GENDER INEQUALITY AND WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE SEATS IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC: A STUDY OF LAGOS STATE (2012-2023)

OLAYINKA BABATUNDE ADEBOGUN, (Ph.D),
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, CALEB UNIVERSITY, IMOTA, LAGOS, olayinka.adebogun@calebuniversity.edu.ng, oluwatayoadebogun@gmail.com

OPEYEMI BOYO ORITSEJOLOMI,
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, CALEB UNIVERSITY, IMOTA, LAGOS, ifeoluwaboyo@gmail.com

ODUNTAN JOSEPH OLATUNJI, (Ph.D)
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, CALEB UNIVERSITY, IMOTA, LAGOS, jossyjoe@gmal.com

OLUWATUNMISE DARAMOLA
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, CALEB UNIVERSITY, IMOTA, LAGOS, daramolatunmise@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT
Women make slightly more than half of Lagos state population and play a crucial role in advancing the country's political system and democratization. However, several studies such as Onyebuchi (2022) and Atajiri (2022) have examined the political representation and the level of involvement of women in politics in Nigeria, however, they did not sufficiently define the forms and effects of gender inequality and the inadequacy inherent in women's representation in Lagos state and implications of this on democratic values and processes in Nigeria. The research aimed at taking a new perspective at examining the phenomena and filing the gap in literature by providing a detailed analysis on the cause and effects of gender inequality and women political representation. The study adopts the liberal feminism theory as its theoretical framework. The study employs qualitative research design in which primary data were collected using interview. Findings shows that the low representation of women in politics in Lagos state and Nigeria is linked with barriers and obstacles like Religion, education, financing, patriarchy, political violence, bullying, perception from other women. This study recommended establishment of mentorship groups, increment of women's political education and empowerment, improve access to financial

resources, introduction, and enforcement of affirmative actions as well as the encouragement of political parties to nominate women candidates for key positions.

Introduction

The issue of inequality in the political sphere is not a recent phenomenon rather it has persisted throughout history, prompting a continuous demand for equality. Women have faced significant barriers and discrimination in their pursuit of political representation and participation (UN Women, 2021). This struggle for gender equality dates to the suffrage movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries and continues to persist in contemporary times.Gender inequality is a serious issue across the world that affects the lives of women and girls, including access to healthcare, education, and political representation. Women remain significantly underrepresented in political leadership positions worldwide (ILO, 2021). Women's political representation is particularly low in regions such as the Middle East and North Africa, where women only hold 17% of parliamentary seats, and in the pacific, where women hold only 5% of the parliamentary seats. Ayetigbo (2022), aptly notes that the relentless fight for gender equality and the progress achieved in this regard are often underestimated and overlooked. Throughout this historical struggle, there have been pivotal moments that have marked significant advancements in women's rights.

Although constituting more than fifty percent of Nigeria's population, women are significantly under-represented in governmental positions. The colonialism in Nigeria, characterized by the colonizers' adherence to Western cultural notions of male supremacy, is the precursor of the under-representation of women in political leadership roles. Oloyede (2016) indicates that Sir Hugh Clifford's 1922 constitution, disenfranchised women and limited the participation of adult males based on their income. Women in Nigeria are under-represented in elected and appointive political positions. A growing number of Nigerians are expressing concern on this issue. The United States, with only 6.7% of elective and appointive positions occupied by women, significantly lags behind the global average of 22.5%. The average for the West African subregion is 15%, while the average for the African region is 23.4%. No female governor has been appointed in any of Nigeria's 36 states, despite the nation's democratic transition and 24 years of continuous democracy since its independence in 1960.

Lagos state was created on May 27, 1967, Despite the state being one of the most politically vibrant states in the federation being crammed with political icons such as Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Oluremi Tinubu, Femi Gbajamiala, Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire, Abike Dabiri-Arewa, Babatunde Raji-fashola, Micheal Otedola, women have not received a commensurate involvement in its political system. Since the creation of the state, women have been struggling to be involved in its political development (Fashola, 2009). The Sole Native Authority (SNA) established in 1994, prior to the creation of Lagos state by the British government in the western region of Nigeria, eradicated women's ruling position in itsentirety and they were excluded from the decision-making process. According to the Lagos State Independent Electoral Commission (LASEIC), merely 10 women are among the 57 local governments that oversee 20 local councils and 37 local council Development Areas (LCDAs). This is not up to the 35 percent required for women in politics through affirmative action. Similarly, gender-based violence affects one in three women, and women and girls are becoming more and more marginalized and excluded in this Nation. Women make slightly more than half of Lagos state population and play a crucial role in advancing the country's political systems democratization.

Several studies such asOnyebuchi (2022), and Atajiri (2022), have examined the political representation and the level of involvement of women in Nigeria's political system, however, they did not sufficiently define the forms and effects of gender inequality and the inadequacy inherent in women's representation in Lagos state and implications of this on democratic values and processes in Nigeria, this study therefore, examined Gender Inequality and

Women Representation in Legislative Seats in Lagos State during the Fourth Republic (2011-2023).

