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Assessment of Women Representation in Nigerian Politics

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Abstract:
This paper critically examined the women representation in Nigerian politics with particular reference to elective and ministerial positions. The objectives of this paper are to ascertain if there has been an improvement in women representation in political position, find out if the present women representation in political position has realized the affirmative action and identify the factors undermining the rise of women representation in political position in Nigeria. The liberal feminist theory was adopted as the framework for analysis. Data were collected through secondary source using the documentary method and the content analysis and the simple percentage method was adopted for data analysis. The paper revealed that there is no improvement in women representation in elective positions and ministerial positions and the level of women representation in politics has not realized the affirmative action. In addition, it was observed that issue of funding, insecurity, culture, male domination in political parties etc. posed challenge to the rise of women representation in Nigerian politics. The paper suggested for encouragement of women participation in politics, sensitization and enlightenment of the public for support of women representation in politics, reduction of electoral violence etc.

Keywords: Women, politics, political participation, women representation, Nigerian politics

1. Introduction

Realization of sustainable democracy and national development requires effective citizens' participation in decision making process and policy execution which must need the active involvement of women (Iheanacho, 2018). Women are seen as catalyst for national development because in most societies' women assume key roles as mother, producer, home-manager, community organizer, socio-cultural and political activists etc. (Oluyemi, 2016). Therefore, the active participation of women in politics is necessary for growth of democracy and sustainable development at large. According to Oguadimma, Nwakalor and Ejinkeonye (2019) 'one must note that the full and equitable participation of women in public life is essential to building and sustaining strong, vibrant democracies. Also, women participation in politics helps advance gender equality and affects both range of policy issues that get considered and the type of solutions that are proposed' (p. 68).

Mere participation of women in politics is not enough for the achievement of gender equality and women empowerment; rather it requires high level of women representation in political positions or governance. To achieve gender equality or equity, reduce discrimination of women, increase the level of women participation and representation in politics, has necessitated several efforts and policies by both government and non-governmental organizations. Such efforts include: the declaration made at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, National Gender Policy (NGP) in Nigeria, formation of Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); United Nation Development Funds for Women in 1985; New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) etc.

In Nigeria, women participation and representation in politics has undergone some major transformation which is traced from pre-colonial to colonial period and from colonial to post-colonial epochs. In pre-colonial era, women were seen as an integral part of the political set up of their societies (Oluyemi, 2016; Mbaegu & Osita, n.d). In Igbo land, through Umu-Ada, women participated actively in politics. Women also participated effectively in politics in Bornu, Zaria, Yoruba societies etc. The pre-colonial societies produced figures like Iyalode E. Aniwura of Ibadan, Queen Amina of Zaria, Moremi of Ile-Ife, Princess Inikpi of Igala, Emotan of Benin, Omu Okwei of Ossomari, Iyayun of Oyo, Orompoto of Oyo, Daura of Daura (Daura Emirate) Eye-moi of Akure (as regent monarch), Ayo-Ero of Akure, Queen Kanbasa of Bony, Gulfano of Daura etc. (Oluyemi, 2016; Mbaegu & Osita, n.d; Oguadimma et al, 2021).

The colonial period brought limitations or barriers to women representation and participation in general leading to marginalization, deprivation, disempowerment, exclusion of women in governance (Egwu, 2015). According to Yahaya and Umar Kari 'women had been politically active and relatively less exclusive in the decision-making process in many pre-colonial societies but the colonial administration with its gender-bias policies have helped to enthrone and sustain patriarchy' (2018 as cited in Oguadimma et al, 2021, p. 68). This situation led to Aba women riot of 1929 and emergence of several interest or pressure groups like Abeokuta ladies club/Abeokuta Women's Union or Nigeria Women Union, Women Party in 1944 (Egwu, 2015). While in the post-colonial period good numbers of women have participated in politics and few had won elective positions and occupied vital key political and administrative position of governance.

