

FEMINIST DOMESTICATION AND POLITICAL EXCLUSION IN NIGERIA: A DISCOURSE ON THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

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Abstract

The feminist movements have for years continued to advocate for gender parity especially through affirmative action. Yet not much seemed to have been done to address the paucity of women in the decision-making process. It places emphasis on the oppression, strangulation and marginalisation of Nigerian women at all levels, even though they successfully perform roles as mothers, home builders and producers. Drawing insights from contemporary Nigeria, the paper argues that if the gender discourse will ever be productive, it would have to be retooled and situated within the framework of women empowerment. It equally notes the diverse techniques employed by the gate-keepers of Nigeria's masculinist-patriarchal democracy to preclude, demean and frustrate women political aspirants. The study utilised the desk research method of collection of data. It submits that the continued marginalisation of women remains an indication of democratic devaluation. And thus recommended that all cultural, religious and social, including political parties activities that tend to demean and relegates womanhood be reviewed and if need be, abrogated.

Keywords: Feminism, Gender, Women Empowerment, Political Exclusion, Affirmative Action, Governance

Introduction

The overthrow of mother rights was the world-historic defeat of the female sex. Men seized control over the households, the women became degraded, enthralled, the slave of the man lust, a mere instrument for breeding children. This lowered position of women.... has become gradually embellished and dissembled and, in part, clothed in a milder form but by no means abolished (Engels, 2004:11).

According to Engels, wealth increase gave more status to man in the family and a further propeller to up-turn the traditional status quo of matrilineal inheritance to establish what he called the institution of patriliney. He argued that this gender revolution took place in prehistoric times (i.e., before the development of writing) and therefore the exact knowledge of how and when it took place is unknown but it can be demonstrated ethnographically. Hence it was argued,

Women in the middle age to late nineteenth century were vital to the commercial acceleration of the time, sometime benefitting from resulting wealth but sometime being the exploited source of value. The colonial economy curtailed their

capacity to accumulate and licensed their exploitation. The early colonial situation favoured an elaboration of male patriarchy and the creation of a new class of African functionaries with cultural, political and material aspirations derived from the colonial arbiters of power in church, mosque and state. The confinement of women to domesticity entailed in this patriarchal program was contested in a host of ways but always in an adverse environment of regulation (Teresa, *et al*, 2004).

Despite their numerical strength, more than half of the world's population (UNDP, 2009), women are still being assigned the subordinate role and being treated as the weaker sex, the result of which has been all forms of discrimination, inequality and exclusion in almost all facet of human life. They have made indelible mark in their effort to conquer the limitations of the past which have placed them permanently in the kitchen and bedroom. This can be seen in the areas of sport, education, business, politics and in other professions, were women such as, Iye-Esigie of Benin, Queen Amina of Zaria, Omu of Onitsha, Madame Tinubu of Lagos, Mrs. Funmilayo Kuti, etc played significant roles.

The problem is aggravated by the gender role differentiation which prescribed subservient roles for women based on the belief that they lack any capacity of executing tasks considered to be the exclusive preserve of men. Women have demonstrated their importance towards Nigeria's national development and can be seen in the fundamental role they played against colonial repression- the 1929 Aba women riot and the 1946 Abeokuta market women riot. These were measures aimed at resisting imposition of taxation on them by the colonial Lords.

This discrimination was so severe that the United Nations had to specially seek redress in the form of conferences and annual celebration of women's rights. The United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985) brought issue of women to the front burner. This concern climaxed with the fourth world conference on women in Beijing in 1995 with the theme, 'Equality, Development and Peace' the aim of which was to review and appraise the achievement of UN Decade for Women (Omotola, 2007).

