

Women in the Nigeria's National Assembly Historical Perspective (1999–2023)

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Abstract:- This study examines the representation and participation of women in the two chambers of Nigeria's National Assembly from 1999 - 2023 focusing on their contributions to the legislative process. Women's political participation in Nigeria has been a topic of interest due to the low representation of women in decision-making positions. By analysing data on women's presence in the National Assembly, this study aims to examine the progress made, the factors contributing to their impact, and the obstacles hindering their advancement. It posits that despite making up 50% of the population and playing significant roles in electoral processes, notably grassroots mobilisation and campaigning, there are socio-cultural factors as well as economic barriers, institutional barriers, electoral processes and political party structures that are glass ceilings to women's political representation. The study adopts narrative, descriptive and analytical tools for historical reconstruction. The study reveals that women in the legislation have been part of the primary sponsors of impactful legislation aimed at increasing women's representation in government and addressing other areas of concern for the general Nigerian populace such as anti-human trafficking and diaspora bills. The study concludes that women in Nigeria continue to encounter significant economic, social and political barriers to their full and effective participation in legislative processes. The study recommends encouraging inclusive decision-making processes within the party, involving women in key positions and decision-making bodies, engaging with communities to build support for women candidates, and addressing cultural or societal barriers that limit the involvement of more women in politics and leadership.

Keywords:- Women; Nigeria's National Assembly; Politics; Legislature, Democracy.

I. INTRODUCTION

All over the globe, there is vast evidence that women's participation in politics is beneficial to both their communities and societies and broader peace and stability. In other words, including women in political processes is a key component in achieving a truly inclusive democracy, and women must have the chance to exercise their political rights and participate in all political decision-making [1]. Women made up 32.7% of the total number of parliamentarians in EU member states in July 2022. During this time, the global average was at 26.4%. Of all the nations in the world, only Nicaragua (51.7% female

representation), Cuba (53.4% female representation), and Rwanda (61.3%) have a majority of female lawmakers. In Mexico and the United Arab Emirates, both men and women held parliamentary seats at 50% [2].

The majority of African nations have implemented some kind of gender quota; thirteen of these nations have designated legislative seats for women rather than quotas for candidates or political parties. Some nations, including Rwanda (61.25%), South Africa (46.35%), Senegal (41.82%), and Ethiopia (36.76%), have reserved seats in parliament so that more women and other viewpoints may be considered while laws are being made [3]. There is still a long way to go, even with these improvements. There are still systemic obstacles that women face when trying to join politics and rise through the ranks to positions of power. Some African nations are actively welcoming female lawmakers, while others, including Nigeria, the Central African Republic, and Eswatini, are falling behind. On the inside, women are still more likely to be assigned to "soft" committees—those dealing with family, education, and social affairs—rather than "hard" committees—those dealing with finance and defence—because the former are seen more powerful and consequential [4].

As a result, the monetary, interpersonal, and political gains from women's political participation are obvious. It promotes gender parity and democracy. Every citizen must take part in the democratic process. Any deviations from this mean that any efforts to advance democracy are merely more ways to support the social and political norms that created an unfair and uneven distribution of power between men and women. As a result, biased political procedures and social policies are created. The inclusion of women in politics challenges the power dynamics and mechanisms that diminish the attention and consideration of women's needs in policymaking [5]. Thus, allowing women to participate in decision-making undermines male supremacy in politics and is a democratic virtue in and of itself. Including women in politics generates political and economic benefits. Women's political participation advances gender equality by opposing the social and political structures that uphold a culture of women's subjugation in both the public and private domains.

Politically, it boosts the proportion of women in parliament, reduces corruption, enhances the results of policies, and encourages minority groups to be included in public spaces. From an economic perspective, it views women as agents of development supports their entry into the workforce,

and fosters growth in both the economy and development. Put differently, the right of women to participate in politics is inalienable. As a human right, political participation gives individuals the ability to vote in legitimate, periodic elections that use secret ballots and universal suffrage, as well as to participate directly or indirectly in the management of public affairs and government. It is a fundamental principle of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Later, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was ratified by the UN General Assembly in 1979, extended political participation to women [6].

In Nigeria's first republican election, there were just four elected female lawmakers. The proportion of female seats in the Federal Executive Council and National Assembly never exceeded 3.1% and 5%, respectively, before 1999. There is prejudice based on gender when it comes to involvement in Nigerian politics generally and in the National Assembly in particular. Although the 1999 revised Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria guaranteed equal rights to all citizens, regardless of gender, in all spheres of society, including politics, economics, culture, religion, and civic participation, this promise has remained unfulfilled. Among the 109 senators serving in Nigeria after the country's restoration to democratic rule in 1999, only three(3) were women. From 2007 to 2011, the number dropped to seven, and then in 2015, it rose back up to eight. Out of 360 members in the House of Representatives in 1999, only twelve (12) were women. There were twenty-one(21), twenty-six(26), and nineteen (19) women in the House in 2003, 2011, and 2015, respectively [7].

For example, because of these characteristics shared by most Nigerian communities, former president Muhammadu Buhari said on a state visit to Germany that his wife belongs in his kitchen and other places. Based on this assumption, women should stay in their husbands' "kitchens" and "other rooms" while they're not working. This proves that Fapohunda is right, that the Nigerian culture is permeated with preconceived notions about gender. It is no longer breaking news that there are fewer female legislators in Nigeria than male legislators, as the 2019 elections showed [8].

The results of the 2019 election showed that women had 3.38% of the seats in the legislature. Since the legislature is essential in establishing policies through law, the election and inclusion of women in our various parliaments can help to resolve conflicts, feminist and intersex concerns, and other pertinent societal issues. But despite the existence of several international conventions and legal frameworks guaranteeing women's political rights, women remain far from the goal of gender parity in Nigeria. However, it is imperative to note that the decreasing number of women elected into the nation's parliament has continued even in the 10th Assembly[9]. Hence, understanding the barriers to the participation of women in politics is a key step in overcoming these issues.

➤ *Statement of Problem*

A depressing and unappealing discrepancy in women's representation in the Nigerian National Assembly is shown by a comparative study. According to historical data, women's political participation in Nigeria has remained relatively stable, with only 6.7% of them holding elective or appointed positions. This number is significantly less than the sub-regional average for West Africa (15%), the regional average for Africa (23.4%), and the global average (22.5%). After looking at the makeup of the ministerial appointments made under former President Muhammadu Buhari, it is clear that only seven of the 36 confirmed appointments or 16.7% of the total were women [10].

The Vanguard Newspaper recorded an important historical milestone in the National Assembly's history on April 16, 2021; the data show a discernible drop in the proportion of female legislators in the 9th Assembly. There are just twenty-nine (29) women who have seats in the House of Representatives and the Senate, which is around 6% of the total membership. This stands in sharp contrast to their male counterparts, who control the majority with 440 parliamentarians. In contrast, there were just thirty-one (31) female lawmakers in the previous 8th House, out of a total of 438 male members. In the Nigerian environment in the 1980s, there was an increased acknowledgement of the important roles that women play in a country's prosperity and advancement [11].

Women's low self-esteem, which leads them to believe they have no influence over politics and that their participation in the National Assembly will not affect society, has resulted in the low representation and participation of women in both elective and appointed positions. Moreover, traditional beliefs about women and men have historically favoured the masculine gender in almost every aspect of life, a phenomenon that has persisted throughout civilizations. Since politics is, after all, the genuine struggle for power, prejudice against women also exists in this sphere.

