Gender and Women Political Empowerment Balance Sheet in Nigeria: A Historical Analysis.

By

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to examine the global trending issues of gender and women's political empowerment that has manifested a continually eternal contention between the genders that is termed discrimination against women, the realities of power relations in balance national development of nations. This phenomenon has a universal carriage that undermined the huge contribution of women, has received global attention in recent times; and explores the possibility of the multiple roles of women and the translation of such roles into a dynamic force as they participate in the nation building process. Therefore, the challenges faced by women as they perform such roles as well as the need to be involved in national development processes is a quagmire of sort. This is to say that despite the sea of international conferences and advocacies, the political empowerment of women is a pandemic in most African countries, especially Nigeria. While most countries have adopted quotas as a function of the political system to this effect Nigeria merely oscillates on advocacy, with no democratic best practices towards the political empowerment of women and gender friendly policies. Thus, the paper contends that, the situation changed with the coming of colonialism and its ideology of domestication of women, which suppressed the extant laws and practices in which men and women shared responsibilities in nation building processes; was transplanted into the postcolonial political system of participatory democracy in the country. Thus, utilizing primary and secondary sources of data analysis, the paper aggressively hopes to unravel the many challenges that faces women's political empowerment in Nigeria.

Key words: Gender, Women's Political Empowerment, Political Participation, Nigeria, Nationhood, Development.

Introduction

The various challenges facing women's vital and complementary roles which they play in the development process of nations is being frontally questioned in all spheres of governance across the globe. There is a universal trending commitment to issues affecting

women. This is that whether discrimination against women has always existed and in all regions of the globe? The historical account of the Iroquois and some North American Indian societies in Maurice Godelier's view, suggest much room for doubt (Godelier, 1981: 4-7). Corroboratively, however, in precolonial Iio society of Nigeria, a women is generally regarded as the property of her husband. Yet she was largely leveraged by the norms and practices of that society to establish her own family, can also lead men to war or even becoming a sovereign ruler. The case of Queen Ediminiba Kambasa of the Bonny-Ijo City State (Alagoa & Fombo, 1972:8-9), is one example.

Also that Ijo women engaged men to aspire to the membership of the prestigious position of head of canoe houses, which is, the pivot of the socio-economic and political institution of that society. Though, women form the nucleus of the canoe houses but, they were been discriminated against as elsewhere. This is well illustrated in a Nembe-Ijo oral history, of which, Queen Ina, wife of King Dede (Gbuda, second ruler of the Ogbodo dynasty) defied the existing patriarchal laws and aspired to the position of a chief (canoe house head). The tradition stated that Queen Ina had attained all the requirements, presented herself to the reigning monarch, King Gbolowei (third ruler) and the council of chiefs, to be accepted for membership of the council. Though she was discriminated against by the men folk members but was given opportunity to present a male figure to immortalize her name for such fame in the late 18th century Ijo society. According to this account, she reluctantly presented her first son, Epemu, what became Ina Wari (Ina House), which was recently renamed Epemu Wari to give it a patriarchal credence (oral interview with Chief A. A. Bugo at Nembe 10/11/ 2002).

This humble attempt by Queen Ina revolutionized women in the 19th century Nembe-Ijo society as notable women vied to take their places in the chieftaincy history with some modest success in precolonial Nigeria such as Queen Boloba, Legai, and Saifegha. Following this, the twentieth century snowballed many women leaders who sees themselves as the equal of their male counterparts, to enforce their will on the social fabric but were discriminated against on the grand of traditions. Such notable women include: Ekineta Peter, Obiaworio Akalu, Remi Kuku, Mercy Alagoa, among others, were prominent associate chiefs in their own right (oral interview with Pugo Tom at Nembe 2/3/2020).

Globally, the attitude of men towards women in the western world was a quagmire of sort. Truly speaking women are generally discriminated against in every sphere of their lives. This social reality was the consequence of a deeply rooted cultural beliefs and values of societies in the world. This invariably made men the locus of such cultural values and morally important (Rosaldo & Lamphere, 1974:20-22). As a consequence, women had for

ages suffered various forms of gender discrimination, inequality and exclusion, especially in the sphere of politics. The struggle for eradication of gender discrimination is a multiple consequence of this system of beliefs and cultural practices as well as values (Agbalajobi, 2010:75).

