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Women's Exclusion in Politics and Democratic Consolidation in Nasarawa State, Nigeria: 2015-2019

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Abstract:

This paper examines the exclusion of women in politics and democratic consolidation in Nasarawa State between 2015 and 2019. The involvement of women in the active political space since the emergence of democratic governance in the fourth republic and the challenges that confronted them was evaluated from hard data and secondary sources of information to situate the miniature space occupied by women politicians in Nasarawa State. The descriptive model of political participation was used as the theoretical framework of analysis. Similarly, key informant interview was conducted with notable women politicians and some major stakeholders. Content analysis was employed to analyze the data. The study revealed that women are politically marginalized and feature minimally in governance in Nasarawa state because of patriarchy, cultural belief systems which affects their involvements in political parties, poor informal networks/mentoring, poverty, religious beliefs, political violence and the low level of education. Similarly, weak institutions and the lack of constitutional and legislative framework that can guarantee quotas for women are factors that militate against active women's political participation and governance in Nasarawa state and also discourages the few that brace up with an of expression interest in the political sphere. To overcome these problems, the study recommends amongst others, the development of electoral reforms that promote equitable representation of women, active engagement of religious and traditional leaders to promote women participation in politics, commitment of women in partisan politics, empowerment of women by ensuring their access to economic activities and intense women activism and lobbying to secure greater representation and visibility in the state etc.

Keywords: Women, political participation, democracy, consolidation and visibility

1. Introduction

Gender mainstreaming is one of the most popular calls globally today in view of the central roles exercised by women in societal progress generally. Women's roles are being increasingly noticed in the overall political development of the global community. The pivotal roles exercised by women political leaders in various parts of the world in the 21st century can no longer be overlooked. (Adadu & Kwon-Ndung, 2019) reports the very imposing presence of Angela Merkel of Germany, the very push-up efforts of Hillary Clinton in the United States politics, the dogged fight put forward by Theresa May in the British –EU Brexit saga along with the presence of Erna Soberg as Prime Minister of Norway and the role of Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in stabilizing democracy in Liberia attests to the strong role of women in democratic politics.

In Nigeria, women constitute 49.3 percent of Nigeria's population according to World Bank's report and 51 percent of the voting population. Women make up 49.33%, (World Bank, 2019), this means that women are major stakeholders and have great potentials of influencing election outcomes since democracy is a game of numbers and women have the advantage of the number, however electoral outcomes do not reflect the numerical strengths of women in Nigeria and in Nasarawa state too

Currently, the overall political representation of women in Nigeria is poor, this is a far cry from the 30 percent by the Beijing platform of Action, several other conventions and protocols that promote the visibility of women in governance and politics in addition to the National Gender Policy 2010 that clamors for 35 percentage inclusion of women in Governance and in politics.

The 2019 elections show only 62 women won elections out of 2,970 who contested elections at different levels and this represent 4.17% of elected officials which also represent a decline from 2015 elections where 5.5 % was recorded. This performance gives credibility to the report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) as at October 2020 which places Nigeria very low on female representation in politics. Nigeria ranks 185 out of 193 countries on percentage of women in national parliaments. This ranking reflects the marginalization of the Nigerian women during the colonial period which was as a result of the nature of colonial constitutions. The constitution which articulated, and determined the

country's electoral process. Specifically, Sir Hugh Clifford introduced the elective principle into the country. This was contained in the 1922 constitution. The constitution however excluded all women and ever since then women have been squeezed in the electoral space. (Kwon-Ndung & Atsiya 2021)

In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of women seated in parliament grew in 2018 with regional average share at 23.7% (Musau, 2019). Ethiopia witnessed the largest increase in women political representation in the executive branch from 10% women ministers in 2017 to 47.6% in 2019. Similar gains for Ethiopia include women in charge of portfolios traditionally reserved for men.

The IPU 2020 ranking for Nigeria is quite worrisome and e pathetic for Nasarawa State, the state has no contribution to this abysmally low ranking. This is because there is presently no single woman in the State House of Assembly as well as in the National Assembly.

