

# **Patriarchy and Women's Political Leadership Position in Nigeria: Issues, Challenges and Prospects**

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## ***Abstract***

*Women worldwide, face discrimination, subordination, exploitation and relegation in several spheres of life. It has been observed that this discrimination against women is more pronounced in the developing African countries of the world. In Nigeria, womanhood is reduced to mere tool in the hands of men and seen as only being relevant in the kitchen. This has brought about tremendous misrepresentation of women right at the level of the family down to the circular society. Nigeria is patriarchal in nature and this is a major feature of a traditional society. Patriarchy is a broad network or system of hierarchical organization that cuts across political, economic, social etc, under which the overwhelming number of upper positions in society are controlled and dominated by men. In the modern world where women go ahead by their merit, patriarchy creates obstacles for women to go forward in the society. It has been adjudged that women constitute about half of the population of Nigerian, yet there is inherently a pronounced level of under representation of women in political leadership positions when compared with their male counterparts. This paper attempts to x-ray the conceptual clarification of patriarchy, origin of patriarchy, theoretical underpin, causes for the discrimination of women in Nigeria and as well proffer practical solutions to this situation. This paper therefore, argues that if Nigeria and the world in general are to benefit from women's full potential, the constant dilemma and stringent constraint on women must be removed.*

**Keywords:** patriarchy, women and political leadership position

## **Introduction**

Scholars have indicated that patriarchy is the prime obstacle to women's advancement and development (Sultana, 2011; Okpe, 2005; Makama, 2013). Despite differences in levels of domination, the broad principles remain the same, i.e. man must control. Makama (2013) noted that women constitute about half of the population of Nigerian State and are known to play vital roles as mothers, producers, managers, community developers/organizers etc. Their contribution to the social and economic development of societies is also more than half as compared to that of men by virtue of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres. Yet, their participation in formal and informal structures and processes, where decisions regarding the use of societal resources generated by both men and women are made, remains unrecognized.

The Nigerian society is patriarchal in nature. Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women (Johannsdottir, 2009). Patriarchal society gives absolute priority to men and to some extent limits women's human rights also.

It is a known fact that patriarchal society sets the parameters for women's structurally unequal position in families and markets by condoning gender-differential term in inheritance rights and legal adulthood, by tacitly condoning domestic and sexual violence and sanctioning differential wages for equal or comparable work, as well as political discrimination (Makama, 2013). Tradition or culture and religion have dictated men and women relationship for centuries and entrenched male domination into the structure of social organisation and institution at all levels of leadership. Salaam (2003) asserts that patriarchy justifies the marginalization of women in education, economy, labour market, politics, business, family, domestic matters and inheritance.

The ideological and cultural background of patriarchy is a very strong determinant of the clinch of male supremacy over female and this justifies the reason why a man is regarded as one who remain in the home in order to retain the family name, while the female is married out and as such attracts discriminations and deprivation of access to all opportunities and benefits in the family, all in the premise that the female will be married out to another family. Thus, men are being trained for leadership roles, while women are confined to domestic activities; roles ascribed to them by culture which affect them later in life, thereby making them lose self confident/worth and have low self-esteem in their career in adult life, politics inclusive (Makama, 2013).

According to the UNDP Report (2005), despite the pronounced commitment of the international community to gender equality and to bridging the gender gap in the formal political arena, reinforced by the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform of Action, women are highly marginalized and are poorly represented in political activities. In order to improve the socio-political status of women and their rights in issues that concern both men and women in Nigeria, numerous, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) have sprung up. They have embarked on campaigns to encourage women's participation in politics and awareness of their rights in other spheres of life. Although in reality, this campaign has not gone beyond the conference halls of hotels and pages of newspapers; that is, it has not actually reached the grassroots (Makama, 2013).

Almas Jimani, UN women president, corroborated this in her keynote address in the just concluded 6<sup>th</sup> African Women in Leadership Conference (2014) held in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, when she reminded the women that "despite the progress that has already been made through campaigns for the protection of women's rights, local and international barriers still exists, hindering women ability to grow in all spheres".

The position of women in society in relation to men and the subordination, oppression and marginalization of women has attracted the attention of

scholars, activists, feminists and development workers for a very long time (Makama, 2013). Hence, the author examines patriarchy and women's political leadership positions in Nigeria; causes of this discrimination, origin of patriarchy and theoretical underpin for this situation that excludes women from governance and politics which is inimical to the overall development of the nation state Nigeria and beyond. This paper will as well proffer solutions/ remedy to this situation.

