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The Gender Question and the Nigerian Fourth Republic, 1999- 2015

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Abstract:

This paper traces the contribution of Nigerian women to the political history of Nigeria. The research also studied the nature and role of women in politics; analyzed the prevailing factors that have made the women folks to get a low percentage, in terms of numbers, of females, that were victorious at polls.

The study relied heavily on documentary data and lightly on oral data. The oral data were based on unstructured interviews with some feminist scholars; and the documentary data were sourced from colonial government annual departmental reports, correspondence, books and magazines. The oral data were transcribed for analysis. The documentary data were subjected to textual and contextual analysis.

The researcher found out that women were not victorious in most elections because of so many inhibiting factors associated with religion, wealth ...etc.

Keywords: Gender, politics, fourth republic, women, nationalist

1. An Overview of Political Administrations

Nigeria covers an area of 923, 768km . The countries bordering Nigeria are the Republic of Benin to the west, Niger to the North, Chad to the East and the Gulf of Guinea to the South of Nigeria . The country lies roughly between 30 and 150E Longitude and between 40 and 140 latitude . Nigeria is undoubtedly a country with a great political and economic potential in the developing world . It is a country with many peoples with diverse cultures. In terms of population and geographical spread, the major cultural groups of Nigeria are the Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Fulani, Ibibio, Kanuri, Tiv, Edo, Nupe and Ijaw . In 1960, Nigeria became a self-governing state with Sir Tafawa Balewa as the inaugurating Prime Minister and Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe as the President. Nigeria became a Republic in 1963 . The country inadvertently ran into a civil war in 1967. The process of reconstruction and rehabilitation was partially successful after the end of the war in 1970 . By 1975, a military coup resulted into a change of administration and the Middle East imbroglio brought an unprecedented oil wealth that propelled the country into a nation of international repute . A return to democracy in 1979 was a harbinger of economic crisis as the administration could not sufficiently protect the polity from corruption . The government of Buhari/Idiagbon 1985 did not fare better despite its good intentions. Ibrahim Babangida administration was unpopular for the institutionalization of the Structural Adjustment Programme, a consequence of the World Bank policy following international loan for structural development . The Ernest Shonekan interim civilian administration was an interlude. It could only hold on to power for three months. This administration was followed by another military dictatorship and resultant sanctions from the international community . The Abacha administration ruled for five years. He died, General Abdulsalam took over power and handed over to a civilian government . The return to democracy was historical, as local and international expectations were heightened by the evils perpetrated by the Abacha regime. International support for the democratic administration of Obasanjo in 1999 ensured its success . In terms of insecurity, the Niger Delta crisis was at the peak and the Boko Haram groups were just emerging. The Boko Haram group came to light in the Yar'Adua/Jonathan administration . The period of this study ends in 2015. How has the women folks performed in the course of history?

2. Background Views and Perceptions

Over the years, there has been raging debates over the participation or desire of women in Nigerian politics. Their main argument was that women are regarded as weaker vessel owing to religious ideas, social values, norms and beliefs, which have neglected their meaningful contributions and have placed them in a second fiddle position to men in the nation's political system. For generations, Nigerian women have grown up to believe that their female children would be better off than the previous generation. Old evils of rape, polygamy, poverty, and illiteracy continue to increase; new evils

