

# Overview of women and political participation in Nigeria (2015–2022)

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to analyze the level of women's political participation in Nigeria. The role of women in the political affairs of developing nation leaves much to be desired, lesser roles given to women in public policy-making has not allowed for the effective galvanization of their efforts into the legislative and executive branches of government.

**Research methodology:** This article adopts primary data through questionnaires and observation and secondary data through consultation with several textbooks, magazines, journals, and other publications. Twenty-five 25 copies of questionnaires were administered and dully returned through the adoption of simple random sampling.

**Results:** It was observed that the level of women's political participation is low and women don't have equal chances of winning elections in Nigeria due to some factors like culture, religion, historical-structural, and even economic or financial factors.

**Limitations:** Some of the major limitations to the research work are time restrictions, access to adequate kinds of literature, documents, and data that can help the researcher.

**Contributions:** The research can be instrumental to the growth and improve the level of women's political participation because women do not get the needed encouragement in the political arena.

**Keywords:** *Political participation, Gender equality, Women*

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## 1. Introduction

Women's political participation and the need for gender equality have become focal points of contemporary women's rights movements globally. Since the 19th century, the struggle for women's social, economic, and legal rights has led to the formation of several women's organizations with the objective of achieving freedom, liberation, and ultimately gender equality between men and women. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1979 (CEDAW) was established as an arm of the United Nations and is primarily aimed at working towards the attainment of these lofty goals. Likewise, the Nigeria government passed into law the national policy that supports women and which is backed by the global instruments and instructions of the CEDAW in 2001. This promoted the improvement in girls 'child access to basic forms of education, with enrollment for females in primary and secondary schools improving from 46.7 percent and 47.1 percent respectively in 2010 to 48.3 percent and 47.9 percent respectively in 2015 (USAID, 2016). Enjoying equal rights when it comes to politics, education, and economic aspects is very essential, equality being the condition of things in which all persons in a given society enjoy similar rights, freedoms, and status, including potential civil laws, freedom of speech, and fair opportunities to certain public goods and services (Khan, 2021).

In many societies, women play marginal roles in political affairs, especially in the developing economies where they are given lesser roles when it comes to public policy making and are

considered weaker vessels and might not be eligible to effectively hold political offices at both legislative and executive branches of government. Since the 1995 Women's Conference in Beijing, China, and the United Nations Millennium Summit of 2000, gender equality has been on the front burner in international, national, and local governance discourses (UN Publication, 2015). Different levels of advocacy have been woven around issues of women's marginalization in politics, the need for special training, and the creation of awareness and encouragement to attain political heights like their male counterparts in many parts of the world and have been made a precondition for good governance and inclusiveness. This is against the backdrop of the fundamental rights of every citizen to participate and to choose their own representatives in a fair and transparent democratic process. A political system that excludes women from participating fully and equally in political life should not be considered "democratic" (Rai, 2000).

Given that some factors have inhibited the participation of women in politics in Nigeria, like religious and cultural factors, some colonial system ideologies, and some other social factors that position men as guardians over women. The right to political participation of any individual both male and female citizen of a country and to be involved in decision-making processes of their country is recognized and protected in the 25th article of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights signed on the 16th December 1966 (ICCPR). Political participation is a voluntary activity that is a collective action by members of a society in the choice of their rulers and thus directly and indirectly involved in the formation of public policies (Maclosky, 2000). An attempt targeted at forcing people to get involved in these voluntary activities is a contradiction to the definition of political participation.

Political participation is a major platform for gender equality and with the advent of democracy, the female gender has accomplished some formal equality with the male gender in some core areas of society like in academics and entrepreneurship; they have attained the right to vote in an election and to be voted for or compete for political offices but they have been vastly underrepresented in Local, State and National levels. In Nigeria, Late Mrs. Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti, Mrs. Margaret Ekpo, Mrs. Janet Moku, Chief (Mrs) Bolarinwa, Hajiya Sawaba Gambo, Alhaja Humani Alaga, and some others have fought for the enfranchisement of the women in time past (Badmus, 2006). In recent times, some political positions and other complementary or additional seats in the National Assembly, with some enabling constitutional review to preserve women's status have been proposed as substitutes for female elective positions. (Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013). Citizen participation regardless of gender, religion, or social class has become an essential element in present-day government management and operations (Mwesigwa, 2021).