This paper is set to assess the level of women representation in Nigerian politics; show the extent of improvement of women representation in political position; whether women representation had reflected the 35% affirmative action and the factors that undermine the rise of women representation in Nigerian politics.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Several women have participated in politics in Nigeria and some have occupied key political positions (both elective and appointed positions). However, there is still low level of women representation in Nigerian politics because the men still to a large extent dominate in every political position. This is affirmed by a report that Nigeria has one of the lowest rates of female representation in parliament in African and right from colonial period a lot of women have been excluded from politics and less likely to be elected into executive political positions (Stakeholders Democratic Network, 2020). Despite that, women are more than half of the electorate in Nigeria and several measures put in place to improve on level of women's participation and representation, the issue of low representation has not been solved. Based on the above issues, this paper is set to know whether there has been an improvement on the level of women representation in politics in Nigeria, and if affirmative action has been realized based on level of women representation. This is the thrust of this research.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to critically assess women representation in politics with particular reference to Nigeria. The specified objectives are:
- To ascertain if there has been an improvement of women representation in political position in Nigeria.
- To find out if the level of women representation has reflected/realized the 35% affirmation actions in Nigeria.
- To identify the challenges of women representation in politics in Nigeria.

1.3. Research Questions

This paper posed the following questions:
- Has there been an improvement in women representation in political position in Nigeria?
- Does the level of women representation in political positions reflects the 35% affirmative action in Nigeria?
- What are the challenges of women political representation in Nigeria?

2. Conceptual Clarification

2.1. Political Participation

Political participation means the involvement of people in political activities which include voting in election, contesting election, engaging in protest, involving in campaign, engagement in electoral violence, political debate or discussion, involvement indecision making process etc. Unanka (2004) sees political participation as the involvement in political activities, starting from listening to political talks and taking part in decision making to involvement in the execution of political violence. Hague and Harrop (2010) see political participation as the 'activity by individuals formally intended to influence who governs or the decisions taken by those who do' (p. 161). Furthermore, they stated that:

> Political participation refers to any of the many ways in which people can seek to influence the composition or policies of their government. Clearly, citizens contacting their representative and activists canvassing for their favoured candidate are participating in the formal political process. But participation can also take less conventional forms such as signing a petition, taking part in a demonstration or even engaging in terrorist acts against the state. (Hague & Harrop, 2010, p. 161)

In addition, Kaase (2011 as cited in Ifeanyichukwu & Ikpe, 2018) defined political participation as an activity that is intended to influence government action either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies' (p. 308). Therefore, in this paper we look at political participation in area of involvement in governance or decision-making process and contesting election.

2.2. Political Representation

Political representation is where by citizens are elected to occupy political office on behalf of their fellow citizens who do not hold political office (Representation, 2018; Iheanacho, 2018). 'Political representation is the activity of making citizens' voices, opinions, and perspectives 'present' in public policy making processes. Political representation occurs when political actors speak, advocate, symbolize, and act on the behalf of others in the political arena' (Stanford

Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2018). To Heywood (2007, p. 249) 'as a political principle, representation is a relationship through which an individual or group stands for, or acts on behalf of, a larger body of people.'

In this work, we see political representation in terms of descriptive representation or resemblance model which focuses on where elected representative or persons work on behalf of the people that possess the same characteristics either in terms of gender, geography, ethnicity, occupation etc. (Iheanacho, 2018). It is the extent to which a representative resembles those being represented (Representation, 2018; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2018). This is based on the idea of a representative cross-section and whether such representation typify or resemble the group they claim to represent (Heywood, 2007).

