The Role of Women in Politics and in the Sustenance of Democracy in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the role of women in politics and in the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. It elicited their challenges, experiences and contributions to the democratic process. Strategies that can assist women realize their political leadership potentials were proffered. Questionnaires were administered on 700 randomly selected female politicians, activists and professionals in government and dominant parties across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. Also, interview schedules were conducted with 10 of the randomly selected respondents. Results revealed that women are marginalized and feature minimally in government because Nigeria lacks a legislative framework that secures quotas for women in political parties. Patriarchal attitudes, poor informal networks/mentoring, finance, religion and educational status were found to militate against women's participation in politics and governance. To overcome these problems, the study recommended amongst others, the development of electoral reforms that promote equitable representation of women and respect for due process. Empowerment of women by ensuring their access to credit facilities was proffered. The study concluded that the institutionalization of varieties of special mechanisms is most needed in increasing women's participation in governance.

Keywords: Nigeria, women, politics, democracy, governance.

1.0 Introduction

Women's involvement in politics varies throughout the world and their participation in politics and the democratic process has become an integral part of contemporary discourse on development and governance. In spite of the clamor for women's political empowerment by international organizations, research consistently shows that in many parts of the world women still linger on the fringes of political realm and their participation in government structures and the democratic process remains low (Vissandjee et al, 2006).

In Nigeria, although women constitute 50 percent of the population and 51 percent of voters in elections, yet they do not enjoy their full political rights as their male counterparts (Ofong, 2002). Available statistics reveal that women's overall political representation in government is less than 7 percent (Agbalajobi, 2010). Also, women have not still attained the recommended 30 percent seats in government as prescribed by the Beijing platform of Action to which Nigeria subscribes. It was not until 1979 that women in Northern Nigeria had the franchise to exercise their voting rights. This implies that they could not contest for political positions nor participate in choosing their political leaders until 1979 (BAOBAB, 2003).

Currently, although the right to democratic governance is an entitlement conferred upon all citizens by law, implying that there is no legal exclusion of women from governance in Nigeria; other barriers still impede their full participation. The increased involvement of women in the democratic process is essential to broadening and deepening the Nigerian government's commitment to democratic governance which by definition allows for diversity and participation of different groups. Women can therefore only make meaningful impact after they have reached the critical mass needed.

It is within this context of subsisting marginalization of women that this paper examines the role of women in politics and in the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.

2.0 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:
- assess gender participation in politics and the democratic process in Nigeria.
- elicit women's challenges, experiences and contributions to the democratic process,
- examine how women are shattering the ceilings that limit and marginalize them in the Nigerian political scene;
- proffer strategies than can assist women realize their political leadership potentials.

3.0 Research Setting

This study was carried out in Nigeria. Nigeria is a Federal Republic comprising of 36 states grouped into 6 geo-political zones with a Federal Capital Territory located in Abuja. The country is located in West-Africa and shares borders with the Republic of Benin in the West, Chad and Cameroun in the East, Niger in the North and the Atlantic Ocean in the South. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, with a population of over 148 million, consisting of 3 major ethnic groups with diverse languages. As a Federal Republic, the executive power exercised by the president is checked by a senate and a House of Representative which are combined in a bicameral body called the National Assembly (Agbalajobi, 2010).

4.0 Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study. Data for the study were derived from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were generated through the administration of structured questionnaires on 700 randomly selected female politicians, activists and professionals in government and dominant political parties across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. This was done in order to capture and document a cross-cutting opinion of the targeted groups in the respective geo-political zones on the situation regarding women's role in politics and the democratic process in Nigeria.

The questionnaire was structured to elicit from respondents, the contributions of women to politics and the democratic process as well as their experiences, challenges and the barriers that hinder them from competing effectively with their male counterparts. The questionnaire also made provision for capturing the actions which women are taking to empower themselves and to dismantle the glass ceiling. Furthermore, it enabled the respondents identify the proactive strategies that can be adopted to enable women realize their political leadership potentials in Nigeria.

In addition to the questionnaires, interview schedules were conducted with 10 purposively selected respondents occupying key political leadership positions and whose experiences facilitated the documentation of women's involvement and experiences in politics and the democratic process in Nigeria. The retrieved data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Some aspects of the data were presented using the ZY index table. Both the data derived from the questionnaires, interview schedules and secondary sources were reported using a triangulatory process.