The challenge faced by women in political processes in Nigeria is herculean. This has attracted the attention of political analysts and practitioners since the country's return to democracy in 1999. The hope of realizing the gains and resolution of the 1995 Beijing Declaration has not been totally met. This can be gleaned from the statistical figures of women's representation in political matters in the country. Specifically, women's political representation in the National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives) between 1999 and 2019 shows a statistical breakdown of 3% in 1999, 4% in 2003, 7% in 2007, 6% in 2011, 7% in 2015 and 8% in 2019 respectively. (National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria, 2019). This trend is clearly not a very impressive performance in terms of women's representation and their political involvement since the return to civilian rule in 1999.

The effect of the scenario painted above is that the ascension to the highest political offices in the Legislature and Executive arms continues to be a mirage for the women's fold in Nigeria. Experiences at the National and state level have shown that since the advent of the Fourth Republic, only a few States have been able to produce female Deputy Governors as seen in Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Enugu, Plateau, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, and Ekiti among others. Closely related to this is a low number of female involvement in the legislative arms of government and in the public policy-making machinery. This has further exacerbated the serious challenges of child labor, early marriage, women trafficking, and illiteracy in the Country especially in the northern region. According to a statistical breakdown, 78% of girls in the Northern region of Nigeria marry before the age of 18 (National Bureau of

Statistics, 2020), adequate women's representation in law-making, policy formulation, and implementation could have reversed the prevalence of these challenges.

Moreover, gender equality is a cardinal objective of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it has remained largely unrealized in Nigeria. Despite efforts of the Federal Government in this direction, especially in the area of advocacy by making gender issues a major basis of governance. By the United Nations template on good governance, gender equality remains an impetus towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNIRSD 2015), the possibility of attaining good governance at any level might not be feasible without a conscious pursuit of the principles of gender equality. The two (2) main research Objectives posed by the researcher are:

1. To examine the level of women's political participation in Nigeria.
2. To analyze the effect of low political participation of women in Nigeria.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. The Concept of Gender Equality

Gender equality is an important point of all modern women's rights movements or associations across the world. Starting with every single struggle for women's political, legal, social, and economic rights since the early 19th century, the movement for the freedom and liberation of women has hit an extreme height. The United Nations General Assembly in 1979 adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and this came into reality when a treaty was signed on September 3rd, 1981 (UN SDG resource document, 2015). The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015. The seventeen United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out clear visions, principles, and commitment to a proper and more sustainable world for all and they are classified and grouped as the 5Ps and can be seen below.

Table 1. The 5Ps of the United Nations seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

People	Prosperity
No poverty (Goal 1)	Affordable clean energy (Goal 7)
Zero hunger (Goal 2)	Decent work & economic growth (Goal 8)
Good health & well-being (Goal 3)	Industry, innovation & Infrastructure (Goal 9)
Quality education (Goal 4)	Reduce inequalities (Goal 10)
Gender equality (Goal 5)	Sustainable cities & communities (Goal 11)
Clean water & sanitation (Goal 6)	Responsible consumption & production (Goal 12)
Planet	Peace & Partnerships
Climate action (Goal 13)	Peace, justice & strong institutions (Goal 16)
Life below water (Goal 14)	Partnership for the goals (Goal 17)
Life on land (Goal 15)	

Source: Adapted from Morton, Pencheon, and Squires (2017) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their implementation

Gender equality which is the fifth goal of the United Nations called the sustainable development goals (SDGs) aimed to end all forms of discrimination against females and empower them. Implementing policies and laws that eliminate any forms of ferocious or violent attack against all women and girls in the private and public domain, including sexual abuse, exploitation, and human trafficking. Putting an end to harmful practices like; child labor, early and forced marriage, female genital mutation, and

promoting social protection policies for the female gender among others (UN SDG resource document, 2015).

The concept is to ensure that women take full and active participation and have equal opportunities for leadership roles at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public areas of society. Gender equality can be described as the means that surrounds the interests, needs, and importance of both the girls and the boys, the women and the men are respected and deliberated upon, recognizing the diverse nature of these different groups and that all humans are allowed to develop and have their own personal abilities and make choices that can affect their lives without the limitations and inadequacy set by stereotypes and preconception about gender roles (UNICEF, 2022). All gender should have equivalent rights and opportunities to participate fully in any aspects desired and at all stages of political processes. Political participation is not only about the right to vote, it is also about the right to power sharing, decision-making, and policy formulation and implementation at all levels of governance.