2.3. Affirmative Action

According to Omenka (2017, p. 5) affirmative action 'is a policy strategy designed to correct an existing imbalance and prevented discrimination against a disadvantaged group or minority based on sex, race or even religion.' It is a measure, strategy and policy plan towards ensuring equal opportunity of people towards access to political position, employment and other benefits in order to prevent discrimination and correct imbalance among groups in terms of gender, status, race, religion, ethnic group etc. It refers to policies that take care of race, ethnicity or gender into consideration in order to promote equal opportunity in socio-economic and political sphere. It is a policy or strategy aimed at countering discrimination against minorities and disadvantaged social group (Omenka, 2017). Crosby, Iyer, and Sincharoen (2006 as cited in Omenka, 2017) stated that:

> Affirmative action occurs whenever an organization devotes resources (including time and money) to making sure that people are not discriminated against on the basis of their gender or their ethnic group. Affirmative action has the same goal as equal opportunity, but differs from equal opportunity in being proactive.... Equal opportunity is a passive policy that seeks to ensure that discrimination will not be tolerated once it is detected. In contrast, with affirmative action, organizations use established practices not only to subvert, but also to avert, discrimination (p. 5).

In relating to gender politics, affirmative action is a strategy, measure or policy adopted to give equal opportunity to genders towards having access to political position and prevents discrimination against any gender on occupation of any political position or leadership. This is meant to ensure women are well represented in any political position.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted the liberal feminism or liberal feminist theory as framework for analysis. It is one of the variants of feminist approach and is traced back to ancient Greek and China. However, it was not recognized as a developed political theory until the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's work: 'A Vindication of the Right of Women in 1792 (Iheanacho, 2018; Heywood, 2007; Sergeant, 2009).

This theory holds that to improve the status of women there is need to allow women to participate actively in public life or politics. This theory is interested in improving the status of women around the world, increasing access to power and believes that the root causes of women's oppression lie in women lack of equal civil rights and educational opportunities (Kendall, 2010; Stean et al, 2010). The Liberal feminist theory holds that unequal access of women to legal, political, economic and social rights causes women's oppression. Therefore, the subordination, oppression of women is associated with presence of unequal distribution or lack of access of women to rights and opportunities in the society (Heywood, 2007). According to Heywood (2007, p. 64) liberal feminism is 'concerned more with the reform of the public sphere, that is, with enhancing the legal and political status of women and improving their educational and career prospects, than with reordering private or domestic life.'

The liberal feminist school views that female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that block women's entrance and success in political sphere which requires political and legal reforms for improving women participation in politics (Kendall, 2010; Stean et al, 2010). Therefore, liberal feminism views that to ensure the equality of men and women needs political and legal reform and altering the structure of the society. Liberal feminism advocates for equality of gender in terms of equal legal rights and participation in the public spheres of education, politics, and employment.

The liberal feminists are more interested on issue of reproductive and abortion rights, issue of sexual harassment, voting rights, education, equal pay for equal work, affordable health care, sexual and domestic violence against women etc.

2.5. Application/Relevance of the Theory to the Study

The relevance of this theory to the study is to enable us to explain if the problem of women's low participation and representation in politics or governance is associated with the legal, political and social constraints in Nigeria. Furthermore, it will help in explanation of the causes of women's subordination and underrepresentation in governance in Nigeria and show how encouragement of women through removal of socio-cultural, political, economic and legal barriers will enhance level of women's participation and representation in Nigerian political system. In the Nigerian politics, there have been low participation and representation of women in politics and governance in all political positions (both elective and appointive positions) which can be associated with political, socio-cultural, economic and legal challenges. Addressing these challenges will most likely improve on women status and ability to participate in politics for improvement of women representation in governance.

3. Methodology

The research design of this paper was descriptive and expository which is based on describing and showing the nature of women representation in political position. This paper adopted the documentary method of data using secondary sources and the data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitatively, the data were analyzed with content analysis and logical reasoning and quantitatively, simple percentage was used. This paper is restricted to only women representation in politics (which is an aspect of political participation) in Nigeria from 1999 to 2019. The women representation in politics is also restricted to elective and ministerial positions.

3.1. Level of Women Representation in Elective and Ministerial Positions in Nigeria

In this section, we will show the level of women representation in elective and ministerial positions in Nigeria from 1999 to 2019 and determine whether there is an improvement on the level of representation.

