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## WOMEN AND POLITICAL MARGINALIZATION IN NIGERIA

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**Abstract;** The word marginalization is a social process of becoming or being relegated to the fringe of society. Marginalization at the individual level results in an individual's exclusion from meaningful participation in society. An example of marginalization at the community level is the marginalization of women. Women are excluded from the labour force and their work in the home is not economically valued and compensated. Feminists' theorists argued that women should equally participate in the labour force, both in the public and private sectors. Today, it is argued that women are still marginalized from executive positions and continue to earn less than men at upper management cadres. In this study, the concept of marginalization and women political participation is critically examined. It also examines the steps and procedures being followed in order to encourage women to participate in politics during the last democratic dispensation of the Jonathan administration; for example, the Women for Change Initiative and the Women Empowerment Programme. The study examines the problems faced by women during elections in Nigeria due to violence; harassment and electoral malpractices and the level of performance of various women elected into various offices.

**Keywords:** *Marginalization, Women participation, Political participation, Political administration*

### INTRODUCTION

That woman is presently discriminated against and largely marginalized in many fields, especially in politics, is a known fact.

Also, recognized as a matter of good economics and governance, is the need to align the energies, expectations and aspirations of women to national ideals. As early as the colonial era, the marginalization of women has been a standard practice in Nigeria's Patriarchal Political System until 1976; women were not even allowed to vote in Northern Nigeria. This marginalization has continued into the 4<sup>th</sup> republic. The negligible presence of women in institutionalized politics is equally apparent in their low participation as party executives, elected officials, and political appointees (Olugbemi, 2004). Democratization in Nigeria since 1999 has created openings that politicize gender identity; there remains both a dearth of political opportunities for women and severe self-reinforcing constraints on gender participation (Vanguard, 2011). Though the number is increasing, women remain grossly under represented. Nigerian women have encountered a number of problems while venturing into politics.

There is large scale discrimination from the men folk, both in voting for candidates and in allocating political offices, whether government or party offices. More often than not, men constitute a larger percentage of party membership and this tends to affect women when it comes to selecting or electing candidates for elections, since men are usually the majority in the political party set-up. They tend to dominate the party hierarchy and are therefore at advantage in influencing the Party's Internal Politics. In the 2003 election, the first set of women senators were displaced, but three other women attained office as senators. Out of the 12 women who served in the house, four lost their seats and eight were re-elected. The number of women nearly doubled as 13 additional women were elected into the house. Nigeria is a male dominated chauvinistic society stifled by culture, tradition and social rankings that make the Indian caste system look feeble. There is simply no place in Nigeria today for a woman to head a country of 170 million, including men who often see women as second class citizens or single objects of desire. Social, economic, cultural and religious factors are largely responsible for

women's marginalization in politics, particularly in the Muslim dominated part of the society, where politics is seen as men's exclusive preserve. Women are mostly seen as minority in a male-dominated sphere. While this increase in female political (or leadership) positions should be applied, gender equality in terms of female political representation is beyond numbers. Equality in numbers does not automatically translate into better policies for female citizens (Adeniyi, 2003).

The emphasis on quantity of women's participation in politics focusing on increasing female political participation is important, but so are women's effectiveness in political positions and their impact on decision making. Simply having females in the appropriate positions is not enough, as once in these positions women still face a variety of obstacles when promoting women's interests (Gurr, 1970). On the surface, equal political representation in numbers indicates a sense of gender equality, but women in Nigeria, as in the rest of sub-Saharan African, still face many struggles in this male dominated sphere, such as discrimination both in voting for candidates and in allocations of political offices, lack of adequate finance to effectively participate and views that stigmatize female politicians as loose. Over time, few women have maintained a prominent role in Nigerian politics, and so the place of women in Nigeria's political and social firmament has always been a strong one. Though, women have been relegated to the background on issues of overall development especially in developing nations like Nigeria. This is borne out of the sentimental attachments of feminine gender.

For anything good to happen to Nigeria, the women should be given greater opportunity to serve, as they constitute a larger portion of the national population. The women should be seen participating in decision-making processes of this country. It must be made clear that the Nigerian women are now more politically conscious. They now play active roles in the politics of Nigeria. This is so because they have been politically re-awakened. Although, they could be said to have

recorded appreciable measure of appreciated political fields of endeavour they are yet to produce a female president for the country. In April 2007, there were a total of 1,200 women aspirants to 1,532 offices, with 660 of them winning their primaries. 93 finally emerged as winners: Six deputy governors, nine senators, 27 national representatives and 52 in various state houses of assembly. There were also notable increases in the number of women holding cabinet and ministerial positions. Although it failed to fulfil its promise of 30% of cabinet positions for women, the Yar'Adua government did place seven women on these high offices. The April 2007 election also saw Nigeria record its first female speaker of the House, the Honourable Patricia Olubunmi Etteh (Vanguard, 2011).

Despite all these, Nigerian women have lagged behind in political power and decision making which is one of the key areas identified during the 1995 Beijing Conference. Nigerian women continue to oppose their continued marginalization in the political sphere. Rabi Musa, coordinator of the Women Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) told IPS news Agency that:

“Although it has been a decade of uninterrupted civilian rule, Nigerian women are still battling political marginalization where they are not given the chance to hold political office”.

In the same vein female politician, Maryam Jari told IPS that while “women constitute the majority of voters during elections; they are hardly given a level playing ground to actualize their dreams of active involvement in the politics of the country through elective offices”. In a bid to implement the 35% affirmative action provided for in Nigeria’s Gender Policy, gender activist and civil society organization such as the National Coalition on Affirmative Action have organized programmes of advocacy, training and research on affirmative to encourage female political participation. In some African countries, quota systems are being used to ensure women’s political appointments and institutional integration (Esew, 2003). The classic

example is Rwanda, which had 48.8 percent of seats in its lower house of parliaments held by women in 2003. Women in the Rwanda upper house are also guaranteed 30 percent of the seats (Vanguard, 2011). In Nigeria, shortly after Dr Goodluck Jonathan became president in May 2011, the first lady Dame Patience Jonathan launched the Women for Change Initiative, aimed at promoting women's participation in the political sphere, amongst other things, emphasize its need to mainstream Nigeria's political sphere. President Goodluck Jonathan promised women a 35 percent slot in his cabinet and he fulfilled his vow because it is his desire to ensure a level playing field in Nigeria by heading an administration where ethnicity, gender and religion do not hinder qualified persons from fulfilling their potential.

