GENDER PERSPECTIVES TO POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
In spite of several years of gender advocacy, women have continued to remain underrepresented at all levels of government in Nigeria. Although several factors seem to be accountable for the cross under-representation, many work in this area tend to pay attention to gender discrimination, thus crowding out the factors that cause discrimination itself. Given this background, this paper examined gender perspectives to political representation with focus on patriarchal structures along with religion, culture and tradition, as well as political institutions as factors that hinder women in political participation and representation in Nigeria. The paper relied an inductive approach predicated on secondary sources of data collection. The Liberal strand of feminist theory was adopted as a framework for the paper. The paper identifies that factors that affect political representation of women in Nigeria to include: patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society, absence of internal democracy, monetization of the political system, financial constraints, physical and psychological violence that characterized the country's political process among others. As a result of these challenges, women have continued to be relegated to the background in the Nigerian politics. The paper recommended that the gap could be narrowed not only by encouraging women to participate but also addressing existing patriarchal structures as well as religious and cultural elements to favour women, and enshrine in the Nigerian Constitution political systems, structures and approaches to upgrade women's political representation at all levels.

Keywords: Feminism,Gender, Patriarchalism, Political and Representation.

ABSTRAIT
Malgré plusieurs années de plaidoyer enfaveur de l'égalité des sexes, les femmes sont restées sous-représentées à tous les niveaux de gouvernement au Nigéria. Bien que plusieurs facteurs semblent être responsables de la sous-représentation croisée, de nombreux travaux dans ce domaine tendent à prêter attention à la discrimination fondée sur le sexe, évinçant ainsi les facteurs qui provoquent la discrimination elle-même. Dans ce contexte, cet article a examiné les perspectives de genre à la représentation politique enmettantl'accent sur les structures patriarcales ainsi que la religion, la culture et la tradition, ainsi que les institutions politiques entant que facteurs qui entravent la

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participation et la représentation politiques des femmes au Nigéria. Le document s'appuyait sur une approche inductive fondée sur des sources secondaires de collecte de données. Le voletlibéralde la théoriféministe a été adopté comme cadre pour le document. Le document identifie les facteurs qui affectent la représentation politique des femmes au Nigéria: la nature patriarcale de la société nigériane, l'absence de démocratie interne, la monétisation du système politique, les contraintesfinancières, la violence physique et psychologique qui ont caractérisé le processus politique du pays, entre autres. En raison de ces défis, les femmes ont continué d'être reléguées au second plan de la politique nigériane. Le document recommandait que l'écart puisse êtrer éduit non seulement en encourageant les femmes à participer, mais aussi en abordant les structures patriarcales existantes ainsi que les éléments religieux et culturels pour favoriser les femmes, et enchâsser dans la Constitution nigériane les systèmes politiques, les structures et les approches pour améliorer la représentation politique des femmes à tous les niveaux.

Mots-clés: féminisme, genre, patriarcat, politique et représentation.

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality is a global phenomenon which hinders women to participate in democratic politics. In the global politics, there are only a few women who have risen to the top political positions (Chukwuemeka & Eze 2011). Like many other countries, Nigeria has been a patriarchal society in which roles of women in political process are restricted. The patriarchy nature of traditional and socio-political system belittles the role of women in politics. The nature, custom, tradition and cultural backgrounds of Nigerian politics totally sideline women from participating in democratic politics, as the stake of survivability remains low (Izugbara& Onuoha, 2003). Women are always treated as second class citizen in their various domains in Nigerian political settings.

Gender is defined as what society believes about the appropriate roles, duties, rights, responsibilities, accepted behaviours and opportunities of people based on what sex they are. Gender also refers to status of women and men in relation to one another (WHO, 2010). Gender inequality is a kind of discrimination based on gender in the allocation of political positions and allocation of resources. On the other hand, political participation entails a series of voluntary activities through which members of a society share in the direct or indirect selection of their rulers and eventual formation of public policy.

In Nigeria, women are always considered as subordinate with little recognition in political participation. The marginalization of women in political participation is as old as the arrival of British colonialism in Nigeria. Women have always been seen as home maker, child bearer among others. Hence there are very few women in Nigerian politics. In the colonial era, there were very few women who were appointed to political offices due to social values inherent in the traditional political terrain of Nigeria. Those women who forced themselves into politics were always considered as irresponsible and promiscuous in the society. In traditional political system, women are not recognised to participate in politics; they rather prefer to be responsible for the home building.