S/N	Positions	Number of Available Seats	Number and % of Women Elected in 1999	Number & % of Women Elected in 2003	Number & % of Women Elected in 2007	Number & % of Women Elected in 2011	Number & % of women Elected in 2015	Number & % of Women Elected in 2019
1	President	1	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
2	Vice President	1	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	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 (6.23%)	26 (7.2%)	14 (3.8%)	11(3.1%)
5	Governor	36	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
6	Deputy Governor	36	0 (0%)	2 (5.55%)	6 (16.6)	1 (0.09)	4 (11.1%)	4 (11.5%)
7	State House of Assembly	990	12 (1.2%)	38 (3.84%)	54 (5.45%)	68 (6.9)	43 (4.34%)	45(4.54%)

Table 1: Showing the Women Representation in Elective Positions from 1999-2019
Source: Centre for Democracy and Development (2021), Stakeholders
Democracy Network (2020), Oguadimma Et Al (2021)

From the table above it indicated that apart from low representation of women in elective position, there has not been a significant improvement of women representation in elective positions. The table proved that there has not been any women representation in Presidential, Vice Presidential and governorship positions (except a situation where a woman was the governor in few months). Therefore, it indicated that no women have been elected in the above positions (President, Vice President and governors).

In the senate, women representation was 3 representing 2.75% in 1999. In 2003, the women representation was 4 representing 3.7% of the 109 members while in 2007 women representation in the senate increased to 8 members representing 7.33%. There was decrease in women representation in 2011 where women comprised of 7 members representing 6.4% of the 109 members. It further increased to 8 members (7.33%) in 2015 and remains constant in 2019 where 8 women (7.33%) were elected in the Senate.

In the House of Representative, 12 women representing 3.33% were elected in 1999 while in 2003 women representation in the lower chamber was 21 representing 5.83%. In 2007, women representation further rose to 23 (6.23%) and 26 (7.2%) in 2011. In 2015, women representation declined to 14 representing 3.8% of the 360 members. It further declined to 11 representing 360 members in 2019 election.

In the State House of Assembly, women representation was 12 representing 1.2% in 1999 while in 2003 it increases to 38 members representing 3.84% of 990 members. In 2007, it increased to 54 women representing 5.45% of 990 members that were elected. Women representation increased to 68 (6.9%) in 2011 and later decreased in 2015 where the number of women were 43 representing 4.34% of the members while in 2019 till present, women representation is 45 representing 4.54% of 990 members. Furthermore, the table below shows women representation in ministerial position

Year	Seats Available	Number and % of Women Appointed
1999	47	7(14.9%)
2003	47	7(14.9%)
2007	27	7(25.9%)
2011	42	12(28.9%)
2015	30	6(20%)
2019	43	7(16.3%)

Table 2: Women Representation in Ministerial Position from 1999-2019
Source: Oguadimma Et Al, 2021

From the table above, it proved that women representation in ministerial position was 7 representing 14.9% of 47 seats available in both 1999 and 2003. In 2007, the women representation was 7 which represents 25.9% of the 27 seats available. In 2011, the number of women representations increased to 12 which represents 28.9% of 42 seats available while in 2015 the level of women representation declined to 6 which represent 20% of the seats available. From 2019 to present the level of women representation is 7 which further declined by percentage of 16.3% of 43 seats available.

So, looking at the results of both table 1 (which deals with women representation in elective positions) and table 2 (which deals with ministerial positions), we conclude that there is no improvement on the level of women representation in political positions in Nigeria. This is because there is still evidence of continued decline of percentage of women in both elective and ministerial positions. Typical example in table 1 which shows decline of women representation in House of Representative in 2015 (3.8%) and 2019 (3.1%) and state House of Assembly in 2015(4.34%). Also, the rate of women representation in ministerial position declined to 2% in 2015 and further to 16.3% in 2019.

3.2. Women Representation and Affirmative Action in Nigeria

Here, we will look at whether women representation in Nigeria has realized the 35% affirmative action. The table below shows if the current level of women representation in political position has translated towards achieving the affirmative action.

