Research Paper

Internal Party Politics and Women's Participation in Nigeria: An Analysis of the Fourth Republic

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Abstract
Women's representation in party executive structures in Nigeria has been largely marginal. There are visible proofs of women's underrepresentation in the internal structure of political parties concerning their party politics and this appears to be a major setback to the realization of 35% Affirmative Action, whereas also, the 35% Affirmative Action which has been purported without verifiable success appears to be a limiting influence to the national potentials of women in shoring up their participation in politics. The import of all these has largely informed the accelerated demand for greater inclusion of women in political decisions and increased presence in the political sphere. This paper is undertaken to review some of these challenges and to suggest some alternatives to broadening the horizon for women's participation to expand first, the space for women's participation within the internal executive/leadership structures of political parties and by extension, the larger body polity of the country. The paper made use of secondary sources of data as the major source of data for the study. The secondary sources adopted include documented materials from research previously conducted by scholars in the field such as textbooks, online materials, journals, conference papers, government publications and official documents of major political parties in Nigeria which aided me in gaining a better insight into internal party politics and women participation in Nigeria and related African and Asian counties and the method of investigation used for this study is content analysis The paper argues that the involvement of women in party politics is likely impeded by the traditional structure of internal party executives. It concludes that emphasis be placed on the complementarity of roles between men and women especially within the internal structures of political parties, this is to create a balance in political decision-making within the parties' executive structures going forward.
Keywords: Intra-Party, Party Structures, Politics, Nigeria, Women.

I.   Introduction

There is large-scale discrimination from male folks in allocating political offices to women within internal party structures. Political participation as one of the key elements of democracy justifiesthe inclusion of marginalized groups such as women in the executive party structure. Even though women constitute over 50% of the registered voters in the country and are actively involved in political rallies and election campaigns, they are grossly underrepresented in elective and leadership positions in political parties and other sectors of the nation's economy (George, Adetunde, Ijagbemi and Udume, 2016). There is a perceived alienation of women's access to leadership from the internal politics of political parties and this appears to influence a major setback in the realization of 35% Affirmative Action whereas also, 35% Affirmative Action which has been purported without verifiable or sustainable success appears itself a limiter to women inclusion in the internal politics of various political parties.

As long as gender discrimination and cultural stereotypes continue to limit women's choices and options, the potential of countries to achieve sustained economic growth and prosperity will be hampered, and so also will how governments respond to the needs of people (Dehinde, 2004). The disadvantaged position of women is further reinforced by several well-known conditions that affect women disproportionately. For example, poverty and lack of education impact negatively people's ability to meaningfully participate and penetrate the decision-making strata of political party executives across political parties in Nigeria. People

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whose focus must be on meeting their basic daily needs will have little or no time for political participation, nor will they readily see the connection between their political participation and their social status.

Education is very much the key to including society's traditionally non-participating groups in any successful reform. The constitutional emphasis of equal citizenship for all can be used as a tool for educating women in particular but also society in general about the right of women to participate in the political life of their countries.(Dehinde, 2004)Lack of internal party democracy in political parties has impacted negatively and contributed to the thwarted political ambition of most women in the executive party structure. Ballington (2004) noted that the stage at which the party gatekeepers choose the candidates is perhaps the most crucial stage for getting women into office. It is consequential therefore to infer from Ballington's submission that the criteria for inclusion of women into core decision-making echelon at all levels of parties' executive administrative structures are tilted in favour of the male folks already before even the wider inclusions of adult citizens (Adult Suffrage) in political processes. The historical experience and culture of Adult Male Suffrage bequeathed to Nigeria by the British Colonial masters provides the dynamics of disempowerment for women and this too explains largely the challenges confronting women's inclusion in crucial political processes especially in Nigerian political parties, the import of which creates two realities that have appeared to condition the growth and inclusion of the Nigerian women in the core business of internal party politics; these two factors are:

1.   Capacity gap.
2.   The domineering attitude of political godfathers.

Political parties have continued to err in the area of recruiting women for elective competitions and this is likely so because there is a domineering male party structure and ideology running in the sociopolitical DNA and psyche of the Nigerian political elites. Nigerian women are usually disenfranchised right from the level of recruitment for elective positions by political parties. Consequent tothe aforementioned, Quadri (2013) observed that the character and the mode of operations of parties in Negara run contrary to the basic principles of democracy and the resultant effect is the inability of women to cope with the kind of politics played by parties and their subsequent alienation. For example, Iferalu (2015), in Women in Politics Forum, while reacting to the treatment of alienation meted out by Christ Anyanwu in the People's Democratic Party (PDP), noted that there is no genuine internal democracy in the party and candidates are handpicked, when one scales party primary, he/she scaled the most hurdle, the extended impact of this is that political parties with male gatekeepers will most often and indeed most readily choose or select male candidates for the parties in primaries.

Internal party selection processes as Norris (2000) observed, should normally be subjected to competitive elections among party members, but it is relegated instead to the preferences of party elites, who manipulate the results in favour of their preferred candidates.

1.1 Research Questions
1.   Does the level of women's participation in politics reflect a proportionate representation of women in political parties' executive positions?
2.   Does the capacity gap associated with Nigeria's colonial experience have any effect on the present inclusion of women in the internal participation of women in party politics?
3.   Do women occupy as many positions as men occupy in the internal working executives of political parties?
4.   How has the role of women in the internal party politics of Nigeria and other African countries evolved through the trajectories of colonial experiences?
5.   How have the internal party structures and party guidelines impacted the inclusion and representation of women within the political parties in Nigeria?