## **2.2. Political Participation**

Political participation is broadly conceived as any number of voluntary activities undertaken by the public to influence public policy either directly or by affecting the selection of persons who make those policies. It is also an activity that is concerned with the traditional conceptualization of politics which involves the campaigning by politicians and parties and with well-acknowledged contact between citizens and public officials (van Deth & Elff, 2000). When citizens participate in politics, it is relevant for any political system, and also an essential feature in democracy, i.e. the more the citizens participate, the more democracy there is (Verba & Nie, 1987). Participating in politics regardless of gender, social class, and racial differences is relevant in the political structure he societies because it will foster inclusion and end any form of discrimination. Political participation can also mean all voluntary activities which include campaigning, voting, contesting in elections, and protesting after the elections by which ordinary citizens try to influence the political outcomes of the country (Frey, 2018).

Political participation refers to those lawful actions or activities by citizens that are more or less directly planned at influencing the selection of governmental officials and or the actions that they take and inactions (Verba & Nie, 1987). ). It is an action by ordinary citizens directed toward exerting influence on some political outcomes of society (Brady, 1999). From his definition, Brady highlighted and emphasized that;

*political participation is the manifestation and observable actions or activities that people voluntarily take part in”, “The people in this regard means ordinary citizens, not just political elites or civil servants”, and the concept also refers to the “deliberate attempts to influence the people in power to make a difference.* Political participation is all those voluntary actions or non-compulsory activities by individual citizens of a country that planned to influence either direct or indirect political choices at various levels of the political system (Kaase & Marsh, 1979). In the quest for political participation, a competitive election that is conducted in a free, fair, and credible manner comprises some multifaceted interactions by multiple actors regardless of their gender and even opposition political parties is very important (Olajubu, 2022).

## **2.3. Women and Political Participation in Nigeria**

Women's participation in politics and the series of their engagement in election processes and activities is an essential marker of the maturity and efficacy of democracy. The pre-colonial era where cultural values were respected; was also characterized by ignorance and deprivation. Men were considered superior and the various existing traditional and customary beliefs and practices relegated women to the background in society (Sule & Haour, 2014). Women suffer different discrimination, exploitation, and rejection because they were considered weak-hearted and moved by what they see, they are regarded as second-class members of societies but that does not prevent them from playing instrumental roles in the progress of the societies, they played prominent roles in politics before the arrival of Islam and the British government, for examples, Moremi of Ile-Ife, Idia and Emotan of Benin and Queen Amina of Zaria, (Kinni, 2015).

During the colonial era, society did not see the female gender as important but as inferior to the male gender. Colonialism disrupted the diversity balance which had characterized pre-colonial African states; they deliberately create different classes in their colonial African states (Adenuga, 2022). But the increasing discrimination and consistent exploitation of women in Nigeria birthed the emergence of female pressure groups such as Lagos Market Women's Association (LMWA) in the 1920s, Nigerian Women's Party (NWP) in 1944 Women Movement in Nigeria (WMN) in 1952, Federation of Nigerian Women Societies (FNWS) in 1953 and National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS) in 1959, women felt the needs to defend themselves, they don't want to fold their arms anymore and never want to remain stagnant and relegated to the background in the society (Dagunduro & Adenugba, 2020). Prominent women like Mrs. Charlotte Obasa, the late Mrs. Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti, Mrs. Margaret Ekpo, Mrs. Janet Mokelu, Hajiya Sawaba Gambo etc help in liberating the women and in mobilizing support for women politically. Although women were not fully recognized in politics, there was the formation of different political parties and there was no role for women at that time because they possessed little or no functional relevance in politics (Ogunsheye, 2021).

