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Perceptions of Women in Political Leadership Positions in Nigeria

Annette Anigwe
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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Annette Anigwe

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Walden University
2014

Abstract
Perceptions of Women in Political Leadership Positions in Nigeria

by

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MBA, University of Phoenix, 2004

BS, University of Nigeria, 1991

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

Researchers have demonstrated that the Nigerian government has failed to protect women's rights and advance gender equality in political leadership; consequently, women's political participation in Nigeria remains low. Although international laws grant women political participation rights, little is known about the struggles and experiences Nigerian women face in their quest to participate in the political life of Nigeria. The purpose of this basic interpretative qualitative study was to explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of Nigerian women on gender equality and other issues affecting their political leadership. The theoretical framework used was Eagly's social role theory and Ayman and Korabik's leadership categorization theory. The research questions focused on how women describe their participation in the political sector and their obstacles. Ten purposefully selected Nigerian women in Nigerian political leadership were interviewed. Data analysis included coding, categorizing, and analyzing themes. The resulting 7 themes were underrepresentation, gender inequality, male dominance, women's empowerment, spousal support/approval, financial support, and legislation reform. The findings indicated that women were still underrepresented in the political sector of government and lacked full political power as they strived for equality to become political leaders. The implications for positive social change are to educate the public, inform policy makers, and create legislative initiatives to support an equitable society in Nigeria in which women can participate fully in the political process.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my family. They have been there during the challenging and stressful times. They have celebrated my successes with me. Their love, prayers, support and motivation inspired me to achieve my goal.

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I would like to thank God; without him this dissertation would not have been possible. I would also like to thank my husband, Christopher and children, Chris, Kristine, Krystal and Christian for their motivation and encouragement. Without the prayers of my parents, Chief Linus and Dr. Bibiana Chukwu, my sister, Pamela Ugwudike, and my brothers, Kene Chukwu and ChuChu Chukwu, I may not have had the strength to continue. I am also appreciative of the support of my friends, Vivian Nwaneri and Lizzy Anibueze.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Gender inequality still exists in Nigeria. Women make up about 50% of Nigeria's population of over 120 million people, yet their positions are still weak when compared with their male counterparts (Ironsi, 2006). Even though their presence in the labor force has increased over the last 30 years, the participation of women in Nigeria's workforce is still below that of men (Salami, 2007). Most Nigerian women are employed in low-paying jobs and are underrepresented in several important fields, including the sciences, mathematics, and technology. Salami (2007) attributed the marginalization of women in these fields to factors such as disparities in male and female enrollments in education, and to micro- and macro-factors, which include discriminatory labor-market forces and restrictive traditional values. Although gender inequalities affect women disproportionately, the entire society pays a price for them (Temesgen, 2008).

This basic interpretative qualitative study sought to address the issues of gender equality in Nigeria and women participation in the political administration of Nigeria. Temesgen (2008) argued that women in Nigeria, like their counterparts in other African countries, are not given the same access to education as men; furthermore, women participate in formal activities less than men. The activities included, but were not limited to participation in labor force, school enrollment, and maternity leave benefit. Temesgen claimed that only 47% of women participate in the labor force; most women in Nigeria participate in informal activities like farming and housework. To eradicate these gender inequities, it is imperative that women be empowered to participate in the political administration of Nigeria and hold key leadership positions. No group can be excluded if

Nigeria is to effectively solve its development issues (Arikpo, Etor, & Usang, 2007). This study was important because it addressed gender inequality based on experiences of women in a developing country, Nigeria, and engendered social change because it attempted to find ways women in Nigeria could participate freely in the politics of the country.

Problem Statement

The problem of this qualitative study addressed gender inequality and issues that affected Nigerian women specifically in key leadership positions and in the political sector of Nigeria. Echoing a published report by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA, 2005), Chamley (2011) contended that many African governments, including Nigeria, offer little or no protection for women who wish to pursue careers and participate in government. As a result, women have made little progress when it comes to government and political participation.

In spite of the numerous international laws that exist, women still are not recognized and given the rights to participate in politics like their male counterparts. Consequently, women participation and progress in government and politics in Africa still lingers behind the men (Nebolisa, 2009). This, explained Nebolisa (2009), may be because of socioeconomic factors, poverty, religious beliefs, cultural values, and simply not knowing their rights under the international and local laws. Although there has been an increase in the numbers of women in legislative bodies, research indicated that African women continue to be under-represented in all structures of power and decision-making (Chuku, 2009; Nebolisa, 2009).

Women are represented in government all over the world in increasing numbers, yet they lag behind in positions of power and decision-making in Africa (Nebolisa, 2009). Cultural attitudes toward women still prevail, especially concerning whether they should lead. Moreover, the growing number of policies that give women their rights are not implemented in reality, women are still underrepresented in the political sector. The restrictive gender roles affect the women's participation in politics (Nebolisa, 2009).

Research was inconclusive that gender equality and parity in the political arena and democratic governance was achieved. Gender parity in education and government does not equal women's empowerment in the social, economic, and political sectors (ECA, 2005). Like many other developed countries, women in Africa should feel empowered and have a role in the political process where key decisions are made. However, this will not happen if women remain underrepresented in the political arena (Nebolisa, 2009). This basic interpretative qualitative study sought to fill this research gap by exploring the issues and factors that affect women in their quest to participate in the political sectors in Nigeria.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study was to explore and understand the perspectives of Nigerian women as they related to gender inequality issues that affected Nigerian women's participation in the political sector and key leadership positions. Statistics show that, in contested elections, women were only able to secure 3% representation in 1999, 4% in 2003, and 6% in 2007 (Agbalajobi, 2010). This study was grounded in the belief that women could have a great influence in Nigeria, if only they

were enabled to do so (Akunyili, 2006). Women need to be active participants in development; however, for that to happen, the women's gender must be recognized through the direct state intervention, which will give them political and economic autonomy and reduce gender inequality (Dauda, 2007).

Nature of the Study

This research focused on gender inequality of women in Nigeria relating to women participation in the political sector and key leadership positions in Nigeria. This was a basic interpretative qualitative study designed to gain deeper insights into the problem and generate ideas about solutions (McNabb, 2008; Merriam, 2002) to gender inequality in Nigeria among women. Merriam (2002) described the basic interpretative qualitative as a tradition used when the researcher is interested in understanding how individuals construct their worlds and make sense of their lives and personal experiences. The basic interpretative qualitative study draws from phenomenology and symbolic interactionism in that researchers are interested in how people interpret their experiences and the meaning they attribute to their experiences.

All qualitative research seeks to understand how people make sense of their lives and their worlds (Merriam, 2002); however, some qualitative traditions may have additional purposes. For example, the phenomenological study seeks to understand the "essence" or the individual's lived experience of some phenomenon. A grounded theory researcher seeks not to understand the phenomenon but to build a theory to substantiate the phenomenon of interest. The case study researcher intensely concentrates upon a

single entity or phenomenon (the case) and it is the unit of analysis that sets it apart from the other traditions (Merriam, 2009).

Data were generated from primarily two sources: personal interviews and document reviews. Personal interviews were conducted with 10 women purposefully selected from different administrative and political sectors of Nigeria. Documents included data from governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). A detailed discussion of distinct difference in the types of qualitative research and the methodology for this study are presented in Chapter 3.

Research Questions

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study was to explore and understand the perspectives of Nigerian women as it related to gender inequality and issues that affected Nigerian women's participation in the political sector and key leadership positions. The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. How do women describe their participation in the political sector and key leadership positions in Nigeria?
2. What obstacles, if any, do Nigerian women believe restrict their ability to participate in the political sector and other positions of leadership?
3. How does status as it relates to education, economic, and marital issues affect women's ability to participate in political leadership in Nigeria?
4. What kind of resources or strategies need to be implemented to help Nigeria women effectively participate in the political sector?

The questions were employed to understand the issues that affected Nigerian women specifically in key leadership positions and in the political sector of Nigeria. One purpose of the study was to bring about positive social change of the women in the social status in the public life by improving the human or social conditions, promoting women enlightenment programs, development of individuals, communities, and communities and organizations (Agbalajobi, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

Several theories can provide a valuable framework for conceptualizing gender equality issues, the focus of this study. These include the social role theory and the leadership categorization theory. The social role theory holds that gender differences occur as a consequence of two related processes: social learning and societal power relations behavior (Kacmar, Bachrach, Harris, & Zivnuska, 2011). What may be considered as gender-appropriate behaviors are usually learned through social modeling and reinforced through society's power and status structures. Kacmar et al. (2011) argued that people internalize gender roles that society has defined, and they have a tendency to view the world and behave in ways that conform to the societal expectations associated with these roles. As Kacmar et al. explained, women and men tend to respond to social information in predictable ways, and over time, these processes generally lead either to communal or agentic behavior patterns. Communal behavior patterns are considered nurturing and socially oriented and emerge mainly among women; wherein agentic are competitive and achievement oriented behavior patterns and tend to emerge more among men.

The leadership categorization theory (LCT) examines the layperson's understanding of leadership (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). The LCT theory holds that individual followers' expectations and mental prototypes of the ideal leaders play an important role in shaping the individual's perceptions of their leaders' contributions and leadership success (Zacher, Rosing, Henning, & Frese, 2011). This means that followers form inherent opinions about their leaders' characteristics based on their interaction or past experiences with the leaders. The followers' perceptions determine how they judge the leaders. The key premise is that people have a tendency to approve individuals as leaders whose characteristics fit these mental models. Akpabio (2009) suggested that some barriers may prevent women from equal participation as men in the government and the decision making process of Nigeria. These discriminatory barriers may include poverty, religious, social, cultural taboos, and restrictions (Okediran, Olujide, & Danesy, 2006).

Relying on the feminist theory, Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (2001) explored why 3 decades after the Women's Movement and three generations after suffrage women are still not as involved as men in the public sector. The authors claimed that this can be attributed to (a) women's having less time for outside activity, (b) women having less psychic time in their minds due to family demands, (c) the emphasized patriarchal society, (d) fewer resources being attributed to women, (e) the institutionalized discrimination in the public sector, and (f) the socialization of women that make them arrive at different conclusions than men (Burns et al., 2001).

Therefore, with regards to theories, Nkomo and Ngambi (2009) also recommended using the African feminism theory as a theoretical framework to study African women in leadership and management. Most gender studies tend to rely on the understanding and experiences of Western women. However, these researchers advocated the use of Africa feminism theory to understand the statutes, experiences, and the leadership of African women. The theory provides the opportunity to examine the cultural, historical, political and economic influences of the African women. African feminism places the emphasis on the African culture. According to Blay (2008), African women are of the notion that womanhood in itself should not to be viewed as the cause for oppression, but it is important to examine gender roles in African culture and society. For this reason, in this study, gender should be considered within the context of Africa's culture or societal norms. The premise is that understanding the African culture and feminist traditions is central to conducting this gender-based study in Africa.

The social role theory, the LCT, and African feminism theory were integrated in this study to guide the line of questioning and explain issues regarding the women's role as leaders and gender inequality. The three theories combined suggested that because women and men have traditionally occupied different roles, people might perceive women and men as having different leadership skills to hold key political positions and positions of power. Individuals beliefs and stereotypes regarding men and women's roles within society have casted both men and women into certain roles. For example, women historically are expected to have jobs such as teachers, while men have political leadership roles or are expected to be politicians. In addition to applying the theories, as

indicated by Blay (2009), the aim was to provide a gender-focused framework for understanding and clarifying gender inequality and misunderstandings relevant to equal protection under the laws of African women.

Operational Definitions

The terms and concepts used in this study were defined as they were interpreted in relation to this study (Babbie, 2007). An outline of the definitions applied in the study follows.

Access is the right of both genders to participate in the political process of Nigeria without discrimination.

Developing countries are those that have not yet achieved developed status according to the United Nations (UN).

Equal participation means that both genders are given the same opportunities, rights, and privileges for public offices, including leadership positions, and the playing field is said to be fair and level.

Equal representation is when both genders are proportionally represented in decision-making of the political process of Nigeria.

Gender equity is when both genders have equal rights, that is, when men and women are afforded the same rights and access to participate in the political process of Nigeria.

Gender relations are the role and position of males and females in the political administration of Nigeria, including how both genders interact with each other.

Key positions of leadership include those of women who have been elected to legislative positions at any level of government, including those who have been appointed to the State or Federal Executive Councils.

Political administration is the political and democratic processes and political leadership of Nigeria; for example, the political structures that are in place to conduct the business of the Nigerian government.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the part of Africa that lies south of the Sahara. It includes most of Africa except the following countries: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

The current study was based on several assumptions. The first assumption is that all participants were candid and truthful in their responses when sharing their experiences; second, the women selected were knowledgeable about the phenomenon under inquiry. Potential limitations were the small sample size and that these data and conclusions were not generalizable to all women in Nigeria and women in any other region or nation. I focused on the participation of women in the political administration of Nigeria and also included women in key positions of leadership.

A possible delimitation was that I may not have had direct access to some of the participants; therefore, telephone interviews were used for some of the participants. One limitation of this type of interview was that I could not adequately observe and assess nonverbal aspects and other informal aspects of communication that influenced the nature of data obtained, not to mention the expenses involved with such conversations

(Creswell, 2007). However, with the advancement in technology, communication services such as Skype were used to alleviate this limitation.

Significance of Study

This study was significant to bring to the forefront challenges women continue to face in the participation of Nigerian politics. Agbalajobi (2010) argued that women have been kept in the background politically for years and are underrepresented in other positions of public life in Nigeria. Nigeria has sustained the British form of government that excluded women from all activities, including politics. Despite numerous efforts to improve the situation, women's lack of education and wealth, aided by the discriminatory laws that have limited women's access to resources, make it difficult for them to pursue their interests or embark on political agendas (Dauda, 2007).

Economic empowerment and political empowerment in which Nigerian women are encouraged to participate are essential aspects of community development. Nigeria cannot achieve sustainable development if women continue to be disenfranchised or experience discrimination. Therefore, improving women's participation in the political administration of the nation and increasing their access to resources such as education, economic resources, and legal protection is not only necessary but is a very important goal, especially for a less developed country such as Nigeria.

This study has potential for social change when women will be allowed to freely hold public office and seize positions of political power. International organizations need to be employed to institute public policies and actions that would end gender inequality and improve the socioeconomic and legal status of women. A change in values cannot

occur until women are able to participate in government and political affairs and hold positions of leadership and power (Agbalajobi, 2010).

Summary

In Chapter 1, I presented the problem of this study that sought to address the issues of gender equality in Nigeria and women's participation in the political administration of Nigeria. Chuku (2009) suggested that numerous issues still exist in many areas of life in Nigeria that affect women. Women in Nigeria continue to see their country as one that grants privileges to men and marginalizes women since gaining their independence (Chuku, 2009). For Nigerian women to make more meaningful contributions to the social and economic development of their country, efforts should be employed by people of power to develop and implement policies that promote gender equality that would benefit both men and women in their pursuit to maximize their potential. The key research question of this study examined how women described their participation in the political sector and key leadership positions in Nigeria. The social role theory, the LCT, and the African feminism theory were informed and guided the research of this study.

In Chapter 2, I conduct a broad review of available literature to better understand the issues that affect women's participation in the political leadership of Nigeria. In Chapter 3, I present the research methods that were used in this study, and in Chapters 4 and 5, I present the findings and discussions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The focus of this qualitative study was to examine the role of women in the public administration of Nigeria using existing data to explore and understand why, despite efforts and some minimal progress, women still play a marginal role in the political administration of Nigeria. In the literature review, I explored social, religious, political, and economic factors that facilitate, contribute to, or mitigate the participation of women in the political administration of Nigeria. I also defined gender equality, while providing the framework and approach that was used in this study. More specifically, the themes explored included (a) women's role in an emerging democracy, (b) their traditional role in Nigerian society, (c) the effects that colonialism had on women's traditional roles, (d) how women still struggle in their contemporary roles, and (e) how women are participating in the Nigerian political process.

