchange and some companies. But it is still largely a man's world. More telling about the situation is that the United States a strong advocate for gender equity has failed to produce a female President in spite of the worthy credentials of former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton and her impressive career record of performance. This shows that even globally the chances of women moving seamlessly into the corridors of power at the highest levels is still a tall dream. It goes without saying that political participation is the key ingredient of every political system, be it traditional or modern, democratic or totalitarian. This means that in every political system there must be somebody in a position to take political decisions and perform other political actions like appointment and removal of officials from time to time. Factors like age, sex (gender), financial status, level of education, political and economic experience, psychology, geo-political zoning, primordial factors (religion, ethnicity), and nature of government, affect political participation of women. But in terms of Nigeria, the female gender has been operating from the margins of the corridors of power, with very few numbers of women in appointive and elective positions. For example, States like Plateau only have one female in the current House of Assembly, while Houses of Assembly in Kaduna and Nassarawa States have no single female representation. This means it will be difficult to include a gender perspective that has the understanding of women and their issues when legislation concerning women are tabled before the house, most importantly during voting their voices will not be heard. This has affected advocacy and passing of the VAPP Bill in Plateau States, whose provisions seeks to strengthen the measures to be taken against persons in terms of cases of gender-based violence.

Indeed, Ogundipe (2002), asserted that;

> *Women working with men through their relations, connections, cash or kind, have no power. This is a mixed grill of influence peddling, manipulation, prostitution, and blackmail, sometimes. This is not political power. It is resorted to by women precisely because they lack power that comes with authority. Direct modes of exercising political power is what women in Nigeria should be seeking. To acquire this power, women should be educated,*

be economically strong, be visible, belong to power elite, be accepted as an authority figure, be able to be nominated and win elections. In Nigeria, market women organizations are active at election time. They campaign for endorse, finance, and generally participate in the political International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development January 2013, Vol. 2, No. 1 ISSN: 2226-6348 125 process but hardly ever think of supporting women candidates or believing in their own political strength. So, only a few outstanding women participate in politics.

Shamim and Kumari (2002), argued that one of the significant goals set out by the Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995, in Beijing was adequate representation of women in all decision-making bodies (Beijing Platform for Action 1996). It was suggested that, in any representative body, there should be a 'logical balance' of men and women to voice the concerns of the society en masse. Good leadership and governance connote being participatory, accountable, predictable, and transparent, which reasonably call for a gender balance in political decision-making. It is accepted that women's insights and values of governance can enhance and enrich the overall decision-making process. It is also typically observed that women at the local level are more sensitive to community issues (Shamim and Kumari, 2002). However, it is important to note that more women in politics does not necessarily correlate with lower levels of corruption, as is often assumed. Rather, democratic and transparent politics is correlated with low levels of corruption, and the two create an enabling environment for more women to participate. The 2015 general elections saw women lost some of the grounds they covered in 2007 and 2011. (Indeed it meant a reverse of the gains made especially in 2007). Only one (1) female presidential candidate contested the 2015 elections. Eighty-seven (87) female candidates contested out of three hundred and eighty (380) for governor and deputy governors (22.9 percent), one hundred and twenty-two (122) out of seven hundred and forty-seven (747) for Senate (16 percent) and two hundred and sixty-seven (267) out of one thousand, seven hundred and seventy-four (1774) candidates for House of Representatives (15 percent) Quadri, (2012, Wuya, 2017). According to Professor Alubo, (2012), participation of women in the political process in Nigeria is almost an exclusive preserve of men. From the period of independence till date he argues that women were completely absent from the political process.

Table 1: Female Members of Nigerian National Assembly 1999-2015

Year	Senate	House of Representatives
1999	3(2.8%)	12(3.3%)
2003	4(3.7%)	21(5.8%)
2007	9(8.3%)	26(7.2%)
2011	7(6.4%)	25(6.9%)
2015	7(6.4%)	19(5.2%)

Source: www.inecnigeria.org 2015.