Concept of Gender

The term "gender" was first employed by John Money in the 1940s to rationalise sex reassignment; its application in the social sciences commenced only after the late 1960s (Unger, 2017). Since that time, the notion of gender has been intricately associated with second-wave feminism, which emphasised sexual differences within society and the consequent patterns of social inequity. Gender, rather than sex, emerged as the principal criterion for examining the relationship between men and women as feminist scholars began to develop novel interpretations of female genitalia.

Some scholars, like Lempiainen (2000), argue that the concept of gender is not restricted to a historical sense but is deeply intertwined with cultural contexts. This implies that gender can manifest differently in various societies and regions, making it a versatile and analytically useful concept.

Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is a deeply ingrained pervasive global issue in societies worldwide, impacting both men and women, though women tend to bear the brunt of its effects (Gada, 2018). Keskin (2019) aptly notes that gender inequality is not an innate trait of a particular gender; rather, it encompasses both genders. Nonetheless, this review focuses on how women are marginalized in politics, given their disproportionate representation and influence.

The historical context of gender inequality, as elucidated by Joan Scott (1986), forms the foundation for which women are marginalized in politics. Traditional gender roles have long associated men with leadership and women with domestic responsibilities. Matabane (2022), further traces the emergence of gender inequality, attributing it to the legacy of colonization, as pre-colonial African societies did not exhibit systemic gender-based discrimination. Gender inequality manifests in numerous forms, contingent upon economic structures, social organization, and cultural dynamics within specific societies (Lorber, 2010). This coincides with the argument of Okin (1999), where she emphasizes the role of cultural and societal norms in perpetuating gender inequality in politics. These norms shape perceptions of leadership and political competence, creating a hostile environment for women who seek political office. I therefore opined that both genders should be equal in some responsibilities which has created gender inequality, men also should be charged with some domestic responsibility while women should be allow to participate more in political activities most especially in political positions of authority at every levels of government in any given state and government should therefore make policies that will encourage women's representation and men responsibilities at every home.

Political Participation

Political participation, as defined by Norris (2002) encompasses activities that aim to impact civil society or systematically alter patterns of social behavior. Verba et al (1995) defines it as activities that intend or effectively influence government action, either directly by affecting policymaking or indirectly by shaping the selection of decision-makers. These definitions indicate that political participation involves a wide range of activities, expanding the concept beyond traditional political engagement.

Voting represents the fundamental means of engaging in politics. In addition to voting, numerous avenues exist for political engagement, including joining a political party, seeking public office, establishing an advocacy organisation independent of government, determining priority issues, or attending a rally (Kumari & Kidwai, 2018).

Women in politics in Pre-colonial Nigeria

Women's status varied among ethnic groups and areas due to the structured character of the nation throughout that time. Domestic responsibilities and child-rearing were historically assigned to women. Although religious or cultural standards occasionally restricted women's agency and regulated their everyday lives, this was not universally applicable. Nonetheless, women were perceived by many throughout that period as equals to men, rather than as their inferiors. Kamene (2019) asserts that seniority, rather than gender, was the principal determinant of social power. This time is significant due to the historically lower levels of women's political participation. According to Kamane (2019), women significantly influenced the agriculture industry for both long-distance and local trade. Socially,

they were essential in delivering healthcare and supporting their families. Female kings have been recorded in numerous kingdoms; for example, Igala is purportedly established by a woman named Ebele Ajanu (Ityavyar, 2017).

Notable figures exhibiting exceptional political bravery included Moremi from Ife, Idia and Emotan from Benin, and Nana Asmau from Zauzzau (Agbalojobi, 2010). During times of political unrest in their kingdoms, many of these women took on roles as soldiers or spies. In precolonial Bornu, women were not merely tolerated but actively participated in the mechanisms of state governance. The historical records of ancient Zaria acknowledge women's achievements. Attoe (2002) notes that the modern city of Zaria was founded in the early 16th century by Queen Bakwa Turuku, whose daughter Amina later became queen. Numerous oral and written accounts portray Queen Amina as a skilled and powerful warrior. She allegedly engaged in and triumphed in several conflicts. Attoe contends in his research that Queen Amina fortified her domain by constructing a formidable wall encircling Zaria and extending it past Bauchi.

Conversely, Moremi was a formidable lady who, as per oral history, consented to be taken prisoner by her adversaries to obtain intelligence that would help them vanquish them. In various other kingdoms, women were also involved in decision-making as members of the king's cabinet, serving as palace ladies, priestesses, or even diviners who provided advice to the monarch. Women, albeit assuming responsibilities that were different although, frequently complementary to those of men, were essential to the political structure of their various communities during this historical period (Attoe, 2002).