of terrorism and militancy had also emerged. The ideal demands that each members of society equally should be assured basic rights of freedom of expression, equality of the sexes, right to inheritance, an end to patriarchy, the right to vote and be voted for in a free and fair election continues to remain a mirage for them in Nigeria. No doubt the issue of gender bias of political participation in Nigerian political system can be traced to the core beliefs of the Christian and Muslim norms that engineers the Nigerian society. The Christian faith for instance subdues the woman. These could be traced to the Jewish and Greco Roman cultures. A critical study of Mathew 15: 28; Luke 7: 37-47 and John 4: 7-27 lend credence to the assertion that Jesus was a strong promoter of women liberation and dignity . Paul, one of the notable apostles that shaped the course of Christianity after Jesus Christ found it difficult to detach himself from the Jewish ideas (the Jewish culture is masculine) about the status of women. Paul was not well disposed to the idea of women offering prayer or prophesying during public worship more so evangelizing to men. He demanded that to do so, they should at least cover their heads (1 Corinthians 11:15) . In Colossians 3:18, Paul advises women thus; 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as it is fit in the Lord'. Even though there are passages in Paul letters which outlined certain obligations of husbands to their wives, his overall position is that women are inferior to men. Apart from the above biblical passages, in 1 Timothy 2: 11-15, Paul declares 'I permit no woman to teach or have authority over a man; she is to keep silent' . In this passage, Paul's intention was to give a definitive basis for women's continued subjugation in the church, this has also infused into the political arena. The liberationist ideas adopted by women such as Maximilla, Priscilla, and Theda among others, whose character (they travelled with men to preach the gospel) and behavior may have engendered respect for women in politics . Christianity is the second largest religion in Nigeria after Islam. Christianity are listed as comprising 40 percent of the population, with Muslims 50 percent and indigenous religion 10 percent. Christianity is the most advertised religion in Nigeria. It was introduced in Nigeria in the middle of the nineteenth century by missionaries from Europe and America. In the context of Islam, political leadership by women is opposed by a large chunk of members of the Islamic sects. Those who say that a woman cannot lead where there are men. They do these in reference to the Islamic holy book which are as follows:

- And women have rights similar to those of men over them in kindness, and men are a degree above them. Allah is Mighty, Wise (Pickthal 2: 228)
- And call to witness, from among your men, two witness. And if two men be not then a man and two women , of such as ye approve as witness, so that if the one erred (through forgetfulness) the other will remember (Pickthal 2: 282)
- Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient to their husbands and guard in (the husbands) absence. (Mushaf 1410H.4:34)

The scholars also mention some traditions attributed to the Prophet ((pbuh) in favour of their arguments.

Abu Bakra Reported: when it reached the Prophet (pbuh) that the Persians had enthroned a daughter of the Kisra as queen over them, he said: 'Never shall a people prosper who make a woman their ruler' (Hossain 1987:214

The Abrahamic religions had indeed conspired against the political development of women. Census figures as at 2006 proved that most Nigerians are either Christian or Moslems.

Islam is one of the formidable religions in West Africa. The first recorded empire in present day Nigeria was centered in the north at Kanem Bornu, near Lake Chad. This empire came to power during the 8th century C.E. By the 13th century, many Hausa states began to emerge in the region as well Trans- Sahara trade with North Africans and Arabs began to transform these northern societies greatly . Increased contact with the Islamic world led to the conversion of the Kanem- Bornu. The religion of Islam was said to have been introduced to the Hausa states from Kanem in about the 12th century; but from available evidences, the religion failed to have any foothold during this time. The religion did not stay until it was reintroduced in the 14th century by the Wangara scholars from Mali . This was during the reign of King Yaji(1349-1385). As a result of the introduction to the Hausas in the North of Nigeria, many people in the Hausa states began to adopt Muslim names. The official title of the King-Sarki was replaced by the Muslim title-Emir. The advent of the religion saw the replacement of the traditional judges in the states' judiciary by the Qadis or Muslim magistrates . In addition the Koranic laws were introduced . This is not to say so far that the old African traditional religion and its practices were totally sacrificed on the altar of the new religion. As a matter of fact both religions existed side by side until the Fulani jihad when the alliance with traditional religions broke down. In 1804, the Fulani launched a jihad, or Muslim holy war, against the Hausa states in an attempt to cleanse them of these non-Muslim behaviour and to reintroduce proper Islamic ways. By 1807 the last Hausa state had fallen. The Fulani victors founded the Sokoto Caliphate, which grew to become the largest state in West Africa until its conquest by the British in 1903. The Islamic religion subjugated the women by the practice of purdah, forcing them to become house wives. The seclusion is to ensure sexual modesty and privacy for the womenfolk. This notion of modesty has also denied the womenfolk liberty, free speech, their human rights and the right to be voted for. Polygyny which is also synonymous with Islam has denied the women their right to equality.