The increasing attempt to mainstream gender issues not only in academic discourse, but also advocacy and public policy domains, are understandable because in view of their demographic strength, they have contributed immensely to human development which are manifest in five key areas of motherhood, producer, home manager, community organiser and social, cultural and political activism (Anifowose, 2004; Ojo, 2006). By this acts, women could be seen as agents of social and political change. Despite this central role of women to societal development, they are still confined to traditional beliefs of chores. This observation was further buttressed thus:

This practice persisted through the ages. Men naturally assumed the sole responsibility of performing outdoor, more physically and mentally demanding tasks while the domestic chores were reserved for women, hence the popular saying that the woman's place is in the kitchen (Gbenga and Akume, 2007:1).

This concern, many view as constituting one of the many paradoxes of democratic policies, not only in Nigeria but also in other countries of the world. This entails a situation where the majority (women) constitute both the least represented politically and the most marginalised socially, economically and materially. The struggle to integrate mainstream gender issues into national politics have been the pivot of feminist movements. For decades feminists have continued to advocate for gender balance, especially through affirmative action, whereby both elective and appointive positions be allocated automatically to women or aggressively seeking out qualified people to redress the gender and ethnic imbalance in the work places. It means encouraging men to train for such jobs as nursing, teaching and secretary, and the women for fields that are considered masculine.

With this in mind, employers can employ workers from different background to achieve a reasonable workplace balance in their workforce and to pay them the same and also give an equal chance to advance in their careers (Lorber, 1997). The political marginalisation of women has been a recurrent theme of Nigerian politics since the return to civilian rule in 1999. It has acquired a renewed vitality in the current civilian political dispensation due to several years of disastrous political governance which has now culminated into a quiet search for alternatives to the failed patriarchal, masculinity system of political rule in the country; hence the consistent calls for 35 percent affirmative action that will ensure the allocation of certain number of political offices, both elective and appointive to women.

The central focus of this study is to take a critical look at the role of women in Nigeria politics since the return to democracy in 1999, the various factors that have inhibited their performance including the roles played by political parties, even though they are the ones that are mostly found in party rallies, and suggestions on how to improve women political participation.

Theorising Women Empowerment

The long-term and widely shared resistance among African-American women can only have been sustained by an enduring and shared standpoint among black women about the meaning of oppression and the actions that black women can and should take to resist it (Collins, 1986:25).

It is a fundamental claim of feminism that women are oppressed. The word oppression is a strong word. It repels and attracts. It is dangerous and dangerously fashionable and endangered (Frye, 1983). This position stems from the reality that women workers in developing countries, particularly Africa, are paid less than men workers, whether in factories or at home. To survive in rural communities, women grow food, keep house and earn money any way they can to supplement what their husbands send them. This gendered division of labour is the outcome of long history of colonialism in which women's traditional contributions to food production were undermined in favour of exportable crops, such as coffee and the extraction of raw materials. Men workers were favoured in this work, but were paid less for their

subsistence. Women had to provide food for themselves and their children, but with good land confiscated for plantations, they also had to live at a bare survival level. Worst still is that in societies with patriarchal family structures where anything women produce, including children, belongs to the husband, women and girls have a low value (Christine, *et al*, 1995; Talpade *et al*, 1991).

Sandbrook and Halfani (1995) conceptualised women empowerment as a multi-dimensional process involving the transformation of the economical, political, social, psychological and legal circumstances of the powerless with its aim of dismantling the cultural, traditional and social norms, which disvalue, disempower and dispossess women with its central objective tied to the needs of women to opportunities, facilities, skill acquisition and position of authority, especially within the political sphere. The process must necessarily include the expansion of women access to educational opportunities. The Forum of Nigerian Women in Politics (FONWIP), whose central objective is to promote women empowerment and eradication of all forms of violence and discrimination against women, supports women in decision making in both public and private sectors. It requested that the Nigerian government should yield to 30% female representation in all appointments and, made several attempts at increasing official awareness on gender issues in public policies (Agbalajobi, 2010).

