T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

LIMITATIONS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLICY-MAKING PROCESSES IN NIGERIA (1999-2023)

MASTER'S THESIS

Nafysah Muhammad ABDELAAL

Department Of Political Science And International Relations
Political Science And International Relations Program

FEBRUARY, 2024

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APPROVAL PAGE

DECLARATION

I hereby declare with respect that the study "Limitations to Women's Participation in Policy-Making Processes in Nigeria (1999-2023)", which I submitted as a Master thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the Project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the References. (02/5/2024)

Nafysah Muhammad ABDELAAL

FOREWORD

I am deeply thankful to my supervisor, Dr. Murat Jane, whose guidance and constructive feedback have been pivotal in shaping this dissertation. His expertise and support have been instrumental throughout this academic journey.

Furthermore, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my family, friends, and especially my mother, whose unwavering love, sacrifice, and dedication have been the driving force behind my academic pursuits. Her belief in my potential and relentless encouragement have shaped me into the person I am today.

February, 2024   Nafysah Muhammad ABDELAAL

LIMITATIONS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLICY-MAKING PROCESSES IN NIGERIA (1999-2023)

ABSTRACT

A careful look at the socio-political landscape of Nigeria reveals a challenging narrative: Nigerian women are, to a large extent, missing from the political scene. The representation and participation of Nigerian women within political decision-making spheres as well as in the electoral are disproportionately limited. This is certainly a contradiction given the fact that significant advancements have been made by Nigerian women in sectors such as education and entrepreneurship in recent years. The blame for this state of affairs can be laid at the door of certain religious, biological, cultural, and even cognitive dynamics. This paper investigated the theoretical bandwidths of limited political participation for any democratic demographic, women's political participation in the historical background of Nigeria, the political decision-making process in Nigeria as well the cultural and socio-religious causes of limitation for women to determine the extent of the barriers to women's political participation and propose a blueprint for change. Through documentary analysis and a few anonymous interviews, this paper discovered that constitutional bias, gender-based violence and media bias, low literacy rates, and electoral gender quotas were the chief barriers to women's political participation in Nigeria. Finally, this paper found out that the vision of enhanced political participation for Nigerian women can be realized if there could be grassroots sensitization, constitutional reform, education, and empowerment for women as well as a nationwide awareness campaign employing media sensitization to support women in political parties.

Keywords: Women, Decision-making, Political Participation, Democracy, Gender.

NİJERYA'DA POLİTİKA BELİRLEME SÜREÇLERİNDE KADIN KATILIMINA YÖNELİK SINIRLAMALAR (1999-2023)

ÖZET

Nijerya'nın sosyo-politik manzarasına dikkatle bakıldığında üzücü bir tablo ortaya çıkıyor: Nijeryalı kadınlar büyük ölçüde siyaset sahnesinde yer almamaktadır. Nijeryalı kadınların siyasi karar alma mekanizmalarında ve seçimlerde temsili ve katılımı orantısız bir şekilde sınırlıdır. Nijeryalı kadınların son yıllarda eğitim ve girişimcilik gibi sektörlerde önemli ilerlemeler kaydettiği göz önüne alındığında bu kesinlikle bir çelişkidir. Bu üzücü durumun sorumlusu olarak bazı dini, biyolojik, kültürel ve hatta bilişsel dinamikler gösterilebilir. Bu çalışma, kadınların siyasi katılımının önündeki engellerin boyutunu belirlemek ve değişim için bir plan önermek amacıyla herhangi bir demokratik demografik grup için sınırlı siyasi katılımın teorik bant genişliklerini, Nijerya'nın tarihsel geçmişinde kadınların siyasi katılımını, Nijerya'daki siyasi karar alma sürecini ve kadınlar için sınırlamanın kültürel ve sosyo-dini nedenlerini araştırmıştır. Belgesel analizi ve birkaç anonim görüşme yoluyla bu çalışma, anayasal önyargı, cinsiyete dayalı şiddet ve medya önyargısı, düşük okuryazarlık oranları ve seçimlerde cinsiyet kotasının Nijerya'da kadınların siyasi katılımının önündeki başlıca engeller olduğunu keşfetmiştir. Son olarak bu çalışma, Nijeryalı kadınların siyasi katılımının arttırılması vizyonunun, tabanda duyarlılık yaratılması, anayasal reform yapılması, kadınların eğitilmesi ve güçlendirilmesinin yanı sıra siyasi partilerde kadınların desteklenmesi amacıyla medya duyarlılığını kullanan ülke çapında bir farkındalık kampanyası yürütülmesi halinde gerçekleştirilebileceğini ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadın, Karar Alma, Siyasal Katılım, Demokrasi, Toplumsal Cinsiyet.

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I.   INTRODUCTION

Women's participation has long been a subject of careful observation throughout the history of politics. Political landscapes around the world have been dominated by male figures in the past. This often means that women are relegated to the margins of decision-making. Since the dawn of politics, women's participation in governance has been complex and evolving. In ancient civilizations, women's roles in politics were often intertwined with their positions as wives, mothers, and queens. Cleopatra's reign as pharaoh, for example, was a demonstration that women could be in positions of power and influence, albeit within the confines of certain social norms. Similarly, in ancient Greece, notable women such as Gorgo, the wife of King Leonidas I, played key roles in diplomacy and statecraft, emphasizing the indirect influence that women could exert (Fantham, 1995).

However, the eras that followed were characterized by prevailing patriarchal norms restricting women's active political engagement. The Enlightenment period and subsequent democratic revolutions brought forth ideals of equality and individual rights, yet these principles were often confined to men. Women's suffrage movements didn't take off until the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Suffragettes such as Emmeline Pankhurst and Susan B. Anthony campaigned tirelessly for women's right to vote, challenging entrenched gender prejudices (DuBois, 1978).

The 20th century marked a turning point with increasing recognition of women's political agency. Women, in 1918, gained limited voting rights in the United Kingdom, and the United States followed suit in 1920 (Britannica, 2023). Women's participation went beyond voting, with women like Indira Gandhi and Golda Meir becoming heads of state. After the first half of the century, women's movements worldwide challenged societal norms, demanding equal representation, and pushing for legislative changes. These efforts led to the United Nations' declaration of 1975 as International Women's Year. The declaration was symbolic of a global acknowledgment of women's contributions to political progress (United Nations, 1975).

Today, women continue to break barriers in politics. More countries have female heads of state, and women are assuming key ministerial and parliamentary roles. However, challenges persist, including the glass ceiling that limits women's ascent to top leadership positions and persistent gender-based violence and discrimination. As we reflect on the history of women's involvement in political affairs, it is clear that while significant strides have been made, the journey toward full and equitable representation is ongoing. The evolution of women's political engagement underscores the importance of dismantling entrenched biases and creating inclusive political landscapes that harness the talents and perspectives of all members of society.

This stark underrepresentation not only undermines the principles of equal representation and democratic inclusivity but also perpetuates systemic inequalities. The struggle for women's political empowerment has been characterized by persistent challenges stemming from cultural norms, institutional barriers, and socio-economic disparities. As societies evolve and advocate for greater equity, there is a growing recognition that genuine and effective governance necessitates the active engagement of women in policy-making.

Nigeria, located in West Africa, is renowned for its rich cultural diversity, encompassing a multitude of languages, traditions, and ethnic groups (Ajayi et al, 2023). With a population surpassing 200 million, Nigeria claims the title of the most populous country on the African continent (Reed, 2014). Since attaining independence from British colonial rule in 1960, Nigeria has undergone multiple phases of political evolution, grappling with challenges ranging from governance inefficiencies to economic disparities and intertwined ethno-religious tensions (Ezeogidi, 2020).

Efforts to address these disparities have gained momentum, driven by advocacy groups, civil society organizations, and international frameworks advocating for enhanced gender equality (Uwa et al, 2018). Various initiatives have been implemented to increase women's participation in politics, including the introduction of measures like gender quotas and policies promoting affirmative action. However, the impact and implementation of these efforts have been inconsistent (Akpan-Obong and Ette, 2022).

Analyzing Nigeria's socio-political landscape within the context of women's participation reveals a multifaceted narrative marked by both progress and ongoing disparities. Despite significant advancements by Nigerian women in sectors such as education and entrepreneurship, their representation within political decision-making spheres remains disproportionately limited (Akpan-Obong and Ette, 2022). The deeply entrenched patriarchal systems, cultural norms, and historical biases prevalent in the country have collectively impeded the complete integration of women into political and social domains (Uwa et al, 2018).

Regrettably, Nigeria's political parties have exhibited reluctance in nominating and supporting female candidates for prominent positions, leading to a pronounced gender imbalance within legislative bodies and executive branches (Akpan-Obong and Ette, 2022). Moreover, societal expectations frequently confine women to domestic roles, thereby restricting their access to formal education and economic opportunities (Gbadebo, 2015) These intertwined factors collectively undermine the potential of nearly half the population to actively contribute to policy formulation, governance, and societal progress.

This research seeks to explore the limitations that constrain the meaningful engagement of women in policy-making processes in Nigeria. This study addresses its research inquiries using an analytical methodology that incorporates data from both primary and secondary sources. The research adopts a qualitative approach to elucidate, describe, and analyze the content and extent of the study.

The primary research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. What factors serve as barriers to women's participation in policy-making across various tiers of governance in Nigeria?

2. What actionable measures can be implemented to facilitate increased political involvement of women in Nigeria?

To address these questions, the study's objectives are outlined as follows:

1. To identify electoral constituencies in Nigeria where women's political dominance is evident, thereby discerning the geographical landscapes where women's influence in governance is substantial.

2. To delineate the various forms and levels of women's involvement in

Nigerian policymaking, encompassing roles, responsibilities, and levels of impact.

3. To pinpoint structural frameworks that can be established to encourage and empower more Nigerian women to actively participate in the political arena, ensuring their voices contribute to policy formulation and implementation.

By analyzing these research questions and objectives, this study aims to provide nuanced insights into the multifaceted challenges faced by women in Nigerian politics. Through a comprehensive examination of institutional, cultural, and practical barriers, this research endeavors to offer recommendations that contribute to fostering a more inclusive and representative political landscape, ultimately benefiting the entirety of Nigerian society.

In the subsequent sections of this thesis, we will delve deeper into the nuanced challenges that hinder women's participation in policy-making processes in Nigeria. By dissecting institutional, socio-cultural, and economic barriers, we aim to shed light on the complex interplay of factors that perpetuate gender inequities. The thesis includes five chapters. In the initial chapter, the study is introduced, providing a concise overview of its background and objectives. The subsequent chapter delves into the concepts of democracy, political participation, and the role of women in politics. The third chapter examines the historical background of Nigeria, from the pre-colonial period, the 1960-1999 period, and also the 1999-2023 period. The fourth chapter considers the boundary of women's participation in politics in Nigeria, from the cultural roots of limitations on Nigerian women in political participation some of which include pagan beliefs, tribal approaches, and the influence of external religions like Islam and Christianity on such involvement, to the limitations of women in political participation through the precolonial to the neocolonial periods while the final chapter is the conclusion of the work. Through a comprehensive analysis of the Nigerian context, we strive to offer insights and recommendations that can contribute to fostering a more inclusive and representative political landscape that benefits all members of society.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A. Democracy

Democracy, which comes from the Greek term *"demos,"* which means "people," essentially, is characterized as a system of governance in which the ultimate power is vested in the people themselves. (Cincotta, 2013). In certain forms, democracy allows for direct participation by the people, while in larger societies, it is practiced through elected representatives. As President Abraham Lincoln famously stated, democracy is a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people (Cincotta, 2013). The terminologies freedom and democracy are many times deployed synonymously, nonetheless, they are different. While democracy is undoubtedly a system of beliefs and ideals regarding liberty, it also encompasses customs and processes that have been shaped over a protracted, frequently difficult past (Cincotta, 2013). Freedom is institutionalized in democracy. The preamble of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world." Ultimately, citizens of democratic societies must act as the ultimate defenders of their freedom and must pave their route toward these ideals (Cincotta, 2013).

1. Premodern Era

Before the Athenian democracy structure, a crude form of democracy was practiced in ancient times. This was evident among the indigenous groups who employed the use of direct communication through deliberation within settlements which led to final decision making through majority votes, and most times these groups had no chief or leader (Olson, 1993). Among the Phoenicians and ancient India, especially the ganas, assembly-based democracy was practiced, decisions were made by rulers elected by the people, however, the caste system in India hindered citizen equality (Robinson, 2003; Sharma, 1968 and Keane, 2009). Progressively in pre-Babylonian Mesopotamia, the final decision-making rested majorly on free male

citizens, including elders and young men capable of military service and holding political positions while excluding slaves (Jacobsen, 1943).

Similarly, famously known for its distinct governmental structure, Sparta engaged the Spartan Assembly, known as the Apella, which comprised adult male Spartan citizens with military training. They had the authorization to decide on matters of war, peace, the election of officials, and certain legislative issues. Another group in Sparta were the Ephors, who were powerful overseers of Spartan kings. They were elected by Spartan citizens and ensured adherence to Spartan laws and customs. Sparta also employed a unique dual kingship system, where two hereditary kings shared authority in war and foreign policy but were subject to oversight by institutions like the Ephors (Powell, 2003).

However, a notable shift can be noticed in ancient Greece, particularly in Athens as democracy was characterized by the direct involvement of citizens in decision-making through assemblies and juries. However, this democracy was restricted to free male citizens, excluding women, slaves, and foreigners (Thorley, 2005). Solon played a significant role in laying the groundwork for democratic reforms in Athens, addressing issues such as political disenfranchisement, economic inequality, and debt slavery, which were later expanded upon by Cleisthenes and others (Raaflaub, 2007). Cleisthenes' democracy focused on the principles of citizen freedom and citizen equality, which were further developed by Ephialtes and Pericles. To uphold these principles, Athenians employed the method of casting lots to select officials. This practice aimed to ensure that all citizens had an equal chance of holding office, and to prevent any corruption, allotment machines were utilized (Hansen, 1991).

Ancient Rome witnessed a significant evolution in its system of governance, transitioning from monarchy to republic and later to imperial rule. Initially ruled by kings, Rome transformed after the overthrow of the last king, Tarquinius Superbus, in 509 BCE (Sanders and Henry, 1908), which marked the establishment of a republican form of government characterized by checks and balances, with representatives tasked with preventing tyranny, senators shaping policy and legislation, and popular assemblies where citizens could vote, elect officials, and declare wars (Balot, 2009). However, political participation was limited to male citizens and certain social classes. The decline of the republican government

eventually paved the way for the rise of military regimes and the autocracy of figures like Julius Caesar (Keppie, 1998)

Before the Athenian democracy phase, Dahl's and Habermas's approach acknowledges the participation of pre-selected officials such as warrior class, assemblies and societies in decision-making and the foundation they laid for democracy, their approach however critiques the rigid hierarchy with political power assigned to elite groups neglecting other groups.

Habermas's approach highlights the use of assemblies and juries in ancient Athens for rational discourse and deliberative processes, his approach analyzes how citizens engaged in open dialogue in the agora contributing to the collective decision-making process. Dahl's approach on the other hand acknowledges the establishment of foundational democratic principles such as casting lots. However, they both question the exclusion of women and slaves as a limiting flaw that undermines the ideal of democracy as inclusive.

Dahl and Hambermas's approach recognizes that while Rome had a system of representative government and citizen participation, Rome was a complex interplay of democratic, aristocratic and Oligarchic elements and was not a direct democracy like Athens.