Islam has a large following in Nigeria so is the Christian faith.

The two major religions somehow have relegated the traditional religions to the background. However, for those who still believe in traditional religions; the faith seems friendlier to women and their political development. In fact, traditional religion, although polytheist gods, are represented as feminist and masculinist. The male gods can be found in most ethnic groups in Nigeria- they are Oghena, Obalefun, Sango, Amadiora, ...etc. The female gods are Olokun, Oya, Yemoja, Idia, ...etc In the Yoruba precolonial times, priests and priestesses had great influence in their communities, such that they were responsible for divining, curing, maintaining peace and harmony, administering war magic, organizing extensive rites and festivals. Many duties of political and religious authorities overlapped. The traditional Igbo religion

comprises of common reverence for Ala or Ana, the earth goddess and beliefs and rituals related to several other male and female deities, spirits and ancestors, who protect their living descendants. Every region or ethnic group worshipped a number of gods. As far as the people were concerned, these principalities were powerful enough to protect and bless worshippers. All authorities were derived from them, and failure to seek their faces could spell doom. Rights to resources, political offices, economic activities, and social relations were defined and legitimized by their traditional religious beliefs. The elders and religious leaders controlled the political aspect of the society. Traditional beliefs also comprised all of the duties of living to one another and to their customs including obligation of men and women. In this instance respect or positions of respect is given to women. Women also by right get political positions which they enjoyed before the colonial period.

In Nigeria's childhood\ gender socialization, the roles that are taught to girls inspires anti-political and economic participation but rather support them to be house wives in their families. She is made to understand that her duties are to serve men whether as fathers or husbands and even in some cases their relatives. For instance, in the Hausa Society, the father has the right to choose a partner for his daughter, most often, without her consent. The daughter, as an honor of respect to the father, must agree with the choice. In the typical Yoruba setting, male children are close to their father, whilst the females should be close to their mothers. Generally speaking, Nigerian parents respond to their children starting from childhood is based on either being a male or a female. Boys and Girls are assigned different roles and also treated differently. A male child is expected to be full of energy, hence should be involved in rough plays. On the other hand, the female child is expected to be caring, softly spoken and gentle, hence monitored strictly to follow this perception of the society. Gender socialization affects all aspects of daily life and society, political attitudes towards leadership, and perceptions and relationships about other people. Family, peers, schooling, religious training, mass media and popular culture are just a few of the agents through which gender socialization happens. It is reinforced whenever gender - linked behaviour received approval or disapproval from these influences. It shapes our perceptions on female leadership.

The society frowns at female leadership in terms of their roles in villages, towns, cities and even spiritual, cultural homes. This condition thrown upon them makes it difficult for women to compete for leadership positions in politics and other areas of life. This bring to fore the notion that women cannot be seen as equal to men. Invariably, this constitutes the genesis of women non participation in politics. The Nigerian society is a form of social organization in which men dominate, oppress and exploit the womenfolk. Nigeria is a patriarchal society, where men dominate women. The patriarchal nature of the society enhances the gender structure of Nigeria based on gender differentiation. For instance, in most cultural groups in Nigeria, the male child is 'heir apparent' of the family. Nigerians are highly hospitable and welcoming of strangers. Thus, the law, religious doctrines and societal traditions and norms all constitute the source of values and morals held by people and the standard by which values and behaviour are considered right or wrong while the law serves as the absolute. This means that a contradiction of these standards of behaviour translate into immorality. In this sense, in pre-colonial Nigeria, women leadership may not be considered an out of norm which has since changed in the colonial and post-colonial period.

