

Dual Burden: Endogenous and Exogenous Obstacles to Women's Political Participation in Nigeria

By

Damian U Attah (Ph.D)
Do Take Action

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Makinde Emmanuel Tunde (Ph.D)
Nile University of Nigeria, Abuja.

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Ngozi Obeta ANADI (Ph.D)
Nile University of Nigeria, Abuja.

Abstract

The results of the last three general elections in Nigeria have shown a low turnout of women in elective positions. Previous studies have linked the low turnout of women in elections to socio-cultural discrimination and the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society, ignoring the role of political parties and other endogenous factors in promoting women participation in politics in Nigeria. Despite extensive research and funding aimed at increasing women's participation in politics, recent off-cycle elections and by-elections conducted after the 2023 general elections revealed a low turnout of women vying for elective positions. This study adopted a mixed-method research design, utilizing a survey population of (n-1000) women respondents and reviewing documents on women's political participation. Documentary data were analyzed using content analysis, while survey data was analyzed using descriptive analysis. The study was grounded in the theoretical framework of socialist Marxist theory, which x-rays the influence of capitalism and patriarchal dominance in understanding issues related to the political domination of women in society. The findings indicate that, despite the widespread belief that exogenous factors such as culture, religion, and political party exclusion are the primary barriers to women's political participation, endogenous factors, such as a lack of personal interest, also significantly hinder women's involvement in politics. The study recommends that political education and enlighten programs be implemented to boost women's interest in politics at all levels.

Keywords: Political participation, Political Party, Culture, patriarchal nature, Endogenous Factors, Exogenous factors

Introduction

Previous studies on the reasons for low women participation have relied on data from Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to establish that women are less represented in both elective and appointed positions in Nigeria. Other studies on low representation of women in elective positions in Nigeria look at the impacts of socio-cultural, religious and economic factors promoting low political participation in Nigeria. The above studies are classified as studies who looked into the exogenous factors while factors which constitute the endogenous factors like personal convictions have remained unattended.

Women make up nearly half of Nigeria's population, yet their representation and inclusion in governance, education, economic activities, and leadership roles fall far short of their demographic strength (World Bank Group, 2019). The right to political participation is one of the fundamental human rights recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in section 40 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Despite the enactment of local and regional laws, the ratification of international treaties, and the development of policy frameworks such as the National Gender Policy—designed to promote women's participation in politics—significant achievements have not been made in this regard. Factors hindering women's participation remain pronounced and persistent.

More than a decade of intellectual efforts, policy initiatives, and advocacy campaigns to promote women's participation in politics in Nigeria—both in elective and appointive positions—have yielded limited success. The results have been marked by indifference and only marginal progress, as less than 10% of women were elected to various positions nationally following the 2023 general elections (Adebayo & Molatokunbo, 2023).

Also, data from INEC and other open sources reveal a persistently low level of women's participation in both elective and appointive political positions in the country. Women made up 47.5% of the 93.5 million registered voters in the 2023 elections; however, only 10.1% of the candidates cleared by INEC were women (INEC, 2023). Their representation in the National and State Assemblies remains minimal. Data from INEC and other open sources show persistently low participation of women in both elective and appointed political positions in the country. Women constituted 47.5% of the 93.5 million registered voters in the 2023 elections, yet only 10.1% of the candidates cleared by INEC were women (INEC, 2023). Their representation in the National and State Assemblies remains minimal. For instance, only 69 women were elected across federal and state levels. Specifically, just four women were elected to the Senate, constituting 3.6%, while 17 women were elected to the House of Representatives, making up 4.7%. Six women emerged as deputy governors. In total, the 36 states have 988 House of Assembly members. Out of these 988 state assembly seats, only 48 female lawmakers representing 4.85% were elected in the recently concluded elections, (Daily Trust, 2023).

The low participation of women in politics, particularly in vying for elective positions in Nigeria, has remained largely unaddressed. This is despite Nigeria's commitments to bridging the gender gap as a signatory to international instruments such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which advocates for 30% affirmative action, and the Maputo Protocol, which calls for 50-50 representation. Domestically, the National Gender Policy (NGP) recommends 35% affirmative action to ensure more inclusive representation and participation of women in public life (NGP, 2006).

This study recognizes the influence of endogenous factors, or what may be termed personal dispositions, in contributing to women's reluctance to participate in politics in Nigeria. This

indifference, even among elite women, women in career professionals, and women business executives, points to the existence of internal factors hindering women's political involvement. These factors remain under-researched, as many women, beyond cultural and religious influences, are convinced that politics is not meant for them.

Exogenous factors identified in research emphasize that the limited participation of women, particularly when compared to men, is not due to legislative restrictions, since no laws explicitly limit or ban women from contesting elective positions but rather stems from socio-economic foundations, cultural and religious beliefs, gender stereotypes, and the burden of unpaid domestic duties. In Nigeria, culture and religion are deeply intertwined and exert significant influence on society. The dominant cultures in Nigeria are patriarchal and often repressive toward women. These cultural norms not only dictate societal roles but also strategically allocate responsibilities and economic opportunities along gender lines. Many advocates of these cultural ideologies argue that a woman's place is in the "kitchen" or in other domestic roles. This gender-based allocation of economic roles has left women with limited financial resources for political campaigns and mobilization. As such, addressing these issues is crucial.

On the other hand, political participation is a choice, rooted in citizens' interest in the political environment and decision-making processes. It stems from an internal conviction to be part of the collective voice in the democratic process. Like any field traditionally perceived as male-dominated, political participation requires a personal conviction to break barriers. For instance, in the 1960s, the field of medicine was dominated by men, while nursing had more women. Recently, both professions have seen an influx of individuals from both genders, despite historical perceptions. However, there remains a prevailing belief among many women that nursing is

inherently more feminine. This same principle of personal conviction applies to political participation or career politics and in this study refers to women as endogenous.