It is also the reason he ordered the admission of women to the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) for the first time in Nigeria history. In his "Women should brace up to be all they want to be in life as this administration will be an enabler of their progress". Goodluck Jonathan is the first president in Nigerian history to appoint women out of 41 ministers as member of his cabinet. Women who have set precedence in leadership positions are Obiageli Ezekwesili, late Dora Akunyili, former Director General of National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and control (NAFDAC) of Nigeria and former Nigerian minister of Information and Communication and Patricia Olubunmi Etteh the first female speaker of the House of Representatives.

Sixteen years of democracy in Africa's most populous nation and yet women are still secondary in Nigeria's male dominated political sphere. Over the years, gradual gains have been made in women's political sphere, but female political participation needs to go beyond numbers. The proportion of seats held by women in the National Parliament increased from 3.1 percent in 2000 to 7.5 percent in 2008 (Vanguard, 2011). After the 10 May 2001 elections, data from the National Centre for women Development showed that there were 9 female senators, compared to 4 in 2003. Also, there were 26 female

members in the House of Representatives, compared to 23 in 2003. Between 2006 and 2009, two women were appointed to the Supreme Court bench, while female Deputy Governors increased from 2 in 2003 to 6 in 2007. Despite these improvements, women are still under-represented in most levels of government and have little progress in attaining position at the decision-making levels. Data from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on April 2007 elections shows the high level of female marginalization in Nigerian politics. For example, of the 7,160 candidates that contested in the April 2007 elections, only 628 were women, 25 candidates vied for the office of the President and only one was a woman while 5 women contested for the office of the Vice-President. Also, only 9 of the 109 senators were women, while 25 of the 360 House of Representative members were women and there were only 54 female members of the state houses of Assemblies (Vanguard, 2011). Looking at Nigeria's 2011 presidential election, Sarah Jubril was the only female amongst the three presidential candidates for the 2011 People's Democratic Party (PDP) Presidential election primary – the other two were president Goodluck Jonathan and Former President Atiku Abubakar, this shows the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian Political system.

Women in Nigeria have far less money than men and even in politics there is a wide economic disparity between women and men, which gives men competitive political advantage over women because they are the ones with money to throw around and win votes. Women have always been discriminated against when it comes to politics; men have an upper hand than women. This is the belief that most people especially in developing countries like Nigeria.

### **Women Political Marginalization: An Overview**

In Nigeria, women political marginalization has been in existence as far back as during the colonial era. In some parts of the country, women were not given the chance to vote until 1976 (Gboyega, 2004). Women have always been seen to have low level of

participation in politics, despite the fact that there are a very large number of women in the country, which also increases by the day. Social, cultural and religious factors are largely responsible for the marginalization of women in Nigerian politics particularly in the Muslim dominated parts of the country where politics is seen as men's exclusive preserve. Nigerian politics is capital intensive as it requires spending large amount of money to organize and mobilize support to win an election. In Nigeria, female candidates rarely receive sponsorship from donors. Women in Nigeria are not as economically empowered as men.

In most communities, women are economically dependent on their husbands who control family income, even where women are allowed to engage in money making venture, their husbands control the purse. Due to the various types of culture and beliefs of different people in different parts of the country, most Nigerians believes that women are meant to be in the lower-class, while men should be in the upper-class which is a very wrong way of reasoning or belief to have about women generally. In some other countries such as Rwanda, women are given the opportunity to participate in politics and contest with men for various political posts (Olugbemi, 2004). In Nigeria, women are always seen or viewed in the aspect of being restricted to domestic affairs like taking care of the home, taking care of their husbands and kids. Some people believe that women are not supposed to be involved in politics because of the hard or difficult challenges they feel they will face during the contest, such as organizing political parties campaign programmes, conference and meetings. Yet some women are determined to participate in politics. This is because they believe they can do better than the men. They believe they can also face the challenges and come out with better results.

### **Conceptualizing the Term Marginalization**

The marginal man is one whom fate has condemned to live in two societies and in two not merely different but antagonistic cultures.

His mind is the crucible in which two different and refractory cultures may be said to melt and either wholly or in part fuses together (Oxford dictionary, 1998). Another example of individual marginalization is the exclusion of individuals with disabilities from the labour force. An employer's viewpoint about hiring individuals living with disabilities as jeopardizing productivity, increasing the rate of absenteeism, and creating more accidents in the workplace. Many communities experience marginalization, example is in Aboriginal communities. Marginalization of Aboriginal communities is a product of colonization. As a result of colonialism Aboriginal communities lost their land and were forced into destitute areas, lost their sources of income, and were excluded from the labour market.

Additionally, Aboriginal communities lost their cultures and values through forced assimilation and lost their rights in the society. Today various communities continue to be marginalized from society due to the development of practices, policies and programmes that "met the needs of marginalized groups themselves" (Wolff, 1969). Also, marginalization is connected to minority communities, when describing the concept of whiteness as maintaining and enforcing dormant norms and discourse.

### **Democracy as a Concept**

Democracy is an egalitarian form of government in which all the citizens of a nation together determine public policy, the laws and the actions of their state, requiring that all citizens (meeting certain qualifications) have an equal opportunity to express their opinion. In practice, democracy is the extent to which a given system approximates this ideal and a given political system is referred to as "a democracy" if it allows a certain approximation to ideal democracy (Gboyega, 2004). Although no country has ever granted all its citizens the right (i.e. including minors) to vote, most countries today hold regular elections based on egalitarian principles at least in theory. The most common system that is deemed "democratic" in the modern world is parliamentary democracy in which the voting



public takes part in elections and choose politicians to represent them in a legislative assembly. The members of the assembly then make decisions with a majority vote.

A purer form of direct democracy is that in which the voting public makes direct decisions or participates directly in the political process. Elements of direct democracy exist on a local level and on exceptions on national level in many countries, though these systems coexist with representative assemblies. The term comes from the Greek word (demokrai a "rule of the people". Which was coined from (demos) "people" and (kratia) "rule", in the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC to denote the political systems then existing in some Greek city-states, notably Athens following a popular uprising in 508BC. Other cultures since Greece have significantly contributed to the evolution of democracy such as Ancient Rome, Europe and North and South America. The concept of representative democracy arose largely from ideas and institutions that developed, during the European Middle Ages and the Age of Enlightenment and in the American and French Revolutions. The right to vote has been expanded in many jurisdictions over time from relatively narrow groups (such as wealthy men of a particular ethnic group), with New Zealand being the first nation to grant universal suffrage for all its citizens in 1983 (Gboyega, 2004).

