

Nigerian Women, Solidarity, and Stereotypical Gender Structures: Implications for Political Participation.**Author: Mary Kingsley Ndidiamaka Ezeh, SJS**

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Email: mezeh@luc.edu or marykingsley06@gmail.com**Abstract**

Nigeria ranks 143rd in terms of political empowerment, according to the 2025 Global Gender Gap Index, with a score of 0.036. Despite improvements in Nigeria's overall scores in the recent Global Gender Index, political participation remain a significant challenge. The country consistently ranks among the 10 countries with the lowest scores in political participation, reflecting the ongoing issues in Nigerian political engagement. This study shifts from the typical discussions on gender inclusion and disparity to an in-depth analysis of how women have contributed to their underrepresentation in Nigerian politics to address the following questions: (1) How do stereotypical gender structures limit women's support for each other? (2) How do Nigerian women perceive the role of solidarity in their political engagement? The study explores women's contributions and the intra-gender reinforcement of stereotypical patriarchal norms that hinder solidarity among Nigerian women, leading to their marginalization in political participation. The qualitative data for this research are derived from conversations between the researcher and three Nigerian female politicians, analyzed through the lens of Social Role Theory and Intersectionality Theory. Existing literature reveals that patriarchy and culture influence what I would refer to as cultural brainwashing, which contributes to an inferiority complex rooted in the beliefs and traditions of the women's populace. There is also a problem of an irrational distribution of gender roles. Consequently, the findings from data collected through interviews reveal other hidden issues among Nigerian women that impede their political growth.

Keywords: Solidarity, Stereotype, Political participation, Patriarchy, Gender Structure.**1. Introduction**

Politically empowering women is Nigeria's weakest dimension in achieving gender parity, with a consistently large gap in ministerial positions and parliament. One truth we must embrace is that gender disparities dominate Nigerian academic and political discourse, but little action follows, yet women constitute nearly a 50% of the population (World Bank, 2025). The realization that gender inclusion, especially in Nigerian politics, seems to be debate merely a discussion to romanticize the leading voices, with no actions to match the vocal agitation. The structure of Nigerian politics is so complex in terms of gender inclusion that it ranks lowest among sub-Saharan African countries in women's representation in parliament (Fadipe, 2024). Over the years, there has been a consistent underrepresentation of women. History reveals a different story from the pre-colonial era. Although the Republic of Nigeria did not yet exist before the arrival of Lord Lugard and his cohorts, the pre-colonial Nigerian women were powerful in their respective regions. In the northern part, the Arewa people had Queen Amina of Zaria, who took over from her father in the 15th century and expanded her kingdom's territories. In the West, also, the likes of Moreni of Ife stood out as a savior to her people (Adekunle et al., 2021). How then do we explain that colonialism, which was meant to bring development in Africa, created gender disparities and inequity?

In the pre-colonial era, Nigerian women made significant contributions to the development and politics of their people. The colonial regime, however, took a different turn. The imperialism that the colonial masters imposed on the country, a system of power and control, affected both the men and the women, but disproportionately affected women. The aftermath of that structure has led to the displacement of women in politics and leadership roles to date. The effect has led women to believe that the culture and tradition have always limited women. The average Nigerian woman believes that there are roles that are strictly reserved for men, and a woman going after that role is taboo. This kind of indoctrination starts with the families and the initial upbringing in a typical Nigerian society. Women are strictly restricted to domestic roles, while men can go out and make money through hard labor and return to feed the family. The boys are trained to believe that they have no role in the kitchen or other domestic affairs. The girls, on the other hand, are trained to become experts on the home front. So many traditional documents dwell on this narrative. Of course, British rule introduced both female education and official documentation, which the pre-colonial eras could not effectively achieve, aside from stories and artifacts. This has a significant impact on Nigerian politics today, emerging from the colonial dimensions of authority placement. In the Eastern part of the country, girls are constantly reminded of how to sit, stand, talk, and look, simply because of their gender. In the political arena, women are also relegated to the background and limited in their political affiliations, often to avoid challenging men, just as they are in family life. I have been nurtured into believing, just like every other female, that it is forbidden for women to venture into certain careers or aspire for certain roles/positions. A quick look into the participation of women in the Nigerian political scene reveals that more than 98% of the ruling class are men. A broader reflection of this will be included in the literature review. Nigeria's Senate comprises only three women out of 109 seats (2.7%), while the House of Representatives has 17 women out of 360 (4.7%). Simultaneously, only 9 out of 36 deputy governors are women, with no female ever elected to be a governor across the 36 states of the Federation. Virginia Etiaba only assumed an acting governor role for six months during the 2006/2007 impeachment of the governor of Anambra State. (Adekaiyaoja, 2023; Ebiwei, 2023; Nkereuwem, 2023) According to the World Economic Forum (2025), Namibia leads Africa, closing 81.1% of the gender gap in the 2025 Gender Gap Index, which brings the country closer to achieving the four key areas (economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment). Nigeria, on the other hand, rates 64.9%, below the global 68.8% gender index. Out of the 148 countries reported in the index, Nigeria ranks 124th in gender participation. The Index shows a 22.9% in political participation of women, bringing the rate down by 3.6% from the 2023 report. If women in other parts of the globe and around Africa are making progress, why are Nigerian women making slow progress in political representation? Nigeria's scores in political empowerment have remained between 124 and 145 in the gender index since 2015. Today, no woman is a governor in of the 36 states in Nigeria. This data underscores the urgent need for change and the potential for significant progress if we can overcome the barriers to women's political participation.