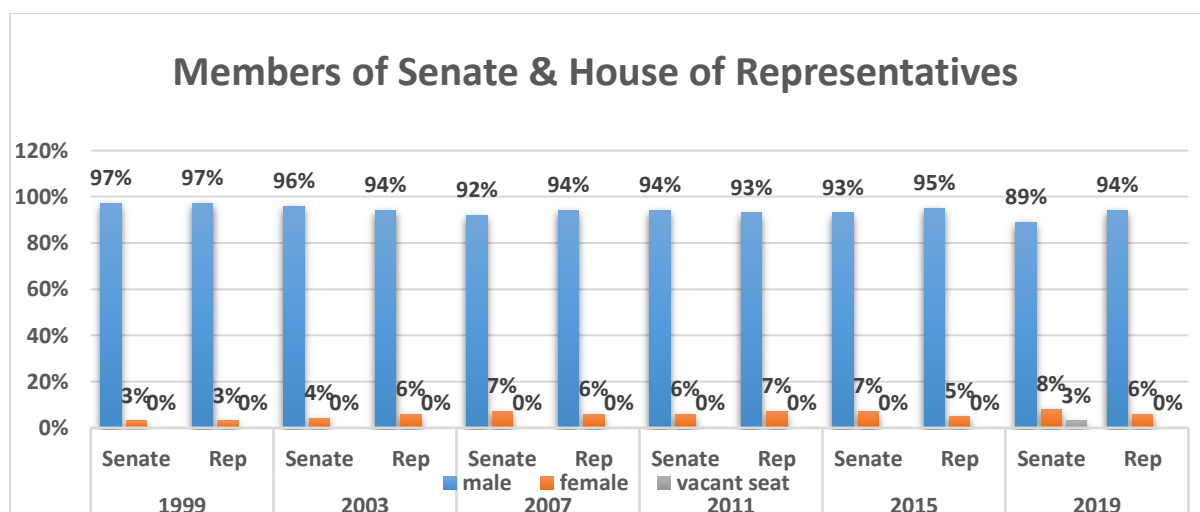
The post-colonial era awakens the female gender from their sleep and the need to participate in politics and decision-making processes of the country. This political awakening can be attributed to the restoration of the franchise to women in some regions of the country, although women's participation is far from satisfactory they began to show their competencies and abilities. The 1979 constitution make provisions and guaranteed women's rights and forbid any form of gender discrimination. Unfortunately, some socio – cultural factors and colonial influences still prevailed and affect the level of women's participation in politics (Rojas, 1994). Mrs. Wuraola Esan represented the western region and the likes of Mrs. Margaret Ekpo and later Mrs. Janet Mokelu represented the eastern region in parliament (Tribuneonline, 2019). Some other women in politics include Mrs. Janet Akinmade, Mrs. Nike Oyagbola, Alhaja Latifat Okunu, Mrs. Pamela Saduki, Mrs. Cecilia Ekpenyong, Mrs. Onikepo Akande, and Dr. Laraba G. Abdullahi in 1998 as the minister of women affairs (Salami, 2014) among others. Citizen participation in the development of society is an integral activity that must be fostered and developed because this will in turn foster a sense of belonging and a sense of responsibility from the society in a conscious, passionate, and responsible manner regardless of gender differences. (Seran & Tamunu, 2022).

In contemporary times, especially when the country returned to civilian rule in 1999, the number of women increased when it comes to political participation but it was still obvious that the female gender practically was still lagging behind and had a long way to go in accomplishing equality when it comes to politics and other aspects alongside the male gender. The below tables and illustrations show clearly the gaps and differences between male and female participation in politics and the need for gender equality, under the international standard, both the male and females should have equal rights and opportunities when participating in politics, governance, and decision-making processes that involve their lives and promoting women's participation in politics is one of the core value of the sustainable development goals targeted on gender equalities.

Table 2. Member of Nigeria Senate & House of Representatives (1999 – 2019)

<b>Member of Senate &amp; House of Representatives</b>												
	<b>1999</b>		<b>2003</b>		<b>2007</b>		<b>2011</b>		<b>2015</b>		<b>2019</b>	
	<b>Senat e</b>	<b>Re p</b>	<b>Senat e</b>	<b>Re p</b>	<b>Senat e</b>	<b>Re p</b>	<b>Senat e</b>	<b>Re p</b>	<b>Senat e</b>	<b>Re p</b>	<b>Senat e</b>	<b>Re p</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>34 8</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>33 9</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>33 7</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>33 4</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>34 1</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>33 8</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Vacant seat</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>

Source: Adapted from paper presentation of National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria, "Monitoring Participation of Women in Politics in Nigeria by Oloyede (2016)



Source: Adapted from paper presentation of National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria, “Monitoring Participation of Women in Politics in Nigeria by Oloyede (2016)

Table 3. The Executive Electoral Position (1999 – 2019)