	Positions in 2019	Percentage of Women Representation	Realization of 35% Affirmative Action (Yes or No)
1	Senate	8 (7.33%)	No
2	House of Rep.	11 (3.1%)	No
3	Governors	0 (0.00%)	No
4	Deputy Governor	4 (11.5%)	No
5	State House of Assembly	45 (4.54%)	No
6	Ministerial position	7 (16.3)	No

Table 3: The Level of Women Representation in 2019 and Affirmative Action
Source: Centre for Democracy and Development (2021), Stakeholders Democracy
Network (2020), Oguadimma Et Al (2021)

The above study indicates that women representation in the current elective positions and ministerial position did not reach or reflect the 35% affirmative action. It proved that the percentage of women representation in Senate (7.33%), House of Representative (3.1%), Governors (0%). Deputy Governors (11.5%), State House of Assembly (4.54%) and ministers (16.3%) is not up to the 35% affirmative action. Furthermore, it revealed that the percentage of women representation in elective and ministerial positions has not reached half of the 35% affirmative action. Therefore, the women representation in both elective and ministerial position is still far in realizing the affirmative action. So, the current level of women representation in Nigeria has not realized the 35% affirmative action.

3.3. Challenges to the Rise of Women Representation in Political Position in Nigeria

Despite several measures to encourage much participation of women in politics and improved women representation, women are to a large extent underrepresented in both elective and ministerial position. This is as result of several factors that had undermined the rise or improvement of women representation in political position. These factors are discussed below:

3.3.1. Low Number of Women Aspirants in Election

The difficulty of improving the number or percentage of women participation in elective position in Nigeria is associated with the low level of women participation in terms of contesting for elective positions. Studies proved that lesser number of women that participated as candidate in election invariably led to low women representation (Centre for Democracy and Development, CDD, 2021; SDN, 2020). Report shows that 2970 women were on the electoral ballot which represents 11.36% of nominated candidates while 70 women representing 4.71% of elected officials were elected (CDD, 2021). The table below shows the number and percentage of female candidate who contested in various positions in 2019 elections.

Positions	Female Candidates	Percentage of Women	Total Number of Candidates	Number of Female Elected
State House of Assembly	1,825	13%	14,583	37
Senate	235	12%	1,904	6
House of Representative	533	11%	4,680	11
Deputy Governor	275	11%	2412	4

Table 4: The Number and Percentage of Female Candidate for 2019 Elections
Source: Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN), 2020

The above table proved that there was low percentage of women that contested election in 2019 election. In the position of State House of Assembly, Senate, House of Representative and Deputy Governorship, the percentage of women contestants was not more than 13%. It proved that there were 1,825 females representing 13% of number of candidates for State House of Assembly, 235 female candidates representing 12% of the total number of candidates for Senate. Furthermore 533 female candidates which are 11% of the total number of candidates that contested for House of Reps. While 275 females' candidates representing 11% of the number of candidates contested for deputy governorship. Therefore, the lesser number of female candidates standing to be elected in elective position will produce lesser number of female representations in elected position.

3.3.2. Wrong Perception about Women in Politics

This is another factor that contributes to low women representation in political position. There exist common perceptions that women in politics are irresponsible mothers, prostitutes, women that will not respect their husbands, bad wives etc. These perceptions most times deter women from participating in politics (mainly in contesting election) and prevent the support of most people in the society (Oguadimma et al, 2021; SDN, 2020; Modupe et al, 2019). According to the report by SDN (2020) 'there are many negative labels associated with women who participate in politics in Nigeria. There are general perception and negative stereotype that female politicians are promiscuous and, if married, will be unfaithful to their partner. They are viewed as irresponsible and shameless for 'abandoning' their homes at strange hours to attend the midnight political party meetings, and are accused of prostitution if seen out during these hours.' (p. 4).

This is further affirmed by the empirical study conducted by Oguadimma et al (2021) that men and women have wrong perception about women in politics which they see women as prostitute, stubborn and disrespectful which discourage women participation and representation in politics in Enugu state.