Literature Review

There are several related studies that investigated the causes of women's low participation in politics in Nigeria. ElectHER (2023) researched on “*Nigeria 2023 Female Candidacy Analysis: Where are the Women?*”. The study carried out a systematic review of three elections (2015, 2019, 2023) to determine women participation. The study analyzed women participation in states, federal levels and also in both state and federal executive councils. The data analyzed found low women participation across all levels of governance in Nigeria.

Also, Iruke (2024) in “*Nigerian Women in Politics: 24years After the Return to Electoral Democracy*”. The study analyzed factors militating against women participation and struggles among women activist to boost political participation. The study adopted a documentary research design and found that cultural delineation, masculine domination are the key factors militating against women participation in politics

Furthermore, Agbalajobi (2013) Researched on “*Women’s participation and the political process in Nigeria: Problems and prospects*”. The study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilizing secondary data sourced from university libraries, newspapers, and academic journals to understand the reason for low women political participation. The study found that low women participation stems from cultural stereotypes, the misuse of religion, traditional customs, and patriarchal societal structures. Over time, Nigerian women have become frequent targets of various forms of violence, particularly when advocating for transformative political change.

Morestill, Oyoru (2023) in “Women Participation in Nigerian Politics: Challenges and Prospects to Nigerian Democracy”. The research utilized a descriptive survey design, selecting 200 respondents through random sampling from three local government areas in Ogun State. The participants represented a diverse group of women with varied occupations, educational levels, party affiliations, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds. Data were gathered using a questionnaire titled *Social Acceptance of Women Political Participation Questionnaire* (WPPQ, reliability coefficient $r = 0.74$). The study investigated the involvement of Nigerian women in politics and the factors restricting their full participation. Findings revealed that women’s low political participation was driven by factors such as marginalization, discrimination, ethnicity, religion, and the nature of post-colonial politics.

Gap in Literature

Most reviewed literature on the causes of low women participation have established the link between culture, religion and economy as inherent factors limiting women participation in politics in Nigeria. Other literatures like Iruka (2024) analyzed women participation without investigating the causes of low women participation in Nigeria. This study bridges the gap by looking at both exogenous and endogenous factors contributing to women political participation in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

In establishing a theoretical link to the causes of low level of women political participation in Nigeria, the socialist feminist theory offers a solid theoretical foundation to the socio-cultural causes of low women participation in politics in Nigeria. Social feminism, a branch of feminist theory, draws heavily on Karl Marx's analysis of capitalism, positing that women’s oppression is intrinsically tied to the gendered structures inherent in capitalist systems and private property (Armstrong & Elisabeth, 2020). Marx identified a division of labor, with men predominantly

engaging in paid, productive work and women shouldering unpaid, reproductive labor. This division, he argued, serves as a foundation for gender inequality in patriarchal societies. While Marxist feminism waned in prominence after the fall of communist regimes in the 1990s, its emphasis on the role of economic capital in shaping production, reproduction, and gender dynamics remains influential in feminist discourse (Bryson & Valerie, 2021).

Socialist feminists argue that women face exploitation within a dual system: capitalism and patriarchy. They reject the radical feminist view that patriarchy alone is the root cause of gender inequality, emphasizing instead how capitalism amplifies patriarchal structures. For example, financial dependence on men continues to hinder women's autonomy (Cruz & Katie, 2018). Marxist feminists often frame patriarchy as a byproduct of capitalism, suggesting that women's subjugation emerged with the rise of private property and traditional family structures. Friedrich Engels theorized that private property necessitated monogamous marriage to ensure property inheritance, marking a turning point in women's historical subordination (Engels, 1981). Consequently, Marxist feminism posits that the abolition of private property and capitalism would lead to the end of gender-based oppression (Armstrong & Elisabeth, 2020).

Socialist feminism, however, diverges by refusing to subsume feminism under broader class struggles. It explores the interplay between patriarchy and capitalism, noting that gender and class intersect to create unique forms of oppression (Marx & Friedrich, 1964). Women face compounded exploitation in the labor market: they are underpaid compared to men due to wage disparities, marginalized through patriarchal norms that undervalue their work, and further disadvantaged when racial and national inequalities come into play (Roback, 2013).

A key focus of Marxist and socialist feminists is the concept of social reproduction. This refers to unpaid domestic work, such as child-rearing and household chores, primarily undertaken by

women. While this labor sustains society and supports male workers, it is undervalued because it lacks exchange value within capitalist economies. This "invisible" work benefits men, who gain additional time for paid labor, and the capitalist system, which avoids compensating women for these essential contributions. In summary, Marxist and socialist feminists highlight how capitalism perpetuates a sexual division of labor, privileging men in productive roles while relegating women to undervalued reproductive tasks. They argue that gender equality is unattainable within a capitalist framework, as its structures inherently exploit women's labor in both public and private spheres.

Theoretical Application

Socialist feminism combines ideas from Marxism and radical feminism to explore how economic systems, societal norms, and patriarchal structures work together to oppress women. This perspective helps us understand why women face so many obstacles to participating in politics in Nigeria, a country where gender inequality is deeply connected to economic and social challenges.

One of the key points socialist feminists raise is how economic systems, particularly those tied to capitalism, unfairly disadvantage women. In Nigeria, poverty and economic inequality are major hurdles for women who want to enter politics. Running for office often requires significant financial resources, but many women, especially those working in informal or low-paying jobs, struggle to afford campaign costs or secure political nominations (Ekundayo, 2022). This economic inequality not only keeps women out of politics but also reflects a broader gender imbalance in society.