1.2 Objectives of Study
In Nigeria, women have been prodigally absent in politics. This is not because of their lack of interest or will but because of their marginalization whereas women constitute about 56 percent of the total population; National Population Commission (2011) yet they are discriminated against in the political democratization process. This has led to the clamour for greater involvement of women in political decisions and increased presence in the political sphere. *Hence, the paper posits that women are discriminated against and marginalized from political party participation based on studies conducted by other scholars, so the focus of the paper, therefore, is to suggest alternatives to broadening the space for women's participation in party activities such as leadership structure at all levels of leadership in political parties.*

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP,2000) article on 'Women's Political Participation & Good Governance 21st Century challenge, says " ... women's participation in politics cannot be isolated from their overall socio-economic status, the following factors in particular: Women usually do not have equal access with men to the means of participation, such as the enabling skills acquired through education and training or

controlling the means of production or access to the information media, including the new communication technologies. They often do not have decision-making power within the household to translate into the public sphere; in many developing countries, their possessions, including land and other collateral, are legally the property of their husbands, fathers or sons. It should be noted that even in the US, until the 1970s, married women could not obtain credit without the consent of their husbands. Despite 20th-century progress, women have not been able to make their material needs, as well as the household needs that they recognize better than most men, known to policy-makers, nor certainly, to influence those who make laws to reduce and eventually eradicate gender biases".

The vital role played by political parties in the development and stabilization of democracy cannot be overemphasized. Although Nigeria since independence in 1960 has continued to hold elections amidst several challenges or pitfalls which make its democracy only an electoral democracy as it appears that the core tenets of democratic institutions are persistently flouted thereby undermining the admirable qualities of popular participation, purposive inclusion of eligible adults in mobilization for voting, appointment and election into public offices. It is within this premise that political inclusiveness is seen as fundamental to the survival and expansion of democracy in Africa.

II.   Women's Discrimination and Internal Political Structure
Women face several obstacles in their efforts to aspire higher even within the internal structure of political parties. Stereotypic roles and perceptions of dominantly male stakeholders who decide the pattern of leadership recruitment for the internal structure of the party and by extension ranking male decision-makers also shape the drafting of the constitutions of political parties which are mostly skewed towards the passion and desires of the male folks with a little embellishment of clauses that seem to reflect some gender balancing but unfortunately, such gender colourations do not translate to even 30% representation of the women in the internal executive structures of political parties let alone the actual nomination of parties candidates in general elections.

The inability of women to effectively compete for leadership positions and occupy a considerable number of seats in the internal structure and politics of political parties is typically reinforced by the prevailing effects of capacity gaps.Capacity gaps mean that more women, compared to men are less likely to possess or access those critical facilities or catalysts such as education, economic power and the requisite social influence needed to enable them to occupy a considerable number of seats in their party executive more so their desire to take up some of the most sensitive positions of power and substance that can increase the involvement in crucial decision making in and for their parties across all leadership levels.

Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for democracy but a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development, peace and a better life for all cannot be achieved.

The paper is subdivided into four sections. The first is on the conceptual discourse as well as the theoretical framework of the study, the two theories which are; Liberal feminism and Alienation theoretical framework were carefully blended to proffer explanations for the nature and causes of poor inclusion of Women in Nigerian politics, the second stage dwells on the historical perspective of political parties and Party politics in Nigeria; highlighting Women inclusion, political parties and internal politics as well as challenges facing women participation in internal party politics. The third focuses on tabulated data detailing the percentage of women inclusion in the decision-making structures of two major political parties in Nigeria and the fourth draws up a conclusion and suggestion of way forward to the challenges identified in the study.

III.   Methodology
This paper which is largely a qualitative study made a review of existing literature using documentary data. Secondary data are the major sources of data used for this study; the need to obtain data mainly from secondary studies comes ready, specifically intending to adopt a Content Analysis method for reliable investigation and analysis based on its efficiency in helping the researcher read meaning into the materials collected from diverse sources such as books, journal publications, News Papers, official documents from INEC and a few other raw data collected by the researcher from the national party secretariats of the PDP and the APC in Abuja; Nigeria thereby giving the researcher a robust premise upon which inferences were drawn for verifiable conclusions. The data obtained from the national secretariats of the two political parties helped to determine the difference or margin of exclusion in percentages between men and women representation in the national working committees of the two political parties that were adopted for the study and with this, inferences were drawn from the discussions of the tables presenting the data covering the internal leadership of the two major political parties in Nigeria from 1999 to 2019 party conventions.

The political architecture of Nigeria from amalgamation has been unpretentiously masculine or dominantly patriarchal owing largely to the sociology of the diverse cultures within the country Nigeria and the

transferred social structures from the British Colonial masters; this culture of little or no inclusion of females in the core decision-making process also impacted on the internal structure and activities of the earliest political parties in Nigeria. The fact that there are political godfathers without political godmothers speaks volumes about how the hierarchy of political party structures demonstrably exhibits a culture of poor gender balancing and equity in the Nigerian political system.