This is to say that these cultural values as well as religious practices and largely ethnic in outlook, have turned into bitter pills in social gender relations between men and women. The gender role socialization assigned distinct and often unequal roles to biological sexes turning them into socially distinct gender, as the sexual division of labor portends. This social formulation is the basis of the Nigerian political system where sexes are assigned to perform different complementary roles in the system, as the compendium of Nigeria's public life characterized by instability (Agagu, 2010:10).

However, women have not always sat back to passively accept their second fiddler status. There are several instances of women taken up fights against the authorities and institution used to promotes and perpetuate their oppression, subordination and marginalization, as well as mounted considerable pressure to bear on governments and international organization such as the United Nations for example. It was this consistent touch of reality of women in politics that provoked the UN declaration of 1975-1985 as "Women's Decade" that opened the floodgate of international women's conferences, culminating in the Beijing world conference on women in 1995. The Beijing conference marked a drastic shift in the focus of the struggle from the earlier emphasis on women's liberation to gender empowerment. This is saying that for women to participate in issues of national development, they must have equal access to the institutions where decisions affecting their lives are taken (Owugah & Uko 2003:203).This paper focuses on gender and women political empowerment trends and interrogates how it fared over the years in Nigeria. It is therefore structured into four major parts and each part connect the others for coherence and galvanized into a whole. This is tellingly, aimed at evaluating gender equality in the country.

Conceptual Clarification.

There are key concepts connected with this paper that would require clarification for clear understanding. They are gender and political empowerment. We shall naturally begin with the clarification of the concept of gender.

The literature on gender converges on the premise that gender is a social construct and not a biological determination. Rather, it is the way members of the two sexes are perceived, evaluated and expected to behave (Schlegel, 1990:23). Therefore, gender is more than just an identity platform for defining societal expectations; it is according to Newman

(1999:450), a major criterion for the distribution of important resources, from life chances to behavior, through interaction with other institution of society, thus constituting an important segment of social organization. While Ferraro (2001) opines that although the concept of gender suggest cultural construction, it is usually not easy to tell the extent to which culture or biology determine differences in behavior between men and women. This accordingly, shows how biological differences largely influence social definitions of maleness or femaleness to varying degrees.

Also, gender is a global concept defining human nature into male or female as regards sex characteristics. It is, indeed, a significant form of social stratification in societies, which although, defer from culture to culture (Egbue, 2010:13). It is therefore a major factor that shape opportunities and life chances among individuals or groups as regards social roles. While throwing more light, the United Nations for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) conceptualizes gender as those characteristics of male and female that are socially determined and in contrast biologically defined. They are described as human sexes categorizing social elements into male or female in terms of roles play (UNESCO, 1997:13)

For a broader conceptualization "gender refers to social attributes that are learned or acquired during socialization as a member of a given community. Gender is therefore an acquired identity. Because these attributes are learned behaviors, they are…cultures. Gender therefore refers to socially given attributes, rules, activities, responsibilities and needs connected to being men (masculine) and women (feminine) in a given society…. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies, there are differences and inequality between women and men in responsibilities… and control over resources, as well as decision- making opportunities" (Christoduoluo & Zobnina, 2009:1).

The point to emphasize is that gender is presented as an idea, a role, a social attribute, a learned process, a changing phenomenon and socially constructed terminology of the expectation associated with being male or female. This explains that gender issue is predicated on distinguishing between the sexes (a biological fact) from gender (a social construct). In fact, gender emphasizes social relations on the basis of sex that has to do with behaviors, responsibilities, aptitudes and opinions that have been formed by society regarding male and female roles. This is saying that interpretation of these roles often underestimates women productive ability especially political decision and policy makers. What is remarkable in all these is that policies are built around assumption of difference in roles between men and women in society. Take Nigeria for example, the roles of men and women are defined by local gender values and norms, which assign to men the

responsibility of leadership and decision making while consigning women to the position of admirers. This social construction of gender has however shaped the lives of Nigeria women in various, often profound, ways. The end result of this dynamics has been that women's full participation in nation building has been seriously undermined (Okeke, 1999:38). Thus, the status of women in contemporary Nigeria is a quagmire, even as more women are becoming renown in various sectors of the society. The foregone is a clear description of the socio-economic and political condition of the average Nigerian woman, which is meant to provide a background for our conceptualization of empowerment, which we now turn to.