This table is a systematic analysis of women's political participation in Nigeria since 1999 when the country returned to democratic rule; it reveals the same pattern and trend of engagement and outcome. The National Assembly in 1999 had three (3) (2.8%) female

Senators and twelve (12) (3.3%) female House of Representatives members. In 2003, four (4) (3.7%) and twenty-one (21) (5.8%) female members were elected respectively into the Assembly. In 2007 the National Assembly had nine (9) (8.3%) female Senators and twenty-six (26) (7.2%) female members of House of Representatives. In 2011, the National Assembly had seven (7) (6.4%) female members and twenty-five (25) (6.9%) female members in the lower House. In 2015, the National Assembly has seven (7) (6.4%) female members in Senate and (19) (5.2%) female in the House of Representatives. So on a comparative basis with men there are very few women in the parliament, this is bound to have an adverse impact when laws affecting women are discussed. The number of women will not be able to garner the required votes to decide on an issue as was the case when a reproductive health bill was introduced to the National Assembly by Senator Daisy Danjuma. This bill was turned down because several of the men felt it was not culturally appropriate (Wuya, 2016). On the whole, governance in most African nations bear a masculine face, with women merely serving as stooges, and often manipulated by men. Women would need concerted exposure and training to understand fully the rules of the game, and the undertones of governance.

Challenges and Prospects
Several challenges tend to hold women back from being actively involved in politics and governance these include among others;
1. Patriarchy.
2. Violence against women.
3. Gender roles.
4. Socio cultural factors.
5. Economic factors.
6. Lack of Social Capital and Political Capacities.
7. Lack of God Motherism.

These factors in combination work assiduously against the female gender enjoying and participating in governance.

Patriarchy; Patriarchy as a system of male domination shapes women's relationship in politics. It transforms male and females into men and women and construct the hierarchy of gender relations where men are privileged (Eisenstein 1984). Andrienne Rich defines patriarchy as:

> *A familial social, ideological, political system in which men by force, direct pressure or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male* (Rich, 1977: 57).

According to Igbuzor, all the explanations of why women are excluded from development relate to patriarchy in one way or the other. For example, the materialist conception recognises that capitalism and patriarchy reinforce each other. In addition, some radical feminists locate patriarchy in men's control of women's sexuality and procreation. Also he argued that culture

and construction of language and words are heavily influenced by patriarchy. Therefore, any attempt to address the women question must put the challenge of patriarchy at the centre (Igbuzor, 2009). Women are sometimes shamed and called names by others for showing ambition and wanting to be politicians. Comments like go and take care of your children, why do you want to be like a man and other derogatory terms are used to addressed women who join politics. But none of these are used for the men it is seen as their natural rights and they can stay up for late night meetings and eyebrows will not be raised about their conduct. It is even more difficult for unmarried women who venture into politics they will be seen as promiscuous and not to be taken seriously as responsible adults because of their marital status. But of course there are no such expectations and requirements for men. Patriarchy also endorses different behaviour for men and women, a male politician can get away with having several concubines but a female politician would be discredited and labelled a prostitute. While the society does not have a name for the same behaviour for a man reinforcing the believe that there are different rules for men and women and conduct of behaviour.

Violence Against Women; Many women shun political participation for security reasons. Political rallies in Nigeria politics are characterized by violence, thuggery, high level of intimidation and most times rowdy with political thugs taking the centre-stage, hurling insults and brandishing all sorts of weapons. Given such turbulent scenario and a perception of Nigerian politics as that of violence, continued fright at the thought of violence has further alienated women from mainstream politics. Politics has been characterized by brutal killings and kidnapping of political opponents so naturally this kind of scenario is bound to scare women off political participation. At the 2015 elections the only woman to have ever won election to the Nassarawa State House of Assembly, Mrs Mary Ewongolu was kidnapped at the height of political campaigns. She was contesting for a higher position to go to the legislative lower chambers in Abuja she was intimidated and harassed before she was rescued by the police. She came back broken, a shadow of herself and she was unable to do much after that and she lost that election. Political antics like that can frighten and weaken the resolve of a tough man not to mention a woman.

