

## Politics of Gender Exclusion and Representative Democracy in Nigeria.

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examined the politics of gender exclusion and representative democracy in Nigeria. The objective is to shed light on the persistent challenges faced by women in Nigerian politics, despite constitutional provisions and policy statements promoting gender inclusion. The liberal feminist theory as was popularized by J. S. Mill was adopted. According to this theory, the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the sexes is wrong and should be replaced with a fair and perfect equality. three research objectives were formulated to guide the study. The mixed method was used for data collection and analysis. The research revealed that women are significantly underrepresented in both appointive and elective positions. This underrepresentation could be attributed to various barriers, including patriarchal norms and societal contempt for women in politics. In view of these structural biases and barriers to women's political participation, some recommendations offered were; implementation of deliberate policies and legislations that target women quotas and affirmative action; women should be economically empowered through access to education, employment and credit facilities because, feminized poverty calls for interventions to reduce wealth disparities, among others.*

**Key Words:** *Politics, Gender, Gender Exclusion, Democracy and Representative Democracy.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Since the evolution of human society, particularly from the ancient, medieval and modern era, to the contemporary epoch, women have been portrayed as intellectually, morally, spiritually and biologically inferior to men (Connell, 2021; Rousselier, 2021; Deslauriers, 2019, 2015, Houston, 2011). Kanu (2012) revealed that women, for a very long time have been regulated to the background of second-class citizens or even insignificance Tonye (1995) citing (Ex. 20:17; Dt. 5:21) alluded to the fact that the woman was included in the list of a man's many properties, which include; house, land, slaves, ox and ass. As such, it was not surprising that she has turned to address her husband slaves do – as Master or Lord. In the Jewish Society, Horst (1995) opined that the woman was seen as a burden, a source of secret anxiety to her father, so disturbing was it that the wise and devout Jew in his daily synagogue service prayed thus, "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has not made me a heathen, a slave or a woman" (Hannon, 1967, P.58 – 59).

Ama Doki (2003) observed that citizenship was defined in terms of the superiority of the male sex who was assigned greater role, which granted him power over the female. Accordingly,

the public world was dominated by the man, whereas, women belonged to the private sphere. Hence, the woman was confined to the household sphere, with the unique responsibility of rearing children and upholding established customs, such as keeping the domestic altar afloat (Okpeh & Sha, 2017).

Walter (1999) succinctly described the Greek view about gender relations in what follows:

The traditions of ancient Greek Society streamlined the socio-political, economic and religious involvements of men and women. The citizenship of men thus constitutes the rational aspects of the society and the public functions elevated to the status of stakeholders. Women's private position was subjected to the whims and caprices of men without content of superior humanity (Walter, 1999 p.23).

This follows numerous allusions to the popular belief that woman instinctively cannot act independently "unless she is closely watched" (Mckenzie, 1965 p.1). Thus, she was circumscribed to domestic service roles. In congruity with the Aristotelian teleology, the man is said to be active, life and firm-giving principle in procreation. The man bequeaths the seed; the woman is passive and only confers matter. As such, he concluded that men ought to be born, and if per chance women are born, it is as an outcome of some failure or defect; the woman was therefore estimated as a "mas occassionatus", a defective man (Aristotle Cited in Peschke 2004, p.437).

Furthermore, the place of women in the world of the Greeks could not be more expressly described than Demosthenes when he stated that "We keep ... concubines for the daily requirements of the body, wives to bear us legitimate children and to be faithful guardians of our household" (Demosthenes Cited in Hannon, 1967 P.60-61). She must be silent as Sophocles expressed in his poem, "woman, for woman silence is grace" (Sophocles Cited in Tonye, 1995, p.44).

Such motions advanced by western philosophers and scholars have fostered misunderstandings and misconceptions about the female gender. Consequently, those narratives hence resulted in high contempt for women and significantly obscured their presence in public leadership for many countries, this notion of male supremacy became popular as the defining pattern of power relations between the genders and has been sustained by a system of patriarchy until the enlightenment.