3.1 Conceptual Discourse
3.1.1 Internal Party Politics
        The concept of internal party politics and democracy is largely about the clamour and emphasis for and towards engineering a political consciousness for every member of the party to have equal or relatively equal opportunities in the decision-making process of their political party, especially as it has to do with decisions relating to party programmes, choices of candidates or representatives and the authoritative allocation of values as espoused by David Easton and "the Question of who gets what, when and how" as espoused by Harold Lasswell(1936). The nature of intra-party politics and relations from the post-military democratic workings of Nigeria's political activities reflects an oligarchic structure dominantly operated and managed by Nigerian men and only a few women within the political social circle. More worrisome too is the wide gulf that exists in terms of the difference in degree of inclusion between males and females in the internal party leadership of most political parties in Nigeria from the colonial times to even our recent democratic experience.

3.2 The Trajectory of a Dominant Male Syndrome in Nigeria Politics
        In the course of advancing its own goals and interests in Nigeria, the colonial authorities had deliberately encouraged the three dominant ethnic groups in the three regions Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba to develop and assert their separate social, cultural and even political identities   (Tyedon, 2012). These competing forces of interest have either overwhelmed the necessity for women's inclusion or completely amputated the urge to sustainably increase the tempo of its pursuit. From the return to democracy on May 29th, 1999 which marks the commencement of the fourth Republic, there have been huge expectations from both citizens and lovers of democracy the world over that the Nigerian democracy will mature into a sustainable democracy with all political parties as one of its institutions thriving through increasing stages and programmes of transitions. According to Abinbola and Adesite in Godwin (2019), ironically, Nigeria's democracy continues to be faced with challenges of imposition of candidates by godfathers, money-bag politics, and party indiscipline triggered by a lack of internal party democracy within political parties. Suffice it to say that all non-affluent Nigerians suffer deprivations in the poor conduct of internal party politics but the women have been the most hit of all class and social strata.

        According to Agbaje and Ojo (2007), a cursory survey of the literature on Nigeria's political parties since 1999 reveals that they lack an internal and open democratic system, wide distribution of power and inclusive decision-making process. Unfortunately, the female gender is most hit by the harsh and adverse effect of this lack of internal party democracy in Nigerian politics today.According to Olabamiyi (2019), all the universal adult suffrages exclude those who are below the certain age stipulated by the law, it has widely been celebrated as the only system that provides a platform for all adults; men and women to express their preferences for ideological orientations or programs of political elites who desire to rule them. However, democracy the world over is being promoted with varying degrees of depth and consolidation as well as challenges but unfortunately, the Nigerian political party system seems to be vertically structured into two folds: the ruling fold and the voting fold; these two, women are invariably the residual component of the second and lowest fold, which is the voting fold.

        The internal party politics of most political parties may best be understood with the evaluation of the historical trajectory of political parties in Nigeria and how the dominant male syndrome that has characterized the formation of most political parties has functioned to create a certain type of internal politics that has not been so favourably disposed to the yearning and aspiration of women in their bid for a robust representative democracy in Nigeria.Since the Nigerian state returned to democratic governance in 1999, party activities especially in the areas of selection, election, accountability, and discipline have been the subject of intense debate in many quarters. As Ikeanyibe (2014) put it, the non-use (practice) of internal party democracy (I P D) in the nomination of party candidates for election in Nigeria weakens party unity and institutionalization and negatively affects democratic consolidation.

        Democracy as a term is used to describe the idea or process which seeks to entrench and expand the rights, ability and capacity of people in any community to take control of their lives through participating as fully as possible in the discussion of issues and events that affect them and their community (Agbaje, 1999).The transition from direct democracy of the Greek city-states of Athens to indirect or representative democracy invariably bequeathed on political parties the duty and practice of decision-making and prescription of rules and modalities by which public officers may be nominated or elected internally in the parties.

Democracy and its consolidation are hinged on the strength and modus of participation and representation. Central to the notion and or ideology of democracy therefore is the culture of participation; who participates, to what extent do they participate and how egalitarian or distributive is the process and access to opportunities for participation; Is the democratic space more open to some gender or close to others all these questions help to determine the character and stability of the internal party politics and or democracy of the political system.Political parties are the conveyor belt of democracy and its practice, so, by its unique objective, it is expected to demonstrate a spread and balance between the male and the female gender and across various other considerations such as age, class and population size in every society. Agbaye (1999) submits that a political party is a network of relationships through which parties influence the political processes.

IV. Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, the subject matter of this paper is approached from two theoretical dimensions: Feminism; particularly the Liberal feminist theory and Alienation theory. This is because of the advantage they both present in analyzing the issues raised in the paper. For example, feminist theory helps to understand gender inequality with a deliberate focus on gender politics and the nature of power relations in political systems. While providing a critique of the social-political relations, much of the feminist theory also focuses on the promotion of women's rights and the need to safeguard them indeed as rights, not privileges. The study adopted liberal feminism as a theoretical framework of analysis to put women's under-representation in Nigerian politics in perspective. While feminism as a theoretical framework mirrors the unequal relationship between men and women in society on the one hand, Alienation theory touches on the trajectory of the feminine subjugation and the unjust distancing or removal from the political roles they (women) ought to be playing as a matter of right.

4.1 Liberal Feminism

i.   Feminism has been defined as advocacy for social equality for men and women. Feminism is generally opposed to patriarchy and sexism (French in Igube, 2004). Abdugafar (2021) defined feminism as an ideology which seeks to assert the principle that women should have political, economic and social rights equal to those of men. It is a movement that entrenches these rights through the emancipation of women, liberating them from class and gender exploitation and oppression. Liberal feminism which is also known as mainstream feminism or equality feminism is a branch of feminism that focuses on pursuing and achieving gender equality through legal and political reforms within the existing system. It seeks to create an enabling environment that allows women to engage meaningfully in the decision-making process sustainably and effectively that is free from violence and harassment of any kind especially in the internal politics of political parties.