2. Early modern Era

During the early modern era in Britain, feudalism, monarchism, and hierarchical governance structures were prevalent. Feudalism involved the exchange of land for military service and loyalty, establishing the basis for contractual obligations. The signing of the Magna Carta in 1215 by King John marked a significant milestone, introducing principles of governance and limiting royal authority (Peter, 2015). Guilds and boroughs also played crucial roles in local governance and economic regulation, with guilds representing craftsmen and merchants, and boroughs functioning as self-governing towns, although these entities did not resemble modern democracies, they facilitated collective decision-making and community representation. Over time, the growing influence of commoners, spurred by the rise of a merchant class and increased trade, led to the emergence of urban centers and greater social mobility. This shift in societal dynamics ultimately fueled demands for increased participation and representation in governance (Zack,

2023).

The French and American revolutions were also significant events in the history of democracy, both contributing to the advancement of democratic ideals and the overthrow of monarchical rule. (Rothenberg, 1988) The French Revolution (1789-1799) saw the end of the monarchy and the establishment of the first French Republic, driven by principles of freedom and equality. The formation of the National Assembly of the Third Estate laid the groundwork for citizen equality and fundamental freedoms such as freedom of speech and religion. However, the revolution also experienced violence and instability, ultimately leading to the rise of the Napoleonic Empire (Rothenberg, 1988).

Similarly, the American Revolution (1775-1783) was a revolt against British rule that resulted in the independence of the thirteen American colonies and the formation of the United States. Anchored by figures like Thomas Jefferson, it emphasized concepts of liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and individual rights, this revolution led to the establishment of a federal system of government and a Bill of Rights guaranteeing fundamental freedoms, it also served as an inspiration for global independence movements (Miller, 1943).

Habermas and Dahl's approach acknowledges the limitations of democracy during this period due to limited political participation due to monarchy, however, their approach identifies certain precursors to modern democracy such as the emergence of guilds and boroughs and the rise of commons which increased citizen participation in politics. Their approach also highlights the communicative dynamics, structural and institutional aspects of the revolution such as equality, freedom of speech and individual rights during this transformative period.

3. Modern Era

The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed the expansion of movements advocating for women and universal Suffrage rights and civil rights, new forms of democracy such as parliamentary systems, presidential systems, and socialist democracies also emerged (Olson, 1993). Case studies of these suffrage rights and civil rights include women's right to vote in 1918 and the passage of a 1928 law granting men and women equal rights in the United Kingdom (Dawson, 2010; Heater, 2010). In the United States the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 granted full

U.S citizenship to America's indigenous peoples, however, some indigenous people were exempted from the act (Lomawaima, 2013). Habermas's and Dahl's approaches show the evolution of democracy over time which includes women's voting rights and inclusion of racial minorities as crucial steps towards democracy.

Democracy expanded in the 21st century due to the collapse of empires and the spread of democratic ideals, free and fair elections, the internet and social media introduction, however, democracy in this present day has experienced backsliding caused by terrorism, threats to freedom of speech, inequality and erosion of trust (Pearse, 2023). In 2003, free and fair election was introduced to Iraq after the removal of President Saddam Hussein by US military invasion (Muntazra, 2006). However, in Venezuela under President Nicolas Maduro, there has been suppression of freedom of speech and manipulated electoral processes to maintain power (Applebaum, 2021).

Habermas's and Dahl's approach critique the power imbalances in this era of democracy. Dahl's approach shows the unequal influence and inclusivity of economic inequality while Habermas's approach acknowledges the lack of public involvement based on technocracy which hinders transparency in the decision-making process. However, both approaches applaud the expansion of democracy through free and fair elections and universal suffrage rights in democracy

Democracy, according to Daniel Tetteh Osabu-Kle, is one of those notions that can have real, nominal, and operational definitions. The genuine definition pertains to the actual, fundamental, or philosophical essence of the idea. What has been accepted by society, a specific community, or a researcher as a means of imagining and characterizing the concept is the focus of the nominal definition. The concept description and measurement may follow from the nominal definition, but this is not always the case. The concept's indicators are listed in the operational description so that they can be measured either directly or indirectly. There is only one true or fundamental definition of democracy. Different meanings of democracy emerge due to the discrepancy between its true or fundamental meaning and its practical application, which gives rise to both nominal and operational definitions. One could argue that the true, philosophical, ideal, or fundamental meaning of democracy is unchanging, but how democracy is practiced is debatable. Therefore, any attempt to define it differently is purely pragmatic and may stem from the

distinction between the true meaning of democracy and its actual practice. (Osabu-Kle, 2007).

Determining the definitions of the common people and rules has generated a great deal of discussion. Robert Dahl questioned the designation of the ordinary people, referring to them as simply "the people" (Dahl, 1989). According to Rustow, national sentiment or a sense of oneness must come before democracy because, as he put it, "The people cannot decide until somebody decides who are the people" (Rustow, 1970). The common people who could participate in political decision-making during the time of the ancient Greeks were designated as only a portion of the population overall, as women, children, convicts, and slaves were excluded. The Greeks believed that it was permissible to exclude some groups of individuals from the concept of the common people and that this did not mean democratic practice was worthless. The exclusion of certain groups from modern democratic society, such as foreigners and minors, nevertheless occurs and is justified in most cases. What defines a legitimate exclusion is consequently the issue in democratic practice. However justifiable, exclusion unquestionably gives one segment of society—which may or may not comprise the majority—the ability to dictate to others who are left out.

Therefore, democratic practice can be seen as a hybrid of certain aspects of democracy and other elements of tyranny. There is no location on this earth where the ordinary people—that is, the masses—rule, and exclusion can also be subtle. Elite theorists have highlighted the reality that, despite claims of democracy and partisan political rivalry, the organized few control the majority, which is made up of the unorganized masses. The group of theorists consists of classical elite theorists such as Mosca, Pareto, and Michel, along with present-day elite theorists like Mills, Porter, Field, and Higley (Osabu-Kle, 2000).

It is evident from this that Osabu-Kle views democracy as fundamentally the people's rule (Osabu-Kle, 2007). According to him, perfect democracy does not exist in real life; instead, democratic practice is a harmonious hybrid of some degree of democracy and some degree of authoritarianism. A society that values democracy requires democratic practices, where the degree of democracy and the degree of tyranny are inversely correlated. Without the dictatorship component, democratic practices risk degenerating into mobocracy. This component is an essential control

function. Society as a whole, needs a reasonable balance between some degree of democracy and some degree of tyranny to prevent chaos and anarchy. In response, the State system allows what it deems a reasonable combination that is in line with societal norms and contextual factors, such as the severity of the emergency. Both public demand and the State's response are flexible due to the dynamic nature of culture and changing circumstances.

The model that Osabu-Kle employs demonstrates how there is a constant fight between what the State system is ready to permit and the democratic practices that society as a whole, demands. When democratic practice reaches a stable balance, a political equilibrium is attained. Nonetheless, the State may modify the contents of democracy and dictatorship by the path of a hyperbola defined by the democratic product constant K. The State accomplishes this by changing both its sensitivity to democratic demands and its democratic threshold. When social problems become too great to handle, there can be a positive or negative transition where the democratic product changes from one value to another, and the State's democratic threshold and sensitivity to democratic demands either stay the same or shift to accommodate a new equilibrium point. Therefore, the value of the democratic product (societal property) is established by society, whereas the State system (State properties) sets the democratic threshold of the State and its sensitivity to democratic demands. The value of democracy can be used to compare societies, while the democratic threshold and responsiveness to democratic demands can be used to compare State subsystems.

Osabu-Kle's concept highlights the idea of a perpetual fight between society and the State, which occasionally results in crises leading to democratic transitions from one type of democratic product to another, without discounting class or group struggles within society itself. However, a high degree of democratic content does not always equate to a high degree of democratic product. A political system with a high value of democratic product may or may not have more democratic content than one with a lower value of democratic product, depending on the characteristics of the State system. Democratic practice can therefore be characterized as subjective. (Osabu-Kle, 2007).

B. Theories of Democracy

Theories of democracy explore governance, power, and citizen participation. They shape modern political systems worldwide. Understanding these theories reveals diverse democratic practices. There are several theories of democracy. Liberal democracy, classical pluralism, Catallaxy, democratic pragmatism, deliberative democracy, participatory democracy, and radical pluralism are a few of these (Warren, 1993).

In this thesis, I will be considering these theorists and their positions will be considered elaborately: Jürgen Habermas' self-transformative participatory democracy theory and Robert Dahl's polyarchy theory. These theories deal a great deal with the emphases of this thesis and hence buttresses its crux; which is encapsulated in the purview of democracy.

Participatory democrats argue that engagement in democratic processes fosters tolerance, reciprocity, moral discourse, and self-reflection. These traits enhance democracy. However, Jürgen Habermas is the sole theorist addressing transformative processes. He links democratic discourse to critical political judgment and autonomy development. While this theory is vital, it requires revision. Habermas mainly addresses issues beyond democratic theory. Upon analysis, it becomes evident that the self-transformation thesis requires further elucidation. Some political contexts may trigger psychodynamic obstacles to autonomy instead of overcoming them. Consequently, the likelihood of democratic self-transformations varies across different democratic contexts (Warren, 1993).

Jürgen Habermas's self-transformation concept of participatory democracy is rooted in his broader philosophy of communicative action and discourse ethics. This principle addresses how individuals' participation in democratic methods can result in private and societal changes. Here are some additional key points about Habermas's self-transformation idea:

1. Communication and Discourse: At the center of Habermas's theory is the idea that democratic procedures, in particular deliberative discourse, play a crucial position in shaping people's moral and political affairs. Through open and rational communication, individuals interact in discourse to collectively determine societal norms and values (Warren, 1993).

2. Autonomy and Critical Reflection: Habermas emphasizes the improvement of man or woman autonomy and critical questioning as essential outcomes of participatory democracy. By undertaking public deliberation, citizens are encouraged to seriously reflect on their ideals and choices. This process allows them to transcend mere self-hobby and bear in mind the common exact (Warren, 1993)

3. Overcoming Distorted Communication: Habermas recognizes that verbal exchange may be distorted with the aid of power imbalances and social inequalities. However, he argues that during perfect democratic situations, people can overcome those distortions through communicative rationality. This rationality entails open communication and mutual information among contributors (Warren, 1993).

4. Normative Foundations: The self-transformation theory is deeply rooted in normative ideas. Habermas believes that democratic procedures have to be guided by way of moral ideas and that residents should interact in ethical discourse to reach just choices (Warren, 1993).

5. Democratic Ideal: Habermas's idea unites a high standard for participatory democracy. It envisions a democratic society wherein citizens actively participate in public debates, respect one another's rights and perspectives, and together form the norms and regulations that govern their society.

6. Criticisms and Debates: While Habermas's theory has had a significant impact on democratic theory, it has also faced criticism. There are claims suggesting that attaining his idealized concept of deliberative democracy might prove challenging in reality due to the intricate nature of politics and the enduring presence of power disparities.

7. Practical Applications: Despite its theoretical nature, Habermas's ideas have influenced practical initiatives aimed at fostering deliberative democracy. Deliberative polling and citizen assemblies, for example, seek to engage citizens in meaningful deliberation on important issues.

In summary, Jürgen Habermas's self-transformation theory of participatory democracy underscores the transformative potential of democratic processes. It envisions a democratic society where citizens not only make decisions collectively but also engage in personal growth through open and rational discourse. While this theory has its critics and challenges, it remains a significant contribution to the field

of democratic theory (Warren, 1993).

The introduction of democratic institutions into a political system that results in the involvement of various actors is known as polyarchy, a word that was invented by American political scientist Robert Dahl (Keman, 2015). Polyarchy, which means "rule by many," views democratization as a process apart from democracy.

Free elections and a representative administration are prerequisites for electoral representation, which is a fundamental component of democracy. Dahl's theory of polyarchy seeks to provide a set of standards to evaluate whether a political system can be considered a democracy, as well as to define the process of democratization empirically. According to Dahl, institutions that closely resemble the ideal form of democracy are developed through the concept of polyarchy. He emphasizes the importance of public power and the role of civil associations and societal organizations, such as political parties and interest groups, in effectively overseeing authority. Dahl argues that the democratic quality of a polity is enhanced when these social actors can operate independently from the state (Keman, 2015).

In addition to the existence and operation of institutions, societal groups and enough space for their organization and activity are also necessary for polyarchy to function as intended. Polyarchy cannot exist without the institutionalization of democracy, especially responsible governance. However, full democracy is not a requirement for polyarchy.

According to Dahl, the following establishments are essential elements of polyarchy (Dahl, 1989) :

1. Entire voting rights and the ability to run for public office.

2. Elections that are fair and free for all adults.

3. The right to free speech, its availability, and protection.

4. Access to alternate, non-government information sources.

5. The unchallenged right to form and join organizations with a certain degree of autonomy, particularly political parties (including opposition parties).

6. Government's (and political parties') willingness to listen to the people.

7. Government (and political parties) being accountable for election outcomes and governance.

Altogether, these establishments set polyarchy apart from other forms of government. The creation of these organizations symbolizes the process of democratization, and their continuous presence and upholding denote the presence of an established democracy. Dahl's idea of polyarchy has inspired empirical research and made a substantial contribution to democratic theory. It has become a widely employed concept in political science, offering both prescriptive qualities for advancing the ideal of democracy and empirical tools for analyzing existing democracies and their potential for further development.

Participatory democracy emerged in the 1960s during student power movements (Mansbridge, 1995). The term was coined by Arnold Kaufman (Kaufman, 1969). Student activists demanded participation in governance and criticized anti-participatory views (Teodori, 1969). These movements challenged the neo-Schumpeterian perspective (Kaufman, 1969).

C. Political Participation

Citizens' actions influencing politics can be broadly characterized as political engagement (Verba & Nie, 1972). Since Pericles's well-known funeral speech (431 BCE), politicians and academics have emphasized the special qualities of democracy by highlighting the participation of the people in political activities. There are numerous avenues for societal involvement, including voting, protesting, contacting elected officials, boycotting, attending political events, engaging in guerrilla gardening, blogging, volunteering, participating in flash mobs, signing petitions, supporting fair-trade goods, and even resorting to self-harm as a form of protest (Verba & Nie, 1972). Any political system should value political involvement, but democracy cannot function without it.

The increasing importance of politics and government in daily life, the erasing of boundaries between public and private domains, the development of citizens' skills and resources, particularly in the area of education, and the easy access to a wealth of political data have all contributed to the ongoing growth of the range of participation options. Elections, protests, and letters to the editor make the

political nature of the activities immediately apparent, but other situations—like buying trainers made under special circumstances, covertly planting public green spaces, or liking a page on a website supporting the conservation of North Atlantic whales—are far more ambiguous (van Deth, 2001). These final examples are easily expanded upon; nevertheless, the difficulties in defining political participation become more apparent with each new form.

Without citizen participation, democracy is unimaginable (Poguntke, 2006). Therefore, there is little basis for complacency despite the expanding number of nations that have adopted democratic procedures; after all, popular engagement in politics is lacking not just in some of the more recently created democracies. Similar issues plague several well-established democracies, including dwindling voter turnout, parties' growing difficulty in attracting new members and candidates, and the threat of local democracy eroding owing to a lack of enthusiasm from the populace. From their perspective, political elites' perception counts even though, as the editors correctly point out, the empirical data on some of these elements is still inconclusive. (Poguntke, 2006).