Women in Colonial Administration

According to Kamane (2019), Nigerian women were largely inactive during the Colonialism era, especially in politics. This is because this administration introduced "European patriarchy into Nigerian society" (Gada, 2018). Most laws related to women were aimed at regulating their behaviour, particularly their sexuality and fertility, which reinforced their subordination. These restrictions altered their roles in indigenous societies, creating a colonial system that was biased against women and hindered their progress in society (Akinboye, 2019). The restoration of women's voting rights in some regions of the nation has been closely associated with this awakening in many ways. Even while women had started to demonstrate their skills once more at this point, particularly in politics, the outcomes were not ideal. Women were falling behind in education, the economy, and society at this time.

The legal system during the colonial-era that was adopted, accomplished little to further women's status in the nation's advancement. Women's involvement in politics under the first republic was essentially non-existent when it came to appointments to political office and the formulation of policy. According to Attoe (2002), this was the true even if different women's organizations, such as the Market Women, supported different political parties. Women began expressing interest in joining the new government in 1960 after being granted the right to vote in some areas In 1961, Mrs. Esan became the first woman to serve in the federal parliament from the Western region. By 1966, Mrs. Mokelu and Miss Ekpo had also gained seats in the Eastern House of Assembly. Meanwhile, women in the North were still excluded from voting due to the strict Islamic beliefs of the population, leaving them without a political voice. Seclusion for women, referred to as "purdah," was prevalent during this period and represented one of the practices dictated by these beliefs that restrictedwomen's involvement in public life. Nonetheless, women's rights advocates such as Hajiya Gambo Sawaba led the campaign for the emancipation of women in Northern regions. These pioneers faced significant challenges in politics, predominantly from men who failed to comprehend or endorse their cause and perceived them as possible disturbances, owing to the elevated level of women's engagement and consciousness of their rights during this period (Akinboye, 2019). Attoe (2002) states that women in the North were granted the ability to vote until 1978 under the Second Republic (1979–1983). Nonetheless, this did not prevent three women from being appointed to the House of Chiefs, in persons of Chief (Mrs.) Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti from the west, Janet Mokelu, and Chief (Mrs.) Margaret Ekpo from the east. "Attoe" was released in 2002.

Moreover, Adeleke (2017) contends that despite lacking the right to vote andmaking minimal contributions to political parties, women remained a formidable force, either by endorsing the different parties or advocating for the rights of women. For instance, Mrs. Ransome-Kuti led a women's uprising in

Abeokuta against taxes and other policies that were detrimental to women. She also backed Mrs. Ekpo in her fight against unfavourable colonial laws in the country's east. Later, these revolutions spread throughout several areas and formed the Nigerian Federation, to elevate the status of women in Nigerian society (Adeleke,2017). Given the available data, it is evident that colonialization had a significant impact on women's status in the political sphere.

The colonial era, which overthrew tradition to establish the bureaucratic state, is largely responsible for setting the current political landscape. However, as these colonial ideologies have been strengthened long after colonialism, it is also possible to argue that some sociocultural principles of the people have also played a role. Even though there are records of resistance by women, like the Aba Women's Riot of 1929, the colonial era may be seen as the most unremarkable in terms of women's representation and participation in politics. It is also possible to argue that the underappreciation at the time led to the current situation of women's engagement in politics, particularly in political parties. This is a result of the fact that the age also saw the establishment of political parties, and since women were not actively involved in society at the time, these parties were founded without any apparent contribution from women (Akinboye, 2019).

Woman in Politics in Post -Colonial Nigeria

This spans the period from Nigeria's independence and the start of its self-government to the present. The early phases of this time are referred to by Oyekanmi (2017), as "the period of awakening" for women since it "marks the stirring of women from their seeming slumber in the political arena. Despite the series of struggles and agitations experienced at bothnational and international levels, and the fact that the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic ofNigeria (section 42) frowns at any form of discrimination whether on the grounds of sex, religion,or ethnic background, one wonders why women are still experiencing a slow change in theirpolitical emancipation. Even while women had started to demonstrate their skills once more, particularly in areas of politics, the outcomes were far from ideal (Akinboye,2019). Women are lagging in education, the economy, and society during this time.

Women predominant in the north had gained the right to vote by the time of the second republic (1979-1983), and as a result, a few more women were elected and appointed. Women's rights were protected by the constitution of 1979, which forbade discrimination based on gender and stated that women could vote at the age of eighteen and be nominated by those who were twenty-one and older (Kamane, 2019). Regretfully, colonial influence or underlying caused, in addition to sociocultural influences, still prevailed, influencing the degree of female involvement (Oloyede,2016).