Pintat (1992), reports that the concept of democracy will only assume true and dynamic significance when political policies and national legislation are decided upon jointly by men and women with equitable regard for the interests and aptitudes of both halves of the population.

Nasarawa state was created in 1996, since the return of democratic governance in 1999 very few women have been appointed into governance and also women have been schemed out of the political space as evidence show that only Hon. Mary Onwugulu was elected into the state house of assembly in 1999 and Hon. Patricia Awashiki was elected into the national assembly in 2007. The scenario in Nasarawa state since the inception of the fourth republic portrays non visibility of women in terms of representation and in governance while SDG Goal number 5 is clear on gender equality and women empowerment with emphasis on women's full and effective leadership in politics and decision making at all levels. The situation in the state is a far cry from attaining the objective of this SDG 5

This paper seeks to establish the non -inclusion of women in appointive positions and in representation. Similarly, the study seeks to identify factors responsible for the poor visibility of women in politics and decision-making processes in Nasarawa State.

2. The Political Space in Nasrawa State 1999-2021

Positions	Men	Women	Total
Governor	03	00	03
Deputy Gov	06	00	06
Secretary to the Government	06	01	07
National Assembly	8	01	9
House of Assembly	117	01	118
Commissioner's	100	13	113
Head of service	07	00	07
Permanent Secretaries	88	14	102
Total	327	29	356

Table 1: The Scorecard for Women in Nasarawa State from 1999-2015
Source: Available Documents on Elections and Appointments in Nasarawa State

Positions	Men	Women	Total
Governor	1	0	1
Deputy Governor	1	0	1
Secretary to the government	2	0	2
National assembly	8	0	8
Secretary to the state government	1	0	1
House of Assembly	24	0	24
Commissioners	13	2	15
Head of service	1	0	1
Permanent secretaries	19	4	23
Head of arm of government	2	1	3
Heads of commission	5	1	6
Chief executive of tertiary institutions	5	1	6
Vice chairmen	12	1	13
Chairmen	13	0	13
Total	82	10	82

Table 2: The Scorecard for Women in Nasarawa State 2019 - Date
Source: Field Survey, 2021

3. The Current Appointments in the State as at 5th February, 2021

S/NO	Name	Ministry	Gender
1.	Dr. Abdulkarim Abubakar kana, Esq	Ministry of justice	M
2.	Prof. Osana Alanana Otaki	Ministry of Agriculture and water Resources	M
3.	Fatu Jimaita Sabo (Mrs.)	Ministry of Education, science and technology	F
4.	Ibrahim Musa Abubakar Ekye	Ministry of Environment & Natural Resources	M
5.	Haruna Ogbole Adamu	Ministry of Finance, Budget & Economic planning	M
6.	Ahmed Baba Yahaya	Ministry of Health	M
7.	Dogo Shammah Danladi	Ministry of Information, Culture & Tourism	M
8.	Salihu Lewon Ahmad Alizaga, Ph.D.	Ministry of Lands and Urban Development	M
9.	Yusuf Aliyah Turaki	Ministry for Local Govt., Community Dev. & Chieftaincy Affairs	M
10.	Barr. Abubakar Muhammad Imam	Special Duties, Legal Matters	M
11.	Muhammad Bashir Aliyu	Special Duties, Revenue	M
12.	Obadiah Boyi	Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment	M
13.	Philip Dada	Ministry of Works, Housing and Transport	M
14.	Hajiya Halima Ahmadu Jabiru	Women Affairs and social Development	F
15.	Othman Bala Adam	Ministry of Youth and Sports Development	M
16.	Tijani Aliyu Ahmed	Secretary to the Government of Nasarawa State	M
17.	Nicholas Abari Aboki	Head of the civil Service, Nasarawa State	M