In response to global outcry against women discrimination, and a possible move towards reaching gender equality, the United Nations, under the auspices of United Nations Global Impact, launched 'International Women's Day in March 2010, titled 'Equality Means Business' in which they outlined seven women's empowerment principles which emphasise the business case for corporate action to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and to point the way toward best practice by elaborating the gender dimension of corporate responsibility. The seven principles include:

1. Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
2. Treat all women and men fairly at work-respect and support human rights and non-discrimination.
3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
4. Promote education, training and professional development for women.
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

The last decade has witnessed a relative increase in women participation. We can measure increase in women participation with certain standards like how many women vote in elections; number of women-related policies implemented by government, etc. Over the years, there has been a remarkable increase in women participation in politics in Nigeria considering these standards, yet there is inherently a pronounced level of underrepresentation of women in politics when compared to their male counterparts (Agbalajobi, 2010), hence Afolabi-Akiyode (2011:57-8) observed,

Women have been relegated to the background in issues of development... The reality of our politics and political arrangement in Nigeria has excluded much of female legitimacy resulting in women's political powerlessness and low participation in power and decision making. It is an enthronement of male agenda over the agenda based on equality of opportunities for both female and male.

Women desire to participate in governance is premised on the following grounds: that women in Nigeria represent half of the population and hence should be allowed a fair share in decision making and governance of Nigeria. Second, that all humans are equal and women possess the same rights as men to participate in governance and public life (Agbalajobi, 2010). Those who object to these changes must note that empowering women does not mean that women are to dominate men. It only implies that women will be accorded opportunities to develop their individual talents and to contribute more meaningfully to societal development. The possible effects include accelerated and balanced societal development in addition to improved welfare, education and health for children since it is generally known that the improvement in the socio-economic condition of a woman translate into improved welfare for her children. Besides, empowering women is in itself, a just cause (Enemuo, 1999).

Women and Politics in Nigeria: A Historical Discourse

At both the National and International level, there is a growing academic interest on the level of women participation in politics. The third wave of globalisation emphasise the issue of democratisation, women and human rights which dominates world interest in Africa. African women, especially in Nigeria are exploited and marginalised. Despite the fact that women constitute about 56% of the total population (NPC, 2011) they are discriminated against in the political process.

Tracing the events that led to demand for gender-based affirmative action within the constitution of Nigeria Igbuzor and Bamidele (2002) observed that a look at the representation of women in political office in Nigeria reveals a striking marginalisation of women from politics and governance from pre-colonial period through the post-colonial period. Although Nigerian women participated actively to nationalist struggle for independence (Idahosa and Jack-Akhigbe, 2002), yet the independence did not translate to women independence in post-independent Nigeria. Hence, former President of Obasanjo, in attempt to solve these challenges, allocated 15% of appointment to public offices at the federal level to women, though this fell short of the 35% recommendation of the Beijing Declaration (Ifemeje and Ikpeze, 2012).

Thus, in the first republic (1960-1966), only two women, Beatrice Kwango and Wuraola Esan, were members of the 36-member Senate, while females were completely absent in the Federal House of Representatives. At the regional level, only three women were elected into the Eastern House of Assembly, while at the Centre, no woman was appointed/elected into the executive branch (Idahosa and Jack-Akhigbe, 2002). In the

second republic (1979-83) four women contested senatorial position, only one, Mrs. Kofo Bucknor Akerele won in 1979 and Franca Afegbua in 1983; three were elected into the Federal House of Representatives, while five were elected as state legislators and two were appointed cabinet ministers (Adefi and Aladi, 2012).

The truncated Third Republic (1992) was generally marked by the absence of women and out of the 91 seats in Senate, only one was occupied by a woman. In the Federal House of Representatives, 13 women were elected out of 589; two female Deputy Governors were elected, while 27 were elected into the state legislature (Igbuzor and Bamidele, 2002). The long military rule played a significant role in the inactive women political participation. The post-colonial military class was exclusively male dominated. With the undemocratic nature of the military institution coupled with the pre-existing male chauvinistic culture, women were largely neglected and had no voice under the autocratic military dictatorships. Under the military administration, no woman was appointed into the highest military council and 99% male were appointed in virtually all the constitutional drafting committees (Terwase and Decker, 2010).