Gender Roles

According to 'Understanding Gender' a website on gender issues, gender is all around us. Like water surrounding creatures in the sea, we are often unaware of its ever-present nature. Gender is actually taught to us from the moment we are born. Gender expectations and messages bombard us constantly. Upbringing, culture, peers, schools, community, media, and religion are some of the many influences that shape our understanding of this core aspect of self. How you learned and interacted with gender as a young child directly influences how you view the world today. Gendered interactions between parent and child begin as soon as the sex of the baby is known. In short, many aspects of gender are socially constructed, particularly with regard to gender expression. Accepted social gender roles and expectations are so entrenched in our culture that most people cannot imagine any other way. As a result, individuals fitting neatly into these expectations rarely if ever question what gender really means. They have never had to, because the system has worked for them. With reference to gender younger women are most likely to be discriminated against because of their age. Older women will

summarily dismiss their ambition and say that they are too young and too much in a hurry to achieve success so they are more likely not to be supported by men as well as by their own sex who would prefer to support a man even if he is a younger man! So young women tend to suffer the double jeopardy of not only being women but also young women. Similarly, young women have to be careful when relating to members of the opposite sex so that their motives will not be in doubt; most times aspersions are cast on their character when they try to initiate contacts with a male counterpart who can be of assistance to them and their political ambition. This can hinder young women from networking and benefiting from what such connections can deliver.

Socio –Cultural Factors
The subordinate status of women vis a-vis men is a universal phenomenon, though with a difference in the nature and extent of subordination across countries. Gender role ideology does not only create duality of femininity and masculinity; it also places them in hierarchal fashion in which female sex is generally valued less than male sex because of their socially ascribed roles in reproductive sphere. The gender status quo is maintained through low resource allocation to women's human development by the state, society and the family. This is reflected in the social indicators which reflect varying degrees of gender disparities in education, health, employment, ownership of productive resources and politics in all countries. Social norms and values have also become social conventions in which women are expected to behave according to the cultural expectations of their kith and kin. Additionally, gender is mediated through class, caste and ethnicity that structure access to resources and opportunities (Ekundayo and Ama, 2014). The socio-cultural dependence of women is one of the key detrimental factors to their political participation in public political domain. Women also find it hard to participate in politics due to limited time available to them because of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres. With their primary roles as mothers and wives and competing domestic responsibilities and care work they are left with little time to participate in politics. In Northern part of Nigeria women also face cultural constraints on their mobility. The mechanisms of sex segregation and purdah are used to restrict their mobility which depends on their husbands consent no matter what is at stake.

According to Jari (2010), a Muslim female political activist:
> 'Our culture and religion strongly abhor mixing between the two sexes which is viewed as indication of lewdness, we are seen largely as lose women because we are politicians who by the nature of politics stay out late at night attending political meetings and rallies and sometimes sleep in hotels far away from our home' Ekundayo and Ama,(2014). *Politics requires women's exposure to interact with male and female constituents and address public meetings.*

Lack of Social Capital and Political Capacities
Women often lack social capital because they are often not head of communities, tribes or kinship groups, resulting in the absence of constituency base for them and means of political participation such as political skills, economic resources, education, training and access to information. Political parties have also not been gender friendly to women generally not to