*Table 3: Hon. Commissioners
Press Release 5th February, 2021*

S/NO	Name	Designation	Gender
1.	(Dr.) John D.W. Mamman	Local Government, Community Development & Chieftaincy Affairs	M
2.	Dominic Adagadzu Bako, Ph.D.	Budget and Planning	M
3.	Hon. Samuel A. Egya	Governor's Office	M
4.	Aliyu Abdullahi Tashas	Conflict Resolution	M
5.	Hashimu Jibrin Gurku	Erosion Control and Waste Management	M
6.	Mohammed Dikko Yakubu	Political	M
7.	Yakubu Kwanta	Youth and Sports	M
8.	Hudu Tafida	Solid Minerals/Mining	M
9.	Sanusi Abdul Giza	Agriculture and Food Security	M
10.	David Nmeri Ayele	Establishment and Labour Matters	M
11.	Munira Abdullahi (Mrs.)	NGOs and Development Partners	M
12.	Hajarat Ibrahim Danyaro	Special Education	F
13.	Ibrahim Adamu Abdullahi	Economic Planning and Investment	M
14.	Alhassan Mukhtar Lamus	Special Duties	M
15.	Ibrahim Oboshi Ogah	Banking and Finance	M

*Table 4: Special Advisers
Press Release 5th February, 2021*

S/No.	Name	Ministry	Gender
1.	Hamza Gayam	Government House Administration	M
2.	Alanana John Attah	Deputy Governor's Office	M
3.	Ishaku Danladi Abari	Ministry of Health	M
4.	Barr. Ishaku A. Usman	Ministry of Justice	M
5.	Muhammed Sani Bala	Ministry for Local Govt., Community Dev. & chieftaincy Affairs	M
6.	Abubakar Sadiq Ishaq	Office of the SSG (Cabinet Affairs & Special Services)	M
7.	Abdullahi Essey Magaji	Office of the SSG (General Admin)	M
8.	Mohammed I.Idde	Office of the SSG (political Affairs)	M
9.	Emmanuel Alidzi	Ministry of Finance, Budget & Economic Planning	M
10.	Asibi O. Omeri, mni	Ministry of Women Affairs & Social Dev.	F
11.	Abigail Waya	Office of Head of the Civil Service (Estab.)	F
12.	Stephen E. Dogo	Ministry of Lands & Urban Dev.	M
13.	Mu'azu Adamu Goshu	Ministry of Trade, Industry & Investment	M
14.	Abdullahi Chiroma Rilwanu	Ministry of Environment & Natural Res.	M
15.	Aliyu Abdullahi Agwai	Civil Service Commission	M
16.	Naphtali J. Dachor	Ministry of Agriculture and water Resources	M
17.	Dr. Janet Angbazo	Ministry of Information, Culture & Tourism	F
18.	Abu Ikpokigye Usman	Ministry of Education, Science & Tech.	M
19.	Dauda A. Sabo	Local Government Service Commission	M
20.	Bulus M. Amoyi	Ministry of Youth and Sports Dev.	M
21.	Hauwa Aliyu Oga	Office of Head of the Civil Service (Civil Service Se.)	F

S/No.	Name	Ministry	Gender
22.	Jibril O. Giza, mni	Ministry of Works, Housing & Transport	M
23.	Yairus G. Dagusa	On Course at NIPSS	M
24.	Zaka L. Yakubu	State Accountant-General	M
25.	Rayyanu Lamus	State Auditor-General	M
26.	Idris Apa	Auditor-General for Local Government	M