If women were able to actively participate in the political process of Nigeria, they could significantly contribute to the development of the country. The significance of this study lies in the idea that “neither the male nor the female could exist and attain their full potential without the other” (Olajubu, 2008, p. 317). Female leaders can have a great influence in their countries, particularly in developing nations, if only they are enabled to do so (Akunyili, 2006). Dauda (2007) contended that women need to be active participants in development; however, for that to happen, the women's gender must be recognized through the direct state intervention, which will give them political and economic autonomy and reduce gender inequality.

The problem is that more research is needed to explore the topic of women participation in the government and political process of their country (Chuku, 2009). Significant advances have been made towards achieving gender equality in many countries; yet in Nigeria, women still remain underrepresented in the political and government structures (Ifedili & Ifedili, 2009). Therefore, in the literature review, I examined the role of women in the political administration of Nigeria, focusing on women's participation in decision-making and leadership.

Literature Search Strategy

While the first chapter focused on the purpose statement research questions, conceptual framework, and significance of study, the purpose of the literature was to provide the outline on which the study could be based. In the literature review, I examined research questions associated with the role of women in political sectors and leadership positions of Nigeria. Included were articles, books, and dissertations that provided insights into the problems being analyzed. I searched *EBSCO Host* and *Proquest* databases, among others, on the Walden library site for recent peer-reviewed articles on women's roles in Nigerian public administration. I also searched *Google Books* and various search engines, especially *Google*, for recent professional websites regarding politics and culture.

The following search words were used: *Nigerian public administration*, *colonialism in Nigeria*, *history of Nigeria*, *traditional role of women* for various groups in Nigeria, and *obstacles to equality in politics in Nigeria*, to name a few. When terms were exhausted in one database, I attempted the same or similar terms in another database,

using information discovered in new articles to go back to the original database and do iterative searches.

Chapter 2 consists of a review of literature pertaining to the study of the role of women in the public administration of Nigeria and the documentation. The exploration of the literature provided both a historical overview including the current research of the underrepresentation of women in the political administration of Nigeria. The information presented in the chapter covers the following subtopics: theoretical framework, traditional role of women, colonialism and the roles of women, women in contemporary Nigeria, barriers to the political participation of women, the legal system's failure to enforce gender equality laws, access to resources, patriarchal attitudes of the society, and lack of substantive unified women movement.

Overview of Study

Nigeria was once colonized by European powers. It is a sub-Saharan African country that gained its independence in 1960 after it was colonized by the British Colonial Administration in 1914 (Tawo, Denga, & Denga, 2009). It is the most populous country in Africa. Tawo et al. (2009) claimed that in 2006 the National Population Commission estimated the population of Nigeria at 141 million people with 50% male and 50% female. The country has over 250 ethnic groups of which Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo are the three major tribes. Politically, Nigeria is a country that has been marred with instability. Therefore, the goal of democratic transition in Nigeria, like the rest of Africa, has been democratic stability (Agulanna, 2006). The unfortunate situation is how Nigeria, with all its abundant resources, remains one of the world's

underdeveloped and poorest countries. In an atmosphere of what has been called one of bad leadership and corruption, Nigeria will continue to lack political stability and will not achieve democracy as long as the country lacks efficient and quality political leadership (Ojo, 2008).

It is clear that one of Nigeria's major problems is that women do not have a substantial role. As asserted by Nwoye (2007), many studies show that benefits can be witnessed instantly when women are involved. In political participation and governance, there have been various great and dynamic world female leaders (Akunyili, 2006). Those powerful women leaders include Indira Ghandi, the Prime Minister of India from 1966 to 1977 and 1980 to 1984; Jennifer Smith, the President of Bermuda in 1998; Elizabeth Domitien, Prime Minister of the Central African Republic from 1995 to 1996; and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia from 2006 to present (Akunyili, 2006). Even though recent Nigerian governments have given women more opportunities to serve than did previous governments, events such as civil wars and military coups have meant that Nigeria remains a middle-age democracy.

The country is one of several emerging democracies in which social constraints that prevent women from attaining leadership roles or from participating in the political process of the country toward a democracy in which equal opportunities, rights, and privileges are extended to all, including the right to lead (Akunyili, 2006). Given the important role women could play in a society, women in Nigeria are not equipped with adequate public leadership tools, as is the case of any other country in the emerging democracy league, so women are typically unable to obtain public leadership positions

(Akunyili, 2006). Democracy is a model that lacks a generally accepted definition; instead, there are various definitions of the model (Kaur, 2007).

Kaur (2007) described the model as the system of governance where the vast participation is by either elections or the implementation of policies and that democracy prevails and is sustainable when there is accountability and transparency. Any movement towards democracy must depend on the existence of social, economic, and political preconditions that ensure all groups are able to participate in the political process of the country, as this is necessary for the survival and sustenance of any democracy (Kaur, 2007).

Currently, those conditions do not exist in Nigeria. The country is not only underdeveloped but also saddled with “deepening inequality arising from imperial relations, differentiated histories, and geographies of colonialism, prolonged military dictatorship, and authoritarian civilian rule” (Pereira, 2009, pp. 263-264). Access to resources is limited, and the balance of power in the country determines which group—based on such social divisions as gender, class, ethnicity, religion, and age—is excluded or marginalized (Pereira, 2009).

No one seems to doubt the role women could play in the development of Nigeria. Indeed, researchers seem to agree that women need to play a significant role in the political process of the county (Ifedili & Ifedili, 2009). Even though few dispute the significant role that women in Nigeria can have in its development, they are not given the same regard in decision-making roles. The effective participation of Nigerian women in 1995 at the International Conference on Women in Beijing, China, helped highlight the

significance of the role women. The declaration of that Beijing conference stated that “women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in decision-making process and access to power, were fundamental for the advancement of equality, development, and peace” (Ifedili & Ifedili, 2009, p. 119).

As a result of the 1995 conference, Nigeria became one of the signatories to the international instruments and regulations that recommended that, by 2000, there should be a 30% benchmark for women in decision-making roles. Ifedili and Ifedili (2009) claimed that through its struggles to attain the benchmark, the Nigerian government has been faced with many problems. Some of those problems included (a) the government’s failure to ingrain equal opportunity into law, (b) women being unwilling to aspire, (c) men opposing women advancing, (d) some intolerable cultural traditions that need to be changed, (e) traditionalists who believe women should not be educated, and (f) women working against each other.

Another major hindrance to women in Nigeria is that it is widely accepted as a patriarchal society because of traditional cultural beliefs (Ifedili & Ifedili, 2009). The country’s social values, norms, culture, and religion tend to work against women. Ifedili and Ifedili (2009) alleged that scholars such as Winful (2001) emphasized the necessity to do away with all those factors that have worked and are still working against women. To complicate matters, women that made it into decision making positions claim they were sidelined. For instance, in 1999, the first female deputy governor from Lagos State complained about being marginalized in the distribution of duties and responsibilities

(Ifedili & Ifedili, 2009). That was also the case for the only female Speaker of the House of Assembly in Benue State, who Ifedili and Ifedili asserted was forced to resign by the men because she was fighting corruption.

There is no question that Nigeria has made some progress. Nigeria had its first female Speaker of the House of Representatives, Patricia Etteh. However, like the other women at the state level, she claimed she was being pressured to resign by her male counterparts (Ifedili & Ifedili, 2009). Other progress includes the fact that Anambra state produced its first female deputy governor and four other states produced female deputy governors. Women were also appointed to the Senate in National Assembly and House of Representatives. Regardless of the progress made, Nigeria has yet to meet the 1995 Beijing 30% benchmark for women in decision making roles. Although such events highlight the importance of the role of women of Nigeria, especially in the political process, Ifedili and Ifedili (2009) argued that so much still needs to be done. There has to be a way to increase the participation of women in the political administration of Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The focus of this study is on gender equality in Nigerian public service and the theories involved are social role theory and LCT. Much social inequality is the result of the gender roles that women internalize from social modeling and through the power structures of society, according to Kacmar et al. (2011). Because of this internalization, women usually conform to what is expected of them in society, which in time leads to agentic behavior. With the LCT, the average person's concept of leadership is examined. Zacher et al. (2011) claimed that the individual concept of the ideal leader shapes their

point of view of their leaders' inputs and the success of these leaders according to their followers is based on these common perceptions.

Many factors contribute to women's inability to participate in the governance and development process of Nigeria. There should be no expectation of the true participation of the women in governance and development if they are not accorded equal participation as men in all spheres of life and levels of decision making (Akpabio, 2009). Women who could be valuable for national development are transported out of the country because of discriminatory barriers. These obstacles include "poverty, religious restrictions, disallowing women from mixing freely with their men folk, ignorance, wantonness, social barriers, cultural taboos and restrictions" (Okediran, Olujide, & Danesy, 2006, p. 99).

When seeking to incorporate gender and equity perspectives into the framework, feminists stubbornly grasp to the universal framework provided by the Declaration of Human Rights framework because it allows them to reject ideas of cultural relativism that unquestionably weaken women's human rights (Ezeilo, 2006). The challenge is that fundamentalists, especially Islamic fundamentalists, insist that upholding their rights to religion and culture does not mean they are against women's rights. The fundamentalists claimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should accord them the right to their religion and culture and should not be used to discriminate against them.

Burns et al. (2001), basing their research on feminist theory, asked why 3 decades after the Women's Movement and three generations after suffrage women are not nearly as involved in the public arena as are men. They speculated that (a) women generally

have less time for outside activity, (b) they have less psychic space in their minds due to family demands, (c) the patriarchal role is still emphasized for a democratic society, (d) that women have fewer resources than men that are associated with running for political office, (e) that there is institutionalized discrimination in the political arena, and (f) socialization of women lead them to different conclusions from men. Similarly, in this study, I examined how women constructed their worlds to make the most of their experiences in the public arena. They were asked how they describe their participation in the political sector and leadership positions in Nigeria. They were asked about obstacles and how their educational, economic, and marital issues affected their ability to participate in political leadership in Nigeria.

African Feminism Theory

There are various feminist theories and different feminist perspectives and definitions under the auspice of the feminist theory (Archer, 2009). The notion is that there are as many feminist perspectives on social research methods as there are “feminisms” (Archer, 2009, p. 150). Pedwell and Whitehead (2012) agreed and posited that the various influential theorists have been able to draw from a diverse range of theoretical sources that include Michel Foucault, Karl Marx, Luce Irigarary, Sigmund Freud, Charles Darwin, Raymond Williams, Erving Goffman, Silvan Tomkins, and Gilles Deleuze.

Feminist theorists have been long concerned with “the relationships between affect, knowledge and power” (Pedwell & Whitehead, 2012, p. 119). Archer (2009) defined the feminist researcher as one who grounds research “in two worlds”: the

disciplines that supply the method and feminist scholarship (p. 150). However, according to Archer, it is the intersection of the two worlds that can sometimes be problematic or beneficial; therefore, the feminist scholarship has to be creative. This is because while the study focuses on women, it also has to emphasize multiplicity and value inclusiveness. The feminist researcher must equally adhere to the strict conventional procedures as other scientific research methods like the ethnography.

Over the past 4 decades, the body of literature by women in Africa and the African Diaspora has inspired vigorous debates that have led to the evolution of a body of theories pertaining to African feminism (Mekgwe, 2010). African is a complex, evolving, and plural society that has undergone historical experiences and has assimilated new cultures. With regard to gender role theories, Nkomo and Ngambi (2009) proposed using the African feminism theory as a theoretical framework to advance the study of African women in leadership and management. The researchers contended that more research is needed to understand the statuses, experiences, and leadership of African women. Nkomo and Ngambi argued that most studies rely too heavily on Western-based understanding of gender and gender relations. Alternatively, African feminism theory offers a means to query the cultural, historical, political, and economic context influencing the study of African women in management and leadership. African feminism is vital because it understands the impact of culture and the historical experiences (colonial experience) on gender constructions. Mekgwe (2010) maintained it is especially important because it focuses on how historical experiences such as the colonial experience have resulted in the “renegotiation, reconsideration, remaking of the African gender construct” (p. 193).

African feminists argued for an emphasis on culture in the description and subsequent analysis of African realities, hence, resisting the universalization and consequent projection of Western ideas (Blay, 2008). According to Blay (2008), African feminists resist notions that womanhood in Africa is itself a cause for oppression. Blay recognized that both “gender” and “power” have the potential to take on variable meanings in variable contexts (p. 69). Thus, the analysis of gender must be contextualized within the particular culture and society within which it occurs and for which it has implications.

The key tenet of African feminism relative to this proposed study is that African-centered approaches to the study of gender in Africa must be based on an understanding of African socio-cultural realities, feminist traditions, and philosophies. In addition to applying other theories, the aim is to develop gender-focused frameworks of analysis and suspend distortions and misrepresentations in the understanding of gender relations of the African woman. Before the problem is examined and any recommendation is made, however, the historical role women played in Nigeria have to be analyzed.

Traditional Role of Women in Nigeria

Strong traditions are part of the history of a nation. In historical Nigeria, traditional rulers played a major role, stated Oguamanam and Pue (2007). Traditional leaders in the western states were involved in the functions of adjusting claims or settling disputes in the family, kinship, religion, tradition, institutions, and belief systems. Men and women, to differing degrees, exerted political power in traditional Nigeria (Chuku, 2009). Age, experience, ability, and marital status were key determinants of the

hierarchical relationship in the Igbo society. Power, authority, and respect were earned on attributes that involved morality, charisma, and notable service in the military rather than on gender (Chuku, 2009). This was especially true in the Igbo society during the precolonial era where political structures were diversified and decentralized. Power did not lie in the hands of one person. It either belonged to kings or chiefs or a council of elders. Political power was decentralized and distributed to the different genders, age grades, titled societies, etc. Though the political system was male dominated, Chuku (2009) posited that system was flexible enough that women were afforded political opportunities.

In a dual-sex political system, as classified by Gwendolyn Mikell, the women's organizations had parallel authority structures to those of men (Chuku, 2009). This simply meant that men and women shared political power in a manner to promote harmony for the well-being of the society (Chuku, 2009, p. 84). Chuku stated that in the dual-sex political system, women held power in areas that were typically considered for women, for example age-grade systems and women courts.

In the age-grade system, women were assigned special duties and responsibilities based on their age. In the title system, women that were conferred titles equally wielded political power and influence. Chuku (2009) and Nolte (2008) agreed that the participation of women in political leadership in the precolonial era was not limited to Nigeria; it was the same in many parts of Africa. Women were able to participate in the decision-making of their precolonial communities through the female lines of authority that had existed parallel to male hierarchies. According to Nolte, women in Yoruba

communities held specific chieftaincy titles and ritual positions where their role was to advise the rulers of their towns and help maintain the social order and welfare of the community. Good examples of such responsibility are the Iyalode title that represented the interests of women and the ritual positions reserved for women in the ancestral masquerade societies. Nolte noted that colonialism seems to have affected the role of women in Yoruba towns and Nigeria as a whole.

Colonialism did not just bring about changes Nigerian people but to the African people; it attributed to be the cause of the under-development of many of the continent's territories (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012). Although Ocheni and Nwanko (2012) acknowledged that western education is as a result of colonialism, and therefore must be acknowledged for that positive contribution to the continent. However, the scholars maintained that colonial education is also partially responsible for the present underdevelopment of Africa. The education was not rooted in the African culture and hence could not promote any meaningful development within the environment. Colonial education distorted African's traditional pattern of education and "any education that is not deeply rooted in a people's culture and environment cannot bring any meaningful technological advancement" (Ocheni & Nwankwo, p. 51).

Colonialism also had an impact on the economy. It distorted the African economy by creating a dual system. African were not allowed or encouraged to go into the manufacturing of goods whereas international trade was forced upon them. The colonial authorities made their African colonies dependent on western countries by introducing "mono-cultural economy for the territories" (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012, p. 53). The

African colonies were grouped into different categories; for instance, the colonies that were sources of minerals, plantation crops, and European settlement include Congo, South Africa, Zimbabwe while Nigeria and Ghana were sources for peasant production. The economic and political structures of the African colonies were molded to be at the best interest and mercy of their European powers.