According to Ripples Nigeria, there were 416 governorship aspirants in the 2023 general election in Nigeria; only 24 candidates were women, which equates to about 6% of the 416 candidates (Ripples Nigeria, 2022)

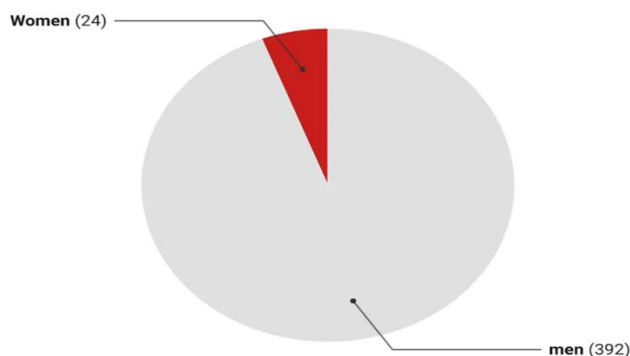
Gender of candidates vying for governorship seat in 2023 general election

Figure 1. Source: Ripples Nigeria analysis

The data above shows the resistance of women to get involved in politics in Nigeria, which is one of the objectives of this paper. The findings reveal a stereotypical gender structure deeply rooted in the culture and tradition of the Nigerian people that has resulted in an inferiority complex among women when they aspire for specific positions and take certain career paths. This 'inferiority complex' refers to the feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt that women may experience due to societal norms and expectations that discourage their participation in specific roles and careers.

Previous studies have often overlooked how women internalize stereotypes and divisions based on gender roles, class, and ethnicity, which hinder unity and inclusivity in national affairs. The findings will reveal the support systems that Nigerian women have established for those aspiring to leadership positions. This paper further investigates intra-gender relations and their impact on political participation and national cohesion in Nigeria. It addresses significant obstacles to women's involvement in politics by examining both external and internal factors. Necessary data will be collected to assess the current extent of women's participation and to track their progression or regression over time. A critical focus of this study is understanding why women may feel disinterested in politics. This disinterest is not solely rooted in male exclusion; it also encompasses women's hesitancy to engage. By identifying the root causes of these issues, we can collectively commit to promoting gender equality in Nigerian politics.

Employing a descriptive method, this research gathers qualitative data from existing literature, blog posts, and three individual interviews. The aim is to provide a solid foundation for future studies on women's political participation in Nigeria, highlighting issues such as stereotypical barriers, intra-organizational dynamics, and collective activism. The findings will address the inquiries into how stereotypical gender norms limit women's support for one another in politics, as well as how these norms affect women's support for each other in politics, and how Nigerian women perceive the role of solidarity in their political engagements. The findings include effects of traditional notions of femininity on women's political involvement, navigating the taboo of challenging gender norms, re-examination of family roles, confronting male dominance, and addressing cultural expectations.