YEAR		President	Vice President	Governor	Deputy Governor
1999	Seat Available	1	1	36	36
	Nos of Women	0	0	0	1
2003	Seat Available	1	1	36	36
	Nos of Women	0	0	0	2
2007	Seat Available	1	1	36	36
	Nos of Women	0	0	0	6
2011	Seat Available	1	1	36	36
	Nos of Women	0	0	0	3
2015	Seat Available	1	1	36	36
	Nos of Women	0	0	0	4
2019	Seat Available	1	1	36	36
	Nos of Women	0	0	0	4

Source: Adapted from a paper presentation by the National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria, “Monitoring Participation of Women in Politics in Nigeria by Oloyede (2016)

## 2.4. Some Factors Hindering Women Political Participation

### 2.4.1. Cultural/ Patriarchy factor

Nigeria is a country ruled and dominated by the male gender, cultural factors have contributed to the low women's participation in politics, and some tribes and cultures to date still see no reason why women should take roles and responsibilities in society. The social status of women in the aspect of culture makes them responsible for just the biological reproduction of the family. Cultural factors have undermined the abilities of women to participate in politics and have made them less ambitious. The cultural factors are vital factors that have contributed to the low women's participation in politics, some tribes and cultures to date still see no reason why women should take roles and responsibilities in society aside from household functions.

### 2.4.2. Religious factor

Similar to the cultural factor, Nigerians hold religion in high esteem. In Islam for example, even though the male and female gender are equal before the law and accountable for their actions, it's not so when it comes to politics. Both Christianity nor Islam do not really accord the female gender many roles in politics because religion plays important roles in Nigeria, it helps shape the beliefs and actions of the people, having such beliefs, they viewed women's participation in politics as a forbidden act

and they have to avoid politics. So many have been influenced by their religious ideologies and they viewed women's participation in politics as a forbidden act and they have to avoid politics.

#### *2.4.3. Economic factor*

Competing in elections requires huge financial competencies and lack of economic resources and finances is one of the hindrances to women's political participation. Some Nigerian women who seek political positions have problems meeting up with the necessary financial obligations, these highlighted the differences between the female and male candidates, women's unequal access to economic or financial resources restricts them in managing their political activities (UN Organization, 2007).

#### *2.4.4. Political violence*

Since its inception, Nigeria's politics and elections, campaigns, and all that always been characterized by one form of violence or another other which makes it difficult for female aspirants to withstand violence in politics, due to a series of political violence that has been perpetrated in order to accomplish their political goals such as threat to life, forced disappearance like kidnapping, targeted assassinations, torture, either psychological or physical. In Nigeria, the Boko haram insurgent group in the northeast, coupled with a series of communal crises and violence, banditry, and kidnapping could be politically motivated. Making reference to the SBM intelligence report that helps in monitoring sociopolitical and economic developments in Nigeria, about 626 people were killed during the 2018/2019 election cycle in Nigeria.

#### *2.4.5. Stigmatization*

With the background of politics in Nigeria and the activities around it, women aspirants who ventured into politics are sometimes the term "promiscuous", and "immoral", women have faced all forms of marginalization, discrimination, and different challenges, criticism when it comes to politics and that's why they have low representation and lesser numbers of women holding political and decision-making positions and they have been treated unfairly in the aspects of politics of the society.

### **2.5. Theoretical Review**

The study adopted the democratic – participatory theory to further justify the research topic. The female gender are perceived as being marginalized to the sphere of domestic work and a more private life and the male in the society are more saddled with the task and responsibilities of shouldering the activities of the public or governance affairs and activities of the society. The democratic participatory theory holds that government at all levels exists solely for the purpose of promoting democracy and participation. Although the theory has been criticized for its assertions that participatory mechanism will not be inherently compatible with some societies because the citizen can become disinterested, self-interested or the rational member has little or no incentive to participate in politics because they lack basic and required skills and knowledge. This theory gains influence largely due to the works of John Stuart Mills (1806 – 1873), especially his work on utilitarianism, liberty, and representative government (Mill, 1877).