Liberal feminism is a phenomenon of the 19th and early 20th century and has since emerged as one of the most dominant strands of feminist thought. Feminist ideology insists that society should recognize claims of women's struggles for rights (legal, political, social and economic) equal to those possessed by men (Learner 1993, Ezeigbo, 1996). Feminist ideology contends against the subjection and oppression of women. Thus, the contention of scholarly discourse in this perspective to step up first the inclusion of women in not just appointed positions but by incremental efforts of systematically creating a process that is non-violent but strategically demonstrative of fairness, equity and balance in the way and many political parties recruit their internal leadership structures and by extension, how these internal structures of political parties democratically evolve a principle that evolves a robust women inclusion for the larger polity

A central feature of feminist political theory is the notion that women and their situations are central to political analysis. Its interest lies in questioning the fact that men appear to have more power and privileges than women and asking how it can be changed for the greater socio-political good of society (Bryson 2003). The argument of the Liberal Feminist in this respect presupposes therefore that political parties should make deliberate policy reforms to accommodate the peculiarities of gender mainstreaming in their party guidelines and or constitution. Liberal feminists argue that women should have equal legal and political rights as men and should be treated as individuals rather than being defined by their gender. They advocate for equal access to education, employment opportunities and reproductive rights.

One of the key ideas in Liberal feminism is that gender inequalities are primarily the result of socialization and cultural norms rather than inherent biological differences between men and women. It is therefore the belief and ambition of the liberal feminist that equal rights for women can best be achieved by challenging and changing the sociopolitical and cultural norms which constitute the status quo. Iwuchukwu, (2006) also define feminism as the belief in the importance of gender equality, in radiating the idea of gender literacy as a socially contrasted concept.

The wave of feminism started after the French Revolution of 1789, the feminists fought for the suffrage that would enable them to enter the legislative bodies and other political institutions. The leading proponents of feminism are Olympe de Gouges of France, Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Taylor and Lydia Becker of Britain, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony of the United States etc (Johari, 2012). Feminism as a theory has

various schools of thought which include cultural feminism, biological feminism, radical feminism, social feminism, liberal feminism etc. Although feminism takes many forms, liberals encourage the struggle of women to secure their economic and political liberty (Adedevoh in Nwagwu and Ifeanacho, 2009). Whatever form or manner, feminism displays or distinguishes itself, what is consistent in all its shades and direction is the determination of every group to lift womanhood and strive towards liberation and emancipation of women (Ezeigbo, 1996).

Essentially, the liberal feminist theory was particularly chosen above other strands of the feminist theoretical framework because its core argument resonates with the nature and character of women's political underrepresentation and also proffers modalities for incorporating women more into the political space as active players in the industry.

4.2 Political Alienation

Political alienation is defined as the attitude of estrangement from the political system. It is conceptualized into two broad categories: political discontentment and political incapability. While political discontentment points to alienation arising from one's volition to not participate due to loss of passion or disaffection, political incapability is a kind of alienation forced upon the individual by one's environment. According to Olsen (1969), survey data indicates that incapability occurs most commonly among persons occupying various disadvantaged social statuses. The apathy to which women's participation in politics is prone is captured in the theoretical assumptions of discontentment in political alienation arising from the incapability of the feminine folks in the internal structures of political parties.

In political science, political alienation refers to an individual citizen's relative sense of enduring estrangement from, or rejection of, the prevailing political system. In representative democracies, this often leads to voters" apathy; this is a deliberate show of indifference to citizens" political obligation of participation in politics, electioneering activities, voting and indeed the gamut of all such political activities that citizens ought to be involved in public or general elections, thus; more and more women who suffer from political incapability as engendered in the internal sociology of major political parties may regress their participation in after a while, owing to that sense of incapability suffered. According to the Premium Times issue of February 9 (2021), the Independent National Electoral Commission had said voter turnout hovered around 30 to 35 percent in the last two electoral cycles compared to the average voter turnout of 65 to70 percent in other countries, even in the West African sub-region, significant therefore to argue or hypothesize that a continuous decline of women participation in politics may well portend a decline in the average national voter turnout in general elections.

Politically, alienated people feel compelled to vote but are restricted by their sense of insignificance to the system or due to fear arising from a palpable sense of insecurity and loss of confidence in the political processes. They feel that they are underrepresented or not represented at all by those running for office. Their best interest or concerns are not regarded (Anifowose, 2008).Political alienation falls into two broad categories: political incapability and political discontentment. In the first instance, alienation is forced upon the individual by their environment, whereas in the second case, it is voluntarily chosen by them (Varma, 1975). Political alienation is adversely related to political efficiency (Varma, 1975). The most common electoral consequences of political alienation are abstention and protest voting (Olsen, Maruine 1968).

