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# Challenges Facing Women in Politics; A Case Study of Lagos State

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**Abstract:** Women do not only constitute the majority in terms of population, but they also play a vital role in the society as conceivers of future generations as well as manufacturers of goods and services. Notwithstanding women have made great strides forward in obtaining a vote and the right to be chosen to political offices in many countries, they hold only a fraction of other leadership positions nationally and internationally. Nigeria is characterized by acute discrimination and inequality. These attributes are also showed in its politics especially as they relate to the issue of gender equity. This research examines the challenges of Lagos women to actively participate in politics. The work also recommends measures to guarantee Lagos women active participation in politics.

**Keywords:** Women, Politics, Discrimination, Inequality, Participation, Lagos-State, Challenges, Nigeria

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## 1. Introduction

To investigate the involvement of Nigerian women in politics and what constraints they face, the logical persons to ask are women active in politics. The level of involvement of women varied widely with different level of activism. Most people dread to explore the unknown, but it has been observed that gender-related variables have profoundly constrained the active political participation of the great majority of women. However, it has been noticed that constraints, no matter how destabilizing, are incapable of dampening the spirit and resolve of women who are psychologically predisposed to participate in politics. If politics is considered in its broadest sense as the division of power in the society, it is obvious that a major attitudinal reformation is imperative to strengthen women's role in the various sphere in which they have power. However, it is in a socio-cultural context that women secondary role is most evident and has the most significant consequences for the participation of women in politics. In order to understand how the socio-cultural variables have affected women, one needs to take into account the economic implications. The combined effect of all these variables results in the marginalization of women from development and politics. While socio-cultural factors rationalize discrimination against women, economic factors constrain them and limit their ability to finance their

campaign strategies. These factors permeate different sectors of the society, limiting and restricting women's part in public life despite legal and constitutional guarantees [1-4].

Some general reasons given for women's limited achievements in politics are lack of funds for effective campaign and administrative expenses, the violent nature of politics in Nigeria, lack of courage and determination to participate actively in politics, poor knowledge of the political terrain on the part of women who venture into politics, lack of support from the female folks and societal attitude towards female political activist. The problems when established are borne out of the socio-cultural environment and have served to highlight women's powerlessness and high level of disinterestedness in politics, an attitude that is to their own detriment [1].

## 2. Method

The data for this research work is sourced from; primary and secondary source. Oral interview was conducted for women and women occupying political post in Lagos state, archival materials were also used. Also, books, journals, articles and other periodicals from scholars in fields relevant to this research were used.

*Comparison of Women in the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011*

*Elections*

The following paragraphs give the adversely low figures of women participation in politics and their occupation of

political office in Nigeria in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections respectively

**Table 1.** Comparison of women elected by state, 2003 & 2007 Nigeria National Assembly, House of Representatives.

	State	House of Reps	No. of Women Elected		Percentage	
			2003	2007	2003	2007
1.	Abia	8	1	1	12.5	12.5
2.	Adamawa	8	0	2	0	25
3.	Akwa Ibom	10	1	0	10	0
4.	Anambra	11	0	2	0	18.18
5.	Bauchi	12	0	0	0	0
6.	Bayelsa	5	0	0	0	0
7.	Benue	11	1	1	9	9.09
8.	Borno	10	1	0	10	0
9.	Cross Rivers	8	0	0	0	0
10.	Delta	10	1	1	10	10
11.	Ebonyi	6	1	1	16.6	16.6
12.	Edo	9	1	0	11.11	0
13.	Ekiti	6	1	3	16.6	50
14.	Enugu	8	0	1	0	12.5
15.	Gombe	6	0	1	0	16.6
16.	Imo	10	0	0	0	0
17.	Jigawa	11	0	0	0	0
18.	Kaduna	16	3	1	18.75	6.25
19.	Kano	24	1	0	4.1	0
20.	Katsina	15	0	0	0	0
21.	Kebbi	8	0	1	0	12.5
22.	Kogi	9	0	0	0	0
23.	Kwara	6	1	2	16.6	33.3
24.	Lagos	24	3	2	12.5	8.3
25.	Nassarawa	5	1	0	20	0
26.	Niger	10	0	0	0	0
27.	Ogun	9	0	0	0	0
28.	Ondo	9	0	0	0	0
29.	Osun	9	1	1	0	11.1
30.	Oyo	14	0	2	0	14.28
31.	Plateau	8	0	2	0	25
32.	Rivers	13	0	1	0	7.69
33.	Sokoto	11	0	0	0	0
34.	Taraba	6	0	0	0	0
35.	Yobe	6	1	1	16.6	16.6
36.	Zamfara	7	0	0	0	0
	F.C.T.	2	0	0	0	0
	Total	360	19	28	5.38	7.78

Source: Etubom Bassey – Ekpo and Nkoyo Toyo (eds.), *Nigerian Women & Political Entrism: Power, Intrigues, and Obstacles around the 2003 Election*; NDI, GADA and INEC Lists of women elected in 2007. [32]

The 2003 and 2007 election gave brilliant evidence that despite the assumed increase of women in politics, their representation in politics in all states in Nigeria is still very low.