Colonialism and neocolonialism were cited as drawbacks to gender relations in Africa. In precolonial Africa, men and women had elements of autonomy in all spheres of life-economic, social, ritual, and political; this created a system of checks and balances (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). In the precolonial political system, women were not considered subordinates but they had complimentary participation roles. The social hierarchy in traditional Africa was not based on body-type (males or females). No amount of stereotyping existed against women (Taiwo, 2010). Women held various leadership roles in the precolonial Africa as queen mothers, queen sisters, princesses, chiefs and holders of office in towns and villages (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). The women had power, which they obtained, from their various positions, especially in the matrilineal societies. This power sharing between men and women was evident in different parts of West Africa, for example, in Asante of Ghana and Igbo towns of Nigeria (Chuku, 2009; Steegstra, 2009). In the traditional African society, women's roles were interwoven with the social structures of the society. There was a dual-sex political system where each sex was responsible for managing its own affairs. This meant that the men and women only shared political power (Chuku, 2009).

Colonialism disrupted the harmonious complementary role women played and the relegated them to the background. Agbalajobi (2010) contention is not that there was no element of gender inequality in precolonial Africa but that colonialism made gender discrimination more pronounced. Colonialists replaced the traditional political system of accountability and the system where women's organizations were recognized at every level of the political system with one that violated their democratic rights. For example, in traditional Yoruba states women held high office such as Iyalode, Iyaloja, Iyalaje and even the Oba but with colonialism women became estranged of these political rights (Agbalajobi, 2010).

As in many African communities, colonialism brought great changes to the Nigerian society. Nolte (2008) maintained that women in Yoruba towns were excluded from the colonial administration. According to Wa Muiu (2008), colonialism was rooted in violence and corruption. For example, the Europeans gave chiefs favors such as pots and pans in exchange for signing treaties. The author asserted that cruelty was the foundation of colonial rule. Basically, countries were made to produce goods needed by their colonial masters. West African countries produced cocoa, coffee, peanuts, and oil for their colonial masters. East African countries produced coffee, tea, peanuts, and sisal; while South Africa produced minerals that Britain used to improve to its own standing in the world economy (Wa Muiu, 2008). The situation was no different in Nigeria. The country was not colonized as a single territory. It was instead colonized as three separate units where each was administered differently: the colony of Lagos and the Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria (Pereira, 2005). Pereira (2005) added that Nigeria was

formed in 1914 by the amalgamation of the three units even although the North and South were governed separately.

In the colonial era, women were conspicuously absent. Even women who once played important roles in the precolonial period were no longer involved. One reason, according to Pereira (2005), was that the colonial masters brought with them Christianity. In the early days women did not have access to Christianity because of the conflicts between Christianity and their traditional ways. Elderly women were unwilling to convert to Christianity because of what they viewed as attacks on their native religious groups. The women were suspicious of Christianity because it appeared to condemn their local religion and beliefs. They rejected and revolted against the religion, as was evident in the 1925 dancing women's movement, a mass protest by the Igbo women of Nigeria. Pereira also claimed that Christianity had an ideological problem: It appeared to justify colonial rule and assist the change to the new economic and political order (Pereira, 2005). The author's argument was that the two main principles of capitalism, property rights and individual freedom, relied on Christianity. Christianity also led to the forming of new structures for marriages, family lives, and inheritances. Olajubu (2008) supported this statement, affirming that Christianity disrupted the social framework of gender relations in Nigeria. Prior to Christianity there were no specific venues for male or female enterprises, but Christianity arrived in Yoruba land with a firm structure: the men's role was more superior and powerful and the women's role was submissive and their area domesticated (Olajubu, 2008).

Colonial rule also caused some difficult and conflicting consequences on the economic conditions and status of African women (Pereira, 2005). With colonialism came international trade, which worked to the disadvantage of women. Even though women had previously played a major role in agriculture, men took over the production of the export crops that had become lucrative in the international trade business. Men became dominant in the import/export business, while women were relegated to petty businesses because of the following that worked to the disadvantage of female traders: (a) the materialization of a money economy and private land ownership; (b) the use of private land ownership as collateral for loans; and (c) large scale traders highly dependent on European credit. It is important to note that the colonists usurped existing female power and influence and either ignored or failed to see their authority (Pereira, 2005).

The systems were differentiated by gender in precolonial Nigeria, but women still participated substantially in the political and religious areas of their lives (Pereira, 2005). Women held influential political offices and titles that were as important as those held by men. Then colonial masters gave the men new powers and introduced laws that favored men. Male elders created new local laws to their advantage when colonial administrators began to codify customary laws. Colonialism also brought about the new idea of two spheres of men and women, which included a new gender ideology: the domestication of women. The ideology placed women in the home caring for their husbands and children.

Christian marriage also presented men and women with a dilemma. Elite women that were previously independent soon found themselves feeling, unhappily, very dependent and vulnerable in relation to newfound conjugal ideas (Pereira, 2005).

Consecutively, men that were supposed to provide for the women soon found that they were unable to meet their new responsibilities. This result was that the elite women who thought Christian marriages would provide them and their children with new inheritance rights and protect them against divorces by making it more difficult to dissolve the marriages, after years of dissatisfaction and marital troubles soon began to reconsider some aspects of their Christian marriages. Elite women found themselves wanting to retain certain aspects, such as monogamy and the new inheritance and property rights they were accorded under Christian marriage, but they also wanted to distance themselves from other aspects such as economic dependence. The women, especially the educated ones, yearned for more independence.

The result was that, even though Christianity and Western education seemed to spread gender ideologies with values that represented women's personal autonomy and economic independence, it was not the case in Africa. In Nigeria and the rest of Africa, the values that were encouraged through churches and schools were the Victorian ideology of domestication, which placed Nigerian women at home (Pereira, 2005). As Pereira (2005) explained, the Victorian and indigenous African ideologies of domesticity differed considerably. The British wife may not have worked outside her home nor had a public life. However, indigenous Nigerian women were expected to be active in the household by taking care of the family, to be economically involved by marketing their commodities, and to be politically involved in community decision-making. The education introduced by colonial masters did not help women much. It did not train them to acquire job skills or excel in academic subjects. Instead, it focused on improving their

behavior and morals. There also were fewer schools for girls than the boys. The few ones that existed were for girls from privileged backgrounds and were generally geared toward providing domestic training rather than leadership skills.

While Christianity was promoted in the southern part of the country, the British colonial administration promoted the Islamization of the northern region. Islam was prominent in the Hausa culture for centuries but did not become an invasive belief system until Usamn dan Fodio's Jihad (Pereira, 2005). The effect of the Jihad was felt by all in the region, especially the Hausa women. Until then, women were conspicuously active in the public and held important positions in society, such as Queen Amina of Zazzau. By the end of the nineteenth century, as Pereira noted, women's political influence in Northern Nigeria had mostly disappeared. Women in the southwest and east were also relegated to domestic duties, with the focus being on the home, husband, and children. Colonial bureaucracy did not help. Pereira (2005) explained that the British colonial administrative policy encouraged Islam in Northern Nigeria. Other factors such as the cultural resistance to colonialism, increased burden of taxation, and establishment of Shari'ah courts all also contributed to the Islamization momentum. The practice of the seclusion of women became widespread not only because of Islam, but also because there were economic and administrative factors associated with the practice. Women were longer allowed to work as field labor so they would not be counted as taxpayers. As a result, the number of taxpayers decreased and there were changes in gendered labor. Women were withdrawn from public economic activities such as farm work to focus on spinning cotton or processing groundnuts.

Wa Muiu (2008) claimed that different ethnic groups in precolonial Nigeria lived together and worked together to resolve conflicts. However, when the colonial masters brought diverse ethnic groups together within the same borders, it increased the possibility of conflicts and reduced individual land tenure, which created problems. Differences that were easily resolved in the indigenous systems became more difficult to settle, and women who had been central to the conflict management process were no longer allowed to participate. Colonialism had undermined women's power, and conflict resolution became based on a law that the colonized people did not recognize, the European Law. Islam and Christianity were forced on Nigerians, and matriarchal societies were replaced with patriarchal ones. Gender relations were restructured to the disadvantage of women; "because the African woman was viewed as the epitome of African tradition she was marginalized during colonialism" (Wa Muiu, 2008, p. 85). Nigerian women were relegated to the home — like their European counterparts — as sex objects, mothers, and housewives; their role in all spheres of life became minimal.

Chuku (2009) averred that women in Nigeria did not silently watch the attrition of their position in all spheres, but instead they protested and demonstrated to show their disapproval for the present male structured political establishment. Examples of such protests included boycotts, strikes, sit-ins, and sleep-ins directed at the colonial government, missionaries, and their colonial master's agents. The women never gave up their fight against the colonial masters and were able to attain some accomplishments in the economic and political arenas (Chuku, 2009). As a result of the 1929 demonstrations, women in Nigeria played greater political roles. However, the few political appointments

occupied by women was not enough to show that the colonial masters were in favor of protecting or promoting female progression in political participation in government (Chuku, 2009).

Women in Contemporary Nigeria

As mentioned previously, colonialism drastically affected gender relations in Nigeria. It accorded greater powers to men. Moreover, women participated in the politics of decolonization in the 1940s to 1950s (Chuku, 2009, p. 91). Despite that, liberation from colonialism did not improve their plight; women are still marginalized politically and economically. According to the 2002 Beijing Platform for Action, women in Nigeria continue to face economic empowerment and entrepreneurship barriers despite the fact that their participation in the workplace has increased over the years (Okpara, 2006). Gender inequalities still exist with respect to pay, working conditions, and level of participation. A 1996 World Bank report on gender and poverty in Nigeria, suggested that legal, regulatory, and cultural barriers may be keeping women more disadvantaged than men in terms of access to health, education, financial, and agricultural extension services (Mberu, 2007).

Studies by Adeyeye and Haddad (as cited in Mberu, 2007) showed that women work longer hours than their male counterparts to achieve the same standard of living and face discrimination in employment. Women do not have the same chances of escaping poverty because of their share of domestic commitments, which do not allow them to go after new opportunities as easily as men (Okpara, 2006). The women also face obstacles that include discrimination in education, training, hiring, access to credit, the right to own

and inherit property, and promotion for equal work. Okpara (2006) mentioned that women also receive lower levels of pay and greater levels of domesticated responsibilities. Only a small percentage of women in the country are in management or other decision-making positions.

Women's Participation in the Political Process of Nigeria

Nigeria gained its independence on October 1, 1960 and was declared a republic in 1963 (Adrogba, 2012). After a series of amendments, the present constitution of the country was adopted on May 31, 1999. The country is a federal republic modeled after the United States; the president of the nation exercises executive power whereas legislative power is vested on the government and the two chambers that make up the legislative arm. The two chambers, the House of Representatives and the Senate, are called the National Assembly. The House of Representatives, which is presided over by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, has 360 members and is typically elected for a four year term. The Senate has 109 members elected for four year term and is presided over by the President of the Senate. The 109 members of senate comprise from three members from each of the 36 states of the country and one from Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (Adrogba, 2012). The highest judicial power is the Supreme Court of Nigeria and like the USA, Nigeria practices separation of powers on all arms of government. Although, according to Adrogba (2012), the National Assembly serves as the check on the executive branch of government.

Nigeria has witnessed various changes in its political system over the past few decades. The country has survived various military coups that destabilized the country.

Its struggles with sustainable democracy, good governance and development have been daunting that previous transitions to democracy have been futile; for example, the collapse of the First 1960 – 1966, Second 1979 – 1983 and the Third Republics 1993-1999 (Omotola, 2010). The country is currently in its Fourth Republic, which began in 1999. As in any other democratic country, political parties play a large part in the democratic process. For the 2011 election, there were 63 political where aspiring candidates contested for various political offices ranging from the Office of the President to membership of the National Assembly, state Governors and states Houses of Representatives (Adrogba, 2012). The April 2011 election marked the fourth presidential election since 1998 that the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) has won the seat. As mentioned above, the country has 36 states and that does not include the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The states are divided into Local Government Areas (LGAs); and as of 2011, there were 774 LGAs in the country.

Nigeria is a patriarchy society and women are expected to conform and confine to the “male dominance and female subservience” (Arwolo & Aluko, 2010, p. 583). Men have played a significant role in the political administration of Nigeria. For instance, in 1992, under President Babangida’s administration, out of the 300 gubernatorial aspirants, there were only 8 and none of the women were elected as governor (Arowolo & Aluko, 2010). Men form the political parties and women are invited to join at a much later stage after the party structures have been put in place. Therefore, typically, men are political party executives and this contributes to the marginalization of women especially during the party nomination process. In a past study, Arowolo and Aluko (2010) examined the

participation of men and women in the political process of Nigeria. The study revealed that women have been underrepresented in the political administration of Nigeria. For instance, for 27 years, 1980 to 2007, women have not had more 8.3% representation in the National Assembly. In 1980, out of the 57 seats in the Senate, 56 men were elected and one woman was elected and there were 442 men and three women in the House of Representatives for the same period. It remained the same in 1992, in the Senate, there were 90 men and one woman and 575 men and 14 women, in the House of Representatives. In Houses of Assembly, the trend did not change from period 1999 to 2007; out of total contestable seats men occupied the following when compared their women counterparts; in 1999, 966 out of 978; in 2003, 912 out of 951; and in 2002, 936 out of 990.

However, although women in Nigeria do not enjoy full equal rights, the proportion of the women to men in Nigeria is split in half. According to the 1991 census, women represented about 50% of Nigeria's population (Okpara, 2006, p. 225). Yet, women in Nigeria are marginalized in all spheres of life, especially in the political administration of the country. Women represent about the half of the population in the world and generally, could make some crucial contributions to societal development. In many societies, women play the following vital five roles: mother, producer, home manager, community organizer, and socio-cultural and political activists (Agbalajobi, 2010). Due to past discrimination and inequality the emergence of women movements has affected the role of women when it comes to being political activists. Agbalajobi (2010) stated that gender roles were divided along male and female sexes, before the

women movements came into existence. The roles could be further classified into productive gender roles – male and reproductive gender roles – female. The reality of the society is deeply rooted in the cultural beliefs and values of the society and “men are the locus of cultural value” (Agbalajobi, 2010, p. 75).

In Nigeria, women suffer from different types of gender discrimination, inequality, and exclusions especially concerning their participation in the political process because some activities are typically considered to be “exclusively or predominantly male and therefore overwhelming and morally important” (Agbalajobi, 2010, p. 75). The system of beliefs including ethnic, religious, cultural values and norms contribute to marginalization of women in Nigeria especially in the area of politics. The sex role socialization that exists in the country allows for distinct and disproportionate work including political positions to be allocated by biological sexes and this creates a socially distinct gender division of labor (Agbalajobi, 2010, p. 75). Currently, this concept known as, the sexual division of labor, where sexes are assigned different complementary tasks appears to be the foundation of both the labor and political sectors in Nigeria.

Research has been done on women’s participation in Nigerian politics. In a past study, Agbalajobi (2010) also examined the participation of women in the political process of Nigeria. Agbalajobi argued that a major problem over the years was that women were regarded as the weaker sex and therefore are placed in subordinate positions to men in nation’s political system. However, this viewpoint tends to neglect the meaningful contribution women can make in the political system of a nation. The issue of

labor divided by gender did not exist in Nigeria until colonialism (Agbalajobi, 2010). The Western cultural notion of male superiority was introduced to the country by the colonial administration. Agbalajobi noted that the 1922 Sir Hugh Clifford Constitution disenfranchised women and increased the participation of the wealthy. Scholars are not disputing that some element of gender inequality and stateless societies may have existed in the traditional state, but the contention is that colonialism was the result of the more pronounced gender discrimination (Agbalajobi, 2010; Nolte, 2008). In traditional Yoruba towns in Nigeria, for example, women held high offices such as Iyalode, Iyaloja, and Iyalaje titles (Agbalajobi, 2010).