Since independence, there have been contentious debates on the participation of women in Nigerian politics. Some people argue that women do not dare to engage in politics since they are perceived as the weaker gender. Scholarly research and discussions centred on mainstreaming women in the nation's political system have been drawn to these issues. Numerous books have been written about women in Nigeria's National Assembly, albeit from various perspectives [12]. By placing the effects of women in the Nigerian National Assembly from 1999 to 2023 into perspective, this research modifies and expands on the body of knowledge already known about the subject. But after the return of democracy in 1999, the majority of these studies, if not all of them have focused primarily on a single government and lack a strong research foundation. Thus, this is a micro study that focuses mainly on the activities of women in Nigeria's national assembly which aims to identify the achievements, impacts and challenges faced by women in politics as well as the prospects and strategies for increased representation and gender equality in decision-making processes.

➤ Aim and Objectives of the Study

This research aims to examine the “Impacts of Nigerian Women’s Participation in Nigeria’s National Assembly from 1999 – 2023. However, the specific objectives of the research include:

- To examine the factors that influenced women's participation in Nigerian politics before 1999.
- To examine the factors that influenced women's participation in Nigeria's National Assembly 1999-2023.
- To analyse the achievements of women in the National Assembly 1999-2023.
- To access the challenges and impact of women in the national assembly 1999-2023.

II. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study is the historical method of data analysis which relies heavily upon both primary and secondary sources of information used in the investigation. The National Centre for Women Development (NCWD) in Abuja as well as materials from the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Abuja and Kaduna, respectively, were reviewed by the researcher for primary sources. The author also conducted longhand notes and oral interviews with pertinent National Assembly stakeholders, recording the events on a recording device. These interviews aimed to gain insight into the perceptions held by these individuals regarding the role and impacts of women within the national assembly.

Interviews were conducted with some officials from various political parties to determine whether these parties adequately represented women in the national assembly as such, 20 females and 8 males were interviewed making a total of 28 representatives, of these respondents, 9 were members of the Nigerian National Assembly while 19 were members of one political party or the other. The collection of primary data was conducted through active participation in legislative plenary sessions and diligent observation of chamber proceedings. The researcher used books, journals, and reports from the National

Library, the Nigerian Defence Academy Library, and the National Bureau of Statistics, journals, books, newspapers, and information procured by government agencies, hospitals, and law enforcement agencies, among other places, when it came to secondary materials. The work's conclusions are presented using both an analytical and narrative style.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Women Legislators and National Development

Women legislators play a crucial role in addressing topical issues, particularly in the context of economic growth, social development, and gender equality. Women in political offices positively impact economic growth as constituencies led by women legislators experience higher economic growth rates compared to those led by men. Also, women legislators are less likely to have criminal records, more efficient in project completion, and less prone to corruption, which can contribute to improved economic performance. Additionally, women in political offices are more likely to prioritize social issues, such as gender issues Chibok girls and empowerment, which are fundamental to social justice and equitable development [13]. Despite facing challenges such as underrepresentation and criticism, women legislators have the potential to drive positive change in addressing tropical issues, promoting economic growth, and advancing social and gender equality agendas. This is crucial for addressing challenges like the Chibok girls' abduction and other gender-based violence. Despite their low representation, female legislators have sponsored bills aimed at promoting women's rights and gender equality.

As an example, of the members of the National Assembly elected in 1999, only fifteen (15) were women. Of them, twelve (12) were House of Representatives and three (3) were Senate employees. With 21 in the House and 4 in the Senate, the total grew to 25 in 2003. In 2007, thirty-six women were elected to the National Assembly, with twenty-seven (27) serving in the House and nine (9) in the Senate, being the greatest number ever. After thereafter, the number steadily dropped, reaching 32 in 2011, 29 in 2015, and 17 in 2019 [14].

Table 1 Women in the 4th National Assembly

S/N	Senate	S/N	House of Reps
1	Stella Omu	1	Patricia O. Etteh
2	Florence Ita-Giwa	2	Omolola Abiola-Edewor
3	Khairat Abdul-Razaq	3	Dorcas I. Odujinrin
		4	Janet Ayo Adeyemi
		5	Lynda C. Ikpeazu
		6	Iquo I. Minima
		7	Florence Diya Aya
		8	Rukayat G. Sarak
		9	Patience Ogodo
		10	Mercy Almona-Isei
		11	Binta Garba Koji
		12	Temi Harriman

Table 1 shows that women's representation in Nigeria's 4th Senate has been very low. In the 4th Senate (2003-2007), there were only three women senators out of 109 senators, representing just 2.8% of the total. This indicates a very low

level of women representation in comparison to the total number of senators. Similarly, the percentage of women in the lower house representatives was approximately 3.33% out of 360 members [15].

Table 2 Women in the 5th National Assembly

S/N	Senate	S/N	House of Reps
1	Rukayat Gbemisola Saraki-Fowora	1	Nkechi Nwagwu
2	Iyabo Anisulowo	2	Jessica Balonwu
3	Daisy Danjuma	3	Iquo Inyang-Minimah
		4	Adzuana Aondana
		5	Fanta B. Shehu,
		6	Tem Harriman
		7	Mercy Alomona Isei
		8	Uwa Patience Ogoto
		9	Titlayo Akindahunsi
		10	Biodun Olujimi,
		11	Ruth Jummai Ango
		12	Binta K. Garba
		13	Saudatu A. Sani
		14	Bebeji Azuna
		15	Maimunat Adaji
		16	Omolola Abiola-Edewor
		17	Abike Dabiri
		18	Olajumoke Okoya-Thomas
		19	Patricia N. Akwashiki,
		20	Patricia Etteh
		21	Eniola Fakeye
		22	Fatima S. Talba

According to the information provided in Table 2, in the 2003 Senate elections in Nigeria, only 3 women were elected out of the 109 total Senate seats won by women. The distribution of seats by sex was: Men: 106, Women: 3, with women making up only 2.75% of the Senate. Thus, the 2003 Senate elections saw the election of only 3 women out of 109 total Senators, representing a very low percentage of female representation in the upper chamber of Nigeria's National Assembly at the time. On the other hand, in the 2003 Nigerian House of Representatives elections, 22 women were elected out

of a total of 360 seats. This represented a very low percentage of female representation in the lower chamber of the National Assembly at the time. So, while the 2003 elections had the highest number of women elected to the House of Representatives up to that point, with 22 out of 360 seats, it still amounted to low female representation. These results highlight the persistent gender gap in Nigeria's political system, despite efforts to promote greater inclusion of women in elected offices at all levels of governance [16].

Table 3 Women in the 6th National Assembly

S/N	Senate	S/N	House of Reps
1	Nkechi Nwaogu	1	Nkeiruka Oyeichiocha
2	Chris Anyanwu	2	Nnnene Ukeje Elendu
3	Patricia Akwashiki	3	Binta Masi Garba
4	Grace Bent	4	Ikpeazu Lynda
5	Zainab Kure	5	Uche Lilian Ewunife
6	Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello	6	Christiana Alaaga
7	Eme Ufot Ekaette	7	Fatima Raji Razaki
		8	Titilayo Akindahunsi
		9	Florence Akinwale Tinuke
		10	Elizabeth Ogbaja
		11	Doris Ubo
		12	Mercy Almona-Isei
		13	Peace Nnaji
		14	Juliet Akanu
		15	Sardatu Sani
		16	Halima Hassan
		17	Patricia Olubunmi Etteh
		18	Folake Olunloyo
		19	Abike Dabiri
		20	Betty Apiafi
		21	Khadijat Bukar-Abba

		22	Martha Bodunrin
		23	Abidemi Okoya-Thomas
		24	Munikat Akand-Adeola
		25	Manunat Adaji
		26	Beni Lar
		27	Nimota Suleiman

Table 3 shows the 6th National Assembly of Nigeria, which served from 2007 to 2011, had a total of 109 senators, with only 7 of them being female. This represents a mere 6.4% of the total number of senators in the assembly. The low representation of women in the Senate is a reflection of the broader gender imbalance in Nigerian politics. Similarly, the

6th assembly with 27 female representatives in the House out of 360 members reflects a significant gender disparity in Nigeria's legislative body. While the number is higher compared to the representation in the Senate, it still underscores the challenges women face in achieving equal participation in politics [17].