3.3.3. Lack of Family Support

Apart from the stereotype or wrong perception of women in politics, another issue is that of poor family support. This discourages women to contest for any political positions. The desire of women to run in an election is often contested by their families and husbands (SDN, 2020). Many women are discouraged from running in an election by their family members because they are dependent on their husband for financial support. Another reason for discouragement is the women's husband's fear on electoral violence, infidelity and men dependent on their wives for fulfillment of domestic duties. According to the study by Stakeholders Democracy Network (SDN) (2020, p. 19)

> Husbands and other family members play a crucial role in whether or not a woman will decide to aspire and seek elected political office. Our research in all three states indicated that women with support from family tend to be more active in politics. One female participant even noted that losing is not as painful as when a husband and other family members intensely oppose a woman who has interest in vying for an elected position.

3.3.4. Insecurity/Electoral Violence

Studies have indicated that the ongoing or current violence and other forms of insecurity in Nigerian election serve as deterrence to both female aspirants and voters (SDN, 2020; Oguadimma et al, 2021; Oluyemi, 2016). A report proved that 'many women are fearful of participating in elections due to high levels of electoral violence which are known to occur, particularly in the Niger Delta' (SDN, 2020, p.19). The research by Stakeholders for Democracy Network (2020) in the Niger Delta region stated that:

> Many women are fearful of participating in elections due to the high levels of electoral violence which are known to occur, particularly in the Niger Delta. Male politicians are known to support armed groups to perpetuate violence for them during election periods, and candidates themselves are also often targets in these attacks. Participants noted that female politicians and candidates are not as close to groups that are able to perpetrate violence as compared to male politicians. This puts women at a disadvantage to men when running for election, as violence and intimidation around election day are well known to heavily influence the final outcome.

Furthermore, Oluyemi (2016) noted that 'female aspirants of various political parties cannot withstand political violence; therefore, women participation in politics is drastically reduced' (p.12).

3.3.5. Male Domination of Party Politics or Political Party Structure

Men do not only dominate the political party structure but also the leadership positions of such political party. The incidence deters women from contesting election because male will prefer to select their counterparts for representing them in election. Therefore, male dominance in political party does not provide opportunities for most women to contest in general election (SDN, 2020; Oguadimma et al., 2021; Modupe et al, 2019). According to the study of Oguadimma et al. (2021, p. 71) 'male political dominance using some suppressive tools like financial inducement, god fatherism, political violence, formation of men's clique within the political cycle' deters women participation as contestants and reduce women representation in Enugu State.

3.3.6. Lack of Support by Large Population of Women

Another challenge towards the improvement of women representation in elective positive is the issue of lack of support by their fellow female counterparts. This may be as a result of hatred, envy, lack of trust, disbelief on women's capability etc. by their women counterparts (Oguadimma et al, 2021). A study shows that even when there is presence of female candidates to vote for, women often prefer to vote for male politicians at the expense of their fellow women. Also, female politicians in studies carried out viewed that they do not receive support from their fellow women during elections (SDN, 2020).

3.3.7. Issue of Financial Problem

Poor access to finance/funds is another challenge to the increase in women representation in elective position (Kelly 2019; SDN, 2020). This is because competing for political position through election required huge financial resources in Nigeria and most of these women that desire for these positions have problem in sourcing for fund despite the waivers given to women by some political parties (Oluyemi, 2016; SDN 2020). In the same vein, Kelly (2019) research stated that:

> The nomination forms required to stand for office cost the equivalent of tens of thousands of pounds. Although some parties provided free forms for women... this has not had significant impact on the number of women contesting. Such waivers appear not to be adequate antidotes to the other extraneous but heavy incidental expenses that are peculiar to the Nigerian type of democracy.

Furthermore, the report by SDN (2020) maintained that issue of finance to compete in an election affect all genders but it tends to affect the women more than the men counterparts and on average women do not have the same access to funds as compared to the men. Furthermore, the research conducted by SDN (2020) revealed that participants interviewed viewed that 'men are also more likely than women to receive sponsorship for an election, as many sponsors are reluctant to sponsor women whom they consider as less marketable compared to men' (p. 20). In addition, the study conducted by Omenka (2017) revealed that there is a strong relationship between poverty rate and political participation among women in Nigeria. That is the higher the poverty rate of female leads to lower level of women participation and representation in governance.