Efforts have been made to rescue women from gender inequality at the local and international level. The United Nation has mandated all its members to raise the status of women in political allocation of elective and non-elective post; it mandated every country of the world to allocate

30% of its political post to women folk (Angya, 2013). Various Conventions and committees have been inaugurated to limit discrimination against women in the global political terrain. For instance, the International Conference on Women in Beijing held in China, The International Women's Year Conference held in Mexico City in 1975, and the United Nation Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), all engaged in advocacy at ensuring gender equality in the global political decision making.

Apart from the above International Conventions, the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria section 42 (1) states that a citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not by any reason only that he is such a person;

a. be subject either expressly by or practical application of any law force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinions are not made subject; or

b. be accorded either expressly by or in the practical application of any such executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to citizens in Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religion or political opinion.

In addition to the constitutional provisions, the Nigerian government created the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in 1996 and the National Gender Policy in 2006 by the Obasanjo administration to ensure gender equality.   In spite of these efforts, the rate of women participation in politics is still low in Nigeria.Angya (2013, p.12) has summarized the number of women in elective positions as at 1999 thus:

> 3 females out of 109 senators, 12 females out of 360 House of Representatives Members, 12 females out of the 990 States Houses of Assembly Members, 143 females out of the 8810 LG Councilors, 9   females out of 774 LG chairmen. The offices of the President, Vice President and 36 state governors were no go areas for women since the 1999.

During the 2003 elections, there were only three female deputy governors, two female speakers of States Houses of Assembly, four female Senators, 22 Federal Representatives, quite some number at the state and local government levels. The April, 2007 elections threw up six women deputy governors, nine senators, twenty six Honourable Members of the Federal House of Representatives and fifty three members of State House of Assembly. The crowning moment for this period came when on 5th June, 2007, Hon. Patricia OlubunmiEtteh was elected as the first woman Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives (Charles & Ikenna, 2009).

In the 2011 Election, available statistics reveal that out of the 109 senators in the National Assembly, 9 were women, while only 27 out of the 360 members of the House of Representatives were women. Out of the 990 members of the State House of Assembly, only 54 were women. The picture depicts a lopsided membership of the legislatures in favour of men, and the story is not so different at the local level where only a few women function as chairpersons or councilors in local government council. These figures have continued to decrease in the 2015 and 2019 general elections. It is against this background that this paper seeks to:

i.   examine the factors that have affected political representation of Women in Nigeria.
ii.   suggest measures that will enhance gender balance in Nigerian politics.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Gender

Gender as a concept defiles universally accepted definition. Generally, gender can be referred to as the roles or functions of a male or female in a given society. Such roles or functions can be distinguished as gender based or as individual concept of themselves or gender identity. Webb (1991) defined gender as social and personality differences between women and men; it refers to that which society defines as masculine and feminine. Gender also refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men such as norms, roles and relationship or and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed (WHO, 2009). As a matter of fact, the roles and responsibilities differences in some societies are more flexible and subject to change, while in some they are rigid and turn out to be very difficult to change.

Gender is therefore defined as what society believes about the appropriate roles, duties, rights, responsibilities, accepted behaviours and opportunities of people based on what sex they are. Gender also refers to status of women and men in relation to one another (WHO, 2010). The parameters of socially acceptable behavior for men and women vary widely between societies, are dynamic over time in the same place, and have far reaching effects on politics. Gender stratification is the measure of separation between the definitions of male and female roles in a given society.

Gender refers to social roles allocated respectively to men and women in particular societies and at particular times. Such roles and the differences between them are conditioned by a variety of political, economic, ideological and cultural factors, and are characterized in most societies by unequal power relations. Bridge (1998) opined that gender constitutes one of the determinants of how poverty is experienced and of wealth creation. Rights and entitlements of men and women to opportunities, resources and decision making are based on socio-cultural norms rather than on human rights or the respective development capability of men and women. The Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC) (2001, p.1) defined gender as a system of roles relationship between women and men that are determine not biologically but by the social, political and economic context.