In Nigeria, there is the assumption that there are no constitutional barriers to women's participating in the political affairs; however, the political enfranchisement of women appears to be maintained on the surface level (Agbalajobi, 2010). Women's movements are helping alleviate the problems that prohibits either the women from participating or the problems they encounter as they seek to participate in the political administration of Nigeria to increase their political participation. However, it would also be more helpful if the women were more knowledgeable as men on the extent of the women's underrepresentation. Agbalajobi (2010) observed that though in recent years there has been a remarkable increase in women's participation in politics in Nigeria, "there is inherently a pronounced level of underrepresentation of women in politics when compared to their male counterparts" (p. 77).

The problem is that since women represent half of the country's population, they should equally share in decision-making and governance of the country. Agbalajobi

(2010) opined that since all human beings should possess equal rights, women should have the same rights as their male counterparts to participate in governance and public life. The problem is that there is nothing in 1999 Nigerian Constitution that precludes women from participation in political administration of the country. There is inherent gender discrimination in political administration of Nigeria. Few women were elected to office in nation's 1999, 2003, and 2007 general elections. Men continue to dominate public offices; women remain under-represented when compared to their male counterparts. After two decades of military rule, Agbalajobi claimed that statistics revealed that in 1999, women only held 3% representation of the contested positions, 4% in 2003 and it slightly increased 6% in 2007.

There are many factors responsible for the low participation of women in political process of country. One of such factors Agbalajobi (2010) listed includes gender roles – patriarchy. According to Agbalajobi, the family is the main institution of patriarchy and it explains gender inequality. It can be defined as “the rule of the father,” or a society in which the men rule or dominate the women (Agbalajobi, 2010, p. 78). Men are given a higher social status in African families and this transcends into public life. Another factor that prevents women from participating in politics is the perception that most women have of politics. Most women view politics as dirty and even the concept violence has alienated them even more from the politics of the mainstream (Agbalajobi, 2010). Women's long history of discrimination continues to work to their economic disadvantage. The sexual division of labor has given the men more financial backing to achieve their political aspirations. Most Nigerian women depend on their men

financially; women are financially incapable to support their political endeavors and since most financiers and sponsors prefer male candidates because they are more successful; some women with political aspirations find that they do not have finances to support their goals. Discriminatory customs and laws is another factor that place women at a disadvantage in their quest to participate in the political administration of the country.

The customs and practices have inculcated a feeling of inferiority in the women; for instance, most of the customs in the country prefer sending the male child to school while the female child is nurtured for marriage. The result is the marginal increase in illiterate women and stiff competition of the male counterparts in politics. In addition, there is no Affirmative Action or quota system in Nigeria to help alleviate the discrimination that women have suffered over the years. Some religious doctrines equally work against the active participation of women in politics. Patriarchy appears to be supported by Christianity and Islamic doctrines bar women from political involvement (Agbalajobi, 2010). The barriers, which include lack of education, impact of culture, religion, and ethnicity that have kept women from participating in the political administration of the country was further examined in the next section.

Lack of Education as a Barrier to Political Participation in Nigeria

Illiteracy has been identified as one of the major problems facing Nigerian women. It may also be true that the educational needs of women in Nigeria have been addressed vigorously in the last decade, especially in such areas as engineering, accounting, management, sciences, social sciences, environmental studies, humanities,

and marketing (Okediran et al., 2006). Although the efforts have helped women in Nigeria, according to Okediran et al. (2006), the problem is that since 1947, adult education “has been streamlined along the lines of mass literacy programs, vocational training, community development, social welfare, and industrial work as a decisive factor in encouraging women to become significant in society as entrepreneurs” (p. 100).

If women in Nigeria are to contribute to the development of the country, then their educational needs must be properly addressed (Okediran et al., 2006). “Boko Haram” means “Western education is a sin” (“The Threat,” 2014, p.10). The Boko Haram version of the Sharia law affects the education of girls because it restricts women to the home tending to their families and not at school where they can be educated (“The Threat,” 2014). Reinvesting in adult and mass literacy programs could help eradicate the inequity in employment opportunities, the religious beliefs that bound the women to their homes, and the cultural obstacles that restrict the women’s social lives. These programs could be used to empower women and provide them with the necessary skills that would enable them to effectively participate in political leadership of Nigeria. The goal of the programs should be to ensure that women are secure, self-reliant and self-confident as society changes their spheres of work, home life, and personal growth (Okediran et al., 2006).

Nwadiwe (2007) was in total agreement with Okediran et al. The lack of formal education was also identified as a major factor to the underdevelopment of Africa, and Nwadiwe saw illiteracy as a very large obstacle in Nigeria’s development. Studies cited by Nwadiwe on the problem reveal an imbalance in the overall enrollment statistics and

literacy levels of men and women, and that the imbalance favored men. Nwadiigwe's study investigated the incidence of sexual harassment on female students and the practice of exchanging sex for grades by male lecturers in the higher education in Nigeria using two universities as samples. The research used questionnaire and rapid-response interview (RRI) for data collection. A total of 210 questionnaires were distributed and 198 returned. With the RRI, the researcher was able to obtain information utilizing both structured and unstructured questions from 70 participants.

Research also showed that many female students graduate with lower classes of degrees and many of those that graduate with excellent degrees have found it difficult to perform in their field, inhibiting educational quality for Nigerian universities. Nwadiigwe (2007) blamed this on sexual harassment, which the author defined as a problem of global proportions that entails grave consequences to its victims. Sexual harassment hampers the educational advancement of women in Nigeria. The recommendation is that practical steps be taken to address the gender inequalities that exist (Nwadiigwe, 2007). This move could strengthen opportunities for women, increase their access to education, guarantee their rights, and increase their representation in government. "The key issue is not just access but the achievement of gender equity and education for those that have gained access to formal education (Aikman & Unterhalter, as cited in Nwadiigwe, p. 366). Nwadiigwe found that the lack of high-quality sex education makes young female students vulnerable to sexual harassment, which affects the quality of education they receive. The recommendation is to educate the students, staff, and university authorities; and strengthen the penal system to fight against the menace.

Impact of Culture as a Barrier to Political Participation in Nigeria

Cultural barriers can work against women's involvement in the public sphere. Iwobi (2008) defined culture as "the integrated sum total of learned behavior patterns which are manifested and shared by the members of a society" and includes the shared "beliefs, values, traditions, or outlooks...characteristics of particular social populations" (p. 42). In other words, culture has a major influence on a person's identity and perception of the world, and consequently is one of the main factors listed as an impediment to gender relations in Nigeria (Chuku, 2009). In recent years, using cultural norms to justify the domination of women has become highly controversial (Iwobi, 2008).

According to Iwobi (2008), no group has been deprived of its human rights under the disguise of culture as much as women have been. This is true in all societies, particularly in Nigeria, where the harmful effects of the indigenous culture have been documented in academia (Iwobi, 2008). The inferior status and unequal treatment of women in Nigeria could be said to be derived from the cultural belief systems that perpetuate women's inferiority psychologically, physically; these systems are also reinforced by the nation's customary legal system (Iwobi, 2008). Scholars such as Tilley-Gyado and Atsenuwa (as cited in Iwobi, 2008) pointed out that it does not help the plight of women when cultural prejudices that underpin discriminatory practices are not only endemic with traditional Nigerian societies, but are also a legitimate, institutional part of the state (Iwobi, 2008).

Iwobi (2008) affirmed that in developing countries such as Nigeria, the relationship between culture and gender has been problematic. One area that has been of great concern is the legal status and rights of Nigerian widows. The co-existence of multiple bodies of law in the Nigerian legal system has produced a difficult and conflicting legal regime where women are typically deprived sufficient legal protection (Iwobi, 2008). The customary laws often promoted by Nigerian men and applied by Nigerian courts have not only acted against the interests of the women, but have been detrimental to widows (Iwobi, 2008). The English law, another part of the Nigerian legal system, has not been any better. Iwobi recommended that the laws of the state be uniform for all persons.

A renowned African feminist, Nkiru Nzegwu (2006), agreed with Iwobi (2008). The scholars conceded that African women are considered subordinate to African men. That is why it was difficult to offer equality to these women while at the same time safeguarding the integrity of cultural traditions. Modern women are fighting for their constitutional rights often see their hopes struck down in the nation's highest courts by judges who want to women to stay subjugated to men (Nzegwu, 2006). The rulings of the male judges have had a huge effect. Nzegwu argued that they have been central in constructing the current human rights dialogue in Africa as one that places the women's personal rights against the shared rights of a people, meaning men, to their culture. Ezeilo (2006) agreed and said that although over the past six decades the United Nations (UN) have worked to create civil, political, economic, social, and cultural human rights among all nations and cultures, this work has proven to be very challenging, especially in Africa

because of the continent's cultural issues. Under the umbrella of the UN, women's movements in many countries have fought for equality and demanded the same human rights accorded to the men, under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The problem, Ezeilo explained, was that the human rights framework originally had a male-centered perspective.

When seeking to incorporate gender and equity perspectives into the framework, feminists stubbornly grasp to the universal framework provided by the Declaration of Human Rights framework because it allows them to reject ideas of cultural relativism that unquestionably weaken women's human rights (Ezeilo, 2006). The challenge is that fundamentalists, especially Islamic fundamentalists, insist that upholding their rights to religion and culture does not mean they are against women's rights. The fundamentalists claimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, should accord them the right to their religion and culture, and should not be used to discriminate against them.

Ezeilo's (2006) effort, in Geneva, to pressure the UN Commission on Human Rights to pass a resolution on equal inheritance rights for men and women, is a good illustration of the challenge. Initially, the theme of the global campaign was "women's equal rights to equal inheritance" (Ezeilo, 2006, p. 41). However, after much deliberation with women in other areas, especially Muslim women in Asia and Africa, the theme had to change. The issue the Muslim women had was that equal right to equal inheritance would not have been taken well under Islamic law and culture. To recognize cultural and religious sensitivities and differences, the theme was changed to "general right to inheritance" (Ezeilo, 2006, p. 41). After the compromise, Ezeilo later determined that,

Islamic law does indeed guarantee inheritance to women and girls, even if it is not in equal shares, but that did not appear to be the case with most customary laws in Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

Therefore, Ezeilo's (2006) suggestion is that in dealing with gender equality it may wise to adopt the principle that "half a loaf is better than none," even though the pragmatic approach to women's rights may have its merits and demerits (p. 42). This situation is because its critics claim it may be settling for too little, while others for it argue compromising divides theory and practice as well as legality and its implementation (Ezeilo, 2006). Ezeilo opined that sometimes, in reality, the pragmatic approach might be the only option for feminists especially where the obstacles are overwhelming. Scholars and academics sometimes do not fully understand the problems involved. Sometimes, outsiders do not understand what causes apparent contradictions in the attitudes and practices of feminists from cultures who are supposed to be very knowledgeable of human rights standards and rights discourses (Ezeilo, 2006). Outsiders simply do not understand how complex it is or the difficulties involved in holding firm to the international human rights norms ratified by countries. For feminists working to attain basic rights for women in these complex cultural societies, the reality is that the nontraditional approach seems to be the only option. Ezeilo suggested that perhaps feminists on the outside should ask instead, what would happen to most of these women, if the compromises arrived at do not help uphold and defend women's basic rights.

Impact of Religion as a Barrier to Political Participation in Nigeria

Women are negatively affected by the religious values, norms, and laws that are imposed on them, legitimizing male dominance and leading to the marginalization of women (Para-Mallam, 2006). Although everyone in Nigeria is granted equality under Nigeria's statutory and common laws, Para-Mallam maintained that this is merely in principle. In practice, the lives of many Nigerians are ruled by customary and Sharia Law. Merging religion with native customs affects women at all levels of the society - grassroots and elite levels of society who according to the patriarchal view are not seen as complete human beings until they are married (Para-Mallam, 2006). Although the constitution of the country grants and guarantees Nigerians fundamental freedoms and human rights, the countless customary and religious laws and practices that adversely affect the women weakens their freedom (Para-Mallam, 2006). The author also claimed that the constitution is undermined by religious politics and that seems to cause a great deal of ambiguity on gender issues. For instance, underage marriages appear to be supported by the constitution because all married girls under the age of 18 are regarded as adults for the purposes of the law, and are prosecuted as adults.

Girls and women through their religious education are taught their beliefs regarding gender roles. Women then become conflicted. This is because after being taught to accept their social roles and interests by the patriarchal religious societies. It becomes difficult for them to accept a feminist scheme that removes obstacles to the women's abilities to function as human beings, and thus advance gender equality (Para-Mallam, 2006). Para-Mallam (2006) maintained that there are deeply engrained

hierarchies that exist in both Christian and Muslim laws that make it more difficult for women to seek gender equality. However, the Christian and Muslim women have also found parts of their life that are influenced by their faith as both liberation and an empowerment (Para-Mallam, 2006). An example of this is a Christian women's organization in Nigeria, the Women's Fellowship Unit (WFU) of the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) is using its faith-based religious platform to promote gender equality within the Christian framework.

Impact of Ethnicity as a Barrier to Political Participation in Nigeria

Nigeria is a country of many different ethnicities. Ekanola (2006) maintained that Nigeria should not be considered a nation, but a "geographical expression" (p. 279). According to Benedict Anderson (as cited in Ekanola, 2006), Nigerians do not exist in the same sense as the "English," "Welsh," or "French." The word *Nigerian* conveys more of a boundary distinction (Ekanola, 2006). Ekanola (2006) declared that the statement describes the condition of Nigeria before independence in 1960 and there has been no change since. The relationships between ethnic and religious groups have been strained due to all the conflicts over the years. Nigeria is a product of British imperialism and is not homogeneous (Ekanola, 2006). The result is that the marginalized groups are excluded from receiving any benefits that the dominant groups are accorded. It is not uncommon for a dominant ethnic group to control the state resources of the country.

Ojo (2009) described Nigeria as one of the most ethnically complex countries in Africa and asserted that one main problem of the country is that Nigeria does not really convey federation in the true sense of the word, and the people constitute more of a

medley (Ojo, 2009). Leaders are unable to “garner broad-based national support that transcends social identities, compradors and compradorial fractions and use their ethnic groups as instruments to serve their particularistic agenda and interests” (Kieh, 2009, p. 12). This meant that the leaders cleverly masked intercompradorial rivalries as ethnics ones. Followers identify with their leaders based on ethnic groups and culture. Kieh (2009) claimed that the resultant ethnic struggles have a negative impact on political stability.

Although no women were elected to office in the 1959 federal elections, two women were eventually nominated to the House Senate to replace a resigning member. Later in 1961, three women were elected to the House of Assembly (Chuku, 2009). Chuku (2009) argued that Igbo female leaders played a major role in mobilizing women in the southeastern part of the country to enable the NCNC political party to gain control of the Eastern regional government, obtain seats in the National Assembly, and even elected the first president of Nigeria, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. Despite this effort, the women still did not hold key political positions at all levels of the government, including positions in the military governments. Odinamadu, who was elected the first female national vice president in Nigeria of a major political party, was the exception. This meant that most female politicians followed the examples of their male counterparts and practiced ethnic politics (Chuku, 2009). Most women were undermined by the ethnic divisiveness of Nigerian politics where people join political parties based on ethnic affiliations. In Nigeria people joined a political party based on ethnicity of the founder and campaign for other candidates based on their ethnicities. Ethnic divisions affected

women's access to political institutions and affect their ability to participate in the political process.

Although Nolte (2008) focused on the women in the Odudua People's Congress (OPC), it demonstrated that participating in vigilantism not only empowers women, but it also reinforces complimentary gender roles. The author provides a short overview of the role of women in Yoruba and OPC politics. OPC is a movement that was founded as one of many prodemocracy groups in the 1990s to protest the autocratic military rule in Nigeria. In precolonial Yoruba communities, as in most of Africa, women participated in the decision making parallel to men through their traditional hierarchical lines (Nolte, 2008). Yoruba women held chieftaincy titles: Iyalode, who represented their interests and ritual positions, and Ogboni, who advised the rulers on their behalf.