In the century that colonialism began in Nigeria; 1900 to be precise, women were still struggling to vote in Europe and United States of America. In the same year, no country in Europe allowed women to vote. Even in Britain, where Queen Victoria was perhaps the most popular monarch the country had ever had, women could not vote or serve in parliament. 'Women are creatures of impulse and emotions,' declared one British Member of Parliament in 1906. 'They do not decide questions on the ground of reason as men do'. Some scholars however disagreed with this statement. Though the woman's suffrage movement commanded wide attention between 1880 and 1914, its successes were few. However, women won the right to vote in New Zealand (1893) and Australia (1902). Only in two European territories- Finland (1906, then part of the Russia Empires) and Norway (1913) - did women gain voting rights before World War 1. In the same 1906, Marie Curie became the first woman ever to teach at France's prestigious Sorbonne. She won two Nobel Prizes and was acknowledged as one of the foremost scientists of her time. Yet she could never become a member of the French Academy of sciences because she was a woman. Several western states in the United States also granted women the right to vote. Often, women won voting rights for local elections before they won statewide or national rights. On the other issues, women rights made faster progress. Britain and most states in the United States enacted laws giving married women the right to own property. In Britain, women began to serve as safety inspectors in factories where women worked. Women also served on local boards to oversee schools and hospitals.

In the case of the Nigerian woman, the western cultural melting of colonialism that brought to the fore the system of democratic governance never redefined the culture of roles defined for womanhood. The western colonial mentality also revolves round male superiority as it reflected in the recruitment of Nigerian political leaders. For instance the subjugation of women by the British was apparent in the 1922 Clifford constitution that disenfranchised women from political participation. The Clifford Constitution was indeed a landmark in the political development of the country. The same 1922 constitution established a legislative council comprising the governor as the chairman, 26 official members, 16 unofficial members and 4 members representing Lagos and Calabar. In that year too, the once German colony, the Cameroons, was integrated into Nigeria. It is remarkable to note however that the legislative council was meant for the south, and the north had its affairs put under the control of the governor. It is necessary to observe that the legislative council was a mere debating society and a mere appendage of the all-powerful governor. In 1922, after the introduction of the Clifford Constitution, Herbert Macaulay launched the Nigerian National Democratic Party with the intention to fight for the four seats allocated to the Nigerians in the newly created Nigerian National Council. It is significant to note that this party was the first political party in West Africa, and the input of women were almost lacking records.

Despite, the political development, Nigerian women were excluded from taking part. This constitutional backing from the 1922 constitution supported the already established traditional societal belief of inferiority of the women folks in terms of participating in politics. The situation the Nigerian women found themselves by this constitutional act was worse than their traditional political plight that still gave them political offices such as Iyalode, Iyaloja and Iyalaje . In the pre-colonial period, women played a major role in social and economic activities. Division of labour was along gender lines, and women controlled such occupations as food processing, mat weaving, and pottery making . Moreover, land was communally owned, and women had access to it through their husbands or parents . Although a man was the head of the household in a patrilineal system, older women had control of the labour of younger family members . In politics, women were not as docile or powerless as contemporary literature tends to portray them . The women in the traditional system however could not get the highest political positions but heard something substantial . The colonial first constitution gave them nothing but crumbs under the 'political table', women by this constitutional act were reduced to a position of inferiority to the men, positing them in a tedious plight.