2. Theoretical Framework

Among the various theories relevant to this study, Social Role Theory is the most pertinent to its objective. According to Newman & Newman (2020), Social Roles Theory explains how our socialization and personality develop as individuals assume different social roles. This pattern of roles connects them to the social context, resulting in commonly held expectations of behavior. Eagly (1987) interestingly argues that the gender division of labor plays a massive role in shared gender stereotypes in each society. Naturally, humans in different parts of the world are positioned in specific gender roles from birth. There is a general perception that nature itself has placed those roles. A good example is the ability to bear children, which is associated with the female gender.

Meanwhile, society takes a step further to apply this in a way that limits certain genders' abilities stereotypically. Eagly argues that when composed of both men and women as decision-makers, gender plays a less significant role. Roles could then be shared based on abilities rather than gender. Eagly & Wood (1999) further argue that although men and women are wired to socialize differently, their different social structuring should not be perceived as beneficial or unfavorable. The strength of gender should be perceived as a strength that is available to combine with another's strength and achieve success.

Social Role Theory encompasses various aspects of social roles, including role transitions and multiplications, for both adolescents and adults. In this study, we focus on norms and the influence of traditional custodians. However, the issue extends beyond societal perceptions. It highlights how women have often conformed to these stereotypes, which can be rooted in an inferiority complex. This dynamic has led to tension among Nigerian women, particularly those who seek to challenge and break free from these cultural barriers.

Intersectionality Theory is also crucial for structuring this discussion. According to Crenshaw (1989), social identities, including class, gender, ethnicity, and religion, intersect to create unique forms of oppression and privilege. This perspective complicates the narrative for marginalized groups by rejecting the simplification of their identities to merely "women." Instead, it emphasizes the importance of ethnicity, class, and religion in understanding their experiences. Collins (2015) further argues that these identities are mutually exclusive entities that contribute to social inequities. Research indicates that the challenges faced by Nigerian women in politics extend beyond gender, encompassing class, ethnicity, religion, and familial barriers. For instance, a northern woman may find herself competing against an Igbo/Christian woman for political support. The latter may receive more backing due to the religious restrictions associated with Islam, while the woman from a larger ethnic group might secure more votes based on regional dynamics. This societal complexity makes Intersectionality Theory an effective and practical framework for analyzing why Nigerian women often fail to support one another politically and are hesitant to pursue political positions.

3. Conceptual Analysis: A conceptual analysis of what constitutes stereotypical gender structures in Nigeria is essential to enhance a smooth transition from the theory to the findings. Besides the stereotypical gender structures, this section will examine women's solidarity and intra-gender dynamics, as well as national inclusivity and democratic participation. Culture Limitations are not excluded.

3.1. Stereotypical Gender Structures in Nigeria

Gender stereotypes assign roles that undermine natural human abilities while insisting on perceived abilities based on sex. Traditional Nigerian structure believes that there are roles for women and roles for men, roles for boys and roles for girls. The gender stereotype in Nigeria has been passed on to the generations. Although women were more inclusive in the pre-colonial era, there were still some traces of gender role placement devoid of oppression, intimidation, and imposed stereotypes. Some fundamental factors that fuel stereotypes can be seen from two different aspects: patriarchal norms, religious and cultural expectations, and Media and curriculum-reinforced gender roles.

Patriarchal norms wobble into religion and cultural expectations. To be more direct, religion and culture are the major cankerworms in the Nigerian gender structures. Nigeria is a nation blessed with three major types of religion: Christianity, Islam, and traditional religion. While Christian women are found more in the general politics, traditional worshippers are found more in the shrines, and the Muslim women are the most constrained because of the nature of the Islamic religion. As observed by Luka (2011), religion has prevented a substantial percentage of women from participating in politics, voting, and contesting. According to Banjo (2023), most of the Islamic populace in Nigeria practices "purdah," a religious tradition that restricts women from public appearance. With all the religious limitations here and there, women are limited from certain activities that would prevent them from public outings. On the other hand, Nigeria as a country is also blessed with multiple cultures, both at the national, regional, and local levels.