### ***Meaning and Origin of Patriarchy***

Patriarchy is a set of symbols and ideas that make up a culture, embodied by everything from the content of everyday conversation to literature and film (Udegbe, 1995; Okome, 2003; Kambarami, 2006). According to Sanit (2009), patriarchy is the systematic domination by men of women. It has gone beyond domination to a culture which includes ideas about the nature of things, including men, women and humanity. It is about how social life is and how it is supposed to be; about what is expected of people and about how they feel. It is about standards of feminine beauty and masculine toughness (McDowell and Pringle, 1992; Kambarami, 2006). It is about defining women and men as opposites, about the 'naturalness' of male aggression, competition and dominance and of female caring, cooperation and subordination (Leclerc-Madlala, 2000). Patriarchy is viewed by radical feminists as the most pervasive and enduring system of inequality. The theory links practices which are oppressive to women (such as wife battering, stoning to death of women accused of adultery, clitoridectomy etc) to patriarchy. Patriarchy is men's creation and is borne out of the desire by men to make women compliant tools and sustained through their access to resources which make it possible (Nnorom, 2006).

Patriarchal structure has been a major feature of the African society. It is a structure of a set of social relations with material base which enables men to dominate women (Makama, 2013; Igbuzor, 2012; Nwokocha, 2007; Johannsdottir, 2009). It is a system of social stratification and differentiation on the basis of sex, which provides material advantages to males while simultaneously placing severe constraints on the role and activities of females. Patriarchy was originally used to describe the power of the father as head of household, and has also been used within post 1960's feminism to refer to the systematic organization of male supremacy and subordination (Okpe, 2005; Makama, 2013; Johannsdottir, 2009 etc).

Most scholars have described patriarchy as a system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions. Feminists have argued that in any of the historical forms that patriarchal society takes, whether it is feudal, capitalist or socialist, a sex gender system and a system of economic discrimination operate simultaneously. A patriarch, according to Nnorom (2006) and Makama (2013), is considered the head of the household and within the family he controls productive resources, labour force,

and reproductive capacities based on the notions of superiority and inferiority and legitimized by differences in gender and generation.

The central idea of Radical Feminism is the belief that men are responsible for, and benefit from the exploitation of women. Patriarchy is viewed as a universal phenomenon that has existed across time and cultures. It has been said by many scholars that the family is one of the primary sources of women's oppression in the society. As a result of patriarchy, men also deny women access to positions of power and influence in society.

Fredrick Engels argued that under capitalism, material and economic factors underlay women's subservience to men, because patriarchy has its roots in private property ownership (Giddens, 2006). Engels argued that capitalism intensifies patriarchy – men's domination over women – by concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a small number of men.

### ***Origin of Patriarchy***

Generally, the existence and origin of patriarchy, traditionalists believe that men are born to dominate and women to be subordinate. They believe that this hierarchy has always existed and will continue, and like other rules of nature this one too cannot be changed. There are others who challenge these beliefs and say that patriarchy is not natural; it is man-made and, therefore, it can be changed.

Learner (1989: 8-11), noted that Aristotle propounded similar "theories" and called it 'males active' and 'females passive'. For him female was "mutilated male", someone who does not have a soul. In his view, the biological inferiority of woman makes her inferior also in her capacities, her ability to reason and, therefore, her ability to make decisions. Because man is superior and woman inferior, he is born to rule and she to be ruled. He said "the courage of man is shown in commanding of a woman in obeying".

According to modern psychology, women's biology determines their psychology and, therefore, their abilities and roles. Sigmund Freud, for example, stated that for women anatomy is destiny. In his view, normal human was male (Freud, 1977). In the words of Sultana (2011), these theories of male supremacy have been challenged and it has been proved that there is no historical or scientific evidence for such explanations. There are indeed biological differences between men and women but these distinctions do not have to become the basis of a sexual hierarchy in which men are dominant. The analysis of many of these theories enables us to recognize that patriarchy is man-made; historical processes have created it.

A very important explanation for the origin of patriarchy was given by Frederick Engels in 1884 in his book, *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Engels, 1940). Engels believed that women's subordination began with the development of private property, when according to him; the world historical defeat of the female sex took place. He says both the division of classes and the subordination of women developed historically. At that stage when private property arose in the society, men wanted to retain

power and property, and pass it on to their own children. To ensure this inheritance; mother-right was overthrown. In order to establish the right of the father, women had to be domesticated and confined and their sexuality regulated and controlled. According to Engels, it was in this period; both patriarchy and monogamy for women were established (Sultana, 2011).

According to the radical feminists (Brownmiller, 1976; Firestone, 1974), patriarchy preceded private property. They believe that the original and basic contradiction is between the sexes and not between economic classes. Radical feminists consider all women to be a class. Unlike the traditionalists, however, they do not believe that patriarchy is natural or that it has always existed and will continue to do so.

Socialist feminists accept and use the basic principles of Marxism but have tried to enrich and extend it by working on areas which, they believe, were neglected by conventional Marxist theory. They do not consider patriarchy to be a universal or unchanging system because of their commitment to a historical, materialist method as well as of their own observation of variety in the sexual division of labour. Socialist feminists view the struggle between women and men as changing historically with changes in modes of production (Beechey, 1977).