### **2.6. Assumptions of the democratic – participatory theory**

1. The democratic participatory theory is a useful tool that aids political liberty and citizen participation regardless of age, gender, or status. It is an indispensable fact that gives freedom and equal rights to all citizens of a state.
2. The democratic participatory theory also campaigns for citizen inclusion and freedom of association. All citizens either the old or the young, the male or the female, the rich or the poor are entitled to participate in politics and be a member of any political party of their choice.
3. The theory promotes and facilitates the fundamental human rights of the citizen. Having fundamental human rights as a citizen gives the individual right to communicate with others, the right to vote and be voted for in an election, the right to participate on equal footing with other candidates regardless of gender, age, or social status
4. The theory emphasizes the idea that fosters good governance and promotes social welfare. The perception will help enhance good relations among the citizen, and help build a self-reliant

community public oriented individuals to ensure good service delivery, since ensuring service delivery is a core function of the State.

5. The theory centers on participation regardless of gender, age, or status. It gives room for deliberations on issues; full participation involves service dialogue, debate, and discussion in an effort to arrive at possible solutions.

### 3. Research methodology

The study reviews “Women and political participation in Nigeria (2015 – 2022). The researcher adopted a mixed method by drawing data from the primary and the secondary data for this study; the primary data was obtained through a questionnaire and the secondary data used for the study was drawn from relevant textbooks, journals, government publications, and seminar papers in order to either approve or to disprove an argument being put forward in the project or to confirm such views. Because of the nature of the research as an explanatory one, simple random sampling was chosen by the researcher because the researcher randomly selects a subset of participants from the population.

The reason for choosing the questionnaire as the data analysis instrument is that it is private in nature and the respondent could easily express their views without fear or favor. The simple percentage was used to calculate the responses of the respondent and presented in tabular form where valuable information will be extracted and the findings interpreted. The frequency and percentage distribution will be used to determine the demographic features from the data collected.

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Number} \times 100}{\text{Total 1}}$$

From the research objectives, the study posed the below research questions that were further expanded into five (5) questions and a total number of 25 questionnaires were administered and dully collected.

1. What is the level of women's political participation in Nigeria?
2. How does low political participation affect women in Nigeria?

The respondent's view was measured on a Likert Scale where:

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Strongly Disagree
- e. Disagree

### 4. Results

Table 4. The level of women's political participation in Nigeria is comparatively low.

OPTIONS	RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly agree	12	48
Agree	8	32
Neutral	0	0
Strongly disagree	2	8
Disagree	3	12
Total	25	100

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

Table 5. Women have equal chances of winning elections in Nigeria as men.

OPTIONS	RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly agree	2	8
Agree	1	4



<b>Neutral</b>	0	0
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	9	36
<b>Disagree</b>	13	52
<b>Total</b>	25	100

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

Table 6. The welfare of society and issues like girl child education, early marriage, child trafficking, and abuse are better supported when women participate in politics.

<b>OPTIONS</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	12	48
<b>Agree</b>	8	32
<b>Neutral</b>	1	4
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	1	4
<b>Disagree</b>	3	12
<b>Total</b>	25	100

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

Table 7. The general syndrome of women being the weaker gender has really undermined the United Nation's Gender Equality principles and women's political participation.

<b>OPTIONS</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	7	28
<b>Agree</b>	8	32
<b>Neutral</b>	1	4
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	4	16
<b>Disagree</b>	5	20
<b>Total</b>	25	100

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

#### **4.1. Discussion**

The roles of women in the political affairs of developing nations leave much to be desired. Lesser roles in public policymaking have not allowed an effective galvanization of women's efforts into the legislative and executive branches of government. Gender equality and increased political participation of women have become focal points for contemporary women's rights movements globally. From above table 1, 12 respondents representing 48% strongly agree that the level of women in political participation in Nigeria is comparatively low, 8 respondents representing 32% agree, 2 respondents representing 8% strongly disagree and 3 respondents representing 12% disagree. The majority of the respondents believe that women's political participation in Nigeria is comparatively low and this inherently denotes the gender gaps in women's political participation which can be traced to factors like culture, religion, social, financial, or economic and among others.

Table 2 shows that 2 respondents representing 8% strongly agree that women have equal chances of winning elections in Nigeria as men, 1 respondent representing 4% agree, 9 respondents representing 36% strongly disagree and 13 respondents representing 52% disagree. The majority of the respondents disagrees and affirms that women don't have equal chances of winning election in Nigeria due to factors like culture, religion, social, historical-structural, and even economic or financial factors.