They are largely secure in this regard because politicians in contemporary democracies frequently lament the drop in public participation. They also have a strong empirical basis for their generalization, given that the majority of them are party politicians. All parties have seen a decline in membership, after all. There aren't many tendencies in comparative politics that are as strong and clear-cut. Because of this, various forms of participatory engineering have become increasingly popular in democracies. This timely volume brings together a wide range of empirical studies on various participatory engineering cases with an engaging theoretical discussion of what is normatively desirable and theoretically meaningful or plausible. (van Deth, 2014)

"What then is political participation?" van Deth (2001) asks. According to him, this topic has become more challenging to answer and has given rise to several debates in the field as a result of the recent decades' rapid growth of political activity and the dissemination of expressive modes. Are political consumption and civic engagement forms of political participation? Does political involvement have to be defined in terms of intentions? What does it benefit to differentiate between "the political " and "politics"? Is participation in "clicktivism" online? These discussions

mostly center on terminological issues that are complicated by an apparent strong belief in nominal definitions. Rather than initiating another cycle of these debates, this research has formulated a series of decision rules that provide, as Hempel suggested; "objective criteria" for deciding whether the term political participation applies to some phenomenon (van Deth, 2001). The query, "What is political participation?" is thus reframed as, "How would you recognize a form of political participation when you saw one?"—a more practical one. By responding to this final query, it becomes possible to systematically identify any phenomenon as an example of political engagement and to differentiate between different kinds of participation.

Van Deth contends that there is a cost to adopting an operational definition: rather than having a single, comprehensive definition of political engagement, we are left with a range of variations. Since the use of nonpolitical activities in political circumstances is implied by the ongoing expansion of the repertoire of political participation, and particularly by the rise of expressive forms, these newer forms of participation could only be covered by a single definition if such a conceptualization, quite literally, covered everything (van Deth, 2001).

A vibrant democracy is one in which the range of participation options keeps growing. Many scholars now face the difficult choice of either expanding their notion to include nearly everything or using an outdated conception of involvement that leaves out a lot of new forms of political action as a result of this expansion (van Deth, 2016). A lot of the more recent, "creative," "personalized," and "individualized" forms of engagement, such as guerilla gardening, street parties, and political consumerism, are difficult to categorize because they essentially include nonpolitical actions that are utilized for political ends. It is particularly challenging to identify political participation when engaging in these activities (also known as "connective action") using internet-based technology (van Deth, 2010). Democratic countries have undergone social, societal, and political upheavals that have rendered the quest for a comprehensive definition of political involvement superfluous. (van Deth, 2001).

D. Feminism, Women and Politics

In recent decades, two of the most prevalent themes in development discussions have been gender equality and effective governance. Gender inequality is

a hierarchical phenomenon that is interconnected with other social and economic disparities. They are united by the expanding corpus of ideas and writings on gender, democracy, and sound governance (Karam, 1998). Women and men are assigned distinct and unequal roles in society by socialization, not birth (United Nations, 1996). Men are allotted the public realm, which involves managing societal matters, and women are assigned the domestic sphere, which involves caring for the house and family. When women enter public areas, they are expected to assume caregiving responsibilities akin to those in the home (Karam, 1998). A shift in power dynamics is also grafted upon the gendered "division of labor" (Karam, 1998). Men are the ones who make decisions in the family, the community, and the country. The system that establishes these power dynamics between men and women—giving males the role of dominance and women the role of subordination—is known as patriarchy (Karam, 1998).

The phrase "waves of feminism" was first used in the late 1960s to distinguish the then-emerging women's movement from the previous women's rights movement, which had its roots in the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. Early liberal first-wave feminism in Europe found one of its earliest expressions in the statement below:

We could start much earlier. We could go as far back as antiquity and the renowned hetaera of Athens, or we could go even further back to prehistoric times in Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean regions and discuss goddess religions and matriarchy. Or we could examine the European Middle Ages and the mystical rhetoric of holy women like Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179). We could also highlight the Renaissance tradition of learned women such as Leonora d'Este (1474–1539) or Enlightenment beaux esprits such as Madame de Rambouillet (1588–1665) or Germaine de Staël (1766–1817). Another obvious start would be the struggles of bourgeois European women for education and civic rights in the wake of the French Revolution.

These words were said by Olympes de Gouges (1748–1793), who drafted a Declaration of the Rights of Women (1791) analogous to The Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789). Olympe de Gouges, in her response, addressed the historical context and depth of women's struggles and contributions in various periods. Her words suggest the need to recognize the long-standing history of women's

involvement and challenges, emphasizing the diverse roles and movements that preceded her time. The prompt for her response likely arose from the lack of acknowledgment or inclusion of women's rights within The Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789). By pointing out the historical lineage of women's contributions and struggles, de Gouges aimed to highlight the oversight and call for the recognition of women's rights and their significant roles throughout history. Her words indicated the depth and breadth of the discussion needed to truly address women's rights and their historical journey toward equality. Her book is considered the inspiration behind Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights of Woman the following year in 1792 (Sottosanti, 2023). Written in the aftermath of the French Revolution, this work remains a cornerstone text in feminist literature. Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own written in 1929 (Britannica, 2023), and Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex published in 1949 (Meyers, 2014) also hold central positions in the feminist canon. Despite belonging to the first wave, both Woolf and de Beauvoir laid the groundwork for radical second-wave feminism. Woolf introduced the concept of female bisexuality and brought attention to a distinct female voice in writing. On the other hand, de Beauvoir delved into the idea of women's radical distinctiveness or, more precisely, the cognitive and societal process of relegating women to an "other" status as the second sex within patriarchal societies. It could be argued that through this exploration, de Beauvoir crafted an authoritative definition of patriarchy.

The initial wave of feminism in the United States was marked by various impactful actions that have continued to serve as inspiration for later feminist movements. However, despite the dedicated efforts of influential figures like Alice Paul, the organizational prowess of Carrie Chapman Catt, who served as the president of NAWSA, and the powerful speaking abilities of Anna Howard Shaw, also a former NAWSA president, achieving women's suffrage in 1920 was an arduous journey. The roots of this struggle trace back to the Seneca Falls Convention held in New York in 1848. At this historic gathering, over 300 individuals, both men and women, convened for the nation's inaugural women's rights convention. Elizabeth Cady Stanton articulated the Seneca Falls Declaration, asserting the inherent equality of women and outlining the political approach toward achieving equal access and opportunities. This pivotal declaration laid the foundation for the suffrage movement, marking a significant moment in history. With the conference

that Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton hosted in Seneca Falls, New York, in July 1848, the first organized effort to advance the status of American women officially got underway. After Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem, and Betty Friedan established the National Women's Political Caucus in 1971, feminism—also known as "women's liberation"—became more powerful as a political movement in the 1970s (Rampton, 2019).

High points of the second wave included the passage of the Equal Pay Act and the landmark Supreme Court decisions in Griswold v. Connecticut (1965) and Roe v. Wade (1973) related to reproductive freedom. While the advances of second-wave feminism had undoubtedly achieved more equality and rights for women, the movement that emerged in the early 1990s focused on tackling problems that still existed, including sexual harassment in the workplace and a shortage of women in positions of power. Rebecca Walker, the mixed-race daughter of second-wave leader Alice Walker, announced the arrival of feminism's "third wave" in 1992 while watching Anita Hill testify before the Senate Judiciary Committee about her accusations of sexual harassment against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas. That same year, dubbed the "Year of the Woman," saw an unprecedented number of women elected to Congress" (Pruitt, 2022).

Sarah Pruitt goes on to highlight the challenge of characterizing what might be considered the fourth wave of feminism—although some contend it's the third wave carried forward—and how the rise of social media activity has undoubtedly contributed to this. Sarah Pruitt continues, "In addition to holding powerful men accountable for their actions, fourth-wave feminists are turning their attention to the systems that allow such misconduct to occur. Like their predecessors in the feminist cause, they also continue to grapple with the concept of intersectionality, and how the movement can be inclusive and representative regardless of sexuality, race, class, and gender" (Pruitt, 2022).

1. **Second Wave of Feminism and Liberal Feminist Theory:**

The second wave of feminism, spanning from the 1960s to the 1970s, was built on the first wave of feminism which focused primarily on women's suffrage rights and legal rights such as property ownership rights and marital rights (Rampton, 2019). However, the goals second wave feminism expanded beyond suffrage issues

to broader including women's political involvement, workplace discrimination, and cultural inequalities (Freedman, 2003). Activists during this period also pushed for legislative changes to address gender disparities, such as equal pay, anti-discrimination laws, and reproductive rights. A significant achievement of this era was the enactment of Title IX in 1972 in the United States, aiming to prevent sex discrimination in education (Hunsinger, 2019).

American Feminist and Women's rights activist, Betty Friedan played a crucial role in this wave with her seminal work, "The Feminine Mystique" (1963), which illuminated the discontent experienced by suburban housewives and challenged traditional notions that women find fulfillment solely in domestic roles. She also advocated for increased representation of women in political organizations like the National Organization for Women (NOW) (Fox, 2006). Additionally, this wave critiqued patriarchal systems and encouraged women to challenge the status quo, leading to heightened scrutiny of political institutions and calls for accountability and inclusivity (Goldsmith, 2014).

However, the second wave of feminism faced criticism for primarily addressing the concerns of white women, prompting the formation of organizations such as the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) to address the specific challenges faced by black women (Hull, 2003). Nonetheless, it achieved tremendous progress, including legal amendments and improved awareness of gender-based issues. Second-wave feminism paved the way for later waves of feminism movements such as the third and fourth waves of feminism. (Fritz, 2018).

It is to this end that Feminist and political philosopher, Susan Moller Okin conducted extensive studies that border around this context and the possible root causes.

She extensively examined issues of justice, gender, and the family in her influential work "Justice, Gender, and the Family." (Okin, 2015). She argued that the family structure is a crucial site for understanding and addressing gender inequality in society. She further contended that traditional family dynamics, where male children often receive preferential treatment and female children are socialized into submissive roles, contribute to broader societal disparities. Okin highlighted the profound impact of family values on an individual's capabilities and opportunities, particularly for women. She advocated for dismantling gender-based power

imbalances within families to create a more just and equal society. Okin stressed the importance of challenging stereotypes and biases ingrained in familial structures, as these values can perpetuate gender inequalities in broader social and political contexts (Okin, 2015).

The phrase "the personal is political" encapsulates Okin's perspective, emphasizing that issues traditionally relegated to the private sphere, such as family dynamics, have significant political implications. In the context of gender roles, the values instilled within families can shape individuals' roles and perceptions in the public sphere, including politics. Okin's work serves as a foundation for discussions on the intersection of family, gender, and politics, encouraging a reevaluation of societal structures to promote true gender equality. Her insights underscore the interconnectedness of personal experiences and broader political realities, urging a comprehensive approach to address gender disparities at both the micro and macro levels of society. These insights have had an impact on history (Okin, 2015).

Liberal feminism, sometimes known as egalitarian feminism, originated during the 17th and 18th centuries when Western nations experienced enormous societal shifts. This era saw the French and American revolutions, the move from feudal to industrial cultures, the shift from monarchical to democratic governance based on the rule of law, and the birth of capitalism. Along with these changes came important social movements like labor rights, abolitionism, and feminism. (Cottais, 2022).

Often associated with second-wave Feminism, Liberal feminism focuses on advocating for individual rights, equal opportunities, and legal reforms to combat gender-based discrimination and inequalities. At its core, liberal feminism emphasizes individualism, asserting that both women and men are entitled to equal rights (Baehr, 2017). Pioneers of liberal feminism, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Judith Sergeant Murray, and Frances Wright, advocated for women's inclusion in politics (Marilley, 1996). Additionally, John Stuart Mill argued for women's civic and legal equality, including their right to vote, in his essay "On the Subjection of Women," which was published in 1869.

Wollstonecraft, in her book "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792), championed the rights of both sexes. She addressed the exclusion of women from discussions and encouraged them to use their voices in decision-making processes,

distinct from decisions made for them, to develop their personalities (Reuter, 2017). Education is particularly, a right that liberal feminists advocate for, arguing that it should not be exclusive to men and that both men and women have the right to education. Wollstonecraft argued that inequality between men and women often stemmed from differences in their educational levels and emphasized the importance of female education (Ferguson, 1999).

The Liberal Feminism theory dictates that women should be allowed to participate in public life and that politics will improve their lives. It aims to ensure that women have equal rights and opportunities as males in areas such as education, employment, and political participation. The argument is that women are kept back because they do not have equal access to rights and opportunities as men, such as in law, politics, employment, and money. (Cottais, 2022). Therefore, Liberal feminism seeks to remedy this by enacting new laws and policies that increase women's rights and opportunities, particularly in education, politics, and the workplace. They are also concerned with women's rights to manage their bodies, fair wages, adequate healthcare, and the abolition of gender-based violence. (Bailey, 2016)

The liberal feminist theory and Dahl's democracy theory both underscore the importance of individual rights, equality, and participation in decision-making processes. While liberal feminism seeks gender equality through legal and political reforms, Dahl's theory of polyarchy democracy focuses on inclusive political participation and competition among various groups within a democratic system (Dahl, 1989; Marilley, 1996). Habermas's theory of communicative action and liberal feminist theory are intertwined in their belief in the importance of dialogue, communication, and inclusivity within society. Habermas argues that individuals should engage in open and rational discourse to reach mutual understanding and consensus, while liberal feminists advocate for women's inclusion in decision-making processes (Reuter, 2017; Warren, 1993). Habermas's democracy theory stresses the need for public deliberation and rational discourse, where education plays a crucial role in fostering necessary skills such as critical thinking, communication, and civic knowledge needed in such debates. Education also plays a vital role in the functioning of democracy as envisioned by Dahl, promoting informed citizen participation and fostering democratic values.

There has been significant progress over the years concerning women's place

in political participation. Before now, women were often excluded from political decision-making and faced numerous barriers to participation. However, with the rise of feminist movements and the fight for gender equality, women have gradually gained more rights and opportunities in politics. In many countries, women's right to vote and contest for election has been achieved, which has opened up avenues for their political participation. Over time, more women have entered politics and held positions of power, breaking barriers and challenging traditional gender roles (Percy, 1997).

The trajectory of women's political participation has witnessed several pivotal moments. One such milestone occurred in 1893 when New Zealand became the first nation to grant women the right to vote. While many other countries have followed suit, the specific timelines for women's suffrage have varied across regions. In recent decades, the importance of gender equality in politics has gained greater recognition. Efforts have been made to enhance women's representation in legislatures and cabinet positions, leading to the implementation of affirmative action and gender quotas to promote the participation of women in politics (Bryan, 2003).

Despite these advancements, challenges remain. Women continue to face barriers such as gender stereotypes, discrimination, and variations in the availability of resources and opportunities to them. However, the ongoing efforts to promote gender equality and empower women in politics are gradually reshaping the terrain of political engagement. The annals of time have revealed some women who have arisen in key political positions and made a difference in their era. One of which is Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Margaret Thatcher was a significant political figure in the late 20th century, primarily influencing matters abroad. It is widely acknowledged by her peers and associates that Thatcher was a unique and influential person. However, very few studies have attempted to methodically examine her leadership style and worldview and assess how these affect her policy decisions (London: Collins, 1983). Margaret Thatcher, the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, was known for her strong and assertive leadership style. She was often described as an "Iron Lady" due to her uncompromising and determined approach to politics. Thatcher supported free-market economics and a smaller role for the government in society. She implemented various policies such as privatization, deregulation, and reducing trade

union power. Thatcher's leadership style was characterized by her strong convictions, decisiveness, and willingness to challenge the status quo. (Campbell, 2002). Thatcher and Merkel were impactful women leaders in their era but differed in approach largely.

The former German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, was renowned for her cautious and practical approach to leadership. She was frequently referred to as a unifying force and a rock-solid presence during difficult times. Merkel was known for her analytical approach to decision-making and her ability to navigate complex political landscapes. She was also known for her ability to build relationships with other world leaders and her commitment to European integration. Overall, Merkel's ability to preserve stability in a world that was changing quickly and balance conflicting interests was a defining feature of her leadership style (Ryan, 2016).

Jacinda Ardern, the current Prime Minister of New Zealand, is known for her empathetic and inclusive leadership style. She is often praised for her ability to connect with people and her focus on well-being and social issues. Ardern is also known for her decisive decision-making and her handling of crises, such as the Christ-church and mosque shootings and the COVID-19 pandemic (Chapman, 2021).