*Table 5: Permanent Secretaries
Press Release 5th February, 2021*

S/No.	Name	Designation	Gender
1.	Muhammed Abubakar Muhammed	Governor's Office	M
2.	Salihu Isyaka Ogah	Deputy Governor's Office	M
3.	Abubakar Murtala Mohammed	Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Dev. Partners	M
4.	James Thomas	Local Government's Affairs	M
5.	Rakiya Alaku	Women Affairs & Empowerment	F
6.	Jibrin Egwa Nagambo	Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs)	M
7.	Haruna Sani Haruna	Utilities	M
8.	Habiba Balarabe Suleiman	Focal Person, Human Capital Development	F
9.	Maryam Gajere Muhammed	Burea for ICT/ BICT	F
10.	Mike Imafido	Investment & Economic Planning	M
11.	Hajiya Fatima Ahmed	Primary Health Care Services	F
12.	Engr. Idris Mohammed Idris	Public Works	M
13.	Haruna Kasimu Idris	Youth and Sports	M
14.	Alhaji Yusuf Mada	Party Affairs, Nasarawa North Senatorial District	M
15.	Imran Usman Jibrin	Humanitarian Services	M
16.	Josephine Mark Ter	Culture	M
17.	Ebu Onyawoye Cecelia	Party Affairs, Nasarawa South Senatorial District	F
18.	Engr. Moses Utundo	Conflict Resolution	M
19.	Hajiya Jamila Dogara Sarki	Persons Living With Disabilities	F
20.	Abubakar Abdulahi	Party Affairs, Nasarawa West Senatorial District	M
21.	Mercy Kumbur (Mrs.)	Food Security	F
22.	Murtala Sodangi	Disaster Management	M
23.	Yusuf Jibrin Maianguwa	Liaison Office, Abuja	M
24.	Arc. Stanley A. Buba	Development Control	M

*Table 6: Senior Special Assistants
Press Release 5th February, 2021*

S/No	Name	Designation	Gender
1.	Lamino Gambo Ishaq	Media	M
2.	Ali Abare	Media	M
3.	Suleiman Awaje	Social Media and Community Relations	M
4.	Saphia Ahmed Mohammed	1 st Lady Special Duties	F
5.	Mohammed Musa Akwanga	1 st Lady Media	M
6.	Rabi Abdulahi Musa	Media	F
7.	Ja'afu M. Looko	Media and Public Affairs	M

*Table 7: Special Assistants
Press Release 5th February, 2021*

S/NO	NAME	DESIGNATION	GENDER
1	Ibrahim Musa	Special Duties	M
2	Hamza Mamman Awe	Social Media and Disability	M
3	Mohammed Jamilu Yaubua	Power	M
4	Abubakar Yammani	Youth and Students	M
5	Hassan Musa	Senior Camera	M
6	Akilu Oboshi Rabi	Film Editor/ Photographer	M
7	Aisha Salihu	1 st Lady General Duties	F
8	Maryam Musa Jibrin	1 st Lady Domestic Affairs	F
9	Musa Abdullahi	Wife of the Governor, General Duties	M
10	Bello Ahmed Mohammed	Wife of the Governor, Special Duties	M
11	Aminu Mohammed	Wife of the Governor, Domestic	M

*Table 8: Personal Assistants
Source: Press Release 5th February, 2021*

S/No	Name	Commissions	Gender
1	Alh. Musa Dangana	Civil Service Commission	M
2	hon. Henry John Omaku, FCIM	Nas. St. Independent Electoral Commission	M
3	Musa Isa Mustapha Agwai I	Nas. St. House of Assembly Service commission	M
4	Sani Bawa	Local Government Service Commission	M
5	Abu Galadima	Teachers Service Commission	M
6	Hafsat Sanda	Judicial Service Commission	F

Table 9: Chairmen of Commission
Source: Press Release 5th February, 2021

S/NO	Name	Boards	Gender
1	Muhammed Musa Dan'Azimi	State Universal Basic Education Board	M
2	Ahmed Yakubu Mohammed	State Internal Revenue Service	M
3	Idris Umar Idris	Tech. Innovation & Skills Acquisition Board	M
4	Dr. Dangana George	Hospitals Management Board	M
5	Ahmed Al-makura	Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board	M
6	Mr. David O. Ayewa	Christian Pilgrims Welfare Board	M
7	TPL Adamu Sule	Nasarawa Urban Development Board	M
8	Engr. Abdulahi Agbo	Nasarawa State Water Board	M
9.	Hon. Danlami O. Ikpobose	Nasarawa State Scholarship Board	M
10.	Dr. Ikrama Ibrahim Hassan	Dalhatu Arafa Specialist Hospital	M
11.	Tanko Abdullahi Zubair	Market Management Board	M
12.	Jibrin Dan Ogaji	Nasarawa State Rehabilitation Board	M