Indeed, the Enlightenment era provided the impetus that challenged the existing order in Europe and culminated in the emergence of liberal philosophy in England and beyond (Milan, 2010). Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the Enlightenment was a period of tremendous intellectual vibrancy that called into question established traditions and impacted various European Monarchies. It encompassed a range of ideas centered on the pursuit of happiness, the sovereignty of reason, and the privacy of the senses as primary sources of knowledge as well as advanced ideals such as liberty, progress, toleration, fraternity, constitutional government, leading to the church-state separation, as well as Parliament's Supremacy over the monarch (Cohen, 1982; Robertson, 2020).

The European Enlightenment and its indigenous American ideology also had a tremendous effect on the thirteen American Colonies, Ultimately resulting in the American Revolution and the establishment of the American Republic. Additionally, it enshrined the political principles of liberty, equality, democracy, and human rights that were historically associated with thinkers such as John Locke and Montesquieu, as well as constitutionally limiting the monarch's power, affirming parliamentary supremacy, enacting the Bill of Rights, the Magma Carta, and establishing the simple principle of "consent of the governed" (Ferguson, 1994).

Finally, the set of objectives for this study are to: assess the level of gender participation and representation in politics and the democratic process in Nigeria, investigate the experiences, challenges and aspirations of women in Nigeria politics and examine the contribution of women to the sustenance of democracy in the Nigerian political scene. These are in consideration with the problem facing women's political rights to elective and appointive positions which have not been adequately reflected in governance since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION: -**

### **CONCEPT OF POLITICS:**

The concept of politics has been widely interrogated in the literature (Heywood, 2007, Nna, 2004; Ndu, 1998; Laswell, 1965; Crick, 1962). Perhaps, as a concept associated with the social sciences, the term renders itself to several meanings. Thus, there are divergent views of politics, as there are several scholars in the discipline.

First, politics, may be viewed as a type of human activity. Heywood (2007) opined that it is something we do together. This implies that politics is not conducted alone. Thus, an individual existing alone in an imaginary desert island would not be said to be involved in a political activity simply because, there is no one to interact with. So, politics impliedly requires at least two people. This particular aspect of reasoning about politics is well captured in the definition of politics by Leftwich (2004). According to him;

Politics is a universal and pervasive aspect of human behaviour and may be found whenever two or more human beings are engaged in some collective activity, whether formal or informal, public or private (Leftwich, 2004 p.100).

That said, however, not all human interactions would be typically considered to be political activity. Therefore, the presence of two people is a necessary but not always a sufficient condition for the presence of political activity. Thus, we find some problems in Leftwich's definition of politics, for one, it gives the impression that all human interactions (formal or informal, private or public) are political in nature. But this seems to be an erroneous impression as Mackenzie (2007), has pointed out that there are other non-political forms of human interaction which list is potentially quite long. These include but not limited to art, the giving of gifts, love and affection, sexual relations, worship, sport, building and so on" (Mackenzie, 2007 p.5).

Politics is a tool for conflict resolution and consensus building (Ndu, 1998). He puts it thus, to quote him verbatim, "We may attempt to define politics as those process by which any group settles or attempts to settle the problems and contradictions which arise from the struggle to satisfy their economic needs" (Ndu, 1998 p.3).

### **CONCEPT OF GENDER**

The term gender originated from the French word "genre" and it was used to refer to the social and cultural definition of male and female. Gender issues frequently connote issues around men-women and male-female categorizations and their attempted reconciliations (Ayemi & Ajibogun, 2013). Years back, the word gender was generally understood to be the same as "sex" (Siwal, 2008). It referred to the differences between men and women and was commonly used interchangeably with sex.

In this context gender as an analytical tool was first distinguished from sex in the late 1960's and early 1970's (West and Zimmerman, 1987) and was seen as a social construction which emerged through psychological and cultural means, rather than biological differences.