From the above definitions, gender can be seen as the social organization of sexual differences but this does not mean that gender reflects or implements fixed and natural physical differences between women and men, rather gender are the knowledge that establishes meaning for bodily differences. These meaning vary across cultures, social groups and time since nothing about the body including women's reproductive organs, determines univocally how social division will be shaped.

Gender Inequality

According to the World Bank (2001), the imbalance of power and low social and economic status of women in the society perpetuates gender inequality in all spheres of life such as health, education and paid employment. Inequality arises from unequal power relations between men and women. The neglect of gender issues within education systems affects the achievement of gender parity and inequality in many ways. For instance, gender equality will lead to sustenance of boys and girls in schools, elimination of gender inequality will get rid of those cultural and social norms which see men and women not contributing equally to the society.

Empirical evidences from the works of scholars around the world are replete with a common theme of domination of women by men in the socio-political and economic scheme of things.

Agbalajobi (2010) and Luka (2011) argued that the increasing domination of women by men have several theoretical underpinning. On the one hand, women are less represented in politics due to persistent cultural stereotype, abuse of religious and traditional practices. On the other hand, the relegation of women from the realm of politics is akin to the kind of societal social structures in operation at a particular point in time. In most societies of the world, economic, political and social structures are strategically dominated by men and the women have been largely subjected to the roles of 'second fiddle' in the affairs of things.

Political representation
There is an intensive literature on the concept of political representation. Among the scholars who wrote intensively on the concept includes Pennock and Chapman (1968), Pitkin (1967), Schwartz (1988) among others. They provide that "to represent is simply 'to make present again'". According to this definition political representation entails the process of making citizens' voice, opinions and perspectives present in public policy decision making processes. Political representation is harnessed through the actions of political actors when they speak on behalf of those they represent and demonstrate win action what they speak in the political scene.

The above definition is not specific as the concept has multiple dimensions. In this context contemporary scholar such as Rehfeld (2006) opined representation to be by reference to a relevant audience accepting a person as its representative. Notably, Williams (1998, p.66) identified three different dimensions of political life that require representativeness:

    i.   The dynamics of legislative decision-making
    ii.   The nature of legislator-constituent relations, and
    iii.   The basis for aggregating citizens into representable constituencies.

Using the corresponding theme 'the voice trust and memory', she explains the three aspects, using the marginalized group in the United States, as reference. For example, the American women trying to gain equal citizenship are marginalized, and so needs a voice in legislative decision-making. This is more so that the deliberative quality of legislative institutions requires the presence of individuals who have direct access to the historically excluded. Williams further explained how representatives need to know the importance of the representative constituent relationship in order to build 'trust'. She regarded trust as the cornerstone for democratic accountability.

METHODOLOGY
Inductive approach was adopted for this study because of the ability to allow the use of secondary sources of data. In this context analyses of scholarly findings were accessed and assessed, including historical materials, empirical journals articles and previous research work. A comparative analysis table of selected African countries within the period of 2015 – 2018 including Nigeria was assessed.

LITERATURE REVIEW
It is incontestable fact that the Nigerian society is patriarchal in nature. Patriarchy refers to a system in which men have all or most of the power and importance in the society to the detriment of the women folk. Patriarchy has been the major structure of traditional society; it is "a salient feature in most Nigerian Societies" (Aina, 1998, p.78).The term has been defined as a system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions. Feminists

have argued that in any of the historical forms that patriarchal society takes, whether it is feudal, capitalist or socialist, a sex gender system and a system of economic discrimination operate simultaneously. It is observed in the literature that the establishment and practice of male dominance over women and children, is a historic process formed by men and women, with the patriarchal family serving as a basic unit of organization (Asiyanbola, 2005). A Patriarch is considered the head of the household and within the family he controls productive resources, labour force, and reproductive capacities based on the notions of superiority and inferiority and legitimized by differences in gender and generation.