4.3 Historical Perspective of Party Politics in Nigeria

Political parties have been the bedrock of political activities in Nigeria since the colonial period (Akinboye and Anifowose, 1999). The evolution of political parties in Nigeria is traceable to the formation of the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) which by Herbert Macaulay in 1923. At the inception of party politics in 1923, following the introduction of the elective principles by the Clifford constitution, Nigerian parties had very limited and self-serving objectives (Omilusi and Ajibola, 2016). Little wonder, when the first political party in Nigeria, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) under the leadership of Herbert Macaulay began, its activities were restricted to contesting elections into the Lagos City Council. For years, the NNDP was hegemonic in its dominance of electoral politics in the country (Omotola, 2010). In this order, key leaders who provided finance to the party; who were largely male aristocrats, cashed in on their leverage to occupy top political positions both in the parties and government (Omilusi and Ajibola, 2016). The national leaders of the parties were, in most cases, the owners of the parties, whose interests and world views ultimately became the objectives, manifestoes, rules and regulations of the parties. This way, political parties were virtually the personal belongings of party leaders who naturally were male persons who defined the character and nature of membership, who gets included or restricted, the next generation of political elites, the leadership recruitment procedures and windows for membership. According to Omilusi and Ajibola(2016), membership of political parties was exclusive, and this further reinforced the disempowerment of the people [especially women] and their lack of ability to participate in party and national politics.

Ever since the formation and development of subsequent political parties, the nature of internal party politics has been characterized by ethnicity and male dominance. The three prominent political parties which were formed in the colonial era that emerged with Nigeria's first republic or post-colonial politics were: the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) which later became the National Council of Nigeria Citizens following the exit of Cameroon from Nigeria, the Action Group (AG) formed in 1951 and Northern People's Congress (NPC) which also emerged in 1951 were not only regionally based but were also dominantly male-oriented social formations and their growth transformation and mutation through generations and republics have retained this core element of ethnicity and patriarchal structure which has made it almost impossible for women to play adequate rolls or occupy crucial positions within the internal structures of the political parties and this also is assumed to have a relationship with poor gender balance in the body polity of Nigeria.

4.4 Political Participation and Party Politics

Participatory politics according to Shalom (2003) demands that the value of freedom, Justice, solidarity and tolerance help to create a political system that will allow people to participate as much as possible to entrench the culture of democracy, fairness and inclusiveness proportionate to the degree to which they are affected by such decision.Women constitute half of the world's population and have contributed sufficiently to the well-being of the human race (Enemuo, 1999). It is imperative therefore that the internal party politics (par-polity) should reflect a level-playing field or show the demonstrable trend of increasing women's participation in politics with deliberate progression towards gender balance in Nigerian politics.

Intra-party politics emphasizes the nature and character of politics internal to the political party. According to Joe-Akume, Nnamani, Egodike and Azuako (2021), the autocratic character of intra-party relations has tended overtime to underscore the ferocious characters of politics, particularly since the onset of Nigeria's post-military democratic experience in 1999. Political parties in the submission of Omodia (2010) serve as the indices through which democratic governance could be compared in states in that the structure and operation of party politics serve as measuring rods for determining the fragility or otherwise of democratic systems.

In Nigeria, the democratic process no doubt is bedevilled by poor party politics as a result of the 'ethnicization' of party politics, poor leadership, excessive westernization of democratic concepts, party indiscipline, no-clear-cut party ideologies, the politicization of the higher echelon of the military profession among others and worrisomely, lack of party democracy (Ntalaja, 2002)Intra-party politics underscores the internal democracy within political parties therefore as political parties constitute one of the institutional guards of democracy, the internal working structures and processes of a political party may well be referred to as the internal working system of democracy, in this sense therefore, internal party politics can be used interchangeably with internal party democracy to convey the same meaning. Internal party conflicts according to Omoruyi, (2021), hinges on a lack of (intra-party) democracy in political parties and a decline in the efficiency of governance and democracy.

Internal party democracy according to Scarrow (2004) is a very broad term describing a wide range of methods for including party members in the intra party deliberation and decision-making, he argues that by this, political parties using internal democratic procedures are likely to select more capable and appealing leaders and candidates and to have more responsive policies and as a result, enjoy greater electoral success. This by implication is a greater possibility for gender inclusion, equality, distributiveness and access to varying demographic strata.

4.5 Global Examples of Women's Inclusion in Politics

Globally, women have been a great source of support to the enthronement of political leaders in every society due to their numbers and nature. (Oguadima et al 2020). Almost 50 percent of Nigeria's population is made of female gender but unfortunately, they occupy far less than 20 percent of positions in the political space, important to mention too that the participation of women in a sustainable democracy is quite essential to the survival of democracy.In many countries especially in Nigeria, women have been practically absent in politics. This is not because of their lack of interest or will but because of their marginalization in society. Women constitute about 56 percent of the total population (NPC, 2011) yet they are discriminated against in the political process. It would appear that the marginalization of Nigerian women is more pronounced in the democratization process.

There are real barriers holding women back from getting to the top in the cultural, labour force, religious and political spheres (Dehinde, 2004) he further asserts that more than 118 countries have national Plans of Action for gender equality as well as laws and policies to promote women's right but the challenge has always been to turn commitment to action.The Nordic countries, Denmark, Norway and Sweden are well known for as high as 40 percent representation of women in politics achieved through positive actions taken by political

parties.For instance, as far back as 1983 the Norwegian LabourParty decided that both sexes must be represented by at least forty percent in all elections.