Hartmann (1981) looks at the link between patriarchy and capitalism and argues that patriarchy links all men to each other irrespective of their class. A woman's work benefits both capital and her husband. Hartmann defines patriarchy as a set of relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them, which in turn enable them to dominate women. The material base of patriarchy is men's control over women's labour power.

Another important 'socialist feminist view' has been presented by Mies (1988) in a paper entitled, *The Social Origins of the Sexual Division of Labour*. She puts forward some ideas regarding the possible reasons for and the sequence of historical developments leading to the origin of gender hierarchy or patriarchy. She further explains that, whatever the ideological differences between the various feminist groups, they are united in their rebellion against this hierarchical relationship between men and women, which is no longer accepted as biological destiny. Their enquiry into the social foundations of this inequality and asymmetry is the necessary consequence of their rebellion.

Mies further stated that male-ness and female-ness are not biological givens, but rather the result of a long historical process. In each historic epoch male-ness and female-ness are differently defined, the definition depending on the principal mode of production in those epochs. This means that the organic differences between women and men are differently interpreted and valued, according to the dominant form of appropriation of natural matter for the satisfaction of human needs. According to Mies, women were the first producers of life, of social production, of the first tools of production and if they were also the first to initiate social relations, why were they unable to prevent the establishment of a hierarchical and exploitative relationship

between the sexes? She answers this by saying that male supremacy, far from being a consequence of men's superior economic contribution, was as a result of the development and control of destructive tools through which they controlled women, nature and other men.

According to Lerner (1989), patriarchy was not one event but a process developing over a period of almost 2500 years (from approximately 3100 BC to 600 BC) and a number of factors and forces that were responsible for the establishment of male supremacy as we see it today. Gerda Lerner (1989) begins by emphasizing the importance of women history in women's struggle against patriarchy and for equality. According to her, patriarchy, in fact, preceded the formation of private property and class society.

One socialist feminist school of thought prefers to use the concept of subordination of women rather than patriarchy, which they reject as being historical. Patriarchy, according to them; is neither universal nor an all embracing phenomenon as different kinds of relationships have always existed between men and women in history. According to them, it is not sex but gender which is important; sex is biological, gender is social. This group is concerned with what they call gender relations (Oakley, 1972). The search for the social origins of this relationship is part political strategy of women's emancipation. Without understanding the foundation and the functioning of the asymmetric relationship between men and women, it is not possible to overcome it.

### **Theoretical Underpin of Women's Discrimination in the Society**

Feminist scholars have generated various theories to inform the study of women and to explain the effects of patriarchy on women. The feminist movement has given rise to a body of theory which attempts to explain gender inequalities and set forth agendas for overcoming those inequalities (Giddens, 2006). Feminist theories in relation to gender inequality contrast markedly with one another. Competing schools of feminism have sought to explain gender inequalities through a variety of deeply embedded social processes, such as sexism, patriarchy and capitalism. The views of the Social Marxist, Radical feminist and Postmodernism on the discrimination, oppression and subjugation of women in the society shall be x-rayed here.

Social Marxist feminism was developed from Marx's conflict theory, although Marx himself had little to say about gender inequality. It was Marx's friend and collaborator, Friedrich Engels, who did more than Marx to provide an account of gender equality from a Marxist perspective in his work known as "The Origin of The Family, Private Property and The State". According to Engels' in Giddens (2006), in capitalist societies, material and economic factors underlay women's subservience to men because patriarchy (like class oppression) has its roots in private property.

Engels further stated that capitalism intensifies patriarchy by concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a small number of men. He opined that the monogamous nuclear family developed with the emergence of private property, especially the private ownership of the means and forces of

production, and the rise of the state. The state promulgated laws to protect the system of private property and to enforce the rules of monogamous marriage. In order to pass this property on to their heirs, men have to be certain of the legitimacy of those heirs. Hence, they needed greater control over women so that there would be no doubt about the paternity of their offspring, and monogamy provided the most efficient device.

According to Engels, the monogamous family is based on the supremacy of the man. He believes that there is the economic dependence of the wife upon her husband and that this economic dependence made the control of the husband over the wife possible. According to Engels, equality between men and women would be realized under socialism where the means and forces of production would be communally owned. The argument of this school is grounded on two premises. The first is that women are socialized into low paying jobs. Secondly, women in addition to any paid labour that they may be engaged in do unpaid domestic labour outside capitalist relations of production. Domestic labour is not only unpaid but is also not computed by economists in calculating the GDP of countries. Meanwhile, domestic labour is necessary to oil the wheel of capitalism.