Elements considered essential to democracy include Freedom of political expression, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press, so that citizens are adequately informed and able to vote according to their own best interest as they see them. The term "democracy" is often used as shorthand for liberal democracy, which may include elements such as political pluralism; equality before the law; the right to petition elected officials for redress of grievances; due process; civil liberties; human rights, and elements of civil society outside the government. Democracy is often confused with the republic form of government. In some definitions of "republic", a republic is a form of

democracy. Other definitions see "republic" as a separate and unrelated term.

### **Nexus between Democracy and Development**

The causal link between democracy and development is a contentious issue. For most of the twentieth century, conventional wisdom has held that autocracies are better able to marshal the resources necessary to promote economic development than are democracy to take hold and flourish in a country. When the countries of the world are examined as a whole, democracies do perform better in terms of economic development than do autocracies or mixed policies. There has been no advantage for autocracies over democracies for the past 40 years in terms of development (Gboyega, 2004). Both developing democracies and non-democracies have grown at approximately 15% of GDP per capita per year. When East Asia is removed from the sample, democracies have actually performed better growing at 0.5% per capita year faster than autocracies and mixed polities. More than simply growing at a faster rate, democracies have outperformed autocracies in the consistency of their growth. An analysis of the 80 worst economic performers of the last 40 years reveals that all but three have been autocracies. In addition, democracies have performed substantially better than autocracies in the social welfare dimension of development (life expectancy, child mortality, literacy, etc.) – in some cases up to 50% better.

It is important to note that there has been a variety of development experiences among democracies this can be attributed to the differing success with which any country can develop institutions of accountability – checks on the Chief Executive separation of politics from the civil service, independence of the judiciary, freedom of the press, and independence of the private sector. For example, which are the foundations of democratic systems of governance? Both autocracies and democracies that have developed these institutions have had better rates of economic development than countries without well-established institutions of accountability. For this

reason, there are some autocracies, the East Asian "tigers" fall into this category. Despite the overall positive performance of democracies over autocracies in development, there has been no preference given to democracies over the past 40 years in the dispersal of development assistance. The same has been true with debt relief, even though new democracies –countries that have recently transitioned from autocratic ideal–have often inherited debt that is as high as 23% of GDP, a figure higher than that will lead to lack of a "democracy dividend" which can underrate popular support for democracy. Indeed, 70% of countries which experienced democratic backtracking over the past 20 years faced periods of economic stagnancy before backsliding.

### **Democracy and Elections in Nigeria**

Democracy thrives on the principle that power belongs to the people. The people exercise power through their elected representative whose mandates must be subject to periodic renewal on terms dictated by the laws of the land in conformity with conventional democratic principles and perceived inadequacies of the legislations and/or their implementation, review normally becomes imperative. In this context, the Nigerian reform process has been seen as an opportunity to strengthen mass involvement and participation in the democratic process by removing existing barriers in such a way that it leads to vast improvements in registration and voting practices, essentially to guarantee the voting rights of all Nigerians and ensure that the people's vote counts.

Nigeria operates a weak electoral system that cannot guarantee any form of modern day democracy. The inability to conduct credible elections in the country has been attributed to the long period of military rule, coupled with weak democratic institutions and processes and a host of other historical factors, which have led to the emergence of political culture characterized by electoral violence, monetized politics, low political accountability, abuse and personalization of power, general apathy towards elections and low

participation of critical segments of the society, especially women and youths.

### **Gender and Electoral reform in Nigeria (1999–2010)**

Historical analysis of constitutions and electoral laws and process in Nigeria are incontrovertibly gender insensitive. Beginning from 1922, when the first constitution in Nigeria was made to the 1999 constitution, which purportedly gave legitimacy to the fourth republic, aspirations and concerns of women, who represent majority of the population, have been undisputedly discarded. But since the return of civilian rule in 1999, there seem to be a lot of momentums gathered around the need for constitutional and electoral reforms. This development has also challenged the women folks in the country, with several women groups lending their voices to the electoral and constitutional reform discourse. Their active participation is dated back to the first attempt at reviewing the 1999 constitution by President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration in October 1999, when the first presidential committee was inaugurated to do a comprehensive constitutional and electoral review (Olugbemi, 2004).

The committee had twenty four members out of which four were women. The report submitted by the committee had some gender friendly provisions, to wit, a proposal that the federal character commission be replaced with equal opportunities commission with a more expanded and intensive mandate, also proposed that women should have a choice in claiming their own state of origin or their husbands in political arrangements, the third major amendment proposed by the committee was the substitution of the word "sex" as it refers to the feminine in the constitution with the word "gender" on political parties, it also included gender as one of the grounds for which discrimination in terms of membership of the party shall not be permissible. Unfortunately, the report was later jettisoned.

After the re-election of Olusegun Obasanjo in 2003, he again convoked a National Political Reform Conference (NPRC) in 2005, to address the challenges of Nigerian political system. Unfortunately, in terms of representation the conference did not attempt to give equal opportunities to all Nigerians. There were only 30 women out of about 400 delegates. Despite the obvious gender gaps in representation of women, the NPRC significantly mainstreamed gender issue in its outcomes. This attempt at political reforms also failed. Nigeria then ran into 2007 elections without a viable constitution but a weak electoral law adopted a year earlier in 2006. As it has been widely acknowledged, the 2007 elections were replete with allegations of irregularities, electoral malpractices, violence and various degrees of disruptions. One would then think that the Electoral Reform Committee (ERC) inaugurated by the late president Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua on the 28th August 2007 with the mandate to review and ensure equality and standard general elections would address some of the pertinent issues of Nigeria's electoral democracy. The committee, headed by a reputable retired Chief Justice of the Federation, Justice Muhammed Bello Uwais, went round the country taking memoranda and oral presentations from Nigerians. It also met several women groups agitating. For the inclusion of women issues and concerns in the committee's recommendation had been adjudged as one of the best in the history of constitutional and electoral reforms in Nigeria.

The report of the committee acknowledged the voices of women and their proposal for gender democracy and made some gender sensitive recommendations worthy of note. For example (i) on the composition of the independent National Electoral Commission (INEC): It recommended that the chairman and the Deputy should not be of the same gender and out of 6 geo-graphical representations, two (2) must be women. In addition, there should be a woman representative from the women's organization. (ii) On political parties' registration, regulation and regulatory commission, the ERC recommended that out of 6 geo-political zones

representations should maintain 20% women in the membership of its governing bodies. (iii) On enhancing internal democracy in the political parties (Olugbemi, 2004).