Gender is a socially imposed division of the sexes ... man and woman are, of course, different. But they are not as different as day and night, earth and sky, yin and yang, life and death. In fact from the standpoint of nature, men and women are closer to each other than either is to anything else – for instance mountains, kangaroos, or coconut palms. The idea that men and women are more different from one another than either is from anything else must come from somewhere other than nature” (Rothenberg, 1998 p.9).

Gender emphasizes the social construction of differences between men and women in different societies, differences which translate in practice into inequality in resources, responsibilities, opportunities and constraint. And thus, gender analysis has to take into account the fact that these differences and inequalities are not uniform across the world. They vary according to such factors as cultural context, levels of development and the policy environment. It can be argued that gender relations are an important branch of gender discussions. Pollert’s (1996) view is that “Gender relations are everywhere, the close interrogation of social process, not the juggling of empty categories, will unravel them, although gender relations are constructed and reconstructed at both a material and ideological level and are a constitutive part of class” (Pollerts, 1996 p.2).

Gender issues draw attention to instances of widespread and pervasive prejudice against women. Thus, much of the interest in gender relations over the last few decades have been motivated by feminism, even if the term gender has been widely used. Gender relations have been portrayed as issues of inequality and subordination by feminists of all stripes (Sarker, 2006: Waylen, 1996). As a result, there is currently an international consensus that gender equity should be an aim of (country) development (Ferrant, 2001). Additionally, feminist academics have worked to ensure that gender analysis is included into all aspects of development plans and programmes, particularly in developing nations (Sarker, 2006).

However, gender is not simply a categorization of the social world into two perspectives as some may be inclined to do (Connel, 1985; Millet, 1970). It is more of a cultural category, based on socially created (and contentious views and conventions about sexuality and identity. These beliefs and standards are manifested in contemporary society through specific ideas and practices that guide (and constrain) human behaviours and the ways in which individual actors project their identities, seize opportunities, and enjoy well-being in life (Arsel et al., 2015). As a result, the disputes and contestations embedded in gender interactions vary. Among the most pervasive of these trends is the notion of gender equality or parity, as women prefer and as democratic tenets demand (Ejumudo, 2007; Htun, 2014).

## **CONCEPT OF GENDER EXCLUSION**

Moghadam (2005) sees gender exclusion as the systematic denial of opportunities, resources, and rights based on an individual's gender, resulting in their social, economic, and political marginalization. In the same vein, it can be understood as the practice of intentionally or unintentionally limiting or preventing individuals from fully participating in various spheres of society due to their gender identity or expression (Risman, 2004). This definition highlights the deliberate or unintentional nature of gender exclusion, showcasing how individuals are restricted from participating fully in societal spheres, leading to their exclusion and marginalization based on their gender identity or expression.

Kabeer (2005), views gender exclusion as the Gender exclusion as the deliberate or implicit segregation of individuals from certain social, cultural, or economic activities on the basis of their gender, reinforcing traditional gender roles and stereotypes. It is the societal practice that restricts individuals from accessing decision-making processes and resources based on their gender, leading to their social, economic, and political marginalization. It highlights how gender-based restrictions limit individuals' participation in various societal domains, leading to their exclusion from important decision-making roles and resources necessary for their well-being and advancement.

World Bank (2019) defines gender exclusion as the complex interplay of institutional, cultural, and societal factors that contribute to the unequal distribution of power, resources, and opportunities between genders, perpetuating a cycle of discrimination and disadvantage. Similarly, the United Nations (2015) sees gender exclusion as a multifaceted process that engenders social, economic, and political disparities, creating barriers for individuals to fully participate in decision-making processes and access essential services and resources.

Sudha (2017) observed that gender exclusion is the societal mechanisms that limit individuals' full participation in various sectors, including education, employment, and politics, based on their gender, resulting in their diminished social and economic status. It involves the systematic negation or devaluation of individuals' contributions and capabilities based on their gender identity, leading to their limited representation and recognition in various domains of public and private life. This underscores how gender-based societal mechanisms prevent individuals from fully participating in critical sectors, leading to their diminished social and economic standing and hindering their ability to achieve their full potential.