Notwithstanding the efforts being made by countries to step up women's rights from education to economic empowerment and to land ownership and others, the inclusion of women in critical aspects of Nigeria's political space is yet to be fully developed to an enviable stage that may be worthy of emulation in the West African sub-region.Concerns over the role of women in society are no longer new in development discourse. Generally, it is accepted that for development of any kind to be successful, women who make up a large proportion of the population should not be left out. There is also no doubt both men and women have some potential and rights to contribute meaningfully to the development of their countries throughout the world, Africa inclusive. There is abundant historical evidence that underlines the fact that African women have long been playing crucial roles in the political lives of their countries.(Agomor, 2004)

4.6 Challenges Confronting Nigerian Women's Participation in Party Politics

Nigeria women have encountered several problems while venturing into politics chief among the problems is the large-scale discrimination from the male folk, both in voting for candidates and in allocating political offices in the political arena. Throughout the world women according to Walters (2005) face obstacles to equal participation in political decision-making processes.Women in Nigeria have always been grossly underrepresented in party core memberships, as well as in the decision-making structure of the party. This emanates from the exclusion of women from political governance and leadership in colonial rule which emphasized the British single-sex model of administration as it was practiced in other British colonies. The basic premise of the colonial gender ideology was based on the principle that women are not to function in public domains as men but to be domesticated.

The participation of women in both external and internal politics of political parties according to Article 44 of the Beijing Platform for Action, has met with several critical challenges which call for deliberate response as are listed below;

• Poor funding due to access to fewer economic opportunities compared to male folks
• Fewer educated women due to several generations of restricted education opportunities for women.
• Lack of support from fellow women.
• Violent nature of politics Nigeria.
• Stigmatization and assassination of women's characters.
• Lack of precise constitutional provision for the specific quota of women representation in the constitutions of political parties.
• Holding political meetings at late night.
• Family and matrimonial restrictions forbade women from participating in politics.

Article 44
Beijing Platform for Action, 1995

According to Oguadima et al (2020), even now women's participation is drastically dropping due to violence, women no longer come out in the same numbers compared to previous years.
Factors militating against woman's participation according to Oguadima, Nwakafor, and Ejikeonye, (2020) are enumerated below;

• Men and women's wrong perceptions about women in politics; they see them as prostitutes, stubborn and disrespectful.
• Male political dominance uses some suppressive tools like financial inducement, 'Godfatherism', political violence, formation of men's cliques within the political cycle.
• Jealousy, hatred, and envy by some women against women's participation in politics have been a source of discouragement to other women with political interests.
• Lack of financial capacity to foot the bills of political ambition etc.

The overall effect of all these factors tends largely to retard the influence of woman person in aspiring for greater opportunities in the internal politics of their political parties, consequently the poor gender representation in the larger politics of states and the country.The financial limitation of women in political participation is robustly captured in Alexandra Kollontai's work. According to Kollontai (1909) the social basis of the women's question, avers here that the conditions and forms of production in society have subjugated women throughout human history, and have gradually relegated them to the position of oppression and dependence in which most of them existed until now.Specific cultural and social factors such as the ego conflict and the patriarchal structure of the society abinitio, These factors have continued to undermine the rise and effective competitive status of women in the effort to seek access to the highest position available in political parties and by extension the highest political offices available in our various states and country at large. The jubilation that greeted Aisha Binani's short-lived victory in the just concluded gubernatorial elections of 18th March 2023 in Adamawa state

goes a long way to tell how protracted the desire to have a woman occupy their (Adamawa state) highest seat in our democracy has been.

4.7 An Overview of Affirmative Action on Women's Participation in Politics

Ideologically, Affirmative Action is perceived as a policy and strategy that aims at the protection of the interests of the women's interest in politics. Nigeria has been recording low participation of women in both elective and appointed positions. This is a growing concern to many Nigerians. However, concerted efforts have been made by the government to increase the level of participation of women in politics in line with the declaration made at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, which advocated 35% Affirmative Action.

In Nigeria, the extant National gender policy (NGP) recommended 35% Affirmative Action instead and sought a more inclusive representation of women with at least 35% of both elective and appointed public service positions respectively.The poor or uneven representation of women in political positions in Nigeria gained root due to patriarchal cultural practices inherent in our society, much of which was obvious from the colonial era till date. However, the re-introduction of democratic government has witnessed once again an increase in women's political participation both in elective and appointed offices.The national average of women's political participation in Nigeria has remained at 6.7 percent in elective and appointed positions, which is below the global average of 22.5 percent, the African regional average of 23.4 percent and the West African sub-regional average of 15 percent. For instance, out of the 36 confirmed ministerial appointments by President Buhari's administration in his second tenure, only six(6) were women, representing 16.7 percent. In the national assembly, women constitute 5.6 percent of members of the House of Representatives and 6.5 percent of the Senate. Also, with the 21 years of uninterrupted democratic governance (1999-2022) Nigeria is yet to produce a female governor in any of the 36 States of the federation. The National Centre for Women Development embarked on the collection of national data on the involvement and participation of women in politics in Nigeria (1999-2022).

4.8 Women Inclusion: Independence to 1999

The early years of independence did not witness a marked difference from the dying days of colonialism. Just like in the civil service, the political leaders of the First Republic who had been schooled in Victorian thoughts replaced the colonial masters and saw women as second-class political activists. (Anya,2004). Their position having been re-enforced by the economic and administrative leverage of the colonial system helped men to acquire a more privileged political position. The First Republic (1960- 1965) according to Anya (2004), saw only an insignificant number of women playing prominent political roles in the parliament. For instance, there were only 4 female legislators: (Mrs. Wurola Esan and Mrs. Bernice Kerry) in Parliament. In the Eastern House of Assembly only 2 women were members, (Mrs. Margaret Ekpo and Mrs. Janet Muokelu). There were no female Ministers. All the Political parties had male-dominated structures with the usual traditional position of women leaders whose general role amounts to little or nothing in parties' decision-making. It showed in the kind of position women occupied in the scheme of affairs. Moreover, no direct policy of the Central Government or Regional Governments was geared towards the redress of the situation.