The ERC recommended that political parties should give more attention to the nomination of women and youths as candidates and ensure that women have equal access to leadership opportunities within party organization. The report also recommended that political parties shall nominate for the proportional representation at least 30% female candidates and 20% physically challenged candidates for legislative elections. The ERC report was subsequently submitted to the National Assembly for consideration. The National Assembly passed the 2010 Electoral law and concluded the review of the constitution. The only probable gender friendly proposal by the National Assembly was the new clause allowing for independent candidacy which was later thrown out by the State Houses of Assembly. This development shows the failure of the Nigerian state once again to put a legal frame work in place to support a gender friendly electoral system.

### **Nigerian Women and Politics**

In West Africa, Nigerian women are taking the lead in pressurizing government to implement up the 30% quota for women. Regardless of the social and political advancement made, women generally continue to be exploited in every society in the world, in such a way that their social and political advances are met with stiff resistance. At the side meetings of the commonwealth People's forum held in Nigeria, government and civil society were urged to take concrete actions utilizing opportunities to promote affirmative action for women at levels of representation in government. Nigerian women have also advocated in addition to this that a proportion of jobs in civil service be reserved for them. In Nigeria, like in other parts of the world, women are at least half the country's population of over 130 million people, yet this numerical strength of women does not automatically translate to increase in women's representation in

governance or decision-making position and increase in the representation of women's interests or concerns in governance. Whereas in South Africa, women are now pushing for equal representation on the political candidature list (one woman for every man). In Nigeria, resistance to women is still very wide spread. Commenting on this, Nana Tankoh of Open Society Initiative of West Africa (OSIWA), said:

*"Affirmative Action is resisted at community level by traditional and religious leaders, there is resistance in political parties where women are not engaged (in the centre of power) where the lists are prepared. Men feel that the entrance of women into the political arena will steal the political spotlight from them."*

Nigeria cannot claim to be a democratic country until there is visible evidence in practical terms, a radical turn around in the condition of women generally and that they have been empowered to have access to all aspects of governance as equal partners with their male counterparts. By being excluded from key positions in political party organs, the tradition of women as house wives whose place are in the kitchen and not the political arena is being portrayed and perpetuated. If the hallmark of a democratic society is puerility of expressed opinions and contributions by those living within it, then the participation of women in leadership position ought to be valued and encouraged, for democracy will only be democracy, when men and women as equal partners deliberate upon the national policies and legislations. The sooner men begin to open up the corridors of power to women the better for our democratic process (Obasanjo, 2002).

The continued exclusion of women from the decision-making position will slow down the pace of development of the democratic process and stunt economic growth of the nation because men govern most political institutions which they use to further their

interest and will not promote women or women's issues. When policy decisions and laws are being made for the benefit of all members of the society, the extent to which the government body is able to carry everybody along will determine the degree to which its decision will be appropriate and meet the needs of the entire nation. Proper representation of women and the inclusion of their perspective into the decision-making process will inevitably lead to solutions that are viable and satisfy a broader section of the society. To conceptualize the issues which will affect citizen's lives without taking into cognizance the gender perspective that will involve women and men in decision-making process is the hallmark of any genuine democratic framework. This is why democracy, by definition cannot afford to be gender blind. It must strive to achieve equality and representation of women and men in any decision-making process to bring about the radical change in structures of power. Since independence in 1960, women's participation in Nigerian politics has been only in the shadowy fringes. Yet when it is time for election, women are mobilized to vote. Women are considered only good for dancing, after which they are given insignificant gifts like bags of rice, salt, magi cubes etc.

The whole essence of encouraging women to dance is to distract their attention from power and to keep them perpetually in subordinate position. They seem to forget that, it is a woman's fundamental right to participate in governance. Increased participation of women in governance is being threatened by practices. The political field is very uneven; there is a structural plan to perpetually side-line women from the political space (Gurr, 1970). Women are marginalized in both elective and political appointments. Political parties fail to nominate them as candidates and the electorate, greatly influenced by gender stereotypes in the society, end up voting for men. Political scientists have attributed this low participation of women in politics to various factors, ranging from cultural inhibitions which are perpetuated and reinforced by patriarchal norms that relegate women to the margin and require them to be seen and not heard, cultural



views about women continue to devalue their dignity and worth and the society see women as unequal to men. The political playing field is uneven and not conducive to women's participation. Women who enter politics find the political, cultural and social environment often not women-friendly. Political violence has taken centre stage in Nigerian politics and many politicians in the country today rely on this strategy for attaining electoral victory, this scares many women off and presents the political environment as very hostile (Wolff, 1969).

Political brutality is employed to distract women's attention from participating in politics, sometimes they are beaten up, their family members are threatened, their marriages are set up for destruction, and these strategies scare women from the political race. Women are limited to their political powerlessness (Vanguard, 2011). In Nigeria today, participation in politics involves huge financial investment because it is assumed that electoral victory amounts to a poverty eradication initiative for the victor as victory guarantees access to the national treasury for looting. This therefore has made attaining in elective or appointive position in government highly competitive and nearly out of reach to women, for women do not have equal opportunities as men to accumulate wealth and increase their economic base.

Family responsibility has also been seen as one of the main impediments to women's participation in politics, most of the family responsibilities fall on the women as gender division of labour in our society encourages men to relinquish all domestic chores to women. This constitutes an obstacle to political activism. Other practices that hinder women's participation in politics include nocturnal meetings, god-fatherism, name calling, old boys' network, and religious equity within the apparatus of governance (Karl, 1968). While the Nigerian government has ratified a number of international instruments to

promote women in politics, none has been domesticated; this in itself is a major hindrance to participation.

Cultural and traditional practices subjecting women to male dominance have hindered women's progress in achieving gender equality in politics. They are confronted with several barriers, like conflict, intimidation, stereotypes by society, negative image of women involved in politics and lack of support from the electorate. In Nigeria, women politicians confront a masculine model of politics. In most cases, they lack the political party support and have no access to quality education and training to enter politics (Adeniyi, 2003). Men have argued that women naturally are apolitical; this is not true as women in contemporary times as in the past have been known to do exploit political. Margaret Ekpo, Gambo Sawaba, Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, Aba and Ibio-bio women in 1929 war, etc. were very active politically. The privileging of men by the colonial administration and marginalization of women empowered men to the detriment of women from the political space in Nigeria. The colonial administration simply swept aside previous female political structures in the society, replacing them with completely male structures and positions. Their masculinity policies gradually eroded the spaces women once occupied during the pre-colonial era and enabled men to subvert the political system (Esew, 2003).