During the second Republic (1979-83), very few women achieved significant success in politics, particularly in the political partied. According to Agbalajobi (2010), women from the eastern part of Nigeria, such as Mrs. J.C. Eze and Mrs. V.O. Nnaji, won political seats in the East, while Mrs. A. Babatope secured a seat in the Western region. Chief Akinrimade was appointed Minister for Internal Affairs, and Mrs. A.E. Oyagbola became the Minister for National Planning. In the Ministry of Establishment, and later the Federal Ministry of Health, Mrs. F.Y. Emmanuel served as the sole female permanent secretary. Additionally, Mrs. F. Afegbua made history as the first woman elected to the Nigerian Senate. A small number of women were also elected to local government councils and appointed as commissioners (Attoe, 2002). Like the first Republic, men continued to dominate politics, particularly in the political parties. Because these women were the first to advocate for female emancipation and led social movements advocating for equality for women both within and outside of political institutions for the benefit of women in the country, one can argue that these women achieved some progress despite the enormous obstacles to access and the small number of them (ijiwole, 2018). Their contributions laid the groundwork for future generations, and their impact is still visible today. However, some argue that while gains were made, they primarily benefited the elite and had limited overall significance (Kamane, 2019).

The success recorded was short-lived because in December 1983, there was another military coup that resulted to the changes in the political landscape of the nation (Kamane, 2019). The introduction of the quota system for the selection of women to government positions during the military rule gave women's participation a new direction. According to Agbalajobi (2010), the administration mandated that "at least one female must be appointed a member of the executive council in every state."

All states duly followed suit; some even nominated two female executive members, while others appointed three. The start of Gen. Muhammadu Buhari's military rule coincided with the end of the UN declaration of the decade for women, and as a result, the government "flirted" with women's issues. This has been largely blamed for the rather unusual development in his military rule (kamane,2019). Nevertheless, women's involvement and representation during this period can be categorized as "token representation', as they constituted a significant numerical minority and the gender ratio in the nation's politics was unbalanced.

The recommendations of the constitution regarding women's emancipation and equal opportunity were not reflected in this act. Not even Gen. Babangida's military regime in 1985 made much of an improvement for women; instead, it merely maintained the pattern of "token representation" for women, with no female representation in the federal cabinet (oloyede,2016). There were only a few women in the local government councils and one woman on every government parastatal, despite the establishment of the first lady's office and the program she created to integrate women in the system, there was only one woman on each of the government parastatals and a small number of women in the local government councils. By 1992, less than 5% of women had won seats in the National House of Assembly, and only one woman, Mrs. Kofo Bucknor Akerele, has been elected to the senate (oyekanmi,2017). Following this, a transnational council was established in January 1993 with the intention of ensuring the regimes promised transition to civilian rule; however, only two of the council members were women (Agbalajobi,2010). Even though they were present in small numbers to represent women, they lacked a voice and sufficient presence to have an influence. Because of this, most of them left their mark by making sure that, at least in part, feminine emancipation is understood and accepted for the benefit of the younger generation. To make up for the mistakes of the past, women are rising to the top once more in this traditionally male-dominated field today (Ijiwole, 2018).

Nigerian Women in Politics Today

The Fourth Republic commenced on May 29, 1999. The fourth republic as expected birthed the new spirit of democracy, return of civilian rule and advancement in women in many areas of life led to the increase of women in the political scene (Liwole, 2018). However, it is still obvious that women have a long way to go in attaining equality alongside their male counterparts. Many news media reports and studies attest to the marginalization of women in politics (Gada, 2018). In a public lecture Former governor of Lagos state, Babatunde Fashola, on the 29th of April 2009, a comprehensive statistical record on women political participation and representation was made available. This report showcases the journey of women in politics since the return of civilian and democratic rule (Oke, 2015). Though the initial stage of Nigeria's fourth republic witnessed women taking the back seat in politics, as the democratic transition proved real over time, more women began showing interest in politics and contesting for positions in the polity. Given this situation, women have contested several elective positions of political leadership in Nigeria since 1999 (Akinboye,2019).

According to the various desk studies and the website of the independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), there were only three female senators, twelve in the house of Representatives, nine female ministers and special advisers, one female deputy governor, one state house of assembly speaker, twenty-four women across the 36-state house of Assembly, nine local government chairpersons and fourteen women councillors between 1999 and 2003. (Arogundade, 2018). Only four female senators, twenty-one women in the House of Representatives, sixteen female ministers and special advisors, two female deputy governors, and forty women in the 36 states house of Assembly-two of whom were speakers-were present between 2003 and 2007 (Akiyode-Afolabi, 2018). When the governor of Anambra state was impeached for serious wrongdoing in October 2006 and reinstated in February 2007, one of the deputy governors, Mrs.Virginia Etiaba, took over as governor for three months.