Despite the alienation of women from the mainstream of Nigerian politics during colonial administration, the Nigerian women folk made itself relevant by its contributions to nationalist movements, which constituted vanguards against the colonial administration. Women political activism dates back to Ngwa women's opposition to colonial tax policies (popularly called the Aba women riot of 1929). The 1929 Aba Riot was a reaction against the attempt to spread Indirect Rule system to the southern protectorate . The administrator of Aba misinterpreted the riot; he was perhaps thinking that the women were all out to wage war against his administration. This opinion may have prompted him to instruct the police to fire at the women. This instruction was promptly and tragically carried out, because after the shooting, about thirty one women lay down dead on the ground, and over two hundred were seriously wounded. Many of them died later on. When the news reached Britain, many people, especially in the foreign office, condemned it, and a commission was immediately set up to probe the killings . As one would expect, the commission of Inquiry made up of the British nationals, absolved the British administrator in the area, and placed the fault on the helpless Aba women. Everybody knew that this was justice turned upside down, although many people spoke against it during the time. This was the last attempt by the people of Aba to speak against the Indirect Rule system of the British. Indirect Rule simply means the art of governing a group of people intermediaries. Essentially, it means the art of dealing indirectly with ones subjects. By this style of governance the British collected taxes, maintained peace and order and settled petty quarrels among their colonists by using the talents and positions of the chief . The people in the East of Nigeria were not used to having chiefs. The traditional system of the Igbos does not allow for a dominant king or chief hence it was not surprising seeing the women demand for their rights. Each Igbo village is made up of lineages which are believed to be descended from the sons of the founder of the village and are usually graded according to seniority . Each lineage is also made of households and the heads of these households are usually brothers. The government of an Igbo village group comprises a chain of hierarchical linked popular assemblies or councils. Traditional administration in Igboland starts at the level of sub-lineage or extended family, the name of this leader is the Okpara . The British negated the traditions of the people for an indirect style of administration, it led to the massacre of those women and no compensation was given their families.

The nationalist agitation continued unabated throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The first significant thing in the 1930s was the formation of the Nigerian Youth movement by the youths of the country. This made Herbert Macaulay and his Democratic Party less popular in the country. This was because the youths thought he and his party had bought over by the British overlords. Almost at the same time, West Africans abroad began to form societies for the liberation of West Africa. One of such societies was the West African Students Union formed by the West Africans studying in America. One of its prominent members was a Nigerian, Ladipo who was fiercely critical of the British Lukewarm attitude to education. However, the constitutional activities of the country took a new turn in 1937 when Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo man, joined the nationalist vanguard and from then on the agitation for independence increased. The series of protests between 1946 and 1958 by the Abeokuta women Union led by Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome Kuti also contributed to the quest for independence. The formulation of women's political party in 1944 established by Mrs. Oyinkan Abayomi, etc. were invaluable contributions of women to the struggle for independence . At the individual levels, however, women, notably including Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, Gamboare Sawaba and Margaret Ekpo participated in anti-colonial political struggle and took part in the negotiations for independence . At independence only a fiddle attempt made by the colonial government is a testament to the poor plight of the women folk. In the light of the above, the aim of this research paper is to historically examine the role of women in politics in the fourth republic. The objectives of the paper therefore includes: the examination of women political participation in Nigeria from 1960-2015 and dwell extensively on the progress and hindrances of women participation in Nigeria's democratically process in the fourth republic.

3. Women Political Participation in Nigeria, 1960-1999

As a result of the series of conferences both in Lagos and London, the British parliament finally passed an act granting independence to Nigeria on October 1, 1960. A constitution was drawn up under which the new independent Nigeria was to operate. This was the 1960 Nigerian Independence Constitution. Under the constitution Nigeria was to retain her federal structure. There were to be a federal parliament as the central government and four other regional parliaments to serve the western, eastern, northern and Mid-western regions to which the country had been broken. The federal parliament was to be bicameral, consisting of the house of legislature and the senate. The federal legislature was to be bicameral, consisting of the house of legislature and the senate. The federal legislature was to be made up of three hundred and twelve constituencies into which the country was divided. Thus, by the constitution the composition of the central legislature was based on population. The senate was to be based on equal representations from the regions.

Twelve senators were drawn from each region regardless of its size, while four were to represent the territory of Lagos. In the case of the regions, each regional parliament was to consist of two houses- the houses of Assembly and Chiefs. The house of Assembly was to be made up of members from the various constituencies in the region while the other house was to have its members drawn among the important chiefs in the region. Both in the central legislature and in three of the regional assemblies, representatives were to be duly elected by universal adult suffrage. In the north franchise was not extended to women. In each of the houses, the winning political party was to form the government. The leader of the government at the Centre was to be known as the premier. The Prime minister in the centre or the premier in the region was to become a chief member of the cabinet. In spite of the contribution of women to Nigeria's independence, a few number of women played significant political roles in the parliament. The names of the women are Mrs. Wuraola Esan and Mrs. Bernice Kerry in the National parliament, Mrs. Margaret Ekpo and Mrs. Janet Mnokelu in the Eastern House of Assembly. Despite the claim to progressive ideology, the three major parties in the First Republic were male dominated. There were only two female legislators in the federal parliament and three others in the Eastern House of Assembly. Four female legislators in the whole of the country were so negligible as to give women the necessary platform to influence policy in Nigeria's politics.