Nolte (2008) argued that although Yoruba women were marginalized in the colonial administration, many Yoruba associations, including churches, mosques, and other organizations were still dependent on leadership from both genders or separate gendered hierarchies (p. 87). This is why Yoruba women were well represented in the anticolonial movements and in early postcolonial party politics of the 1950s and 1960s. Despite the representation and the participation of women, Nolte claimed that it did nothing for the women. The number of women that were either electoral candidates or elected to high offices remained low.

Nolte (2008) wrote that the position of women after the collapse of the First Republic and during the two long periods of military rule from 1966 to 1979 and 1983 to 1999 only worsened. In Southwest Nigeria women were excluded from active political

participation. The downturn of the economy along with the introduction of the structural adjustment programs in the 1980s did not help the situation of women; it specifically affected them. Many Yoruba women were involved in some sort of trade so the impact on the economy or the informal sector directly affected them. The autocratic nature of the military regime and the militarization of the civil society made it difficult for women to organize and speak out. Nolte contended that although only few women held personal wealth or public office before OPC, things have slightly improved. The Yoruba women realizing they were being sidelined in the national politics responded to the economic and political marginalization by organizing themselves. The Female members of the OPC control an organizational wing of the movement called the OPC Women's League, which functions autonomously and is responsible for the activities of the female members.

The Women's League has two fundamental functions: first, it is responsible for ensuring that women play a significant role in OPC and, secondly is in charge of the organization's struggle for the oppressed (Nolte, 2008). The dual function attributed to women as both the liberators and those to be liberated shows that women were allowed to participate politically without the interference of men. As described by Nolte, the presence of the women's wing in the OPC was in part due to the structure of Yoruba organizations and political parties before Nigeria's Independence in 1960.

Most anticolonial political parties introduced women's wings, after an unsuccessful bid by Oyinkan Abayomi in 1944 to form a Nigerian Women's Party (Nolte, 2008). Egbe Omo Odudua, founded in 1945, had a women's league based on the success that political mobilization Action Group, Obafemi Awolowo's party, was able to

mobilize by supporting women through its women's wing. From the 1940s, many other political parties that materialized had a different political space for women, however the problem was that the women's wings did not typically share the intraparty decision-making "equally or even consistently" (Nolte, 2008, p. 91). The women's wings exposed a few women to politics so a few of them were able to gain power, such as Wuraola Esan, who played a role in the women's wing and was later elected Senator to the National Assembly in 1960. However, many women were still unable to gain power and the little exposure the few women gained ended when the military regime took over in 1966.

Nolte (2008) claimed that the role of women in the Second Republic from 1979-1983 was just for show and that their political relevance was even lower than in the 1960s. Furthermore, the Nigerian political structure is based on male privilege (Chuku, 2009). Until recently, the level of membership in political parties was only associate members, which did not allow women to participate in the decision-making processes of the parties or be elected into office (Chuku, 2009). Chuku (2009) indicated that political parties in Nigeria were designed just to allow women to register, campaign, and vote for rural party candidates.

Nolte (2008) pointed out that women were largely rewarded with token appointments and were only allowed to sing or dance. Nolte noted that regardless of the women's active participation in campaign rallies and voting hardly any of them were ever elected or appointed to office. During this period one of the most radical women's organizations, Women in Nigeria (WIN), was established. After another military coup in 1983 WIN, along with other women's groups, helped to revive grassroots politics.

Eventually all independent parties, including the women's wings, were banned, and two government-created institutions were set up to contest local and state elections.

Nolte (2008) noted that several post-1999 Nigerian parties have women's wings and the number of women in public office has increased slightly by appointment rather than election. The author suggested that while women's wings, in the absence of other forms of women's inclusion, have a small, positive effect on female representation, they also show that there are limitations in mobilizing women through structures that are attached to those of men. Nolte averred that just like most political parties of the past and present, the main purpose of the Women's League in OPC is to work for the interests of women and to attempt to control and contain an autonomous female agency. Just as they do in OPC, women are also members of the main political party where important offices are reserved for them. Female leadership positions that complement those of men are created specifically for women in political parties. For instance, women of OPC are well-represented at all levels of the administration, as female leadership positions have been created for them. The OPC administration mirrors the local tradition of female political participation and clearly illustrates the way the Yoruba value women's personal power (Nolte, 2008). Women's empowerment and representation in OPC relies on the notion that men and women are complimentary and not equal. Nolte (2008) claimed that gender equality relies on the assumption that both genders can be effective as participants and contributors, but this not the situation in most Nigerian societies.

The Legal System's Failure to Enforce Gender Equality Laws

Gender equity laws have been difficult to enforce in Nigeria. A good way to understand this challenge is to look at the debate that ensued in the attempts to domesticate the Child Rights Act (CRA) in 2003 (Toyo, 2006). In 1991, Nigeria ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) only to domesticate the Act, CRA, 13 years later, in 2003. A major limitation was Nigeria's Constitution, which placed the issue of child protection at the state region. Some states, especially the Northern states, opposed the Act (Toyo, 2006). The fundamental problem was the section in the CRA that stipulated a minimum age of marriage. Therefore, taking from that experience there is problem that arises when dealing with the issue of ensuring gender equality is that "the normative assumption that flow from the adoption of any international human rights treaty is that it will guarantee rights for people alike" (Toyo, 2006, p. 1299). The belief is that the domestication of the national treaty into law can enforce rights for all citizens. However, Toyo (2006) opined that this assumption often fails to ignore the power culture, religion, or power structure will have on the legal provision. Interest groups that feel threatened would use these cultural and religious norms to their advantage. Toyo claimed that this has been the case in the fight for women's rights.

A major problem is the political decisions involving who is involved in making political decisions and in whose interests the decisions affect (Toyo, 2006). Another problem is that Nigeria recognizes cultural and religious rights as well as fundamental human rights (Toyo, 2006), which is the reason there will always be conflicts. The Constitution of Nigeria clearly prohibits discrimination based on sex; however, when it

comes to personal law that deals with issues of marriage, inheritance, divorces, the standards are not that explicit (Toyo, 2006). The problems that arose during the domestication of the CRA clearly illustrate the issues those fighting for the rights of women face in relation to existing cultural and religious norms and traditions.

Toyo (2006) claimed that the low socioeconomic status of girls and women in many parts of Nigeria is apparent. The issue is that opposition groups often deny that a relationship exists between low socioeconomic status and the withholding of the women's rights. One cause of the issue is that proponents of women's rights, to gain popular support, often go into the fight with conflicting approaches that eventually undermine their efforts. The rights logic has helped feminists in the past, more especially in promoting "the ideals of international human rights treaties and their underlying principle of equality" (Toyo, 2006, p. 1302). However, because competing interventions undermine efforts to achieve certain principles, situations arise when the advocates feel the need to separate the principle of equality from the rights principle to capture solidarity; however, this only tends to jeopardize the case against discrimination. Toyo (2006) maintained that de-linking the rights principle from the principle of equality only creates partial success and normally grants access to certain constituents, but it rarely achieves social change.

Another aspect of Nigeria's legal framework that discriminates against women, according to Okediran et al. (2006), is that in Nigeria, although women can either work or become entrepreneurs, they must get permission from their husbands, for Muslim women live in a society ruled by purdah in which they cannot work alongside men. Women in

Nigeria are required to obtain permission from their husbands before they can accept any jobs outside their matrimonial home, other than the workplace of their husbands. In some Nigerian societies, a woman also cannot inherit her husband's property when he dies, and widows suffer neglect and denial of their legal rights (Okediran et al., 2006).

Women's legal status, including the economic and social position of widows, could be linked to "the gendered nature of their existing cultures" (Iwobi, 2008, p. 43). The women are trapped with their need for bereavement over their loss, the oppression they have to endure from their traditional communities, and inaction from the legal systems that should protect them in the first place. As previously mentioned, the co-existence of plural bodies of law within Nigeria's legal system does not help the plight of women, especially widows; legal pluralism "arising from the co-existence of state law and nonstate normative orderings within the state territory is so deeply ingrained in the African legal environment" (Iwobi, 2008, p. 49). This combination of principles, rules, and procedures from states and from other institutions such as kinships and community organizations sometimes become problematic for gender relations.

African women and their experiences in the legal arena have not been given serious consideration, and the state law has taken a secondary "rather than a primary locus of regulation" (Iwobi, 2008, p. 49). Widows are made to suffer from draconian funeral traditions and bereavement ceremonies although they are not sanctioned and endorsed by state laws, but realistically are the product of the nonstate sector (Iwobi, 2008). Widows are subjected to demeaning customs and rituals that emanate from the traditional (nonstate) normative order. Iwobi (2008) pointed out that there is a widespread

argument over whether customs, rituals, and practices should fall within the territory of law. There is a lack of agreement on what law is, and whether legal pluralism exists and in traditional Nigeria, distinguishing law from local practices can often be difficult (Iwobi, 2008). Some argue that the normative order should be included in the definition of law, while others insist that law should be confined to the state order. However, Iwobi's position was that law should be viewed as "what people within social groups have come to see and label law," and "legal pluralism exists whenever social actors identify more than one source of law within a social arena" (p. 50). For women in Nigeria, particularly, widows, the traditional normative system that governs them is so embedded in the society that it should be recognized as law since the people perceive it as law.

Access to Resources

Education is fundamental not only to employment, but to various other opportunities as it advances living conditions of people in Nigeria; its access continues to remain unequal for men and women (Mberu, 2007). People with a higher level of education have better expectations of their living standards. In a 2004 study, Aromolaran (as cited in Mberu, 2007) revealed that while an additional year of postsecondary education might increase participation in the job market by as much as 15.2%, a marginal increase in primary schooling has no effect on wage employment. Although female primary school enrollment has increased in Nigeria — from 32% in 1970 to 87% in 1994 —for the younger generation, the attainment rates at the level of primary school completed is higher. However, there the result has relatively remained the same in terms

of female formal employment in Nigeria (Mberu, 2007), which is because the marginal increase in the level of primary schooling did not have an effect on the probability the women would have wage employment as the study showed, but it improved the participation rates of women in self-employment by about 5.4%. This was even more likely if the woman was married to a more educated spouse (Mberu, 2007). The results reveal a linkage between female poverty and the female heads of households. However, Mberu (2007) argued the study equally showed, with regards to living standards, the extent of male advantage over female advantage does not reach the very levels once attributed to it- especially if the disadvantage of single-adult, male-headed, and single-adult, female-headed households is examined.

The fact remains that social and demographic factors such as education, age, place, and region of residence all contribute to the living conditions of Nigeria, while “education is a central force in producing better living conditions and a crucial instrument in the fight against poverty” (Mberu, 2007, p. 525). The study reveals that there is a wide gap in the living conditions of those with no education and those with a higher level of education, and the gap is significant and very large. Mberu suggested it is important to understand how educational access works because it, as studies has shown, helps in the alleviation of poverty especially since women are at a disadvantage to men in Nigeria. Aladejana and Aladejana (2005) agreed and stated that there is becoming a better understanding for the need to educate women.

Patriarchal Attitudes of Society

Colonialism in Nigeria was characterized by a strong patriarchal system.

Patriarchy is defined as the organization of social life and institutional structures where men are vested with ultimate control over most aspects of women's lives (Iwobi, 2009). Chuku (2009) and Nolte (2008) agreed that women in precolonial Nigeria in many male dominated indigenous communities were still actively involved politically because of the separate gender systems. In such political systems, distinct male and female systems co-existed in a complimentary way. According to scholars, the different precolonial systems allowed Nigerian women to participate in the political affairs of the country without being marginalized by men. However, like the rest of Africa, colonial rule changed things for the worse for women in Nigeria. Colonialism "brought in its wake shifts in ideology as the old centers of traditional power came under attack and eventually capitulated hegemonic forces" (Iwobi, p, 44).

One factor that contributed to this is that the British took over Nigeria when the British society was deeply patriarchal, both in public and in private (Iwobi, 2009). To compound issues, from the onset the British colonialists, influenced by their patriarchal attitudes, set out to undermine the traditional indigenous structures that empowered women and ensured the balance of gender power in the communities they took over. Western values relevant to family and gender were thrust on the Nigerian people by the early colonialists (Chuku, 2009). A good example of this is how the colonialists imposed their systems by governing through male authorities while ignoring the female equivalents that had existed in the precolonial era. The colonialists practically removed

the dual sex political systems and weakened the women's sociopolitical organizations, which had provided some checks and balances in the country's political systems (Chuku, 2009). Women in Nigeria then lost their power and authority and ceased remaining active in politics. Colonialism helped create the conditions that women in Nigeria currently face. The result is that Nigeria is patriarchal society – there is a persistent disparity between men and women in access to resources, political voice, and employment resources, and women cannot possess and manage property on their own (Temesgen, 2008). The women's poor socioeconomic status restricts their ability to participate in social and political decisions at the local or national levels.

Tawo et al. (2009) claimed that women have remained the underdogs in Nigeria; they have “remained victims of oppression, discrimination, alienation, humiliation, marginalization and exploitation” (p. 45). The country is male dominated. In the Northern part of the country, many women are in the purdah system of marriage, and in the South, women are marginalized and not included in the decision-making process. Purdah is the practice where women are physically segregated from men, required to cover their bodies, and required to limit activities outside their homes (Tawo et al, 2009). Married women are restricted to their homes so they would not expose themselves to any vices. The suppression of women by men not only affects their opportunities for self-fulfillment, personal development, and achievements, but also hampers opportunities to attain leadership roles in public life (Tawo et al., p. 46). Nigerian women currently have the right to vote and be voted for but they barely participate in the country's political process. This also affects women's ability to access financial resources and regrettably,

to date, even with the different improvements in the laws of Nigeria, eradicating the discriminatory approach against women in the society has not been feasible, especially in political participation (Tawo et al., 2009).

African women, Nigerian women included have always been classified as somewhat invisible (Tawo et al., 2009). Asiyanbola (as cited in Tawo et al., 2009) observed a “high sense of patriarchy and male dominance” in the Western part of Nigeria (Tawo et al., 2009, p. 51). A survey of the Northern region also showed that about 95% of women have no say in decisions that affect them, including political participation. The problem is that Nigerian women have been left out of governance for a long time. Various constitutions that have been put in place from the colonial era (1914 to 1954) excluded women. This was even the situation after Nigeria gained Independence. The Independence Constitution did not create any place for women; they had no role. The 1979 Constitution tried to remedy the situation for women by stipulating in section 39, subsection 1 that there should be no discrimination on the basis on sex. However, Tawo et al. (2009) argued that it did not help much because the Constitution only mandated the no one should be discriminated against and that basis could refer to men or women. The constitution also failed to take into consideration the disadvantages the women have faced for years and did not make any provisions for gender equality and equity.

Okediran, Olujide, and Danesy (2006) agreed that patriarchal societies are the result of Western influence. When the human race began, men and women were bestowed with knowledge and wisdom. However, Okediran et al. argued that it was not until about 2,000 to 3,000 years ago that the creation of knowledge became separate: men

took over the learning and education and “the exclusive preserve of the upper class” (p. 105). The influence of Western science and knowledge over the traditional knowledge of other cultures made “so-called learned men create formal, organized modern religions, which dethroned the feminine principle of power” (Okediran et al., p. 105). The problem is that modern religion is patriarchal, as clearly, women play no role (Okediran et al., 2006). The same applies in the modern society in Nigeria. Men define the law. Few women rise to the bench as judges and justices in courts of law, and as such laws are full of double standards that are unjust to women in Nigeria (Okediran et al., 2006).