**Table 2.** Distribution by percentage & political party of women elected to Nigeria National Assembly House of Representatives 2007 Elections.

s/n	Party	No. of Hon. Members	%	% Women of total Reps
1.	PDP	24	85.7	
2.	ANPP	1	3.57	
3	AC	3	10.71	
	TOTAL	28	100	28/360 = 7.77%

Source: INEC List of the Hon. Members of the House of Representatives, National Assembly, 2007. [32]

**Table 3.** Comparison of Nigeria women elected by the state 2003 & 2007 senate elections.

	State	House of Reps	No. of Women Elected		Percentage	
			2003	2007	2003	2007
1.	Abia	3	0	1	0	33.3
2.	Adamawa	3	0	1	0	33.3
3.	Akwa Ibom	3	0	1	0	33.3
4.	Anambra	3	0	1	0	33.3
5.	Bauchi	3	0	0	0	0
6.	Bayelsa	3	0	0	0	0
7.	Benue	3	0	0	0	0
8.	Borno	3	0	0	0	0
9.	Cross Rivers	3	0	0	0	0
10.	Delta	3	0	0	0	0
11.	Ebonyi	3	0	0	0	0
12.	Edo	3	2	0	66.66	0
13.	Ekiti	3	0	0	0	0
14.	Enugu	3	0	0	0	0
15.	Gombe	3	0	0	0	0
16.	Imo	3	0	1	0	33.3
17.	Jigawa	3	0	0	0	0
18.	Kaduna	3	0	0	0	33.3
19.	Kano	3	0	0	0	0
20.	Katsina	3	0	0	0	0
21.	Kebbi	3	0	0	0	0
22.	Kogi	3	0	0	0	0
23.	Kwara	3	1	1	33.3	33.3
24.	Lagos	3	0	0	0	0
25.	Nassarawa	3	0	1	0	33.3
26.	Niger	3	0	1	0	33.3
27.	Ogun	3	0	1	0	33.3
28.	Ondo	3	0	0	0	0
29.	Osun	3	0	0	0	0
30.	Oyo	3	0	0	0	0
31.	Plateau	3	0	0	0	0
32.	Rivers	3	0	0	0	0
33.	Sokoto	3	0	0	0	0
34.	Taraba	3	0	0	0	0
35.	Yobe	3	0	0	0	0
36.	Zamfara	3	0	0	0	0
	F.C.T.	1	0	0	0	0
	Total	109	3	9	2.75% of Total Seats	3.25 of Total Seats

Source: Extracted from INEC List of Senators Elect, Nigerian National Assembly, 2007 [32].

Women are being pushed to the background in issues that matter to them, in 2003, just three women were elected (by state) for the Senate elections while nine were elected for the 2007 senate elections.

Below are some INEC's preliminary statistics depicting estimated numbers of female candidates by state and zone for national, state, and local elected posts.

**Table 4.** Zonal statistics, female candidates in 2007 general election, selected states.

Zone	State	Senate	House of Reps.	Governor	Deputy Governor	State Assembly	LG Chair	LG Councillor	Total
South West	Lagos	2	23	3	4	68	N/A	N/A	100
	Osun	1	2	-	4	13	N/A	N/A	20
South East	Enugu	4	9	1	1	8	N/A	N/A	23
	Abia	3	6	-	-	9	N/A	N/A	18
North Central	FCT	2	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	16	26
	Plateau	2	6	1	-	8	N/A	N/A	18
North West	Kano	1	2	2	-	1	N/A	N/A	4
	Zamfara	-	-	-	-	-	N/A	N/A	-
North East	Bauchi	-	-	-	-	2	N/A	N/A	2
	Adamawa	1	1	-	-	1	N/A	N/A	3
South-South	Edo	-	8	1	-	8	N/A	N/A	17
	Delta	1	4	-	-	11	N/A	N/A	16

Source: Extracted from INEC Database, 2007. [32]

### 3. Result

Many women attributed their interest in politics to the desire to help their people. Others, based on their reputations as community activists, were urged by their people to become involved in politics. Those who won the elections looked forward eagerly to engaging the political system as their people's representatives and were confident that they would make a difference. Those that lost through what they believed were machinations, rigging, intimidation, and other unfair practices largely said that they were disillusioned with politics and the political process, but some were determined to fight for the mandate that they claimed was snatched from

them. There was the perception that the political system had failed Nigerians and was in need of committed and dedicated politicians, and that the contributions of women politicians would help to begin the process of political renewal.