5.0 Results and Discussion

The results of this study reveal the intricacies underlying the under representation of women in the Nigerian political scene, as well as what they have done and are still doing to sustain the democratic process in Nigeria. The emerging themes are presented below:

5.1 Demographic Characteristics

Table 1: Summary of respondents' demographic data

Marital status	Frequency (%)
Married	580 (82.8)
Single	45 (6.4)
Divorced	75 (10.7)
Total	700 (100)
Educational status	
Secondary school certificate	310 (44.2)
Bachelors degree	290 (41.4)
Higher degrees	100 (14.2)
Total	700 (100)
Religion	
Christianity	420 (60)
Islam	188 (26.8)
African traditional religion	92 (13.1)
Total	700 (100)

Data on the demographic characteristics of the respondents as contained in Table 1 reveals that 82.8 percent of the respondents were married, 6.4 percent were single while 10.7 percent were divorced. Although marriage is a concept in explaining gender inequality in the political sphere, this result indicates that in Nigeria, women are beginning to break this cycle because more married women are venturing into politics. Data on the educational status of the respondents indicate that 44.2 percent of them had basic secondary school education, 41.4 percent possessed Bachelors degree, while 14.2 percent had higher degrees. Although the figures indicate that majority of the female respondents are literate, women still constitute a larger percentage of the illiterate group in Nigeria. This is because the patriarchal set up of the country permits a situation whereby parents promote the education of their male children but relegate that of the females to the background, particularly when financial resources are scarce in such families. In respect of religion, 60 percent of the respondents indicated that they were Christians, 26.8percnet were Muslims while 13.1percent were African traditional worshipers. It should be noted here, that the women who indicated that they were Muslims were predominately from Northern Nigeria. The fact that they constituted just 26.8percent of the study population is not surprising, because it was not until 1979 that women from that region (Northern Nigeria) could exercise their voting rights, while their counterparts from the south who are predominantly Christians had the franchise to vote immediately after independence in 1960.

5.2 Gender participation in politics and the democratic process.

Table 2: Participation in State Houses of Assembly, House of Representatives and Senate by gender (1999 – 2007) N (%)

Year	Total No. of seats	Men (%)	Women (%)
Houses of Assembly			
1999	978	966 (98.8)	12 (1.2)
2003	951	912 (96.0)	39 (4.0)
2007	990	936 (94.5)	54 (5.5)
House of Representative			
1999	360	347 (96.4)	13 (3.6)
2003	360	105 (94.0)	21 (6.0)
2007	360	100 (93.0)	25 (7.0)
Senate			
1999	109	106 (97.2)	3 (2.8)
2003	109	105 (96.3)	4 (3.7)
2007	109	100 (91.7)	9 (8.3)

Table 2 shows the participation rate by gender in the Nigerian State Houses of Assembly, House of Representatives and Senate, between 1999 and 2007.

Figures on the table reveal that in 1999, out of the 978 contestable seats in the 36 State Houses of Assembly, men occupied 966 (98.8 percent) while women occupied 12(1.2%). In 2003 out of the 951 available seats, women occupied 39(4%) and men occupied 912(96%). Although there was an increase in 2007 where out of 990 seats, women occupied 54 (5.5%) and men occupied 94.5% (936), there still remains a yawning gap in the participation rate of women.The observed low levels of political participation by women are explained partly by societal norms that consider politics as a public affair reserved exclusively for males. The low pattern of female participation seems to replicate itself at the national level in the House of Representatives and Senate. The table shows that in 1999 women occupied 13 (36%) out of the 360 seats in the House of Representatives, while men occupied 347 (96.4%) seats. In 2003 women occupied 21 (6%) seats and men occupied 105 (94%), while in 2007 women occupied 25 (7%) seats and men 100 (93%).In 1999, women won just 3(2.8%) out of the 109 seats in Senate, while their male counterparts won 106 (97.2%). There was a minimal increase (3.7%) in the participation of women in 2003, while in 2007 the increase was a little bit more significant, as they occupied 9(8.3%) seats. In spite of this, there remains a significant gap in the participation rate of women when compared with their male counterparts.

