Original Research Article

Political Culture and Women in Politics and Governance in Nigeria's National Assembly

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Abstract: Women's inroad to power is hazy due largely to a highly competitive political environment with an unpredictable political culture. In this light, this paper seeks to examine whether political culture undermine women's quest for political office in Nigeria especially to the National Assembly. Nevertheless, extant literature established that scholars have written extensively on women's inclusion in politics. The paper applied liberal theoretical explanations to the major variables of the study. Data was generated via documentary sources while content analysis was utilized for analytical discourse. The paper revealed that out of a total sum 469 seats in the National Assembly, the average percentage of elected female legislators between 2007 and 2023 is 5% and the average percentage of elected men for the same period stood at 93%, representing a worrisome disparity in the gender gap in political participation, inclusion and apathy amongst others. Despite campaign promises and assurances, our analysis revealed consistent women under-representation in the national assembly. Hence, the paper recommended that equity and fairness for women should be a top priority of the current administration. It also recommended that Civil society organizations need to rise and support or promote female representations for elective and appointive positions across government establishments.

Keywords: Nigeria, National Assembly, Political Culture, Gender Disparity, Women in Politics, Liberal Theory, Political Representation.

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the Nigerian State is patriarchal in nature. However, the common perception that women are merely reproductive species are no longer tenable in the current globalized world political economy. As argued by Afolabi et al. (2003), women constitute over half of the world's population and contribute enormously to societal growth and development. In most societies, women assume certain roles as mother, producer, home-manager, community organizer and sociocultural and political activists. Political history vividly asserts that Nigeria's development since pre-colonial times, recorded various tangible contributions by women- politically and other wise. Extant literature and oral accounts show that women have overtime contributed socially, economically and politically to the development of Nigeria although not much attention has been paid to these various contributions (Attoe, 2002).

Women's participation as well as their contribution in politics is often not sufficiently emphasized. According to Attoe, (2002, p.4), literature on Nigeria's national development are relatively silent on the contributions of women, In fact Yusuf (in Badejo, 1985) argued along this line of thought, he maintains that looking back at the political development of the country, an independent observer would hastily conclude that women have contributed next to nothing in this very important aspect of human life. However, a closer observation shows that women made their mark in the political development of Nigeria as much as men.

Equally, the prevalent political culture is unarguably a strong inhibition in the dynamic of social forces that have shaped women's participation in politics. It is a common observation among social scholars and political actors that the Nigerian template of political culture riddled with political corruption, electoral malfeasance, electioneering hooliganism, ethnic bigotry and elite inclination to materialism and lack of political accountability, violence etcetera is averse to the influence of women in politics. In furtherance of this line of thought, Okeke (2017) posits in very clear terms, that leadership rascality, god-fatherism, and the mentality of winner-takes-all are strands of the political culture in Nigeria inhibiting political participation especially from the female folk. This attitude to politics propagates a political culture that is averse to fair play and promotes crass materialism and political corruption.

Statement of the Problem

There is a common perception among the civil society that women are most vulnerable in a prevailing patriarchal society with its feisty power relations. They are living in need and poverty and often have less or no access to socio-economic and political opportunities and in most cases subservient to the male forks. Globally, no country in the world has yet achieved gender justice-in terms of equal opportunity for men and women in politics. The exclusion of women in politics has a long history dating back to the ancient times. For instance, the status, position and roles of women in politics in ancient Greece and in Greeco-Roman civilizations is quite low. It is explicitly established that women in ancient Greece and even other Roman civilizations at a time had an inferior position to men. They were primarily viewed as "species-extending beings". In was a preponderant practice among the Greek city-states that women did not have political rights and were not considered as citizens. This status was well known for ancient Athens, (Zhulduz, 2019)

It is regrettable to note that the roles played by women in the Nigerian society and their efforts towards the liberation struggle from colonialism did not earn them a fair chance in leadership positions afterwards. Presently, women in Nigeria are still being marginalized, structurally denied political and economic benefits (Anigwe, 2014). Thus, inequalities have become a chronic social challenge confronting women in Nigeria, particularly in pay, working conditions, and participation in political leadership (Aro, 2022). There is growing marginalization and political exclusion of women from the mainstream of governance. In principle, it appears that the country is projecting democracy and inclusive governance, but in practice, the principles that underpin democracy are grossly lacking. From inception, women had always been politically relegated, because extant laws, religion and cultural beliefs were systematically and socially constructed to favor the men folk (Nish and Vezhaventhan, 2018).