A few women were also offered inducements that convinced them to abandon their quest for elected office in favor of political appointments. They largely expressed satisfaction and some maintained that they would run for office at a future time. The women who challenged their loss in electoral tribunals expressed feelings of disappointment and dissatisfaction with being sidelined. Many felt abandoned and discouraged but were resolute in their stand [32].

*Table 5. Women elected to public office in Nigeria 1999 – 2011.*

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011	
	Seats available	Women	Seats available	Women	Seats available	Women	Seats available	Women
President	1	0		0		0		0
Senate	109	3(2.8)	109	4(3.7)	109	9(8.3)	109	7(6.4)
House of Representatives	360	7(1.9)	360	21(5.8)	360	27(6.9)	360	19(5.3)
Governor	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
State House Assembly (SHA)	990	24(2.4)	990	40(3.9)	990	57(5.8)	990	69(7)
SHA Committee Chairpersons	829	18(2.2)	881	32(3.6)	887	52(5.9)	887	
LGA Chairpersons	710	13(1.8)	774	15(1.9)	740	27(3.6)	740	
Councillors	6368	69(1.1)	6368	267(4.2)	6368	235(3.7)	6368	

Source: Gender in Nigeria, report 2012

Nigeria is yet to achieve gender parity in political representation at national level. The 2011 election results suggest a regression from the clear progress that ensued the retreat to democracy in 1999. Very few candidates for the National Assembly elections in April 2011 were women. Only 13 of the 340 candidates who vie on behalf of different political parties for the office of governor were women. A mere 909 of the 10,037 candidates for available seats were women (9.06%). After only 19 women were elected to the 360 member House of Assembly, Nigeria is now listed 118 out of 192 countries in terms of gender

balance. The 9% representation of women in Nigeria's House of Representatives is noticeably below the global average (15%), and can't be compared to South Africa's and Rwanda's 43% and 56% respectively. Nigeria's registered political parties have failed to deliver gender parity in political representation at the national level [33].

Representation in local government is equally low. Only about 4% of Nigeria's councilors are women, juxtaposed with South Africa's sloping but still applaudable 38%. [33]. The Table below shows clearly this pattern of general under-representation, peaking in Northern regions.

*Table 6. Women elected to political office by region in 2011, Nigeria.*

2011	Governor	Senate	House of Reps.	State House of Assembly
North-Central	0	1	2	15
North-East	0	1	4	4
North-West	0	1	1	2
South-East	0	2	6	21
South-South	0	1	4	12
South-West	0	1	8	15

Source: Gender in Nigeria, report 2012 [33] Regional differences can also be explained in If women can play vital roles in market associations alongside men, this suggests they could participate in politics in a more active way.

#### *Lack of Gender Parity in Political Representation in Nigeria*

Many of the problems can be located in Nigeria's political party system, and are little to do with the personal characteristics of candidates. Internal party selection

processes and outcomes during the 2011 elections suggest that in all political parties few women were elected to contest seats and that those that were selected were given seats that were hard to win. It is clear that an overwhelming majority of women candidates went on to lose. Only one in every 14

female candidates was elected, compared to one in every seven males. Male candidates obviously a reasonable conversion rate. A reasonable number of smaller political

parties in Nigeria are said to have a better report than the larger parties with regard to gender balance.

*Table 7. Participation in Elections by Gender in April 2011, Nigeria.*

Office contested	Gender		Total
	Female candidates	Male candidates	
President	1(0)	19(1)	20
Vice President	3(0)	17(1)	20
Governor	13(0)	340(36)	353
Deputy Governor	58(1)	289(35)	347
House of Reps	220(19)	2,188(341)	2,408
Senatorial	90(17)	800(102)	890

Source: Gender in Nigeria Report 2012 [33]

It is clear that women are very much under-represented in issues that affect their lives. Their voices are yet to be heard and are yet to take their rightful place in politics. It is undeniable that different factors have contributed to the relegation of women to the background in Nigerian politics.