mention young women. Political party primaries have always failed to produce a significant number of women as their flag bearers, so if young women are not selected it is difficult for them to represent their parties. Also most political parties in Nigeria are said to be lacking in internal democracy as most candidates tend to be selected rather than elected. And the ones who get nominated are the ones who can afford to throw a lot of cash around creating a culture of 'cash and carry' within the political party selection system. It goes without saying that most women do not have the required resources, especially young women who are just starting out and trying to create a niche for themselves to compete. Epelle and Oriakhi, (2003), identified lip services which political parties normally paid to women's political ambition as another factor affecting women active participation in politics. Several political parties, according to these scholars, lack a clear policy for women both in their manifesto and party's constitution and by extension makes women in Africa to continue to face enormous obstacles. Other scholars such as Izugbara and Onuoha, (2003) and Gadant, (2004), also traced the systematic exclusion of women from political participation and governance in Nigeria to the colonial experience (Epelle and Oriakhi, 2003).

Economic Factors
Politics is increasingly becoming commercialized. More and more money is needed to participate in politics. Women lack access to and ownership of productive resource, limiting the scope of their political work. Strong economic base is a strong factor in electioneering campaign giving the politics of money that is evident in Nigeria. Nigerian politics is capital intensive requiring a large amount of money to organize and mobilize support. For instance, the cost of gubernatorial elections could be as high as 250 million naira, an amount that is not easy for women to mobilize. Women's financial base makes it impossible for them to woo voters with money, a practice that is common with their male competitors. Only persons (women) with strong political affiliations either by virtue of their parents, spouses or either close relatives political cleavage with some strong economic base can aspire or contest for elections starting with the party primaries. The list of both successful and unsuccessful female candidates at the 2011 general elections lends credence to this fact. Such successful candidates include- Chief (Mrs.) Oluremi Tinubu, Senator Gbemisola Saraki-Fowora, Senator Daisy Danjuma, Senator Iyabo Obasanjo- Belo, Senator Ume Ufot Ekaete, and Honourable Beni Lar Ekundayo and Ama, (2014). By this, the political space became open only for a selected privileged few leaving majority from humble background from participating and contributing their quota in democratic governance. So women's poor economic base contributes to their marginalization in politics in Nigeria. Fisher, argues that women constitute the majority of the poor and the illiterate in both urban and rural areas in Africa and many young women between the ages of 15 and 25 have been pushed into sex work and face the risk of HIV/AIDS infection. The problem is exacerbated by the current trend towards institutionalizing money-politics as well as high registration and nomination fees. Although waivers are granted to women with regards to nomination fees, the absence of a ceiling on campaign expenditure, however, undermine the efficacy of such gesture (Uhunmwuangho, 2011).

Lack of God Motherism
Politics of 'god-fatherism' which tends to exclude some women and favours certain categories of women (daughters and wives of prominent politicians), societal attitudes (often negative)

towards female politicians which are borne out of ingrained perceptions of gender roles and women's position in the society have all conspired and continue to work against young women in their pursuit of political power. Few women in decision-making positions cannot adequately guarantee effective representation of women's interests and issues.

Therefore, the absence of political heavy weights wearing the toga of 'god mothers' to other women is lacking. These 'god mothers' would ideally be political financers to support and nourish their political ambition. Therefore 'God motherism' as a similar concept as God fathers would have significantly given women an edge in terms of winning party nominations and elections. In addition, women lack the financial and social support usually provided by God fathers to their anointed chosen candidates, this usually facilitates winning elections from the party primaries to the election. The importance of a godfather who in reality acts as a sponsor cannot be underestimated. In 2018, a high level politician and a former Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development was in the News for saying she would support former Vice President Atiku Abubarkar no matter what decisions he takes regarding contesting in the 2019 Presidential election because he was her political godfather. This generated a lot of interest but she was just showing her support to secure her position and reassure her political power base that she is still with them.

However, there are prospects for women aspiring to be in the corridors of power especially in terms of the corruption experienced in governance which has significantly impeded Nigeria's development. Integrating more women into public office as a potential anti-corruption remedy without addressing the collectivist culture, and the inherent masculine manipulations existing in the public sphere, may prove futile. As women may succumb to the social ethics of their godfathers at the expense of public sector ethos, as in the case of Patricia Etteh (Aina, 2012). There are some factors which are likely to help women to participate in politics. These are discussed below as argued by Okafor, Emeka and Akokuwebe, Monica, (2015).