The concept of gender exclusion also encapsulates the restrictive norms and expectations imposed on individuals that constrain their choices and opportunities, reinforcing gender-based disparities in education, employment, and social status (Kangas, 2010). From this prism, it can also be understood as the result of deeply ingrained cultural and social norms that enforce the unequal treatment of individuals based on their gender, perpetuating discriminatory practices and impeding efforts towards achieving gender equality. This definition emphasizes the role of cultural and social norms in perpetuating gender exclusion, showcasing how deeply ingrained discriminatory practices hinder efforts aimed at achieving gender equality, thereby perpetuating the cycle of gender-based disparities and exclusion.

According to UNICEF (2021), gender exclusion can be characterized as the process through which individuals are excluded from participating in and benefiting from social and economic development initiatives due to their marginalized gender identity, exacerbating existing inequalities and vulnerabilities (UNICEF, 2021): This emphasizes how gender exclusion leads to the exclusion of individuals from participating in and benefiting from crucial social and economic development initiatives, further exacerbating existing inequalities and vulnerabilities within marginalized communities.

A study by the department for international development revealed that socially excluded groups are often the most vulnerable in a humanitarian emergency and may have specific needs that must be met in responses (DFID, 2009). Weldon (2008) however, revealed that sometimes, gender exclusion may result not necessarily from any conscious thought or intention to deny them such a privilege but may be a manifest or an unintended and natural effect of the system which they find themselves that maintains a structure of power imbalance and dominance in the society. As Mill, writing on the then Victorian Society, observed that;



the adoption of this system of inequality never has the result of deliberation, or forethought, social ideas or any notion whatever of what conduced to the benefit of human or the good order of society. It arose simply from the fact that from the very earliest twilight of human society, every woman (owing to the value attached to her by men, combined with her inferiority in muscular strength) was found in a state of bondage to some men, laws and systems of polity always begin by recognizing the relations they find already existing between individuals (Mill, Cited in Weldon, 2008 p.7).

Gender exclusion affects individuals who do not conform to traditional binary gender roles, such as transgender and gender non-conforming people. They may face discrimination and exclusion in various areas of life, including education, employment, healthcare, housing and social interactions. Gender exclusion can have significant negative effects on the well-being and mental health of individuals who experience it.

Efforts to combat gender exclusion focus on promoting gender equality and inclusivity. This includes advocating for legal protections against gender-based discrimination creating inclusive policies and practices in institutions, raising awareness about gender diversity, and challenging societal norms and stereotypes that contribute to gender exclusion. The goal is to create a society where individuals of all gender identities are treated with respect, dignity and equality.

## **DEMOCRACY**

Democracy is a system of government where power or sovereignty lives on the people who have the liberty and right to choose or elect those that will represent their interests at various levels of government. Democracy is “a system of government that its representatives devoid of tyrannic and absolutist rule, favour the masses by the great representation of the people, guarantees the citizens liberty and their welfare” (MacAlex – Achinulo, 2021 p.157).

Democracy can only be seen or viewed as a good system of government, when it goes a long way to be able to deliver the identified dividends of good governance which is centered on welfare and socio-economic advancement of the people, as well as their environment (Otu, 2005). Democracy has gained global acceptance as the best system of government; hence, many more countries or states are transformed from their old system of governance to become a democratic government with good prospects for the people and by the people. This has been the reason why democracy is called a rule that is controlled by the people through their representatives given the modern form of democracy (Nna, 2004). And lastly, the concept of democracy “is a political system by which citizens determine their mode of rule directly through participation (direct democracy) or indirectly by selecting individuals to whom they grant the mandate to rule (representative democracy) “(Zimako, 2009 P.7).