The historical review of appointment into Lagos State executive council since 1967 when Lagos State was created

revealed that women's representation in the council had not exceeded 21% either under military or democratic government. The situation under this current democratic dispensation is worse off as the highest so far recorded is 11%, a percentage way too below the 35% affirmative action under the Nigeria National Gender Policy 2006. The table below justifies this

*Table 8. Representation of women in the Lagos State executive council from 1967-2015.*

Year	Male		Female	
	No of Seats	%	No of Seats	%
1967-1968	4	100%	0	0%
1968-1970	12	100%	0	0%
1971-1973	13	100%	0	0%
1973-1975	17	94.1%	1	5.88%
1975-1977	20	95%	1	5%
1977-1978	18	94.4%	1	5.6%
1978-1979	22	95.5%	1	4.5%
1979-Oct. 1983	20	100%	0	0%
Oct. 1983-Dec. 1983	17	100%	0	0%
1984-1986	19	94.7%	1	5.3%
1986-1988	19	89.5%	2	10.5%
1988-1991	19	79%	4	21%
1992-1993	11	81.8%	2	18.1%
1993-1996	14	82%	1	7.1%
1996-1999	15	80%	3	20%
1999-2003	29	89.7%	3	10.3%
2003-2007	48	97.9%	1	2.1%
2007-2009	38	97%	3	3%
2011-2015	34	89%	4	11%

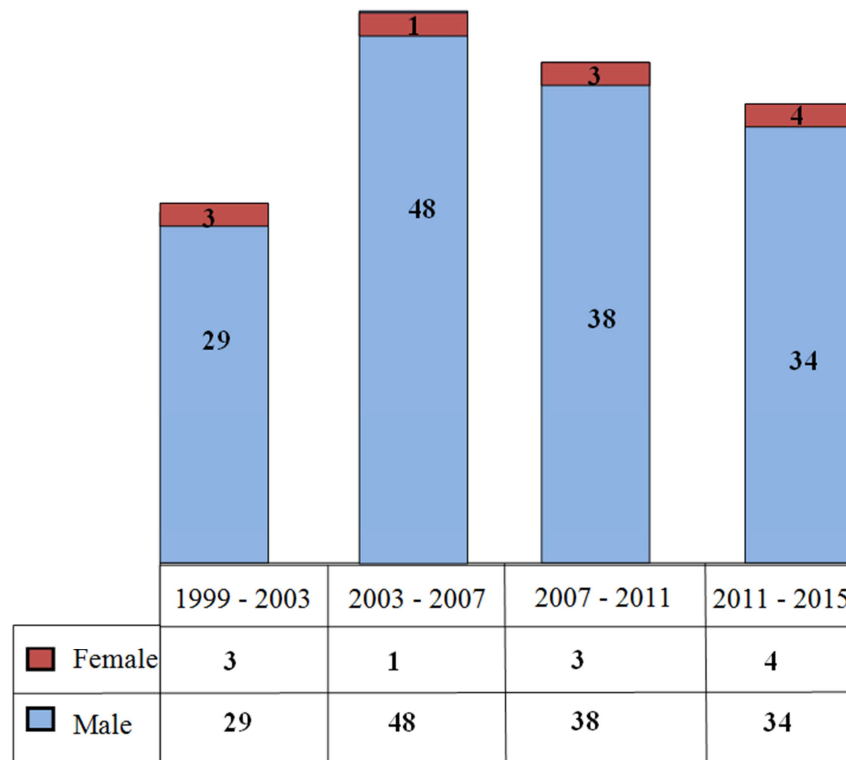
Source: <http://c21stingeria.worldpress.com/lagos/women-in-politics>.

The election took place these years, showing the low participation of women and inclusion of women in Lagos politics. Therefore, the figures exclude Governors and Deputy Governor's position.

In over four decades of the existence of Lagos State, men have had many chances to get appointed into Lagos State

executive council than women. This is indeed a poor result from a state respected for good governance. It is unjust, to say the least, that despite the active participation of Lagos women in politics they hardly win an election or given appointments in government [2].

**Lagos State Executive Council (Appointive) 1999 – May 2015**



*Figure 1. Lagos State Executive Council (Appointive) 1999- May 2015.*

Figures for these years exclude elective positions of Governors and Deputy Governors.  
Source: <http://c21stingeria.wordpress.com/lagos/women-in-politics>.

The Deputy Governor position stands as the only position where women have had higher representation than men. Between 1979-2015 Lagos has had six female Deputy Governors and three male Deputy Governors [2].