Under the apartheid regime, black women were forced to live under a wide range of repressive laws that denied them freedom in a political, social and economic context. This political oppression, which was based on race, led many women to join the struggle against apartheid. In their public and private lives, women have to struggle to articulate their desires and to find their own voices. For a long time, women have been seen as extensions of men: as people who cannot politically stand on their own, but must be propped by men (Kasomo, 2012). A similar situation has prevailed and is still prevailing among Nigerian women.

The challenges of women's under-representation in leadership, politics and decision making are attributed to religion, cultural beliefs and practices, a skewed division of labour, high cost of running political campaigns, poor education, lack of resources, bullying, and acumen, to enable women to navigate the political landscape especially from the gatekeepers (political party level). Another underlying barrier hindering women from politics is fundamentally rooted in the unequal power relations between women and men.

Accordingly, political culture matter, because they not only shape a population`s political perceptions and actions, they also shape regime outcomes or governance. Although political cultures vary greatly from state to state and sometimes within a state, they provide a framework for understanding power, legitimacy, authority and policy; and largely affect democratic institutions. Given this development there is a systemic exclusion of women in Nigeria's politics, over time this has generated a huge political challenge that needs to be addressed. To this end, the paper seeks to examine Nigeria's political culture and women in politics using the National Parliament or National Assembly as a case study of the level of involvement of women in the politics of the country.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political culture refers to the dominant state or situation of citizens 'awareness' of issues and stakes in the political system, their evaluation as well as acceptance or rejection (of the issues as the case may be) in the system, and their expectations about the relationship among actors and participants in the political system. The word political concerns itself with politics, and culture simply refers to a well-established way of life of a people in a particular community. (Kluckhohn, 1963). In a simple sense therefore, the concept of political culture refers to the dominant political way of life of a people in a particular political community. Taylor (1924) defined political culture as; the complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, custom, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of the society. Pye (1962) defined political culture as; the set of attitudes, believes and sentiments which give order and meaning

to a political process and which provides the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behaviour in the political system. It encompasses both the political ideals and the operating norms of a polity.

Some leading scholars of behavioral tradition, Gabriel Almond and S. Verba (1963) also define political culture as; the patterns of individual political orientations, their attitudes towards the political system and its various parts, and to the role of the self in the political system. In the words of Sydney Verba, (1965) political culture can be defined as a system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols and values which define the situation in which political action takes place. From the above definitions, the concept of political culture has such common characteristics as the attitudes and values of citizen towards politics in a particular environment.

Furthermore, Almond and Verba (1963) classified political culture as parochial, subject and participant. It is observed that where participant political culture is dominant, people manifest attitudes of personal political competence and they participate in active political process. Advanced countries such as Britain and the United States are found in this category. However, it is good to re-emphasize that these political culture levels are not sacrosanct in any society; they are the dominant ones but have other forms at peripheral levels. In addition, it is possible to have a country that has more than one or even all these political cultures in it, especially a country that is highly stratified along ethnicity and tribes. Nigeria for instance, has three major ethnic nationalities, and research has shown that political culture differs in each of these ethnic nationalities.

There are other categorizations of political culture, like that of Elazar (1970) who define political culture as what people believe and feel about government, and how they think people should act towards it and, in another dimension, "the particular pattern of orientation to political action in which each political system is imbedded. He studied the states in the United States and came out with three categories of political culture there in: Moral political culture, individual political culture and traditional political culture.