Cultural norms and traditional gender roles in Nigeria further limit women's political participation. Patriarchal systems often see women as caretakers rather than leaders, reinforcing stereotypes that

make it difficult for them to enter male-dominated political spaces. Women who try to break these barriers often face societal resistance and discriminatory practices within political parties, where they are less likely to be considered for leadership roles (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2021).

Socialist feminists also highlight how class and gender oppression intersect. Women from poor or rural backgrounds in Nigeria face additional challenges, such as limited access to education and healthcare. These barriers make it harder for them to understand their political rights or advocate for change. Even wealthier women, who might have more resources, still encounter gendered obstacles, though their financial status might provide some advantages (Aina, 2020).

Another issue socialist feminists' critique is the structural violence within Nigeria's political system. Corruption and political violence disproportionately affect women, discouraging them from participating. Politics in Nigeria is often driven by money, and there are few legal protections to ensure that women have equal opportunities to participate. This combination of factors keeps men in control of governance and further marginalizes women (Adetula, 2021).

By focusing on these interconnected issues, socialist feminism helps shed light on why women in Nigeria face such significant barriers in politics and what needs to change to create a more inclusive system.

METHODOLOGY

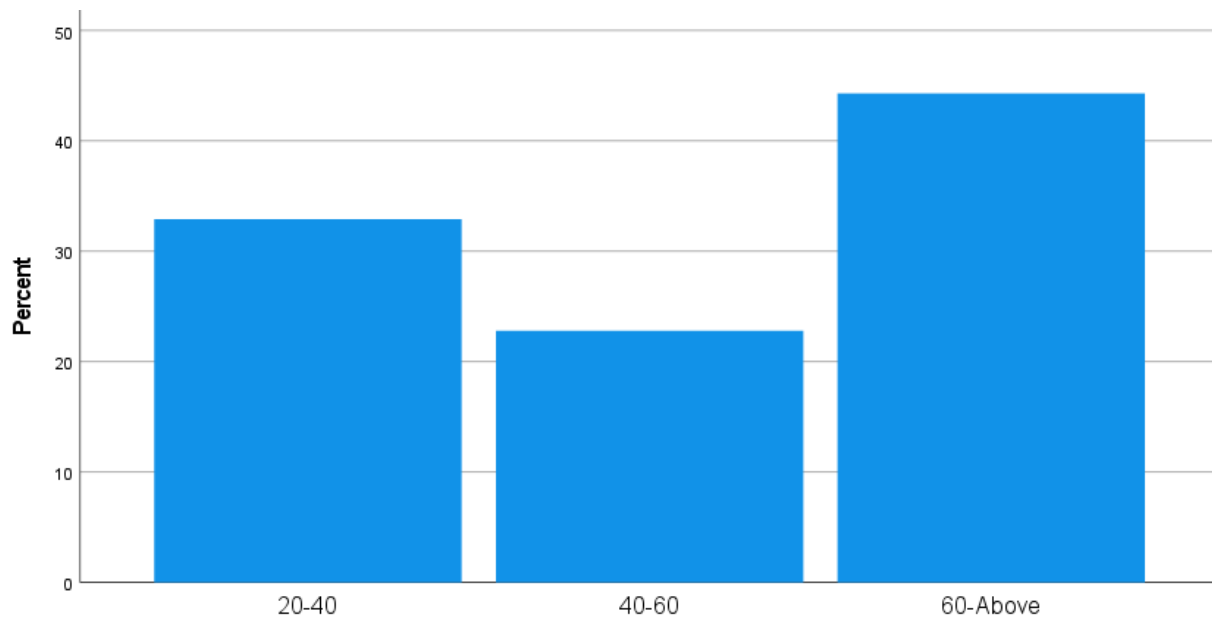
In this need for an assessment report of women's participation in politics in Nigeria, a mixed-method research design was adopted to integrate the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research, allowing for triangulation and a deeper understanding of complex social phenomena surrounding the subject matter (Creswell, 2014). This approach is particularly suitable for assessing the multifaceted barriers and enablers of women's political participation in Nigeria. A survey was

conducted in all the six (6) geo-political zones in Nigeria. A total of (n-1000) participants were involved. Documentary data from other secondary sources highlighting women's participation were used to strengthen the data collected through a survey. The data collected from the survey were analyzed using descriptive analysis, while content analysis was used in the documentary data collected from secondary sources, especially from the INEC repository, ElectHer etc.