Table 4 Women in the 7th National Assembly

S/N	Senate	S/N	House of Reps
1	Chris Anyanwu	1	Abike Dabiri
2	Zainab Kure	2	Mulikat Adeola-Akande
3	Nkechi Nwaogu	3	Nkiru Onyeagocha
4	Nenadi Usman	4	Uche Ekwunife
5	Oluremi Tinubu	5	Nnena Elendu-Ukeje
6	Helen Esuene	6	Olajumoke Okoya-Thomas
7	Aisha Jummai Alhassan	7	Beni Lar
		8	Elizabeth Ogbaga
		9	Peace Uzoamaka Nnaji
		10	Juliet Akano
		11	Maimunat Adaji
		12	Suleiman Oba Nimota
		13	Folake Olunloyo
		14	Martha Bodunrin
		15	Betty Okogua-Apiafi
		16	Rose Oko
		17	Nkoyo Toyo

Table 4 reflects the number of women in the 7th National Assembly of Nigeria, who served from 2011 to 2015, who saw a slight increase in the representation of women compared to previous assemblies, but their numbers remained low overall. In the Senate, there were 7 female senators out of a total of 109, representing 6.4% of the upper chamber. In the House of Representatives, there were 17 female members out of 360, accounting for only 4.7% of the lower chamber. Despite the presence of these women in the 7th National Assembly, their representation was still far below the 35% affirmative action target prescribed by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action [18].

B. Women Legislators as Principal Officers and Committee Members

The inauguration of the eighth National Assembly took place on the auspicious day of Tuesday, 9th June 2015. Each chamber of the Eighth Assembly has its unique makeup; the Lower House has 360 members and the Upper House has 99 Senators. It is worth noting that a peculiar composition developed inside the Senate, with fifty-nine (59) of the 109 senators having been elected as members of the governing All Progressives Congress (APC). Conversely, the remaining forty-nine (49) senators achieved their status under affiliation with the principal opposition party, the People's Democratic

Party (PDP). Dr. Bukola Saraki, a prominent political figure, recently held the position of President of the Senate. Accompanying him in this influential role was Ike Ekweremadu, who served as the Deputy Senate President. The individuals who held the positions of Speaker of the House of Representatives and Deputy Speaker of the House during the specified period were the Right Honourable Yakubu Dogara and Yusuf Sulaiman Lasun, respectively. In the scholarly work entitled "Gender Mainstreaming in Nigeria: The Cross-Cutting Issues," it is observed that the composition of the Nigerian Senate during a specific period exhibited a notable gender disparity. Specifically, the Senate was predominantly comprised of male senators, accounting for approximately 93.6% of the total, while their female counterparts constituted a mere 6.4% of the senatorial body [19].

Table 5 Women in the 8th National Assembly

S/N	Senate	S/N	House of Reps
1	Princess Stella Oduah	1	<i>Nkeiruka Onyejeocha</i>
2	Monsurat Sunmonu	2	<i>Nnenna Ukeje</i>
3	Fatimat Raji Rasaki	3	<i>Owoidighe Atai</i>
4	Oluremi Shade Tinubu	4	<i>Lynda Ikpeazu</i>
5	Rose Oko Okoji	5	<i>Eucharia Azodo</i>
6	Binta Masi Garba	6	<i>Sodaguno Omoni</i>
7	Biodun Olujimi,	7	<i>Asabe Bashir</i>
		8	<i>Evelyn Oboro</i>
		9	<i>Omosede Igbinedion</i>
		10	<i>Stella Uchena Ogiageli</i>
		11	<i>Joan Mrakpor</i>
		12	<i>Binta Bello</i>
		13	<i>Aishatu Dukka</i>
		14	<i>Rita Orji</i>
		15	<i>Beni Butmaklar Langtang,</i>
		16	<i>Ayo Omidiran</i>
		17	<i>Blessing Ibibia</i>
		18	<i>Betty Apiafi</i>
		19	<i>Boma Goodhead</i>
		20	<i>Princess Olufunke Adedoyin Talatu Yohanna</i>

The inauguration of the 8th National Assembly on 9 June 2015 heralded the formation of a distinguished body of governance. This Assembly consisted of 109 Senators representing the diverse interests of and regions of the nation, alongside 360 members of the House of Representatives, collectively assuming the mantle of legislative authority. Seven

women were elected into the Senate and 20 women were elected into the House of Representatives. Table 5 shows an increase in the number of female lawmakers elected into the House of Representatives in comparison to the 7th Assembly [20].

Table 6 Women in the 9th National Assembly

S/N	Senate	S/N	House of Reps
1	Stella Oduah Adaeze	1	<i>Nkeiruka C. Onyejeocha</i>
2	Abiodun Olujimi	2	<i>Lynda Chuba-Ikpeazu</i>
3	Oluremi Tinunbu Shade	3	<i>Onuh Onyeche Blessing</i>
4	Dahiru Aishatu Ahmed	4	<i>Zainab Gimba</i>
5	Dr. Akon Eyakenyi	5	<i>Ogunlola O. Olubunmi</i>
6	Uche Lilian Ekwunife	6	<i>Aishatu Jibril Dukka</i>
7	Jocelyne Betty Okagua Apiafi	7	<i>Onanuga Adewunmi Oriyomi</i>
		8	<i>Taiwo Olukemi Oluga</i>
		9	<i>Tolulope T. Akande-Sadipe</i>
		10	<i>Beni Butmak Lar</i>
		11	<i>Khadija Bukar Abba Ibrahim</i>

The inauguration of the 9th National Assembly, on Tuesday, June 11, 2019, heralded the formation of a distinguished body of governance. This Assembly consisted of 109 Senators representing the diverse interests of and regions of the nation, alongside 360 members of the House of Representatives, collectively assuming the mantle of legislative authority. Within the broader context of the federal parliament, it is noteworthy that a mere 18 individuals, initially identified as female, held membership in the two chambers [21]. This figure, when juxtaposed against the overall count of 479 parliamentarians, underscores the stark gender disparity that pervaded the composition of this legislative body. However, the unfortunate passing of Senator Rose Oko resulted in a decrease in the total count to 17 individuals. The composition of the Nigerian National Assembly of the 9th assembly reveals

a notable presence of female legislators, with seven women serving as Senators and 11 occupying seats in the House of Representatives as shown in Table 6.

C. Contributions Made by Female Legislators in Legislative Activities

Most of these bills and motions indicate the women legislators' inherent nature and cognitive framework, as their notions, motions, and bills predominantly revolve around matters about women and children. A notable observation emerges from the interview wherein 8.3% of the participants believed that performance evaluation does not exhibit gender sensitivity. This perspective posits that women possess comparable abilities and shortcomings to their male counterparts. It is worth noting that this viewpoint aligns with

the consensus among other respondents, who assert that women legislators have actively engaged in the legislative

process, which is counted for them as their achievements; these bills are presented in Table 7.