Women's Position in Post-1999 General Elections in Nigeria

Prior to the emergence of Nigeria's fourth republic, women in positions of leadership were around two percent. The aftermath of the 1999 elections saw the increase of percentage of women in both elective and appointive position to eight percent.

Table 1: Women Representation after the 2003 General Elections

Position	Seat Available	Male	Female	% of Female
President	1	1	-	0
Vice President	1	1	-	0
Senate	109	106	3	2.8
House of Representatives	360	339	21	5.8
Governors	36	36	0	0
Deputy Governors	36	34	2	5.6
Speaker House Assembly	36	36	-	0
Cabinet Minister	34	28	6	17.7
State Legislators	990	953	37	3.7

Source: Awofeso and Odeyemi, 2014:107; Esidene and Abdul, 2013:14.

It must be noted that prior to the election, women dominates campaign rallies. They were the most active, adorning the occasion with beautiful and customised attires, dancing, shouting party slogan and singing praises of electoral candidates and party leaders who ironically, are men. Nevertheless, their marginalisation has continued as they remain victims of discrimination.

Women and the 2003 General Elections in Nigeria

Despite their victimisation in the politics of the country, they are still seen more at polling units, not to vote for female contestants, but for the opposite sex. They have helped in sustaining their own marginalisation as they have not been able to transform their numerical strength to power.

Table 2: Women Representation after the 2003 General Elections

Position	Seat Available	Male	Female	% of Female
President	1	1	-	0
Vice President	1	1	-	0
Senate	109	106	3	2.8
House of Representatives	360	339	21	5.8
Governors	36	36	0	0
Deputy Governors	36	34	2	5.6
Speaker House of Assembly	36	36	-	0
Cabinet Minister	34	28	6	17.7
State Legislator	990	953	37	3.7

Source: Awofeso and Odeyemi, 2014:107; Esidene and Abdul, 2013:14.

In the 2003 general elections, of the 20 contestants for presidential position, three were women-Mrs. Sarah Jubril, Anthonia Ferreira Jorge and late Mojisola Adekunle Obasanjo. They came out 6th, 16th and 20th with 157, 560 (0.40%); 6, 727 (0.0%) and 3,757 (0.01%) respectively (INEC, 2003).

Women's Participation in the 2007 General Elections

In the 2007 general elections, there was an increase in the number of women that contested and won elections, including appointments into the Federal Cabinet and the emergence of the first female Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives. It was during this period that women recorded one Governor (Dame Virgy Etiaba) who only functioned for six months following the initial impeachment of her boss, Peter Obi on November 2, 2006.

Table 3: Women Position in the 2007 General Elections

Position	Seat Available	Male	Female	% of Female
President	1	1	-	0
Vice President	1	1	-	0
Senate	109	100	9	8.3
House of Representatives	360	335	25	6.9
Governors	36	36	0	0
Deputy Governors	36	30	6	19.6
Speaker House of Assembly	36	35	1	2.8
Cabinet Minister	39	31	8	20.5
State Legislator	990	936	54	5.5

Source: Awofeso and Odeyemi, 2014:107; Esidene and Abdul, 2013:14.

Women and the 2011 General Elections

In the 2011 elections, women defied all odds as appreciable number of them stepped into the murky waters of politics, aspired, campaigned and contested for party primaries, though many lost the primaries, yet a significant number won the primaries and contested for elective positions in the various political parties with fewer emerging victorious, though less than that of 2007.