Only seven Female senators, twenty-five female members of the House of Representatives, six female deputy governors, and fifty-seven women in the 36 state Houses of Assembly were elected in 2007. In the 201 elections, there were 68 women in the 36 state Houses of Assembly, 26 women in the House of Representatives, a female deputy governor, and seven female senators. (Oloyede, 2016). Most men succeeded some of the women who were impeached of forced to quit. They include Hon. Margaret Icheen, who served as speaker of the

Benue state house of assembly in 1999, Hon. Eucharia Azodo (speaker, Anambra state house of Assembly for 2003 dispensation). Speakers of the house of representatives in 2007, Hon. Olubumi Etteh, and the Ogun state house of assembly, who was impeached in May 2008, who was Hon. Titi Oseni.

Although they are few, there have been female councilors, Honorables in the several state house of assembly, chairs of local government, and commissioners (Oloyede, 2016). There were a sizable number of women in important and roles as ministers, special Advisers and Directors under Dr. Goodluck Jonathan's administration from 2011 to 2015. They include Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-iweala who was the minister of finance and overall supervising minister, Mrs. Diezani Alison-Madueke who was the minister of petroleum, Mrs stella Oduah who was the minister of Aviation, and Erelu Olusola obada who was the minister of state and later acting minister of defense (Eyinade,2017). According to oloyede (2016), Prof. oluremi Sonaiya of the KOWA party was the only female presidential candidate in the 2015 election, three other women served as her running partners. 267 women ran for House of representative's seats, 87 women ran for governor and deputy governor positions, and 122 women ran for senatorial seats. In rerun election, popular female candidate for governor of Taraba state, senator Aisha al-Hassan, popularly known as "Mama Taraba", was defeated by her male opponent. A total of 757 women ran for office in the state Houses of Assembly. Eight senators (out of the 109 seats), twenty-one Honourable (out of the 360 seats), four deputy governors from the states of Lagos, Ogun, Rivers, and Enugu, and fifty-one women in the 36 state houses of assembly made the total number of women in government (oloyede, 2016). The 2019 election saw 7 female senators, 22 female Honorables, 4 deputy governors and 45 women in the total 36 states House of Assembly (George, 2019).

According to the Dataphyte (2023), the just concluded 2023 Presidential and national assembly elections, a total of 18 political parties fielded 380 female candidates for the National Assembly elections, 92 for the senate and 288 for the house of Representatives. Only three of the 92 candidates who contested for the 109 senatorial seats won. They are Ipalibo Harry Banigo of the People's democratic Party (PDP) From the Rivers West District, Ireti Kingibe of the Labour Party (LP) from the capital Territory, and idiat Adebule of the All-Progressive Congress (APC) from Lagos West District. Out of 288 women who contested for house of Representatives, only 15 won, with eight from APC, four from PDP and one each from LP, APGA and YPP. Oby Orogbu-LP, Maureen Gwacham-APGA, Chinwe Nnabuife-YPP won their House of Representatives seats in Anambra State. Ebikake Enenimiete of PDP won in Bayelsa while Blessing Onuh and Regina Akume of APC won in Benue State. Zainab Gimba won in Borno under the APC, Erhiatake Ibori-suenu of PDP won in Delta State, Miriam Onuoha, Ogbara Kafilat and Adewunmi Onanuga of APC won in Imo, Lagos and Ogun States Respectively. Beni Lar and Boma Goodhead of the PDP emerged winners in Plateau and Rivers state, while Fatsuma Talba and Khadija Ibrahim of APC won their contests in Yobe State (Dataphyte, 2023).

According to UN women (2023), Only eight out of President Tinubu"s 45 newly sworn-in ministers are woman. They are; Lola Ade-John - Minister of Tourism, Im aan Sulaiman- Ibrahim - Minister of State and Police Affairs, Nkerouka Onyejeocha - Minister of State for Labour and Productivity, Doris-Uzoka - Minister of Industry, trade and investment, Hannatu Musawa - Minister of Arts, culture and Creative Economy, Betta Adu (who is currently on suspension) - Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Uju Kennedy - Minister of Women's Affairs and lastly Mariya Manga Mahmoud - Minister of State, Federal Capital Territory. Nonetheless, a few women who took part in the elections demonstrated incredible fortitude and tenacity by overcoming all obstacles to mount a strong defense. Nonetheless, few of women who took part in the elections demonstrated incredible fortitude and tenacity by overcoming all obstacles to mount a strong defense (Premium Times, 2023).

A great Example is chichi ojei, the one female Presidential Candidate of the Allied Peoples Movement, even though she lost the party's support, her involvement in the election seriously questioned gender norms and Stereotypes in Nigerian Politics (Premium Times, 2023). Meanwhile, Statistics indicate that the total number of women who were elected to the National Assembly in 2023 is still the lowest since 2003 as 24 women were elected (UN Women, 2023).