Socio-Demographic Profiles of the Respondents

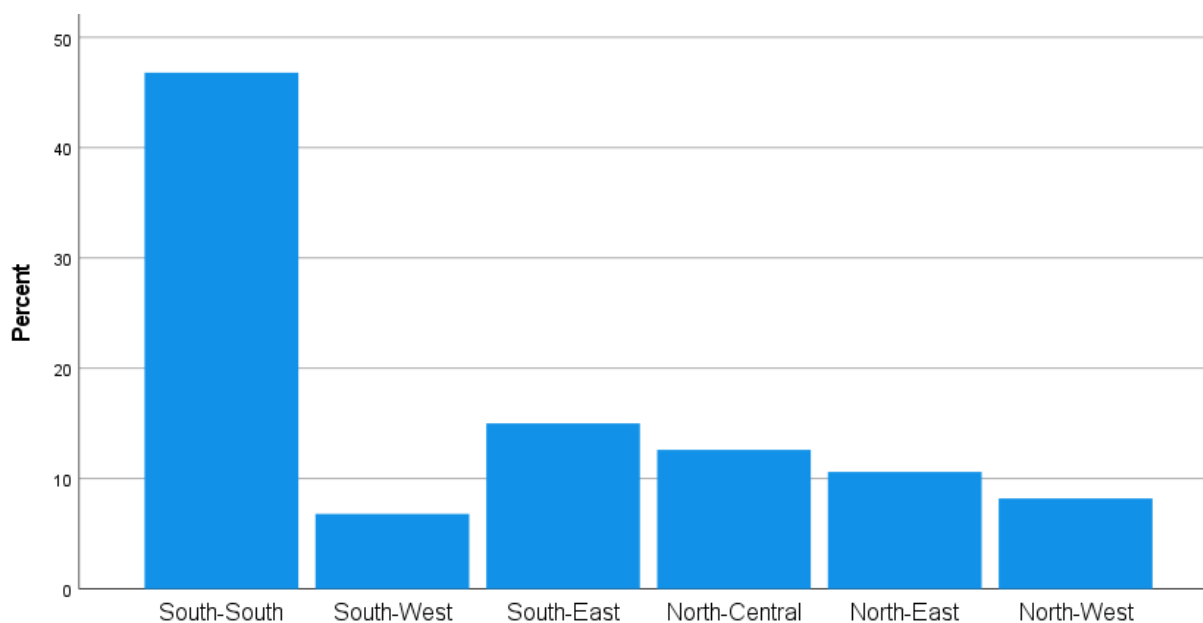
The survey was conducted across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. By the end of the survey window, 1,000 (n=1,000) respondents participated. Their opinions were analyzed using descriptive analysis and correlated with secondary data sources to explore the reasons behind women's participation—or lack thereof—in politics, including political campaigns, voting, and seeking elective positions.

Figure 1: Age of the Respondents



Based on the data presented on the age brackets of the respondents: Respondents within the age bracket of 20–40 had 329 participants, representing 32.9% of the valid respondents. Respondents within the age bracket of 40–60 had 228 participants, constituting 22.8% of the valid respondents. Respondents aged 60 and above accounted for 443 participants, making up the largest proportion at 44.3% of the valid respondents. One respondent's age data was missing, representing 0.1% of the total dataset. The majority of respondents fell into the 60-and-above age bracket (44.3%), followed by those aged 20–40 (32.9%) and those in the 40–60 bracket (22.8%). The negligible fraction of missing data does not significantly affect the analysis. This distribution suggests that older individuals (60 and above) dominate the respondent pool and show more interest in politics than other age groups.

Figure 2: Geo-Political Zones of the Respondents



Based on the provided data on the geopolitical zones. The South-South Zone has 468 respondents, constituting 46.8% of the valid respondents, making it the most represented zone. The South-West Zone has 68 respondents, representing 6.8% of the valid respondents. The South-East Zone has

150 respondents, constituting 15.0% of the valid respondents. The North-Central Zone has 126 respondents, constituting 12.6% of the valid respondents. The North-East Zone is represented by 106 respondents, forming 10.6% of the valid respondents. The North-West Zone has 82 respondents, correlating to 8.2% of the valid respondents. One respondent's geopolitical zone data is missing, representing 0.1% of the total dataset.

The South-South Zone dominates the respondent distribution with 46.8%, followed by the South-East Zone at 15.0% and the North-Central Zone at 12.6%. The South-West, North-East, and North-West Zones have comparatively lower representation, with 6.8%, 10.6%, and 8.2%, respectively. This data reflects significant regional variation in representation, with the South-South Zone contributing nearly half of all respondents.

The data obtained from the South-South, South-East, and South-West Zones show a positive correlation with the data presented by INEC on gender nominations in political parties across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Based on this data, it can be deduced that the desire for political participation is stronger among women in the southern zones compared to the northern zones. In the North, such aspirations are often limited by factors such as religion, culture, family ties, lack of funds, and societal stereotypes that discourage women's involvement in politics.

Women Political Participation (WPP) in Nigeria

Nigeria has three tiers of government (local, state, and federal), with each tier having both elective and appointed positions. The rate of women's participation across all these tiers is not significant when compared to that of men. In the recently concluded local government elections held between June 2024 and November 2024 in 29 states across Nigeria, elections were conducted in 618 local

governments for chairmanship positions (Dataphyte, 2024). Only 23 women emerged as chairpersons, compared to 595 men, constituting 3.7% women and 96.3% men ((Dataphyte, 2024).).

Among the local council elections, in Rivers, Adamawa, Yobe, Kwara, Gombe, Kogi, Borno, and Ebonyi states, only one woman emerged in each state after the elections. In Ogun, Abia, and Bauchi, two women emerged in each state. The state with the highest number of elected women was Benue, where nine women were elected out of 23 seats, making it the state with the highest representation of women in local government elections in Nigeria.

In the National Assembly, only eight women (7.3%) out of 109 are serving as Senators, while 13 women (3.6%) out of 360 elected members in the House of Representatives are women (ElectHER, 2024). Additionally, in the judicial system, the Supreme Court currently has seven men and three women, with a woman serving as one of the Supreme Court judges.

Women's Political Participation Across Political Parties in Nigeria

Political parties are the vehicles for attaining elective positions in Nigeria. As the primary means of nominating candidates for elective offices, women's participation in party politics is crucial to qualifying or standing a chance for elective positions in the country.

In the last elections, nominations by 18 political parties across Nigeria showed low representation of women, particularly in the major political parties (Section 221, 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria). Geographically, women's nominations remained low. The South-South, South-East, and South-West regions recorded the highest levels of female nominations across all tiers of government where elections were held.