Table10: Chief Executive of Boards
Press Release 5th February, 2021

S/NO	Name	Agencies	Gender
1	Dr. Bello Ruth Nabe	Nasarawa State Aids Control Agencies	M
2	Barr. Yusuf Musa	Nasarawa Broadcasting service	M
3	Alanana M. Emmanuel	Nasarawa Agricultural Development Prog.	M
4	DR. Gwamna Shekwonugaza D.	Nasarawa State Insurance Agency	M
5	DR. Mohammed Adis	Primary Healthcare Development Agency	M
6	Barr. Zachary Z. Allumaga	State Emergency Management Agency	M
7	Saidu Ahmed	Community & Social Dev. Agency	M
8	Engr. Abubakar Danjuma Ango	Nasarawa Electricity Power Agency	M
9	Abdullahi Labaran	Nasarawa State Youth Empowerment Agency	M
10	Sonny M. Agassi	Nasarawa Geographic Information Service	M
11	Ibrahim A. Abdullahi	Nasarawa Investment & Development Agency	M
12	Dr. Dominic Banko	Nasarawa State Bureau for Public Procurement	M

Table 11: Chief Executive of Agencies
Source: Press Release 5th February, 2021

S/N	Name	Present Posting	New Posting	Gender
1	Abigail Nbasu Waya	Establishment and Manpower Development, Office of the Head of civil service	Establishment and Manpower Development, Office of the Head of Civil service	F
2	Hauwa Aliyu Oga	Civil Service Secretariat, OHCS	Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development	F
3	Naphatali Dachor	Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources	Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources	M
4	Stephen Dogo	Ministry of Lands and Urban Development	Civil Service Secretariat, Office of the Head of Civil Service	M
5	Abu Usman Ikpogigye	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	General Administration, Office of the Secretary to the Government of Nasarawa State	M
6	Ishaku Danladi Abari	Ministry of Health	Ministry for Local Government, Community Development and Chieftaincy Affairs	M
7	Aliyu Abdullahi Agwai	Ministry of Youth and Sports Development	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources	M
8	Mohammed I. Idde	Political Affairs, Office of the Secretary to the Government of Nasarawa	Political Affairs, Office of the Secretary to the Government of Nasarawa State	M
9	Dr. Janet Angbazo	Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism	Ministry of Health	F
10	Emmanuel A. Alidzi	Ministry of Finance, Budget and Planning	Ministry of Finance, Budget and Planning	M
11	Alanana J. Attah	Deputy Governor's Office	Deputy Governor's Office	M
12	Bulus M. Amoyi	Civil Service Commission	Civil Service Commission	M

S/N	Name	Present Posting	New Posting	Gender
13	Sani Mohammed Bala	Ministry for Local Government, Community Development and Chieftaincy	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	M
14	Jinrin O. Giza, mni	Government House Administration	Government House Administration	M
15	Polar Zeigi	Newly Appointed	Ministry of Works, Housing and Transport	M
16	Rilwanu Al-Quasim	Newly Appointed	Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment	M
17	Kasimu Suleiman	Newly Appointed	Ministry of Youth and Sports Development	M
18	Ibrahim Barau	Newly Appointed	Ministry of Lands and Urban Development	M
19	Ramatu Julde	Newly Appointed	Local Government Service Commission	F
20	Idsrisu Umaru	Newly Appointed	Cabinet Affairs and Special Services, Office of the Secretary to the Government of Nasarawa State	M
21	Ibrahim S. Shammah	Newly Appointed	Teachers' Service Commission	M
22	Barr. Yusuf Musa	Newly Appointed	Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism	M
23	Barr. Isaac Ijiwo Edoh	Newly Appointed Acting Solicitor-General/Permanent Secretary	Ministry of Justice	M

*Table 12: Permanent Secretaries
Source: Press Release 5th February, 2021*

The tables: 11 to table 12 above presents the actual situation of gender distribution in representation and in governance. The tables no doubt shows the very limited space created for women in the state This can justify the claim that women in Nasarawa state are not visible in governance and poorly represented in this fourth republic.