Similarly, the 2007 general elections produced the highest number of women in the National Assembly with 34 elected. The Second

lowest number was recorded in 2011 and repeated in the 2015 elections with 29 females (Dataphyte, 2023). In the 2023 National Assembly elections held on 25 February, 11 women contested for the senate seats while 35 contested for the House of Representatives seats. At the end, the 10th National Assembly recorded 3 in the upper chamber and 14 female members in the lower chamber (Iwok, 2023). It is interesting to note that while seven of 14 female Representatives returned to the house, the three senators are Newcomers. These Successful 17 were among the 286 women who competed the party primaries for the 360 seats of the House of Representatives and the 92 who contested for the 109 Senate Seats (Dataphyte, 2023). This results in a 3.62 percent representation for women in the 10th Assembly.

Factors Responsible For the low level of Political Participation and Representation of Women in Lagos State.

Religion

Religious traditions are another effective tool used to discourage female politicians and political aspirants in Nigeria from actively participating in politics. Nigerians are deeply religious people; they have always been devout adherents of their faith since they are naturally religious (oloyede, 2016). Beginning with traditional religion, which is the oldest religion in the nation, women do not engage in any decision-making processes outside their own families. Most traditional religions in Nigeria, including Islam, orthodox Christianity, and others, strongly advocate for men's dominance over women and emphasize women's subservience to their husbands over their families, clans, villages, states, and nation. These religions emphasize that if women were to participate in politics at all, it should only be to take on auxiliary roles (oke, 2015). Oyekanmi (2017) asserts Women are further marginalized in politics because the two main religions in the nation, Islam, and Christianity, teach that women should not subservient and are not supposed to be leaders by implication. Islamic philosophy's purdah rule, or the home seclusion of women, strictly forbids women from participating in politics, including voting, holding public office, or even just supporting campaigns or other political activities (Ayetigbo, 2022). However, when it comes to political leadership and the formulation of public policy, women's roles in Islam are limited to those of supporting and advising. Similarly, in the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church, men were the only ones permitted to hold senior leadership roles like the pope, priests, and deacons (Eyinade, 2017). While some prominent protestant churches are strengthening their restrictions in response, very few are starting to loosen their long-standing bans on ordaining women in positions of leadership (Ayetigbo, 2022).

Education

Akinboye (2019) contends that education is the most effective means to empower girls and women in contemporary society, when competition is intense and both genders encounter escalating physical and social problems. Education is the most potent method of instilling suitable values in women and fostering a feeling of cultural identity. In 2010, the national adult literacy rate was 50.6% in English and 63.7% in all languages for female adults aged 15 and older, as reported by the National Bureau of Statistics. The low levels of education among women highlight their underqualification for political positions. Another effect of colonialism's bias favouring men over women is this. Although a greater number of women attended educational institutions during the colonial period, the British admitted more males (Adeleke, 2017).

Economic Factor

Statistical figure on poverty in Nigeria shows that women makeup 70% of the country's impoverished population (Dataphyte, 2023). For any politician in Nigeria to survive, money is a critical component. It is the cornerstone of success for a politician. In Nigerian slang, politics makes sense when viewed through the lens of monetization. All candidates for political office should have been ready to gather all the resources needed to win the election (Iwok,2023). Women in Nigeria are unable to pursue political office due to the exorbitant expenses involved (Gada, 2018). These expenses encompass party nomination forms, elections, campaigns, gifts to benefactors, public mobilisation, financial support for political party leaders, among others. Women are less inclined to participate in democratic elections due to the financial constraints. Running for office in Nigeria, especially in Lagos State, requires substantial financial resources.

Culture

Another important reason why the case for gender inequality is because of culture and

tradition. How dare we attempt to alter a long-standing custom? (Oyekanmi, 2017). However, it begs the question of who establishes a people's way of life. Many of us have heard the tale of Mary Slessor, the Scottish missionary who, in the 18th and 19th centuries, prevented the efik people from killing their twins (krook, 2010). Many outdated customs that were formerly followed religiously were abandoned when it became clear that they were wrong. One of the main hindrances limiting women's participation in Nigerian politics is culture (Akinboye, 2017). The perception of women as merely housewives and impartial decision-makers within households, let alone as potential candidates for political office, has been shaped by culture and customs (Oke, 2015).

Women are not supposed to be in public settings and are instead viewed as quite meek and virtuous by society. Women who are therefore found in the political sphere are perceived as irresponsible (kamane, 2019). Furthermore, the Nigerian woman knows that the culture and tradition have a strong hold on her. The best course of action is to figure out how to combine cultural and contemporary trends. Although society is expanding quickly, women in these communities are still restricted and marginalized. This will entail using a radical feminist strategy towards agitating for a better status in the society (Ityavyar, 2017).

Personal Attitudes and Beliefs

Kamane (2019) asserts that most women lack motivation by nature and are afraid to move outside their comfort zones. Many of them are happy in their married lives and would rather not engage in activities beyond the borders of their homes. In addition, women's perceptions of politics prevent them from taking on leadership. Many women perceive that pursuing a political career is unfeasible, while preserving a fulfilling home life, owing to the stramineous demands of campaigns, meetings, and fundraising events thatoften distance them from their families (Oke, 2015).