These women have made significant contributions to politics and have helped to pave the way for future generations of female leaders. They have shown that women can lead effectively and handle crises, and they have used their platforms to advocate for women's rights and gender equality. Furthermore, they have set the pace for women in politics and governance, making their prospects more obvious. Though society has bestowed patriarchal powers on the man, these are women who have left indelible footprints on the landscape of decision-making and public life.

All facets of power are involved in politics and governance, including who possesses it, what power relations exist, the utilization of power structures and their operational mechanisms, the laws and policies that are passed by these institutions, and the effects they have on the populace. Men are the "directors" of almost all public life and the "face" of politics and government due to the patriarchal powers that society has bestowed upon them (Karam, 1998). The United Nations (UN) report presented at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 states that there is no other domain where the gap between legal and actual equality between men and women is more pronounced than in decision-making (UN, 1996).

Politics is about more than just the structures of power and the people who run them. Additionally, this issue pertains to both the outcomes and how power is wielded. Women who are excluded from participating in decision-making processes are effectively denied their rights as citizens. Policies' results serve to uphold their low standing. The feminization of poverty, abuse, violence against women and girls, and development initiatives that do not improve the position of women are indicators of this (VAWG). According to the equity arguments, women should have a say in decision-making processes commensurate with their size as a separate social group. Fair representation of all interest groups in society is fundamental to democracy. This principle is violated when there is a lack of adequate representation of women in the population. (United Nations, 1996). Whether or not they have an impact, women have a right to equal participation in political decision-making. Parliaments, according to Cooper and Lybrand, ought to be "mirror images" of every nation (Cooper and Lybrand, 1994).

The effectiveness of qualitative arguments centers on how women's experiences, viewpoints, and interests enhance governance (Karam, 1998). According to this perspective, the insufficient presence of women in politics contradicts the democratic ideal of equitable representation. This viewpoint is supported by various resolutions by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and international commitments (IPU, 1994). The IPU maintains: "The concept of democracy will only assume true and dynamic significance when political policies and national legislation are decided upon jointly by men and women with equitable regard for the interests and aptitudes of both halves of the population" (IPU, 1994). The BPFA argues: "Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning" (UN,1995).

In the preface of Beyond Numbers, the groundbreaking research on the impact of women in politics, Speaker Frene Ginwala, the first South African woman to hold public office after apartheid, mentioned: "While the debate about the enfranchisement of women and participation of women in decision-making often

focuses on issues of justice, equity, and human rights, the representation of women and the inclusion of their perspectives and experience into the decision-making process will inevitably lead to solutions that are more viable and satisfy a broader range of society"(Karam, 1998). This argument contends that while women are not homogeneous, they do share some common experiences and "interests" in life, which should be taken into consideration and used to inform political decision-making (Karam, 1998). It is argued that women are likely to have distinct viewpoints on all major political issues, including the economy, transportation, and crime, because of these disparate life experiences.

III. CHAPTER THREE

A. Women's Political Position in The Historical Background of Nigeria

Known officially as the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Nigeria is a country on Africa's western coast. Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, is situated between the 36 states that comprise the nation. More than five hundred languages are spoken, and the population is made up of a wide variety of colorful ethnic groupings. Nearly one-sixth of Africans are thought to be her citizens (NBS, 2009).

Nigeria gained independence from the British government in the year 1960 on the 1st of October. A civic democracy with the President serving as the head of state was established in 1963. The lower and upper chambers' respective bi-cameral councils serve as a model for the council. The Senate is the upper chamber, and it has 109 members—three from each of the 36 states—with a total of one hundred nine (109), a single for the civil center region and the House of Representatives, which has 360 members and is the lower house of the assembly (IPU, 2015).

According to Karunwi (2003), Nigeria has a civil system with a president as the head of government and a representative of popular democracy. Nigeria has experienced military control more than thirty times since gaining independence in 1960 (Ojo, 2010). Nigeria has seen rulership by recrimination through military victories and absolutism rather than a democracy, with a significant amount of recrimination towards women because it impacts how they are represented in politics and involvement. (Afolabi, 2013). On May 29th, 1999, Nigeria was put back on the path to popular rule with the installation of a democratic administration. Since then, the country has enjoyed stability and experienced numerous popular elections and government changes (IFES, 2015).

For Nigerian women, however, it has been largely discouraging because democratic institutions and practices have made little headway toward advancing their lot in terms of political involvement and participation (Lewu, 2012). The legacy and legacies of the military regimes in terms of gender governance seem to continue

to be important after the Gender Policy was introduced in 2004 (preface). (Nkwankwo, 2010). Power and how it is used continue to be significant in an eccentric and patriarchal environment where there are many barriers for women who want to participate in optional services or top decision-making roles in the nation.

According to Mba (1989), the military government in Nigeria harmed women's disposition to participate in spheres of society and politics, as well as in governmental structures and practices. Women are not only excluded but also persistently underrepresented due to the centralization of power (Iloh & Ikenna, 2009).

Despite the seeming non-concession of the nation to consensus in conferences like the Beijing conference in post-colonial Nigeria, In the pre-colonial era, women had a longstanding and notable record of engaging in political activities.

1. Pre-Colonial Period

Despite the common belief that Nigerian women have been oppressed and vulnerable since pre-colonization to modern-day, scholars such as Falola, Lewu, and Effah have opposed this notion by presenting proof of historically active and politically involved groups of women. These women were involved in pre-independence struggles, such as the Aba women's uprising of 1929, where they resisted societal injustices and fought for their rights and these struggles have received little consideration or appreciation.

According to them, Nigerian women have always been politically active and involved, even during British rule, yet, women have not had many opportunities to engage in national decision-making that is consistent with their legal standing (Effah, 2002; Falola; 2012; Lewu 2014). Women in Nigeria carried out pivotal responsibilities in the socio-economic sphere throughout the pre-colonial era.

Even if women couldn't inherit land, they could do so through their dads or husbands if they didn't have any male offspring. The pre-colonial era's success of women in trade was significant to take cognizance of because, on occasion, women traveled far from home, and those who succeeded were included in the processes of making decisions in the community (Falola, 2012). The family is the first introductory bloc in politics, as women exert their dominance over the kids at home. Age was another aspect that empowered women and gave them authority and

leadership roles. Considering that the majority of families were polygamous, a man becoming married to more than one woman at once, Special considerations and advantages are given to older women or women who primarily take care of household matters when it comes to making decisions that have an impact on every family member (Egbue, 2010).

The women's private and public spaces complement one another in a way. In the community, women who have financially succeeded will rise to a position of regard and respect, and they will regularly be met on issues of public significance. Women used this sort of power to laterally impact the choices made. But outside of the home or the bedroom, men predominate in positions of political power. However, the mother of a king instantly becomes a genuinely significant character who may hold meetings on her own and solicit comments at the behest of the community (Mohammed & Said, 2014). Nonetheless, pre-colonial Nigeria had several real-life examples of women, Prominent figures, and heroines like Moremi of the Yoruba tribe in South Western Nigeria, Queen Amina of Zaria in Northern Nigeria, and other renowned individuals who held significant leadership positions in the political realm during their respective eras (Oyewumi,2004).

Democracy is assumed to be an open, pluralistic system that includes everyone, but women are often shut out of the process. This seems to be a departure from what was in vogue in the pre-colonial days. This is not necessarily being assertive but it is noteworthy that a certain kind of development has given birth to what can now be considered a problem in need of solution. There will be a sense of ambiguity in this postulation if history is not conferred with.

Due to the polygamous character of the majority of households, which occurs when a man is married to multiple women at once, women advanced in age are granted specific prerogatives in the household when it comes to making decisions that impact the entire family (Egbue, 2010). The women's private and public spaces complement one another in a way. With this type of power, she has a lateral effect on other women's decisions. Political authority, however, is overwhelmingly held by men outside of the home and the private sphere. The mother of a monarch, however, immediately elevates to a position of veritable authority and has the power to convene meetings and solicit input at the behest of the entire society (Mohammed & Said, 2014). In contrast, there are numerous historical figures or heroines from pre-

colonial Nigeria who can be compared to the Yoruba people's Moremi (South West Nigeria), the city of Zaria's Queen Amina (Northern Nigeria), and many well-known amazing feminine giants who had great strides and very pivotal roles in governance in history.

The social administration in Nigeria throughout the 20th century was the problem that greatly reduced the strength that women had before the era of colonial masters (Falola, 2012). The powers of the female chiefs were diminished while those of the men-autocrats were elevated and bequeathed dominant roles, particularly in the areas of duty government and duty collecting (Mba, 1982). Also, cash crops such as peanuts, cocoa, rubber, and oil paintings that were primarily exported to European nations also significantly removed a large amount of lucrative authority away from the ladies because this aspect of commerce was dominated by men (Effah, 2002).

2. Post Colonial Period (1960-1999)

From 1960 until 1999, when the country gained its independence, only roughly 3.1% of women were elected to political office and 5% to positions of appointive authority, respectively. But since 1999, when democracy was restored, women's political participation—in both elected and appointed positions—has sharply increased. Despite these gains, women remain extremely marginalized when one considers the ratio of males to women in positions of political and decision-making authority. Notwithstanding the obstacles that women face when participating in politics, the population of educated women and professionals is on the rise, accompanied by an increase in political activism and advocacy for women's rights by various women's groups. Additionally, the implementation of affirmative action by successive governments since the return to democracy and the remarkable accomplishments of women in politics and administrative roles have not only improved the visibility and reputation of women in governance but have also created a bright future for women in Nigeria (Ochanja, 2013).

There were just four female parliamentarians in the entire nation during the first republic (1963–1966), an extremely small number that prevented women from having the required impact in politics. Women were therefore unable to actively participate in decision-making during that period. Following this period from 1966, there was an era of military control, which did not encourage women to participate in

politics and made very little mention of women in decision-making roles (Samuel and Segun, 2012).

Women's engagement in politics and decision-making advanced further during the 2nd Republic (1979 - 1983) and particularly the 3rd Republic (1992–1993) . A small number of women were elected as council members. Chief (Mrs.) Titilayo Ajanaku, for example, was the first female chairperson of the Abeokuta Local Government Council in Ogun State, while Chief (Mrs.) Alhaja Sinatu Ojikutu and Mrs. Cecilia Ekpenyong were the first female deputy governors of Lagos and Cross River State, respectively. Not only that but relatively few women were elected to the House of Representatives and only one to the Senate. It's important to remember that, before 1999, women held 3.1% of the seats in the national parliament and 5% of the seats in the Federal Executive Council, respectively. This explained, for the most part, why women were excluded from public life and did not participate in governance. The periods between 1966-1979 and 1983-1992 were times of strict military rule in Nigeria and there was no room for politics of any sort.

Cecilia Ekpenyong in Cross River State and Lagos, correspondingly. In addition, relatively few women were elected to the House of Representatives and only one to the Senate. It's important to remember that, before 1999, women held 3.1% of the seats in the national parliament and 5% of the seats in the federal Executive council, respectively (Luka, 2012). For the most part, this explained why women's interests were excluded from government and why they were marginalized in public affairs.

Throughout Nigeria's history, women held significant social and economic roles before colonization. With figures like the "Iyalode" principals and influential women in decision-making, their prominence was evident. Despite men predominantly holding political authority outside the home, notable exceptions like monarchs' mothers wielded substantial influence. However, during the 20th century's social administration, women's powers diminished, affected by colonial changes and the dominance of men in commerce and governance. The post-colonial period from 1960 to 1999 saw marginal female representation in political offices, but since the restoration of democracy in 1999, there's been a notable rise in women's political engagement, although challenges in achieving equal representation persist. Despite historical obstacles, increased education, advocacy, and affirmative action have

paved the way for a more promising future for women in Nigerian governance.

3. Post Colonial Period (1999-2023)

In 1999, women made up slightly more than half of Nigeria's population. With this strength in numbers, organizational prowess, and resolute determination to overcome barriers, people's lifestyle, and the men, they have the potential to turn the ailing condition of things at all fronts, including the family, state, or public situations (Asaju and Adagba, 2013). In 1999, under President Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria returned to a democratic government. There was a relative enhancement in the political participation witnessed by women when compared with the preceding history.

Upon assuming office on May 29, 1999, the civilian president appointed four women, 13.7% of the 27 senior ministers, and three women, 16.6% of the 18 junior ministers. He appointed two female counsels, two senior special assistants, six special assistants, one special assistant to the vice president, and two female senior special assistants in addition to eight permanent secretaries (Luka, 2012). In all the nations, there were female appointees as officials, making them take part in the councils of superintendents (Kalawole et al).

It should be emphasized that although the proportion of women holding political office significantly increased between 1999 and 2011, the majority of these posts were appointed rather than elective. This nonetheless improved the involvement of women in the processes of making decisions in the country, however, it was not a major improvement when compared to what is globally advised. In any of the 36 states, not a single woman was elected governor or chairman between 1999 and 2011. Still, only fifteen women held senatorial seats and the House of Representatives in 1999, representing 3.19% of the total seats. In 2003, this figure increased to twenty-five, or 5.33%. In 2007, there was an additional rise to thirty-four or 7.24%, and in 2011, there was a minor decrease to thirty-three, or 7.03%. Four to six women were designated as deputy governors between 2003 and 2007. Despite these developments, Nigeria still falls well short of the 35 percent worldwide requirement for affirmative action when it comes to decision-making and women-representation (Kalawole et al).

In 2007, elections held in April were an aggregate of one thousand two

hundred (1,200) women applicants to one thousand five hundred and thirty-two (1,532) services. Six hundred and sixty (660) emerged winners of their primary electoral process. Of the six hundred and sixty (660) campaigners who queried choices into colorful posts, Ninety- three were eventually elected into the contested offices: six of them deputized six governors, there were nine legislators, twenty-seven public representatives, and fifty-two in colorful state legislatures (Luka, 2012).

Indeed, even if this shows a huge growth in women's political participation, it still falls well short of the sum of women. Political participation is crucial in every society at every level to structure society, gather and redistribute assets, and impact decisions by structured or personal objectives (Arowolo and Abe, 2008). As an abecedarian motivation for political engagement, everyone—even women—craves to impact the distribution of empowerment per defined objectives.

Since the dawn of the fourth democracy in 1999, there have been six consecutive general elections. Even if it's just for holding elections regularly since the restoration of civil government, this is what genuinely a measure of public development is. How all-embracing this growth has been, and very specifically, how much women have gained from the popular notions of equity and parity, remain major areas for concern. Women's candidacy fared poorly in the 2019 civil electoral process for the Senate, House of Representatives, and the Presidency. Men outnumber women in the presidential candidates by a factor of 92%. 763 females ran for Senatorial seats and Representatives' House out of the 6,563 seats available, the number of women vying for National Assembly seats was 12% of the total seats available (Okechukwu and Onyishi, 2015). To put it simply, with only eight to twelve percent of candidates running for president and National Assembly, respectively, women's equality in Nigeria is still a distant dream.

Despite the consistent emphasis on improving the involvement of women in public life, Nigeria seems to be heading in the wrong direction. Data from 2018 demonstrate that women's rates of formal decision-making participation are among the lowest on the mainland and globally, with just 5.6% accrued to women (which is 86 out of 1534) of all optional positions in both public and subnational contexts. Nigeria's failure to carry out all of the agreements and commitments it signed has been further highlighted by the results of the presidential and National Assembly

elections that were held on February 25, 2023. Ninety-two women contested for the Senate in the February polls, and just three surfaced winners, representing 8.4 percent of the one hundred and nine senatorial seats. They are *Ireti Kingibe* of the Labour Party (LP) from the Federal Capital Territory, *Idiat Adebule* of the All-Revolutionaries Congress (also known as ARC) from the Lagos West District, and Ipalibo Harry Banigo of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) from the state of Rivers, West District (Nkereuwem, 2023).