A greater opportunity for women to participate in politics emerged with the transition to civil rule in 1979. Nigeria returned to democratic governance after 16 years of Military incursion.The Fourth Republic officially commenced on 29th May 1999. Weeks later various governments at the Federal and State levels began to make appointments. Notwithstanding the general clamour of women for the implementation of the 35% affirmative action for elective and appointive positions recommended by the Beijing Platform for Action of which Nigeria is a signatory, none of the Governments; State and Federal gave women up to 35% in their respective appointments. The non-implementation of the 35% affirmative action has since geared women into various levels of serious awakening within the period 1999-2003. Women organizations civil society and non-governmental organizations began to work towards increased women's participation in politics. Going by Sklar's categorization of participatory politics in terms of objectives, conceptions of society, the role of the state, the political processes, citizens' rights, citizens' participation and the practical problems to which each type gives rise, Nigeria ought to be described as a country practising liberal democracy. The character of Nigeria's liberal democracy however negates positive aspects of liberal democracy. This negation has its effect on the participation of women in politics in all ramifications.

Since the return of democratic rule in 1999, Nigerian women have loved to gain access to political decision-making positions by contesting for elective positions at various levels. Clark, (2012) notes gender equality and women's empowerment are not only human rights, but they are also imperative for achieving inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. Women's political participation is central to these goals and political parties are among the most important institutions for promoting and nurturing such

participation.Political participation as one of the key elements of democracy promotes the justification for the inclusion of marginalized groups such as women in electoral competition. Participation of women in politics will be meaningful only if the process is just fair, and persuasive and a level playing ground is guaranteed for possible ascension of women politically. Politics has strategic importance for women because the ultimate success of the women's movement will rest heavily on the effective use of the political process (Lym 1978). A system analysis of women's political participation in Nigeria since 1999 when the country returned to democratic rule reveals the same pattern and trend of engagement and outcome. The national assembly in 1999 as shown in Table 1, had three (3) (2.8%) female senators and twelve (12) (3.3%) female house of representative members. In 2003, four (4) (3.7%) and twenty-one (21) (5.8%) female members were elected respectively into the assembly. In 2007, the national assembly had nine (9) (7.2%) female senators and twenty-six, (26) (7.2%) female members of the House of representative. In 2011, the National Assembly had seven (7) (6.4%) female senators and twenty-five (25) (6.9%) female members in the lower house. By 2015, the National Assembly had seven (7) (6.4%) female members in the Senate and (19) (5.2%) female in the House of Representatives. These are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Female members of Nigerian National Assembly 1999-2015

Year	Senate	House of Representatives
1999	3 (2.8%)	12 (3.3%)
2003	4 (3.7%)	21 (5.8%)
2007	9 (8.3%)	26 (7.2%)
2011	7 (6.4%)	25 (6.9%)
2015	7 (6.4%)	19 (5.2%)

Source: www.inecnigeria.org

The lack of internal party democracy in political parties has impacted negatively and contributed to the thwarted political ambition of most women in elections. Political parties are important for women's participation in politics as it is political parties that recruit and select candidates for elections and that determine a country's policy agenda (Ballington, 2012). Parties are the country's gatekeepers into the mainstream politics.

The stage at which the party gatekeepers choose the candidates is perhaps the most crucial stage for getting women into office (Ballington, 2004). Political parties have continued to err in the area of recruiting women for elective competitions. Nigerian women are usually disenfranchised right from the level of recruitment for elective positions by political parties. Male candidates are given preference over females as evidence of parties' disposition towards fielding female candidates for general elections has revealed. The character and the mode of operations of parties in Nigeria are contrary to the basic principles of democracy and the resultant effect is the inability of women to cope with the kind of politics played by parties and their subsequent alienation (Quadri, 2013).The Composition of the National Working Committee of two Dominant Political Parties in Nigeria (PDP & APC) from 1999-2019.The two political parties above have been selected because they have respectively held power at the center both in executive and legislative capacities.

Table 2: List of National Working Committee of the PDP

S/N	Year	Number of Male	Percentage of Male inclusion	Number of Female	Percentage of Female inclusion	Total composition
1.	1999 – 2001	56	93.3%	4	6.7%	60
2.	2001 – 2005	41	95.3%	2	4.7%	43
3.	2005– 2007	20	95.2%	1	4.8%	21
4.	2007 – 2010	17	94.4%	1	5.6%	18
5.	2012 –2014	15	83.3%	3	16.7%	18
6.	2014 – 215	10	91%	1	9%	11
7.	2017	24	88.9%	3	11.1%	27
8.	2021	24	85.7%	4	14.3%	28

Source: Fieldwork, (2022).