The materialists argue that domestic work or housework is productive labour and a hidden source of profit for capitalism (Dalla and James, 1972). The criticism against the materialist conception which has its root in Marxism especially the orthodox ones is that there is too much emphasis on material factors and class analysis. In fact, some scholars argue that for most Marxists, it was unthinkable that working class men might be oppressors in their own homes or that 'bourgeois' women might also be oppressed (Delphy and Leonard, 1992).

Radical feminism asserts that men are responsible for and benefit from the exploitation of women. The analysis of patriarchy - the systematic domination of females by males - is of central concern to the radical feminists. Patriarchy is viewed as a universal phenomenon that has existed across time and cultures. Radical feminists often concentrate on the family as one of the primary sources of women's oppression in society. They argued that men exploit women by relying on the free domestic labor that women provide in the home. As a group, men deny women access to positions of power and influence in society.

Radical feminists differ in their interpretation of the basis of patriarchy, but agree that it involves the appropriation of women's bodies and sexuality in some form. They argue that men control women's roles in reproduction and child rearing. Radical feminists do not believe that women can be liberated from sexual oppression through reforms or gradual change. This, they said, because patriarchy is a systematic phenomenon; they argued that gender equality can only be attained by overthrowing the patriarchal order.

The postmodernists asserted that women subordination results from the cultural construction of who a man or a woman is. They argue that the use of word and language affect our psyche on the definition of men and women. They emphasized on the effectiveness of the capacity of language to shape our

thoughts and desires. Postmodernists conceptions of why women are oppressed has been criticized for neglecting the social context of power relations and failing to recognize the systematic oppressions of gender, class and race (Walby, 1992).

### ***Women and Political Leadership Positions in Nigeria***

Makama (2013) noted that the various Nigerian constitutions guaranteed the rights of women to participate in active politics; however, the last decade has witnessed a relative increase in women's participation. This is only when we measure increase in participation with certain standards like the number of women who vote in elections; the number of public offices held by women; number of women related policies implemented by government etc. Over the years, there has been a remarkable increase in women's participation in politics in Nigeria considering these standards, yet there is inherently a pronounced level of under representation of women in politics when compared with their male counterparts (Nkechi, 1996).

Women's aspiration to participate in governance is premised on the following ground; that women in Nigeria represent half of the population and hence should be allowed a fair share in decision-making and the governance of the country. Secondly that all human beings are equal and women possess the same rights as men to participate in governance and public life. The right to democratic governance is an entitlement conferred upon all citizens by law (Makama, 2013). The 1999 Nigerian constitution by virtue of Section 40 states the following:

Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his interests:

Provided that the provisions of this section shall not derogate from the powers conferred by this constitution on the Independent National Electoral Commission with respect to political parties to which that Commission does not accord recognition.

Section 42(1) of the same constitution states further that: A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination.

This further confirms that you can go to court to seek redress if as a woman your franchise is violated and that the constitution as a whole prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Section 77 of the constitution also states:

- (1) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, every Senatorial district or Federal constituency established in accordance with the provisions of this Part of this Chapter shall return a member who shall be directly elected to the Senate or the House of Representatives in such manner as may be prescribed by an act of the National Assembly.
- (2) Every citizen of Nigeria, who has attained the age of eighteen years residing in Nigeria at the time of the registration of voters for purposes of

election to a legislative house, shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for that election.

From the foregoing, it appears that there is nothing in the letters of the constitution, which excludes the participation of women in politics in Nigeria. Yet when it comes to actual practice, there is extensive discrimination in the spirit of the constituents that produced the constitution. Few and almost insignificant number of women were elected into various posts in the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 general elections held in the country. Men dominate most public offices till date. Female gubernatorial candidates have emerged but none has ever won and same goes for the Presidency. Legislative representation has witnessed the presence of women, yet, they remain under-represented when compared to their male counterparts.

Following two decades of military rule statistics reveal that women only secured 3% representation in contested positions in 1999, 4% in 2003, while in 2007 they made with only 6% (Makama, 2013). Few and almost insignificant number of women were elected into various posts in past four general elections held in the country between 1999 and 2011. The result of the survey shows that no woman was elected as governor of any state in the federation. There are only few women as members of Houses of Assembly across the country and as members of the upper house (Senate) and lower house (House of Representative) of the National Assembly.

According to the figures collated from the database of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), records shows that a total of 7160 candidates (men and women) contested in the April elections of 2011. Of this number, only 628 women participated. Out of the 25 candidates that participated for the office of the President, only 1 is a woman, while 5 women contested for the office of the Vice President.