The military took over power from the civilians in January 15, 1966 and worsen the plight of women in their political participation in Nigeria. Military rule is synonymous to male rule and while it lasted up to 1979 the women only played a minimal role. However, in 1967, when Nigeria was divided into 12 states, 1 woman was appointed each as commissioners into East Central and Lagos, while Oyo State had two women commissioners. It should be said here that this was the Gowon Administration. The administration that took over from the Gowon administration was worse; the Olusegun Obasanjo administration that took over from the Gowon administration had no single woman in their administration. Woman was appointed to the fifty-member Constitutional Drafting Committee, hence very few women were elected into the local government councils during the 1976 elections. Mrs. Janet Akinrinade was elected to the Constituent Assembly, also four other women were appointed to the 250 member assembly and the Constitution Drafting Committee. Thereafter, came the promulgation of 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. General Olusegun Obasanjo was the head of state then and he continued to reiterate his avowed commitment to returning the country to a civilian administration come October 1, 1979. Five political parties passed the obstacle of the Federal Electoral Commission, which was headed by Michael Ani. The registered political parties were as follows: Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP), whose leader and presidential flagbearer was Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim, a man noted to be a pragmatic man; Nigeria Peoples Party (NPP) led by the Rt. Hon. Nnamdi Azikiwe, a colossus when it comes to Nigeria Politics. Other were the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) led by Nigeria's foremost nationalists, Chief Obafemi Awolowo; the National Party of Nigeria led by Chief A.M.A Akinloye, with Alhaji Shehu Shagari as its presidential candidate and the Alhaji Aminu Kano led Peoples Redemption Party (PRP). The second republic parties all had women's wings, which was represented in the parties national executives but were not involved in decision making processes of the parties. Women held the position of Vice Chairpersons in some of the political parties. In the Second Republic, many women contested the elections, there was only one female senator out of a 96 member House of Senate and 11 female House of Representatives members out of 450 members. Although women tried to struggle for positions in these representatives politics of the second republic, they recorded low representation in the National Senate, the House of Representatives and State House of Assembly. Only 3 Ministers, 1 out of 96 Senators and 11 out of a total of 450 members of the House of Representative were women. In all the 19 states (now 36 states) of the Federation, there was no female representation in all the state Houses of Assembly neither was there a female chairperson nor Councilor at the Local Government level. At this time, it should be noted that women in the United States of America were still fighting for equal treatment at their workforce and politics. However during the 1980s women in the U.S.A could point to some changes in law and the attitudes of the society. A year prior the 1980s, Great Britain had produced its first Prime minister. In 1979, Margaret Thatcher won a landslide victory. She served the British for 11 years, from 1979 to 1990.

The Mohammad Buhari and Tunde Idiagbon administration aborted the second Republic through a coup; in less than two years, another administration through a coup removed the military leadership whose coup truncated the 2nd Republic. This administration was known to history as the Ibrahim Babangida administration. It brought with it the 'First Lady' terminology. The first lady, Mrs. Mariam Babangida, brought an alien addition to the political structure of the country. This first lady position was allocated a large chunk of the countries resources. The First Ladyism status entered into the psyche of the Nigerian state and the 'post' was institutionalized from thereon. Mariam Babangida institutionalized the office of the first lady in 1987 and she became the first working First lady. During this administration, she launched the 'Better Life for Rural Women' programme. However, despite her effort, this did not improve the position of women in governance. This military ruler, experimented so many democratic system, however, the transition from military rule programme became the longest and most expensive in the history of Nigeria so far. The women folk's participation in politics remained stagnated statistics such as, 27 females' members out of the 1,172 members of the States House of Assembly across the country. The House of Representatives had 13 women out of the 593 seats and the senate only had a woman out of the population of 93 (Okome, 2002). While many women contested for gubernatorial position, none won the election; only a woman attempted but was unsuccessful in the presidential election. The Constituent Assembly that drafted the 1989 constitution had only 5 women members out of a total membership of 150 while in 1990, out of the 1,297 Local Government position in the country, women won only 206. The same old plight of the womenfolk continued in the Babangida administration despite the women having a strong first lady having their interest in mind.