Arguments on women's participation in politics abound in the literature. Most Scholarly studies on the issue of political representation of women focus on four main dimensions: formalistic, symbolic, descriptive, and substantive (Pitkin, 1967; Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler, 2005). The descriptive model of political participation is adopted for the theoretical analysis of this paper. This model tends to critically address the question as to whether the election of more women into political and leadership positions will ensure greater representation and participation of the group.

Advocates of this school stressed the importance of a resembling composition between the representatives and the represented to ensure that the representatives would act the way the represented would. Underlying the support for descriptive representation is the assumption that numbers matter: an increase in women's descriptive representation will generally translate to an increase in their substantial representation, especially on women's policy issues. Four major claims are listed by advocates of descriptive representation to include: the justice claim, the women's interest claim, the rights claim, and the added value claim.

The Justice Claim argument for gender parity in political representation centers on the question of justice and fairness. Supporters of the argument emphasize numerical strength in making the case. They opined that since women constitute half of the world's population, they should be given the same level of equality in political representation. Proponents of descriptive representation argue that if there were no challenges to women's political representation, one would expect elective and appointment positions of leadership to be randomly distributed between both males and females and across other social groups that constitute the society. In a nutshell, justice claim requires the elimination of all forms of intentional or structural obstacles to women's representation.

The second argument for increased women's political representation states that there are particular needs and interests (strategic and specific needs) that arise from women's experience that will not be adequately addressed in a male-dominated polity. This argument is grounded on the notion that women occupy a distinct position in the society considering that they are typically concentrated mainly in lower-paid jobs, and that they carry the primary responsibility for the unpaid work of caring for others. This perspective, therefore, claims that addressing women's representation requires, in addition to universal suffrage, gender parity among those elected to office.

The rights claim argument states that providing opportunities for women and men to participate equally in all political processes is a human right obligation, and that respect for these rights brings greater democratic legitimacy and increases the likelihood of inclusive governance. The rights argument is based on international human rights and gender-equality standards endorsed by various states, which enshrine equal rights for women and men and promote gender equality, as well as the international standards and principles governing the functioning of democratic institutions. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) protects *'equal rights of men and women'*, including the right to participate in government. The Declaration lays the foundation for other international commitments in the area of women's rights. The most comprehensive articulation of these rights is contained in the 1979 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The 1995 UN Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action expanded CEDAW by mandating the Member States to *'take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.'*

Interestingly, the United Nations Millennium Declaration, also known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted in 2000, with related objectives, which make up a global plan for the 21st century, decided to *'promote gender equality and the empowerment of women'*, and this objective is adjudged to be very important towards achieving the

other seven Millennium Development Goals. In the same vein, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as successive programme that came after the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which was adopted in 2015, came up with 17 main objectives out of which the 5th objective seeks to *'achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.'* Most women activists have capitalized on these international instruments to push their case for increased women's representation in political leadership positions.

The Added Value Claim Argument for gender equality in political representation has shifted from the justice, interest, and rights claims to a more realistic argument. It tries to convince individuals and organizations that do not accept the justice, interest, and rights arguments by appealing to their various interests. It, therefore, takes a bonus-based approach by persuading political parties and its leaders, to support the political participation of women. The idea here is that leaders are more likely to be convinced if they see that increased presence of women in political office can help parties compete more effectively and draw attention to the party's policy issues that may secure greater support from the electorate.

This approach is rooted in two main arguments: the 'difference' argument, and the 'pragmatic' or 'utilitarian' argument (Lovenduski, 2005; Childs, Lovenduski and Campbell, 2005). The difference argument posits that women and men bring different perspectives, views and experiences to the table that can enrich political and policy and that only through full and fair representation will these differences be considered in political policy and decision-making. On the other hand, the 'pragmatic' argument outlines the benefit parties stand to receive by including more women in their power structures. These benefits include greater electability, legitimacy, as well as the broader array of skills, knowledge and expertise that women bring.