**Table 1: Comparison of women representation in 2003, 2007 and 2011 General Elections**

Position	No of available positions	No of women elected in 2003	No of women elected in 2007	No of women elected in 2011
Presidency	1	0	0	0
Senate	109	3(2.27%)	9(8.26%)	8(7.34%)
House of Reps	360	21(5.83%)	25(6.94%)	12(3.33%)
Governorship	36	0	0	0

*Source: Gender Audit and IPU PARLINE DATABASE (2012)*

From the table we see that 8(7.34%) out of the 109 senator's elected in 2011 were women compared to 9(8.26%) in 2007, while only 12(3.33) out of 360 members of House of Representatives are women, down from 25(6.94) in 2007. Out of Nigeria's 36 states only one-Lagos state voted in a woman deputy governor, and no woman was elected governor. The table further shows that

instead of women's political leadership positions increasing after the 2007 elections, it decreased in 2011 elections. This implies that there is no impact made towards women's recognition in the realm of things in Nigeria (mainly in political positions) through the organized conferences, campaigns and women liberation movements geared towards liberation of women from marginalization in political leadership positions. On the contrary, most people may ask this question; is political position not contested for or is it just given for the asking?

Women have not received much support from the men because those who have found themselves in one position of authority or the other are frustrated out of office or forced to step down. This was why Makama (2013) stated that Mrs. Margeret Ichen, who was the first female speaker of the House of Assembly in Nigeria, was frustrated out of office in Benue state. Similarly, Mrs. Titilayo Odeni, who was the second Speaker of the House of Assembly in Nigeria, was also impeached out of office in Ogun state in 2008. Different reasons are adduced for the low level of the involvement of women in politics. This includes; gender roles — patriarchy; virility deficiency — women's conception of politics; lack of economic incentives (financial backing); discriminatory customs and laws etc (Nkoyo, 2002 and UNESCO, 1999).

There is a National Gender Policy that commits to ensuring affirmative action for women, however, women's representation remains below the 35% target. Suffice to mention that, the manifestos and constitutions of political parties in Nigeria rarely mention affirmative action for women, and when they do, their commitments are lower than the bench mark set by regional and International conventions.

Women participation in Nigerian politics is an issue of great importance. Women have been put at the background politically for years by men; either due to women's perceived gender weakness or due to their financial low standings when compared to men and this has engendered a consciousness of women under-representation in public life. In order to improve the socio-political status of women in Nigeria, numerous women Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's), have sprung up. They have embarked on campaigns to encourage women's participation in politics, although in reality, this campaign has not gone beyond the conference halls of hotels and pages of newspapers, that is, it has not actually reached the grassroots (Makama, 2013). One of the strategies is to soften the ground for the female contestants by agitating for some concession. This is called affirmative action. It is aimed at increasing women representation in political offices. The recent election of Park as South Korean President is worthy of mention (CCTV News, 2013). The women advocates agree upon thirty percent affirmative action as the demand. This is to ensure that women constitute a critical minority of thirty (30) percent in all political posts.

### ***Causes of Women's Marginalization***

Many factors have been outlined by different scholars as reasons for women's discrimination, subjugation and relegation to the background in politics and other spheres of life. Makama (2013) enumerated the following as the causes of women's marginalization both in politics and other spheres of life:

#### ***Religion/Cultural Factors***

Generally, religion is used as an instrument in defense of a class society and patriarchy. It discriminates against women. As a result of the theocratic character of the governance of the northern part of Nigeria before the advent of the British colonialists, Islam has been institutionalized as a culture - the way of life - of the majority of the people of the region. Islam like most religious beliefs gives hope of fantastic heaven — the paradise - to the adherents (Makama, 2013).

Still in words of Makama, knowing well the emotional attachment of the northern Nigerian, Muslims to religion and the psychological equanimity they derive from it, politicians ruling the northern Nigerian states introduced Sharia law in order to enhance their political prospects and divert attention away from their own looting and failure to improve living standards. Of course, Sharia as religious law gives central place to paternalistic interpretation to women's appropriate roles and socio-political arrangement of the society. Sharia law conflicts with national secular principles, especially in relation to women's rights, on which Nigeria is formally based. It places a lot of restrictions on the rights of women. The major victims of this political Sharia are women.

Scholars fight against discrimination on the basis of religion, gender, ethnic origin or race. In this sense, the right of Muslims to practice those aspects of Sharia, which pertains to worship, mode of dressing, naming of children and other personal or family matters must be respected. However, religion should be a personal affair and should be separate from the state. This is even more imperative in a multi-religious society like Nigeria.

The failure to adhere to this principle by successive capitalist governments in Nigeria is one of the main reasons for the rising wave of ethnic and religious conflicts in the country, particularly since the beginning of the introduction of Sharia law by some states in year 2000. The bourgeois politicians who introduced the Sharia penal code with severe punishments such as stoning and amputation for crimes like stealing, prostitution or so-called adultery, argue that these types of law and punishments are necessary to curb the increasing wave of crime in the society. Even some sections of the working masses both within and outside the Sharia states, perturbed by the violent crimes and social decadence which pervade society, genuinely support the penal code in the belief that it is the solution to these problems.