Another scholar, Finer, (1962) made invaluable contribution towards categorizing political culture. He identifies four levels of political culture as minimal, low, developed and mature. Finer 's typology of political culture is however based on political institutions, procedures and legitimacy of rulers. Note that Nigeria experience is more of minimal or low political culture. This is a system where the ruling class acts with impunity because they are brutal and more coercive than the unorganized and politically passive people. In this place military intervention in politics is perceived as normal, and leaders can fiddle with public opinion at will.

The political culture of any given country determines the outcome of democratic privileges to be enjoyed by the citizens. Nigeria contains different cultural, ethnic and religious groups. These group(s) of people have different principles, ideology, beliefs and practices which affect their reasoning, character, and political behavior. Though they have different ethnic and religious differences, they still exist as a nation bound by the same geographical boundary and political identity. The value preferences of political culture here are beliefs about public goals that should be maximized by government action. The major determinants of the political cultures in Nigeria are ethnic and religious cleavages, cultural affiliation and the syndrome of political elitism marked by cult-like and self-serving political affiliation.

There is a general belief that an emerged political leader from any ethnic group gives greater consideration in development to the area where he comes from. This gives the impression that every ethnic group should do everything possible within their reach during elections to install somebody from their region to attract regional development and not national development. This has become an endemic political culture existing in the country. This attitude does not give rise to a good leader with good leadership quality and potentiality to operate or emerge, Achebe (1983, p8). The culture of electoral violence, use of political thugs to win election, falsification of election result and rigging becomes the other of the day. They use intimidation and kidnapping of political opponents, use fowl languages against some political opponents, elimination of political opponents in other to win, campaigning against the ethnic and religious group and use of false accusation on political opponents in other to ruin the political career of such person. They also involve themselves in unpatriotic dispositions and lack respect for their fellow politicians. The culture of regional marginalization by leaders from one ethnic group to others, frustrates ideal democracy, subverts the rule of law and hinders political stability.

Politics
The institutional approach views politics within the purview of the state and its related institutions. Politics, in this sense, comprises of public and formal affairs of the government (Nnoli, 1986). While the instrumentalist perspective views politics as an exercise of power game. It is argued that when "X" influences "Y" so that the latter accomplishes the wishes of the former which without that influence nothing would have happened, power is assumed to have been exercised (French and Raven, 1959). Extrapolating from the above, political power is seen to be confined to the public sphere, the sphere of man. Thus, one is expected to see power revolve around men and women in public sphere. To be sure, politics

being a formal activity in the public sphere should not exclude women. Perhaps, both the institutional and instrumental conceptions of politics focus on the public sphere of decision making and governance.

Women in Politics: A Legal Framework

To pursue gender justice on women's inroad to politics the adoption of international and regional frameworks became imperative. Principally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979); the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA, 1995); the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (also referred to as the Maputo Protocol, 2003); the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007); and the 2008 Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development. Most African countries have ratified these protocols and are in the process of domesticating them. Other enabling factors have been the role of women's movements and civil society organizations, which have been active in advocating for women's participation in politics.

Acknowledging the pivotal role that women play in advancing comprehensive development, Article 3 of the Protocol on Amendments of the African Union's Constitutive Act; mandates the African Union (AU) to guarantee the active involvement of women in decision-making, particularly in politics, governance, the economy, and sociocultural endeavours. It is a framework within the AU that champion women's rights known as Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), as well as the AU's African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. These initiatives collectively aim to ensure the full integration of women into Africa's development agenda. Consequently, achieving the goals of AU-2063 requires the equitable participation of women in political and leadership roles. The complete and active involvement of women in legislative bodies, alongside men, is not solely an objective, but also a pivotal element for the establishment and sustenance of democratic systems. Women's equal representation, leadership, and perspectives in parliaments, for example, play a vital role in ensuring heightened responsiveness to the concerns of citizens.