## **CONCEPT OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY:**

Literature on representative democracy is quite extensive and very expensive thus; the term has been explained differently by different scholars. Representative democracy has been defined as a form of government where elected representatives act on behalf of the people in making decisions and formulating policies, (Stoetzer, et al, 2022). It is a form of governance in which the people exercise their right to make political decisions through their elected representatives. In this way, the people elect their leaders to the representative bodies.

In Nigeria, as in other democratic states, this system involves periodic elections and the selection of political leaders to represent the interests of citizens. Berisha, (2011) observed that the very essence of representative democracy lies in the fact that the will of the people is fulfilled through representative bodies directly elected by citizens themselves. Thus, the highest state body, elected by the people, is accountable to the people and obliged to act in accordance to the interest of the later.

Dahl (2005) conceives representative democracy as a form of government in which all eligible citizens vote for representatives to pass laws for them. Thus, the electorate is the bearer of sovereign power, as this power cannot be exercised directly, and it elects its representatives who constitute the representative body of parliament. This representative body from the electoral body is charged with the mandate and responsibility of governing the state within a certain period of time. Bajrami (2005) has suggested that the role of the electorate in the system of parliamentary democracy is twofold: it elects the representative bodies, empowering them with the mandate and responsibility for governing the state, and exercises political control over their work through elections. EMA (2009:10) opines that “the people delegate to them the power to issue normative acts the right to design governing policies”.

Latifi (2009) makes the point that modern democracies are defined and implemented through representation and they are essentially the representative systems of the state, which are conducted by authorized persons. Through authorized procedures, the democratic ideal seeks to maximize the extent to which governance will be representative of citizens and will respond to their demands and interests as well. For instance, section 14 (1a) of Nigerian constitution expresses the sovereignty of the people thus: “Sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from whom government through the constitution derives all its powers and authority” (Nigerian Constitution, 1999). Here, the government is a representative of the people. By implication, the people rule through those whom they have elected to represent them in matters that affect their individual and collective interest. But as Rousseau has argued, the power which the people exercise, entrusted in the “General Will”, cannot be “inalienable and indivisible.” Hence, it could not be represented nor delegated in parliamentary institutions (Rousseau in Chand, 2004). In his view, as soon as a nation appoints representatives, it is no longer free, it no longer exists. Rousseau points to the situation in England. “England was only free during elections, after which it is enslaved and counts for nothing” (Rousseau in Chand, 2004).

Bajrami (2005) avers that the very essence of representative democracy consists in the fulfillment of the will of the majority of citizens, through institutions and representative bodies directly elected by the people. Though the sovereignty and governance of the people is not directly exercised by the people but through the representative bodies elected by the people and empowered by their mandate to govern the state.

However, one of the main concerns expressed by political theorists about representation relates to the control of the democratic agenda. Representatives tend to reflect their own enlightened self-interest in parliament and not necessarily those of the people over whom they represent (Dahl, 1989; Michels, 1962).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The study adopts the Liberal Feminist Theory. Liberal feminism is the emerging variant of mainstream feminism that spotlights gender inequality and women’s liberation within the context of liberal democracy. This theory was propounded by Mary Wolstonecraft in 1772. In her book “The Vindication of the Rights of Women”, Wolstonecraft (1772) argued that women have the

capacity to be equal partners with their male counterparts in society. It's important to note that liberal feminism is one among various feminist perspectives, each with its own assumptions and approaches to addressing gender inequality. This theory was subsequently adopted and expanded to several schools such as the liberal, social and maxists variants as popularized in the various works of John Stuart Mill (1869), Bell Hooks, Simone de Beauvoir, Andre Dworkin and Kate Millet, etc.