Historically, in many traditional African societies, like Nigeria, a woman's place is seen to be in the home space, where she is confined to domestic chores, bearing and rearing of children, whereas the man roams the wild looking for adventure in work and war (Dogo, 2014). From the time a child is born in the Nigerian society, he or she is cast in the role ascribed for the sexes by society. The children are therefore brought up in the awareness of societal gender roles and grow up to fulfill them. These roles confine the sexes to supposedly appropriate manners of behaviour and areas of endeavour based on their biological identification of being either male or female. As the children grow, their mindsets as regards their roles in society are already fixed, and so they instinctively fill these roles. Gender inappropriate behaviour is met with serious sanctioning which further reinforced gender role differentiations (Omadjohwoefe, 2011, p. 69). This argument is re-enforced by biological determinism postulates; that human behaviour, appearance, abilities and even long term fate, are entirely determined by an individual's genes, that is, their biological make-up. Biological determinists did not recognise, and therefore disregard, the effects of environmental variables on the expression of a given gene. They believe that everything about an individual is innate and all behaviour is in the realm of the control of the gene (Wilson, 1975).

However, the theory biological determinism does not provide adequate explanation for the discrimination of women in many African societies. Many scholars like Chua &Fijino, (1999, p. 392) have questioned the validity of the biological determinism thus: "it is not biology, therefore, but patriarchal social institutions, interactions, and practices that limit each sex to those characteristics and activities defined as feminine and masculine". Feminist believes, therefore, that gender differences between the two sexes result from cultural practices and social expectations which every individual is exposed to from childhood, and which are peculiar to respective societies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper adopts the liberal feminist theory as its framework of analysis. Generally, theory of feminism emerged as both theoretical and /or socio-political movement addressing the systematic unequal treatment of women vis-à-vis men. The movement originated in the 18th century and was first predominantly concerned with women's political rights, such as voting. The most recent phase started in the 1960s and focuses, among other issues, on the unequal treatment of women in the workplace and in organizations in general (Welik, 2015).

The main argument of liberal feminism according to Welik (2015, p.9) is that:

> Feminism claims that gender differences are not based in biology, and therefore those women and men are not all that different their common humanity supersedes their procreative differentiation. If women and men are not different,

then they should not be treated differently under the law. Women should have the same rights as men and the same educational and work opportunities.

In other to achieve fair representation in political arena, the liberal feminist often include men in their organizations. Their activist focus has been concerned with visible sources of gender discrimination, such as gendered job markets and inequitable wage scales, and with getting women into positions of authority in the professions, government, and cultural institutions. Liberal feminist politics took important weapons of the civil rights movement anti-discrimination legislation and affirmative action and used them to fight gender inequality, especially in the job market (Welik, 2015).

The major shortcoming of this strand of feminism is that liberal feminism could not overcome the prevailing belief that women and men are intrinsically different. It is somewhat more successful in proving that even if women are different from men, they are not inferior.

In spite of the above, feminist theory aims to understand gender inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations, and sexuality. While providing a critique of these social and political relations, much of feminist theory also focuses on the promotion of women's rights and interests. Politics is grounded in the nature of society in which it takes place. Liberal feminism argument shows that society set these values for women to follow as the sense of being under the control or protection of a man is upheld.

Historical Overview of Women Political Representation in Nigeria
The role of women in politics pre-dates the country's political independence. For instance, in pre-colonial Bornu, women played active roles in the administration of the state, complementing the roles played by male counterparts (Oluyemi, n.d). Women also played a very significant role in the political history of ancient Zaria. According to the Oluyemi, modern city of Zaria was founded in the first half of the 16th century by a woman called Queen BakwaTuruku. She had a daughter called Amina who later succeeded her as Queen. The story was not different in ancient Yorubaland, where Oba ruled with the assistance of a number of women referred to as female traditional chiefs. They consisted of eight titled ladies of the highest rank. The significant role played by prominent women such as Moremi of lfe, Emotan of Benin and OmuOkwei of Ossomari, cannot be ignored (Oluyemi, n.d).

However, with the advent of colonialism, women were disenfranchised from the political process. It was only in the 1950s that women in Southern Nigeria were given the franchise. Three women were appointed into the House of Chiefs, namely Chief (Mrs.) OlufunmilayoRansomeKuti (appointed into the Western Nigeria House of Chiefs); Chiefs (Mrs.) Margaret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu (both appointed into the Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs), but possessed very little functional relevance (Kolawale, 2013).

In the First Republic EssanWuraola, was the first female senator to be elected on the platform of the Action Group to represent Ibadan West. In Eastern Nigeria, Margaret Ekpo (1961) was member of the Eastern House of Assembly while Janet Mokefu won seat in the Eastern House of Assembly and Republic that lasted (1979-1973) recorded only one female senator out of 571 seats, House of Representatives 2 females out of 445 seats (Otu and Okechukwu, 2015). In the second Third Republic 1979-1983) Franca Afegbue was elected senator to represent the old Bendel state now Edo and Delta State (Adebanjoko, 2018).