Despite the richness of Nigerian culture, it often limits women's potential. Certain practices hide women and limit their participation. Girls' education is denied in some parts, and child marriage is celebrated. In a specific gathering in Igbo land, women are not allowed to speak while the men are saying. Growing up, I recall days when the girls were restricted from leaving the house due to certain masquerade ceremonies. What about traditional family and community roles? The oppression embedded in some cultural practices sometimes presents culture as a 'horrific thing'. The ideas of some privileged sex seem to turn culture into a "terror" rather than a 'companion'. The popular tales by moonlight are still told with limitations on what a woman should or should not do, and at the same time, present the men as heroes who should venture into the evil forest without a shred of fear.

The stereotypical gender structure is embedded in society such that women see themselves as limited and vulnerable. Being restricted in all other aspects of society perpetuate a sense of limitation in political involvement. Any move to break free from these culturally and religiously imposed, stereotypical conditions suggest going against the status quo. It results in the individual being perceived as going against the cultural norm rather than merely breaking stereotypes. Unfortunately, most of the obstacles come from fellow women.

3.2. Women's Solidarity and Intra Gender Dynamics

The complex nature of women's solidarity in Nigerian politics dates to colonial Nigeria. The regional and ethnic sentiments surrounding Nigerian politics cannot be ignored while discussing the involvement of women in politics. Nigeria is a country that is deeply rooted in regional politics.

Dating back to 1928, in the early colonial era, the Aba women's riot was led by Igbo women and other women from surrounding ethnic groups in the South-East. Although the agitation was against the imposition of warrant chiefs and some colonial policies, such as taxation, the riot centered around the Igbo women and some of the Ogoni, Ibibio, Andoni, and Opobo women. While shared grievances could unite the women, it was still geographically based. Fast forward to this era when technology makes communication easier for women's solidarity groups. The women express their situation more in writing, a social media political crusade. Irrespective of the availability of these great tools, great tools that should reinforce better unification of women, ethnic bigotry worsens as women cannot even freely express their political affiliation when it is different from that of their husbands. By the implications, the women's voices are driven by family affiliation.

Division on the grounds of class also affects the aspirations of women in politics, particularly for elite versus grassroots women. Some women are fortunate enough to join the elite class. Some of them have served as stakeholders or are married to stakeholders. Education also contributes to elite positions. In 2021, the adult female literacy rate was 53.3% (UNESCO,2021). There is no specific current data on this. The gap in class, due to upbringing, education, and exposure, places some women above others, which further jeopardizes political unity among women. A Ezekwesili. A notable example is Oby Ezekwesili's involvement in the "Bring Back Our Girls" movement. Ezekwesili, although from the Eastern region, championed the movement. Nonetheless, collaboration between elite and grassroots women is not always straightforward. Elite women might unintentionally align their advocacy efforts with the priorities of donors, which can seem out of touch with the pressing survival issues faced by rural or economically disadvantaged women. This disconnect can foster feelings of elitism and hinder the formation of coalitions.

In summary, the problem of Nigerian women in politics is not limited to gender oppression. It cuts across class differences, regional affiliations, religion, ethnic sentiments, and family partisanship. Most times, women form alliances against their fellow women because they share different religions or family partisanship. The challenge primarily lies in into a source of strength by harnessing them and prioritizing politics over class, religion, or ethnicity.

3.3. Women in Nigerian Politics

Political participation has long been viewed as a key means for women to become involved in public life (Chong, 2012). To buttress this point, various scholars have researched the gender-exclusive political structures in Nigeria as a key factor in national development. inclusion. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also emphasize the importance of gender inclusion, as their 5th Goal. To track global progress on gender equality, the World Economic Forum consistently publishes gender equality statistics across more than 140 countries. Interestingly, Nigeria shows improvement in areas like education and the economy in the Gender Index over the years; however, political empowerment remains a significant challenge. It is unlikely that Nigeria will meet the gender equity targets set by the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, considering the chameleon movement. A glance at the gender index for Nigeria reveals an improvement. However, political empowerment remains fluctuating with no significant upward trend. The figure had dropped further between 2022, when there were up to 7 female ministers, and 2024, when there were just three female ministers. Diagram 2 illustrates the upward and downward trends in this context. For further insights, refer to Diagram 1, a study by Ripples Nigeria (2022), which shows the percentage of women who vied for gubernatorial positions in the 2023 election.

Year	Political Empowerment Score (0–1)	Political Empowerment Rank	Overall Global Rank
2024	0.059	140	130/146
2023	0.056	139	130/146
2022	0.058	139	123/146
2021	0.058	145	139/156
2020	0.059	145	128/153

Source: World Economic Forum. *Global Gender Gap Report (2020–2024)*.