Empowerment is in the main a controversial concept, which is, prone to a variety of meanings. The concept of "Empowerment" is used to refer to some degree of leadership role for some members of the less powerful group in position of power, dominated by the powerful group where decisions are made. The concept logically implies that gender is not about women per se but also includes other oppressed groups, not excluding men. The idea of "Empowerment" is a collective carriage and trumpeted by all the oppressed groups in the society. It is argued fervently, and believed by many, that with gender empowerment, there is bound to be national development.

While this idea is realizable within the human community, it is important that the concept of "Empowerment" be interrogated, and it meaning properly digest for the purpose of establishing the linkage. For the concept of empowerment is better explain in the light of the theory of "power", which could be interpreted in double layers as either "power over" or "power to". The "power over" is an instrument of domination, which impacts negatively on the ability of powerless over whom the "power over" is exercised (Owugah & Uko, 2003:214). This is that it makes the members of the group over the "power over" is exercised to lose confidence in themselves and their abilities, especially to act and influence their own lives.

It is that, empowerment is about the acquisition of power in all its ramifications. It, therefore, connotes an asymmetrical power relation of domination and subordination. There is no gain saying the fact that the "power over" it is believed that the less powerful could only be empowered by the more powerful group through the process of surrounding some of its power to the less powerful, or utilizing some members of the latter in position of power, dominated by the former where decisions are made. The most visible consequence of this model is, the extent to which the less powerful could acquire power and be empowered is dependent on the willingness and the quantum of power the powerful decides to transfer to the less powerful group. In view of the above circumstance, empowerment can only come from the powerful. The tendency is such that, it is even

logical that the more powerful will never deliberately and voluntarily surround enough power to the less powerful to gain power parity between them. In light of this (Taliaferro, 1991) remarked that "true power cannot be bestowed …" and admonished that any notion of empowerment being given by one group to another hides an attempt to keep control. This simply suggests whatever power that is given to the less powerful, is merely symbolic and was never intended to achieve power parity.

Conversely, "power to" is an instrument of force and therefore, does not come from outside. It is achieved through one's ability to resist, challenge and confront what is referred above as "power over". The only one sure way to fight against "power over" is neglecting or rejecting all the negative social constructs. This will enable the people to develop certain abilities and the confidence and the realization that they have the capacity and the right to act and have influence (Rowlands, 2000).

To this end, therefore, McWhirttar conceptualizes empowerment as the process by which people, organizations or groups who are powerless and as it were, identified four aspects to it according to him;

- Become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context,
- Develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives,
- Exercise this control without infringing upon the rights of others and,
- Support the empowerment of others in the community.

In this conceptualization of empowerment, two broad perspectives can be explained here: the technical aspect, and the holistic aspect, for example.

- In the technical aspect, political empowerment in gender discourse goes beyond mere negotiated numbers and access to positions of decision- making or power itself.
- While the holistic aspect, it encompasses compendium of processes to enable people to perceive or see themselves as capable and entitled to occupy that decision making space.

The point should be made as Liz Kelly (cited in Rowlands, 2000) puts it "power to" or "power within" is what "Empowerment" all about. In this line of conceptualization of "Empowerment" Keller and Mowewe (1991) postulate empowerment as a process whereby women become able organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to

assert their independent right to make choices and control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination.

It is therefore pertinent to summarize "power to" description of empowerment as "political empowerment is, therefore, not just about women occupying positions in the key political institutions that shape people's access to, and control over resources by just any woman. In gender empowerment discourse, such positions should be…empowered through the "power to" process, which comes from an understanding of the situation of the oppressed and marginalized; undoing the negative effects of internalized acceptance of inferiority and subordination developing the abilities, the confidence and commitment to changing the situation. It is only such empowered women that should be encouraged…especially the gender-sensitive men, to gain access through election…all are taken. It is such women that can be relied on to champion the cause for gender equality as well as for the oppressed in general" (Owugah & Uko, 2003:215).

Democracy, Women and Politics in Nigeria

Democracy is about a system of government that concerns the institutions and procedures designed for mass participation in decision making process. It however repudiates arbitrariness and authoritarianism. This is saying that democracy exalts the consent of the governed and protects human values and dignity of life. Democracy anchors among other things recognition of popular sovereignty, equal opportunity for all, representativeness, majority rule, right of choice between alternative programs, minority rights, consensus on national issue and free, fair and periodic elections, which are held according to the rule of law (Karl, 1990:2).