The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria guaranteed the rights of women to participate in active politics. Consequently, there has been a remarkable increase in women participation in politics in Nigeria although with a pronounced level of under representation in comparison to the men. The above statement establishes the very fair and just conditions in the constitution towards women participation in politics, but in practice (governance), men who had dominated the country's political process have deceitfully deviated from complying with the constitution. Governments in Nigeria have declared in Article 13 of the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and that the states in the country shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic, political and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same right; this still remains as lip service, (Ololade, 2009).

Women in politics in Nigeria: Pre-colonial Phase

According to Rojas (1994), women's position in the socio-political structure of society varied according to kinship structure and their role within the economic structure of society. Traditionally, women assumed roles as mothers and caregivers. In some cases, religious practices did provide various means of controlling women and dictating their lifestyles, nonetheless, in many ways the society at that time still conceived them as complementary to men rather than subordinates. Power structure in traditional society was mostly based on seniority rather than gender. However, women contributed immensely to the agricultural sector, local and long-distance trade.

Women in Politics in Nigeria: Colonial Phase

The colonial administration brought European patriarchy into Nigerian society. Colonialism in many ways was biased against women and their advancement in the society because most of the legislation concerning women attempted to control them, their sexuality and fertility" and in many ways defined their subordination and the restrictions placed on them, changed their positions in indigenous societies (Rojas, 1994). It has been argued that the origin and structures of inequality that has led to discrimination against women became more prominent in the colonial era with the promotion of predominantly male dominated social systems (The Guardian, 2009).

Although structures of inequality existed in pre-colonial times, however they became institutionalized as new legal structures under colonial rule. A major adverse effect of colonialism on women was glaring in politics and governance. First and foremost, women were denied their franchise and as such the political space was completely dominated by men, women had little or no power to take part or contribute within the colonial structure and this was the case till about 1950s. Consequently, very few women were offered political or administrative appointments. Note that within the period women in the South were granted relative franchise while women from the North were still denied franchise until 1978. Nonetheless, three women to be exact, were appointed into the House of Chiefs and they were Chief

(Mrs) Olufunmilayo Ransome kuti (appointed into the Western House of Chiefs); Chief (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu both appointed into the Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs (Badejo, 1985; Rojas, 1994; Attoe, 2002).

Furthermore, Mrs. Ransome-Kuti, and Mrs. Ekpo organized revolt of anti-colonial and unfavourable policies against women in Abeokuta, and in the Eastern part of the country. There were also other women who mobilized to support the political parties; the likes of Chief (Mrs.) Bolarinwa and Alhaja Humani Alaga; and Hajiya Sawaba Gambo who fought for the enfranchisement of the Northern women (Badmus, 2006).

Women in politics in Nigeria Post-colonial Phase
Post-colonial Nigeria was not a watershed period for women due to colonial structure of gender inequality. At this time, women were behind in education, economically, socially and politically. However, it was seen as a period of political freedom and integration. This time women had begun to flaunt their capacity yet again in politics, though the results were auspicious. In the First Republic, the participation of women in politics was very minimal in terms of involvement in policy making and political appointments. Notwithstanding, Hajiya Sawaba Gambo made inroad in the support for women emancipation in the North. By the Second Republic (1979-1983), women in the North had been granted their voting rights, and accordingly a few more women won election and got appointments. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria at this time (1979) also guaranteed women's rights.

Second Republic (1979-1983), saw a little more participation of women in politics. A few Nigerian women won elections into the House of Representatives at the national level and also few women won elections into the State Houses of Assembly like, Mrs. Cecilia Ekpenyong of Cross River State. In the Senatorial election held in 1992, Mrs. Kofo Bucknor Akerele was the only woman who won a seat in the Senate. Very few women won election into the House of Representatives. One of these few was Chief (Mrs) Florence Ita Giwa who won in the Calabar Constituency