Table 7 Bills Presented by Women in the National Assembly

Women Legislator	Year	Bill Sponsored	Remarks
Hon. Tejuoso Funmilayo	2003 - 2015	Domestic Violence Bill led to the construction of the Happy Home and Child's Rights Law.	Passed
Hon. Rose Oko	2018	National Planning Commission Act (Repeal and Re-Enactment)	Ended in Second Reading
Biodun Olujimi	2015	National Library Act (Amendment) Bill.	Ended in Committee
Biodun Olujimi	2015	Counterfeit and Fake Drugs and Unwholesome Processed Foods (Miscellaneous Provision) (Amendment) Bill.	Passed
Biodun Olujimi	2018	Federal College of Education Omuo-Ekiti, Ekiti State (Est. etc.) Bill.	Passed
Biodun Olujimi	2016	Whistle Blowers Protection Bill.	Passed
Sen. Rose Oko	2015	Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (Alteration) Bill.	Passed
Sunmonu Monsurat	2016	Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Educational Institutions Prohibition Bill	Passed
Sen. Oluremi Tinubu	2019	Criminal Code Act (Amendment) Bill, 2019	Passed
Hon. Lynda Chuba Ikpeazu	2015	HB 172: Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (Alteration) Bill, 2015	Passed
Hon. Lynda Chuba Ikpeazu	2015	HB 212: Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria Act (Amendment) Bill, 2015	Passed
Hon. Lynda Chuba Ikpeazu	2015	HB 216: Telecommunications and Postal Offences Act (Amendment) Bill, 2015	Passed

Table 7 provides a comprehensive overview of the noteworthy contributions made by select women in the National Assembly. It is worth noting that the bills sponsored by these female legislators during the 8th and ongoing 9th Assemblies have exhibited a favourable disposition towards the welfare of all Nigerian citizens. For instance, the compulsory treatment of critical condition victims' bill, which holds significant implications for both genders, underscores the understanding that the loss of life reverberates throughout the entirety of a given society, impacting not only the individual but also the entire family unit. However, some of the sponsored bills by women legislators never saw the light of day, these bills are dynamics and relationships that undermine the recognition of women's concerns and interests within policy formulation. Incorporating women into decision-making processes is widely regarded as a fundamental tenet of democracy, serving as an intrinsic virtue in its own right. Moreover, this practice effectively challenges and disrupts the longstanding hegemony of male dominance within the political sphere.

The active involvement of women in the legislative process catalyzes advancing gender equality as it confronts the entrenched social and political frameworks that sustain a system of female subjugation within both the realms of personal and public life. The inclusion of women in the political process has been observed to yield significant political and economic advantages. From a political standpoint, the phenomenon under examination manifests itself in the augmentation of female representation within the parliamentary body, the mitigation of corrupt practices, the enhancement of policy outcomes, and the facilitation of

inclusivity about marginalised communities within the public domain. From an economic perspective, the prevailing discourse acknowledges women as active participants in the development process, emphasising the imperative of their integration into the labour market. This approach is underpinned by the belief that such inclusion empowers women and catalyses economic and developmental progress. Moreover, if more women are granted access to the National Assembly, the sponsorship of a gender-sensitive bill by a female Legislator would likely garner support from other female Legislators who possess a practical comprehension of the bill's significance. This collective effort would contribute to the successful passage of said bill.

The impact of bills sponsored by women on society can be significant, as women legislators tend to focus more on bills related to social policy issues such as children and family issues, education, health policy, and women's issues. This emphasis on social policy issues by women lawmakers can harass, rape, divorce, and domestic violence. Countries with a higher share of women in parliament are more likely to pass comprehensive laws on these important matters, contributing to the advancement of gender equality and social justice. Furthermore, the presence of women in decision-making roles can have positive effects on various aspects of governance. Women's political inclusion challenges existing power structures promotes gender equality, and enhances democracy by increasing the number of women in parliament, curbing corruption, improving policy outcomes, and fostering inclusiveness of minority groups in public domains. The emphasis is that women in public life, including in legislative positions, may help reduce levels of corruption, influence

policy decisions, and contribute to more effective governance. That is to say, bills sponsored by women legislators have a transformative impact on society by addressing critical social issues, promoting gender equality, enhancing democratic processes, curbing corruption, and improving policy outcomes for the benefit of all members of society.

D. Achievements Made by Female Legislators in Legislative Activities

During the Senate Plenary on the 15th of November, 2016, a Bill to impose a mandate upon public hospitals and medical institutions was put forth by Moonsurat Sunmonu. The objective of this mandate was to ensure the prompt and immediate treatment of accident and gunshot victims, thereby eliminating the cumbersome bureaucratic processes associated with paperwork, such as the requirement of police reports and receipts for medical expenses. Having successfully navigated the legislative process, the motion was ultimately ratified as a Bill. After thorough scrutiny and receiving approval in all readings within both the Senate and the House of Representatives, in the annals of legislative history, it is duly recorded that the Bill, bearing profound implications for the governance of the land, was solemnly affixed with the signature of His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, in the waning days of December 29, 2017 [22].

The Domestic Violence Bill 94, which was successfully enacted into law, addressed the pressing issue of domestic violence within the societal framework; the Bill aims to proscribe all manifestations of violence against women within both public and private domains. Moreover, it seeks to eradicate detrimental socio-cultural norms perpetuated by various entities, including public, private, and traditional institutions, to eliminate gender-based stereotypes, biases, and archaic customary rituals. The speaker subsequently advanced the argument by asserting that the proposed National Women's Empowerment Fund, amounting to N1.6 billion, put forth by President Buhari, merits commendation and should be endowed with the necessary legal framework to establish mechanisms to guarantee its enduring viability. The proposed Bill aims to enhance the capabilities of the oil and gas agency by broadening its scope of responsibilities and authority to effectively address issues about oil and gas pollution within the petroleum sector.

Furthermore, the legislation imposes a compulsory requirement for oil industry operators in Nigeria to actively engage in membership with Clean Nigeria Associates (CAN) or any other Association designated by the Agency. The proposed legislation seeks to enhance existing protocols by mandating a comprehensive reporting mechanism for incidents involving gas leakages or oil spills. This system, which operates round the clock, allows for submitting incident reports through traditional means such as letter writing and modern channels like fax or e-mail. Failure to promptly report such occurrences by the responsible parties, namely the owners of gas pipelines or storage facilities or the individual. Given the extensive authority bestowed upon the Agency, which encompasses the ability to promulgate regulations, the passage of the Bill in its current iteration will undoubtedly yield substantial ramifications for the functioning of the oil

and gas sector. In the electoral proceedings of 2019, Ms Stella Oduah emerged triumphant in her bid to assume the position of representative for the Anambra North constituency within the Ninth Assembly. To date, Oduah, in conjunction with five fellow Senators, has put forth a motion advocating for establishing a Visionary Budget-Driven National Planning Framework for Nigeria.

In addition to her political endeavours, the individual in question has demonstrated her legislative acumen by sponsoring a series of bills. The Private Hospitals Regulation Bill 2019 seeks to establish regulations governing private healthcare facilities. Furthermore, she has put forth the Marriage Act (Repeal and Re-enactment) Bill of 2019, which aims to revise and update the existing legislation about marriage. Additionally, she has shown her commitment to local development by proposing the Nigerian Latin Village Ibadan (Est) Bill of 2019, which seeks to establish a designated area for Latin culture within Ibadan. Moreover, she has demonstrated her concern for protecting personal information by introducing the Protection of Personal Information Bill 2019. Furthermore, she has advocated for religious equity by sponsoring the National Religious Equity Commission (Est. etc.) Bill of 2019. Other notable bills she has sponsored include the South East Development Commission (Est. etc.) Bill of 2019, the Constituency Projects (Budgetary Provisions) Bill of 2019, and the Integrated Rural Development Agency (Est. etc.) Bill of 2019.

Nkeiruka Oyejeoch, a legislator initially assumed office as a representative for the Isuikwuato/Umunneochi federal constituency of Abia State in 2007. Her electoral success was reaffirmed through re-election in 2015 and 2019, solidifying her continued presence and influence within the political landscape. The individual in question consistently demonstrates exceptional intellectual prowess when deliberating on pivotal matters of national significance within the legislative body. Throughout the previous annum, she has sponsored numerous legislative proposals. She has proactively initiated motions aimed at enhancing the well-being of the common populace while concurrently ensuring the preservation of their fundamental entitlements. The individual in question has demonstrated her legislative process by sponsoring several bills. Notable among these is the National Youth Service Corps Act (Amendment) Bill of 2019, which seeks to introduce modifications to the existing legislation governing the National Youth Service Corps.