In addition to the above figures, gender statistics from the independent electoral commission, a body charged with the responsibility of conducting the 2007 elections in Nigeria revealed that only 6 women emerged as deputy governors, while none was elected as governor in the whole of the 36 states in Nigeria. Agbalajobi (2010) further confirmed that women occupied 26 out of the 145 positions in the presidency between 2007 and 2010. Although figures in tables 2 reveal a gradual increase in the participation rate of women in politics and government, they are still far behind competing effectively with their male counterparts and reaching the internationally recommended 30 percent benchmark of female representation in government and politics. The observed low trend in female participation in politics is not unconnected with the fact that more males constitute the membership of most political parties and are therefore readily available to be voted for. Also this trend demonstrates the social construction of female and male roles in Nigeria such that males rule, while the females follow. As a patriarchal society, political activities in Nigeria fall outside the boundaries of social norms and socially acceptable activities of women. Due to such widely held views on the appropriateness of political activities for women, their participation is constrained. The other various factors that affect women's political participation in Nigeria are discussed in the subsequent section.

5.3 Factors affecting women's political participation in Nigerian democracy

Table 3 Percentage distribution of respondent's opinions on factors that affect female participation in politics and the democratic process

Factors	Yes	No	Total
Multiple roles of women	450 (64.2%)	250 (35.7%)	700
Religion	120 (17.1%)	580 (82.8%)	700
Finance	445 (63.5%)	255 (36.4%)	700
Lack of mentors	150 (21.4%)	550 (78.5%)	700
Lack of adequate mechanisms for monitoring electoral outcomes and protecting women's mandate	395 (56.4%)	305 (43.5%)	700
Patriarchy/cultural barriers	465 (66.4%)	235 (33.5%)	700
Exclusion from informal political party network	640 (91.4%)	60 (8.5%)	700
Education/Training	390 (55.7%)	310 (44.2%)	700
Biologically inherited weakness	32(4.5%)	668(95.2%)	700(100)

Table 3 shows respondents' opinions on the various factors that affect women's effective political participation in Nigeria. The report of this data is supported by comments and extracts from the interview schedules.

Data on the table reveals that the greatest factor that affects women's political participation is "Exclusion from informal political party networks" (91.4%). This is followed by the problem of patriarchy and cultural barriers (66.4%), the multiple roles of women (64.2%), finance (63.5%), education/training (55.9%) and lack of adequate mechanisms for monitoring electoral outcomes and protecting women's mandate (56.4%). Others are: lack of mentors (21.4%) religion (17.1%) and biologically inherited weakness (4.5%).

The fact that a large number (91.4 percent) of the respondents indicated that exclusion from informal political party networks affect their participation in politics confirms the fact that women are discriminated against in the Nigerian political scene as revealed by Anifowose (2004). One of the females interviewed confirmed evidences of discrimination by reporting that the political parties and their existing networks are male nominated and that they do not promote the interest of women, nor provide them with sufficient information that will empower them. Thus, the various political parties promote issues that are in the interest of men. In support of this,another interviewee stated that:

> "Because of the structures of the political parties,
> with many sub-groups within each one, women
> do not get a chance to network nor build relational
> ties that can advance them in politics…. Also the
> men exhibit a chauvinistic disposition and affirm
> that decision-making positions are exclusively
> for men, while women are to be instructed.
> This puts women off…"

Most of the female respondents also indicated that exclusion from political party network is accentuated by the fact that most political party networking and caucus meetings are held in the night. Such nocturnal meetings held at unsociable hours are not conducive for the female folks. Due to the prevailing gender division of labour in Nigeria and the multifaceted roles of women, they are unable to attend such meetings where very crucial decisions are taken. In addition to this, the belief that politics is a 'dirty game' only meant for men is a strategy for excluding women from political party network.In respect of this, one of the females interviewed reported that:

> "Meetings of most parties and activist take
> place at night and in locations such as hotels and
> clubs which are regarded by society as places
> exclusively reserved for men. Therefore most
> women would not want to attend such meetings
> for lack of time and for the fear of being regarded
> as "irresponsible" to be in such places…"

Consequently, women are unable to position themselves to participate effectively in taking decisions that affect them and in entrenching themselves in the democratic process because they are denied access to the 'old boys' networks. In view of this, the respondents acknowledged the importance of informal networks in advancing women's political career and in increasing their participation rate in the democratic process.