Women's marginalization in Politics
Scholars have diverse interpretations for the marginalization of women in politics in Nigeria. For instance, Ojukwu, (2005), sees marginalization as a state of relative deprivation, a deliberate dis-empowerment of a people by a group or groups that, during a relevant time frame, wields political power and control the allocation of material and other resources at the center. In the same vein, (Obianyo, 2003) reveals that marginalization depicts neglect, non-involvement or inequality in the distribution of the socioeconomic and political resources of the state or indices of development. Akinbade, (2004) sees marginalization as a denial of access to political power or social amenities to a group or region while dispensing favour to the advantage of others. He went further to say that this is predominant in Nigeria where women group complains of marginalization. This ultimately reveals the extent to which women are sidelined and excluded from the country's political activities and that marginalization gives rise to other contending issues such as oppression, domination, accusations and allegations of neglect, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, nepotism, and bigotry among others. Feminist theories on gender posits that in formulation of state structures we have to incorporate women as participatory and influential political agents of the state for the state to successfully establish a strong, representative and cohesive structure.

Women Education and Inroad to Politics
Amanchukwu, (2003) observed that formal education is a dynamic instrument of change geared towards national development. Thus, formal education ushers in enlightenment, self-confidence, self-discipline and capabilities. It is, therefore, important to everyone but it is especially significant for girls and women because an educated woman is an asset to her community; training a woman is training a nation. Enaibe and Imonivwerha (2007) noted that women education is "the process of sensitizing the girl-child on the need to possess basic skills, knowledge, ability and attitude to make her fit positively, comfortably and productively into the society. Provision of sound, general education and vocational training for women will go a long way to improve their political power. Women have seriously remained in the passive state with telling consequences, to such an extent that they are not having much freedom that would have allowed them to favourably compete with men. In Nigeria, female participation in education and politics had been neglected, at the higher levels where real power and influence is wielded. Seminars and workshops organized on women often focus on lack of education as a constraint to women's contribution to national development.

In times past, women were given inferior education to men. According to Kisekka (1981), this was because "women education curricular emphasized Home Economics" which was tagged Domestic Science with sub-areas as laundry, needle work, embroidery, cookery and childcare. In fact, the colonial education system was discriminatory against women. Many women do not participate in political activities to the fullest either because the society frowns at it or because they are not educationally sound. A three-day national workshop was inaugurated in Lagos in September 1986 to study and come out with a blue print on women education in the country. There was a national launching of women education campaign on the 27th of November 1986. The objectives of the campaign were:
a) To awaken the awareness of all citizens for equal educational opportunity.

b) To bring a change of attitude toward women's education progress and to embrace all professionals.
c) To awaken the consciousness of all women in development.
d) To make the Nigerian woman an indomitable force of reckoning, both in her country and the world over (Osiegbu, 1988).

With sound education, which is the greatest weapon of development, women can go places. They will gain knowledge that will allow them to look at the world more critically. Through education, some women have secured ministerial appointments at federal level. Education makes a man hence; women should seize that opportunity to excel in various areas of the educational sector. However, as Ohachenu (1997) put it, "although there have been some improvements for women over the past twenty years, the majority still lag behind men in power, wealth and opportunity".

Given the above, patriarchal attitudes, political culture of corruption, unequal power structures, culture and education, and religion, the result is few women in politics. Nevertheless, scholars have written extensively on women inclusion in politics. Despite the campaign, women's inroad to power remains hazy due largely to a highly competitive political milieu with an unpredictable political culture. Therefore, the paper interrogates political culture and its impact on women quest for political influence and positions.

Theoretical Framework
The emergence of liberal political theory is associated with the rise of capitalism in Western Europe around 17th Century. The theory is essentially grounded on the conception of human beings as rational agents. Rationality has three distinct elements: firstly, the mental capacity; secondly, as a property of individuals rather than of groups; and thirdly, as a capacity that is possessed in approximately equal measure at least by all men (used generically) (Jaggar, 1983). Like any other political theory, in developing its vision of the good society, liberal political theory incorporates some assumptions about the nature of men and women.