Table 1: Gender Nomination in the Six Geopolitical Zones

S/N	Geopolitical Zones	Female	Male
1	North-West	20	686
2	North-Central	38	441
3	South-West	70	508
4	South-South	69	468
5	North-East	28	360
6	South-East	61	367

Source: INEC 2023

From the table above, the ratio of women's participation to men stood at 286 women to 2,830 men.

The marginal difference was 2,544, with the South-West having the highest number of women participating and the North-West recording the lowest. There are also differences in women's participation across political parties. Data released by INEC on nominations from various political parties highlights the varying levels of opportunities provided by different parties.

Table 2: Nomination of Women for Elective Offices across Political Parties

The table below shows the nomination of women for elective political positions across parties in the 2023 general elections.

S/N	Political Party	Female Nomination	Male Nomination
1	A	8	24
2	AA	2	43
3	AAC	-	8
4	ADC	9	99
5	ADP	6	33
6	APC	4	104
7	APGA	2	42
8	APM	4	35
9	APP	8	41
10	BP	1	12
11	LP	4	75
12	NNPP	8	100
13	NRM	10	74
14	PDP	5	104
15	PRP	1	44
16	SDP	9	89
17	YPP	5	33

18	ZLP	6	48
	Total	92	1008

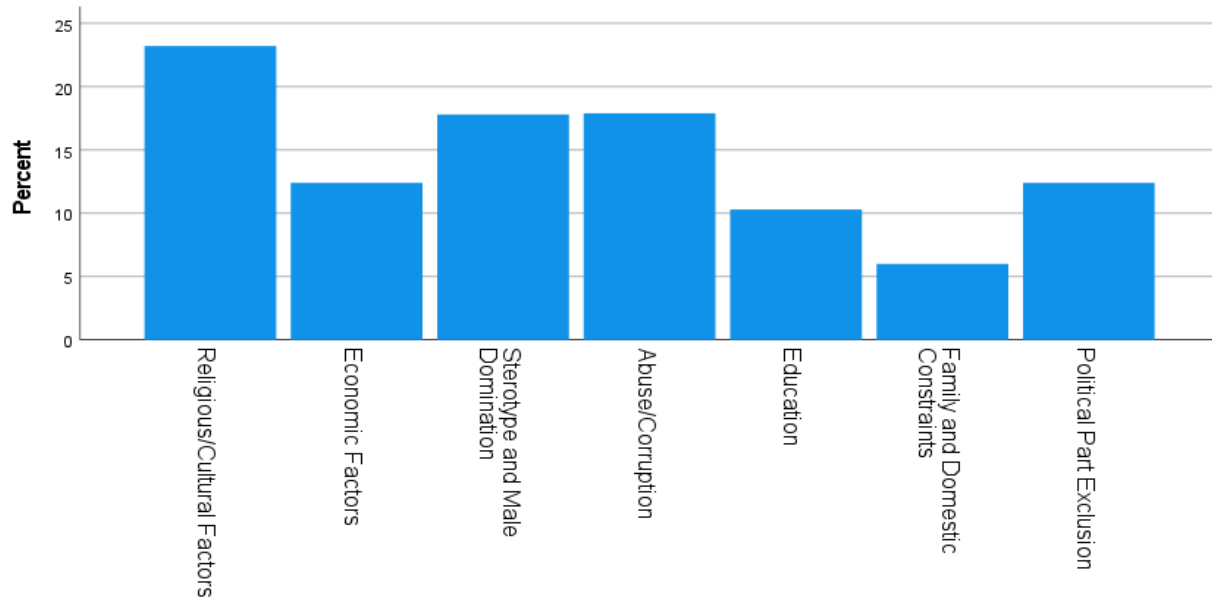
Source: INEC 2022

The National Rescue Movement (NRM) had the highest number of female nominees in the past elections, while the African Action Congress (AAC) had no female nominees, despite fielding eight candidates. Among the major political parties in the last elections, the All-Progressives Congress (APC) and Labour Party each had the lowest number of female nominees, with four nominations each. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) had the highest number of female nominees among the major parties, with five. Overall, non-major parties had more female nominees than the major political parties.

EXOGENOUS FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST Women POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN Nigeria.

Systematic review of secondary data collected for this research revealed some existential factors militating against women participation in politics in Nigeria. Exogenous factors are external influences or systemic barriers that hinder women's political participation in Nigeria. These factors are rooted in societal structures, cultural norms, institutional frameworks, and socio-economic conditions.

Figure 3: Exogenous Factors Inhibiting Women's Political Participation



Source: Authors survey

Based on the data provided about the reasons women cited for not seeking elective positions in an election, Religious/Cultural Factors represent the frequency of 232 respondents. This is the most cited reason, accounting for 23.2% of the valid responses. Economic Factors has a frequency of 124 respondents which is represented by 12.4% of the valid responses cited economic factors. Stereotype and Male Domination had a frequency of 178 respondents which represented 17.8% of the valid responses. Abuse/Corruption has 179 respondents with 17.9% of the valid responses, closely matching stereotypes and male domination. Education has 103 respondents with 10.3% of the valid responses. There is a wide disparity between the ratio of school enrolment between men and women in Nigeria. Men have more chances to be enrolled by their parents. Family and Domestic Constraints has 60 respondents with 6.0% of the valid responses. The burden of caring for family needs limits wider women's potential outside the family circles. Political Party Exclusion 124 respondents. This group also accounts for 12.4% of the valid responses. One respondent's data is missing, representing 0.1% of the total dataset. The most common reason cited