The descriptive theory has clearly shown that that the women in the state have not enjoyed the advantage of their numerical strength, even though they do participate actively in voting and are being used during campaigns they are often relegated in politics. In terms of fairness, Rights, Interest and value added the women in the state have not been beneficiaries and this explains the political space for the women in the state.

4. Analysis of the in Depth Interviews

In -depth interviews were conducted and some notable women in the state that are considered as stake holders were interviewed

In the opinion of the former president of National Council Women Societies and APC 2019 Campaign Director of Nasarawa state, the level of women participation in politics in Nasarawa state is very low, she opines that the fundamental challenge for women is the lack of a level playing ground, ranging from the party structures, the heavy monetization of the process which does not favor women because of their low economic status. The high cost of the nomination form is a knock out for most women in addition to practical stealing of their mandate she cited the case of Hajia Halima Ahmadu Jabiru whose votes were literally stolen. When she contested for House of Assembly elections. Similarly, she laments over the lack of access to economic empowerment of the women, she cited examples of how women in agriculture lack the financial strength to venture into merchandised farming, they lack access to lands and therefore lack collateral to give in exchange for loans.

Women in the state also face social issues, she narrated that woman who venture into politics are called derogatory names like prostitutes, insubordinates to their husbands and wayward etc. This is also worsened by when politicians meet late into the nights. According to her the low level of education of women in the state is also a major setback for the women.

To overcome these challenges, she advocates for implementation of the 35% affirmative action and the commitment by the government in the state to replicate the pragmatic move in Kogi state which has become a reference point in the inclusion of women in politics (Dalhatu, R. Personal Communication, 02/07/2021).

A gender activist and a crusader of women in leadership also believes that the extent of women participation is very low in the state, she opines that woman mostly are confined to voting, and used profusely at campaigns to either sing or dance at rallies to keep the life of the campaign going, she attributes this predicament of women to patriarchy, religious beliefs, electoral violence, poverty, low level of education, lack of support as well as unity among the women.

To overcome the low level of women participation in politics, she suggests enormous enlightenment on the political rights of women, through networks of civil society organizations and various stake holders to massively enlighten the women. Similarly, she suggested that women must intentionally empower themselves economically as well as government providing adequate security at the pools and the speedy amendment of the constitution to give certain quota to the women which will change the narrative of women representation and visibility in Nasarawa state (Adamu, A. O Personal Communication, 28.05.2021)

The Chairperson of 100 women lobby group North Central zone as well as the Director Center for Gender studies Nasarawa State University Keffi, also agrees to the very low visibility of women in governance and politics in the state. She listed the factors that work against women to include: lack of support from government, male dominance, cultural and religious norms, low level of education among women and financial constraints.

To her women must take advantage of their numerical strength in the state to work towards winning elections by putting up a very strong network amongst themselves from the grassroots to towns in order to ensure victory at the pools. Similarly, she suggested for a political party for women that can help give women the opportunity to emerge as candidates (Mainoma, H. Personal Communication, 29.05.2021)

One time commissioner and the only woman to ever sit in the state house of assembly also admits to the very hostile political theatre in the state where a mixture of patriarchy, cultural norms, outright intimidation are fundamental

factors that affect the representation of women in politics in the state. She also identified the not impressive level of education and economic factors as some of the factors that deter the women in the state.