The idea of democracy confers the opportunity to participate in decision making on all adult citizens. The citizenry enjoys widespread participation in the political process. Democracy is a form of government that recognizes power be vested in all citizens of the community and not in the ruling elite. In addition, the principle of political equality contends equal opportunity for all members of the community, not actual equal participation. This is codified that as long as each member has a genuinely equal opportunity to participate to the extent that she/he wishes and can manage, the requirement of political equality are achieved. While the principle of majority rule in a democracy adheres that no government decision be made against the ultimate desires of popular majority, for example.

While analyzing the principle of popular consultation Oke (2015) notes consist of dual requirement.

- A democratic state must establish certain institutional machinery through which public official hear what public policies the people wish adopted and enforced.
- Having known the policies performed by the people, public officials then utilize them into effect whether or not they believe them to be wise.

The attainment of these democratic goals, therefore, is sine qua non to nation states quest to develop rapidly, has propelled a maximum utilization of their human resource. It is that human resource is an essential factor of production and doubles as the "utilizer" of the other resources- materials and capital in the production process. In fact, the human element constitutes human capital that comprises both male and female. This is in line with the ideals of democratic practice, premised on the belief that mere participation of women in the political activities of a country is key as this offers equal opportunity to all and leads to a new phase and a diversity of contribution to policy making and to priorities of development. Adding that it provides the female folk a role in the decision making process in order to represent the entire society (Philips, 1995).

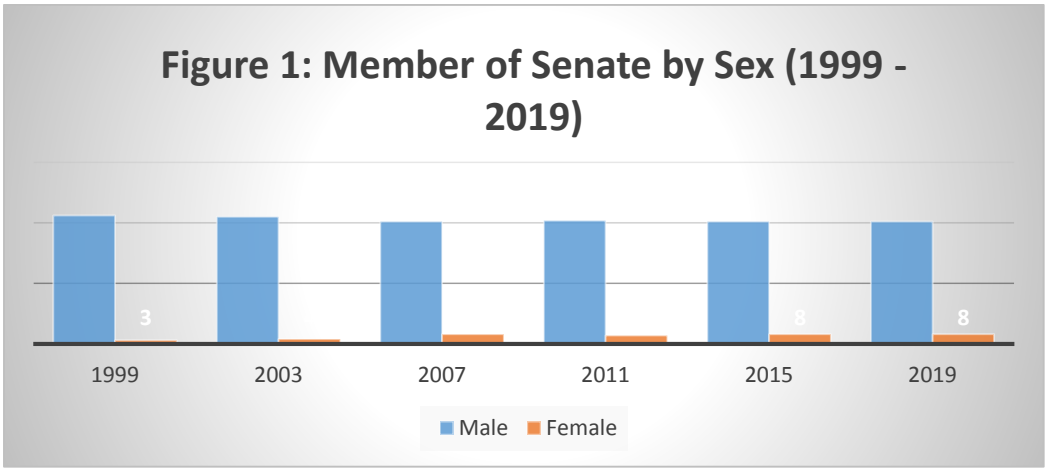
Such is the universality of gender issue that the former United State Secretary of States Hillary Rodham Clinton (1997) was quoted to have emphasized that "there cannot be true democracy unless women's voices are heard. There cannot be true democracy unless women are given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own lives; there cannot be true democracy unless all citizens are able to participate fully in the issues of their country" (Oke, 2015). Similarly, former president of Nigeria Chief Obasanjo articulates and correctly "democracy requires that men and women have unrestricted access to spaces of power…preferences can be manifested and satisfied. The absence of women in political debates and the decision making process distorts the appreciation of women's interest. Women…because male representatives and their groups do not possess adequate and appropriate knowledge, interest,....Development indices show that the involvement of women in governance promotes development because women form the bedrock of the society (Obasanjo cited in Mangvwat etal, 2009:87).

Conversely, at the level of policy making and implementation in Nigeria since the attainment of nationhood, democracy has not taken full cycle of the process as most policies are masculine both in their making and implementation. This is clearly reflected in figures 1&2 and the table below that shows the number of men and women into various public positions (elective positions) in the political development of the country.