Poverty Reduction and Economic Empowerment of Women: This could be done by ensuring equal factors that can aid women's participation in politics. Access of the woman and man to critical resources and reducing extreme poverty among women, including ensuring gender equitable access to capital and large-scale investment opportunities; removing gender discriminatory practices on access to landed properties; facilitating women's access to improved technology; building women's entrepreneurial skills. Involve women in the execution of empowerment programmes. Government should enhance the business environment through provision of infrastructures and accounting for the value of women's work in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Building the capacity of the women and men in low-poverty groups on investment opportunities, by enlightenment on investment opportunities, providing access to institutional credit facilities, supporting and encouraging the development of small-medium-and large-scale enterprises, and providing extension services for those in poverty group to enhance information.

Eliminating employment discriminatory practices against women and addressing labour issues affecting women: This is achievable by building the human capital of women to allow comparable opportunity in the modern labour market by encouraging equal access to

education and skill acquisition for women to increase their participation at the managerial level, and making vocational education and adult literacy programmes available to all. It is necessary to eliminate all discriminatory practices against the employment of women in the public and private sectors of the economy, that is, by eliminating all gender-based discriminatory practices in recruitment, wages and promotion, with particular reference to the private sector. Personnel policies and practices must comply with the principle of equitable representation of both sexes to ensure effective implementation of national and international labour laws, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on Equal Treatment for men and women workers. Government should create reward systems for organizations in the public and private sectors of the economy that operate based on gender equity and equality principles.

Improvement of Women Social Capital and Participation: So as to increase the level of women participation in politics, there is the need for sensitization of women to political participation, creating enabling environment for women to participate in politics by economic empowerment and adequate education of women for political participation. It is important to eradicate all discriminatory policies against women, by reviewing the structure and operational guidelines of political parties. Financial support should be provided for women political aspirants. To increase the number of women in elective positions and decision-making processes, there is need for affirmative action's in politics (for example, 30% of political posts to be reserved for women). The existing traditional structures which exclude women from participating in decision-making should also be reformed. Since the return to democracy in Nigeria in 1999, women have made a lot of impact on the political landscape of the country. They have occupied and continue to occupy high and sensitive positions in both executive, legislative and judiciary arms of government. For instance, under the current democratic dispensation, the first woman Speaker of House of Representative, Hon. Patricia Ette, was produced. The first woman governor, Dame Virgy Etiaba was produced in Anambra State. Also, the former Chief Justice of Nigeria 2012- 2014 (CJN) Aloma Mariam Mukhtar is a woman.

Constitutional Provisions: This could be done by ensuring that women and men have equal legal and human rights by eliminating all gender discriminatory clauses in existing laws and legislations including, by persons, organizations and enterprises. It is also achievable through customary laws with gender equality principles through advocacy, sensitization, equal access to the laws, irrespective of wealth and gender. Introducing human rights education into school curricula at all levels and building the capacity of the legislative, the judiciary and other law enforcement agencies to uphold gender justice and gender equality principles are also crucial. The use of quota and proportional representation assists in the promotion of gender balance in public life. Phillips (1995), notes that quotas do not discriminate but compensate women's actual barrier that prevent women from pursuing a political career. Relevant stakeholders, such as Independent National Electoral Commission and political parties should be engaged in introducing quota. Related to the above is the necessary legal framework that guarantees the rights of women especially in achieving the provision of international and domestic instruments for more participation in social, economic and governance processes.