I concurred with the assertion of Kamene (2019) which argued that women lack motivation by nature but contrarily, this assertion applies to all women because some of them are still highly motivated to engage themselves in any political activities or issues. A prevalent assumption is that Nigerian politics is excessively harsh for women to withstand. Oyekanmi (2017) asserts that women's perceptions of governance are influenced by these ideas, resulting in diminished interest in political participation.

The literature dealt so much well in explaining how violence related to political activities influences the attitudes and behaviour of women towards governance and politics in a negative manner, however, the literature has left out male gender in their explanation. Apart from women, violence nature of politic not only affects women, it is an all-inclusive phenomenon, their male counter-parts are also affected in this regard, for instance, electoral violence affects both men and women and it may discourage both genders to exercise their sovereignty in any election and this may leads to voter and political apathy. Violence nature of politics has affected both male and female gender during the 2020 End-Sars Protest and this may affect the political culture of many in any country, men inclusive.

Theoretical Framework

The liberal feminism or liberal feminism theory is adopted to underpin this study. Liberal feminism is a branch of feminist thought traced back to ancient Greece and China. Key proponents of this theory include Mary Astell (1666-1731), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1799), Harriet Taylor (1807-1858), John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), and Virginia Woolf (1882-1941). The theory posits that improving women's status requires their active participation in public life and politics (Tripp, 2015). It emphasizes enhancing women's roles globally by increasing access to power, asserting that the main sources of women's oppression stem from their lack of equal civil rights and educational opportunities (Adeleke, 2019). Liberal feminism proposes practical solutions to achieve gender equity, an essential aspect of societal progress. It calls for dismantling the barriers that prevent gender equality in political participation (Lorber, 2010).

In the context of this study, the liberal feminist theory is relevant in analyzing and explaining gender inequality in Nigeria, particularly in Lagos State. Women are often denied equal opportunities as men due to historical, biological, and cultural perceptions that label them the weaker gender (Tripp, 2015). This has hindered their socio-political and economic roles. The theory helps explore whether women's low participation and representation in politics are linked to Nigeria's legal, political, and social constraints. It also

explains the underlying causes of women's subordination and underrepresentation in governance in Lagos State and shows how removing these social, cultural, political, and legal barriers can improve women's participation in the country's political system.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research method using a descriptive research design. The study utilised both primary and secondary data as sources of information. The primary data were gathered from oral interviews, where 9 people were interviewed and their responses informed the findings of the study. Other secondary sources were retrieved from books, journals, unpublished essays, and the internet.

Discussion of finding

Number of Proposed Sample	Number of Valid Representation	Number of attentions given
9	9	9

Field Work, 2024

Effects of Low Level of political participation of women in the development of Lagos State

(i) Effect on women's interest

The study observed that poor women participation in politics has effect on their interest, this finding is in tandem with Akinboye (2019) assertion that women's poor participation in decision-making prevents them from addressing core societal challenges and requirements. Men have shown little to no interest in addressing the problems that women face in the society, this little to no interest would put their dominance in jeopardy. In addition, a significant proportion of women need to be involved in governance since they have significant responsibilities (Gada, 2018). Their lack of participation in governance is thus likely to have a negative impact on their growth and general well-being. Research suggests that diverse decision-making bodies tend to be more innovative and effective. With a higher level of female participation and representation, Lagos state could benefit from a wider range of perspectives, ideas, and problem-solving approaches. This diversity in governance is crucial for addressing complex issues and fostering a more resilient and adaptable development strategy (UN women, 2023).

(ii) Lack of role model and mentor to look up to

The study also observed that women need role models in politics who can inspire and counsel them. According to Adeleke (2017), the continued existence of gender inequality in leadership roles can be attributed to a lack of female role models. If more women begin to experience electoral success, perhaps more women will be encouraged to support female candidates. The inability of women to win major positions during elections affects the participation of women contesting for similar votes in subsequent years.

(iii) Limited Economic growth

Women's underrepresentation in politics can hinder economic growth, as women's economic empowerment and participation are crucial for growth (Gada, 2018). Women's representation in the economy, entrepreneurship and access to resources are credit are essential for economic development. By ensuring gender equality and empowering women to participate equally in the workforce, economies can benefit from a larger talent pool, increased productivity, and higher levels of innovation, ultimately leading to stronger economic growth (Akinboye, 2019).

(iv) Inadequate healthcare and Education

Women limited political representation can lead to inadequate healthcare and education for women and girls, perpetuating gender disparities. Gender inequality can lead to inadequate healthcare and education because when women and girls discriminate and limited access to resources, they are more likely to experience barriers in accessing quality healthcare and education (UN women, 2023). This lack of access can result in poorer health outcomes, limited educational opportunities, and perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequality.