Data on the table further reveals that respondents acknowledged patriarchy and cultural barriers (66.4%) as major factors that hinder women from effectively participating in politics. The political landscape in Nigeria is replete with the history of male dominance, which is largely underscored by the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society dictated by culture. In addition to this, there are obnoxious cultural beliefs and practices that deny women access to positions. Such practices include: restriction of movement, early marriage and discrimination against women under various traditional values and customs. In almost every part of the Nigerian society, men are perceived as superior to women. This has permeated the political scene and has given rise to the masculine model of politics in Nigeria, such that men formulate the rules of the game and define the standards for evaluation. This results in women either rejecting politics altogether or rejecting "male style politics". A female respondent confirmed this with the following expression:

> "Most of the political parties have no definite
> policy on women. Rather, they prefer to relegate
> women and use them as supporters in the parties.
> Women are therefore made to continue to "cheer up"
> the male, than engage them in the activities that will
> uplift their status within the parties and in government".

Another respondent added:

> "When women are elected into positions, they are
> often assigned to Ministry of women Affairs, Culture
> or Education, none of which can be described as
> very strategic Ministries in terms of their capacity
> to influence government policies that can entrench
> development and promote female participation in
> politics and the democratic process"

In Nigeria, politics is seen as a 'dirty game' which exposes women to close interactions with men. Such interaction is culturally unacceptable and is regarded as an indication of lewdness. Consequently, opportunities for the forms of social interaction intended to build women's confidence and garner solidarity is hampered by cultural norms (Akiyode-Afolabi and Arogundade,2003).

Data on Table 3 further reveals that the multiple roles of women (64.2%) which include reproduction, production and social reproduction impact on their capacity to effectively participate in politics in Nigeria. It should be noted that the dynamics of family life and women's responsibility for integrating the family impact on their social mobility which is a very vital factor in politics. One respondent affirmed this in the following expression:

> "Social mobility is indeed a vital factor in politics.
> This implies that women must be ready to make
> several trips to campaign and to attend caucus
> meetings which are sometimes held in the night…
> Futhermore,since legitimate authority is naturally
> assigned to male members (husbands) in the
> family, women's ability to effectively negotiate
> political life is dependent upon men's consent"

The study gathered that, the burden of family responsibilities combined with the demands of political career (which includes excessive travels and night meetings) is stressful for women, particularly those with young children. This is why the few female politicians are usually well advanced in age.

Results on the Table further reveals that 63.5% of the respondents indicated that finance is a major challenge to their participation in politics. This implies that the cost of engaging in electoral politics in Nigeria is capital intensive, particularly as some of them lack access to resources and credit facilities. The study also found that inadequate political party financing legislation, lack of fund raising skills and access to funds hinder women from effectively participating in politics. It was also found that the cost of organizing campaigns and mobilizing support to win elections is high and it is only men who have the kind of money that is required for this process. This is demonstrated in the following remarks by one of the respondents:

> "Men control state power and use the privilege in
> diverting funds in facilitating their political activities.
> Women lack access to such funds and they may not
> be inclined towards diverting state funds for personal use".

Another female respondents had this to say:

> "It is difficult for women to contest and win
> elections because politics is tied to 'cash and
> carry' arrangement whereby elections are won
> by the highest bidder. The electoral process ranging
> from party primaries, public campaigns, to the election
> process is monetized and this puts women in a
> disadvantaged position"

Furthermore, the study found that political party money are not equally distributed between the sexes because men are in charge of funds distribution.

These evidences clearly demonstrate the fact that the number of men who have the kind of money that is required to win election outweighs the women. Economic power is therefore a critical factor to women's participation in politics and democratic governance. Data on the table reveals that lack of adequate mechanisms for monitoring electoral outcomes and protecting women's mandate (56.4%) is a major hindrance for securing victory at the polls. This implies that   intrigues, rigging and lack of transparency in the electoral process in Nigeria affects women and it is further exacerbated by lack of monitoring mechanisms to protect the rights of women and their votes during elections. In view of this, Anifowose (2004) suggested the need for government to initiate constitutional and legislative reforms aimed at both protecting the rights of women and eliminating all vestiges of discrimination against them.