The Sani Abacha Administration took over from the feeble interim government of Ernest Shonekan whom the administration of Ibrahim Babangida had handed over to. The collapse of the Ernest Shonekan interim government

botched the Third Republic and another round of military rule began. The Abacha administration does not have a flamboyant first lady but had Mariam Abacha as the first woman in government. During the period of the new administration, the senate had 3 women the House of Representatives had 12 women out of the 360 members, and the State House of Assembly across the nation had 12 women out of the 990 members. At the local government level, out of 8,810 councilors across the nation, 143 were women while 9 out of 774 local government chairpersons were women.

4. Women Participation in the Fourth Republic, 1999-2015

The 1999 general elections saw only 181 positions won by women out of the 11,881 available positions throughout the country. The first administration in the Fourth Republic had only 5 women in the senate. The number of Senators is 109, thirteen women were elected into the National House of Representatives of 360 seats while there were 36 gubernatorial seats, no woman became a governor. Nigeria had only one female deputy governor – Chief Kofoworola Akerele – Bucknor, deputy Governor of Lagos State (1999-2003). Out of the 990 seats available across the country for the States House of Assembly only 12 women were elected. At the local government level, out of the 774 local government Chairmen across the nation, only 9 were women and only 143 out of the 8,700 councilors were women. In spite of different groups working to improve the plight of women in the first tenure of the Obasanjo first term in governance, nothing seem to have improve the participation of women and in 2003 elections, just 21 women won seats out of the 339 member House of Representatives legislative house and 13 were also elected into the 109 Senatorial seats. Of the 36 gubernatorial seats available, no woman was elected and of the 990 seats available for the States house of Assembly in Nigeria, 38 women were elected. In 2007 only 25 women out of the 358 seats were elected into the House of Representatives and 9 women out of the 358 seats were elected into the House of Representatives and 9 women out of the 109 seats were elected into the Senate, while out of the 36 gubernatorial seats available, no woman was elected and of the 990 seats available for the States House of Assembly in the country, 54 women were elected.

A total of 3141 candidates contested for seats in the National Assembly, 799 candidates for the Senate and 2342 candidates for the House of Representatives. The Independence National Electoral Commission website showed that in the 2007 elections a total 7160 candidates contested in the April elections; of this number, only 628 women of the total candidates took part in the election. In 2007, the election had more women contesting, although marginally. This was due to the conscious affirmative efforts of the Obasanjo administration to involve more women in his political administration. The political parties then waived for the women the payment of pre-registration levies for political aspirations in the country. It should also be added that the International Human Rights Law Group, Centre for Development and Regulation Activities and Gender and Development Action held on June 28, 2002 in Abuja was to improve women participation in politics.