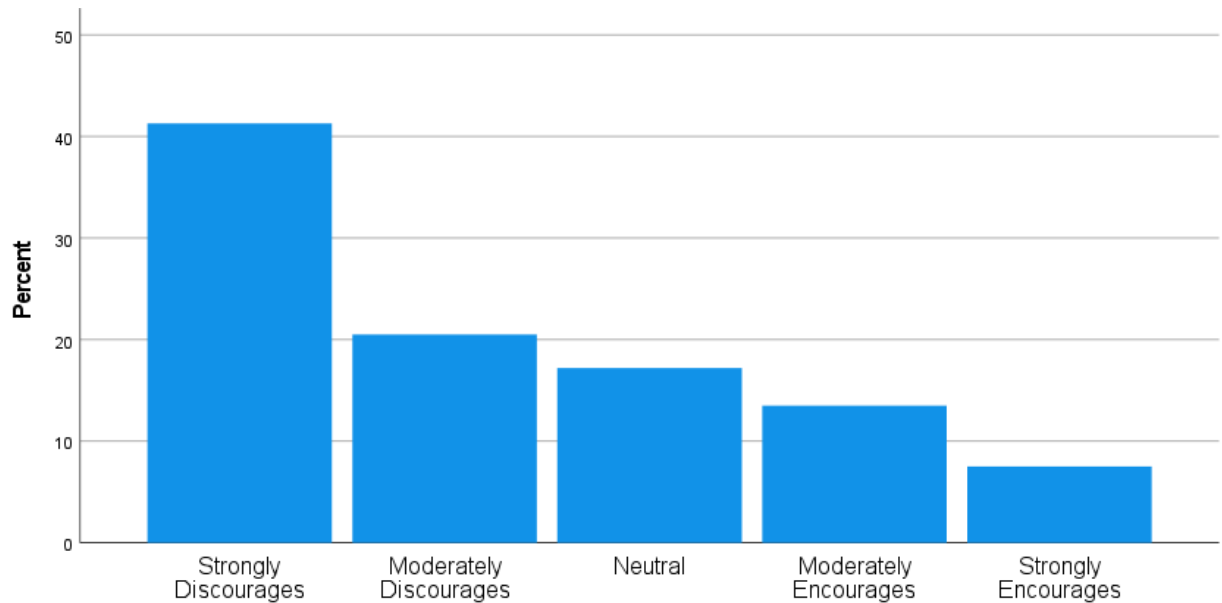
by women for not seeking elective positions is religious/cultural factors (23.2%), followed by abuse/corruption (17.9%) and stereotype and male domination (17.8%). Economic factors and political party exclusion each account for 12.4%, while education (10.3%) and family/domestic constraints (6.0%) are less frequently mentioned. This data reflects a mix of societal, structural, and personal barriers to women's political participation in elections.

Drawing an inference from the above responses, its sine qua non to establish that among the seven thematic factors militating against women's participation, religious/cultural factors (23.2%) constitute the highest percentage. The finding negates the widely held assumption that economic setbacks are the core factor militating against women's participation. This finding correlates with other postulations on the impacts of lack of education on women's participation. Education here connotes both general education and political education.

Political Environments and Women Participation in Politics

In Nigeria, every election year is characterized by an intense political atmosphere marked by threats of violence, hate speech, fake news, targeted assassinations etc. On election day, the political environment often escalates into intense situations, including ballot box snatching, vote buying, intimidation of opposition members, violence, and other forms of targeted attacks (ACLED, 2023). The political climate or environment have implications on political participation.

Figure 4: Political Climates and Women Participation



Source: Authors survey

Based on the data provided regarding the influence of Nigeria's political climate on women's decision to participate in politics. Nigeria's political climate is shaped by a complex interplay of historical, cultural, economic, and social factors, which significantly influence political participation, particularly for marginalized groups like women. Scholars have often described it as highly competitive, patriarchal, and sometimes exclusionary, marked by entrenched power structures and male-dominated leadership (Ademola, 2020). The dominance of ethnic and religious considerations in political decision-making further complicates the political environment. Religious and cultural norms often discourage women from active political engagement, with many citing these factors as primary barriers to participation in elective positions (Okonkwo, 2018). Additionally, the prevalence of stereotypes and male domination in Nigeria's political landscape reinforces structural inequities that limit opportunities for women to assume leadership roles (Olayemi, B. (2022). Economic challenges also play a critical role in shaping Nigeria's political climate. The high cost of running political campaigns often discourages underrepresented groups,

particularly women, who may lack the necessary financial resources (Eze, 2021). Furthermore, political corruption and abuse in the system reduce trust and hinder inclusivity, creating an environment that many perceive as hostile (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2019).