Results on the table further reveal that women's lack of adequate education/training (55.7%) is another major challenge to women's political aspirations. In Nigeria women constitute a larger percentage of the illiterate group and this translates directly into their inability to have their voices heard in the political sphere Education is vital because it builds awareness and self-confidence required by women to voice informed opinions. Women who have acquired formal education are regarded with respect and enjoy increased opportunities for political participation. Knowledge is therefore an essential and critical ingredient required by women for meaningful participation in political activities.

Finally, the table shows that lack of mentors (21.4%), religion (17.1%) and biologically inherited weakness (4.5%) were not highly rated as inhibiting women's participation in politics. However, it should be noted that religion mostly affects women in Northern Nigeria from effectively participating in politics because of the practice of purdah (i.e. house seclusion of women). An interviewee from northern Nigeria provided further explanation as follows:

> "Some fanatical Muslims clerics mount campaigns
> on the pulpit, denouncing women's political participation
> as being against the tenets of Islam".

Despite the challenges encountered by women as highlighted in Table 3 and in the preceding paragraphs, women have however, made positive inputs and contributions towards the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria.

5.4 Women's contributions to politics and the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria

Over the years women in Nigeria have been relegated to the background and are circumscribed within the political arenas by structures, procedures and ideologies that favour men, as well as the existence of an invisible 'glass ceiling' that block their upward mobility and full participation. Despite the difficulties faced by women, they continue with their political ambition, contributing enormously to politics and the democratic process with a view to advancing national development. Table 4 captures the views of the ten females interviewed on the various contributions women in government have made towards advancing and sustaining democracy and development in Nigeria.

Table 4: Women's contributions to the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria

Women's Contribution	Cases									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Women have performed noble roles in government and have served as agents of change	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+
2. women in government have been accountable and have promoted transparency and good governance	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
3. Most self-help development projects in the rural areas in Nigeria were initiated by women politicians in government	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
4. Women have contributed to national development despite the limited support and resources at their disposal	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
5. The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development produced the National Gender policy Document	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
6. Women support Bills that benefit themselves and families than their male Counterparts	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-
7. The few women in politics use different styles from men to build consensus on issues.	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+
8. Women in politics are taking the lead in pressurizing the government to meet the 30% quota for women in government	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Key: + = Cases where opinion is expressed
-= Cases where opinion is not expressed.

Data on table shows that all the respondents with the exception of just one reported that "women have performed noble roles in government and have served as agents of change". Also, they unanimously affirmed that "the few women in government have been accountable and have promoted transparency and good governance." One of the interviewee cited the examples of women who have made such impact in Nigeria. According to her, Prof. (Mrs.) Dora Akunyili who was formerly the boss of National Agency for Food Drug and Administration Control (NAFDAC) performed credibly by leading the fight against the infiltration of adulterated pharmaceutical drugs into the Nigerian pharmaceutical markets. Also, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo- Iweala who was the former Minister of Finance worked very hard and used her expertise in ensuring that some of the nation's debts with international financial institutions were offset, thereby saving the nation records of billions of naira.

The respondents indicated that as far back as the colonial and early post-colonial era, a couple of female political activist such as Margaret Ekpo worked for equal civil rights between the colonial masters and the ruled, while some others emerged as members of the Eastern House of Assembly. Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti was an icon in the politics of the old Western region of Nigeria, while Hajia Gambo Sawaba fought for the political and cultural emancipation of women in Northern Nigeria.

Data on the table further shows that all the respondents with the exception of just one of them commented that "most self-help development projects in the rural areas in Nigeria were initiated by women politicians in government". Furthermore, all interviewees agreed that "women have contributed to national development in their own way despite the limited support and resources at their disposal". One of the female politicians further explained that the institutionalization of the office of the First Lady in 1987 during president Babangida's administration facilitated the launching of the "Better Life for Rural Women Programme". The programme was a supportive mechanism for initiating and executing self help development projects for women in the rural areas. In addition to this explanation all the females interviewed stated that "The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development produced the National Gender Policy Document" which is used as an instrument for facilitating the elimination of gender discrimination and inequality in the Nigerian society**.**

Majority of the females (with the exception of just three) particularly those in the Houses of Assembly expressed the fact that "women support Bills that benefit themselves and their families than their male counterparts." Such Bills are those related to health, education and children issues. Data on the table further shows that majority of the respondents with the exception of just two reported that "women use different styles from men to build consensus an issues more easily than men". They further explained that women adopt a 'common sense approach' and are more willing to make a difference and talk from the heart.