Additionally, she has put forth the Nigerian Assets Management Agency (Establishment) Bill of 2019, aimed at the creation of an agency responsible for the management of Nigerian assets. The aforementioned legislative proposals include the Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria Act (Amendment) Bill, 2019, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (Alteration) Bill, 2019, the Loans (State Development) (Repeal) Bill, 2019, and the National Eye Centre Act (Amendment) Bill, 2019 [23].

In exercising their parliamentary duties, the Deputy Chief Whip of the House, Ibrahim Gobir put forth several motions of significance. Among these motions was one that

called for an investigation into the recurring incidents of accidental discharges by security personnel to prevent the unfortunate loss of innocent Nigerian lives. Additionally, another motion was presented, emphasising the necessity of providing adequate security measures for judicial officers within the nation.

An additional figure of notable prominence individuals such as Tolulope Akande within the legislature has garnered notable acclaim within the federal legislature for her relentless approach to engaging with the executive branch during committee meetings. Over the previous year, she has assumed a prominent role in diaspora affairs, cultivating a more harmonious and mutually beneficial rapport between Nigeria and its expatriate populace. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated unwavering commitment to combatting the grave issues of human trafficking, organ trafficking, and the mistreatment of Nigerians residing abroad. She has actively participated in the legislative and diaspora spheres within the Ninth House and has made notable contributions. Among her achievements, she successfully initiated a motion to investigate the significance of Nigeria's diaspora remittances and their implications for the nation's economy.

Additionally, she spearheaded a motion addressing the recent incidents of violence targeting Nigerian traders in Circle Market, Ghana. The individual in question assumed the responsibility of introducing a proposal concerning the imperative release of mistreated Nigerian women who find themselves trapped in Lebanon, unable to return to their homeland. Furthermore, they proposed an alteration to a motion aimed at addressing the distressing issue of sexual harassment endured by children and minors. Lastly, they suggested an amendment to a motion concerning the prevailing state of insecurity in Zamfara State, advocating for its extension to encompass the entirety of the nation. Her legislative endeavours encompassed a notable intervention during a plenary session concerning the pressing matter of xenophobia. In this context, she fervently implored the federal government to establish supplementary air transportation avenues, facilitating the expeditious evacuation of Nigerian nationals stranded within South Africa's confines.

Blessing Onuh made a significant contribution to the discourse surrounding the contemporary surge in incidents of sexual violence targeting women and girls. Specifically, she put forth an amendment that sought to establish a framework wherein security officers could be held accountable for their complicity in facilitating and supporting perpetrators of rape. In addition to her legislative duties, the individual under examination demonstrated her commitment to humanitarian causes by actively supporting a petition on the legislative floor. This petition sought the rescue of four Nigerian individuals who had gone missing in the regions of Cameroon and Gabon [24].

Furthermore, she undertook an appeal to the Saudi Government, urging them to secure the release of Sulaimon Olufemi, an individual who had been unjustly confined to death row in Saudi Arabia, his plight having been regrettably overlooked. The person influenced the legislative mandates of

the Diaspora committee, steering their focus towards the acknowledgement and execution of oversight tasks that correspond with evolving worldwide conditions. The convening of an oversight hearing featuring the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) serves as a platform for scholarly examination and analysis of the commission's operational strategies in the diaspora. The conduct of an investigative hearing involving pertinent agencies the individual in question has actively initiated communication with the pertinent authorities regarding Nigerian nationals who are presently incarcerated at the Maca Prison, located in Yipogan Town, Abidjan, Côte D'ivoire. Furthermore, they have also undertaken efforts to engage the relevant agencies about the Nigerian girls who have been recently discovered to be victims of contemporary forms of enslavement in the nations of Lebanon and Oman.

E. Impacts of Women in the National Assembly

The impacts of women in Nigeria's National Assembly have been significant, despite their low representation. Women have played crucial roles in shaping legislative agendas, advocating for gender-sensitive policies, and addressing issues affecting women and marginalized groups in the country. This will be discussed along with societal, political, economic and future implications. The societal impact of women in Nigeria's National Assembly has been significant, despite their limited number. Women's participation in the National Assembly has contributed to legislative activities, promoted gender equality, and addressed issues affecting women and marginalized groups in Nigeria. One such area is legislative contributions. Also, female legislators have sponsored bills that have had a significant impact on the lives of all Nigerians. For example, the Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill, although rejected, was moved to the Committee on Judiciary and Legal Matters, Human Rights and Women Affairs [25]. However, the bill highlighted the need for legislative action to address gender disparities. Moreover, women in the National Assembly have advocated for gender equality, pushing for affirmative action, specific legislative seats for women at federal and state levels, and constitutional amendments to achieve greater gender inclusivity in politics.

To this effect, female legislators have used their positions to address issues affecting women, children, and other marginalized groups in Nigeria. They have sponsored bills and motions to tackle gender-based violence, promote maternal and child health, and improve access to education and economic opportunities for women in addition to the mentorship and support roles that experienced female legislators have been providing to young women aspiring to enter politics. This has helped to build a pipeline of future female leaders and ensure the sustainability of women's political participation in Nigeria thereby increasing the presence and representation of women in the National Assembly, though low, has increased the visibility and representation of women in Nigerian politics.

Female legislators have championed bills and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality, women's rights, and social development. For example, the Temporary Special

Measures bill in the 9th Assembly, which aimed to increase the number of women in government, had strong support from female legislators and women's rights campaigners. Also, women in the National Assembly have been at the forefront of advocating for women's empowerment and gender parity. They have pushed for affirmative action, specific legislative seats for women at federal and state levels, and constitutional amendments to achieve greater gender inclusivity in politics. They have used their positions to address issues affecting women, children, and other marginalized groups in Nigeria. They have sponsored bills and motions to tackle gender-based violence, promote maternal and child health, and improve access to education and economic opportunities for women.

Economically, women in Nigeria, including their role in the National Assembly are crucial for driving economic growth, promoting gender equality, and achieving sustainable development goals. Efforts to enhance women's entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, and representation in leadership positions are essential for harnessing the full potential of women in the Nigerian economy. Nigerian women play a crucial role in entrepreneurship, accounting for 41% of ownership of micro-businesses in the country. This high level of female entrepreneurship, although often driven by necessity, places Nigeria among the highest entrepreneurship rates globally. In other words, the impact of the female labour force on the economic growth of Nigeria analyzes the relationship between female labour force participation and economic growth. Thereby accelerating women's economic participation improves national economies, household productivity, living standards, and overall well-being.

As such, the impacts of women in Nigeria's National Assembly are significant and far-reaching. As women continue to make strides in political representation and legislative contributions, their influence has shaped the country's political landscape and societal outcomes in the period of this study. So far, with the notable contributions of women lawmakers in the National Assembly, they have achieved significant strides in gender equality legislation, policies that promote women's rights and initiatives that empower women economically and socially [26]. This has led to more consciousness of the capability of women towards an equitable society. Again, women legislators prioritize issues affecting marginalized groups, such as children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. The female lawmakers in the National Assembly have initiated better policies and programs that cater to the needs of these vulnerable populations. Thus, as women continue to make meaningful contributions to legislative activities, their presence and input have led to more effective and responsive lawmaking. The bills and motions championed by female legislators keep impacting positively on the lives of all Nigerians.