3.3.8. Poor Education/High Rate of Illiteracy among Women

Low access to quality education remains a challenge to women in Nigeria. This adversely affects their opportunity to contest or occupy political positions (Oguadimma et al, 2021; Oluyemi, 2016; Omenka, 2017). Therefore, the more women lack the access to education, the more women are less qualified to contest or occupy sensitive political positions. The study conducted by Omenka (2017) proved that there is a strong relationship between education and political participation among women in governance. Therefore, the lower the literacy rate, the lower the level of women participation in politics and representation in political positions. Furthermore, the study conducted by Oguadimma et al (2021) observed that lack of the girl child education is a major factor that denied women basic qualification for active participation and women representation in politics in Enugu State.

3.3.9. Cultural or Religions Factors

The cultures and religious factors are well known factors that undermine women representation in politics. The cultural norms and practices have entrenched a feeling of inferiority in women and place them at a disadvantage (Oluyemi, 2016; Abubakar & Ahmad, 2014; Egwu & Eme, 2016; Esomuchi & Akoji, 2016). About 270 different tribes in Nigeria have the belief that women position is at home and women have been regarded as a property and house wife (Esomuchi & Akoji, 2016; Iheanacho, 2018). In particular, the women in the Muslim sect find it difficult to participate in politics because of the seclusion of women which disallows them to move unwillingly (Esomuchi & Akoji, 2016; Akpan, 2015). According to Oluyemi (2016, p. 12) 'both Christianity and Islam do not accord women much role in public life and same is obtainable in most cultural values, where women are seen culturally as quite submissive and image of virtue. However, they are not to be seen in public domain' That is why Mbakwem (2019, p. 23) stated that 'the customary positions of many societies are biased by subjecting women to men undermining their self-esteem.'

4. Conclusion

The role of women in the society has been of relevance for national development. The high rate of women representation is needed for realization of gender equality, equity, women empowerment, inclusive governance and

national development. Consolidation of democracy and achievement of sustainable development must require adequate representation of women in governance.

This paper critically analyzed the women representation in politics with reference to political positions (elective and ministerial positions). It revealed that presently, there has not been an improvement of women representation in political positions in Nigeria. This is evident in decline of the percentage of women representation in State House of Assembly, Senate, House of Representatives, Governorship and Deputy Governorship positions. It also proved that the level of women representation has not reflected or realized the 35% affirmative action in Nigeria.

The lack of improvement of the rate of women representation in political positions and failure to achieve the 35% affirmative action is as a result of certain factors identified, which include: lack of support of women by female counterparts, insecurity/electoral violence, low level of women contestant/aspirants in election, lack of family support, wrong perception of women in politics, problem of funding, low level of education among most women and male dominance in party politics. To solve these challenges, there is need to adopt adequate steps or measures towards increasing the rate of women representation in governance or political position.

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations are put forward by this paper

- There is need for adequate political education and sensitization of the public on the need to support women desiring to compete in election.
- Necessary security should be provided before, during and after elections in order to prevent electoral violence and intimidation. This will enable women to freely participate in election without fear.
- The issue of high rate of male dominance in party politics should be drastically reduced. This should be done by given some qualified women access to top leadership positions of the political parties.
- There is need to encourage or improve on women access to formal education. If there are more educated women, the more likely the level of women participation in politics and women representation in governance will improve or increase.
- There is need for adequate political will and commitment by the government and political parties to adequately implement the 35% affirmative action and encourage women or give women more access to political positions.
- The independent national electoral commission (INEC) should made it mandatory or compel political parties to adhere strictly to the 35% affirmative action in selection of candidates for general election and leadership position in the party.
- Government and non-governmental organization should develop partnership between women's organization and men that are committed to gender equality in order to increase the rate of women representation in governance.
- There is need to build formidable alliance of women support and advocacy group including NGOs and grassroot women organizations towards coordinating support for women contesting in elections.

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