Men dominate and control all spheres of Nigerian society. Okediran et al. (2006) revealed that this kind of patriarchal domination d terrible injustice to women by discounting or reducing women’s knowledge and marginalizing their chances in education, academia, political posts, and appointments, and thus reducing women in society as second class citizens or subordinate class” (p. 106). The patriarchal nature of Nigerian society has caused the disempowerment of women and they are now subordinates in societal events. In short, the result of the westernization of developing countries such as Nigeria is “the current exploitation tendencies, poverty syndrome, discrimination, and apathy in sexism and great dangers to the survival of women elitists and illiterate class” (p. 107). Okediran et al. stated that if women in Nigeria are to be empowered to participate in the political affairs of the country, certain barriers must be eliminated. Factors such as poverty and all steps that contribute to impoverishment should be alleviated and this includes the “lost values, norms, ethics and morality” being lost because of western civilization” (Okediran et al., p. 107)

Mixed views exist about the issue gender equality including female political participation and how the issue can be resolved. An important observation of Cornwall (2007) was that although many Western feminists normally base their gender and development interventions on female solidarity and female autonomy, they may just be myths that feminists live by. The scholar did not claim that female solidarity and female autonomy do not exist. However, Cornwall's argument was that to state that women were "inherently co-operative and selfless" and would willingly free themselves from their current situation if they had the means to do so and "act as autonomous sovereign individuals," fails to acknowledge the gender-powered relations that are more of an obstacle than the men (p. 164). As Cornwall observed, it appeared easier for the feminists to hide the frictions between women on those explanatory frameworks that blamed patriarchy as the cause of all women's disagreements rather than to accept that "not only are women's identifications contingent rather than fixed, stable, or enduring but so too are those of men" (p. 164).

Though solidarity, autonomy, and empowerment remain very important feminist keywords, Cornwall (2007) suggested redefining them so they can be used as a way to properly address the deep-seated social inequities. It means going deeper than the assumption that women were "inherently co-operative and if only they had a voice, they would use it in their favor as a group" (Cornwall, 2007, p. 165). Autonomy could also be redefined in more relational terms to include "to participate effectively in shaping the boundaries that define...the field of what is possible" (Cornwall, 2007, p. 165).

Empowerment could mean “renegotiating and re-imagining the boundaries of the possible from within actually existing webs of sociality,” it is not individual decisions (p. 165).

Solidarity, redefined to mean the act of coming together “with a shared concern about issues,” not simply women coming together because of a presumed commonality of interests (Cornwall, 2007, p. 165). Therefore, it is understandable why Cornwall considered solidarity one of the myths of Western feminists. However, the importance of solidarity in changing the unfair, gendered-power balance in African countries cannot be ignored, and this point is illustrated in Okeke-Ihejirika and Franceschet’s (2002) comparison of Chilean and Nigerian women.

Lack of Substantive Unified Women’s Movement

On comparing the achievement of women in Chile to their Nigerian counterparts, Okeke-Ihejirika and Franceschet (2002) alleged that a major difference appears to be a unified women’s movement. State feminism is more probable where a moderately united women’s movement exists with the ability to make political demands, where women are given access to political institutions and where gender philosophies can be revolutionary positioned to confront the marginalization of women (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002). Even though Cornwall suggested that solidarity, along with autonomy and empowerment, may have outlived its usefulness if not adequately redefined. Okeke-Ihejirika and Franceschet considered the lack of solidarity, or the lack of a substantive unified women’s movement as a major reason why women have been marginalized, especially from participating in the political administration Nigeria. Ethnicity has an effect on the types of women’s movements that are created and is the basis by which all

social groups, including women, have access to political institutions (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002).

According to Okeke-Ihejirika and Franceschet (2002), comparative research on state feminism clearly revealed “the importance of broad-based women’s movements in civil society that can display support for goals of gender equity” (p. 454). Women benefit as a group when movements acting on their behalf are able to organize collectively and make political demands; “In other words, women must be able to connect their individual experiences of marginalization or deprivation to broader social or political processes and to formulate collective demands for change” (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002, p. 454).

However, Okeke-Ihejirika and Franceschet (2002) claimed that such movements can only survive depending on the (a) political history, (b) nature of societal divisions, (c) nature (and extent) of economic decline, and (d) crisis (p. 454). The political climate after independence has been very unstable and marked with long periods of military rule. The Islam/Christian divide, as well as ethnic rivalries, continue to undermine efforts to build a stable civil society in Nigeria. The country also has continued to witness an economic downturn since the 1980s. According to Okeke-Ihejirika and Franceschet, a comparative research on state feminism reveals the role women’s movements play in civil societies. While such a movement emerged in Chile to help women, it did not in Nigeria. Organized women are likely to still remain inaccessible to other social movements as long they are no unified opposition movements; as such the women will be most likely

unable to devise the political demands that can bring about gender equity and can place them into the current political discussions (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002).

Madunagu (2008) was of the same belief and declared that Nigeria has always had what are known as women's movements that existed "before, during, and after colonialism" (p. 666). The problem is that many of the so-called movements should be called interest groups because most likely they could not fit did in the "conventional definition of a movement" (Madunagu, 2008, p. 666). The fact is not that the groups do not help address gender inequality issues in a society, but that, some of these groups did or do not have any clear objectives, mission, or vision, and although useful, the groups have little or no organization and therefore are not able to sustain the test of time (Madunagu, 2008).

Related Methodology

In an explorative qualitative study, Sossou (2011) examined Ghanaian women's perception on their lack of political decision making and participation in the governance of their country. The phenomenology methodology was employed. The data collection technique utilized was focus group discussion and demographic survey. Open-ended interviews were used to collect data on the phenomenon of gender equality from the focus group discussions while demographic surveys were used to collect socioeconomic data. The location of the study was Greater Accra and the Volta Regions of Ghana and the regions were chosen for the size of population; the diversity of the cultural, educational, economical, regional, and ethnic patterns; and the heterogeneity of the people and groups. The six focus group discussions used in the study made of 68

participants were purposively selected. The study found that women in Ghana were relegated to the background. They faced cultural, educational, and financial barriers and occupied lower positions in political parties.

Agbalajobi (2009) examined the theoretical standpoint of the discrimination and inequality suffered by women in Nigeria. The current status of women in political sector of Nigeria and the efforts the women have made towards their political empowerment were also reviewed. Agbalajobi identified several problems that women have as they seek to participate in politics and suggested possible ways to measure the political empowerment of women. The conceptual framework used in the study was “representation.” Political representation was described as being different from political participation. Political participation included variables such as voting in elections and contesting public elective offices whereas representation involved “elective/public office held in relation to other representation” (Agbalajobi, 2009, p. 76). The study revealed that women are under-represented in the public life because they have not been political active for years.

In contrast, Chuku (2009) argued that the role of women in Nigeria was diminished after colonization. Chuku examined the political participation of women in a Nigerian society during the four political phases: the precolonial, colonial, decolonization, and post-independence periods and found that role exerted a significant amount of power during the precolonial era. The role of women was substantial and complementary to men prior to colonization. However, some of the power was eroded in the colonial period.

In a qualitative study involving the in-depth interview of 60 purposively selected male and female academic staff, Ogbogu (2011) sought to determine the reasons for gender inequality in academia in Nigeria universities and other institutions of higher education that claimed to be liberal and open-minded; however, their mode of governance was considered “male dominate and patriarchal” (p. 6). The findings indicated that gender inequality could not be attributed to Nigeria alone. It is a worldwide problem. The study revealed that the universities’ recruitment or selection practices were not discriminatory against women. Additionally, the study revealed the problems in Nigerian universities were attributed to factors such as lack of mentoring, poor numeration, and family responsibilities. Universities develop the expertise and high level manpower necessary for growth and national developments and they also provide the skilled personnel for public and private sectors (Ogbogu, 2011). Women have to be part of the national development.

According to Chuku (2009), the origins of this male dominated culture can be conceptualized as a throwback to Nigeria’s colonial history. Nigeria has sustained the British form of government that excluded women from all activities including politics. In addition, despite the numerous efforts to improve the situation, women’s lack of education and wealth, aided by the discriminating laws that have limited women’s access to resources, makes it difficult for women to pursue their interests or embark on political agendas (Dauda, 2007). In a study based on the extensive review of existing published research, Nkomo and Ngambi, 2009 argued the need for further research to understand the status experiences, and possibilities of African women in leadership.

Summary

It is apparent that men dominate women in Nigeria and this transcends into the political arena. If women are to be active in the political process of the country, then the legal, regulatory, cultural, and religious barriers must be removed or at least minimized. In precolonial Nigeria, women wielded political power. Colonialism altered gender relations on the continent, and many claim that it shifted power and placed women at a disadvantage to men.

Women must find ways to participate in the political process. It is true that colonialism disrupted the power that women had in the precolonial era, but it alone cannot continue to be blamed for the gender inequality that persists in Nigeria, or especially for the lack of women's participation in the political administration. Tawo et al. (2009) argued that women in Nigeria must be given autonomy and empowered; their social, economic, and political status would improve if a sustainable system of government that is both transparent and accountable can be achieved. Empowerment is the "social action process that promotes participation of people, organizations, and communities in gaining control over lives in their community and larger society" (Tawo et al., 2009, p. 48). Empowerment must not be misunderstood as domination and should be viewed individually as awareness and action taken collectively. Education and female empowerment must go hand-in-hand since education gives women the power to utilize their knowledge and skills to adapt to change (Tawo et al., 2009). An effective way to improve women's participation in the political administration of Nigeria would be to adopt better education policies that offer equal opportunities for males and females.

However, Nigeria's current equal opportunities programs and policies "often receive lip service at best" (Tawo et al., p. 48). The national policy of education, which was revised in 2004, provided equal education for boys and girls. However, parents do ignore the policy; some prefer to train only their boys because of long held cultural practices. The belief is that the Nigerian government can and should intervene and fully implement the policy. Other obstacles to gender equality include those who see training women as giving them an unfair advantage in the professional setting so women are restricted by limiting them to just some disciplines. The result is that, in 2000, of the 50 million illiterates reported in Nigeria, 30 million were women between 15 and 60 years of age (Tawo et al., 2009, p. 48). Another situation is that the young educated girls made their choice of training under the guidance of their families and peer groups, which limited the roles they play in the labor market when it was time to enter the work force.

Therefore, women are currently underrepresented in the political administration of Nigeria. Women represent only a small percentage of national legislators; they have only occupied 22% of the parliamentary seats in the past and present (Tawo et al., 2009). Efforts made in the 1980s, such as the establishment of the National Policy on Women, a Ministry of Women Affairs, States Commissions for Women, Women Education Units in Ministries of Education, and so on did not produce many results. The scholars alleged that none of the efforts, especially the establishment of the National Policy on Women in the 1980s, helped to eliminate the barriers women face, particularly as it pertains to integrating women in the development of the country. Tawo et al. (2009) claimed that a survey revealed a high sense of patriarchy in the western part of the country. Another

survey conducted in the northern part of the country shows that about 95% of women have no say in major decision that affect them or their children. The same applies to women in politics; their level of participation is low.

Conclusion

Chapter 2 presented scholarly information that provided research based information to inform the research questions and justify the need for this study. The purpose of this proposed basic interpretive qualitative study was to explore and understand the perspectives of Nigerian women as they relate to gender inequality issues that affect Nigerian women's participation in the political sector and key leadership positions. Women are half of the population yet they constitute only about 18% of all members parliament of worldwide (Krook, 2009). Statistics showed that, in contested elections, women in Nigeria were only able to secure 3% representation in 1999, 4% in 2003, and 6% in 2007 (Agbalajobi, 2010).

As the literature suggested, women level of participation in politics is low and women are currently underrepresented in the political administration of Nigeria. Women represent only a small percentage of national legislators. This study is important to address gender inequality based on experiences of women in a developing country. There has been an increase in the level of participation of women in national development but the gender system of Nigeria is still prohibiting women from fully participating in national development (Igwesi, 2012). Women, if enabled, can contribute to the development of Nigeria. It is therefore very important that women are active participants

(Akunyili, 2006; Igwesi, 2012). In Chapter 3, a full and in-depth description of the research design, sampling, procedures for data collection and analysis is presented.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study is to explore and understand the perspectives of Nigerian women as they relate to gender inequality issues that affect Nigerian women's participation in the political sector and key leadership positions. This study sought to fill the research gap by exploring the issues and factors that affect women in their quest to participate in the political administration of Nigeria. In Chapter 3, I present the research procedures that were used to complete this research. This included an explanation of the research design and approach, the appropriateness of the method, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

The following research questions were used to guide the research procedures:

1. How do women describe their participation in the political sector and key leadership positions in Nigeria?
2. What obstacles, if any, do Nigerian women believe restrict their ability to participate in the political sector and other positions of leadership?
3. How does status as it relates to education, economic, and marital issues affect women's ability to participate in political leadership in Nigeria?
4. What kind of resources or strategies need to be implemented to help Nigeria women effectively participate in the political sector?

Research Design

The setting of this study was in Nigeria, Africa. This setting was selected because it is my native country and the source of the problem of this study. The purpose of this

basic interpretive qualitative study is to explore and understand the perspectives of Nigerian women as it relates to gender inequality and issues that affect Nigerian women's participation in the political sector and key leadership positions. The research design is the logical sequence that links data to the study's research problem, initial research questions, and ultimately to its conclusions. Every research method has its strengths and weaknesses, and certain ideas are better studied using some methods than others (Babbie, 2007).

Qualitative research is conducted when people need to be empowered to share their stories or make their voices be heard (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative methods are usually selected when the researcher's intent is to describe and understand a complex phenomenon from the perspective of the participants. Conversely, the quantitative research method is used when the researcher's intent is to seek explanations and predictions that would be used to generalize to other situations (Creswell, 2007).

On evaluating whether what qualitative approach was most suitable or appropriate for this study, several methods were reviewed. The initial design considered for this study was the case study. Merriam (2002) noted that the case study is very similar to other traditions and is often confused. Similarly, the researcher looks for meaning and understanding. However, as Merriam (2002) pointed out, the case study is less of a methodology choice and more of a choice of *what* is to be studied. The "what" is a bounded system in terms of the single entity to be studied, located in a specific place, over a specific time period. For the present study, the case is not clearly defined and there are no boundaries. The participants came from various backgrounds and were not a part

of a specific group or organization. The only commonality is that all the participants were from Nigeria. Therefore, the case study was not the most suitable choice for this study.

Another popular approach reviewed was the phenomenological study. This approach underpins all qualitative research and shares the notions of experience and understanding that other approaches have in common (Merriam, 2002). The key difference is the form of inquiry that attempts to deal with direct or lived experiences of the participants. The shared experiences of different individuals are bracketed, analyzed, and compared to capture the essence of the experience. To understand fully this experience, the researcher has to set aside all preconceived ideas about the phenomenon. Although this choice may provide some valuable insight into the participants' views on the topic, not all of the participants shared the same experience of serving in the political sector or holding positions of leadership. In other words, the participants' experience for the present study may be indirect, and in the phenomenological approach, the researcher is seeking participants who have directly experienced the phenomenon. There is no assurance that each participant experienced gender inequality or bias. Therefore, the phenomenological study is a lesser preferred choice for this study.

Given the number of traditions to select from, this research was organized using the basic interpretative qualitative approach. Briefly explained in Chapter 1, the basic interpretative qualitative study encompasses several traditions, most closely resembling the phenomenological study. This choice is preferred over the others discussed because it exemplifies all the characteristics of qualitative research (Merriam, 2002). Like all the others, data can be collected through interviews, document analysis, or observations. The

key difference in this approach as compared to the others discussed is the focus of the study and the method of inquiry, which is framed by the concepts of the social role theory, the LCT, and African feminism theory.