The penal code is also informed by the belief that the harsher the punishment, the lesser the crime rate; but these are erroneous views. Crimes, violence and other social vices are products of worsening mass poverty and unemployment, which are engendered by the Nigeria's crisis-ridden neo-

colonial capitalist economy (Makama, 2013). Only the abolition of the causes of endemic poverty, the provision of decent living, full employment with a living wage, free and qualitative education and medical care, plus adequate housing for all may lead to the reduction, if not eradication, of crime.

### ***Socio-Cultural and Political Factors of Women discrimination***

Since the advent of colonialism in Africa, women have always been exposed to varying forms of discrimination due to the simple fact of their 'femaleness', which ought to have been understood on the basis of its mutual usefulness (Obbo, 2005). It is observed that most African countries have not had specific laws or policies to stem the tide of gender disparity. However, the colonial hegemonic philosophy, dependent political ideology and identifiable socio-economic exigencies are seen as factors aiding the prevailing distinctions between men and women in our society (Adeniran, 2006).

### ***Ideological Factor***

Eisenstein (1984) believes that patriarchy as a system of male domination shapes women's relationship in all spheres, including politics. It transforms males and females into men and women and constructs the hierarchy of gender relations where men are privileged. Andrienne Rich defines patriarchy as:

"A familial-social, ideological, political system in which men by force, direct pressure or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male". (Roc, 1977)

The society is so patriarchal to the extent that if a man dies in politics or electioneering process, he is better honoured than a female in a similar situation. The society will praise him and not her. This to a large extent has discouraged a lot of people from participating in electioneering, in such a case children are left motherless, who will then cater for them? It is easier for a man to remarry, than for a woman. When it comes to the decision, of participating in politics, all odds must be weighed because the woman has a lot to loose than the man in politics.

Makama (2013) asserts that the gender role ideology is used as an ideological tool by patriarchy to place women within the private arena of home as mothers and wives and men in the public sphere. This is one of the vital factors that shape the level of women's political participation globally. However, this ideological divide is not reflective of the reality. The boundaries between public and private are often blurred in the daily lives of women.

Nonetheless, domestic domain continues to be perceived in the North as well as in the South as the legitimate space for women, while public space is associated with men. Women have to negotiate their entry into and claim on public space according to the discursive and material opportunities available in a given culture and society. Although the gender role ideology is not static,

rather remained in a flux while intersecting with economic, social and political systems of a particular society, women continue to be defined as private across countries which resulted in their exclusion and disempowerment.

### ***Political Factors***

The nature of politics is an important factor for the inclusion or exclusion of women in politics. Vicky Randall defines politics as an “articulation, or working out of relationships within an already given power structure”, which is in contrast with the traditional view of politics that defines it as an activity, a conscious, deliberate participation in the process by which resources are allocated among citizens. This conception of politics restricts political activity only in public arena and the private sphere of family life is rendered as apolitical. This public-private dichotomy in traditional definition of politics is used to exclude women from public political sphere and even when women are brought into politics they are entered as mothers and wives.

Male domination of politics, political parties and culture of formal political structures is another factor that hinders women's political participation. Often male dominated political parties have a male perspective on issues of national importance that disillusions women as their perspective is often ignored and not reflected in the politics of their parties. Also, women are usually not elected at the position of power within party structures because of gender biases of male leadership. The society frowns at women keeping late at night, most political meetings and gathering usually run into the mid-nights, especially when one is actively involved and wants to vie for a political post. As a mother, with children and husband at home, it is usually not easy.

It is important to also mention that most successful women in politics are those with supportive husbands, those who have become husbands, those without husbands, and those who are through with childbearing, those who have mingled with the military, daughters of past politicians/leaders, such as: Dora Akunyili (supportive husband), lyabo Obasanjo (divorcee and daughter of the past president), Condoleezza Rice, (single lady), Sara Jubril (widowed), and Hillary Clinton (wife of former president). It goes a long way in showing that women are actually in the known about the trend of women participation in politics irrespective of the odds against them.

Politics in Nigeria has been described as a terrain meant for the hardened (Akinola, 2009), and where candidates cannot fund elections themselves without recourse to godfatherism (Soyinka, 2004). Godfatherism involves a patron-client or servant-master relationship which cannot be free of violence, especially in the area of controversies where a candidate fails to comply with earlier agreed negotiations and contracts. Politics of godfatherism hardly favours women. No woman can stand the resultant consequence of not yielding to the godfathers' demands, as observed in Oyo and Anambra states.