Finally, data on the table reveals a unanimous assertion that "women in politics take the lead in pressuring the government to meet the 30 percent quota for women in government as recommended by international communities." Women who constitute not less than 50 percent of the Nigerian population vote and play key roles during political campaigns, yet they do not enjoy their full civil and political rights as members of the federation. They have not attained the recommended 30 percent of seats and offices in government which Nigeria signed and ratified but which is yet to be implemented. Consequently women take the lead in pressurizing government so that the gap can be bridged.

Generally, the views expressed in Table 4 therefore reveal that women have been playing crucial roles in politics and in the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. These evidences indicate that women have the potentials to contribute meaningfully to national development.

5.5 Strategies adopted by women in breaking the barriers

Table 5 shows the comments of the females interviewed on the strategies women are adopting in breaking the barriers that hinder their participation and advancement in politics and the democratic process in Nigeria.

Table 5: Strategies adopted by women in breaking the barriers

Strategies	Cases									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Women in political parties build networks and partnership between themselves	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
2. Women mobilize and build agenda for change through alliances	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
3. Negotiate gender parity through intensifying campaigns for balanced gender-representation.	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	-
4. Organize awareness programmes that attract women to government through various groups.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Key:
+= Cases where opinion is expressed
-= Cases where opinion is not expressed

The table above shows that all the females interviewed indicated that 'females in politics build networks and partnerships between themselves.' They explained further that they share information and resources within the networks that will strengthen their links with other women in government, nongovernmental organizations and experts. Furthermore, the table reveals that 'women mobilize and build agenda for change through alliances'. This is because they cannot rely only on quotas to bring real change to their political advancement within their parties. Consequently, women organize for change from within through alliances that include women from other parties as well as gender focused civil society groups and non-governmental organizations. An example of such a group is the forum of Nigerian women in politics (FONWIP), a body that works towards the empowerment of women in politics and the eradication of all forms of violence and discrimination against women.

The table reveals that not all the females interviewed reported that "they participate in negotiating for parity through intensifying campaigns for balanced gender representation." This is because of the existence of the National Gender Policy Document which is a major negotiating instrument for concession for women.

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Results on the table also reveal that women "organize awareness programmes that attract women into government through various groups". According to them, this is done by training and boosting women's skills to enable them actively participate in elections as candidates and voters. In furtherance of this, the respondents commented that, the Forum of Nigerian Women in Politics (FONWIP), civil society groups and non-governmental groups organize awareness programmes/workshops that enable women understand their democratic rights. It also equips them with the requisite skills needed to access information and negotiate their ways in politics and the democratic process.

6.0 Recommendations and conclusion

This study has found that equitable political participation of women is a fundamental prerequisite for genuine and sustainable democracy and that a higher number of them in government generally contribute to stronger attention to women's issues. Although women have been marginalized and under-represented, they have recorded some measure of political achievement and have contributed to the sustenance of the emerging democracy in Nigeria. Since women's participation in politics is crucial for good governance, this paper recommends the creation of an enabling environment to enhance women's participation in politics. It also recommends an improvement in the constitutional law framework to incorporate the needs of women in politics. This is particularly important because the Federal character principle in the Nigerian Constitution is inadequate in addressing women's concerns. The study further suggests the need to intensify campaigns to promote women's representation in political platforms. In addition, women should be economically empowered through access to education, employment and credit facilities. The creation of gender awareness training for political party members and leadership training for prospective women leaders is also recommended. Gender sensitive and equitable policies in the agenda and operations of political parties should be promulgated and their implementation monitored.

The study concludes that although Nigeria is still a long way in reaching the recommended 30 percent representation of women in government, the future prospects of Nigerian women in politics is bright. A gender balanced political leadership is crucial to the sustenance of Nigerian democracy.

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