From Table 2, the composition of the National Working Committee between 1999 and 2001 shows that 93.3% of the party's NWC were male persons while only a fraction of 6.7 was female. The same was true in 2001-2005 with 95.3% of the NWC of the PDP male while only 4.7% was female. In their 2005-2007

composition of NWC, the PDP had 95.2% male against 4.8% female, shown in column 4 of Table 2 too is the composition of PDP NWC from 2007-2010 with 94.4% male inclusion against a slim 5.6%, then from 2012-2014 the NWC of the PDP was given as 83.3% male inclusion against a 16.7% female in what seemed to have received a little improvement but by its 2014-2015 party executive structure, it showed a 91% male against a 9% female composition of its NWC. In 2017 and 2021, the composition of the PDP's NWC was 88.9% male against 11.1 and 85.7% male inclusion against 14.3% female respectively.

Table 3:List of National Working Committee of the APC

S/N	Year	Number of males	Percentage of Male inclusion	Number of Females	Percentage of Female inclusion	Total composition
1.	2014	19	95%	1	5%	20
2.	2018	20	95.2%	1	4.8%	21

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)

Table 2 provides details of the composition of the APC's notational working committee from 2014 till date. The 2014 convention produced a 20-man party executive with a 95% male and only a 5% female inclusion and that of 2018 too was not different as it similarly produced a national working committee with 95.2% male and a dismal 4.8% female inclusion indicating a significant male-dominated leadership arrangement.

Tables 2 and 3 above show the composition of the National Working Committee of the PDP and the APC. On both parties, their internal party politics have not fared well concerning women's inclusion. The fact that women are largely underrepresented in the internal political and administrative structure of the two most dominant political parties is significantly shown here.Apart from the insignificant percentage of inclusion, data also show that positions occupied by women in the two dominant parties are of no significant influence on the hierarchy of decision-makers in the internal working mechanism of the major political parties. The import of this is that women have a less significant influence on major decisions taken within the political party and this is also capable of influencing the way and manner opportunities are created for increased women's inclusion and participation in the body polity.

Although many women register to become members of political parties and function effectively in grass root mobilizations and canvassing during electioneering campaigns unfortunately they do not usually have a reasonable representation in the core caucuses and upper echelon of political parties''' decision-making body this, regrettably is the case in Nigeria from the local government executive organs of major political parties to state executives and right up to the National Working Committees of these parties. Below is the table showing the composition of the national working committees of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and of the All Progressives Congress (APC):

According to the chairpersonof;the Women in Politics Forum, Ebere Ifeodu, (2015) "There is no genuine internal democracy in the parties as candidates are handpicked. When one scales the party primary, he or she scaled the most hurdles. Internal party selection processes as Nwosu, (2015) observes should normally be subject to competitive elections among party members, but they are relegated instead to the preferences of party elites; most of who are men, who manipulate the results in favour of their preferred candidates.

V. Conclusion

This paper is informed by the need to analyze how the failure of political parties to grow and sustain gender inclusion through internal party democracy helped to perpetuate a sustained political culture of lack of women inclusion in body politics and why affirmative action for women fails to be accomplished amidst several other action plans initiated towards bettering the political opportunities of women about the male gender. It is observed that a lot of challenges are faced in the actualization of Affirmative Action, alternatives suggested are as follows:

i. Aspiring female politicians should be encouraged and supported materially and financially.
ii. Create an enabling environment that allows women to engage meaningfully in the decision-making process sustainably and effectively that is free from violence and harassment of any kind especially in the internal politics of political parties.
iii. Political parties should intensify efforts in making party vice or deputy positions vacant for women.
iv. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should take over the conduct of party primaries in the country as opposed to the current position where the commission only observed the conduct of such primaries as provided under section (2) of the Electoral Act 2010 (As attended)
v. Political parties should make deliberate policy reforms to accommodate the peculiarities of gender mainstreaming in their party guidelines and or constitution.
vi. The national working committees or political parties´ executives from the very top (central government) to the regions (states) and down to the local governments and wards, party structures at all levels

should place much emphasis on women inclusion and make demonstrable efforts in broadening the scope of women inclusion every convention year.

vii.   The paper suggests that emphasis should be placed on the complementary roles between men and women to improve the opportunities for women and reduce the limitations often encountered by women in Nigeria party politics.

viii.   As much as the debates on Affirmative Action have often been met with ideological disagreements as to whether it meets the core criterion of democratic procedures; especially for elective offices, the internal party politics of political parties should seek to step up the role of women first into appointed offices and then sustain the conversation towards sustainably expanding the scope.

Women's participation in Nigeria politics is a topic of huge importance especially as it affects the stability of democracy in Nigeria's fledgling democracy.If no sustained efforts are made, Nigerian women may never achieve the often professed 35 percent Affirmative Action, the paper argues that there is a need therefore for a paradigm shift.Although this paper has recorded several cases where women have shown to participate or seem to have been involved in the internal politics of major political parties in Nigeria the percentage assessment of their levels of participation and access to topmost positions in party executive is either abysmally poor or almost not in place. This indicates that Nigeria women still have a long way to go in attaining the pinnacle of political decision-making.

In a nutshell, so much still needs to be done by political parties, gender advocacy groups and government at all levels to place gender inclusion a top priority in their internal party politics.The single most important opportunity for women to participate in politics in Nigeria remains under a democratic set-up. Colonialism and military rule worked against women's participation and the awareness created by the circumstance of democracy would not have been possible for women if Nigeria was under an undemocratic setting (Anya, 2004).The opening up of the political space through the formation of more political parties gave women room to contest elections, this is likely to be sustained with committed efforts through legislation and research by repository bodies in Nigeria in the world over.

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