*Table 9. Past Deputy Governors and current Deputy Governors of Lagos State.*

NAMES	YEARS	GENDER
Rafiu Jafojo	1979 – 1983	Male
Okunnu Lateefa Modupeola	1990 – 1992	Female
Alhaja Sinatu Ojikutu	1992 – 1993	Female
Akerele Bucknor Kofoworola	1999 – 2002	Female
Mr. Olufemi Pedro	2003 – 2007	Male
Prince Abiodun Ogunleye	2007	Male
Princess Sarah Adebisi Sosan	2007 – 2011	Female
Mrs. Joke Orellope Adefulire	2011 – 29 <sup>th</sup> May 2015	Female
Mrs. Oluranti Adebule	29 <sup>th</sup> May 2015 – Till Date.	Female

Source: <http://c21stingeria.wordpress.com/lagos/women-in-politics>.

Nevertheless, the factors limiting Lagos women in politics shall be discussed in the following paragraphs.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. Lack of Public Acceptance

One possible explanation for women’s small share in public offices is lack of public acceptance of women in political life. Public attitude is an important reason for the

small number of female officeholders. Public attitude does not only determine how many female candidates win a general election but also, directly and indirectly, determine how many are considered and nominated for office. In Lagos, women who are actively participating in politics are not publicly accepted because they are seen and treated as free women (prostitutes or wayward) of easy virtues, stubborn people, whores, too domineering, culturally rebellious, etc. It is observed that during the campaign, the political opponents (mostly men) use the alleged loose moral standing of these

women against them and often insult them directly in public. However, they are often exposed to public shame and are socially stigmatized by both men and women. The use of negative labeling, derogatory names; abusive languages and expressions to describe women in politics poses a big challenge to those in politics [3]. Hon. Adebayo Abolaji (the former supervisor for WAPA and present Education Secretary for Badagry Local Government) identified this factor as a huge challenge to women in politics; she said “many of our people say that all women in politics are prostitutes” this alone is enough to discourage women from participating in politics [4].

#### 4.2. Socio-Cultural Practices

The entrenched socio-cultural practices in the Yoruba society prevail in favor of men against women which constitute a serious challenge to women. Women are often not permitted involve in public life from childhood via adulthood by authority figures such as husbands, fathers, mothers and other relations due to cultural image of a virtuous woman defined as quiet, submissive who should be seen and not heard because of the patriarchal nature of the Nigerians society. Most Nigerians including women still believe and embrace the traditional perspectives that view women as inferior to men, second-class citizens, weaker sex to be seen and not to be heard, Child bearers, primary caregivers, etc. Most times, they feel the game of politics is exclusive to men and women should dare not venture into it, and those who struggle to venture are usually contented with back seat [5].

In relation to this socio-cultural challenge, even many women psychologically acknowledge and perceive the social stigma that politics is a “dirty game” and as such tend to wrongly perceive fellow women into politics as arrogant and irresponsible and want to pull them down. Thus, most women in Lagos dread politics to retain their good personality traits and preserve their homes (for married ones). More so, the lack of family support is a critical challenge to women active participation in politics in Lagos. Owing to the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society, it is culturally assumed that women must seek approval from men / husbands before heading into politics. However, if such permission is not granted, the only option for such women is to drop their political ambitions. Thus, most family members especially husbands even among educated ones do not allow their wives to participate actively in politics. However, many poor women political aspirant do not enjoy family support financially, socially and otherwise. Mrs. Hunpe Elizabeth Oluwatobi, the former supervisor for WAPA Badagry, revealed that the first actor that discourages women from participating actively in politics is the family. The responsibility of the child or children in the home (to those who have) is enough to threaten the political zeal of any woman. The business of keeping a home is time demanding, however most women do not see the possibility of combining politics with the family responsibility in a society where the responsibility of keeping the home is more on the woman [6].