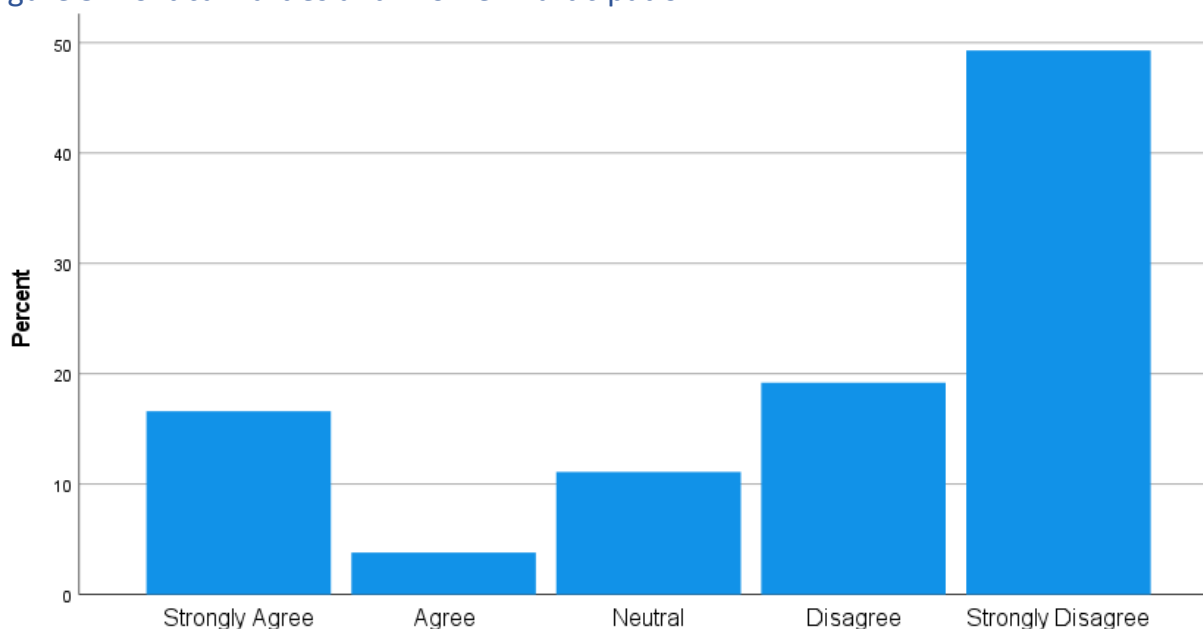
In the statement regarding the influence of Nigeria's political climate on women's decision to participate in politics. The majority of respondents (413 respondents, 41.3%) are of the opinion that the political climate "Strongly Discourages" participation. 205 respondents (20.5%) believe it "Moderately Discourages" participation, representing a significant portion. 172 respondents (17.2%) are neutral on the matter. 135 respondents (13.5%) feel the political climate "Moderately Encourages" participation. 75 respondents (7.5%) feel it "Strongly Encourages" participation, making this the smallest group. One respondent's data is missing, representing 0.1% of the total dataset. The data indicates that a majority of respondents believe Nigeria's political climate discourages women's political participation, with 41.3% strongly discouraged and 20.5% moderately discouraged. Only a small fraction feel that the political climate encourages participation, with 13.5% moderately encouraged and 7.5% strongly encouraged. About 17.2% of respondents remain neutral on the issue.

This data reflects a perception of significant barriers and challenges within Nigeria's political environment, with a strong bias towards discouragement, which may deter women from active political engagement. Despite efforts to encourage inclusivity through policies and advocacy, such as the National Gender Policy of 2006, the representation of women in politics remains minimal. Data suggest that Nigeria's political climate discourages women from participating, with 61.8% of respondents in a recent survey indicating that the environment either strongly or moderately discourages their involvement. Only 21% perceived the political climate as encouraging (Survey Data (2024).

Political Parties and Women Participation

In Nigeria, political parties serve as vehicles for ascension into political offices. These parties provide platforms for political campaigns and the sponsorship of candidates for elections. Since the Nigerian constitution has no provision for independent candidates, the low level of women's participation in elective and appointed positions can be linked to their limited involvement in party politics.

Figure 5: Political Parties and Women Participation



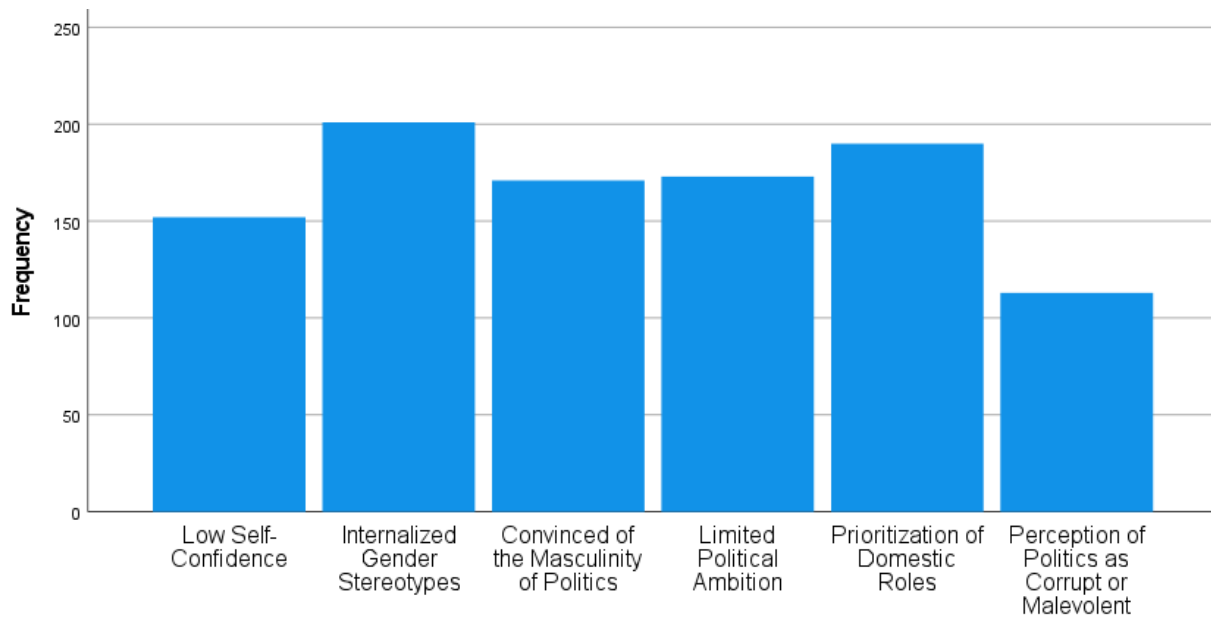
Based on the data regarding perceptions of whether political parties promote women's participation in politics in Nigeria, those who "Strongly Agree" are 166 respondents which is 16.6%, representing a minority who strongly believe political parties promote women's participation. Those who "Agree" are 38 respondents representing 3.8%, showing limited agreement. Those who are Neutral are 111 respondents represented by 11.1%, representing those who neither agree nor disagree. Those who "Disagree" are 192 respondents represented by 19.2%, representing those who believe political parties do not promote women's participation. Participants who "Strongly Disagree" are 493 respondents with 49.3%, the largest group, indicating a strong

belief that political parties do not promote women's participation. The data reveals a dominant perception that political parties in Nigeria do not promote women's participation in politics, with 49.3% strongly disagreeing and 19.2% disagreeing, making up nearly 69% of respondents. In contrast, only 16.6% strongly agree and 3.8% agree that political parties promote women's participation, while 11.1% remain neutral. This suggests that most respondents perceive political parties as failing to provide adequate support or opportunities for women in the political landscape.