Table 3 shows that 12 respondents representing 48% strongly agree that the welfare of society and issues like girl child education, early marriage, child trafficking, and abuse are better supported when women participate in politics, 8 respondents representing 32% agree, 1 respondent representing 4% were neutral, 1 respondent representing 4% strongly disagree and 3 respondents representing 12%

disagree. The majority of the respondents agree that when women participate in politics and governance of the society, the welfare of the society will be given more attention and high women's political participation is somewhat relevant.

Table 4 shows that 7 respondents representing 28% strongly agree that the general syndrome of women being the weaker gender has really undermined the United Nations Gender Equality principles and women's political participation, 8 respondents representing 32% agree, 1 respondent representing 4% were neutral, 4 respondents representing 16% strongly disagree and 5 respondents representing 20% disagree. The majority of the respondents agree that society views and might continue to view women as the weaker gender and this has continued to disrupt the gender equality principles designed by the United Nations, the society cannot easily support women's political participation.

## **5. Conclusion**

It is of essence to know that women can also play an active role in politics and governance of the Nation but due to series of global experiences that women face such as cultural or patriarchal factors, religious factors, and economic factors among others, makes them play marginal roles in political affairs of the country. The level of political participation of women and access to governance and decision-making is low, and trying to make them occupy several positions of influence in the public and in achieving equal footing with men is a very important display of gender equality and equity in society. Facing a series of marginalization, discrimination, and other prevalent challenges and condemnation when it comes to politics has resulted in low representation of women in politics and decision-making positions in society. There is a constant need to ensure that people participate in the political affairs of their society regardless of their gender, social class, and differences in race. All these unique differences are relevant in the political structures of the societies because of its abilities to promote inclusion and eliminate any forms of discrimination at all levels.

From the observation conducted in the National Assembly (NASS) and a questionnaire administered, the overall objectives of the study were achieved, and concluded that the level of women's political participation in Nigeria is considerably low, the 2019 general election for an example reveals that the female gender has a low representative in the legislative arms of the government (8% and 6% respectively forms the female representation in Senate and House Representative) and this inherently denotes that, there are gender disparities in political participation and governance of the country, some of this can be traced to factors like culture, religion, social, financial or economic and among others. Some culture and tradition still discriminate against women in the political arena which make the domination of men in political practices continued to grow. In line with the gender disparities, 35% Affirmative action in the National Gender Policy should be adhered to. Affirmative actions are steps that are positive, taken to improve the representation of women and other minority groups in areas such as employment, politics, education, promotion, and appointment, from which they have been historically deprived. The Affirmative action policy will generate and mobilize support towards members of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups that are believed to have suffered from discrimination in society. Adopting and adhering to Affirmative action principles or policies will help bridge that gap of inequalities in societies with reference to political, economic, educational, and employment opportunities, and promotion of adversity by readdressing the obvious past wrongs.

### **5.1. Limitations and study forward**

The major limitations to the research study are basically have been time frame due to the researcher's other engagement, access to kinds of literature that can be instrumental to this research study, difficulties in getting and obtaining necessary information or reliable data, and lack of cooperation from subjects of the study. The researcher focuses more on women and political participation in the aspect of winning an election. For further studies, voting in elections by women should be taken into consideration.

## 5.2. Suggestions

From the basis of the research findings and results, the following suggestions and recommendations were given:

1. Government should introduce policies like a quota system to aid women's participation in politics, a form of an electoral quota system that will mandate a certain percentage of women candidates for public elections.
2. Advocacy by civil society organizations should be geared towards the political education of women and society on the social benefits of gender equity and equality. Good sensitization and creating of awareness on the need for women to participate in politics is very important at all levels of governance.
3. The government should be committed to the creation of a conducive environment that will help promote the inclusion of women in politics and decision-making of the State in order to take up leadership roles.
4. The miss- conception, and misinterpretation the public has concerning female candidacy for election should be discouraged. Some cultural and religious beliefs are of the opinion that women should not ascend to leadership roles because men are assumed as the head and women are the weaker gender.
5. Women should be willing to join and participate actively in the governance and politics of their state, community, and country or organizations in order to show their capabilities, skills, and qualities to the public.
6. There is a need for the government and the general public to recognize women's role in society as far as governance and state building are concerned and women in society need to recognize and fully understand their self-esteem, improve their confidence level and political will, and must be ready to take risk and face challenges associated with politics and governance.

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