Electioneering in Nigeria has been characterized by violence, electoral irregularities and various criminal activities. However the continuous campaign for women to be actively involved in the democratic process has yielded little

compare to the increasing number of women heading key positions in other domain. The larger democratic framework and level of democratization also impact women's political participation. Secular democracies in Europe and also, in some of the developing countries have created relatively more space for women's participation in politics as compared to countries where religious orthodoxy has been shaping politics and democracy.

Adherence to discriminatory gender ascriptions persisted after the end of colonial rule in Nigeria. Ake (1996) claims that the surrogate post-independence political elite deliberately weakened women organizations hitherto involved in active agitation for liberation by enhancing the militarization of the polity, and increasing the statist of the economy. As observed by Mama (1997), gender blindness has meant that until recently the differential impact of colonialism on African men and women has not been taken into consideration.

Opaluwah (2007) however, opines that the coordination of gender advocacy based on indigenous patriarchal anxieties about meaningful gender equity, external pressure and western prescriptions has had far reaching consequences on the womenfolk. Our unbridled openness to western influence by the political leadership has equally worsened the dependency dilemma; with the west providing us with anything, but participative emancipation (Ake, 1996) e.g. the sapping effects of the SAP policy of 1986 on Nigerian women. Unlike the largely successful equity-driven NEP Development Plan (1971-1990) in Malaysia which ensured gender parity in schools' enrolment, rhetoric has often been the bane of such programme here e.g. the New Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), projected to draw inspiration from the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD)'s gender parity principle-Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004). According to Oyekanmi (2005), in respect of Nigeria, the enabling laws and programmes to achieve the objectives of NEPAD are not yet in operation.

### ***Socio-Cultural Factors***

Indeed, to a considerable extent, gender has been a subsidiary issue in Nigerian society. The traditional social structures have been offering limited incentives for amending the existing distribution of power between men and women. As observed by Nmadu (2000), the Nigerian society (pre-modern and contemporary) has been significantly dotted with peculiar cultural practices that are potently inimical to women's emancipation, such as early/forced marriage, wife-inheritance and widowhood practices. Moreover, to Bhavani *et. al.* (2003) such unequal social and gender relations needs to be transformed in order to take women out of want and poverty.

As daughters self-identify as females with their mother and sisters, and sons as males with their father and brothers, gender stereotyping becomes institutionalized within the family unit (Haraway, 1991). Also, the dominant narratives of religion in both colonial and post-colonial Nigerian Society

indeed benefit men at the detriment of women, even in educational accessibility. As such, our society remains entrapped in 'history of analogy' whereby it is either exoticised, or simply represented as part of European history (Mamdani, 1996).

Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) articles (1979), therefore, acknowledge that whatever socio-cultural norms that deny women equal rights with men will also render women more vulnerable to physical, sexual and mental abuse. The subordinate status of women vis-à-vis men is a universal phenomenon, though with a difference in the nature and extent of subordination across countries. Gender role ideology does not only create duality of femininity and masculinity, it also places them in hierarchal fashion in which female sex is generally valued less than male sex because of their socially ascribed roles in reproductive sphere. The gender status quo is maintained through low resource allocation to women's human development by the state, society and the family. This is reflected in the social indicators which reflect varying degrees of gender disparities in education, health, employment, ownership of productive resources and politics in all countries.

Additionally gender is mediated through class, caste and ethnicity that structure access to resources and opportunities. The socio-cultural dependence of women is one of the key detrimental factors to their political participation in public political domain. Women also find it hard to participate in politics due to limited time available to them because of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres. With their primary roles as mothers and wives and competing domestic responsibilities and care work, they are left with little time to participate in politics.

In some of the countries, particularly in Nigeria, women also face cultural constraints on their mobility. The mechanisms of sex segregation and *pardah* are used to restrict their mobility, although this exists among the Muslims. Politics requires women's exposure to interact with male and female constituents and address public meetings.

### ***Economic Factors***

There is no doubt that the economic sector of our society is one area where discrimination against women has been richly pronounced. According to the CEC Report (2007), the role of women in employment and economic activities is often underestimated because most women work in the informal sectors, usually with low productivity and incomes, poor working conditions, with little or no social protection. It observes that the female labour force in sub-Saharan Africa in 2005 was about 73 million, representing 34% of those employed in the formal sector, earning only 10% of the income, while owning 1% of the assets.

However, the denial of women's inheritance and land rights has made their economic participation considerably constrained and by implication, their educational aspiration (Nmadu, 2000). Politics is increasingly becoming

commercialized. More and more money is needed to participate in politics. Women lack access to and ownership of productive resource, limiting the scope of their political work.

To Eade (1996), such government's macro-economic policies like liberalization of petroleum sector and removal of subsidies e.g. on fertilizer, have always created distortions, in spite of strides women (rural dwellers) make in self reliance. To this end, Ake (1996) believes that the contradictions between the latent and manifest functions of public policy have often been the bane of all emancipatory agenda in Nigeria.