This analysis is strengthened by further empirical evidence provided by ElectHer showing the number of female candidates sponsored by major political parties during the election. For instance, the APC, PDP and Labour parties who are the main contenders in the elections sponsored only 13 candidates (ElectHER, 2023).

Endogenous Factors Militating Against Women Participation in Politics

There are several internal or endogenous factors militating against women's participation in politics. Most of these factors stem from personal interests or environmentally induced decisions not to engage in politics. Additionally, many of these factors arise from individual perceptions of political activities and politicking. In Nigeria, many women perceive politics as a masculine activity, while others view politicians as lacking nobility, leading them to avoid participating in politics or being associated with politicians.

Figure 6: Endogenous Factors Militating Against Women Participation in Politics

Source: Authors survey

The data presented in the table identifies six key endogenous factors that contribute to low political participation among women in Nigeria. Low self-confidence accounts for 15.2% of the responses. Many women in Nigeria feel unqualified or incapable of holding political office, often doubting their leadership skills. This psychological barrier is a direct result of years of societal conditioning that discourages women from pursuing roles in leadership. Without confidence in their abilities, women are less likely to engage in political activities or challenge the male-dominated status quo. Internalized gender stereotypes are the most significant factor, representing 20.1% of responses. These stereotypes reinforce the belief that politics is a male domain, leading women to subconsciously accept these roles as inappropriate for them. This internalization discourages women from aspiring to leadership positions and participating in political decision-making processes.

The perception that politics is inherently masculine contributes 17.1% to the total sample size. Many women believe that politics requires aggression, resilience, and dominance—traits traditionally associated with men. This belief deters women from pursuing political careers, as they may feel that they do not embody the characteristics expected of political leaders. Limited political ambition accounts for 17.3%. Even when women possess the qualifications and resources for political engagement, they may lack the drive or interest to participate actively. This lack of ambition often stems from a combination of cultural expectations, personal priorities, and a lack of encouragement from their communities or families.

Furthermore, the prioritization of domestic roles represents 19.0% of the responses. In Nigerian society, women are traditionally expected to prioritize caregiving, household management, and family responsibilities over public or political roles. This societal expectation creates a significant internal conflict, with many women feeling that entering politics would compromise their domestic obligations. The perception that politics is corrupt or malevolent is the least significant factor at 11.3%. Many women associate politics with unethical practices, violence, and dishonesty, leading them to view political involvement as incompatible with their personal values. This perception acts as a deterrent, particularly for women who prioritize integrity and moral standards.

The cumulative percentages illustrate that nearly 89% of the factors are rooted in societal and cultural expectations that women have internalized over time. These factors reflect the deeply ingrained barriers that discourage women from engaging in politics. While systemic and exogenous factors, such as laws, socio-cultural and religious factor are significant, addressing these internal, psychological, and cultural barriers is equally crucial for addressing these challenges.

Conclusion

The findings reveal that women's political participation in Nigeria remains significantly constrained by a complex interplay of societal, structural, and personal factors. Religious and cultural factors emerged as the most prominent barrier, reflecting deeply rooted societal norms and traditions that discourage women from seeking political roles. This was closely followed by issues of abuse, corruption, and stereotypes that perpetuate male dominance in politics, further dissuading women from active engagement. Economic constraints, while impactful, were not the leading deterrent as previously assumed, suggesting that societal barriers hold greater influence. Additionally, factors such as political party exclusion, family/domestic responsibilities, and lack of education, particularly political education, contribute to the systemic underrepresentation of women in politics. Geopolitically, women in southern Nigeria demonstrated a stronger desire for political participation than their northern counterparts, where cultural and religious dynamics play a more significant restrictive role. Political engagement in campaigns, voting, and party activities remains low, with the majority of respondents abstaining or expressing discouragement due to the prevailing political climate.

In conclusion, addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including societal reorientation, economic empowerment, inclusive political reforms, and targeted political education for women. Efforts must also prioritize dismantling stereotypes and fostering an environment that actively encourages and supports women's equal participation in politics.

Recommendation

In line with the findings, these recommendations are based on findings that show low participation of women in key thematic areas, which are critical to political participation.

1. There is a need for the political education of women, targeting three key frontiers: First, the importance of participating in elective positions. Second, general political participation, including campaigns and voting. Third, active involvement in party politics.
2. There is a need for broader engagement with political parties to promote inclusion and greater involvement of women in Nigerian politics. Political parties serve as vehicles for political ascension, and increasing women's participation in both elective and appointed positions must start at the grassroots level within these political parties.
3. There is a need for an intensive campaign against religious, cultural, and patriarchal antecedents that hinder women's participation in politics. Cultural and religious belief systems in Nigeria often confine women to reproductive and family roles rather than allowing them to contribute to the productive and leadership sectors. Women in leadership positions are still perceived as taboo in some areas, underscoring the urgency of addressing these systemic barriers.

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