While just fifteen of the two hundred and eighty-six candidates for positions in the House of Representatives were proclaimed victorious. A total of 18 political parties competed for the votes of the three hundred and eighty candidates that were women for the National Assembly, including ninety-two candidates for the Senatorial and two hundred and eighty-eight candidates for the House of Representatives. Only fifteen of the two hundred and eighty-eight women who ran for seats in the House of Representatives were elected; eight were from the All Progressive Congress, four were from the People's Democratic Party, and one from LP, one from APGA, and one from YPP. In Bayelsa, the PDP won with Ebikake Enenimiete, while the APC won in Benue State with Blessing Onuh and Regina Akume. Borno was won by Zainab Gimba of the APC, Delta State by Erhiatake Ibori-Suenu of the PDP, while Imo, Lagos, and Ogun were won by Miriam Onuoha, OgbaraKafilat, and Adewunmi Onanuga of the APC independently. In Plateau and Rivers State, the PDP's Beni Lar and Boma Goodhead were victorious, while the APC's Fatsuma Talba and Khadija Ibrahim prevailed in Yobe State. Only 25,961 of the sum of valid votes in the electoral process went to Chichi Ojei of the APM which is the Allied People's Movement, the only woman to run for president. Numbers from INEC show that between the general choices of 2019 and 2023, the overall number of eligible voters increased by 11.3 percent. Out of the total number of voters reported, men were 52.5% of the total, and 47.5% were women. Nigeria is ranked 184 out of 192 countries for women's representation in public congress. Consistent with this ranking, only 21 of the 469 members of the Ninth National Assembly are women. According to data from Invictus Africa, of the 990 members of the state House of Assembly, only 45 are women, and 15 of the 36 countries had no female legislators. Given the numbers thus far, most certainly, the tenth assembly would be poorer than the earlier ones (Nkereuwem, 2023).

Between 1999 and 2003, there were 360 House of Parliament members, including 12 female members, or 3.3% of the total, and 348 male members, or 96.7% of the membership. Only 21 women, or 5.8% of the population, held seats in the House of Representatives between 2003 and 2007, while 339 men, or 94.2 percent of the total, held such positions. Out of 7,160 candidates, just 628 women were selected in the April 2007 selections, making up a pitiful proportion of all candidates. 3,141 candidates were running for seats in the National Assembly, however, only 209 (6.7%) of them were female. There were 25 labeled lawmakers in 2007 and 19 in 2011, however, there were 9 more female legislators in 2007 than there were in 2011. In 2019, 235 women competed for Senate seats from an aggregate of 1,904 contenders, while 533 women ran for House of Representatives seats consisting of a cumulative of 4,680 contestants (Ulugbemi and Omoniyi,2021).

Before the 2023 elections, 21 women were sitting in the National Assembly, 8 in the Senate, and 13 in the House of Representatives, making up 4.47 percent of the current National Assembly class, which is a decrease in the numerical strength of the representation previously had. Similar issues of marginalization and rejection from their male counterparts in political processes have also plagued Nigerian women since the country's independence (Falola, 2012). To combat this issue, pathways must be created for women to recognize their importance in policymaking, and participation and representation must be pushed and supported (Iyayi 2017). Among other transnational organizations, the United Nations (UN) has worked for years for the advancement of equitable representation of women and their rights in national administrations, notably those of its member states (UN Women 2013).

The UN aggressively promotes women's participation in government institutions at all levels, from the lowest to the highest levels, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Nigeria places importance on enacting legislation that aims to enhance the representation of women in positions of authority and decision-making. Additionally, it increases the ability of female activists who are interested in pursuing optional services across the nation, whether at the state council, in the context of new forms of governance, or by participation in public congresses and administrative functions (UNDP, 2011).

World leaders opposed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) spoke out about women's concerns during the year 2000, particularly as they pertained to

the Women's 12 Commission. Out of the eight protests launched, the third simply calls for gender parity and increased authority for women. This was also succeeded by similar efforts, such as the initiation and setting up of UN Women in 2010 as an entity with the exclusive purpose of addressing women's concerns (Onyenenkwa & Nkamnebe, 2011). This UN Women-founded organization has been actively addressing discrimination based on gender, and disparities in how both genders conduct themselves in all aspects of socioeconomic and political life.

It encourages the construction of islands for public gender initiatives and international development objectives. Additionally, it promotes the formation of gender-sensitive budgets for public administrations with pointers to track and monitor the advancement of women in member-state countries, as well as appropriate and transparent support for issues and programs that advance gender equality (UN Women, 2013). Combined with the United Nations sweats at several indigenous organizations that promote women's empowerment and responsible government worldwide in different countries. The African Union (AU), an international organization, has achieved another noteworthy step toward the emancipation of women in Africa.

To advance women's rights and gender parity on a national and worldwide scale, the African Union proclaimed 2010–2020 the African Women's Decade (AWD) in 2010. (Pogoson, 2012). The AWD aims to increase the proportion of women in African congresses to enhance popular government procedures. Furthermore, it aims to improve women's and girls' access to education, fight violence against women in all spheres of life, prevent postponing justice for victims of gender-based violence, and empower women. It also intends to improve maternal health and reduce maternal mortality. To enhance women's empowerment and remove obstacles to their full participation in decision-making processes, all of these dynamic governance groups throughout the globe are working together. The argument for this course of action is also being supported by reputable voices from pressure organizations like the civic society. How the world is educated about women's concerns is also being significantly impacted by the rapid advancement of technology and the digital age. It has been demonstrated that social media is a rapid and efficient tool that can be used to apply lobbying pressure and enlighten millions of people about the significance of supporting a cause that improves the

representation of women in policy-making.

It is vital to highlight that gender equality and equivalence thrive in environments where the republic and its institutions coexist peacefully. Women in comparable societies are thought to perform better in republican countries than in authoritarian ones (Oluwole, 2014). It is believed that a popular government will make room for more possibilities of political involvement for women. It opens up more opportunities for introspection and open dialogue with all parties involved without fear or favor (Duerst-Lahti & Kelly, 2000). This eventually results in a deeper understanding of prevailing values in nations with similar cultures. As emphasized in earlier iterations of this research, democracy supports equity, the right to air one's views, civic rights, and rights to participation in national politics, and even equal wealth and power dispersal across every social class.

Yet, only five of the member nations—South Africa (32.8); Tanzania (30.4); Uganda (30); Mozambique (34.8); New Zealand (32.2), and Uganda (38)—have satisfied all 30 of the requirements for women's representation in governance outlined in the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015. Nigeria is conspicuously absent from this list. In Nigeria, virtually all the leaders of the 36 states and the President are all men, meaning that there is no female representation at the administrative level. Out of the 36 states, there is one speaker at the legislative level that is a woman and that happens to be from Ogun State in the South-western part of Nigeria. Just 8 (or 7.3%) of the 109 members of the chamber are female, whereas only 26 (or 7.2%) of the 360 members of the parliament are women, including the speaker (Oyebode, 2007).

The speaker's leadership of the somewhat progressive, manly-dominated parliament may hence likely result in ineffectiveness and destabilization in the days to come. This inclination would be exacerbated by her mostly ineffable position of exposure to formal educational training. Women's lack of power in government, according to Nkebari and Nyeke (2005), is directly tied to their poor educational standing, which prevents them from making contributions at the highest levels of administration. It has been noted that the bulk of women's activism positions are nothing more than a method of achieving celebrity and fortune (Opaluwah, 2007:5).

They stated that the goals of the 30 Beijing Platform of Action (1995) and the AU's Solemn Protestation on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) (2004) could only

be achieved by enabling women to run for office. These women ought to be leaders in a variety of fields, so it's unlikely that their time in government will benefit the less fortunate—mostly the uneducated, rural, and semi-civilized women. Because of the egoism of the female activists, the regulatory application of the concept of gender as an emphatic converse decreases the activism for gender justice (Goetz, 1998).

The 1997 Universal Declaration on Democracy issued by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) reaffirms the notion that participation and responsibility are the fundamental tenets of the republic. It states that citizens of all genders and ethnic groups who are adults have the liberty to be involved with how decisions about how the nation is governed are arrived at, it could be by voting or by being voted for in an electoral process that is without foul play, rid of violence, free, unbiased and open (IPU, 2000).

It also emphasizes how crucial it is for governments to address the cries and protests of their citizens. (IPU, 2000). The calls for women's liberation originating from various sources need to be acknowledged by a responsible government, ranging from civil society in extraordinary situations to the urgent demands for action from international organizations. To achieve effective gender governance, the 14 men and women of a particular society must engage in meaningful trade, collaboration, or teamwork, as outlined in the IPU declaration (Goetz, 1998; IPU, 2000; IDEA, 2010).

The metamorphosis Nigeria has undergone throughout its history has pointed to the possibilities of the female gender across differing civilizations. While women in the pre-colonial era were relevant to decision-making in the proportion they rose in ranks of socioeconomic status, women during the colonial era seemed to be almost non-existent as their roles were inconsequential in the decision-making stage, whereas, the military regimes did no better and the backlog of this era has not waned totally since independence in 1960. However, history makes it noteworthy that democracy offers a possibility of women's active participation in the national political landscape even though the current statistics suggest that this is still a far cry.

IV. CHAPTER FOUR

A. Women, Political Participation and Nigeria

1. Political Decision-Making Process in Nigeria

Approximately half of Nigeria's population is comprised of women, following the global trend. However, women's functions in society are still underappreciated despite the significant roles they play with their people. Cultural prejudices, the misuse of religion, customs, and patriarchal social institutions are to blame for this (Oluyemi, 2016). In Nigeria, women's contributions to national progress became more widely recognized in the 1980s. The 1995 Beijing International Conference on Women improved Nigerian women's effective political engagement (Oluyemi, 2016).

Moreover, Oluyemi asserts that by global norms, men and women ought to enjoy equal rights and chances to actively engage in all facets and levels of political processes. With a population exceeding half of the global total, women play a crucial role in the progress and development of society at large. Mother, producer, house manager, community organizer, and sociocultural and political activists are among the important tasks that women often play in most countries. Out of all the roles that have been discussed, the women's movement has given rise to the last one (Oluyemi, 2016).

Approximately 51% of women in Nigeria cast ballots in elections (Agbalajobi, 2010). Women are still underrepresented in both appointed and elective roles, despite this. According to available data, fewer than 7% of Nigeria's population is represented politically overall in the government. This proves that Nigeria is yet to achieve the Beijing Platform of Action recommended 30% affirmative action (Agbalajobi, 2010).

The insufficient representation of women in both elected and appointed positions within Nigeria has become a growing concern for many Nigerians. Nonetheless, in keeping with the Beijing declaration from the Fourth World

Conference on Women, which promoted 30% affirmative action, the government and non-governmental organizations have been working together to raise the number of women participating in politics (Oluyemi, 2016). Instead, the National Gender Policy (NGP) that is now in place in Nigeria called for 35% affirmative action and aimed for a more inclusive representation of women by requiring them to hold at least 35% of both appointed and elected public sector positions, respectively (Ojo, 2007). The patriarchal practices ingrained in our society—many of which have been evident since pre-colonial times—were the underlying cause of the underrepresentation of women in political involvement. However, since democratic government has been restored in Nigeria, women have once again become more involved in politics, holding both elected and appointed positions (Ojo, 2007).

Oluyemi (2016) asserts that women's involvement in Nigerian politics is a significant issue. Despite the extensive endeavors undertaken by the government and non-governmental organizations in response to the Beijing Declaration at the Fourth World Conference on Women, which advocated for a 30% affirmative action, as well as the National Gender Policy (NGP) recommendation of 35% affirmative action to ensure a more inclusive representation of women in elected and appointed positions, women continue to face political marginalization. (Oluyemi, 2016). It is important to note that Nigerian women continue to face marginalization as a result of the nation's ingrained leadership style. Notwithstanding the obstacles women face, there is a lot of good energy being generated by women's activism and advocacy, women's education, the government's support of women's empowerment, and women's desire to engage in politics. This suggests that women's involvement in politics has a promising future. As a result, it is recommended that the pertinent parties support laws that protect women from violence, provide them with more economic and political clout, and study legislation that will enable women to pursue elected and appointed office in politics (Agbalajobi, 2010).

A declaration allowing women to run for office was the only way to fulfill the objectives of the 30 Beijing Platform of Action (1995) and the African Union's Solemn Protestation on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) (2004). However, the dismal state of affairs seems to be encouraged by the Nigerian Constitution. An analysis of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution by Ezeifeka & and Osakwe (2013) reveals a significant prevalence of masculine pronoun references and gender-specific terms

that predominantly refer to males. This linguistic structure extends across various social and political positions in Nigeria. It is evident in the use of terms like 'he,' 'him,' 'his,' and 'himself' about persons without regard for their gender, giving the notion of an all-male affair, male dominance, and or the complete exclusion of women. This linguistic representation has possible effects or repercussions for the school of thought embedded in Nigerian legal documents (the constitution). The repeated usage of male pronouns and gender-specific terms for elected and appointed public offices suggests that women's eligibility is non-existent and are not expected to fit into these offices.

Ezeifeka & Osakwe (2013) further emphasized how this constant repetition of male pronouns can have a humongous import on the perceptions and ambitions of girls and women who read this document. It may lead them to believe that their identity and aspirations as individuals are not recognized and that certain positions are exclusively reserved for males. The Constitution uses terminology like 'Chairman' for the heads of various bodies, which implies that these roles are reserved for men. While this practice might be argued as common in other texts and contexts, the Constitution, as a foundational legal document, should strive for inclusive and gender-neutral language to reflect the principles of gender equality and female empowerment. One notable exception in the Constitution is Section 29, which includes specific conditions for renouncing citizenship, and, in doing so, recognizes both genders but introduces an additional condition for women based on marriage. This distinction can be seen as a deviation from the norm and may reinforce traditional gender roles. It is apparent that the linguistic choices in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, including the use of masculine pronouns and gender-specific terms, suggest biases and underrepresentation of the female gender. This is contrary to the constitutional provisions on gender equality and democratic principles. Addressing these linguistic biases is essential for Advocating for gender equality and empowering women within the socio-political landscape of Nigeria.