(v) lack of gender-sensitive policies

Without Sufficient women in politics, policies may not address gender-specific issues, such as

gender-based violence, reproductive rights, and maternal health. Gender inequality often prompts the development of gender-sensitive policies that aim to address and rectify the disparities faced by women and girls (Gada, 2018). By Recognizing the unique challenges and needs of different genders, these policies can promote equality, empower marginalized groups, and create a more inclusive society. Implementing gender-sensitive policies can help build bridge the gap in opportunities, access to resources, and representation, ultimately fostering a more equitable and just environment for all individuals (UN women, 2023).

Critical Analysis on representation of women in the legislative and executive seats of Lagos state in the Fourth Republic

In the 2019 election, female representation in the 36 states houses of assembly was only 4.41%, In the 2023 elections, a total of 48 women were elected to state legislatures. Ekiti State had the highest number, with six women occupying seats out of the 36 state's house of assembly (within Nigeria, 2023). While there have been notable efforts, achieving gender parity in political leadership remains an ongoing struggle. Advocacy for equal representation continues, aiming for a future where women's voices shape policies and governance in Nigeria. (UN women,2023). The two tables below show a critical analysis on the representation of women in the legislative and executive seat of Lagos state.

Table 1

Assembly/year	Number of Total Seats	Number of Women Representative	Number of Men Representative	Percentage
7th Assembly (2011-2015)	40	5	35	12.5%
8th Assembly (2015-2019)	40	4	36	10%
9th Assembly (2019-2023)	40	3	37	7.5%
10th Assembly (2023)	40	3	37	7.5%

Source: Field work, 2024.

Table 2

Critical Analysis of women representation in executive seats of Lagos state.

Year	Governor (F)	Deputy Governor (F)	Commissioner (F)	Commissioner (M)	Total Seats	Percentage
2011-2015	0	1	3	19	22	13.6%
2015-2019	0	1	2	22	24	8.3%
2019-2023	0	0	7	15	22	31.8%
2023	0	0	5	18	23	21.7%

Source; field work, 2024.

Year	Special Adviser (F)	Special Adviser (M)	Total Seats	Percentage
2011-2015	3	11	14	21.4%
2015-2019	3	11	14	21.4%

2019-2023	4	9	13	30.7%
2023	5	10	15	33.3%

Source; field work, 2024.

The aforementioned analysis highlights the under-representation and marginalization of women in politics in Lagos State. Liberal scholars assert that women's equal participation is essential for societal advancement, whereas some researchers contend that women are more suited for household roles (UN Women, 2023). It is crucial to recognise that women in Nigeria have historically been overlooked and excluded within the political sphere, which poses a concerning indication for the country's male-dominated system (Agbalajobi 2010). The study indicates that women's political roles have significantly impacted Nigerian politics from the pre-colonial period to the present democratic government (Akinboye, 2016). Moreover, in this era of globalisation, where women significantly contribute to international politics and peacekeeping, it is profoundly detrimental to restrict political power exclusively to men (Gada, 2018).

Summary of Findings

The main findings of this study were that there is gender inequality in women representation in legislative and executive seats in Nigeria's fourth republic. This inequality is unequivocally clear in the Lagos state political administration. Using the liberal Feminist theory which recognizes that individuals can simultaneously experience multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination and privilege, all stemming from various aspects of their identity, such as race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, and more. liberal feminist theory also offers practical solutions crucial for achieving gender equity, a fundamental aspect of societal development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes by stating that, the study of gender inequality and women representation in legislative and executive seats in Nigeria's fourth Republic, specifically focusing on Lagos state from 2012 to 2023, underscores the persistent challenges women face in attaining equal political participation. Despite some progress, disparities persist, reflecting broader societal biases and structural barriers. Moving forward, concerted efforts are needed to dismantle these barriers, promote gender equality, and ensure the meaningful inclusion of women in decision-making processes, thereby fostering a more inclusive and representative democracy in Nigeria.

Based on the findings of the study on gender inequality and women representation in legislative and executive seats in Nigeria's 4th Republic, particularly focusing on Lagos state from 2012 to 2023, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Legislation should be enacted to establish gender quotas for political representation, ensuring a minimum percentage of seats are reserved for women in both legislative and executive bodies.
2. Comprehensive political education and training programs tailored for women, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate political landscapes and effectively campaign for office should be provided.
3. Socio-cultural barriers should be addressed through awareness campaigns to challenge socio-cultural norms and stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequality, promoting a cultural shift towards greater acceptance of women in leadership roles.
4. Support networks and mentorship programs for aspiring female politicians, offering guidance, networking opportunities, and emotional support to navigate the challenges of political life should be established and strengthened.
5. Electoral reforms that promote fair and transparent electoral processes, including measures to combat violence and intimidation against women in politics should be promoted.

6. The government should Invest in comprehensive data collection and research initiatives to continually monitor progress on gender equality in political representation, enabling evidence-based policy interventions.

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