The Senate and House of Representatives

Since the return of democracy in 1999, the Senate has been dominated by males. In 1999 there were only 3 women out of the 109 members representing 2.8% and 4 in 2003

representing 3.7% of the members of the Senate. In 2007 the number increased to 8 which is 7.3%. However, there was a decrease from 8 women members in 2007 to 7 in 2011 which is 6.4 per cent and again increased to 8 women 7.3% in 2015 and maintains same after the conduct of bye elections in 2020. See the Figure 1 and Table 2 below.



Member of House of Representatives

In 1999, the number of women in the House of representative was 12 out of 360 members which was about 3.3% but increased to 21 which is 5.8% in 2003. It increased to 26 which is 7.2% in 2011, in 2015 the number of women in the House of representative decrease to 19 which is 5.3% and currently in 2019 it increases to 20 which is 5.7% out of 360 members. See table 1 below for other elective positions.

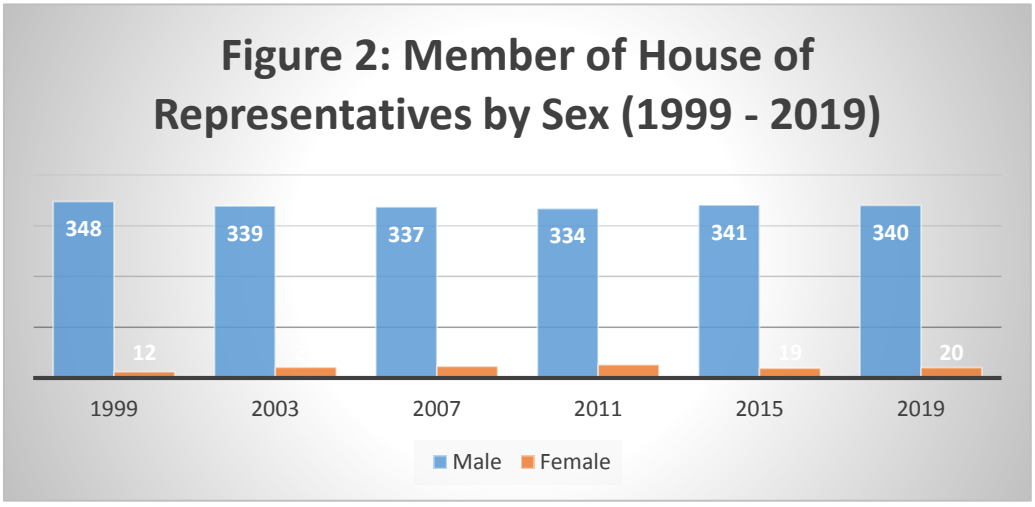


Table 1. Number of Women Elected in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2015, and 2019 in Nigerian General Elections

S/N	Position	Number of Available seats	Number of Elected Women in 1999	Number of Women in 2003	Number of Women in 2007	Number of elected Women in 2011	Number of Elected Women in 2015	Number of Elected Women in 2019
1	President	1	-0%	-0%	-0%	-0%	0%	-0%
2	Vice President	1	-0%	-0%	-0%	-0%	-0%	-0%
3	Senate	109	3 2.75%	4 3.7%	8 7.33%	7 6.4%	8 7.33%	8 7.33%
4	House of Reps.	360	12 3.33%	21 5.83%	23 38%	26 7.2%	19 5.3%	20 5.6%
5	Governorship	36	-0%	-0%	-0%	-0%	-0%	-0%
6	Deputy Governorship	36	-1 0.09%	-2 5.5%	-6 16.6%	13 8.3%	4 14.4%	4 14.4%

Source: Adapted from Men without Women: An Analysis of the 2015 General Election in Nigeria by Nse Akpan.

An analysis of the foregoing, suggests that only very insignificant number of Nigeria women have participated and won in Nigeria's electoral space, in spite of the dogged pioneering struggle of women as exemplified by Margaret Ekpo and other notable Nigerian women. Today the number of women in both elective and appointive positions is still insignificant. This is well captured in the 2019 general elections like previous ones, women should make strong to advocacy to support party activities and fund women who are actively vying for political positions, arising from their poor performance in the electoral space.