To be sure, the liberal conception of the good society naturally is the one that advocates the basic liberal values of protecting the dignity of each individual and promotion of individual autonomy and self-fulfillment. This means that individuals should enjoy maximum freedom that is not impeded by others. Liberal theorists therefore devise a state as a social institution that will protect each individual's right to a fair maximum autonomy and self-fulfillment. They are, however, very cautious of the potential dangers of a state abusing its role as a custodian of protection of liberty. This theory aptly explains the inclusion of all in the activities of the state. It is gender sensitive in nature to accommodate both men and women.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis
To generate the relevant data the paper we relied on secondary date sources or documents such as books, journals, Conference paper, Newspaper and online articles. This approach was adopted provides a better understanding of the research problem.

This study made use of content analysis. Content analysis is a qualitative method of collecting and analyzing the contents of written document, transcript of films, video, government publications, newspapers, photographs, diaries and other written, visual and pictorial sources in papers, electronics, or other hard copy form (Corbetta, 2003). We employed it to examine the content of documents in order to determine its relative emphasis and make genuine inferences. This method of data analysis is suited as it helped us move further into the domain of interpretation because effort is made to understand not only the manifest but also the latent content of data with a view to discovering patterns or regularities in the data.

Discussion and Results: Political Apathy and Under-representation of Women in the National Assembly 1999-2025
The new wave of democracy as of 1999 was a source of hope for Nigerian women to attain political advancement, economic opportunities and inclusion in the affairs of the Nigerian state. Sadly, World Economic Forum Report 2025 (covering 2024) shows the poor participation of women in politics in Nigeria drawing from the under-representation in the National Assembly. Nigeria has been ranked 143rd out of 144 countries in the 2025 Global Gender Gap Report for women's political participation, marking its lowest position in five years. In the legislature, female representation is also low. The report notes that only four of the 109 Senate seats and 17 of the 360 seats in the House of Representatives which comprise the Nigerian parliament are currently held by women, accounting for just 4.2 per cent of representation in the National Assembly. According to the report, Nigeria has made minimal progress in addressing gender disparity in political leadership. In 2025, it also fell significantly in the sub-category for women in ministerial positions, dropping from 91st in 2024 to 131st (see Guardian newspaper, June 2025).

Table 1: Numbers of Women Legislature in National Assembly 1999-2025

Year	House of Reps	Senate	Total	Percentage	Remark
1999	13	3	16	3.4%	Very poor
2003	21	4	21	4.4%	
2007	29	9	36	7.6%	
2011	25	7	32	6.8%	
2015	22	7	29	6.1%	
2019	22	7	29	6.1%	
2023	17	3	20	4.2%	
	127	40	154		

Source: *Policy and Legacy Advocacy Centre, (2023)*

Table 2: Numbers of Male Legislature in National Assembly 1999-2025

Year	House	Senate	Total	Percenage	Remark
1999	347	106	453	96.5%	Very Good
2003	339	105	444	94.6%	
2007	331	100	431	91.8%	
2011	335	102	437	93.1%	
2015	338	102	440	93.8%	
2019	338	102	440	93.8%	
2023	343	106	449	95.7%	
	2,371	621	2,992		

Source: *Field Survey, (2025)*

Drawing from the above table (1) and (2) between1999 to 2025 only 127 women had been elected to the House of Representatives or the Green Chambers. While the Senate had only 40 women senators which gives a total 154 female parliamentarians out of a total of 469 seats. Equally, within period under review the male elected legislators stood at 2,371 members for the House of Representatives and the Senate or Red Chambers had 621 male senators bringing the total number of male parliamentarians to 2,992 between 1999-2025. Note that the number of seats in the green chambers is 360 while the red chambers have 109 seats. Given a total sum of 469 seats in the National Assembly. With the calculated percentage above, it shows that there is huge gap between elected male to women lawmakers within the period under review. Equally, from the table (1) it shows the consistency of women under-representation in the National Assembly. It is evident that even 35% affirmative action was far from being realized. This underscores the challenge to women's inroad to Nigerian politics. The Nigerian political culture is characterized by assassination, manipulation, lawlessness, illegalities, rigging, oppression, manipulation, marginalization and violence. These are complimented by male dominant political parties, high cost of post-election litigation among others. These constitute barriers to women aspiring and contesting for elective positions in Nigeria. In the 2015-2019 elections women were given free forms to encourage them to participate and aspire for political office and many contested for party's primaries. Yet many lost and few emerged as candidates and fewer of them emerged as winners, (see, Premium Times newspapers, April 2019).