She suggested that the constitutional amendment to safeguard the inclusion of women in politics is the only viable panacea for women inclusion and representation in the state. (Ohwugulu, M. Personal Communication, 29,05.2021)

Nzomo (1994), posits that the most significant barrier to women participation in politics is the socio-cultural system of belief and myths, which informed the socialization process and the gendered education and training most men and women are exposed to from childhood. Accordingly, the sex-stereotypes and gender segregation in employment and allocation of roles in private and public life are fundamentally a product of the early socialization process, which is the indoctrination of the social environment. In this regard, many women's anxieties and lack of confidence in their competence to execute public leadership roles arise from socialization for subordination. However, it is in the social cultural context that women's secondary role is most evident and has the most important consequences for the participation of women in politics. Similarly, patriarchy, lack of economic empowerment, low level of education and political party structure are also largely responsible. (Kwon-Ndung, 2020), reports that in 2019, women representation was 4.17%, a decline from 5.5% in 2015. This decline is a clear indication of decreased women representation.

The poor outing of women generally in 2019 was blamed on the overall political structure in the country. For instance, the two major political parties were clearly and particularly accused of not allowing enough space for women. There was also the intimidation of women within the political process, in which they were threatened to step down for stronger male candidates, or they were even screened out and therefore edged out of the process. Other factors such as large-scale violence, rigging and vote buying were also said to have played out against the women in the electoral process and therefore worked against their democratic consolidation.

Most importantly the legal frame works such as. The 1999 constitution as amended, the protocol on the rights of women in Africa, Beijing Platform for Action 1996, UN Convention for elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), National Gender policy 2010, advocates for 35% affirmative action and the Electoral Act – 2010 on inclusiveness, have largely remained rhetoric because they have not yielded the needed and expected results.

5. Conclusion and the Way Forward

The marginalization of the Nigerian women during the colonial period was as a result of the nature of colonial constitutions, which articulated, and determined the country's electoral process. Specifically, Sir Hugh Clifford introduced the elective principle into the country. This was contained in the 1922 constitution. The constitution however excluded all women and ever since then women have been squeezed in the electoral space. In fact, before the elections in 2019, the marginal improvement earlier recorded of women involvement in the political space was not good enough in the face of a more heightened voting strength considering the almost 50 percent of population of women in the country. Descending down from 5.5 percent in 2015 elections to 4.17 percent in the 2019 elections is indeed alarming and worrisome, this shows a poor performance of women in the electoral process particularly when the bellow is in the air for up to 35 percent. This obviously presents a male dominance in the democratic space and therefore a lowered inclusiveness as far as women performance in the democratic process and governance as clearly seen in the non-visibility of women in Nasarawa state. Patriarchy and Security issues around the electoral process have been raised along with other issues such as increasing role of money in Nigerian politics as causes for the poor participation of women in the electoral process. Other problems such as weak party structures worsened by feeble institutional mechanism for a credible political process contributes immensely to the poor performance of women. Similarly, there is also the weak 'self-belief' of women on themselves which has eroded the 'can do spirit' among women in Nasarawa state.

Apparently, for women in Nasarawa state to attain political visibility, concerted efforts must be harvested through the activities of the various women groups and stake holders in order to strategically sensitize women from the grass roots on their political rights, mobilize them to engage in party politics and dare to hold sensitive party positions where they will be part of decision-making processes in their political parties. Women groups must demand for affirmative action and ensure its implementation rather than rhetoric's.

Money politics and the high electoral spending must be monitored and controlled to make the exercise open to all and political parties particularly the major ones must go beyond free forms and consider free tickets to encourage the women folks,

Constitutional amendments and electoral reforms are veritable frame works that must be embraced and implemented, this will guarantee a form quota system like the case in Rwanda to balance up the wide gap that exist between the representation of women and men in politics. This is constitutional in Uganda and Rwanda; Legislative as the case in many Latin America; or adopted by political parties as in South Africa and Mozambique.

High premium should be placed on the girl child education, massive grassroots sensitization to parents and religious leaders on the value of girl child education should be strategically done and the provisions for free education for the girl child by the government will adequately bridge the gap in educational status of women. This way the political voyage of women in Nasarawa state will be boosted and enhanced to guarantee greater representation

In conclusion, the concept of democracy can only assume true and dynamic significance in Nasarawa state if political policies and state legislation are decided upon jointly by men and women with equitable regard for the interests and aptitudes of both halves of the population.

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