Table 4: Women's Position after the 2011 General Elections

Position	Seat Available	Male	Female	% of Female
President	1	1	-	0
Vice President	1	1	-	0
Senate	109	102	7	6.4
House of Representatives	360	334	26	7.2
Governors	36	36	0	0
Deputy Governors	36	35	1	2.8
Speaker House of Assembly	36	34	2	5.6
Cabinet Minister	41	30	11	26.8
State Legislator	990	936	68	6.9

Source: Awofeso and Odeyemi, 2014:107; INEC, 2011

Factors Inhibiting Women's Political Participation in Nigeria

Historical evidences in many societies both ancient and modern times, support the idea of male domination over the female folks in many sphere of human endeavours (Awofeso and Odeyemi, 2014). For instance:

The campaign for 35% of Nigeria women participation in politics would be inimical for Nigeria and her future. I will be the last person to encourage my wife to go into politics because I realise women are agitating that they should be given more percentage in politics. The culture of the black race does not allow too many women to go into politics. However, the few that go into it should do so with integrity. The more you encourage them to go into politics to seek power, the more reduction in integrity we see in women (Ganiyu, 2010:11).

Such statements are inimical to women's political growth and development. Even if the woman is politically inclined and ambitious, she will not get her husband's nor family's support, hence she remains perpetually home-tied and ostracised from the political domain.

Religious Constraints

The two most prominent religions in the world, Christianity and Islam, to certain extent, hegemonizes the man over the woman by making the former the head. For instance, the Holy Bible in Genesis Chapter three verse 16a stressed, '...and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee'. So even if the woman is tempted to

politicise, she needs her husband's endorsement. If the man refuses, it automatically buries that ambition. Similarly, the Sharia law devalues a woman's testimony to that of a minor. The punishment meted in the case of adultery, discriminate against the woman. Safiya Husseni was sentenced to death by an upper Sharia Court in Sokoto state Nigeria for adultery without being tried with a co-adulterer. This gave a wrong impression that adultery could be committed by only one person.

In practice, even where a woman name a co-adulterer, under the Sharia law, such a person would only be required to swear to an oath of innocence. Once this is done, he is left off the hook and goes scot free leaving only the woman to face the music (Ifemeje and Ikpeje, 2012). The keeping of women in seclusion (Purdah) is another perceived area of women degradation. Women movement outside the home is severely circumscribed and public forms of physical labour are associated with shame and insecurity for women (Adekeye, 2003). This practice in northern Nigeria is conterminous with the introduction of Islam (Zakaria, 2001). This may explain the reason in 2015 for the absolute exclusion of women in the Houses of Assembly of some states in the North, such as Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Gombe, Kebbi, Benue and Kogi

Cultural Strangulation

The fundamental root of women discrimination in Nigeria rest on the character and content of the social life which celebrates the male as unique beings who are considered stronger and fit for public space while women are weak, feeble-minded and reserved for domestic use at any point (Esidene and Abdul, 2013). This appears to be more damming and highly entrenched in Nigerian politics. This assumption rests on the social-biological school which identifies the biological dissimilarities between men and women as being responsible for sexual division of labour in all societies. It believes that "women were naturally and biologically inferior to men, hence did menial duties of cooking, housekeeping and domestic coining while men fight war, went hunting and performed hard tasks" (Izugbara, 2013:296).

This confers on male the hard life of politics, leadership, governance and headship and female to soft life of mother and homecare. Most of Nigerian customary laws, the Igbo in South-East for instance, permits forced/child marriage, wife/girl child disinheritance, wife chastisement, payment and refund of bride price, polygamy, denies women custodial and maintenance rights, encourages harmful widowhood practices and female genital mutilation (Ifemeje and Ikpeje, 2012). Similarly in Benue state, the central part of Northern Nigeria, it is their culture to make their wives sleep with their special guest as a form of entertainment and appreciation. This is a harmful traditional practice which is compelled by forces outside individual control and amount to violation of women's rights (Omiri, 1995). Some of these beliefs have been practiced for so long that they are embedded in the societal perception almost as a legal norm such that the laws of the land and international instruments which protect the rights of women are flagrantly infringed in the guise of these age long cultural beliefs (Ifemeje and Ikpeje, 2012).