Characteristics of the basic interpretive qualitative study were explained in a study conducted by Rodehorst-Weber, Wilhelm, Tobacco, and Delapaz (2009). In this basic interpretative study, the focus groups were used to help researchers identify ways to conduct asthma screenings in tribal communities in a manner that would be culturally appropriate and beneficial to them. A group of tribal and community leaders, as well as parents and children from two tribal communities, were invited to participate in the focus group discussions. The researchers explained that an interpretative approach was chosen to aid them in examining how people made sense of their lives and how they defined their situation (Rodehorst-Weber, Wilhelm, Tobacco, & Delapaz, 2009). This method placed emphasis on describing how a phenomenon was perceived and how meaning is constructed in situations. The researchers were able to use interviews, observations, and field notes as ways of interpreting the experiences.

Similarly, Merriam (2009) explained that the researcher wants to understand the meaning that a phenomenon has for everyone involved. Meanings are not discovered but are constructed by engaging in the environment that is being interpreted. Therefore, when using the basic interpretive qualitative study, I was interested in (a) interpreting the experiences of people, (b) constructing their worlds, and (c) the meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall goal is understand “how people make sense of their lives and their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 23).

Using Merriam's (2009) approach, several steps were taken that included (a) collecting data through interviews, (b) data analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns, (c) providing a rich description of the findings, and (d) using references from the literature that provided a framework for the study in the first place. Findings were reported based on the recurring patterns or themes obtained from the data. The interpretations involve the researcher's understanding of the participants meaning attached to the phenomenon under inquiry. In summary, the main objective of a basic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret these meanings.

The Role of the Researcher

As the primary instrument, I carried out all the stages involved in the research, including data collection, data analysis, and report writing. Personal interaction between researchers and participants is crucial in data gathering; therefore, I kept the research focus in mind and strived to remain clear of my role. Singleton and Straits (2005) claimed the role of the researcher is very important because it could determine what the researcher is able to learn. To deal with bias, bracketing was employed (Creswell, 2007) Bracketing is where the researcher endeavors to set aside previous experiences, as much as possible, to assimilate the perspective of the participants. Creswell (2007) maintained that it could be achieved if the researchers first describe their own experiences about the phenomenon and then bracket them out before attempting to deal with the experiences of the participants.

Criteria for Selection of Participants

The job of a good social researcher is to create an effective sampling strategy that is appropriate to the context so that the generalizations made are as convincing as possible to as many as is practical (Trochim, 2001). This purposeful sampling consisted of 10 women who met any or all of the following criteria:

- Must be over 21 years of age or over and female.
- Presently hold or have held a political office within the past 3 years.
- Have been involved in the political sector (i.e., ran for public office, campaign manager) within the past 3 years.
- Presently hold or have held a leadership position in the public sector within the past 3 years.
- Must be able to communicate in English.

Purposeful sampling is useful when the researcher seeks to reach a target sample quickly and where getting the opinions of the target population is the objective (Trochim, 2001). Merriam (2002) argued that it is important to select individuals from which one can learn a great deal about the issues central to the purpose of the study, thus the term purposeful sampling. Therefore, to understand the views of women in the political sector and other administrative positions, I only selected women whom I believed were able to provide rich information on the topic. The primary aim was to find participants who were accessible, willing to provide information, could shed light on the issue being explored, and could provide valuable information to address the research questions of this study.

With regard to sample size, I used 10 participants for the personal interviews. Many researchers differ as to what is an appropriate sample size (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002). The key point in qualitative research is to select enough participants to assure that readers and the researcher are likely to hear most or all of the perceptions that may provide valuable insight. In other words, the smaller the sample size, the narrower the range of perceptions; whereas, if the sample size is too large, the researcher risks discovering a perception that would add value to the research. Nastasi (n.d.) of Walden University said that when deciding the appropriate sample size, the researcher should consider whether sample is large enough to reach saturation and whether sample is large enough to represent the variation within the target population. Nastasi recommended a sample size of 10 unless the point of saturation is accomplished before all participants have been interviewed.

The 10 participants of this study were women residing in Nigeria who met the criteria previously mentioned. Upon approval by Walden University IRB (approval #05-21-13-0036292), 10 participants were invited via email or telephone to participate. The process continued until I had at least 10 respondents who were willing to participate in the study. The participants were also selected based on the basis of their knowledge in the subject matter and their experiences. These individuals ranged in ages from 21 and over. These individuals were accessible and through casual conversations expressed a desire to voice their opinions and beliefs as a part of this study. They were women from different educational and socioeconomic backgrounds, but all well-known throughout the local

district for their community involvement in the political sector and holding positions in leadership.

Data Collection

Data collection is a series of interrelated activities with the purpose of gathering information needed to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2007). The primary data source for this was generated from in-depth individual interviews.

The interview process provides the researcher with the opportunity to gather in-depth information and ask probing and follow-up questions (Trochim, 2001).

Upon approval by IRB, the participants were invited to participate either by email or by phone. The letter of invitation included the following information: (a) an introductory paragraph along with the purpose of the study, (b) a brief description of what her participation involved, (c) the projected length of time required to complete the interview, (d) any risks and inconveniences, (e) benefits, and (f) a statement describing how I planned to protect the participant's confidentiality. A final statement explained that participants were under no obligation to participate, and there were no negative consequences if they withdraw. If participants agreed to participate, they were asked to sign a consent form that included the same information in the letter of invitation. I informed the participants of the plan to conduct an approximately 1 to 2-hour informal semistructured interviews at a location that was mutually agreed upon. The participants were also informed that the interviews would be recorded for later transcriptions and analysis.

Qualitative interviews for this basic interpretative study were used to explore the participants' experiences and interpretations in an effort to bring meaning to their perspectives (Hatch, 2002). These semistructured interviews were digitally recorded for uploading directly to the computer for transcribing and storage. The interviews were considered semistructured because I had a list of prepared guiding questions opened to probing and following the leads of the participants. All prepared questions were open-ended designed to get the participants talking about their experiences and understanding.

The initial interview questions were aligned with the research questions of this study (Appendix C). Opening background questions were asked to get the interview started and to establish for the record that the participants met the criteria. The initial question asked, "Why don't you begin by telling me something about yourself?" This line of questions was followed by the essential questions aimed to get to the purpose of the study and to address the research questions. Each interview was expected to last for approximately 1 hour or longer and largely depended upon the participant's response. Field notes were made during the interviews of key phrases or points that may have required follow up or additional probing. The field notes also helped keep track of the questions asked and where to go next in the interview. All data from the interviews were processed as soon as possible following each interview.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a systematic approach for examining, organizing, and categorizing data in search for meaning (Hatch, 2002). This process allowed me to identify themes, see patterns, develop relationships, make interpretations, and draft

explanations for the problem of the study. Immediately following the interview or as soon as possible, I listened to the interview tapes to make sure that tapes were audible and interviews were properly completed. The tapes were then transcribed. All transcripts were reviewed while listening to the recordings to assure accuracy in transcribing.

All transcripts were saved in Microsoft Word rich text format for uploading into the Atlas ti 6.0 qualitative software. Atlas ti is designed to do several functions and is fundamentally a tool to assist the researcher in handling relatively large amounts of research materials. These functions include storing, indexing, coding, and annotating the data (Atlas ti User's Guide, 2004). Although the process for using Atlas ti may vary with user, the main steps entailed creating a project called a hermeneutic unit (HU) where all files, findings, and codes were stored under an assigned a name. I assigned the text documents as a primary document or PD. The PDs represented the text that was interpreted, saved, and stored in data files on the computer. When the PD was uploaded, I read and selected text passages or significant phrases of further interest, assigned key words (codes), and wrote memos that contained thoughts about the data. These data were compared data based on the codes assigned.

From all indications in the literature reviewed, there was no single best way to discover themes or code data. However, the themes were identified using various strategies. This included reading and rereading transcripts, looking at word repetitions in the transcripts, in-depth, line-by-line scrutiny of the text, and comparing large blocks of data for commonalities and similarities. Finally, a rich, descriptive, written report based on the information gathered was compiled and presented in Chapter 4.

In qualitative research, there is a likelihood that a participant's responses may contradict or run counter to any particular category or specific pattern. This is referred to as deviant data or discrepant cases. All data considered to be significant were reported and were considered for further probing or follow up.

Issues of Trustworthiness

To be trustworthy, research needs to be valid and reliable (Merriam, 2009). The extent to which the research findings are credible is also important; therefore the trustworthiness of a study equally depends on the credibility of the researcher. To address credibility, several measures were taken so that the interpretations were not only credible, but also transferable (Merriam, 2009). Credibility is an assessment of whether or not the findings reported represents a believable or truthful interpretation of the data drawn from the participants' original data. Transferability is the degree to which the findings of this study can apply or transfer beyond the bounds to other similar situations. These measures included member checking, peer review, and audit trail. When member checking, the participants were provided the opportunity to review a summary of their transcribed interpretations for accuracy of their perspectives. In addition, I requested a peer to review a sample of the transcripts and provide honest feedback on the findings. Revisions were made to correct any discrepancies. A detailed account of the methods and the procedures used and how the results were arrived at were maintained in chapter 4. Finally, the dissertation committee members served as peer reviewers and all feedback received from them were properly addressed.

With regard to the researcher/participant relationship, I had an ethical responsibility to select participants who added value to the study and built a working relationship with them. There was open and honest communication with the participants of this study. Proper steps were taken to bracket my perspectives to control personal biases that could have distorted the interpretation of the participants' perspectives. Bracketing, a term commonly used in phenomenological research, requires that the researcher suspend or be aware of own personal biases, assumptions, or preconceived ideas to be open and receptive to the participant's views (Hatch, 2002).

Measures for Ethical Protection of Participants

I had to take many ethical issues into consideration. Guidelines for the ethical protection of participants were followed to assure that all ethical implications established by the IRB are addressed. Although IRB scrutinized the research proposals, as I was ultimately responsible for protecting the participants, I did not deliberately subject any of the participants to any substantial risk or harm. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study and provided the option to participate voluntarily. Each participant was given a consent form, which addressed the purpose of the study, how the study was conducted, and a statement of foreseeable risk and benefits. All signed consent forms, along with other artifacts such as the transcripts, notes, confidentiality forms, and tape recordings, were properly stored in a secured and protected area for the duration of the study. Backup copies were made in case of damage or loss. Any Word documents stored on the computer are password protected and I am the only person who is able to access the information. These tapes and documents are available to the dissertation committee

members. The participants were made aware of their specific pseudonyms so they can recognize their own comments when they are given the opportunity to review the initial report. This is important because data collected should not be traceable to the participants as this will maintain their right to privacy (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). All field notes, audio recordings, transcripts, electronic data, and narrative coding will remain with me for a period of 7 years after which they will be destroyed.

To further protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, the professional transcriber and research assistant were asked to sign a confidentiality statement. The specific public office held by each participant and the exact work location was not identified. All participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and they would be allowed to discontinue with the study at any time they became uncomfortable or experienced stress during the process. These principles could not ensure ethical issues would not occur. In the event that ethical issues occurred, the incidents and ethical issues were reported immediately.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study was to explore and understand the perspectives of Nigerian women as it related to gender inequality and issues that affected Nigerian women in the political sector and key leadership positions. Chapter 3 provided an in depth discussion on the methodology that was used to collect and analyze the data. The research design was described, along with the researcher's role, and clearly laid out the course of action from the research design through the data collection to the data analysis process. Chapter 4 presents the research findings.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study was to explore and understand the perspectives of Nigerian women as they relate to gender inequality issues that affect Nigerian women's participation in the political sector and key leadership positions. To guide the data collection and analysis process, there were four research questions:

1. How do women describe their participation in the political sector and key leadership positions in Nigeria?
2. What obstacles, if any, do Nigerian women believe restrict their ability to participate in the political sector and other positions of leadership?
3. How does status as it relates to education, economic, and marital issues affect women's ability to participate in political leadership in Nigeria?
4. What kind of resources or strategies need to be implemented to help Nigeria women effectively participate in the political sector?

To address the research questions, interviews were conducted with 10 Nigerian women who held or had previously held positions of leadership in the political sector. The setting was Nigeria, and because of geographical locations involving distance of the participants to me, seven interviews were conducted via Skype video conferencing and three were via face-to-face. All of the interviews took place within the confines of their personal residency. The participants were very willing and uniquely positioned to participate. There were no known instances or organizational conditions that impacted the interviews, interpretations, or outcome of this study.

Each participant who agreed to participate signed and returned the consent form with her signature. Each participant was informed that the interview would be recorded for later transcriptions and analysis. All data inclusive of electronic data, field notes, transcripts, and interview forms were safely stored in a locked file cabinet. The computer used was password protected. All data were preserved and will be saved for the required period of 5 years, after which all data will be destroyed. The results from the data analysis are presented in this chapter beginning with the demographics and a summary of the interviews.

Demographics

The female participants were 10 native Nigerians who presently lived or had lived and worked in Nigeria. Most of the women were highly educated and seemed well informed about the political climate in Nigeria. All of the participants had held key leadership positions and most had participated in the political administration of Nigeria. Two of the participants held elected positions, three held cabinet level (appointed) positions, one held no political appointment position, and the remaining six had political appointments. The participant who held no political appointment was a state coordinator for an organization that was an initiative of the First Lady, her Excellency, Dame Patience Jonathan, a sociocultural organization that aimed to enlighten women by helping them progress economically and politically. She worked with various politicians in different local governments and helped place women in special appointments and/or obtain elected positions. The participant expressed that there were not many women in these positions because men have dominated them. She aimed to get all women under

“one umbrella and to learn to pull together.” To protect the privacy and confidentiality of the interviews, all participants were assigned fictitious names. A brief summary of each participant’s educational level, present position, and political positions are presented in Table 1.

Data Collection

Upon approval by Walden’s IRB, I personally extended the invitation to each participant via email and/or telephone. Each participant who expressed interest was emailed a copy of the informed consent form, which outlined the elements and terms of the study. All participants agreed to voluntarily participate in the study and the times were arranged for the interviews. Data were collected through interviews of ranging from 45 minutes to 1 hour in length. Three of the interviews were conducted face-to-face in the United States, while the other seven interviews were via Skype from Nigeria. All participants were natural born Nigerians, over 21 years of age, and spoke English fluently. The interview questions consisted of open-ended questions relating to the research questions and subject matter of this study.

Immediately following each interview or as soon as possible thereafter, I listened to make sure that the digital tape retrieved from Skype was audible and interviews were properly completed. There were no unusual circumstances encountered during data collection. All interviews were digitally recorded with an average time of 55 minutes. Data were transcribed, and the 10 transcripts were saved in Microsoft Word rich text format for indexing and coding.

Table 1

Summary of Demographics

Participants	Education level	Present position	Political position
Alice	Graduate degree	State officer	Appointed
Betty	Bachelors degree	State officer	None
Catherine	Graduate degree	Executive officer	Elected
Doris	Graduate degree	Civil service	Appointed
Elaine	Bachelors degree	Civil service	Appointed
Frances	Bachelors degree	State officer	Appointed
Georgia	Graduate degree	State officer	Appointed
Harriet	Graduate degree	Former executive officer	Appointed
Iris	Graduate degree	Former congresswoman	Elected
Joan	Bachelors degree	Local government officer	Appointed

Note: All names are pseudonyms that were assigned to protect the privacy of the participants.

Data Analysis

At the completion of the interviews, recorded data were transcribed, saved in Word documents, and uploaded to Atlas ti 6.0 qualitative data analysis software for storing and managing the transcripts. With the aid of ATLAS.ti, I examined and highlighted the transcripts for significant similarities, patterns, and themes. Data were

analyzed using the methods ascribed by Merriam (2002). During the data analysis process, I identified qualitatively separate categories that described the views and experiences of the participants relevant to their participation in political leadership in Nigeria. All of these categories were found in the interview transcriptions. One example of a coded transcript is shown in Appendix D. This was done for each transcript.

Several steps were taken to arrive at the themes. I first became familiar with the material by reading the transcripts repeatedly. This step was important to make corrections in the transcripts and get a deeper sense of what the participants were trying to say. I then compiled answers from participants to certain interview questions to identify the most significant elements in the answers they gave and to find the central parts of the dialogues. I highlighted the responses in different colors. Similar answers were grouped together and placed in categories. I made a preliminary comparison of the categories between individual for similarities and patterns across interviews. Based on key phrases and statements derived from the interview questions, several categories and emerging themes were established for each participant (see Table 2).