In 2011, the women talks were thankful to the first lady, Dame Patience Jonathan, through her pet project, Women for Change Initiative, President Jonathan Goodluck had appointed more women into cabinet positions more than his predecessors both military and civilian since independence. Women talks had never had it so good, when the juicy ministerial positions were handed over to women, the number of female appointees in this administration were close to 35%. Jonathan appointment included the following women: Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, the then Minister of Finance (who was trusted with the responsibility of overseeing other Ministries), other female Members of the Cabinet were Mrs. Diezani Alison Madueke – Former Minister of Petroleum Resources, Prof. Ruqayyatu Rufai (former Minister of Education), Mrs. Stella Odua – Ogiemwonyi (former Aviation minister), Mrs Hadiza Ibrahim Mailata (Environment), Mrs. Omobola Johnson Olubusola (former minister of Communication Technology), Mrs Ama Pepple (former minister of Lands and Housing), Mrs. Sarah Renge Ocheke (former Minister of Water Resources), Hajija Zainab Maina (former Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development), Prof. Vila Onwaliri (former Minister of State Foreign Affairs), Erelu Olusola Obada (former Minister of State, Defence) and Hajija Zainab Ibrahim Kuchi (former Minister of State, Niger Delta Affairs). The women folks had 35% slot implying that the administration of Goodluck Jonathan was the friendliest to women.

5. Concluding Remarks

Modupe Adu described the feat achieved by the administration as wonderful but she felt it could have improved on the numbers. According to her, the level at which women participate in politics is growing gradually but she said when compared to developed countries it has achieved very little. She said the society is quick to castigate the few women that participate in politics, the mentality of the women and men tend to label them as up to no good. Gbenga Jegede observed that women involvement in politics is very low compared to other developed states. He traced the problem to the subjugation of the women folks in their various place of worship in the Nigerian society. He further stressed that women are not given total autonomy because of the societal religious norms. The issue of electoral violence, poverty level of citizens and electoral rigging makes things more complex to the women folks who may be interested in participating in politics. Patriarchal structure which manifest in 'masculine model' of politics, lack of internal democracy in politics, the political environment within which women compete, the nature of politics in Nigeria which is akin to warfare, funding of running election campaign and other electoral sundries which most female politicians find excruciating, politics of 'god – fathers' which tends to exclude some women and favour certain categories of women (daughters and wives of prominent politicians), societal attitudes (often negative) towards female politicians which are borne out of ingrained perceptions of gender roles and women position in the society have all conspired and continue to work against women in their pursuit of political power. Feminist ideas are considered as anti-society. In Asaju K and Adagba, S.O opinion, democracy is based on a process of free choice however those that should make this decision are hampered by their poor state of judgement. Women participation in politics can only produce results if a large number of them have access to quality education. It is

through education that Nigerian women can be liberated. Education is indeed the tool for development and growth. Development can only come if the women are added to the equation. A nation that denies its women folk's political leadership cannot develop as those that allows their women to assume leadership offices. The ivory towers can also be held as a culprit in the quest to have a woman as a leader. For instance, no woman in the student union bodies of Nigerian Universities had ever won the presidential ticket of these institutions. This is due to the patriarchal social system where male dominates the female, which in turn affect every aspect of the system. A female aspirant, Miss Olaitan Oladigbolu, former student of the Ekiti State University concurred to the view when she described her loss to a male aspirant vying for the departmental president of the History and International Studies Department as a conspiracy borne out of the fact that she was female. If at the level of the ivory towers, a place of scholarship, women are yet to get the apex leadership post of the student union. Very few women were lucky to become vice chancellors in Nigeria. This is infused into politics and the mindset of the average man or woman in Nigeria is anti - female leadership.

The attainment of gender equality and the full participation of women in decision making are key indicators of democracy. The involvement of women in all aspects of political life produces more equitable societies and delivers a stronger and more representative democracy. The women's movement in many nations have emphasized the need for equal opportunity and affirmative action strategies through reforming institutional barriers, removing structural biases, and altering the rules of the game to get into positions of elected office. A particularly effective means to do this has been the use of quotas in the selection of female parliamentary candidates. Acceptance of quota to increase the number of women in Nigerians legislature for women representation have increased women representation in some countries like Rwanda, Malawi, Senegal and South Africa among others and could be used to the involvement of women in all aspects of political life produces a liberal society. It is quite surprising that the vessel whose birth carnal was found worthy to reproduce the Homo sapiens community- is considered not worthy to rule or govern the Nigerian state. It is a shame that the Nigerian society despite the one hundred years of existence has been cocooned into this inequality syndrome.

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