F. Challenges to Women Legislators in Nigeria's National Assembly

Parliaments are comprised of individuals who are chosen or elected to serve as representatives of the people. Their primary responsibilities include enacting laws, effectively supervising the executive branch, and making sure that government policies and laws are in line with what the people

want and need. A parliament can only serve as a microcosm of society or an idealised version of it if it is a reflection of the people. Citizens are encouraged and guaranteed to participate in political processes by robust parliaments. Some have argued that, as equal citizens, women should have the same access to public decision-making roles as men to eliminate the gender gap. One measure of a state's political representation is the number of women serving in parliament. The number of women who hold parliamentary positions is influenced by electoral systems. So, compared to parliaments chosen by plurality or majority, legislative assemblies excluded from PR systems have double the number of women.

The global proportion of women in the world's voting chambers inched up to 26.9 per cent on the back of elections and appointments. The growth was smaller than the increase in 2022, but slower than the two prior, in both 2021 and 2020, as Nigeria ranked among the bottom five countries globally for women's representation in the legislature [27]. In Nigeria, women are stereotyped as being primarily responsible for household duties, such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for children and spouses. Some hold the view that women should stay out of politics due to the perceived difficulty of the tasks required, such as planning the platforms, rallies, and other aspects of a political campaign. Still, some females are hellbent on running for office. This is because; they believe that as women they are capable of contributing to national development like the males if given the chance. They are certain that they can likewise overcome the obstacles and achieve greater success.

The restoration to democracy on May 29, 1999, resulted in just three women being elected to the Senate, which has 109 members, while twelve women were elected to the House of Representatives, which has 360 seats. There had been progress by 2003, with four women serving in the Senate and twenty-one in the House of Representatives. An additional eight women were elected to the Senate in 2007, bringing the total number of women in Congress to twenty-eight. 208 On the other hand, since 2007, the 58 representation of women has never been greater [28]. In 2011, the number of female senators dropped to seven. With an average age of 50, the House of Representatives had 19 members in 2015 compared to the Senate's 8 female senators. In the House of Representatives, the number of women has dropped back down to 1999 level, with only twelve elected, after the 2019 elections. However, there were still eight women in the Senate. There has been no improvement in female representation throughout Nigeria's 20 years of unbroken democracy.

In the 2019 general election, out of 1,543 elected government officials, only 68 were women, constituting less than 5% of the total. Even though there were six female presidential contenders and there was a call for younger candidates and newer political perspectives, women were even more sidelined in the 2019 general election. Nonetheless, the idea that women are still unable to compete was bolstered by the fact that all six female presidential contenders withdrew in the months leading up to the vote. The number of women running for Senate in 2019 was 232, or 12.3% of the total [29]. With 17 candidates each, the two major political parties—the

People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the governing All Progressives Congress (APC)—showed their feminine side. Each of the two major political parties in Nigeria sent an official to the polls; two representatives from the APC and six from the PDP were chosen. There were 533 female candidates for the House of Representatives, with 31 from the APC and 31 from the PDP. Twelve people were elected to the House of Representatives; nine of them were APC candidates, two were PDP candidates, and one was from the All-Progressives Grand Alliance, which received two seats in total. Although it is statistically difficult to get onto the ticket of a major party, doing so greatly improves women's prospects of winning.

Nigerian legislators have tried to guarantee women's participation in elected posts and create a more gender-fair political environment. Although bills to domesticate the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) came before the National Assembly 59 (NASS) in 2002 and 2007, there is no evidence to show that significant input was made towards achieving this in the 4th and 5th Assemblies (between 1999 and 2007) [30]. One of the main challenges that women in Nigeria face while trying to become involved in politics is the income gap. Women with limited financial resources, regardless of their ability, face significant challenges in Nigeria's money-based political landscape, in addition to other obstacles such as patriarchy, cultural and religious gender restrictions, gender stereotyping, and electoral violence. There is already a lack of sponsorship opportunities for young women in Nigerian politics because of the patriarchal and mostly age-defined nature of the country's political landscape.

In 2019, Ndi Kato spent more than N4 million on her campaign, only for the expression of interest stage, when she contested for the Kaduna State House of Assembly in the Jema'a Constituency. It is difficult to get on the ballot in Nigeria due to the lack of a robust institutional structure regulating campaign spending. When these challenges arise, many women choose to run for office on the ticket of smaller parties, which lowers their overall electoral prospects. After boldly leading the APC Young Women's Forum (APC-YWF), Rinsola Abiola switched allegiances to the Action Democratic Party (ADP). She spoke out against the APC's anti-democratic primary procedures while serving as Speaker Yakubu Dogara's Special Assistant on New Media. Despite losing the general election, Rinsola stood for the House of Representatives in Ogun State's Abeokuta North/Obafemi Owode/Odeda Federal Constituency on the ADP platform. Rinsola said, "My problem is not with APC at the national level" when asked about her departure from the APC. Everything in politics is on a local level. We are fighting for the inclusion of young people and women, but I fear that if we tolerate this oppression now, we will be able to do the same thing to the generations who follow us. Aside from cultural and religious constraints, gender stereotypes also play a significant role in preventing women from running for office in Nigeria. According to studies on gender stereotypes, many young women below 60 years stay away from public spaces because people question the morality of women in leadership roles. This is a useful tool for the current political power brokers to maintain their influence. Fearlessly venturing into

this realm exposes one to the tried-and-true obstacles of sexism, ageism, patriarchy, religion, culture, and the almost insurmountable issue of dismantling longstanding political systems that serve to maintain power.

A male-centric view of leadership persists in the majority of Nigerian cultural and religious organisations. Cultural and religious organisations have a significant impact on the prevalence of male-dominated leadership roles. Regarding leadership, the majority of Nigerian political parties adhere to this patriarchal philosophy. As a result, women who want to run for office face bias. Within their political party, the majority of female candidates who ran in earlier elections experienced some kind of prejudice. There is persistent sexism and misogyny even among political party women, who tell young women they should establish a family first or wait for their turn. This bias might also originate from more senior women who aspire to the same position. The cultural norm that places the married status of a woman above everything else is a major contributor to this. Party caucuses and elections are often conducted at night in seedy areas where 'decent' women are not expected to be present, exacerbating the prejudice that young women face in the political sphere.

The major political parties have entrenched a primary system that inherently makes the emergence of women and young candidates near impossible. Women encountered supplementary challenges outside party politics, such as pervasive violence during elections, intimidation, electoral fraud, and vote-buying. As an APC candidate for the Orlu, Orsu, and Oru East Federal Constituency in Imo State, Christina Eligwe-Ude said, "I faced a lot of threats up till election day." She had previously worked as a UN consultant. "The experience was exhausting and depressing because it's money politics." Mrs Eligwe-Ude said this after leaving the APC to run for office under the Social Democratic Party (SDP). In a phone call interview, 39 year-old woman named Natasha Akpoti who ran for governor of Kogi state spoke on the issues she encountered particularly governmental repression, bullying, personal attacks by thugs and rigging during the voting process. The speaker said, "We already knew this was going to happen" because just a small number of women made it 61 through the main parties' primary, the most crucial election of the year. As to Dr Ezekwesili, one of six female presidential candidates in 2019, "On numerous occasions, women and young individuals faced intimidation or threats compelling them to withdraw, or they were systematically screened out and substituted with their male counterparts.

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During the YIAGA session, some young women who were running for office shared their stories of betrayal at the hands of party agents who had been paid off. The campaign manager for a female candidate in a North-Central seat attempted to use the donor's desire to support her campaign based on her gender. He intended to undermine my prospects after learning about my candidature via the election. She made it clear that he was keeping the donations made to her campaign in his pocket. Another South-West candidate was the victim of sexual harassment at the hands of a state governor who, in a very arrogant manner, told her how fortunate she was and offered her "the whole society" as a reward for becoming his mistress. A woman in her mid-twenties, one of the youngest female applicants at the reflection meeting, was 62 disadvantaged due to her marriage status and her advanced age. She was brutally assaulted for just refusing to engage in sexual relations with a sexual predator, who had before offered her support but now threatened to keep attacking her if she did not.