However, the present study adopts John Stuart Mill's liberal feminist theory, also known as Mill's feminist thought, which emphasized individual freedom and equality. Mill was a significant advocate for women's right and gender equality during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and his ideas contributed to the development of early feminist thought. Liberal feminist theory, as seen from the perspective of J.S. Mill is based on several key principles and assumptions with reference to J.S. Mill's, influential work that shape its understanding of gender equality and women's rights:

- 1) **Gender Equality:** Liberal feminists, including J.S. Mill, assume that women and men are fundamentally equal and should have equal rights and opportunities. They argue that gender should not be a basis for denying individuals their basic human rights, including political, legal, and economic rights.
- 2) **Individual Freedom and Autonomy:** Central to Mill's liberal feminist theory is the principle of individual freedom, liberal feminism places a strong emphasis on individual autonomy and freedom. It asserts that women, as autonomous individuals, should have the right to make choices about their own lives, including their education, career and reproductive decisions. This perspective rejects traditional gender roles and societal expectations that limit women's autonomy.
- 3) **Women's Education:** Liberal feminism emphasizes the importance of education and rationality in empowering women. It asserts that access to quality education is essential for women's intellectual and personal development, enabling them to challenge traditional gender roles and contribute to society as equals. Mill advocated for women's education highlighting that women's intellectual abilities were no different from men's. He argued that denying women education limited their potential and perpetuated gender inequality.
- 4) **Legal and Political Reform:** Liberal feminists including J.S. Mill, contend that achieving gender equality requires legal and political reform. They advocate for changes in Laws and institutions to eliminate discriminatory practices and ensure equal treatment under the law.
- 5) **Gender Role Dissolution:** Mill charged the traditional gender roles that prescribed fixed roles and responsibilities based on biological sex. He argued for the dissolution of the roles, allowing individuals to pursue a diverse range of occupations and interests based on their talents and inclinations.

Lastly, Liberal feminist theory provides an analytical framework for interpreting empirical findings, within a gendered lens. By adopting this theoretical perspective, the research can analyze the experiences, challenges and aspirations of women in Nigerian politics, as well as the underlying power dynamics and social structures that influence their participation. This lens enables a nuanced understanding of the gendered aspects of political process and helps to identify areas for intervention and policy recommendations that align with the principles of gender equality and women's empowerment.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The survey research design was adopted for this study. Data for the study were derived from secondary sources of data collection. The secondary method component, involved a systematic



review of materials relevant to the study. It included a painstaking process of consulting and skimming relevant citations from textbooks, journal articles, legal documents, etc. these reviews also included relevant literature focusing on mill's theories of liberty and equality, and representative democracy, as well as gender politics in Nigeria which helped to elucidate the nature of the problematic challenges being investigated.

However, method of data analysis involved content analysis, which is a critical analysis of the subject matter and it equally involved a critical analysis of Mill's principles of liberty and equality in relation to gender exclusion, identifying their strengths, limitations and potential applications, while the content data was thematically analyzed.

## **THE POLITICS OF GENDER EXCLUSION AND REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA**

The politics of gender exclusion in Nigeria is a complex issue that has been under-explored in scholarly debate and public discourse. Nigerian women face discrimination and are burdened by the responsibilities of reproductive tasks, which hinder their political participation and engagement (Ette, 2017). Despite Nigeria being a signatory to global and regional treaties promoting women's inclusion and gender inequality, discrimination against women persists in politics, education, employment, and security (Nwangwu & Ezeibe 2019).

Nigeria women have one of the lowest rates of descriptive representation in national legislatures in Africa (Nwangwu & Ezeibe, 2019). The relationship between gender, democracy, and national development in Nigeria has been disarticulated, leading to contentious national development (Idike, et al, 2020). The challenges faced by women in political representation within the Nigerian state have power implications and contribute to underdevelopment (Idike, et al, 2020). Structural problems such as patriarchy and restricted economic opportunities for women are responsible for their unequal representation in politics (Okorie, 2016). The socio-culturally ascribed roles of women as restricted to motherhood or wife further deepen their exclusion (Okorie, 2016).

The media plays a role in promoting gender discrimination and inequality in Nigeria politics (Wiyatimi, 2018). Media stereotypical portrayals of female politicians as unequal to their male counterparts reinforce gender inequality and affect how society perceives women's participation in politics (Wiyatimi, 2018). Media Coverage of the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria showed disparities in female candidates compared to male candidates (Wiyatimi, 2018).