Table 1. Federal Laws Promoting Gender Discrimination in society and political participation

S/N	Laws	Finding	Recommendation
1	The Constitution	I. Section 42(3) of the Constitution excludes the right to freedom from discrimination in public office appointments, which effectively eliminates this right for women, even though the provision doesn't explicitly target them. ii. Section 26 of the Constitution currently allows only women who are or have been married to Nigerian citizens to become Nigerian citizens by registration. However, husbands of Nigerian female citizens are not granted the same opportunity to acquire Nigerian citizenship through marriage. This discrepancy discriminates against Nigerian women by denying them the chance to have their foreign husbands obtain Nigerian citizenship through marriage, while husbands can confer citizenship on their wives.	The removal of Section 42(3) from the Constitution is necessary. ii. An amendment to Section 26(2) of the Constitution is proposed to include individuals who are currently or have been married to Nigerian citizens. This change aims to grant equal rights to both male and female foreign spouses of Nigerian citizens to obtain Nigerian citizenship through registration.
2	Electoral Law	There is currently no legislation or regulation that mandates a particular percentage of elective positions to be reserved for women, whether in government or political parties. The National Policy on Women 2000 is the only document that sets a target of 30% reservation for women in both the Legislative and Executive branches of government, as well as within political parties	Legislation should be enacted to support the Affirmative Action Policy of 30%, accompanied by a specified timeframe for reaching this target
3	Police Regulation	窗体底端 Women are hired for clerical, telephone, and office orderly tasks within the General Duties Branch to prevent male police officers from performing these duties. ii. Female police officers are prohibited from participating in underarm drilling or engaging in baton or riot exercises iii. Female police officers are required to seek permission before getting married, unlike their male colleagues who do not face the same requirement. Iv. An unmarried police officer who becomes pregnant will be discharged from the Force and can only be re-enlisted with the approval of the Inspector-General of Police	i. Women should be employed in regular police duties, similar to their male counterparts, and should not be assigned to positions specifically to assist their male colleagues ii.Women should be permitted to participate in underarm drilling and engage in baton and riot exercises. iii. Female police officers should not be singled out for requiring permission before getting married iv. Unmarried female police officers should no longer face discharge from the Force. It is suggested that these changes be implemented by repealing the applicable police regulations.窗体底端 I Women should be employed in regular police duties, similar to their male counterparts, and should not be assigned to positions specifically to assist their male colleagues ii Women should be permitted to participate in underarm drilling and engage in baton and riot exercises Iii Female police officers should not be singled out for requiring permission before getting married. Iv Unmarried female police officers should no longer face discharge from the Force. It is suggested that these changes be implemented by repealing the applicable police regulations

Table 1. (con) Federal Laws Promoting Gender Discrimination in society and political participation

S/N	Laws	Finding	Recommendation
4	Tax Law	窗体顶端 While legal provisions aim to ensure equality between men and women, the Policy of the Joint Tax Board is discriminatory against women in the following ways: I. Deductions for dependent children are granted to the husband by default, while the wife is only eligible if she can demonstrate the children's dependency on her. Single mothers are unable to claim allowable deductions for their dependent children due to their inability to provide marriage certificates	Women, according to the law, should be entitled to receive allowable deductions for their dependent children without the requirement of proving the children's dependency on them individually. Additionally, children should be equally considered as dependents of both the husband and wife for this purpose Single mothers should be relieved from the obligation of presenting a marriage certificate to claim allowable deductions for their children
5	Labor Laws	i. Sections 34(1) and 44 of the labor Act permit an employed individual to be accompanied by members of their family, which includes up to two wives and children under the age of sixteen years. This definition of family only considers wives and children, without considering husbands ii. Women are prohibited from being employed for night work in industrial and agricultural roles, except for positions in nursing or supervisory management iii. Women are prohibited from being employed in manual underground work in mines	i. A woman should have the right to be accompanied to her workplace by her family, including her husband and dependent children. Therefore, sections 34(1) and 44 of the labor Act should be revised to reflect this ii. Regarding findings (ii) and (iii), it is suggested that women should not face prohibitions from working night shifts or engaging in manual underground work in mines, as these restrictions limit their employment opportunities. Instead, women should have the opportunity to work in all areas of employment. However, adequate protection in terms of equipment and facilities should be ensured for them. Therefore, sections 55 and 56 of the labor Act should be amended accordingly.
6	Land Use Act	Section 24 of the Act stipulates that the customary laws of the locality or the deceased landowner's customs apply to the inheritance of the deceased's landed property upon their death. However, these customary laws cannot deprive any person of their beneficial interest in the land or its proceeds from sale. Nonetheless, the section preserves the authority to prohibit, restrict, or regulate the right to occupy the land. In cases such as Folarin v. Cole and Coker v. Coker, it has been established that even if a woman is entitled to inherit the beneficial interest in the land, she may still be denied the right to inherit and occupy the land itself	Amending section 24(b) to grant women the right to inherit and occupy the land directly.
7	National Commission for Women's Act	The aim of this Act is to encourage the complete involvement of women in the development of human resources and to ensure their recognition as equal participants in all aspects of human development. The affirmative provisions of the Act do not discriminate against women in any manner.	The objectives outlined in sections 2 and 5 of the legislation should be vigorously implemented. Additionally, there should be a policy equivalent to Affirmative Action, ensuring that a minimum of thirty percent (30%) of all credit schemes, including microcredit, are exclusively reserved for women.
8	Other Laws	Laws concerning economic development, financial and fiscal policies, banking, and other financial institutions do not include any discriminatory provisions against women.	Affirmative Action should be utilized to provide special assistance to women, aiming to expedite their involvement in national development
9	Marriage Act	Section 18 specifies that parental consent for marriage of a minor is typically attributed to the father, except in cases where he is deceased, of unsound mind, or absent from Nigeria. In such instances, the consent of the mother is deemed acceptable.	Section 18 should be revised to mandate the collective consent of both parents.

Table 1. (con) Federal Laws Promoting Gender Discrimination in society and political participation

S/N	Laws	Finding	Recommendation
10	Child rights Acts	Section 21 of the Act establishes eighteen years as the minimum age for marriage and engagement, effectively prohibiting child marriages, which disproportionately affect girls.	There should be broad legislative adoption of eighteen years as the minimum age for marriage in Nigeria. Section 16(e) ought to be revised to stipulate that. i Instances of domestic violence should be recognized as grounds for divorce, and the abusive spouse does not necessarily need to be the respondent. Ii The abused spouse or petitioner should only need to provide evidence of the abusive violence without requiring a conviction of any listed offenses. They must demonstrate this evidence beyond a reasonable doubt
11	Matrimonial Acts	In referring to the utilization of violence by the respondent's spouse as a circumstance deemed intolerable for the abused spouse to persist in living with, as outlined in section 15(2)(c), section 16(e) states that i The abusive violence must escalate to the level of attempting murder, causing severe harm, or having the intention to commit either or both of these acts. ii. The abusive spouse must have been formally convicted of the specified offense.	Section 16(e) implies that only severe instances of violence would qualify as grounds for divorce, and even in such cases, the abusive spouse must have previously been convicted of the serious offenses mentioned before the violent behavior can be considered as grounds for divorce. Consequently, due to this provision, the court has ruled that not all forms of violence are deemed intolerable.

Source: Compiled from National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI).

Ette & Akpan-Obong (2022) acknowledge the awareness of the disparity in political representation between genders, emphasizing the significance of women's full engagement in politics for safeguarding their interests within society. This demonstrates a consciousness of the issue. Despite this awareness, certain recommendations, such as the proposal to allocate 5% of legislative seats to women, have been proposed but ultimately rejected by political administrations. This rejection points to a lack of political determination to address the problem. This highlights where the norms of culture and socio-economic norms meet, which jointly marginalize women in politics. These norms consistently position women on the periphery of political involvement. These same norms further inform gender-based violence which has proven over time to also be a unique constraint thwarting women's political participation. It functions as a form of intimidation and a substantial barrier to their involvement. Another unique factor is the media; it is implicated in perpetuating the patriarchal framing of politics, further undermining women's participation. News media are seen as amplifying gender bias in political coverage. Above and beyond the aforementioned is Low literacy rates among women; this hinders their awareness of their political and democratic rights, presenting a significant barrier to their political engagement. Moreover, political parties are recognized as major obstacles for women in politics. They frequently fail

to nominate or support women for influential positions, with men predominating in party structures and decision-making processes.

Socialization processes are noted as contributors to women's limited engagement in politics. A culture of female subordination is identified as a root cause. Unlike some countries with electoral gender quota systems, Nigeria lacks such a system. It is thought that quotas work well to encourage women to participate in politics. In northern Nigeria, where no woman has been elected to either the state House of Assembly or the national House of Representatives, the underrepresentation of women in politics is particularly apparent. In addition, one major obstacle facing women is their inability to obtain political money. The cost of elections and the monetization of politics disadvantage women who lack economic resources.

Earlier this year, two researchers, Ette and Akpan-Obong (2023) carried out research that highlighted the issues plaguing female participation in Nigerian politics. The research fieldwork spanned two periods, 2016 and 2019, in Nigeria. Their investigation involved engaging with a diverse group of female politicians and their male counterparts across various cities in four geopolitical zones: north-central, south-east, south-west, and south-south. Security considerations guided the decision to omit travel to the north-central and north-west zones. Participant selection was meticulous, hinging on factors such as media prominence, standing within political parties (including roles as electoral candidates), and employing the snowballing method. The female politicians and their associates belonged to prominent political parties like the PDP and APC, as well as smaller parties.

The goal was to delve into the experiences of female politicians across different political strata and to achieve this, they utilized semi-structured interviews guided by an interview guide. This approach facilitated probing responses and encouraged participants to elaborate on their answers. The adaptability of semi-structured interviews allowed them to explore areas initiated by the participants, yielding a more nuanced set of accounts. A total of 25 women and 10 male allies were interviewed, constituting the primary content for this article. Nearly all the women had contested elections at various government levels, except for two who, despite not running for political office, actively contributed as party members and campaigners. Interview sessions occurred in venues preferred by participants,

including hotel meeting rooms, offices, and homes, with each session lasting between 45 and 60 minutes. All interviews were conducted in English, meticulously tape-recorded, transcribed, and coded for thorough analysis. The identity of the interviewees was concealed for the sake of discretion. For analysis, they adopted a thematic approach, extracting excerpts from interviews to showcase commonalities and differences in the subjects' accounts. The methodology used aimed to provide a platform for politicians to construct narratives that centered on their experiences. Direct quotes from research participants were incorporated. All participants responded to a uniform set of structured questions addressing the gender-specific challenges faced by female politicians. While the specifics and personal contexts varied, a unanimous consensus emerged among all female respondents, highlighting four major challenges in their political endeavors. These challenges encompassed bullying and intimidation, the patriarchal character of the party structure, financial constraints and the expenses associated with elections, and the pervasive 'politics of insult'.

According to the findings of Ette and Akpan-Obong (2023), the following were highlighted as major issues facing women's participation in politics in Nigeria:

Bullying and Coercion: Unsuccessful female candidates recounted experiences of intimidation and coercion by party leaders and influential figures, referred to as godfathers, who wield substantial influence in Nigerian politics. Instances were highlighted where candidates were pressured to withdraw from party primaries, with male counterparts selected without adhering to democratic processes. Rule changes, favoring men, were cited, including a case where an absent male opponent was declared the winner without votes being cast. Some female candidates faced altered voting systems and impromptu meetings compelling them to withdraw:

"Bullying and intimidation are some of the tactics that were used against women. No woman wants to die and leave her children so they will quietly step down." (Parliamentary candidate (PC1))

"The godfathers ganged up against me... They do all kinds of things to keep women away." (Parliamentary candidate (PC2))

Patriarchal Party Structure: In addition to hindrances from leaders and godfathers, the party organizational structure itself disenfranchises and discourages

women. Despite claims of gender inclusivity, women are often relegated to roles that lack power or leadership requirements. The predominant parties typically assign women to the 'woman leader' position, limiting their influence within the party hierarchy. Women's involvement in party formation is rare, leading to limited representation in policy-making. One respondent noted:

"Do the parties then make room for women when they join? Not really because when offices are assigned, one woman will be given the position of woman leader and yet she will not be involved in policy-making processes." (Former parliamentarian (FP1))

Access to political space is further restricted when women are perceived as threats or gain traction. Parties may create obstacles for independent women who have earned the right to participate:

"There is a clear denial of access to the political space... if you are seen as an independent woman who has earned her right to participate, the party will create obstacles to keep you out." (Former parliamentarian (FP2))

Financial Constraints in Politics: Political funding stands as a significant hurdle for women's political participation globally (Muriaas, Wang, and Murray, 2020). The economic impact on electoral outcomes and political engagement is particularly challenging for women in a country where the average woman earns 58.4 Kobo for every Naira earned by men. In 2021, only 30% of managers in Nigerian corporations were women, and just 13.9% of firms had female top managers, as per the 2021 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report. The influence of political godfathers, predominantly male, who financially support favored candidates, perpetuates the disadvantage of women. This financial disparity hinders women's ability to compete in a political landscape where economic resources and privilege often determine success over political ideologies or visions:

"The reign of political godfathers in Nigeria who bankroll anointed sons (always male) means that women will always come last." (Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013: 40)

The 'cost of doing politics' emerged as a substantial impediment to political participation, especially when parties elevate economic thresholds for members aspiring to electoral offices. The monetization of politics is a considerable challenge,

with voters expecting material incentives for their votes. Attempts to emphasize long-term benefits beyond immediate gratification often fall on deaf ears:

"I was talking to a group of women and I asked them what they would prefer... They reflected for a short time and then said, 'Yes, that would be the best thing, but right now, we need N2000 to buy rice.'" (Sonaiya, presidential candidate)

Poverty significantly influences women's representation in politics, as impoverished voters may prioritize selling their votes to the highest bidder. The financial burden of contesting elections starts from the expression of interest, despite some parties offering free or subsidized nomination forms for women. However, this arrangement can work against women, as those who paid for forms may resist yielding to those who obtained them for free: "Giving free forms is not an answer because those who pay for forms do not want to give way to those who got free forms. Why should someone pay and then not be allowed to win?" (Interviewee)

Providing complimentary or subsidized nomination forms leads to an increase in the participation of women in electoral campaigns, however, it does not guarantee electoral success without powerful 'godfathers' and sufficient funding. In the Nigerian political landscape, where money plays a pivotal role, women face challenges accessing funds for their campaigns: "In the Nigerian situation, politics has to do with money. When money talks, women keep quiet because they will not go to the bank to borrow, and they don't have properties to use as collateral." (Male ally and member of the PDP (MA1)).

Successful women candidates often receive financial support from various sources, including family, friends, and personal businesses. The 'cost of politics' not only deters women from electoral politics but also perpetuates patronage, underscoring the crucial role of money in determining women's access to politics.

Meanwhile, female politicians often face verbal abuse and insults, including accusations of promiscuity. This "politics of insult" contributes to a hostile environment for women in politics. Some male allies suggest that women are not sufficiently proactive in pursuing political roles and that they need to take more initiative. While socio-cultural norms may no longer be the primary barrier for women in politics, the 'politics of insult' remains a significant challenge. Female politicians face verbal abuse and accusations, often centered around derogatory

remarks on their personal lives. The demeaning treatment extends to party meetings, In situations where women are stigmatized as being promiscuous and are alleged to attend political events to seek affluent men**:** "I was called a prostitute and told I should be at home looking after my husband and children. Single women are particularly vulnerable to abuse. They are called big girls. Women who are not able to handle insults give up when they are attacked." (Former parliamentarian (FP3))

This disrespect isn't confined to state politics backrooms; it also manifests at the national level. A proposed Gender and Equality Opportunities Bill, aiming to secure unrestricted rights for women in politics, was voted down by the male-dominated Senate. A male senator explicitly stated concerns about giving women too much opportunity, suggesting that an influx of women into the chamber would lead to chaos.

Despite the widespread acknowledgment of various barriers, including bullying, patriarchal structures, financial limitations, and the politics of insult, some male allies attribute women's underrepresentation to their alleged reluctance to step up. Moses Ekpo, a deputy governor, suggests that women are not 'putting themselves up': "I am disappointed that at this time in the nation's development, we still have a relatively small number of women in politics... And I don't think there is a restriction on women registering for political parties except for the restriction by husbands who might say, 'No, don't register'" (Ekpo, male ally and member of the PDP).

However, female respondents argue that party membership alone doesn't provide equal opportunities for women. Ndi Kato, a young politician, and activist, points out that while the political space is partially open to women, seats at the table are not willingly created for them, enforcing different rules for engagement compared to men: "You can come. You can enter the house but there are some rooms which you cannot enter. You should be satisfied that we have allowed you into the house. You can talk but nobody will listen to you." (Kato, political activist)

Another claim suggesting women's unwillingness to support each other is disputed among women who achieved electoral success. Some argue that this notion is a device employed by men to undermine the credibility of women, emphasizing solidarity and mutual encouragement among female politicians: "It might have been true in the past, but it's not true anymore. We are standing solidly behind each other, we're encouraging each other." (Parliamentary candidate (PC3)

Itam Abang, a legislator, attributes her success to the support of rural women in her community, challenging the narrative that women do not support each other: "Women won me the election... They said, 'this is our daughter'. You know when women say no you can't buy them. I spent time with the women and they, in turn, supported me." (Abang, state legislator)

Ette & and Akpan-Obong (2022) underscore the multifaceted challenges encountered by women in Nigerian politics, encompassing cultural, economic, and institutional barriers. Addressing these limitations necessitates a comprehensive approach involving changes in societal attitudes, political party structures, and electoral systems to create a more inclusive and equitable political environment for women.