Figure. 2.

Irrespective of the aim of this research, it is essential to acknowledge that a few Nigerian women have delved into politics in the past, and some are still actively involved in politics. However, it becomes paramount to take cognizance of the various hindrances that hamper their active participation. Although women constitute almost 50% of the population according to the last official census held in 2006, the percentage of women in politics at the time of this research is 16.6% in ministerial positions (Guardian Nigeria, 2025), 3.7 % in senatorial positions, and 4.4% in the House of Representatives. The percentage so far is in no way commensurate with the 35% women's participation promise as promised by President Tinubu during his political campaign (Premium Times, 2024). Thus, the leadership of false hope has significantly impacted women's political positions. It seems like they are used to raising votes and being given a seat outside after the election. Considering that the key players are men, women's voices are not heard in the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The primary challenge faced by women in political involvement is rooted in socio-cultural barriers or structural barriers (Ette & Akpan-Obong, 2023), which foster insecurity and complexity among Nigerian women. Banjo (2023) identifies these barriers as stemming from sex stereotypes, political socialization, lack of preparedness for political activity, and familial obligations. Additionally, the influence of religious idiosyncrasies (Aina, 2012) and media propaganda exacerbates the situation, as cultural and religious norms often restrict women's visibility in public life. Women are frequently reminded of their domestic roles, tasked with cooking for their husbands and managing household chores (Okere & Omodu, 2023). Consequently, some women risk losing their marriages due to societal conditioning that pressures them to abandon political aspirations. The patriarchal structure prevalent in Nigeria significantly dictates societal perceptions of what is considered ideal for women. Erunke and Abdul (2013) argue that politics is regarded as a "dirty game" and that women's association with sacredness should preclude their participation in activities deemed to tarnish that sacredness. Furthermore, poor financial resources and insecurity serve as additional obstacles to women's engagement in politics (Erunke & Abdul, 2013; Ezeh, 2023).

3.4 National Inclusivity and Democratic Participation

Section 15(2) and 42(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex and emphasizes equality for all citizens. Section 17 also emphasizes the eradication of gender-based disparities. (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). The constitution is silent on the political gender quota system in politics and governance; however, although it is simply a policy and not a law, Nigeria's Gender Policy recommends at least 35% representation of women (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2021). Over the years, the National Assembly (NASS) has repeatedly voted against bills proposed by advocates for a 35% quota system for women in governance and politics. A recent attempt is underway, as the bill resurfaced in March 2025 and is still going through public hearings and reviews. This initiative is in response to the House of Representatives' approval of a landmark package of constitutional amendment bills that includes gender inclusion. Could these reviews regarding a 35% quota for women in governance? We keep our fingers crossed. The underrepresentation of Nigerian women in politics and government undermines Sustainable Development Goal 5, which aims for gender equity and inclusivity by 2030. An inclusive government prioritizes gender representation, yet the current structure and policies in Nigeria fall short of this ideal. In the recent general election, only a handful of women ran for gubernatorial positions, with none being elected as governors. Currently, only seven states out of the 36 in Nigeria have women serving as deputy governors, highlighting a significant gap in political representation. This lack of female representation, where women occupy less than 5% of parliamentary roles, poses a serious challenge to achieving political inclusivity in the country. In contrast, Rwanda serves as a positive example of how gender parity laws and affirmative action can enhance women's political representation and alter governance priorities. Countries like Rwanda, Senegal, and South Africa demonstrate that increasing women's participation in politics can lead to more responsive democratic institutions that better address the needs of all citizens. Consequently, achieving gender equity is not merely a symbolic gesture; it is a robust democratic governance. As Nigeria strives to comply with SDG requirements, prioritizing women's representation in politics is essential for creating an inclusive and effective government.