These cultural practices have imposed a burden of ostracism on females and simultaneously negatively impacted and retard the pace of women emancipation and development in the country.

Patriarchal Structure

Over the years, the Nigerian political scene has been characterised by patriarchy which in the words of Heywood (2007:98) connotes the 'rule by men'. The family as the main institution of patriarchy is an important concept in explaining gender inequality. Literally it means the rule of the father. More broadly, it refers to a society ruled and dominated by men. This is inherent in most African families. Giving men a higher social status over females has crept into public life, which reflects in state activities (Agbalajobi, 2010). The patriarchal structure of traditional society enables men to dominate women. Through this system, Nigerian women are socialised into a culture of female subordination. This is the culture of gender inequality /discrimination and its persistence in the face of national and international initiatives on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (Abegunde, 2014).

The society is so patriarchal to the extent that if a man dies in politics or electioneering process, he is better honoured than a female in a similar situation. The society will praise him, not her. This to a large extent has discouraged a lot of women from participating in electioneering, in such a case, children are left motherless. It is easier for a man to remarry than for the woman (Allanana, 2013). Nigerian women thus, suffer this discrimination from birth to death.

The Colonial Dispensation

Adherence to discriminatory gender ascriptions persisted after the end of colonial rule in Nigeria. Ake (1996) argued that the surrogate post-independence political elite deliberately weakened women organisations hitherto involved in active agitation for liberation by enhancing the militarisation of the polity and increasing the statist of the economy. Although women were politically active and relatively less exclusive in decision-making process in many pre-colonial societies, the advent of colonial rule with its anti-women policies gradually transformed a hitherto politically gendered-unbiased to a predominantly male dominated political scene. Prior to colonial dominance, women occupied very influential political offices, including the highest political office among the Yorubas (King or Oba).

Others such as Queens Esigie of Benin and Amina of Zaria, Iyalode of Ibadan, Moremi of Ile-Ife, etc were powerful political forces who occupied very sensitive positions in the overall political hierarchy of their various communities (Awofeso and Odeyemi, 2014).

Reuben Abati (1999: 11) aligned with this position when he argued that the colonialists treated women as subservient to men. In his words,

Traditional African countries operate on the principle that every individual, male or female is an important member of the society with an assigned place and role in the chain of being which is not in any way inferior but rather important for the survival of the community and the race... Colonial rule truncated the evolution.

Similarly, Bolanle (1977:153) opined thus,

The Nigerian society is largely rigged against women who are treated as second-class citizens. The Victorian-era colonialists did not consider women to be anything other than housewives and ornaments of the society.... The Nigeria women before colonial rule played major roles in the various societies in the age-grades, chieftaincy councils and in maintaining the overall peace and stability of the community.

Two major colonial policies helped promote male domination in Nigeria politics. First, colonial policy considered only men to be active in the public sphere and earn living to support their families (Assie-Lumuba, 1996). Consequently, few educational assistance programmes were reserved for only male who were later recruited into colonial service and merchant houses. This gave male gender undue advantage over the female and thus marked the beginning of women under-representation in formal agencies of government. Secondly, the restructuring of traditional economies and their linkage with the international capitalist economies, transformed the Nigerian economy to producer of primary crops which were exported to Europe as cheap raw materials.

The male-folk quickly filled the vacuum of producers and exporters of these crops while their female counterparts concentrated on the production of food crops and domestic management. The control over export crops and other merchandise activities accounted for the post-independence domination of the Nigerian political landscape by men who could fund election cost (Awofeso and Odeyemi, 2014). This explains the second-fiddle role played by women in the Nigerian political scene. At best, they can only get the offices of 'deputy, vice or assistant'.