B. Cultural Roots of Limitations on Nigerian Women in Political Participation

Nigeria bears the weight of deeply ingrained discriminatory practices against women. These practices have endured for generations, firmly rooted within the different patriarchal systems that form the foundation of these communities (Olomojobi, 2015; Ikpe, 2011). Perceptions of gender are intricately woven into the fabric of cultural and religious beliefs in Nigeria, perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes. These deeply entrenched customs have given rise to pervasive gender discrimination, depriving a substantial portion of the population of their essential human rights and stifling their potential contributions to economic and social progress (Olomojobi, 2012)**.** Customs, often influenced by male-dominated structures, have remained stagnant, acting as barriers to social advancement (Olomojobi, 2012). These customs encompass practices such as child marriages, the imposition of restrictions on females, and the often degrading rituals associated with widowhood (Ikpe, 2011; Mojekwu-Chikezie, 2012). Child marriages and the limitations imposed on girls have persisted in Nigeria, resulting in the premature withdrawal of many young girls from educational and skill development opportunities. Girls are frequently wedded at tender ages, sometimes to significantly older men, severely curtailing their prospects for personal growth and empowerment (Ikpe, 2011). Furthermore, early motherhood places them at risk of childbirth complications, including Vesico Vaginal Fistulae (VVF), and often leads to abandonment by their husbands (Mojekwu-Chikezie,2012).

Within the patriarchal framework, male children are typically favored over their female counterparts, leading to unequal investments in their education. Even when women receive an education, they often find themselves relegated to the confines of housewifery, limiting their participation in societal development (Ikpe, 2011). Widowhood in Nigeria frequently results in severe social, cultural, and economic sanctions. Diverse communities have adopted various dehumanizing widowhood rites, subjecting widows to physical and mental anguish (Olomojobi, 2015; Mojekwu-Chikezie, 2012). These rites encompass practices such as confining widows with the deceased's body, enforcing clothing restrictions, isolation, dietary constraints, and even sexual abuse by family members, all in the name of a supposed cleansing ritual. While these practices may vary across ethnic groups, they all share a common theme of degrading treatment toward widows (Olomojobi, 2015; Mojekwu-Chikezie, 2012).

Widows often lose their inheritance rights and are treated as property to be inherited by relatives, perpetuating their dependence and exploitation (Akinboye, 2004). Female genital mutilation, deeply entrenched in traditional and religious beliefs, remains a widespread harmful practice in Nigeria. It is perceived as a means to subjugate women and control their sexuality within patriarchal systems (Olomojobi, 2015). The consequences of female genital mutilation extend beyond the physical realm, inflicting psychological harm and perpetuating discrimination and oppression against women (Olomojobi, 2015). Customary laws across Nigeria often deny women access to land and restrict their rights of succession. This exclusion results in social and economic disadvantages for women, as they are marginalized from property ownership and communal decision-making processes (Olomojobi, 2015). While some cultures, like the Yoruba, grant equal inheritance rights, many others adhere to patriarchal customs where women have no claim to their late husband's property (Mojekwu-Chikezie, 2012). In recent years, several Nigerian states have taken legislative action to prohibit harmful widowhood practices and female genital mutilation, aiming to dismantle barriers to women's progress (Olomojobi, 2015). Nevertheless, further concerted efforts are needed to empower women and eradicate these deeply ingrained discriminatory practices (Mojekwu-Chikezie, 2012).

1. Pagan Beliefs

Throughout the history of Nigeria, especially in the old Ijebu society of South-West Nigeria, the duty of women in religious practices and beliefs has been both influential and significant. This research explores the pagan beliefs of Nigerian women, shedding light on their remarkable involvement in religious activities and the unique roles they played within these traditional systems.

Throughout history, women in Nigeria have faced discrimination, as noted by Akintan (2013). However, despite these challenges, they have managed to confidently and forcefully wield their influence, particularly within Yoruba traditional societies. A notable avenue through which women have demonstrated their leadership and significance in these societies is through active participation in various religious cults. This suggests women have not been confined to the periphery of traditional society; instead, they have actively engaged in religious practices, making invaluable contributions.

One crucial arena where Yoruba women have made their most substantial impact is within the religious sphere, as noted by Beier (1955). Their participation in traditional religious life has been instrumental in shaping Yoruba society. Aina (1998) further highlights the strong correlation between women's status in traditional religious life and their standing in the average Nigerian community. Their contributions are far-reaching and multifaceted.

Maintaining the cleanliness of holy sites of worship is the duty assigned to Yoruba women. They actively participate in religious ceremonies and, in some instances, serve as leaders in religious setups. Adewale (1998) highlights that certain cults grant equal participation to both men and women, allowing leadership roles to be determined by factors such as seniority, heredity, election, or divine choice. This demonstrates the dynamic nature of women's roles within these religious contexts.

Female-dominated cults hold a significant place in Yoruba society. These cults see women taking on more eminent roles than men in conducting religious roles. In Yoruba civilization, women have accomplished amazing things throughout history, frequently making them deserving of the title of goddess. The legacy of legendary people like Moremi, who was instrumental in freeing her people from Igbo subjugation, endures in the culture. Osun, Orisa-Oko (wife of Yemowo, Obatala),

Oso-Usi, Yemule, Yemoji, and Yemoja are some other well-known deities. Within these cults, women make up the hierarchy of officials, having been inducted to the highest priesthood and functioning as priestesses. One such instance is the Sango cult, in which "Iya-Sango," also known as "the mother of Sango," plays a major role and has great impact (Beier, 1955).

Yoruba women are also skilled in divination and frequently serve as medicine ladies. They blend the skills of childrearing and healing, with Orunmila's wife Osanyin being associated with the former. Titles like Iya Elewe Omo (the lady who knows the herbs for the cure of children's diseases), Iya Abiye (the woman who gives birth peacefully), and Iya Onisegun (the woman who creates medicine) are used to pay homage to them. These women are respected for their healing skills and have a wide range of healthcare knowledge (Odebiyi and Aina, 1995).

In the *Ìjèbë* society as a whole, women still hold significant positions in religious matters and interests. They acknowledge the existence of God alongside their male counterparts and have a variety of mythologies to clarify His actuality. Their religious involvement begins at a young age and persists throughout their lives. Religion plays a prepotent role in the lives of the traditional Ìjèbú women, as it binds all aspects of their culture and provides the foundational rules for their behavior. According to Ìdòwú (1979), the central theme of the Yoruba life, including that of Ìjèbú women, is their religion. This unwavering commitment to religious practices is further illustrated in the words of Paul the Apostle, who noted that "In all things they are religious" (Acts 17: 22), much like the Ìjèbú women.

Women offer prayers for their families and the larger community during religious activities. During religious rituals, they are in charge of delivering music, singing, and dances; men typically assume the role of percussionist. Female priests, physicians, mediums, customary birth attendants, and keepers of sanctuaries OF deities are among the roles played by women. Mbiti (1988) recognizes the important role that women play in traditional medicine, emphasizing their duties as spirit possessors and mediums, especially when it comes to the medical needs of women and children.

Women in *Ìjèbú* land's different cults hold significant positions in divination, frequently experiencing trances to receive divine inspiration and visitations. They are responsible for overseeing the rituals' mystical aspects and performing the required

rites. Ogundipe (2007) emphasizes that these roles highlight the exceptional and sacred nature of womanhood within a society dominated by patriarchy. Women are considered both givers of life and givers of meaning through their actions and interpretations of the spiritual realm.

Women in Ìjèbú traditional society hold pivotal positions, contributing significantly to religious, economic, medical, and political-religious spheres. Despite facing discrimination, they have displayed unwavering resilience and commitment to their multifaceted roles. As Johnson (1956) observed, women in Ìjèbúland are often more industrious than men, dedicating themselves to their various responsibilities, including child-rearing. Their involvement in religious activities showcases the depth of their influence and their integral role in the survival of the community.

2.   Tribal Approaches

Women in Nigeria had independent access to resources and were actively involved in both the public and private spheres before colonization. Although there were some exceptions to this trend, particularly among the Hausa-Fulani women in the Northern part of the country, who were restricted in their commercial activities due to the practice of Islamic purdah, women still managed to make a significant impact on the socio-political landscape of the region. It's important to recognize the contributions of women in Nigeria's history, despite the challenges they faced.

During the pre-colonial era in Nigeria, women played significant roles in various aspects of society, despite patrilineal and patriarchal kinship structures being common. Women were involved in economic activities and held domestic roles in different ethnic groups. Women gained power through lineage or marriage into ruling families, but their influence in public spheres was limited (Abdul et al., 2011). The position of women varied among societies. Some societies had strong women's organizations that managed their affairs and wielded political influence, while in socially stratified societies, women of high status held superior social positions. Queen Amina of Zazzau is a prominent example of a woman who became the undisputed ruler of a Hausa city in Northern Nigeria due to her military prowess and empire-building skills. In Southern Nigeria, women played pivotal roles in the administrative structure of the Oba, or Alafin, in the highly centralized and intricate palace administration of both the Old and New Oyo (Abdul et al., 2011).

However, in Yoruba and Riverine Igbo societies, not only individual high-status women but also women collectively possessed political power through their organizations and representatives, exemplified by the Yoruba "Iyalode" (Abdul et al., 2011). During significant events like the Kiriji war, women played vital roles alongside men, and when women rose to meet these challenges, they were rewarded with increased political responsibilities, as seen in the cases of the Egba and Ibadan iyalodes.

As the period of a hundred years came to a close, a new order of historical occurrences began to adversely affect women's political duties. In African society before the colonial regime, women occupied a position that was harmonious and interdependent rather than inferior to men. The existing sex segregation in many aspects of society often allowed women to exercise control over their affairs, contributing to their political agency (Abdul et al., 2011).

3. Islam and Christianity

The history of female Muslim's involvement in Nigerian party politics is a complex one, marked by a series of significant developments and challenges. This history can be backdated to the introduction of Islam in the eleventh century, which gradually led to the marginalization of women in political affairs. This marginalization became more pronounced with the Fulani conquest of many northern states in the nineteenth century (Callaway, 1987).

During British colonial rule in the twentieth century, this pattern was reinforced, particularly in southern Nigeria, where women were largely excluded from significant political roles. Post-independence Nigerian governments attempted to address this gender imbalance by including women in governance. However, these efforts fell short of achieving true gender equality in political representation (Callaway, 1987).

Notably, early post-independence politicians like Aminu Kano and Isa Wali made women's issues a central concern of their political groups. While initially, they were among the few addressing this issue, by the late 1970s and 1980s, it became a prominent part of the party agenda, particularly in the People's Redemption Party (PRP). These efforts were, however, limited to education and not focused on organizing women for political activism (Callaway, 1987).

Due to intense Muslim lobbying, many female Muslims in Nigeria were not granted the right to vote until 1976. The Northern People's Congress (NPC), citing custom and the low rate of formal education among Northern women as grounds, was adamantly against granting women the right to vote. For Muslim women in the North, the differences in schooling were especially pronounced (Callaway, 1987).

In the early years of independence, political parties had women's wings, but these were often treated as auxiliaries and had little control over their affairs. Women's involvement in party politics mainly revolved around entertainment activities at political rallies. Because women in the North could not vote before the 1979 elections, their involvement primarily aimed to attract male voters. Parties like NEPU and later PRP showed concern for the social position of women but focused on education rather than political activism (Callaway, 1987).

The granting of voting rights to numerous Muslim women in 1976 signified a pivotal moment. By the time of the Second Republic, Muslim women were appointed to public positions, and parties created women's wings that played more substantial roles in politics. These women leaders were given traditional titles, legitimizing their leadership. Consequently, women's participation in public affairs expanded, leading to the appointment of more Muslim women to public offices (Callaway, 1987).

During the transition to the Third Republic, discussions on the roles of women, young people, and labor were prominent. Women in Nigeria (WIN), a research and advocacy organization, condemned the male bias in government across regimes. Muslim women were also involved in these discussions, highlighting their vision for a just, active, receptive, and reactive government, the primacy of law, and women's representation in legislative bodies (Callaway, 1987).

By the late 1980s, opinions emerged suggesting that good Muslim women could not only be involved with political activities like voting but also stand for office. This shift was significant and led to more discussions on the involvement of female Muslims in politics. In the 1990s, Muslim women's associations actively engaged in building alliances with mainstream organizations to address women's political concerns. The Nigerian Women's Political Agenda was developed as a result of this cooperative effort, to incorporate women's concerns into political party manifestos and programs (Callaway, 1987).

Nigerian women were more involved in politics with the Fourth Republic's reintroduction of democracy in 1999, accounting for roughly 51% of female voters. Nonetheless, with fewer than 7% of all political representation in the government, women—including Muslim women—remain deemed underrepresented in both elective and appointed roles (Callaway, 1987).

Among Christians in Nigeria however, the realm of politics has historically been viewed with skepticism, often seen as tainted by corruption and immorality (Dada, 2015). This perspective, shared by a significant number of Christians, is responsible for shaping the political disposition of individuals, especially women. Given the paramount importance of gender as a determinant for societal development and progress, the participation of women in politics assumes a vital role in achieving a balanced and equitable society.

One significant factor affecting the political involvement of women among Christian women in Nigeria is the perception that politics is inherently tainted and immoral. Many Christians are wary of engaging in a sphere they perceive as incompatible with their moral and ethical values. This reluctance often manifests as a hesitancy to participate actively in politics, particularly among women (Dada, 2015).

A prevailing assumption is that women, irrespective of their religious background, have not mustered the courage to engage in politics actively. This belief is intertwined with the broader societal notion that women are inherently less assertive in the political arena (Dada, 2015). Moreover, it is argued that men have not adequately created opportunities for women to participate fully in politics. This lack of access and opportunity further dissuades Christian women from venturing into the political landscape.

Christianity, as a dominant religion in Nigeria, significantly influences the perspectives of its adherents. Some argue that Christian teachings, directly or indirectly, discourage women's participation in politics. This influence may stem from interpretations of religious texts or traditional norms within certain Christian denominations. Consequently, Christian women in Nigeria may feel constrained by religious expectations that limit their political involvement (Dada, 2015).

Another assumption is that political parties have not done enough to facilitate women's active involvement in politics. This deficiency is often attributed to the lack

of affirmative action policies or sufficient support structures within political parties. Additionally, traditional beliefs and customs can serve as formidable impediments to women's political engagement. These deeply rooted traditions may discourage women from participating in politics or limit the positions they can aspire to hold.

The height of understanding and involvement of Christian women in politics in Nigeria correlates strongly with their level of educational attainment. Contrary to some assumptions, marital status does not significantly affect their participation in partisan politics (Dada, 2015). Additionally, the choice of elective positions for Christian women in Niger State is not markedly influenced by their church denomination.

There are several facets to the topic of how Christian beliefs affect women's political participation in Nigeria. While religious convictions and traditional norms may act as barriers, education emerges as a critical factor in promoting greater political engagement among Christian women (Dada, 2015).

C. Nigerian Women in Political Participation

1. Pre-Colonial Period

In Nigeria's pre-colonial period, women held crucial roles in the political dynamics of their communities. (NBS, 2013) Their contributions to governance were substantial and complemented the efforts of men. This era witnessed a range of political involvement by women, showcasing their dynamic and diverse participation across different regions of Nigeria.

For example, in the ancient kingdom of Borno, women actively participated in the management of the state (NBS, 2013). Their duties were not confined to domestic affairs but extended to the political sphere. They worked alongside male leaders, and their collective efforts contributed to maintaining societal order.