Mrs. Oluremi Adukwu who came second in the governorship election of Lagos in 1993, and the only woman in the NPC eight-man campaign directorate; shared her experience that in those days there are visitors who had come to lodge one complain or the other about their ward or local government that rose her from bed at 5.00am, and not until 1.00am the following day would she go back to sleep [7]. The home revolves around the woman who is expected to perform her role as wife, mother and house keep as a lifetime occupation, while any other career is regarded as secondary. Whereas, it is not so for the men, as they never have such responsibilities placed on them, having the freedom and ample time at their disposal to engage in politics or any other form of activity. For the woman to engage in any other career “like politics” she must have been “childfree” (not childless) or older in age when her physical tendencies must have considerably diminished [7]. Such activities however take their toll on her family responsibilities and attract challenges from the society and more especially from women folk most of whom are ready to criticize her “too active” participation. She finds that the demands in her political career would conflict with the normal lifestyle of the average woman irrespective of her status or social condition, for example, she would be expected to attend party meetings, consult with party chiefs and other members, going on campaigns for long periods, attending local functions to attract political favour, etc. All these activities are unavoidable and sometimes can stretch the personality beyond limit. The result is that women shun a political career surmising that it is better suited for men [7]. For a clearer understanding of this challenges facing women, an interview was conducted for men. In an interview conducted with comrade Hundeyin Semako, LGA Auditor for APC, he gave the cultural fact that “in the African context, women are not supposed to be robbing shoulder with men. Women cannot combine politics with the home; a woman cannot be going out in the night as men as politics demands, only women that are old whose children are responsible for themselves can engage in politics. Men in politics may entice women in politics with money, which may cause divorce in the home of the woman. In order to avoid this, some men do not allow their wives in politics. Some men also do this out of the bid to protect their women. When he was asked the question “can you allow your wife in politics”; he responded with a capital ‘No’ giving the reason that it is not healthy for the children, for both of them to be in politics. Also, with the way some women are treated and taken advantage of, he cannot allow his wife in politics. He also said his wife can be involved in politics is if he attains a political post like governor or president and automatically his wife will have political responsibilities as a first lady. Also, if his wife clocks age 60, she is then free to be active in politics, when she is free of child training and ‘elderly enough’ [8]. To buttress this point; the view of men were sought on the question “are women better politicians?” The response of those interviewed shows the non acceptance of women in politics;

Mr. Adetunji one of the interviewee responded that

“women are not better politicians and can never be, firstly, women are biologically weaker than the men, secondly, their responsibilities does not permit them to concentrate on full time politics. Hence, the men out-reign them in politics”.

Erapl Ray another interviewee responded that “it depends on where the politics is being played. There’s no doubting the fact that women are better ‘bedroom politicians’ than the men. They simply use what they have to achieve what they lack. If we are however talking about politics as it concerns Nigeria, some women like late Madam Tinubu and Funmilayo Ransom Kuti had played important role in Nigerian politics during their time, they were so courageous in pursuing their rights, and they were good motivators that they left indelible prints in the history of Nigerian politics. However, records have not shown them to be better than their male counterparts. Nigerian women of today are nowhere near the marks of those mentioned above. All they keep saying is women liberation, liberation from what? The recent honor bestowed on some women as deputy governors is an act of sympathy, and I think that is how far the women-folk can go for a long time to come”. On the international scene names like late Indira Gandhi, Corazon Aquino and Margaret Thatcher had at one time or the other made waves. They have only held offices once held by men” [9].

Another interviewee, Mr. Yemi, responded that “there is hardly anything legitimate which women can do better than men. That noisy propaganda about women independence, women better life, women emancipation is more ways invented by a few what-can-my-husband-do-women who are exploiting such to advance their selfish motives. Women should better intensify their efforts to rescue their images by taking back their kitchen pride, which men have silently snatched. Women can only be better ‘politician’ if they are vying for a post with men- they have their articles of ‘campaigns’ and surely will win. But in democratic politics, women have no ‘locus-standi’ to rise; they are not even supported divinely. They are like soldiers; they have no say (in) politics. Theirs is to take care of politicians. If a woman becomes the president of Nigeria, “I will change my nationality” [9]. This clearly shows the unacceptance of women in politics.

### **4.3. Unhealthy Political Environment**

This is another challenge to women’s active participation in politics in Nigeria. The political terrain in Lagos is a do-or-die affair and fraught with violence, maiming, assassination, threats, blackmail, intimidation, humiliation, etc. which are utilized by most men to scare women away from active participation in politics [10]. Involvement of thugs during and after elections and the attendant insecurity such as destruction of lives and properties that characterized a typical electoral process in Nigeria makes politics something out of the way for most women. An illustration of electoral violence in Nigeria is the testimony of a female aspirant, Dorothy Nyone who narrated that a “ward chairman was shot dead; all the women and most of the men fled the scene. My husband rushed down and took me home. I was

scared; men who were fully prepared for violence were the only ones who remained behind to hand pick various winners [11].

Also, Alhaja Taiwo Almaroof, who was once a councilor of Ward L of Oshodi gave the account of her experience. She recalled that several times she was harassed by her opponents and their supporters. She said, “it got to a stage when my brothers advised me not to go for campaigns again, they used to go for me instead” [12].

Hon. Kappo Mautin Elizabeth also mentioned that the insecurity in politics mostly during political campaigns and elections is one of the important reasons why women choose not to participate in politics and have instilled fear in women who participate in politics [13].