Greater Enrolment of Girls into Educational Institutions: Over the last three decades, there has been greater enrolment of the girl-child into higher institutions in some parts of Nigeria. For instance, in the eastern part of Nigeria where most male children have gone to the lines commerce and trading even at quite early age, girls have taken over the spaces left by male. As a matter of fact, most boys' secondary schools have been changed into girls' secondary schools or community secondary schools to accommodate high enrolment of girls into the schools. This has been made possible by the changing positive perception of most Nigerian parents on the role of women in the society. Also, there has been greater enrolment of the girl-child in both private and public universities in Nigeria.

Mentorship and Support by Role Models: Some of the few women (Dr. Okonjo-Iwela, Prof Dora Akunyili, Mrs. Margaret Ekpo, and Mrs. Obiageli Ezekwesili and so on) that have occupied political and decision making position since in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era have demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities and outstanding track records of achievement. These group of women can network, promote and mentor younger women. Build women and put women on a good pedestal thus giving a promising signal of high prospects of more roles for Nigerian women in public affairs. These women exhibited exceptional qualities that endeared them to the hearts of most Nigerians, thereby giving credence to that maxim that whatever positive thing a man can do a woman can do even better.

Strategy

Gender inequality differs from other types of inequality in significant ways, so we cannot tacitly assume that gender inequalities will trace the same path as other inequalities. Gender inequality exists when men (or women) enjoy a disproportionately large share of some valued good such as political power or long life. Men and women can differ in any number of domains, so gender inequality intersects other types of inequality (educational, economic, political, and so on). Women may be gaining on men in some domains and falling further behind in other domains. In a few domains, such as life expectancy, women have the advantage, so "declining gender inequality" in this instance refers to men gaining on women. These features of gender inequality imply that it is important to examine the domains of gender inequality separately. In short, with respect to political power and economic activity, the disparities between women and men worldwide remain sizeable.

While gender equality is an important goal in itself – an issue of human rights and social justice – steps toward greater equality can also contribute to the achievement of other social and economic objectives. It is important to be able to illustrate for economists that gender equality is relevant to issues of economic growth and efficiency. Similarly, it is important to convince demographers that gender perspectives can strengthen their analyses and provide new insights about demographic processes, and to demonstrate to statisticians the inadequacy of data that are not sex-disaggregated and respond to critical information needs related to gender equality. Applying gender mainstreaming in specific contexts "… governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively" (Beijing Platform for Action, 1995, para 79).

Most importantly, this also applies to the issue of incorporating women in the political life and other sectors in the society after all in the traditional societies several women had positions of influence and authority and it was not a problem as the society was much better organized and better for it. For example, the history of the participation of Nigerian women in leadership dates back to the precolonial period. The geo- political region now called Nigeria had famous and powerful kingdoms and empires. Some of these empires were ruled and controlled by Women Ityavyar, (2002). David Sweetman, (1984) has documented the political influence of Nigerian women in the pre-colonial period. Women like Queen Amina of Zaria in the 16th Century, was credited with conquests of the frontiers of the only Hausa Empire. While Uvwi Emotan who was a politician and diplomat in Benin Kingdom and Idia Esigie who through her political prowess successfully fought to restore her son as Oba of Benin and maintained a highly successful court. Oba Orompo reigned from 1555 and is the only known female Oba (traditional leader) in Yoruba land. She was an influential figure who restored dignity, peace and stability in Oyo kingdom. While Madam Tinubu ruled from 1830-1887 and was a seasoned political stalwart who used her political weight to support Akitoye the rightful king of Lagos over his feud with Kosoko and helped in returning him to the throne. She also played an active role in the resistance to British rule in Nigeria among others Ityavyar, (2002). So it is not a new thing that women were participating in the social and political life of the communities without any discrimination as far back as we can see from these examples. So this current trend of keeping women on the margins of development is not only an issue of women asserting their human rights it is an effort to try and regain some of the grounds women have lost in the cause of modernity because indeed they used to be at the fore front and it was not an issue at all. There is a growing concern among scholars and development workers about applying non-universal values transplanted from one cultural milieu to another. It follows therefore that for gender mainstreaming strategies to be effective and align with human rights, they must duly acknowledge that culture takes on various forms and functions in different contexts, and also these strategies must be designed to suit the particular contexts of a country. In this regard, designing strategies "requires assessing the level, forms, and causes of gender parity for the country as a whole and for specific government institutions. In particular, strategy formulation requires taking a hard look at the level of political will for reform in government and civil society.