Another amazing historical story of women's political activity comes from ancient Zaria, in what is now northern Nigeria (NBS, 2013). A queen by the name of Queen Bakwa Turuku built the groundwork for the present-day city of Zaria in the first part of the 16th century. Queen Amina, a strong and courageous warrior, continued her mother Queen Bakwa's heritage. Queen Amina's accomplishments in Zaria are awe-inspiring; she constructed formidable defensive walls around the city

to safeguard it from potential invasions. Her influence extended well beyond Zaria, as she expanded her territory, reaching as far as Bauchi. This expansion also transformed Zaria into a prominent commercial center, underlining the immense contributions of Queen Amina to the region.

In Yorubaland, a prominent ethnic group in southwestern Nigeria, women held crucial roles as female traditional chiefs (NBS, 2013). These women were known as titled ladies and occupied positions of high regard within society. The Yoruba society was characterized by a centralized and complex palace administration system, where the Oba, or king, ruled. The king's wives, referred to as ayaba, held various ranks and grades, reflecting the hierarchical structure of Yoruba society. These titled ladies not only played essential roles in the palace administration but also had significant influence and authority.

Furthermore, several remarkable women in different regions of pre-colonial Nigeria left indelible marks in the annals of history (NBS, 2013). Figures like Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin, and Omu Okwei of Ossomari are celebrated for their exceptional contributions to the socio-political landscape of their respective regions. In Nigeria's pre-colonial history, several well-known women had important roles in the political system. In their respective territories, Moremi of Ife and Emotan of Benin were examples of extraordinary bravery and power. Additionally, Omu Okwei emerged as a dominant figure in the commercial activities of Ossomari, which is now located in Delta State. (Vanguard, 2022). These women left a lasting impact on their communities, showcasing the dynamic and diverse array of political involvement among Nigerian women across different regions of the country (Ake Modupe Ph.D; et Al., 2019).

While these examples illustrate the active participation of women in pre-colonial Nigerian politics, it's essential to acknowledge that women faced limitations and challenges (NBS, 2013). These limitations were influenced by various factors, including traditional gender roles, societal expectations, regional practices, leadership structures, and cultural norms.

In regions with centralized power structures, women of high status had opportunities to hold influential positions and play critical roles in the administration. However, in more socially stratified societies, women's political roles were often less pronounced. Nevertheless, women in positions of high status, either through the

queen's mother's office or personal connections with male rulers, still held significant political influence. This was especially prevalent in regions such as Benin.

In other regions, collective female organizations were central to women's political power. The Yoruba "Iyalode" is a prime example of a female representative with political influence (NBS, 2013). In ranked and power-structured societies, women of esteemed rank occupied positions that were superior to those of commoner men and women**.** The regionally specific dynamics of women's political participation highlight the nuanced nature of gender relations in pre-colonial Nigeria. These historical accounts offer a rich tapestry of women's contributions to politics, challenging the perception that women were entirely marginalized from the political sphere during this era.

These experiences vary widely across different regions, showcasing that the opportunities and limitations on women's political participation were not uniform throughout pre-colonial Nigeria. The multifaceted roles women played provide a deeper understanding of the complexities of gender dynamics in the pre-colonial period.

2. Nigerian Women in Political Participation (1960-1999 Period)

The denial of voting rights to Nigerian women during colonialism was one of the most significant effects on their political engagement. Women achieved great progress in their communities by active participation in politics during the pre-colonial era, but the colonial era brought about a change in the status quo. Women in Southern Nigeria were not allowed to vote until the 1950s. A noteworthy but constrained step given their abilities was the appointment of three women to the House of Chiefs: Chief (Mrs.) Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Chief (Mrs.) Margaret Ekpo, and Janet Mokelu (Kolawole et al., 2013; National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2013).

The engagement of Nigerian women in politics underwent a sea change during the Post-Colonial Period. Mrs. Wuraola Esan established an example for future women to follow when she was elected as the first female member of the Federal Parliament in 1960. Mrs. Janet N. Mokelu, Chief (Mrs.) Margaret Ekpo, and Miss Ekpo A. Young all ran for office and were elected to the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly. However, in northern Nigeria, where patriarchal customs and cultural

prejudices persisted as obstacles even after independence until 1979 when civilian administration was restored, things were different (Kolawole et al., 2013).

The Second Republic (1979–1983) saw a rise in the number of women involved in Nigerian politics. At the federal and state levels, several women were elected to the House of Representatives. Two female federal ministers were also appointed during this time: Chief (Mrs.) Janet Akinrinade and Mrs. Adenike Ebun Oyagbola, held the positions of Minister for National Planning and Minister for Internal Affairs, respectively. As the sole female permanent secretary, Mrs. Francesca Yetunde Emmanuel created history by serving as the head of both the Federal Ministry of Establishment and the Federal Ministry of Health. To increase the representation and roles of women, many of them were appointed as Commissioners in the various states. (Kolawole et al., 2013).

Ms. Franca Afegbua's election to the Senate in 1983 marked a pivotal moment in Nigerian politics. During this time, a few women also ran for and were elected to posts on Local Government Councils. However, the resurgence of military rule in December 1983 brought about A notable change in the political terrain. The Federal Government introduced a formal quota system, mandating that every state's Executive Council must include at least one female member. In compliance with this directive, some states even exceeded the quota, appointing two or three female members, which, while affirmative, emphasized the need to ensure gender equality (Kolawole et al., 2013).

The 1990 local government transition elections marked the beginning of the Third Republic and provided women with an opportunity to establish themselves as councilors. A woman in the Western region of the nation became the Chairperson of a Local Government Council, demonstrating how female participation is changing. Two female deputy governors were appointed during this time, Alhaja Sinatu Ojikutu of Lagos State and Mrs. Cecilia Ekpenyong of Cross River State, even though no female governors were elected. Mrs. Kofo Bucknor Akerele became victorious in the 1992 senatorial election and was awarded a Senate seat. In addition, a few women were elected to the House of Representatives, Chief (Mrs.) Florence Ita Giwa is among them (Kolawole et al., 2013).

The Transitional Council of President Babangida and General Abdulsalami Abubakar's military government were two of the interim periods that saw modest

advancements in the representation of women in Nigerian politics. Various female ministers held positions in the Federal Executive Council, demonstrating a growing trend of inclusivity. Nevertheless, the journey towards gender equality in Nigerian politics continued, with each period providing new opportunities for women to assume influential roles and contribute to the nation's governance (NBS, 2013).

3.   Nigerian Women in Political Participation (1999-2023 Period)

The return of democracy in Nigeria on May 29, 1999, held the promise of a new era for women's participation in the country's political landscape. Democracy, at its core, embodies the principle of equitable representation of all segments of society, and the underrepresentation of women in Nigerian politics has raised significant concerns regarding the nation's commitment to this democratic ideal (Akpan, 2016).

Nigeria has been working hard to close the gender gap, but it has not yet reached the lofty goals established by international agreements. The National Gender Policy and the Beijing Platform for Action set goals of having thirty-five percent and thirty percent of women in elected office, respectively.

Nigeria had five different administrations between 1999 and 2015. These were headed by Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007), Umaru Musa Yar'adua (2007–2010), Goodluck Jonathan (2010–2011 and 2011–2015), and Muhammadu Buhari, who is now in office (Akpan, 2016). Every one of these administrations had a distinct influence on how women participated in politics in the nation.

When examining the vice-presidential position in Nigeria during this time frame, it becomes evident that this role has consistently been occupied by men, paralleling the situation at the presidential level. These four administrations witnessed male dominance in the vice-presidential position, further underscoring the underrepresentation of women in the upper echelons of political power (Akpan, 2016).

A considerable gender gap exists in the composition of the Nigerian Senate and House of Representatives as of 1999, according to an analysis. For instance, the Senate has continued to be predominately male. Just 3 of the 109 senators in 1999 were female, making about 2.8% of the total. Although there was a slight increase to 8 women (7.3%) in 2007, this number decreased to 7 (6.4%) in 2011 but then returned to 8 (6.4%) in 2015. In the House of Representatives, the scenario exhibited

a similar pattern. In 1999, only 12 women out of 360 members held seats, accounting for approximately 3.3% of the House. This figure increased to 21 (5.8%) in 2003 and further to 26 (7.2%) in 2011. However, there was a decline to 19 (5.3%) in 2015, out of a total of 360 members (Akpan, 2016).

Women's participation in appointive positions in Nigeria has experienced fluctuating progress since 1999. With just 7 women (5.6%) serving on 130 boards in the early years of this democratic age, there was little representation of women on federal boards of public corporations. Gender discrepancies were also evident in the composition of the government, with 7 women (14.89%) appointed out of 47 cabinet ministers. One woman also served as the Director-General of a government regulatory body. A moderate improvement in the proportion of women in political appointments was observed in 2011, as 12 out of 42 women were appointed as Ministers, representing 30% of the positions. Furthermore, four of the twenty women had the role of Special Advisers. This demonstrates the continued difficulties and sluggish progress Nigeria is making toward attaining gender balance in high-level political appointments (Akpan, 2016).

In reflecting on the challenges surrounding women's participation in Nigerian politics as highlighted by Ette and Akpan-Obong (2023), it is evident that progress is being made, albeit amidst persisting hurdles. The 'politics of insult' remains a poignant issue, showcasing the deeply ingrained stereotypes and biases that women in politics grapple with. The narratives of verbal abuse and accusations underscore the need for a cultural shift and a more inclusive political environment. While male allies may attribute women's underrepresentation to their perceived reluctance, the voices of female politicians tell a different story. The struggle for equal opportunities and recognition within political parties continues, revealing the complexity of barriers that extend beyond women merely 'putting themselves up.' Yet, amidst these challenges, there's a resilient spirit among female politicians, a solidarity that defies the notion that women do not support each other. The stories of mutual encouragement and support, as seen in the victories attributed to the backing of rural women, challenge stereotypes and showcase the strength derived from collective empowerment. Certainly, the journey towards gender parity in Nigerian politics is multifaceted, marked by strides and setbacks. It calls for a collective effort to dismantle the existing barriers, foster a more inclusive political culture, and amplify

the voices of women who are determined to defy stereotypes and contribute meaningfully to the political landscape.

V. CHAPTER FIVE

A. Conclusion.

1. Revisiting Research Questions and Objectives

As this research work climaxes, it is essential to revisit the fundamental questions and objectives that have informed this thesis:

2. Research Questions:

The primary research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. What factors serve as barriers to women's participation in policy-making across various tiers of governance in Nigeria?

2. What actionable measures can be implemented to facilitate increased political involvement of women in the Nigerian context?

To address these questions, the study's objectives are outlined as follows:

1. To identify electoral constituencies in Nigeria where women's political dominance is evident, thereby discerning the geographical landscapes where women's influence in governance is substantial.

2. To delineate the various forms and levels of women's involvement in Nigerian policymaking, encompassing roles, responsibilities, and levels of impact.

3. To pinpoint structural frameworks that can be established to encourage and empower more Nigerian women to actively participate in the political arena, ensuring their voices contribute to policy formulation and implementation.

3. Summarizing Key Insights

The exploration of women's political participation in Nigeria has illuminated a range of challenges, including constitutional biases, gender-based violence, media bias, low female literacy rates, and the absence of an electoral gender quota system.

This research has also unveiled the diversity of women's involvement in Nigerian policymaking, shedding light on their multifaceted roles, responsibilities, and varying levels of impact.

4.   **Unveiling Barriers to Women's Political Participation**

A closer examination of these challenges reveals the following:

- Constitutional Biases: Within the Nigerian Constitution, there exists a palpable gender bias, reinforcing the exclusion of women from political roles. The deployment of masculine pronouns and gender-specific terms contributes to an institutional narrative that designates certain political positions as exclusively male domains.

- Gender-Based Violence and Media Bias: Gender-based violence, often exacerbated by media bias, presents a significant obstacle to women's entry into the political sphere. This pervasive bias takes various forms, constructing formidable barriers that women must surmount.

- Low Literacy Rates: Low literacy rates among women pose a considerable impediment to their political participation. Education emerges as the guiding beacon towards empowerment and meaningful engagement in politics.

- Electoral Gender Quota: The conspicuous absence of an electoral gender quota system in Nigeria exacerbates the underrepresentation of women in politics. The introduction of such a quota system could bridge this gender divide effectively.

5.   **Delving into Cultural Roots of Limitations On Nigerian Women in Political Participation**

The comprehensive exploration of the cultural underpinnings reveals intriguing facets:

- **Pagan Beliefs:** In Yoruba society, women actively participate in religious practices and rituals, maintaining sacred spaces of worship, and playing pivotal roles in ceremonies. Female-dominated cults occupy a significant place in the intricate fabric of Yoruba society.

- **Tribal Approaches:** Throughout pre-colonial Nigeria, women held

prominent roles in various societies, despite certain limitations. Accounts of Queen Amina of Zazzau and women's influential positions in palace administration and women's organizations in southern Nigeria underscore the contributions of women to governance.

- **Islam and Christianity:** The profound influence of Islam and Christianity on women's political participation in Nigeria reflects historical developments characterized by receding interest and the decline in participation. The misinterpretation of Islam by some Nigerian Islamic clerics, mixed with the deep-rooted misogyny and cultural belief of the Nigerian society is a deterrent to women's aspirations to be leaders in the society. The arduous struggles for voting rights and political representation within Muslim communities mark pivotal milestones in this journey. Among Christian communities, a deep-seated skepticism about politics has deterred many women from active political participation, driven by the perception of politics as inherently tainted and morally compromised.

In conclusion, this research offers nuanced insights into the intricate challenges and potential solutions related to women's participation in Nigerian politics through its detailed exploration of constitutional biases, cultural roots, and gender disparities. It further examines the cultural limitations that hinder Nigerian women from participating in political decisions within the country's patriarchal society. Addressing these challenges will set the stage for a more inclusive and equitable political system, enriching the collective tapestry of Nigerian society.

The research examined and utilized Dahl's theory of Polyarchy and Habermas's Self-transformative theory, which have proven significant in understanding the involvement of women in policy-making processes in Nigeria. Dahl's polyarchy theory emphasizes the importance of competition and participation in politics, encouraging the inclusion of women in political spheres in Nigeria, albeit to a limited extent. Similarly, Habermas's theory of self-transformative participatory theory promotes inclusive and deliberate communication, advocating for women's inclusion in the National Assembly and decision-making spheres, thereby increasing women's representation and participation.

However, despite the theoretical influences, women are still largely marginalized due to factors such as limited access to education, constitutional and

cultural biases, gender-based violence, and biases in media coverage.

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RESUME

Personal Information

Name: NAFYSAH

Surname: ABDELAAL MUHAMMAD

Academic Qualification

- Masters degree in Political Science and International Relations, Istanbul Aydin University, Turkey (2022-2024)

- Bachelors degree in International Relations, Eco.Tes Benin University - Benin Republic (2014-2018)

Language Skills

Language	Reading	writing	Speaking
English	Native	Native	Native
Hausa	Native	Native	Native
Arabic	Intermediary level	Intermediary level	Intermediary level

Computer skills

- Professional in (Word, Excel, Power Point etc.)
- Professional in Cyberspace (Working on Internet)

Work experience

I. **20 P.O.W Mafemi Crescent, Utako Abuja (April 2021- March 2022)**

II. **Wonderland Television Abuja (Febuary 2020-March 2021)**

- Journalist with three years' experience in producing News bulletins and Programs, anchoring/ reporting, telling strong human angle stories and a voice over artist.
- News editor/ broadcaster
- Interviewed over 30+ Nigerian creative entrepreneurs and professionals

- Talented and immensely creative journalist with a commitment to high quality research and writing, with a proven history of achievement in the industry with professional experience.

III. Assistant Secretary, Nigerian Postal Service (Nipost) Abuja (October 2018-October 2019)

- Carried out administrative duties at the department of internal relations.