### **4.4. Inadequate Education**

The lack of education and exposure among the womenfolk in relation to the requirement or demands of political leadership is a problem incidental to women’s participation in politics. As a result of low education and professional attainment, they are poorly equipped mentally to venture into the male-dominated world of politics. Owing to lack of an appreciable level of education, professional ability, and poor leadership skills, the Nigerian woman lacks self-confidence, courage, and boldness required to aim for the highest post in the political arena.

Ironically, women who do venture into politics are expected to demonstrate the high caliber type of education and exposure either equal or above that of men. Unfortunately a reasonable percentage of Lagos women, due to circumstances beyond their control lack the resources that could launch them into the political arena [14].

### **4.5. Religion**

Religious practices are also used as powerful instruments of stereotype against Nigeria women political aspirants/politicians from active participation in politics. The purdah system (i.e. house seclusion of women) of the Islamic doctrine for instance, strictly bars women from participating in politics either as voters, political aspirants or even participating in campaigns/ other political activities. However, when it comes to the issue of political leadership and formulation of government policies, women’s role in Islam is limited to supportive and advisory [15].

### **4.6. Male Dominated Political Party**

Hitherto, women played essentially a “cheerleader role” in politics. Women were the enthusiastic supporters who thronged the campaign for elective office. Women, it would appear were merely content to cheer contestants of the opposite sex to victory. This was ensured through the creation of viable women’s wings of political parties whose functions include inter-alia mobilization and political education of women. There is general agreement that women’s wings of the various parties performed well in mobilizing women for party activities including voting



enmasse on election day. As influential as this role was in the euphoria of competition for elective office, the content of political education merely emphasized the supportive role of women in mobilizing votes for party candidates who were in the main, men, rather than women seeking elective office themselves. Thus, women were active in political rallies and going out to vote but did not seek and could therefore not win elective positions. Women also featured prominently as executive members of political parties. But party organizations became moribund once there is election to be won and lost. By implication, women's influence also became moribund until the next circle of elections. It would therefore seem that women were seen and heard only during the period of elections and were relegated to the back-stage when the allocation of the pay-off of electoral competition was to be done. This limited conception of the political relevance of women accounts for and is the very evidence of their political marginalization [16]. Also, the element of 'organization' in a political party inevitably leads to a situation in which some members become much more involved than others and therefore better known within their party circle (these are mostly male member). These persons (mostly men) invariably form an overt or covert caucus that determines the fate of persons and issues being considered by the party. Depending on the quality and quantity of party members such individuals could become the defacto determiners of what issues get or do not pass by the party as well as which candidate secures or fails to secure party nomination at election time. The emergence of this kind of small clique which dominated and otherwise widely composed organization is what Robert Michel explained by his 'iron law of oligarchy'. According to him, because the party relies on organization, with the implied element of structure (which is hierarchical) rules, and financial control, it is inevitable that a few influential members of the party invariably control the decision making processes (in which the highest percentage are men), with the masses of followership just ratifying [17]. It is for this reason that Omo Omoruyi describes political parties as "structures of domination and control" and the onus of penetrating the party hierarchies (and caucus) rests on the gladiatorial aspirant that seeks to survive in the slippery terrain of political competition where the competitor's gender does not attract special concession [18]. Even in situations where intending candidates at elections have other necessary resources, their lack of clout within the party has led to failure to secure party tickets [19]. This has been a big challenge to Lagos women who find themselves in male-dominated political parties. The inadequate number of female representation in parties has also posed a big impediment for the success of women in politics. This highly limited number has made it difficult for a visible women party constituency to emerge. The contribution of the few active members could thus be ignored or rendered ineffectual. This is particularly the case with women in important party positions. This inability of the few women that are visible in the parties to capture consequential party offices while their male counterpart overwhelmingly

dominate the top posts like chairman, deputy chairman, general secretary post, etc. The treatment of women in political party has not encouraged women in politics. For instance in the gubernatorial post in the 1991 elections in the 30 states of the federation, Lagos produced two candidates (NPC and SDP Parties respectively), none of these was successful in securing the party ticket for the inner party election [20]. In relation to this, Professor Remi Sonaiya, the Presidential candidate of KOWA Party in 2015, postulated that; "women need to redefine their role in the polity, women are been used for electoral campaigns; they sing praises of men and when the men got elected they forget that these women have a role to play in their policy formation" [21]. Hon. Adebayo Abolaji, former supervisor for Women Affairs And Poverty Alleviation and the Present Education Secretary of Badagry local government has revealed that the biggest challenge of women in politics and in intra party elections is the domineering and 'want-to-be-the-head' nature of men, they hardly give room for women to participate. This can be a big discouragement to women [22].