However, we must not forget the fact that a number of women lack the confidence needed to lead, they have imbibed the traditional belief that men are born leaders and as such do not stand a chance against them at the polls, so why contest? They ask. The myth that women are their own enemies is often used to discourage women from political participation. A very vital political weapon which is working against women is the lack of interest by the media in giving female politician adequate coverage. The media has failed to project the contributions and potentials of women politicians. They would rather portray women as beauticians, fashion designers, movie stars, lovers, good and bad wives, husband snatchers, witches, diabolical,

wicked, fashion conscious, witches; good teachers and nurses, thereby perpetuating the already existing stereotypes in the society (Esew, 2003). On the other hand, women have not come to appreciate the full importance of media relations. They do not understand that investing in media coverage is one major toll the men have used to keep themselves ahead of them. Good media coverage goes a long way to winning elections.

In recent times political scientists have cited sexism as a major obstacle on the way of women's political advancement. Studies have shown that the military administration breed sexism in the political culture of the country. It was so deeply rooted in the military regime that women devaluing attitude were fostered, in a male dominated, male-oriented military environment. All these obstacles combine to enhance the invisibility of women in the political centre stage. The fourth Republic, which began in 1999, ushered in an era of little respite of those who had prayed, lobbied, canvassed for better political empowerment for women. Women participated more actively at the level of party elections in 1999. With all the cries for enforcing Affirmative Action, only less than five percent of the elective positions at the Federal, State and Local government levels were occupied by women between 1999 and 2003 (Olugbemi, 2004).

In the power structure, the higher the pyramid of power, the lower the participation of women, President Olusegun Obasanjo tried to correct this by appointing during his first tenure 9 women as ministers and advisers out of a total of 44. States like Ogun and few others did not have a single female commissioner in the first lap of the fourth Republic. Relatively 2003 brought better deals for women although there was no remarkable difference, even when most of the political parties waived the levies imposed on aspirants for women; the response of female politicians was not so commensurate with the potential of that opening. Two women contested for the presidency while two went for Vice Presidential slot. None of them was elected.

According to the spokesperson of the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), Comrade Moshood Erubami stated while addressing a press conference.

“The present state of democratic governance in Nigeria gives us serious cause to worry. Instead of making progress, democratic governance appears to be in crises if not in danger as a result of many factors in the country which include the following: the state of insecurity in the country, lack of institutional independence in INEC, high level of corruption, interference with the Judiciary, killing of electoral reform process undemocratic local government system, lawlessness and lack of internal democracy in Nigeria’s political parties, growing rate of poverty in the country, and marginalization of women, youths and persons with disability in the political process”.

On the on-going insecurity in the country, TMG said that the government has failed, saying “under the Goodluck Jonathan civilian based governance regime, innocent citizens are being killed, maimed, robbed, raped and kidnapped on daily basis”. The security agencies are not able to curb the criminal activities of the armed robbers, kidnapers, militants, assassins and most recently, the terrorist activities of the Boko Haram group. Today most Nigerians live in fear. Various governments in Nigeria are begging armed groups and persons who have violated the sanctity of lives of many Nigerians to come and embrace amnesty. The right to life guaranteed in section 33 of the constitution imposes a duty on the government to save life. The Federal government has failed woefully in this regard. The TMG recommended that the government should as a matter of urgency, revisit and implement the Uwais panel report “so as to provide a level playing field for 2015 general elections Government should play by the rule of law by respecting the independence of judiciary, and the

National Assembly. Any member of INEC board who is one way or the other affiliated to political party should be sacked as a step towards guaranteeing the independence of Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC).

### **Historical Review of Women Political Marginalization in Nigeria**

In the history of Nigeria, cultural factors have been a serious source of problems for the development of women politically and have continued to affect the development and prominence of Nigerian women in their roles in politics. The country has governments run by men at all levels, not because there are no women fit to fill the positions but because most women think of political participation as hopeless for them. Among the factors inhibiting women to vote or contest in elections is lack of information about politics and politicians. Because most women in Nigeria dwell in rural areas and their votes are needed to ensure their full participation in politics there is a need for government to find ways in which women can be informed about and encouraged to participate fully in election. Discrimination against women is defined by Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979 as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex, which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women. In Nigeria, awareness about the role of women in development gained momentum in the latter half of the 1980s (Vanguard, 2011). Awareness was further enhanced in 1995 as a result of the effective participation of Nigerian women in the international conference on women in Beijing, China. In spite of these efforts, it is appropriate to state that the role of Nigerian women in development has not been sufficiently emphasized. In highlighting the Nigerian experience, three periods namely, the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial, is briefly looked at.

During the pre-colonial era, Nigerian women contributed to the sustenance of the kin groups. Pre-colonial Nigerian economy was

basically at a subsistence level, and Nigerian women participated effectively in the rural economy. Apart from being mothers and wives and taking charge of the domestic sector, women contributed substantially to the production and distribution of goods and services. In the agricultural sector, women farmed alongside their husbands and children. In South Eastern Nigeria, women also took part in the production of palm oil and palm kernel. They also participated in local and long distance trade in different parts of Nigeria and were fully involved in the procurement and sale of various food items and related commodities. Women in pre-colonial Nigeria were fully involved in food processing, for example, fish drying (especially in the coastal areas of Calabar, Oron and the Niger Delta Area), garri processing and so on.

In Eastern Nigeria, the women of Okposi, Uburu and Yala were very active in salt production. Women were engaged in pottery making especially in Afikpo in present day Abia State, and in weaving. In Northern Nigeria, even women in purdah were involved in food processing and also trade with the aid of their children. Most often, these women supplied the means of sustenance for entire households. Pre-colonial Nigerian women also provided health care and spiritual services, extensively; most traditional religions feature females as goddesses. Most goddesses in Nigeria were portrayed as ruler goddesses, fertility goddesses and earth goddesses. In the Niger Delta area, women provided music, song and dances required during religious activities. Women also officiated as Priestesses, diviners, healers, traditional birth attendants, and often times as custodians of sanctuaries for gods and goddesses (Adeniyi, 2003). The legal status of Nigerian women in pre-colonial times needs highlighting. Under the pre-colonial customary laws in most Nigerian societies, women were considered free adults. At the same time, certain limitations were imposed which subordinated them to male authority. Women had independent access to income. Since land was usually owned communally, whoever worked or tilled the land, whether male or female, derived the benefits. Nevertheless, women in many societies

could not inherit land. Education in pre-colonial times was functional. It enabled women to obtain a skill in order to earn a living.