Throughout history, women have faced limited opportunities for political engagement and participation. The goal of most African governments to achieve a 50% representation of females in politics across all tiers of government remains a considerable challenge, as stipulated by the 2008 Protocol on Gender and Development, which has been ratified by most African countries. Presently, women comprise merely 24% of the 12,113 parliamentarians on the continent, with 25% representation in lower houses and 20% in upper houses of parliaments. Rwanda now leads the world in gender parity, with women holding more than 60 percent of seats in the legislature. Other nations, such as South Africa, Senegal, and Morocco, have implemented gender quotas to increase female representation in political offices, thus institutionalizing women's participation in governance.

Drawing a comparative analysis the United Kingdom House of Common has an established debate on women's representation at Westminster. It is centered around the question of numbers. Women are 51% of the population but make up less than 30% of the House of Commons, even after a record number were elected in 2015. Currently there are 263 female members of parliaments MPs in the House of Commons and 238 female members of the House of Lords. In the Commons women make up 40% of MPs and in the Lords 30%. Together, women make up 35% of members of the Commons and Lords. After 1918 when women became eligible to be MPs, the number grew slowly until a jump in 1997 when 120 women were elected. Since then, the number of female MPs has continued to grow. Following the 2024 general election, 263 MPs were women. At 40%, this was an all-time high. Between 1918 and 2024, there were 693 individual women elected to the House of Commons, (Common Library, 2025). According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, with women making up 40% of the House of Commons, the United Kingdom ranks 27th globally for the proportion of women

in the lower (or only) house of parliament. Rwanda, Cuba and Nicaragua have the highest female representation. Historically, the UK was the fourth country to elect women to Parliament, doing so in 1918, the same year as Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the above analytical discourse, the under representation of women in Nigeria's National Assembly is a test case of political apathy, marginalization and exclusion of women in the legislative institution for past two decades. We observe that women are coming out more, but their visibility and leadership opportunities are not sustained in the political space. The patriarchal perception that politics was traditionally reserved for men is no longer sustainable. Hence, equity and fairness for women should be a top priority of any democratic government. Civil society organizations need to rise up for advocacy campaign for legislative inclusion to promote female representations for elective and appointed positions across government establishments.

The African Union High-Level Panel on Emerging Technologies (APET) suggests that technological progress across the African continent presents an opportunity to attain equitable representation of women in political roles. Within the political realm, access to information holds immense significance. For instance, the expansion of the internet and social media has granted women greater access to information, enabling them to remain informed about laws, candidates, and subjects directly impacting them. As such, digital platforms provide women with spaces to educate themselves, form informed viewpoints, and actively participate in political discussions. Furthermore, APET encourages African women to leverage the prevalence of social media platforms to advance their political agendas. Social media has emerged as a potent tool for women to share their narratives, articulate their ideas, and amplify awareness of their challenges. Unrestricted by physical boundaries, women can orchestrate campaigns, initiate virtual communities, and deliberate on policy matters.

Furthermore, women education aims at improving women's social status and political awareness that aid them in developing responsible behaviour as to indulge in healthy competition with men for efficient and effective participation in politics. However, the few cases of women who have made remarkable impact in education and politics are not effective enough to truly represent the population of women who have been integrated in the scheme of women education or equal representation in political positions (as the government is propagating).

Therefore, women should confront these contradictions and break free from antiquated beliefs and traditions which promote hierarchies, domination, dehumanization, underrepresentation and violence in daily life. Women should take up the challenge and be involved in the struggle for functional education and active politics. The society should change positively toward women education and participation in politics. Women should strive higher to think of the progress of the nation in their capacity to develop political and cultural power with which they can contribute effectively to the society.

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