3.5 Interconnectivity of Women's Representation and Broader Civic Trust

The prevailing belief is that women's involvement in political participation significantly enhances citizens' sense of belonging and civic responsibility. The ongoing marginalization of women in political affairs threatens the democratic principles that Nigeria stands for. The rule of law is founded on essential

democratic principles, including national inclusivity, gender equity, and broad democratic participation. Governance should not be exclusive to a specific group or gender. Active engagement fosters a sense of ownership among citizens; conversely, exclusion leads to apathy and withdrawal. A vibrant political environment emerges when all individuals feel included in the democratic process. Collaboration among citizens is crucial for national economic development and progress. As noted by Isike (2016), collaboration is a vital component of nation-building and resource management, and women's inclusion improves developmental outcomes. Implementing accountability in representation, establishing inclusive gender quotas (Tukura & Suleiman, 2024; Ugwu & Ekekwe, 2021), and enacting anti-discrimination laws within political parties are essential steps toward enhancing collaboration and transparency. Evidence from countries where women actively participate in political processes and governance supports this argument. Citizens perceive fairness and are more likely to engage in the system when they see that the democratic process is inclusive and representative of all, regardless of gender.

When women's viewpoints are genuinely included in policy-making and national discussions, people—especially those from marginalized communities—tend to feel a stronger connection to political processes. This enhanced representation fosters a robust social contract between citizens and their government, bolstering political stability and the strength of democracy. On the other hand, ongoing disparities in political empowerment for women can indicate systemic exclusion, which diminishes public trust and threatens the legitimacy of our democratic institutions. We must prioritize gender inclusivity to ensure a thriving, representative democracy for all.

Social Role and Intersectionality Theories have been applied to the study of the existing literature. Gender disparities and a lack of gender inclusion have so far been the focus, as it is deeply embedded in the Nigerian political structure. Relevant literature reveals barriers and setbacks to gender equity and inclusion in the Nigerian political arena, which have so far sustained the recommendations on the gender quota system as a means to achieving SDG 2030. However, while most focus on barriers and recommendations, such as a quota system, this research finds a gap and aims to investigate intra-gender relations explicitly. This gap limits a full understanding of how solidarity and stereotypical gender structures intersect to affect women's political participation in the Nigerian context. (*Women supporting women, women standing up for fellow women, women groups, Women agitation*).

(4) Methodology

A qualitative method was employed to collect the data for this empirical study. According to multiple sources, empirical research is not based on a theory of belief but on observed and measured phenomena captured from actual experience involving the collection of data under carefully defined conditions. (Calfee & Chambliss, 2005; Eastern New Mexico University Library, n.d.) The data was gathered through one-on-one interview sessions using a well-designed interview protocol. This approach is ideal for data collection due to the level of detail required. The topic's relevance necessitates such an in-depth approach. According to Creswell & Poth (2018), qualitative interview methods are primarily used for complex issues, assisting researchers to assess detailed information from those directly involved and to understand their perspectives and feelings. Qualitative interviews the interviewee through an extended discussion (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Moreover, Patton (2015) views it as a means of accessing another person's perspectives. To understand why female politicians seem to lack support from the masses, including their fellow women, a one-on-one interview data collection approach was employed as the best means to access the views of active or practicing Nigerian women politicians. This interview approach helped the participants to share their lived experiences regarding women's solidarity, stereotypical gender structures, political engagement, and even interpersonal connections within the women's group. The data were subsequently coded with NVivo software. To balance the findings, three women were randomly selected from across the country to provide a diverse range of perspectives. However, the study ensures that its findings are based on empirical evidence, rather than assumptions or theories.

Discussion of Findings:

The findings stem from in-depth interviews with three Nigerian female politicians who have been active in politics during the last three democratic regimes. This study examines the impact of women's solidarity, stereotypical gender structures, and intra-gender dynamics on the political participation of Nigerian women. Guided by two questions— (1) How do stereotypical gender structures limit women's support for each other? (2) How do Nigerian women perceive the role of solidarity in their political engagement? The data reveal a significant connection to Social Role and intersectionality, the two theories underpinning the research. Insights women, highlighting the significance of these systems in politics, particularly between female politicians and female voters. To ensure a grounded discussion, additional sources were consulted, including past research on women in politics and documents from the World Economic Forum database.

Disruption of Women's Solidarity Movement:

Solidarity among women requires a common understanding of political involvement and alignment of goals towards effective political participation. The challenge with this solidarity movement lies in a common understanding of the need for women to become active in political affairs. The social responsibilities imposed on women domestically divert attention from anything beyond the immediate family and wider family networks. In congruence with Social Role theory, the domestic roles women play disorient their solidarity structures, making it almost impossible to find a significant of women who are ready to be fully involved in politics or any other activity outside the home.