As regards politics, women in pre-colonial Nigeria were an integral part of the political set up of their communities. Most often, they carried out separate functions from the men, these functions were fully complementary. In pre-colonial Bornu, for instance, women played active parts in the administration of the State. They held very important offices in the royal family, including the offices of the Megira (the Queen mother) and the Gumon (the first wife of the Mai or King) (Olugbemi, 2004). Women also played a very significant role in the political history of ancient Zaria. The modern Zaria was founded in the first half of the 16th century; by a woman called Queen Bakwa Turuku. She had a daughter called Amina who later succeeded her as Queen. Queen Amina was a great and powerful Warrior. She built a high wall around Zaria in order to protect the city from invasion and extended the boundaries of her territory beyond Bauchi. The people of Kano and Katsina paid tributes to her. She turned Zaria into a very prominent commercial centre. The story was not different in ancient Yoruba land. The Oba ruled with the assistance of a number of women referred to as the ladies of the palace. The ladies of the palace consisted of eight titled ladies of the highest rank. The significant role played by prominent women such as Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin and Omu Okwei of Ossomari in the pre-colonial history of Nigeria cannot be ignored. Moremi and Emotan were great amazons who displayed tremendous bravery and strength in politics of Ife and Benin respectively, while OmuOkwei dominated the commercial scene of Ossomari in present day Delta State (Olugbemi, 2004).

During this period, Nigerian women began to play very active roles in various aspects of the nation's development; and assumed a more critical role in traditional agriculture. Particularly as a result of the large scale exodus of able bodied men to wage labour. Nigerian women took over an increasing portion of the burden of food

production, contributing between 50 per cent and 70 per cent of Nigeria's food requirement. While the situation in the public sector remained unsatisfactory, it was markedly different from what had obtained during the pre-colonial and colonial times. Five years after independence, only 6.9 per cent of the salaried workforces were women; by 1970, 8.7 per cent of the total number of established staff in the federal civil service was women. In 1980, the percentage of women had risen to 12.6 per cent. Similar patterns were maintained in state civil services. In 1979, women constituted 4.9 percent of agricultural manpower in Nigeria. 1.4 percent of artisans and craftsmen, and 1.6 percent of the professional/sub professional group. It was only in the medical sector that women constituted 84.3 percent of dieticians and 80.2 percent of nurses (Olugbemi, 2004).

According to the population reference Bureau, in 1981, only 6 percent of adult Nigerian women were literate. By 1979, 72.9 percent of urban girls and 80.08 percent of rural girls were not attending school. University admission figures also reflect a low percentage of female entries in the new era. Successive post-colonial governments have encouraged female education and expanded education facilities for girls. In spite of these efforts, however, the impact on women is still low. Some of the factors that militate against women's education in the country include the perception that women needed to be educated only to be good house wives. The economic recession since the mid-1980s is also affecting women's education in Nigeria. As a result of increasing cost of education, most parents, especially in the rural areas prefer withdrawing girls from school, instead of boys. To stem this tide, some state governments have passed laws granting free education to girls up to certain levels, in other states, women with children are allowed to attend school and it is considered an offence to withdraw a female child from school before a stipulated age. Early marriages by girls are frowned at by many states and women's organizations. Women's education units were established at the Federal Ministry of Education to encourage women education.



Subsequently, all state Ministries of Education did same. The legal system inherited from the colonial era placed many obstacles on the way of women's self-advancement and participation in national development. For instance, married women had to obtain their husband's written permission to obtain international passports. Until very recently, women were not allowed to stand bail for a suspect. The statutory provisions still do not favour women in many respects, including divorce and inheritance.

The role of women in Nigeria's post 1960 politics has not been rewarded sufficiently, in terms of appointments to policy making posts. In spite of massive support given to various political parties by women, women organizations, market women movements etc., until recently very few women benefited from political patronage. In Southern Nigeria, women already had the franchise by 1960; thus in 1960, Mrs Wuraola Esan from Western Nigeria became the first female member of the Federal parliament. In 1961, Chief (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo contested elections in Aba Urban North Constituency under the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) platform and won, becoming a member of the Eastern Nigerian House of Assembly until 1966; Janet Mokelu and Ekpo Young also contested elections, won and became members of the Eastern House of Assembly (Olugbemi, 2004). In Northern Nigeria, however, women are still denied the franchise even after independence. As a result, prominent female politicians like Hajia Gambo Sawaba in the North could not vote and be voted for. It was only in 1979 that women in Northern Nigeria were given the Franchise, following the return of civilian politics. During the second Republic (1979, 1983) there was further progress. A few Nigerian women won elections into the House of Representatives at the national level. Some of these women were. Eze of the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) who represented Uzo Uwani Constituency in former Anambra State, Nnaji, also of NPP who represented Isu and Abiola Babatope of the Unity party of Nigeria (UPN) who represented Mushin Central II of Lagos State.

But, on the whole, very few women won elections into the State House of Assembly during the second republic (Olugbemi, 2004).

During the same period, only two women were appointed federal ministers. They were Janet Akinrinde who was Minister for Internal Affairs and Adenike Egun Oyagbola, Minister for National Planning; Francesca Yetunde Emmanuel was the only female permanent Secretary (first in the federal Ministry of Establishment and later Federal Ministry of Health). A number of women were appointed commissioners in the states. In 1983, Franca Afegbua became the only woman to be elected into the Senate. Also, very few women contested and won elections into the local Government Councils during this time. With the return of Military rule in December 1983, the first formal quota system was introduced by the federal government as regards the appointment of women into governance. The Buhari administration directed that at least one female must be appointed a member of the Executive Council in every State. All the states complied with this directive; some states even had two or three female members. In the early 1990s, two women were appointed Deputy Governors. These were Alhaja Latifat Okunnu of Lagos State and Pamela Sadauki of Kaduna State. Kuforiji Olubi served as Chairperson of a bank, i.e. the United Bank for Africa Plc. Later on, Simi Johnson and Eniola Fadayomi served as Chairpersons of Afribank International Nigeria and Allied Bank Nigeria Plc, respectively. There was, however, no female minister. There was also, no female member of the defunct Supreme Military Council or the later Armed Forces Ruling Council. In the 1990 elections into local governments heralding the third republic, very few women emerged as Councillors and only one woman, Titilayo Ajanaku, emerged as Chairperson of a local Government Council in the South-West. During the gubernatorial elections no female governor emerged in any of the states. Only two female Deputy Governors emerged namely: Sinatu Ojikutu of Lagos State and Cecilia Ekpeyong of Cross River State. Today, the number of women in top jobs is still nearly insignificant.