Poverty Underbelly

The colonial and historical discriminative experiences placed women at a disadvantaged position economically. In the words of Agbalajobi (2010:78), 'over the years, sexual division of labour and job opportunities offered on sex basis has given men productive gender roles, enabling them to possess more purchasing power over their female counterparts'. According to the Commission of European Communities (CEC) report (2007), 'the role of women in employment and economic activities is often underestimated because most women work in informal sectors, usually with low productivity and incomes, poor working conditions with little or no social protection. It observe that the female labour force in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2005 was about 73million, representing 34% of the informal sector employment, earning only 10% of the income while owning one percent of the assets'.

The denial of women's land and right to inheritance has made their economic participation considerably constrained and by implication, their educational aspiration (Nmadu, 2000). Those who acquired some level of education are not rich while those that are rich are uneducated and to some extent, uninclined politically. Hence they cannot match money for money in Nigerian politics of monetisation. Money is very critical in the shaping, making and unmaking of public office which is supposed to be on trust. Politics is commercialised. More and more money is needed to participate in politics.

Women lack access to and ownership of productive resources, limiting the scope of their political work (Allanana, 2013). The larger the financial muscle in Nigeria, the greater the chances of winning public office (Esidene and Abdul, 2013).

Hence, poverty feminisation has become a clog in the wheel of women's growth and development, and subsequently their relegation to the background in the scheme of things.

Women's Perception of Politics

There is a consensus belief that Nigerian politics is based on high political virility-those who have all it takes to compete in the turbulent environment; those who possess the wherewithal to take it by force when force is required; those that can match violence with violence. This consensus believe that men possess the superior strength competitiveness, are self-reliant and are prepared to tussle in political endeavour while women are considered too passive to engage in politics and governance (Agbalajobi, 2010).

Politics in Nigeria is a game of 'do-or-die' with a mentality of winner takes all. Hence, it is matter for the strong. It thus follows that Esidene and Abdul (2013) by nature, man is stronger and virile enough to play the game of politics. Women are physically weak and hence have no ego to compete favourably with men in the turbulent activities. Also, women conception of politics as dirty game and the fear of violence has further reduced their participation in politics and continued alienation from mainstream political activities in the country.

Organisation and Structure of Political Parties

The structure and organisation of any political party plays a major role in the inclusion and exclusion of women in politics. The Executive Council of the major political parties in Nigeria, the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) for example, can boast of only Women and Deputy Women Leader, and this is due to the feminist appellation of the positions, while every other notable and available position are exclusively reserved for men to the detriment of Politically inclined and sensitive women.

The Executive Council, being the highest decision making body of any political party allocates and zone party, elective and appointive positions, hence according to (Akande, 1999), it is not surprising that only few women are nominated for elective offices with only a few actually winning. Thus women have been reduced to the role of adorning beautiful apparel in major campaign rallies, wear customised party shirts and faze-caps, sing, clap, praise and dance for party leaders and elected party members, share party handbills and vote in election with a reciprocation of pinch of salt, tin tomatoes, rice, meagre amount of money and other seemingly trivialised items.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper argued that women have been relegated to the background in all sphere of life due to the key roles they perform in the home and the society at large. While culture and tradition placed a burden of home care on her, political parties have

deliberately strangled the woman by allocating only the position of Woman and Deputy Woman leader to her. She is not expected to attend late night party meetings like her male counterpart due to her home care role. This informed the logic of female domestication. If the issue of women disempowerment will be addressed, it requires political parties in Nigeria to restructure their programs in such a way that women can rise to any position in such a way that certain positions are either allocated to them directly or they are given room to take part in the party political process without any form of victimisation and intimidation, while late night meetings be reduced and if possible, eliminated as this will enable women to take active part in party decision making machinery.