Findings reveal that an increasing number of women are becoming interested in politics, but they are being held back by cultural expectations or a lack of financial support. Solidarity can only manifest when a significant number of women begin to share similar societal ideologies regarding political involvement, which will form the backbone for greater participation and numbers. Orisadare (2019) sees a lack of trust and confidence among themselves as a challenge to the women's movement. Politics is tied to numbers, and solidarity extends beyond numbers. men. Men dominate every political party in Nigeria. The percentage of women among the political parties is win, or insufficient to achieve a political majority. As a nation grounded in patriarchy, the men do not want the women and are likely not to vote for them. In 2022, one of the participants was the only woman who contested as a member of the House of Representatives for AMAC/Bwari federal constituency. The nomination form raised to the amount the woman could not afford, and she dropped out of the race. No woman had the capacity to support her because the leadership of the party is controlled by men who decide who to give the ticket. The political parties are quick to create women's groups within the party as a "cloned inclusivity". The votes count for the men, but their sex does not count for voting.

There is also a glimpse of hope. The number of women going into politics is increasing more than it used to be. Intersectionality theory encourages solidarity among women who are incapacitated by different factors to come together and find ways to break through their barriers. In some parts of Yoruba land, women are beginning to form solidarity groups outside of a political party, such as women farmers' clubs, market women's clubs, and committees of friends, and use the platform as an avenue to raise money and sponsor their candidates for political positions. The strength of their solidarity is the primary determinant of women's presence in political offices. Although there is currently better awareness, the number still cannot match that of men. If politics remains a game of numbers, the majority will continue to take votes.

1. Stereotypical Gender Structure

Societal stereotypes have placed women in subservient positions. In Nigeria, politics is identified with the male domain. The low status of Nigerian women in politics is ignited by the patriarchy prevalent in traditional laws and culture (Okere & Omodu, 2023). "Patriarchy justifies the marginalization of women" (Adekunle et.al., p.22). Dissembling the mindset of women over the culturally imposed stereotype of women being wired to stay at home and raise kids is a big problem for women's political growth in Nigeria. This stereotype particularly affects women in rural areas, leading them to believe that women should not get involved in politics. Drawing on Social Role theory, the participants affirmed that women's societal stereotypes confine them to life within the family and domestic environments, such as caregiving, childbirth, and other traditional domestic roles. The cultural and traditional restrictions are more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas. Factors such as a lack of education, limited exposure, and an English language barrier all contribute to the mentality of rural women, who perceive those in urban areas as going against their culture. Social Role Theory and Intersectionality intertwine in gender stereotypes. Placing social roles over political participation and the intersectionality of poverty of the mind (complex), gender marginalization, lack of education, and poverty.

Additionally, some women do not believe their fellow women possess the necessary skills or qualifications to effect change or hold political positions. Thus, women politicians face everyday ridicule from both men and their fellow women and are often reminded to go home and take care of their husbands and children. The danger of these stereotypical traits is that they discourage women from political engagement and strengthen patriarchal/male dominance structures. A few

women who have succeeded in politics in Nigeria were either widows, divorcees, or women whose husbands imposed on their political parties to replace them in their roles (a common political tactic). Having served the required terms in office, male politicians often nominate their wives to take their seats while they play behind the scenes. In that case, the problem of sponsorship and the men's endorsement won't be a constraint. The woman gets endorsement and sponsorship. Sometimes, they are rigged into offices by their husbands and political parties. Only a few women try to resist this structure, and many of them are frustrated with the system, leading to depression and total withdrawal.

2. Intra-Gender Dynamics:

Intra-Gender Dynamics is a significant weakness that seriously endangers solidarity among Nigerian women in politics. It is orchestrated by various mechanisms that intersect with one another. Data reveals that jealousy, an inferiority complex, ethnic bigotry, favoritism, nepotism, and rivalry are common among women politicians in Nigeria. Others include the motivated divisions among political parties, the structure of the women's wing, religious beliefs, and power struggles. Consequently, addressing the above issues is crucial in helping women support one another. Findings reveal that intra-gender dynamics are the greatest weakness women must deal with to progress in politics. Rivalry or jealousy affect the overall impact women can make in political participation. It weakens their collective stronghold (Oluwaseun, 2021). That instead of working together, the women work against each other and divide among themselves to support the men. Findings reveal that men sometimes fuel the division on the grounds of ethnic sentiments to pull down the women's stronghold.