With the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1999, twelve (12) women were elected to the senate, and 12 to the House of Representatives. In 2003, senate 9, House of Representatives 25.Leadership position (Speaker) in House of Representatives during the Third Assembly (2007) was given to a woman for the first time Patricia OlubunmiEtteh. In 2011, the number of women representation dropped to7 in Senates but increased in the House of Representatives to 26.

In 2015, women representation in the Senate was 7 while the number in House of Representatives dropped to 22. Also in 2019, seven women have been appointed ministers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is worthy of note that even when the number of women at the national assembly was scanty, they had the opportunity to head some committees.
Nigeria is lagging behind compared to the global trend of women in parliament and national assembly's as shown in the table 1 (about here). The table clearly demonstrates that even in Africa, women political presentation in Nigeria ranked the lowest (6.2%), whereas other smaller African countries like Kenya, Burundi, Mozambique, Senegal and Namibia had higher political representation by women. Similarly, comparison of women political representation in countries outside Africa (tables 2 and 3 about here), indicates that the number of women in both elective and appointive offices is low in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Table 1: Female representatives across Africa: A comparative analysis

S/No.	Country	Number of Seats	Number of Women	Percentage	Year
1.	Rwanda	86	49	61%	2018
2.	S/A	397	168	42.3%	2014
3.	Namibia	104	48	46.2%	2014
4.	Senegal	165	69	41.8%	2017
5	Nigeria	469	29	6.2%	2019
5.	Ethiopia	547	212	32.0%	2015
6	Burundi	121	44	36.4%	2015
7.	Mozambique	250	99	39.6%	2014
8.	Uganda	449	154	34.3%	2016
9	Zimbabwe	270	85	31.5%	2018
10.	Tunisia	217	68	31.3%	2014

Source:AjodoAdebanjoko, 2018

Table 2:Countries with Outstanding Women Parliamentarians including Africa 2014-2018

S/NO	Country	Year	Number of seats	Number of women	Percentage of women
1.	Rwanda	2018	80	49	61%
2.	Cuba	2018	608	322	53.2%
3.	Mexico	2018	506	241	48.2%
4	United States	2018	435	102	23.5
5	Canada	2018	15	7	46.7%
6.	Sweden	2018	349	161	46%
7.	Costa Rica	2018	57	26	45.6%
8.	South Africa	2014	397	168	42.3%
9.	Nicaragua	2016	92	42	45.7%
10	Namibia	2014	104	48	46.2%
11	Bolivia	2014	130	69	53.1%

Source: Computed by the Author, 2019

Table 3: General Aggregate 2018-2019

S/NO.	Zones	Percentages	Remarks
1.	Nordic group of countries	42.3%	leading
2.	America	30.3%	average
3.	Europe	26.5%	Average
4.	Sub-Saharan Africa	23.8%	low
5.	Asia	19.7%	Low
6.	Arab	18.7%	Low
7.	Pacific nations	15.5	Very low

Source: Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2018

The Major Impediments to Women Political Representation in Nigeria
The patriarchal system is found to be the fundamental problem were all obstacles that hinder women participation and representation in politics have a root. This does not only impede women presence in the political system but also their rights to leadership as patriarchy exerts negative influences during pre-election to post-election period.

Culture, Religion and Traditional Factors
In their analysis of culture, religion and traditional factors influence on women political participation, Izugbara and Onuoha (2003) explained how oral traditions, surviving religious cults, relics and indigenous political cultures in different parts of Nigeria support the view that women were major players in the political system in the past. Issues of cultural and traditional practices seem to have severe implication on the ability, willingness and the involvement of women in socio-political cum administrative endeavours. According to the African leadership Forum, several traditional practices are injurious to women's self-esteem and self-image which are necessary ingredients for the confidence needed in political participation (Yetunde, 2008). The issues of

marriage institutions especially the polygamous set up, widowhood, child marriage, female circumcision, exorbitant bride price and rejection of wives by husbands because they could not have children are all identified setbacks that prevent the women from active political responsibilities.