Women also need to organize and mobilize and support each other in real terms apart from the usual rhetorics. Women have to effectively coordinate and pool resources in terms of time, finances and tap into strong networks of established women to get the much required endorsements and support for political office if they ever hope to make a dent in the corridors of governance. It is my modest argument that a critical mass of women working together in coalitions are more likely to achieve results, such as the call for a movement by the former President Obasanjo seeks to organize a movement to present an alternative presidential candidate for the 2019 elections.

Conclusion, Recommendation and Agenda for Further Research
The interludes of civil war and intermittent military incursions into governance have truncated democracy and subsequently put Nigeria into the league of emerging democracies when, in

fact; she should be a middle-aged democracy. Even though Nigerian democratic governance dates back to independence on October 1,1960. Democracy is supposed to accord equal opportunities, rights and privileges to all persons, irrespective of gender, race, religion, and so on. This, therefore, presupposes that there is a level and fair playing ground for emergence into public leadership positions. In deed in modern times, women are not only voting but they are getting elected as councillors, chairmen and deputies of local government area councils, legislators at the state and federal assemblies, as well as deputy governors in Nigeria. In some countries of the world, women have become elected Governors and even Presidents or Prime Ministers. It may be considered as a token, at present, but a long road has been travelled and there is still much more distance to cover. And it is good that we appreciate the enormity of efforts women have been making in this regard in order to realize some truths.

However, more needs to be done instead of counting on quotas and affirmative action and expecting men to concede quotas to them or be paternalistic with regards to issues that concern them, they should go inwards to see how they can mobilize themselves for functional education, empowerment and advocacy. More than that, they should support each other through coalitions, teamwork and networks and ensue they present a credible candidate and vote for such a candidate at the elections. They can rally round to support one another for elective or appointive positions. By supporting other women and putting them in the corridors of power they can strategically push for issues that directly affect them by engaging actors who are directly involved in the process and more importantly come from their fold and are more likely to be proactive and sympathetic.

In this regard teamwork and effective networking cannot be underestimated. Policies that prevent violence fear and intimidation, especially during elections should be implemented. In terms of violence and the fear of kidnapping women can and should approach politics with a wholistic approach including hiring security and being vigilant at all times. All these cost money that is why a strong key to access to governance would be women pooling resources and leveraging such resources to successfully achieve their goals. All these become necessary because women, by nature, are virtuous and care givers. There should be determination on the part of women to assume leadership positions in the public and private sectors. There should be democratic and equitable participation in development process through office holding to give control and access to the allocation of resources. Acquisition of the right leadership skills, especially qualitative education. There should be eradication of illiteracy through mass adult literacy and schooling for girls. Community action-based strategy, some of which are access to productive resources like land, credit and technology, is required. Breaking of negative cultural, religious and other gender barriers to women development is imperative and long-time mentoring of women by more established women.

Most importantly, there is the need to consistently carry out gender audits and strengthen policy gender recommendations for effective implementation of gender policy. This will go a long way in gradually reversing the trend and ensuring that a formidable percentage of the population is fully utilized for sustainable development. Indeed, two hands, working together is good, but two good hands working together would be great. The United Nation Population

Fund's "State of the World Population" report for (2005), argued that 'gender equality, and the social transformation it implies, is most likely to be achieved when men recognize that the lives of men and women are interdependent and that the empowerment of women benefits everyone." Further grounds for research would be the investigation of social mobilizing and effective resource mobilization, fund raising coalitions to present and support credible women candidates for governance.

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