Nigeria plays politics of ethnicity; therefore, ethnic sentiment and affiliation are predominant in Nigeria's political system, and women are not excluded from this issue. The primary reason why the government has remained underdeveloped since the 1999 democratic transition is that Nigerians are more concerned with ethnicity than with abilities or capabilities. The participants expressed great concern about how ethnic divisions have endangered their progress in politics. Division on the grounds of sex, division among women of different ethnic groups, division based on religious affiliation, and division on the grounds of class. These are all connected to patriarchy, which I will always believe is the architect of women's political marginalization. Adekunle et al (2021) affirm that Nigeria's patriarchy impacts women's political roles. This fosters a culture of inferiority, leading women to accept that they are not good enough to compete with men in politics. According to Banjo (2023), women generally over-emphasize their feminism and accept defeat as the weaker sex.

Summarily, the findings reconfirm that the women's political divisions pull down their progress, through solidarity disruption, stereotypical structures, and intra-gender dynamics, giving the men a continuous edge to hijack the politics of Nigeria. However, some recommendations were highlighted during the interview.

Recommendations

1. Regular organization of a women's forum for constant sensitization
2. Strengthening the women's groups outside political parties and aligning their interests and resources to unanimously nominate and sponsor their candidates.
3. Educating women about their rights and political opportunities, and encouraging young women to pursue studies in political science.
4. Develop mentorship programs led by experienced female leaders.
5. Grassroots sensitization of women in political participation and projection/support of fellow women. (e.g., The recent case of Senator Natacia, for whom Nigerian women came out in mass to question and restore her senatorial seat after she was recently suspended from the Senate.
6. Build strong alliances/networks across political parties.
7. Provide financial support for each other, both at the local and national levels.
8. Celebrate women's political achievements to inspire others.
9. Encouraging women to see themselves as partners and not competitors.
10. Encourage participation through community projects.
11. The women's wings of various political parties should continue to advocate for the implementation of a 35% quota for women, as emphasized by the Ministry of Women and Gender, even at the party level.
12. Inviting an expert psychologist to train the women on confidence and attainable abilities.
13. The government will enforce laws that will protect women from sexual abuse in political positions.

Conclusion

This research meticulously examines the interplay between Nigerian women and politics, focusing on gender stereotypes, women's solidarity, and intra-gender dynamics, all supported by relevant literature. The findings highlight how societal norms, and patriarchal structures continue to marginalize women, discouraging their political participation while simultaneously revealing how they contribute to existing cultural perceptions. Factors such as ethnic sentiments, jealousy, and an inferiority complex hinder support among women.

However, women's solidarity emerges as both a practical and strategic mechanism to overcome these structural and cultural barriers, despite disruptions caused by the current system. The discussion of findings suggests that solidarity among women is not only pragmatic but also strategic in addressing and dismantling the various obstacles they face in the Nigerian political landscape. This solidarity will foster a sense of community and mutual support, enabling women to collaborate and share resources effectively. By uniting their voices and efforts, they can challenge societal norms and advocate for changes that promote equality and empowerment.

Additionally, collective action will enhance their capacity to confront the stereotypical barriers and create a more inclusive environment where women's issues are recognized and addressed. The application of two guiding theories for the study aligns with the findings and recommendations. Social role theory examined the socialization of women through diverse cultural demands and social roles, suggesting that cultural gender expectations influence their perceived capabilities. This study challenges the notion that political participation is a male-dominated phenomenon by examining Nigerian women through the lens of social role theory. Intersectionality theory has also highlighted the intersection of gender with other social categories, such as class, religion, and ethnicity, and emphasized the complex nature of women's political struggles in Nigeria. It is therefore clear that to advance gender-inclusive politics towards achieving SDG 2030, the recommendations of this study should be implemented. These include, but are not limited to, grassroots awareness programs, women's alliances, mentorship, political rights education, and the sponsorship of female candidates by women's groups. Implementing these actions could enhance Nigeria's women's political participation.

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