The Nigerian culture and belief reflect in the political culture. This implies that the fact that in most parts of the country, or various ethnic groups, their belief or culture is based on the fact that women should be in the lower-class, while the men are given the opportunity to rule or govern the society. This is a wrong perception or belief to have about women generally. This is due to the fact that, in some other countries even within Africa, women are being given the opportunity to participate in politics and contest with men for various political posts. In Nigeria, women are always seen or viewed from the aspect of being restricted to domestic affairs like taking care of the home for example, taking care of their husbands and kids. Some people believe that women should not be involved in politics because of the difficulties being faced by politicians during the contest, organizing political parties, campaign programmes, conference and meetings. Yet, some women are still determined to participate in politics. This is because they believe they can face the challenges, and do better than the men, and also come out with greater results than the men have done (Adeniyi, 2003).

Nigeria is a male biased country. Rather than giving the women a chance to participate in politics, there is a common belief that women are only supposed to be involved in domestic affairs. Most women that participate in politics are usually viewed or seen by some as irresponsible promiscuous women. Political meetings hardly commence before 12 midnight in order to as to deter determined women from attending such meetings. Some women, who attend such meetings sometimes, have to contend with sexual harassment (Vanguard, 2011). Women are far and between in all levels of the political process and decision making in general. Yet our kind of gender relation which is very traditional allows for separate spheres for women and men. Consequently, men make decisions at all levels while the women must follow. Hardly do men invite the women to gatherings in which important decisions are taken.

Years after, Nigeria returned to civil rule, women still play second fiddle in the male dominated politics of Africa's most populous nation. Since this West African country of about 170 million people broke from military rule and embraced uninterrupted multi-party democracy in 1999, men have been in charge of election. Women only hold marginal elective offices. Although, it has been sixteen years of uninterrupted civilian rule, Nigerian women are still battling political marginalization where they are not given the chance to hold political offices. Despite the relative improvement in women political participation and representation between 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 such improvement does not reflect women's numerical superiority. Between 1999 and 2003, a total of 5 female parliamentarians were elected. This figure marginally improved from 2003 to 2007. Nigeria is a signatory to the UN's convention for the elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women, but women in the country continue to voice dissent against their continued domination by men in the realm of politics and in other spheres. Women constitute the majority of voters during elections, but they are hardly given a level playing ground to actualize their dreams or active involvement in the politics of our country (Adeniyi, 2004).

### **Problems Militating against Women Political Participation in Nigeria**

Nigeria's democratic culture is characterized by assassination, manipulation, lawlessness, illegalities, rigging, oppression, manipulation, marginalization and violence. Other issues are male dominated party executives labelling money politics and innumerable social, cultural and religious factors. These constitute barriers to women aspiring and contesting for elective positions in Nigeria. In the 2011 general elections, an increased number of Nigerian women defied the odds, stepped into the murky waters, aspired and contested for party's primaries. Many lost and few emerged as candidates and fewer of them emerged as winners. The number and percentage of women who were successful at the polls in 2011 was less than those in 2007 and 2003 (Vanguard, 2011).

There was only one female presidential candidate in the person of Mrs Ebiti Ndok of the United Nation Party (UNP), and it is doubtful if she eventually voted given issues she had with the administration of justice system. It should be noted that Sarah Jubril was a presidential aspirant under the platform of the "People Democratic Party" (PDP). She lost at the party's primaries. There were four female Vice Presidential candidates. Whereas there were 36 governorship seats in the federation, there were 348 governorship candidates with just 13 (2.98%) being women who all failed at the polls. It appears some parties agreed to adopt female deputy governorship candidates as there was generally an increase in the number of governorship candidates that had women as their running mates. At least four parties in Lagos State selected women to contest as deputy governor in the person of Kofoworola Buknor. Although she was later removed and replaced by Femi Pedro, a man. In 2003 the number of deputy female governors increased to (5.5%), it increased to 6 (16.6%) in 2007. In 2011 there was only 1 female deputy governor in person of Mrs Adejoke Orelope Adefulire of Lagos State who contested under the platform of Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). Out of the 109 senators that emerged only 7 (6.4%) were women. In 2007 there were 9 (8.3%) female senators, in 2003 there were 6 (5.5%) female senators whilst in 1999 there were only 3 (2.8%) female senators. Female performance in the House of Representatives election was no less different from that of senate. Out of the 360 available seats, women won only 19(5.3%). This is an abysmal drop in the light of the success recorded in 2007, 2003 and 1999 where the figures were respectively 27 (7.5%), 21(5.8%) and 12 (3.3%) an arithmetic progression which was not sustained in 2011 (Vanguard, 2011).

The 2011 general elections could be described as the year of whittling down of the influence of political godfather, as their candidates performed woefully at the election. Nevertheless, it does appear that patriarchy, religion, vote buying, ethical issues, party intrigues and absence of internal democracy within political parties constituted reasons for the poor performance of women at the polls, in addition

to awareness by the electorate that they have the final say on who represents them through their ballots. The fate of Senator Iyabo Obasanjo Bello who respectively contested for governorship elections in Ogun State typifies the genre. Popularity of the candidates also determined the outcome of elections and not necessarily the platform on which the female candidates contested election.

In Anambra state for instance, traditional strong hold of APGA where late Dora Akunyili of APGA lost to her stronger opponent of Chris Ngige of ACN who has an incomparable profound charisma. Vote buying which was alleged by some voters may have influenced the voting pattern of some people. Vote buying has implications for female candidates as many of them are not similarly situated economically with their male competitors and therefore could not be able to woo voters with money. The performance of women at the 2011 general elections called for sober reflection and an urgent need for re-strategizing for the 2015 general elections. There was urgent need for internal democracy in the political parties to whittle down male dominated party executives. There was also examination/assessment of parties' primaries with a view to formulating and implementing reforms that will support a more level playing field.

Politicking is time-consuming with politicians travelling far from their homes during political rallies. Such political rallies are often rowdy and at times violent with political thugs taking centre-stage, hurling insults and brandishing assortments of locally made weapons (Howell, 2004). Given such scenarios, women politicians are generally seen as promiscuous in a society that believes women's role should be confined to domestic management. Politics involves intermingling between women and men and our culture and religion strongly abhor mixing between the two sexes (Wolff, 1969).