Gender inequality in Nigerian politics is also influenced by socio-cultural beliefs and traditional norms (Ojo & Sunday, 2013). Women are underrepresented in various political assignments, including presidential elections, ministerial appointments, and local government elections (Ojo & Sunday 2013). Socio-cultural beliefs pose a challenge to women's political participation in Nigeria (Ojo & Sunday, 2013).

Again, the advent of colonialism and its attendant political and economic subjugation entrenched the masculinity of politics and subordinated the women under the man (Ikpe, 2004). Colonial administration initiated a patriarchal government in which women were not acknowledged to hold any authoritative positions. The colonialists considered "only men to be active in the public sphere and earn a living to support their families" (Assie-Lumuba, 1996). This practice gave African males an undue advantage over the females and thus marked the beginning of women's under representation in formal agencies of government.

Ette and Akpan-Obong, (2002) opined that although the Nigerian constitution permits women to take part in the political life of the nation, however evidence shows that women's role

in politics has been peripheral. Akande, (2002) observed that the participation of women in Nigeria politics is mostly limited to the membership of the women's wing of political parties, clapping, dancing and cooking for the men at political rallies and party meetings (Akande, 2002).

Odebiyi and Iweragwu, (2018) in their study found out that women usually face massive resistance to participating in politics. They discovered that only 39.7% of husbands could allow their wives to participate in politics. They also observed that a lot of females that are involved in politics are believed not to be able to take absolute care of their families. Hence, the fear of broken homes, the breeding of irresponsible children, and the need to perform their domestic activities were identified as major reasons preventing women from going into politics.

Ayede (2006) is of the opinion that the number of women in political offices have improved over the years, using the 2007 elections as a justification and that it is still likely to increase in the future, but the fact remains that the degree of improvement remains marginal.

In conclusion, the politics of gender exclusion in Nigeria is influenced by factors such as patriarchy, cultural norms, discrimination, and limited economic opportunities for women. These factors contribute to the under-representation of women in Nigeria politics and hinder their full participation in decision-making processes. Efforts to address gender inequality in Nigerian politics include advocating for equal rights, legislation, policies, and affirmative action. However, there is still need for further research and action to promote gender equality and inclusive democracy in Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the politics of gender exclusion and representative democracy in Nigeria, using liberal feminist theory and elements of John Stuart Mill's liberal political thought. However, by law, any individual shall be deemed qualified to contest election or participate in an election to any office from the apex to the least political position, so long as he or she is a true citizen of Nigeria, especially by birth Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN, 1999).

Furthermore, inequality should be expunged and every individual should be accorded the equal opportunity to contest and attain the highest political position in the state of Nigeria, without any sort of restriction or discrimination, irrespective of what is attached thereto, political office positions should be open to all the citizens of Nigeria in a bid to curb inequality in political participation.

Conclusively, the results of this study revealed the intricacies underlying the under representation of women in the Nigerian political scene, as well as what they have done and are still doing to sustain the democratic process in Nigeria. Cultural norms, societal expectations, and gender stereotypes play a significant role in perpetuating gender exclusion in Nigerian Politics and these factors influence the political landscape, impacting women's access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making power.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ❖ The study recommends the strict adherence to and enforcement of the 30 percent affirmative action reached at Beijing Conference, which will create an enabling environment to enhance women's participation in politics.
- ❖ There should be an improvement in the constitutional law framework, to incorporate the needs of women in politics. This is particularly important because the federal character principle in the Nigerian constitution is inadequate in addressing women's concern.

- ❖ There is need to intensify campaigns to promote women's representation in political platforms.
- ❖ Women should be economically empowered through access to education, employment and credit facilities. Femised poverty calls for interventions to reduce wealth disparities.
- ❖ The creation of gender awareness training for political party members and leadership training for prospective women leaders is very important and also recommended.

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