The performances of women above, no doubt, is a consequence of the nature of Nigeria political clime, which discourages women's participation. Political gatherings are often held at odd hours in the night, making attendance difficult for women, who face greater personal risk and family welfare. Women who participate in such nocturnal meetings have been labeled as loose women (Eme & Onuigbo, 2015:24). They went further saying that politics is considered to be a "dangerous" pursuit in Nigeria and female politicians are frequently been painted with dubious moral character because they chose to be involved in this so-called dangerous game.

Arguably, therefore women's marginalization in Nigeria politics began effectively during the colonial period. This is mainly because colonialism had huge adversely negative readings on indigenous socio-political systems, and the gender dimension of politics was certainly affected (Izugbara & Onuoha, 2003). This awkward male-biased political system was then transplanted in the post-colonial Nigeria. This political system and associated ideology, was ill-fitted to the Nigerian social framework. The result was that it amplified the fissures of gender inequality by eroding women's power and autonomy and forcing them down the drains of the social architecture. Therefore Okonjo (1976) noted that, the absence of women from meaningful political representation in post-colonial Nigeria can be substantiated as showing the strength of the legacy of single sex politics as a reinvigoration of colonial politics, is one example. It therefore practically silenced the very foundation of democracy. In the first republic, for example, only Beatrice Kwangi and Wurola Esen, won senatorial seats while Franca Afegbua was the only women elected out of 91 senators in the second republic. Also, the militarization of the Nigerian state, which lasted for almost three decades, reinforced the image of politics as men world, and undermined women's action in governance arising from the overthrow of the civilian governments 1966 and 1983 respectively. Thus, the military era largely represented the height of women's political marginalization in Nigeria's political history (Nelson, 2006) is another example. This is reflexively evident during the foiled attempt at a transition to civil governance by President Ibrahim Babangida regime, only a woman won a seat in the senate, while 12 were elected into the 360 member House of Representatives. This trend continued throughout 1999-2019 general elections in Nigeria, as the paper has aptly deliberated. Also, the story of appointive public offices followed a similar trend as few women were appointed to public offices. The only time was in 2011 when more women were given political appointment, 12 women were appointed as ministers out of 42 which represents 30 percent for the first time.

Marginalization of Women in Politics

In light of the guarantees of equality in convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women and other treaties, to which Nigeria is a signatory, shows glaring inequalities at all the levels of decision making. The poor political empowerment of women in Nigeria's political space is due largely to a multiple of factors such as the socio-cultural determinants that instituted women's domain in the private sphere. Women's limited political empowerment in Nigeria is attributed to the politicized notions of indigene and citizenship. The idea is that an individual is eligible to contest for election where he or she is an indigene, women who marry outside their constituencies of birth and wish to contest for an office in their conjugal constituency are often regarded as non-indigenes. This largely barred a number of female politicians who are married outside their

constituency, find it difficult to be empowered in the electoral space because of such discriminations.

Also that the constraint of women from actively seeking elective public offices range from the huge financial resources to fund elections, cultural ideologies as well as inferiority complex etc. This is due largely to the sentimental attachment on feminine gender. It is that in spite of the considerable contributory roles they play in political life of the country; have not been translated into commensurate measure in terms of their performances when it comes to electoral empowerment. Conversely, lack of affirmative action among other quota policies as a strategy for promoting gender equality eloquently demonstrates the consummate discriminatory tendencies towards women in the country. This is not to circumvent its potential for enhancing the realization of women's vision of social equality is seriously questioned. The point to emphasis is that affirmative action like the National Gender policy is a reformist strategy, which is insensitive to class-based and systemic problems underlying women's political marginalization.

Besides, affirmative action is mistakenly equated with political empowerment because it provides women with a certain percentage of position in political leadership. As Toyo (2002) aptly notes, this approach refers to equality only for its instrumental value and not as a basis for transforming political structures and for negotiating more tenable and enduring solutions to the fundamental problems facing women in politics. The fact is that equal representation in political empowerment does not necessarily suggest or mean equal participation in policies and decision making; as it portends "descriptive representatives" who symbolically stand for women (Tamale, 2000).