It is important to note that the political relegation of women is not limited to Nigeria or Africa alone, but manifest itself all over the world though in varying degrees. Commenting on the situation of American women in American politics, Mrs. Carter announced:

What have I also to do with politics? Even the government of our country, which is said to be the freest in the world, passes over women as if they were not. We are excluded from all political rights without ceremony. Law makers thought as little as comprehending us in their code of liberty, as if we were pigs or sheep... I am conscious of being an intelligent and moral being... I see myself denied... The existence of my own discretion, incapable of separate property, subject in all periods of my life to the will of another on whose bounty, I am made to depend for food, raiment and shelter... I see myself in my relation to society regarded merely as beast or an insect... Passed over in the distribution of public duties... They generously admits me into the class of existence but affirm that I exist for no purpose than the convenient of the more dignified sex, that I am not to be entrusted with the government of myself, that to foresee, to deliberate and decide belong to others, while all my duties resolve themselves into this precept 'listen and obey'. It is not for me to smile at their tyranny or receive as my gospel, a code built upon such atrocious maxims (Kerber, 1977:491).

It must be mentioned at this juncture that the most successful women in politics in Nigeria are those with supportive husbands, those who have become husbands, those without husbands, those who are through with childbearing, and those who have mingled with the military, daughters of past politicians/leaders. Examples are: Late Dora Akunyili (supportive husband); Iyabo Obasanjo (divorcee and daughter of former President); Sara Jubril (widowed) etc. (Allanana, 2013). Others include: Ngozi Okojo-Iweala; Oluremi Tinubu; Eme Ekaete and Diezani Alison-Madueke (Supportive husband); Stella Oduah (separated), etc.

Politics in Nigeria has been described as a terrain meant for the hardened (Akinola, 2009), where candidates cannot fund elections themselves without recourse to

godfatherism. Godfatherism is a kind of patron-client or master-servant relationship which obviously is not free of violence, especially in controversial areas where candidates failed to comply with earlier agreed negotiations. This type of politics hardly favour women because no woman can stand the resultant consequence of not yielding to godfather's demands, as the country has witnessed in recent past. Electioneering in Nigeria has been characterised by violence, electoral irregularities and all forms of election manipulations. The system of corruption that has infiltrated the Nigerian polity has practically put women on the edge and everything seems to be working against them in men's favour. Women are by nature sympathetic, caring and think largely towards home-building, and hence, aspiring for public offices to enrich themselves is very rare (Abegunde, 2014).

Thus, the continuous campaign for women to be actively involved in the democratic process. Though, this has yielded little as compared to the increasing number of women heading key positions in other domain. The larger democratic framework and the level of democratisation also impact in women's political participation. Secular democracies in Europe and also in some of the developing countries have created relatively more space for women's participation in politics as compared to countries where religious orthodoxy has been shaping politics and democracy (Allanana, 2013).

Nigerian women deserve the best. They can be President, Vice President and Governor, which systematically are exclusive preserve for men. In other democracies, both developed and developing, women are seen playing key roles in the development of their various countries. This they were able to achieve because they were given opportunities in the democratic process. In Africa for instance, there are female presidents such as Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (Liberia), Prime Minister Aminata Touré (Senegal-appointed) and Catherine Samba-Panza (Central Africa Republic-appointed) and so many other countries of the world. These women have contributed in no small measure to the development of their countries and in Africa as a whole.

The call for increased female participation became imperative in view of the fact that the 2015 general elections in the country witnessed a reduction in the number of elected women in Nigeria. For instance, virtually all the women who won in the 2011 elections as senators lost their bid to return to the red chamber in 2015. The House of Representatives is not different. What this meant is that it will be difficult to find a female principal officer in both chambers, except for Senator Oluremi Tinubu who is returning to the senate for a second time, but may not be favoured by the zoning arrangement. There are about five female Deputy Governors from Akwa Ibom (PDP), Enugu (PDP), Lagos (APC), Ogun (APC) and Rivers (PDP) states (Offiong et al, 2015) and six female ministers (Aziken, 2015). In the National Assembly, there are seven female Senators and 14 female members of the House of Representatives which is slightly lower than that of 2011 except the position of Deputy Governor. Similarly, of the 919 contested seats into the various states Houses of Assembly, on 46 women representing about 4.6 percent were elected.

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