### ***Prospects***

Makama (2013) enumerated some of the way forward towards reducing or complete elimination of women's discrimination in politics and other spheres of life. Democracy anywhere in the world is the prerogative of the people. This is because sovereignty they say belongs to the people (women inclusive). It is therefore important that the act of governance should be diversified to capture the interest of women through adequate representation.

First of all, the United Nations General Assembly should reaffirm its Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), thereby making it compulsory for all nations of the world to adopt as cardinal objectives of its constitutions. Violation of this convention in any form should be meted with strider sanctions. Again, relevant clauses of the Beijing Conference should be reactivated, giving specific rights to women. This way, the personality and character of women will be respected.

Secondly, societal obstacles of religion, tradition and other obnoxious beliefs must be broken, women should not be domesticated, they have to enjoy right to work and associated benefits as men. They along with men need to have access to free and functional education and health care, and electoral process and contest must not be a preserve of the rich. All these are parts of what can create level playing ground for both men and women. However, the reality is that those stated preconditions could only ultimately be secured when patriarchy is challenged.

Some scholars have suggested that patriarchy is located in six relatively autonomous structures (Walby, 1990; Igbuzor, 2012). These sites include domestic production, paid employment, culture, sexuality, male violence and state. It is important to point out that the level of work at the six sites below has to be at the local, national and international levels:

#### **a. Domestic production**

- Challenging patriarchal division of labour in the home.
- Advocating for equitable distribution of housework.
- Promoting male responsibility for fatherhood.
- Inclusion of domestic work in the computation of GDP.

#### **b. Paid employment**

- Challenging stereotypes in paid employment.

- Fighting discrimination against women in paid employment.
  - Promoting the entry of women into male “dominated or reserved” professions.
- c. Culture and Religion**
- Combating cultural practices that oppress women e.g. widowhood practices, wife inheritance, female genital mutilation etc
  - Challenging cultural taboos that subordinate women.
  - Challenging practices that promote son preference.
  - Challenging cultural practices that predispose women to malnutrition and restrict access to food.
  - Challenging stereotypes in upbringing of the boy and girl child.
  - Promoting education of the girl child.
  - Challenging gender stereotypes in the media.
  - Promoting radical and women sensitive interpretation of religion.
- d. Sexuality**
- Empowering girls and women to have control over their sexuality.
  - Challenging practices that predispose women to infections such as STIs and HI V/AIDS.
  - Promoting women sexual and reproductive rights.
- e. Male violence**
- Combating violence against women.
  - Interrogating masculinity and femininity and promoting new conceptualizations of a transformed man and woman.
- f. State**
- Challenging the patriarchal arrangement of the State and the violence in the State.
  - Challenging neo-liberalism and fundamentalism.
  - Challenging State practices that fuel violent conflicts.
  - Promoting women participation in governance.
  - Promoting women friendly constitutions and legal frameworks.
  - Promoting redistribution of national budgets in favour of women.
  - Supporting affirmative action for women and other marginalized groups.

### **Conclusion**

From the above discussions, it is very clear that women are very much discriminated, in terms of political leadership positions in the name of patriarchy. This ugly situation can be attributed to many factors ranging from

religious, cultural or traditional, ideological, socio-political and economical factors.

Many theorists have aligned this subordination and discrimination of women to materialistic tendency, cultural and economic issues. Nevertheless, if Nigeria and the world in general are to benefit from women's full potential, and if women and their families are to benefit from the advances of technology and society, the constant dilemma and stringent constraints on women must be removed. Evidence from around the world has underscored the importance of women as partners in development, and how such is undermined by the limiting influence of patriarchy and resulting to restricting environment.

To raise women's position, it is urgent to protect women from patriarchal subordination. It is patriarchal ideology which makes the difference between feminine and masculine, which assigns different roles, vital and responsibilities to women and men. But those so-called "masculine and feminine" qualities are human qualities and not specific to either men or women. According to Sultana (2011), since all works are done by both man and women, there is no reason to differentiate works on the basis of sex i.e. men being harden for political positions, while women are feeble and weak for the same political position. The family can play a great role by bringing a new dimension in reconstructing the ongoing socialization. Moreover, if men become more like women i.e. look after children and old people, run homes etc, it will make man more gentle, sensitive and humane and will relieve women of some of the burden of work. And if bravery, fearlessness, rationality, efficiency are considered 'male' then women should definitely imbibe and practice these traits.

Our double standards of morality and our laws, which give more rights to men, should also be reformed. All that is needed is the recognition of justice and the courage to put an end to this injustice, male discrimination and double standard. Given the fact that patriarchal oppression of women is rooted in the home/family sexuality, and man-women relationship, so this patriarchal oppression, exploitation and discrimination of women within the families should be protected by personal matter of families as addressed, analyzed to change and this will transcend to the circular society.

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