Gender based NGOs have mounted rigorous sensitization campaigns to erase the stigma attached to female participation in politics.

Women in developing countries, especially Nigeria, have been experiencing different forms of exploitation before the Beijing Conference; to put it mildly were harsh for them after the Beijing Conference and its attendant consequences of awareness, generated through ideas at the conference, things took a democratic turn in some parts of the world. But then, did things change in Nigeria after the Beijing Conference? Certainly not! Nigerian women have been marginalized for a long time. This marginalization which persists till date creates a situation where women are hardly given any critical role to play.

### **Strategies adopted to encourage Women Political Participation in Nigeria**

The Women for Change Initiative is a Nigeria gender focused movement for mobilizing women to take active interest in affirmative action, which is promoting women's empowerment and gender equality in the society. Its broad objective is commitment to the creation of a movement that will engender the mass awareness of women at all levels of their human rights and obligations as citizens of Nigeria. The NGO specifically wants the advance strategies for gender equality, equity and promotion of affirmative action principles and mechanisms for effective resource management and accountability to develop a mechanism which could enhance the legislative process in Nigeria, including domesticating international instruments to which Nigeria is a signatory; draw upon successful experiences as best practices or framework in other countries, such as ensuring that the constitutions and manifestos of political parties support women's participation in politics and decision-making; create an enabling environment for gender equality and women's empowerment through the review of electoral laws, tax laws, labour act, property law, land use act, marriage act, as well as criminal laws that continue to perpetuate discriminating traditional practices and norms; engage in the mobilization and sensitization of women as role models for women political participation; promoting mentorship programmes as a strategic tool for human development; build the

skills of female politicians in the area of fund raising, public speeches, understanding of legislative procedures and practices, lobbying skills, deciding on appropriate choices, coping with stress in public office, balancing multiple roles of wife-mother-politicians (or professional career); develop women's leadership skills in every field, make the recruitment of women as a deliberate priority for constituency expansion and promote women's economic empowerment through provision of micro-credit and entrepreneurship skill.

The initiative also intends to engage in the mobilization and sensitization of women as well as women allies towards increasing the number of women in politics at all spheres of government, lobby the legislature for the eradication of discriminatory laws and policies and advocate the review of a structure and operational guidelines of political parties, among others. The establishment of a women's political institute where parties and all female aspirants and candidates would be equipped with relevant skills that underpin the positions should be desired. The outcome would inform necessary remedial measures aspirants should take to address gaps to reposition them for exigency of electoral campaigns and elective offices. Nigerian women have always been in the forefront, championing the cause for more women participation in politics. At a period, various women groups in the country were championing the cause for at least 35% women representation in public office according to the recommendation of the Beijing Conference. Although the women seem not to have produced the 35% women representation recommended by the Beijing Conference, to some extent the Federal and State governments have been able to give about 20-30% representation to women in some key public offices, especially in the legislative and executive arms of government.

The women for change meeting started on the 16th July, 2010, when about 2,000 Nigerian women turned up in their colourful outfits at the International Conference Centre, Abuja to declare: the launch of Nigeria's women for change initiative, the pet project of the then first lady Dame Patience Jonathan. Fifteen years after Beijing



pronouncement of 35% affirmative action for women, the women have realized that no threats can move the men to support them. Hence the women have to change tactics. Rather the demand is now appealing followed, by assurances that the women will remain loyal and submissive in their quest to occupy political office in the country.

The former United State Ambassador to Nigeria, Robin Sanders in highlighting the achievements of both Nigerian and African American Women, past and present, cited the efforts of Nigerian women like Funmilayo Ransome Kuti and Grace Alele Williams as well as those of African American standard bearers, like Mary Bethune. She called on women to be involved in politics. The initiative underscored their commitment to work with the NGO to stop violence against women as well as work to improve the overall lives of Nigerian women in areas of health care and education. Women for Change Initiative (WFCI) focused on economic development, health, education and self-help for women. The former Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Josephine Anenih, said that the initiative is aimed at empowering women economically and politically and eliminating those cultural traits that have not projected women into limelight.

Nigeria is a signatory to the CEDAW document. Thus discrimination against women should no longer be allowed in this country. Nigerian women need to come together to tackle the numerous problems confronting them and to discuss ways out of them. Nigerian women must make sure they do not discriminate against their fellow women. The women for change initiative has not only become a rallying point for female politicians to seek equity and justice on women political life, but has also provided a platform for tackling challenges against women's political empowerment.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study explains the concept of marginalization and reveals the level of women political participation in Nigeria. In terms of

elections, and the chances some Nigerian women have been given to vote and to be voted for (To participate in elections). The study also examines the various cultural practices in the country which view women from the perspective of not being up to the task to perform some certain duties and responsibilities, when it comes to politics.

Women in this country are being discriminated against due to the fact that they are being viewed from the aspect of being mothers, taking care of their husbands and children, doing house chores etc. This study revealed that Nigeria is a male dominated country and this reflects so much on the political culture being practiced in the country. Men are given higher chances to participate fully in politics, while women are being viewed from the aspect of not being up to the task to perform certain functions and responsibilities. The steps being taken to encourage women political participation in Nigeria during the Goodluck Jonathan administration have also been examined from the aspect of the first lady Patience Dame Jonathan's pet project in order to fight for the right of women in the country which is: Women for Change Initiative. This initiative was taken by the Nigerian women to ensure that they are not discriminated against, and allowed to participate in politics as men are being given the chance to do so.

The problems militating against women political participation in Nigeria have also been examined in this study. Also, the electoral process and political participation of women in various elections were also stated. The concept of democracy practiced in this country has also been stated in this study. Some lapses and problems in the politics of this country were also stated, which are thuggery and violence during elections which give room for electoral malpractices, vote buying, fighting and killing during elections etc. The Nigerian government should curb violent acts during elections in order to give room for free and fair elections, and also to give Nigerian women a chance to participate in politics. The fact that women are being marginalized in the country is caused by some factors like violence and thuggery in the country during elections. In order to correct this

in-balance in our political sphere, programmes such as women for change initiative programme, the women empowerment programme should be further enhanced to increase the level of women participation in politics. Finally, the Nigerian government should ensure that elections are being conducted well, and electoral malpractices, violence, thuggery, harassments, vote buying should be avoided during elections in order to ensure free and fair elections in the country.

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