G. Challenges of Women in Legislative Process

Women have been significantly underrepresented in the National Assembly, with only a small number of female legislators compared to their male counterparts. This low representation has hindered the ability of women to effectively advocate for more women's participation in politics and influence policy decisions. For instance, gender discrimination remains a significant barrier to women's leadership opportunities as women legislators face resistance and bias from some of their conservative male counterparts, political dynamics, and competing legislative priorities, which often impede the progress of gender-related bills in the National Assembly. This resistance can hinder the passage and implementation of legislation aimed at promoting gender equality. In March 2022, the Nigerian National Assembly rejected five gender bills that sought to advance women's rights and increase their representation in politics. This setback demonstrated the lack of political will to address gender inequality in the country.

In another analysis, the participation of women in the legislative process in Nigeria has been fraught with various challenges, stemming from deep-rooted societal norms, cultural attitudes, institutional barriers, religion, media bullying, thuggery, intimidation and political structures.

Despite efforts to promote women's empowerment, significant disparities persist in women's representation in Nigerian politics, particularly within legislative bodies such as the National Assembly and state houses of assembly. Understanding these challenges is crucial for addressing the systemic barriers that hinder women's full participation in the legislative process. Some challenges stem from a lack of understanding of gender-related bills and their importance. This lack of awareness can contribute to the failure to prioritize gender equality initiatives and hinder the passage of critical legislation. This is a result of insufficient awareness and limited support for gender-related bills which impede progress in advancing women's rights and empowerment in Nigeria.

Male-dominated institutions within political parties and legislative bodies such as the Nigerian National Assembly reinforce gender inequalities and limit women's representation. As well as lack of gender-sensitive policies and practices within legislative institutions perpetuates the marginalization of women lawmakers has led to slow progress in affirmative action measures and impedes efforts to increase women's representation in politics and in their capacity to make viable laws in Nigeria. Despite constitutional provisions guaranteeing gender equality and non-discrimination, enforcement mechanisms are weak, and legal protections are often not effectively implemented. Thus, inadequate representation of women in legislative bodies limits their influence in shaping policies that address gender-based discrimination and promote women's rights.

Consequently, women find themselves marginalised in both elective and political appointments, as political parties neglect to nominate them as candidates. The electorate, heavily swayed by societal gender stereotypes, ultimately tends to favour male candidates in their voting decisions. The limited engagement of women in the political sphere can be attributed to a multitude of factors, including cultural constraints that are sustained and reinforced by patriarchal norms, which position women on the periphery and dictate that they should be seen rather than heard. Additionally, prevailing cultural perceptions diminish the dignity and value of women, leading society to regard them as inferior to men. The political landscape is marked by disparities that hinder the active engagement of women. Women who engage in politics frequently encounter an environment that is often unwelcoming in terms of political, cultural, and social dynamics. Political violence has become a prominent feature in Nigerian politics, with numerous politicians employing this tactic to secure electoral success. This alarming trend deters many women from participating and renders the political landscape exceedingly hostile.

Security-wise, women in Nigeria have been playing significant roles in national security despite cultural, religious, and demographic challenges facing them. Because women are the most affected by uncertainties and different types of insecurities in all the geographical regions of Nigeria; including the Federal Capital Territory. Insurgency and insecurity often exacerbate gender inequalities and pose specific risks to women and girls, including sexual violence,

forced displacement, and restricted access to resources and services. Women legislators advocate for policies that promote women's active participation in politics, protect women's rights, and ensure their meaningful participation in decision-making processes related to peace and security. Even though women are the most affected when it comes to the issue of security, they seem overlooked compared to their male counterparts in decision-making when it comes to finding solutions to violence and physical insecurity in Nigeria. For instance, Nigerian female legislators under the aegis of the Women in Parliament (WIP) Committee of the National Assembly have raised concern over increasing challenge because, at the hearing of the bill, it is the same male who usually votes against it.

Another lawmaker stated that legislators need one another because males and females have their respective roles in the law-making chambers, and women have their uniqueness, which is why they are part of the system. Women have proven themselves not to be cheerleaders but formidable team members working for a common goal. This is seen during the election period, where their turnout is massive and encouraging as the burden of familial obligations has been identified as a significant barrier to women's engagement in the political sphere; the majority of these responsibilities are disproportionately shouldered by women, as societal norms regarding the division of labour tend to compel men to abdicate domestic duties entirely to their female counterparts. This presents a hindrance to political engagement. Additional practices that obstruct women's engagement in politics encompass late-night meetings, patron-client relationships, derogatory labelling, exclusive male networks, and the balance of religious representation within governance structures. Although the Nigerian government has ratified numerous international instruments aimed at promoting women's participation in politics, none have been integrated into domestic law; this represents a significant barrier to engagement. The imposition of cultural and traditional practices that reinforce male dominance has significantly obstructed women's advancement towards achieving gender equality in the political sphere. They encounter numerous obstacles, such as conflict, intimidation, societal stereotypes, a negative perception of women engaged in politics, and insufficient backing from the electorate.

In Nigeria, women in politics navigate a predominantly male-dominated political landscape. In numerous instances, there exists a deficiency in political party backing, coupled with an absence of access to high-calibre education and training necessary for participation in the political arena. It has been posited by some men that women possess an inherent apolitical nature; however, this assertion is unfounded, as women both in contemporary society and historically have demonstrated a capacity to engage with and leverage political structures. Margaret Ekpo, Gambo Sawaba, Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, and the women of Aba and Ibibio during the 1929 war exemplified remarkable political engagement. The colonial administration's favouritism towards men and the consequent sidelining of women significantly bolstered male dominance, ultimately undermining women's presence in Nigeria's political arena.

The colonial administration systematically dismantled existing female political frameworks within the society, substituting them with entirely male-dominated structures and roles. Their policies regarding masculinity progressively diminished the domains that women previously inhabited in the pre-colonial period, allowing men to undermine the political framework. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that numerous women struggle with the self-assurance required for leadership roles. They have internalised the conventional notion that men inherently possess leadership qualities, leading them to believe they are at a disadvantage in electoral contests, which raises the question: why even enter the race? They ask; as such looking through 1999, the seats were mostly occupied by women from the South and West but not from the North because their husbands did not give them the support they needed, it is a problem as a vacuum from the Northern representative is created due to religion, traditions and beliefs.

The notion that women are adversaries to one another is frequently employed to dissuade female engagement in the political sphere. A significant political challenge that adversely affects women is the media's insufficient engagement in providing appropriate coverage for female politicians. In a discussion with a media aide, he asserts that the media has not adequately safeguarded the achievements and possibilities of women politicians. They tend to depict women in roles such as makeup artists, designers of clothes, film actors, spouses, both virtuous and flawed wives, homewreckers, sorceresses, malevolent figures, style aficionados, and nurturing educators or carers, thus reinforcing the prevailing stereotypes within society. Conversely, women have yet to fully recognise the significance of media relations. They fail to recognise that the strategic investment in media coverage serves as a significant mechanism employed by men to maintain their advantageous positions. Effective media representation significantly contributes to electoral success.

Within the hierarchy of power, there exists a notable inverse relationship between the elevation within the pyramid and the representation of women. President Olusegun Obasanjo endeavoured to address this disparity during his initial term by appointing nine women to ministerial and advisory positions out of a total of 44. In the initial phase of the Fourth Republic, states such as Ogun and several others were devoid of any female commissioners. In 2003, there were improvements in opportunities for women, albeit modest ones. Although many political parties eliminated the fees for female candidates, the reaction from women in politics did not align with the possibilities presented by this change. Two women vied for the presidency, while two others sought the Vice-Presidential position. None of them secured an election.