In addition, most political parties marginalized and discriminate against female political aspirants by excluding them from politics through 'traditional' methods based on male-centered interpretation of culture, religion and sharp practices of 'zone out' and step-down techniques mainly for women. The 'zone out' techniques is where a political party simply zones out the seat of a female aspirant to a constituency where she is not regarded as an indigene, while 'step-down' techniques is where a female candidate who has obviously scaled through party nomination and is eligible to contest an election is simply asked to step down for a more suitable candidate (mostly men) [23]. A good analogy is the experience of Kofo Bucknor- Akerele who was pressurized to step down for one or two candidates but clung to her own interest [24]. In most political parties in Lagos, the discrimination against women from the menfolk in electoral activities tend to relegate women to the background; this is a critical challenge to women active participation in politics

#### **4.7. Lack of Support from Fellow Women**

Jealousy and envy among women are manifested in the 'tear me down-syndrome' where women condemn female politicians or political aspirants by calling them names, assassinate their character and engage in smear campaign thereby making women enemies of one another [25]. Hon. Kappo Mautin Elizabeth, the Executive Secretary (ES) of Badagry local government, revealed in an interview that one of the major challenges of a female politician is the lack of support from fellow women. She declared "you get very little support from women, that is why it is easy for men to hijack all positions from women." [26] Also, Dr. Idiate Adebule, the present Deputy Governor of Lagos State thinks that the lack of synergy among women in the public and private is a contributory factor to the poor representation of women. Women need to support one another and work together to achieve collective empowerment in the face of a male-dominated society. She also observed that women in the

private sector had been excluded in the struggle for women representation in government thereby missing out on the opportunity to build better synergy between women across the board [27].

#### 4.8. Lack of Fund

Politics in Lagos especially, seeking elective position is expensive requiring huge financial involvement and solid financial backing. Generally, the relatively pathetic poor financial disposition of Lagos women is a critical challenge, which mostly accounts for their poor participation in politics and political defeat in elections. According to Nagara et al., about 90% of women in Nigeria, currently live below poverty line, so in spite of concession granted by some major political parties, which lowers the cost of obtaining party nomination forms for women into elective office; the prize of achieving electoral goals is still far-fetched from the reach of the most esteemed women in the absence of “godfather” who foots the bill in exchange for unlimited favour when the seat is eventually secured [23, 28, 29]. Considering financial backing, the godfathers and other financiers of politicians in Nigerian prefer male political aspirants to female ones based on the societal value assumption and political activities are masculine and male candidates are believed to stand a better chance of winning elections. In Lagos, the women poor access to credit facilities, lack of inheritance right for the developmental purposes: including culturally unaccepted control of their income and resources while living with their husbands (for married ones) add to their lack of financial capability as a major hindrance in their active involvement in politics [23, 29]. Mrs. Adeyemi Esther also declared in an interview that a high percentage of women have interest in politics, but there is no one willing to finance them. People prefer to finance men than women because they believe that women will run the position and enjoy the benefits with their husbands. She used herself as an example that she has the desire to contest for the post of Councillor of her Local Government, but it is difficult to get a financier as a woman [30].

According to John Locke, “all men are by nature equal they never recommended that women be allowed to vote and considered it more or less self-evident that in family matters, husbands have the final say” [31]. The physical difference between men and women gives a highly plausible explanation to male domination even in politics. Men are physically heavier, taller and even physically stronger than women and therefore more capable (physically) than women to mandate their will via violence and threat of violence. Women, on the other hand, are vulnerable because of their role in childbearing and nursing. In addition, discrimination and subjection of women are further enforced by custom, traditional practices, beliefs and the law, behind which stood the coercive force of the state.

In summary, the key point is that discrimination against women has its roots in the nature of our societies which celebrate men as being unique, stronger and fit for the public space while women are fragile and meant to confine within

the confluence of the private space. This has gone a long way to affect women’s perception of politics and thus lead to a very low level of political penchant, knowledge, and activity of women in politics [23, 29, 31]. All these have their root in the challenges of women in politics.

## 5. Conclusion

Politics is not a mystery too complex for the human mind to understand. The view that politics is too dirty a game for women to participate in should be debunked with its proponents. Politics shouldn’t be tagged dirty while the other aspect of national life, the economy, sports, law etc are considered clean enough for women to participate in.

In Lagos, despite global campaign for gender equality, women’s political representation has failed to achieve the 30% women representation in the state, different factors (as examined in the work) have created a culture that alienates women from the main stream of Lagos politics. It is therefore expedient that any corrective measure adopted to address the low participation of women in Lagos politics will only be superficial unless the nation’s socio-economic, cultural, political factors that limit women empowerment are decisively addressed.

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