There is also the contention that even where women are given such quotas, they often do not participate in political decision making as representatives of women collective interests to transform the structures that perpetuate inequality between men and women. But they are co-opted into a male biased political system, they tend to dance to the gallery in order to safeguard their privilege positions, rather than adopt a radical stance to protect the interest of the larger women folk. This is so because, the political space provided for women through affirmative action or quotes becomes a platform for compromise, which de-radicalizes them of the male-biased state. Adding that it only produces "formal", not "substantive" political empowerment of women that leads to the enfeeblement of their capacity to catalyze action for social change. This is condense to mean that state patronage through the aforementioned system aids the systematic dilution of a genuine vision of women political empowerment by translating it into mere motif of political jamboree (Izugbara & Onioha, 2003). Women who however enjoy such political empowerment become what Tamale (2000) calls "women in power without power"

Perhaps the greatest challenge women encounter in political empowerment in Nigeria is electoral violence. Nigerian elections have always been characterized by one form of warfare or another since the return to democracy. It is because political power guarantees access to state resources, which are often appropriated by a few for parochial benefits. Electoral politics in Nigeria therefore is a form of prebendal enterprise engaged largely for crude appropriation of national resources (Fawole, 2005). The electoral process is manipulated through such illegal and fraudulent practices as election rigging, pre-election ballot stuffing, ballot box disappearance or destruction and disruption of voting in opponents strongholds, intimidation of voters, bribing of electoral personnel, deployment of terror tactics, vote buying, violence and so on. Women contestants in the electoral space cannot withstand political violence; therefore women's success effort is drastically reduced. This is apart from constituting a disincentive for the exercise of their franchise in voting, it also constraints their chances of being elected into political offices (Sweetman, 2000)

Aside consideration of the aforementioned factors women are at a disadvantage for lack of patronage and other things limiting their ability to make independent decision. While their male counterparts receive donations through patronage there are few patrons willing to risk their money on women politicians, given the low likelihood of them being elected? Following this, women's electioneering campaign is frequently small scale with less coverage than that of men. This majorly helps to explain away the lower success rate of women in electoral policies, couples with the chauvinistic disposition and psyche of the Nigerian man that decision making is a preserve of the men folk while women are to remain dependent on men (Oke, 2005:53).

The reality is that all over the world especially Nigeria there are numerous problems confronting women. But the underlying principle of state is the ability of its problem-solving mechanism, while public policy entails deliberate decisions to act (or not) in response to societal problems (Johnston cited in Agagu, 2010). The inability of the Nigeria's patriarchal state to accede to the imperatives of gender equality and women political empowerment in governance, constituted the bane of woman empowerment in the country. The state socializes how women are viewed in society in various ways: through legislation, in how public institutions are staffed and functions, and through social policies. This is saying that women play the number two role at homes is playing itself out at the macro level of their political life. Thus Oby Nwankwo writes correctly when she opines "[w]omen were discouraged from seeking political offices by discriminating attitudes and practices, family and child care responsibilities, and the high cost of seeking and holding public office, socialization and negative stereotyping through the media, reinforcing the tendency for political decision making to remain the domain of men" (Nwankwo, 2009:60)

It is submitted that discriminatory practices to which women are subjected in politics in Nigeria when they contest elections with men cannot be justified under the constitution. The parties' often want those who can match violence with violence, those who can coerce people to vote for them. Accordingly, men are widely adjudged to be more violent entrepreneurs than women. Thus, the gender unevenness of electoral politics manifested itself as we have amply deliberated in the paper

Conclusion

It is truly worthwhile to emphasize the systemic disempowerment of women from politics and decision making in Nigeria, which is a negation of women's right with huge attendant consequences on national development. This is arguably tenable considering women's numerical strength vis-à-vis their under-representation translates into denial of their critical contribution to policy making and implementation, in shaping development goals to the needs and concerns of the most vulnerable and disempowered groups in the society (women, children and the elderly). It is however argued that Nigerian women are still being marginalized due largely to patriarchal and corrupt structural systemic disposition of the Nigeria state, as the saying goes, one's interest is best protected when present and involved. It is therefore suggested that the scope for policy making be enlarged and women's inclusion and involvement be made a state policy towards accelerating political empowerment of women in Nigeria. The paper thus argues vehemently that all existing structural barriers on gender and women's capacity to participate meaningfully in politics must be removed. It must however be recognized that the empowerment of Nigerian women cannot achieve social transformation and gender equality in a state of archipelago, with a note only within the "power to" framework of empowerment of all the oppressed.

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