The security agencies appear to be struggling to effectively address the criminal undertakings of armed robbers, kidnappers, militants, assassins, and, more recently, the terrorist actions associated with the Boko Haram group. Currently, a significant number of Nigerians exist in a state of apprehension. Numerous governmental entities in Nigeria are appealing to armed factions and individuals who have transgressed the fundamental rights of countless Nigerians to

consider the option of amnesty. The constitutional provision of the right to life as articulated in section 33 mandates an obligation for the government to preserve and protect lives. The Federal government has demonstrated a significant shortcoming in this regard. The Transition Monitoring Group has urged the government to promptly reassess and execute the Uwais panel report to establish equitable conditions for the 2015 general elections. The government ought to adhere to the principles of the rule of law, ensuring the autonomy of the judiciary and the National Assembly is upheld. Any member of the INEC board with affiliations to a political party must be dismissed to ensure the autonomy of the Independent National Electoral Commission.

IV. CONCLUSION

The present paper examines the noteworthy contributions of female legislators within the legislative activities from 1999 to 2023 in the National Assembly. Furthermore, it elucidates the consequential impact engendered within Nigerian society as a direct consequence of the bills sponsored by these elected women during their tenure in the National Assembly. The study has thoroughly endeavoured to elucidate the circumstances surrounding women's involvement in politics and their access to other leadership positions. The investigation commenced by delving into the historical aspect of women, specifically examining their exclusion from political engagement despite their demonstrated interest dating back to the period of colonial rule. The manifestation of gender-based discrimination leading to the exploitation of women can be attributed to a multitude of interrelated factors. These factors encompass a wide range of influences, including entrenched traditions, cultural norms, and the prevailing dominance of men in the generation and allocation of resources. The imperative of incorporating women into developmental endeavours on a global scale garnered significant attention, thereby catalysing proactive measures within African nations, most notably Nigeria. Subsequently, successive administrations in power have exhibited remarkable dedication towards this pursuit.

To get more women involved in politics and government in Nigeria, political parties, which are the only way to get into political office, should make it legal to have a certain percentage of women on their candidate lists, use a more open process for choosing candidates for elections, create a women's section in political parties where a lot of women are in charge, and educate and raise awareness among voters about women's rights. Keeping women out of the economy and politics goes against the values of democratic government and a free market economy. Our society is worse off without educated and active women because they are responsible for raising the next generation. Young people must take the lead in breaking down barriers to female empowerment. Women have nothing to lose by getting involved in social, economic, and policy issues, but they have much to gain. Efforts have been made to make sure that women are represented at all levels of government.

As a result, many countries that believe in fair democratic representation now recognise representation as a basic human right. So far, affirmative action, the quota system (where a certain number of positions are set aside for women), and

presidential appointments have been the main ways to fix the inequities between men and women in the private and public sectors (in the case of parliament and cabinet). It is thought that once equality for women has become the norm, these roles will be won through a public process. According to this view, rather than focusing on women's strengths and weaknesses, the solution to the underrepresentation of women in politics lies in altering the structure of political institutions. Therefore, this method places the onus for addressing the problem of inadequate political representation of women and women's problems firmly on these establishments. Like other jurisdictions, Nigeria may achieve the necessary ability to support the revolution for women with increased political will by the government and initiatives by political parties, lawmakers, and civil society organisations. But it will take a while to get to that point because women face many problems in public places. In the same way, Nigerian women must make their own culture that goes against the deeply rooted traditions that say what women should or shouldn't do or be, especially in an African setting. At this point, it's important to say that countries worldwide are trying to close the gender gap in politics. But in Nigeria, even though the number of women in government has gone up, it is still very low compared to what happens in other countries, especially in developed countries. As it stands, there are still not that many women ministers in Nigeria. There's no doubt that Nigerian women have some rights and abilities that could help their country grow and improve.

Therefore, Nigeria's government must ensure that women have equal access to and participation in democratic decision-making. It's important to recognise that women's traditional roles as homemakers have far-reaching effects on their service obligations and that this fact cannot be minimised. Women have an unrivalled ability to make any situation better with only a touch. Most people haven't supported several bills and issues related to women. This is often because citizens or key stakeholders outside of NASS who could have weighed in on these bills did not know enough or had the wrong information. Sponsors and supporters of women's issues bills need to expand their campaigns around these bills to persuade their colleagues and bring the general public into the conversation about the issues surrounding them. For example, inside and outside the NASS, there was opposition to the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill because of misunderstandings about the law's purpose and scope. Public awareness campaigns will also help lawmakers and the general public understand how important these bills are and why they must be passed. The same thing happened to the Sexual Offences Bill 2013, which was passed by the Senate in 2015 but was criticised by public commentators for supposedly trying to change the definition of a child and lower the age of consent for sexual offences. Some parts of the bill were misunderstood, which hurt its reputation. A lot of the backlash could have been avoided if there had been more education and use of the media.

Female lawmakers who want to push bills about better women's representation in politics and other women's issues should have the help they need to get these bills through the Assembly and be ready to defend their contents. This is important because it has been seen that legislators, both men

and women, will often get a bill to its First Reading but then forget to schedule it for Second Readings, Third Readings, etc. Also, it has been said that some proposed bills are too hard to understand or go against other laws, which makes them harder to pass. Lawmakers have been known to ignore suggestions to improve them by hiring legal experts and bill drafters, which hurts the bill. Because of this, it is very helpful to give female legislators ongoing training to make laws and lobby strategically. Working with civil society groups, think tanks, and experts can also be helpful, as can sharing experiences with female legislators from other African parliaments where best practices have been used to pass laws about women's issues. In Nigeria, running for office outside of a political party is illegal. Therefore, membership in a political party is required for any level of elected office in Nigeria. Given this context, political parties must adopt the following strategies to enhance the involvement of women in governmental roles:

- The government should mandate that political parties field a certain number of female candidates for office. Depending on the political party, this might be a required or suggested quota for women. As part of this process, a regulatory body should be implemented to oversee compliance and non-compliance and enforce penalties following the statute of the relevant regulatory agency.
- There must be internal party democracy to encourage a more welcoming environment free of intimidation, sexual harassment, hate speech, and forced patron-client relationships between political leaders and aspirants to increase women's active engagement. As a result, the consolidation of democratic ideals and the promotion of political fairness need more open, credible, and fair nomination procedures free of frequently replacing candidates' names during and after party primaries.
- Political parties should invest in training and mentoring for women in the party, particularly those women who want to run for governor. Their sense of agency and self-assurance will both get a boost from this action. Female politicians with greater experience would inspire newcomers, and mentoring them would bring out their natural leadership skills.
- To encourage women to run for office and succeed in elections, providing them with a foundation in politics and a new perspective on the values that guide their actions is essential.
- To educate women and the general public about their rights and the need for women's engagement in politics, political parties may host sensitization programmes on social media such as radio, television, and online platforms, as well as at social gatherings and meetings.

Political parties should establish formal women's sections to encourage more women to become involved. Through this internal process, the party may attract more women. The obstacles women face in the party and government and suggestions for overcoming them are well discussed. It would encourage women to participate in leadership development programmes, provide seminars and symposia where attendees could learn about and practice leadership techniques, and help them become stronger individuals and more effective leaders.

With the help of this internal structure, female party members may develop to the point where they can run for office and win with the backing of their political parties. Therefore, this paper, the study of women's representation in Nigeria's National Assembly from 1999 to 2023 underscores the need for concerted efforts to achieve gender parity in politics. While there have been some positive developments, significant challenges remain. Addressing these requires a multifaceted approach that includes legal reforms, cultural change, financial support, and protection against violence. By implementing these strategies, Nigeria can move towards a more inclusive and equitable political system where women have an equal opportunity to contribute to governance and decision-making.

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