Physical and Psychological violence

This connotes threats, assaults and battery, murder, sexual harassment and defamation of character, as well as abduction to mention a few. Nigerian elections have always been characterized by one form of violence or another since the return of democracy. Female aspirants of various political parties cannot withstand political violence; therefore, women participation in politics is drastically reduced.

Stigmatization

Following the way politics in Nigeria is played, it is being perceived that it is for individuals that have no regards for human rights and are quick at compromising their virtue for indecent gains. Therefore, women aspirants who ventured into politics are looked upon as shameless and promiscuous.

Low Level of Education

The low participation of women in education is also part of the shortcomings. The National Adult Literacy Survey, 2016 published by the National Bureau of Statistics revealed that the adult literacy rate in English in Nigeria is 50.6 per cent while literacy in any other language is 63.7 per cent (female adult age 15 and above). This explains why most women are least qualified for political offices due to low educational attainment. This is also an effect of colonialism, where men were more favoured than women.

Monetization of the Political System

Competing for political positions in Nigerian requires huge financial backup. Most Nigerian women who seek these positions could not afford meeting the financial obligations therein, despite the wavers giving to women aspirants by some of the political parties. And so, they could do little or nothing to outweigh their male counterparts.

Godfatherism

This practice often obstructs the system because political Godfathers do not patronize women; they prefer spending their money on male aspirants whom they believe to have the potentials of winning. They choose, select, and impose candidates on the people through the use of money.

Towards a Greater Representation of Women in Nigerian Politics

For Nigeria to exploit the abundant leadership trait for national development, the paper suggests the following:

One of the major impediments to women participation in elective politics is the level of violence that has been trailing the electoral process in the state. Political violence negates women's chances at the polls and in political participation thus, the Nigerian State should ensure full security for women and girls during election periods and end the impunity of violence. Political Parties should commit to non-violent campaigning and desist from hate speech while non-violent

education should be mainstreamed in all awareness raising and voter education campaigns by all players. The country should safeguard freedom of movement, expression and assembly for all citizens especially women during and even after elections.

Additionally, perpetrators of political violence should be brought to justice. Nigerian women need more than economic empowerment for success at the polls. This highlights the need for the establishment of a special tribunal for the trial of perpetrators of election violence, a situation where numerous lives will be lost during elections and the perpetrators continue to walk the streets free without any arrest and prosecution is undesirable and government should do all within its powers to bring such culprits to justice. Adequate compensation should be paid to victims and their families. A situation where a suspect of political violence would contest for party primaries, contest and win election and get an arrangement for bail thereafter questions the political will of government to address political violence.

In order to enhance women participation in future party politics NGOs, and Women Associations must assist in providing a conducive cultural environment for women. This can be done through systematic and integrated campaigns in both rural and urban centres to soften gender stereotypes and ensure public support. The potential roles of women in promoting good governance must be highlighted to elicit support. Alliance must also be forged with civil society associations that strive to re-engineer political values devoid of violence and manipulations. Female politicians must support one another to create a wider political space for women folk.

Constitutional provisions need to be put in place to ensure women's maximum participation and involvement in the political process. Apart from the general reference to non-discrimination on the basis of sex, there is nothing in the Nigerian constitution that is aimed at redressing the disparities that exist along gender lines in Nigeria. The Electoral Act and the INEC also need to put in place similar provisions. In particular, if INEC's role as a registrar of political parties (as currently exists) is to continue, it should include women's participation as a condition for registration of political parties and the composition of cabinets after elections.

The doctrine of the Affirmative Action and CEDAW should be strengthened so that they could have considerable impacts on the political landscape of Nigeria thereby curtailing any form of discrimination against women.

CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that Nigeria is signatory to many International Conventions against the discrimination of women, the country still rank low in terms of women political representation. Several factors are responsible for the poor state of women political representation. Theseare socio-cultural factors, low educational status, poverty and political violence.

In spite of the challenges women are facing, women activism and advocacy for education of women, is positivity being encouraged by successive governments in Nigeria. These are policies geared towards women empowerment, and channeled to enhance the interest of women to participate in politics. These are indications that the participation of women in politics has a bright future. Therefore, the relevant stakeholders are advised to advocate for the protection of women from abuse, empower them economically and politically and review the necessary legislations to accommodate the growing interest of women in politics both for elective and appointive positions.

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