Table 2

Summary of Categories and Themes

Participant	Categories	Emerging themes
Alice	Challenges Marital life Political status Husband support Employment policies Career aspirations	Inequity in appointments Gender inequity Financially stable Salary inequity High expectations of wife Stable marriage Male domination No employment policy High aspirations
Betty	Profession Finances marital life Political status Employment policies	Women in leadership Financial inequalities Educational advantages Marital dilemmas
Catherine	Challenges Educational Marital life Political status Husband support Employment policies Career aspirations	Educational advantages Leverage financial dilemma Career conflict female Sponsorship Sponsorship retirement Legislative leadership
Doris	Challenges Educational Marital life Political status Husband support Employment policies	Civil service Husband support Financial status Higher positions

(table continues)

Participant	Categories	Emerging themes
Elaine	Career aspirations Challenges Educational Marital life Political status Husband support Employment policies Career aspirations	Civil service worker Seeking retirement Husband support Marriage is necessary
Francis	Challenges Affirmative action Educational Background Economics Marital status Career aspirations	Political Racial equality Elected positions Financial instability Husband support Career advancement Legislation
Georgia	Challenges Educational Background Economics Marital status Career aspirations Political climate	Political Elected positions Financial instability Husband support
Harriet	Challenges Gender Professional priority Educational background Economics Challenges	Qualifications high Husband support Career advancement Gender sensitivity training
Iris	Gender Professional priority Educational background Economics	Political Gender inequity Unmarried
Joan	Challenges Educational background Economics Marital status Career aspirations	Gender inequity Male dominance Political representation

As shown in Table 2, there were more than 50 emerging themes and categories derived from the interview responses. The following sections represent the essence of the interviews and excerpts from the interview transcripts are presented.

Alice

The first interview was conducted with Alice via Skype. Alice is well educated with a graduate degree. She is married with children and is currently a government employee. Alice explained that she faced many challenges because of male domination; however, because of her career in Civil Service, she gained lots of support: “I was fortunate enough in my career that as a civil servant, to have a lot of support. The head of my department recommended me to the commissioner. Some men are appointed who do not have degrees.”

Alice’s greatest concern was related to the unfairness in political appointments. She felt that women needed more qualifications to compete with the men. She said, “The system is manipulated by men. It is male dominated system.” With regards to policies being in place to support the women, Alice maintained that the women were not always aware of them. She stated that “more women should be encouraged to apply” to positions of leadership. When asked to describe the current political climate as it relates to women in Nigeria holding office, she explained, “Elections are associated with violence. Policies should be in place to control the violence between the different parties.” In spite of the challenges, she faced, Alice still expressed high hopes for a future in politics: “I want to make it to the top of the political ladder and to develop economic and employment

policies and to learn how to get involved in politics. Women need to be at the same level. Women need information to gain access to the politics.”

Betty

The second participant was Betty, a married woman with children. Well educated, Betty holds a science degree. She currently is working with a nonprofit organization, a nonelected position. She stated that “it is something that I want to do. There is a political undertone. Women are about change. We want to secure something.” Similar to Alice, Betty felt that political positions were male dominated and men felt that women should not be empowered: “They do not call you for meetings because you are not supposed to be there.” A major concern of Betty’s was getting other women involved. She said, “Women need to love one another and support one another.” With regard to finance and marriage, Betty felt women cannot affect change: “Men spend the money. Women make their family the priority, men do not think like that. We do not have the money to spend.”

Comparing men with women, Betty said that women consider family first. She asserted that “Men do not see it that way, family comes second.” Continuing, Betty believed that women should offer more support for one another and should believe in their fellow women. Betty complained that women do not support their fellow women: “I don’t know if it’s jealousy or envy. That is a major problem.” She said her responsibility is to create awareness for the women and to tell them what can be achieved working together as women. It goes a long way. She felt that support and understanding is needed from the husbands. She told me, “My husband is my mentor. He guides me.”

Regarding employment for women in Nigeria, Betty claimed that she is fighting for change and better conditions. She feels women need jobs and should be given the opportunity. She claims that though her program is helping, more needs to be done to help women participate. Women have not made significant gains, and according to her, “We must empower the women through the programs. It is important for women to come out and learn to achieve. Women must learn to be empowered.” Betty acknowledged that most elected positions at the federal level were men, and she believes that the creation of more gender awareness programs will help alleviate gender discrimination.

Catherine

Catherine, an executive officer in an elected position, is married with children and grandchildren. Catherine, who has been in her position for several years, is of the opinion that although the men did not protest openly, they felt her standards were really too hard. “I did not compromise my standards.” Catherine claimed that politics was very demanding. “It requires meeting at all times and meeting with other men who think women are not serious.” She explained that her financial situation was good. When I asked her about the current political climate for women holding political positions in Nigeria, She replied, “You need someone to sponsor you. Women are to be seen and not heard.”

Catherine was looking forward to retirement and felt that empowerment of women will come through education. “I feel good, I came up early in my career, many men desired that position. Just one more year and I can resign.” She believed that women

become empowered through school and said she asserted that women should be encouraged to go back to school. "It is possible for them to lead."

Doris

Doris worked in a state agency and is married with children. She described her present position as an appointed position, but that she not in politics. She says that her only challenge is to "get to the peak of my career... the waiting and the anxiety of getting to the position." Doris said that "political party has a lot to do with money." However, she acknowledged that her present economic status was good: "God has been good, not so many women are that lucky. Majority of women have to scrap to make ends meet. Some opportunities have been available to me."

With regard to marital status and leadership, she stated that marital status does to an extent affect women's leadership in politics. Most political meetings where the important decisions are made are held late at night and married women cannot attend them. In her case, she states "So far I have been able to manage" According to her, in Nigeria, arrangements can be made with husbands and family members to help and "besides some of these men are glad to see their women in high positions." Continuing on, Doris said, that in a state House of Assembly, there are only three women. In the National Assembly, "they use the women to garnish the crowd."

Affirmative action programs have not helped. Women are not discouraged from political leadership but they are not given a chance and they are not utilizing the available opportunities. Women are not encouraging each other; they also lack the courage to embark on political leadership. Similar to Catherine, Doris is looking forward to

retirement next year. “In the civil service, you retire either after the completion of 35 years of service or 60 years of age. I am setting up a business to keep me economically alive.”

Elaine

Elaine was married with children and currently works as a civil servant, which she explained, is an appointment that has nothing to do with politics. “It is not a political appointment because I am a civil servant, the Governor appointed. Elaine explained that politics in Nigeria is largely affected by marital status: “You must be married to husbands who have the money. No one really wants women to be in politics. Men have the money.” She acknowledged that though some men are supportive but many men do not support their wives getting into politics.

Elaine felt that women are economically constrained “because many women do not have the financial resources unless they are married.” She felt that marital status could also act as a barrier, because not all men are supportive of their wives. In regard to leadership positions, Elaine felt that women should be encouraged to go to school. “Many are discouraged because of their husbands and lack of finances.” Elaine is looking forward to retirement; however, she admitted that, in future, she would like to seek a career in politics.

Frances

Frances is an educator, “proudly” married with children, all of whom are graduates or undergraduates. She holds an appointed position in a state agency: “In obtaining this position I didn’t have many problems, but I think it was mainly because it

was an appointed position. “I am an educator by profession. In fact, I have taught for so many years and I’ve been in women’s organizations.” This is before she was appointed to her present political position.

Continuing, Frances expressed concern about women lagging behind. “They’ve had to take care of children and take care of the household and not had education.” Now women work side by side with men.” She believed that here educational background is a major factor in her success. Similar to other participants, Frances feels that it is a man’s world: “It’s not like in America. In Nigeria, the kind of politics, whether you are appointed or elected in a position, it is a man’s world what we are trying to break now.”

With regard to her marital status affecting her, Frances said, “Actually, I think I am one of the lucky ones, because I have a very understanding husband. One thing I always tell women, ‘Try to be trusted by your husbands.’” Frances believed that women must work to empower themselves. She acknowledged there are many struggles unique to women, such as having marital issues.

Georgia

Georgia currently works with the government. Like the other participants, she is well educated and holds a master’s degree in science. This position is a political appointment. She is married and currently working on a PhD degree. Georgia attributed her education to getting her position.

With regard to pay, Georgia said, “In my present position as a public servant, I get paid like other public servants.” She stated that her present marital status is good: “Well, I will say that I am lucky because my husband understands. He allows me to do my job

very well.” She did express concern for many other women and continue to promote and encourage other women to get involved in politics. Continuing, she said,

We want to encourage them [women] to get high positions . . . men will be rising and rising and women are down there, but now things are changing. Women have access to political leadership. I know women want to join the process but their husbands will not let them and discourages them.

Georgia described her present position as a political appointment. “My position is one of multitasking because it involves the physical, what people can achieve. In this era of greening, the task is quite challenging.” She believed that her educational background in her field contributed to her getting her position. What she is currently doing is related to her major in college.

I asked Georgia, under what circumstances did she think it would be feasible in Nigeria for a political future in Nigeria. Georgia felt confident that if given an opportunity she would pursue a political career: “We are finding that women are getting up there. There are more women now in power and in high positions.” Georgia believed that her future depended largely on the present leader and his leadership

Harriet

Harriet currently works with an education institution and said she never held an elected position and is no politician: “I spent my formative years in Nigeria, up to college graduation. I came to the United States to do my graduate work and stayed on to teach here.” I’ve had a nominated position. I served as an executive officer for the Federal Republic of Nigeria and resigned to continue to fulfill my professional commitment.”

Harriet claimed she did not face any challenges, “in fact I resigned that position because I wasn’t a career politician and involved in any way in the political scene in Nigeria.”

Harriet believed that most of her success stemmed from her educational qualifications and not necessarily gender related. She added, “He [President] admired people who are well educated.”

Harriet said she could not imagine who would recommend her for an appointment, but in retrospect it turned out that the president knew she had the skills and competence. He was trying to reinvigorate the sector I was appointed to oversee, there were some of the foundational work involved and he advocated me to get some of the key things that he wanted done in record time. He was also trying to increase the number of women in his cabinet and his administration.

Harriet described herself as an excellent executive officer and served during the time when her country struck oil, suggesting there were available monies. She believed that gender sensitivity training should be implemented for men, women, and children as opposed to waiting for new laws and legislation: “In the final analysis, we are organic beings, and it’s all in a day’s work when we see ourselves confronted with these challenges.”

Iris

Iris is currently in the legal industry with a graduate degree. Iris asserted that she was previously elected to a political position before she went into the private sector.

Continuing, she said,

For a woman getting elected it's difficult. It doesn't matter which country. But for here it's especially so because many reasons. For one, it's the economic power that women don't really have. I need money for an election. For a woman, you have to work extra hard. That's just the basic reality. You have to go the extra mile and work harder. Our culture is male dominated.

Iris said she met challenges as an elected official, she maintained that for a woman to excel in a field that is dominated by males, she has to work extra hard. Though Iris is not sure education played a role in obtaining her position but it is important if you want to be productive. For elected positions, money plays a huge role in politics in Nigeria but for appointed positions she claimed that is more of "whom you know- the women's political connections." Economic power is important. Once in power, constituents depend on you for their financial needs and that can be draining. She equally claims that Nigeria does not have a good affirmative program. All that is talked about is how to empower women but more needs to be done. There are not adequate programs to ensure that at least a minimum number of women are in leadership positions.

Joan

Joan works in a local government agency, and is married with children. Her position is a political appointment. Joan claimed that she faced numerous challenges, but mainly gender stigma. She claimed that she vied for an elected position but felt she did not get the position because she was a woman. She believed that she did not get the position she wanted because the men were not prepared to take orders for a woman. Home was another challenge. "A woman has to coordinate her home and her

responsibilities at work. Women need an understanding husband.” Joan indicated that women get high-ranking offices in areas such as education, health, education, gender and welfare; however, not fairly represented in other high political offices, such as in House of Assembly.

Joan posited that the current political climate is not conducive for women: “The factors that discourage women for obtaining key leadership positions are money and discrimination affects the women’s morale.” She believed that women are not given equal opportunity and said she wants gender equality tackled through the enactment of laws: “If it is done then women will have less limitations and equal rights and be more empowered.”

The interview data were compared for similarities and patterns. The analysis presented seven major themes: Underrepresentation of women in the political sector, gender inequality, male dominance, women empowerment, spousal support/approval, financial support, and legislation reform. The analyzed responses indicated that majority of the women felt they were underrepresented in the political administration of Nigeria. Gender equality, male dominance and the lack of financial support were the main obstacles that the women believed restricted their ability to participate in the political sectors and other positions of leadership. Many of the participants felt that their educational backgrounds empowered them, but it was not a defining factor for them getting elected. For example, five of the participants did not have terminal degrees, yet these women held or had held political leadership positions.

Financial support was determined to be more of a factor. The cost of a political campaign was expensive as explained by the women. Spousal support/approval was also considered very important. The resources or strategies that need to be implemented to help women so they can effectively participate in the political sector were legislative intervention and gender sensitivity training for everyone. Other recommendations offered include women groups and the use of NGOs to help women participate in the political administration of Nigeria.

Results

In the context of the present study, the following results represented the shared experiences of women who advocated and lobbied for political space for women within the political parties. One of the participants summarized the necessity of this platform, “women should be empowered and encouraged to aspire for political leadership and governance positions, which is critical to societal and human development.” A discussion of the results in relation to each research question is the focus of this section.

The first research question asked how women describe their participation in the political sector and key leadership positions in Nigeria. Each participant described her participation by the positions she held or previously held in four ways: elected, appointed/nominated, civil service, or neither. From personal knowledge of Nigeria government, being a political appointee means positions appointed by politicians. Politically elected positions include presidency, governorships, and parliamentary seats. The information obtained indicated that at least seven of the participants had or presently held an appointed or nominated position, one elected position, one elected to a

nonpolitical post, and one not at all. Two people currently held Civil Service positions. Based on these findings, the main theme was *underrepresentation of women*.

The second research examined the obstacles Nigerian women believe restrict their ability to participate in the political sector and other positions of leadership. The responses were unanimous. All of the participants believed that *gender inequality*, *male dominance*, and lack of *financial support* were the major themes. One participant referred to differences in how women were treated as “gender stigmatism.” One participant indicated that being *highly educated* was likely to increase the woman’s chances of being appointed or elected. They believed that education was empowering other restrictions included nonsupport from dominant husbands and heavy family obligations. Although most felt that many husbands were perceived as barriers to their progress, at least four of the women reported that their husbands were supportive.

The third research question examined how education, economics, and marital status affect women ability to participate in political leadership. All of the women were well educated, as presented in their individual profiles. Each held at least one university degree. Education was viewed as *empowering*. Two of the participants held law degrees and one was a practicing litigation lawyer. They all indicated that education was one factor in obtaining political leadership positions, but not the deciding factor. One participant said she knew other people who held political offices in Nigeria who did not have terminal degrees. Recently, “I actually saw a senator, who represented my constituency, and some people attacked him because of his educational qualifications to be a senator.” That is, he did not have the educational qualifications to be a senator

(Harriet, 2013). Continuing, Harriet said the senator brought his high school certificate on TV and said that was the minimal requirement needed to be a senator and to hold political offices in Nigeria. Harriet stressed that compared to men, women had to be highly educated to be considered for elected positions (2013).

With regard to education, similar to Iris, Harriet felt that being educated was important but her education alone was not sufficient to address the problem. The premise was that even if a woman was well educated and did not have a “war chest” [money] to go through a very competitive election, she would not be elected. “If she does not have the war chest then she is not going very far in the gender-biased environment. They are not going to give her the nomination.”

Harriet seemed to suggest that money was a key factor in political success. Seven of the women expressed this; they felt money was certainly a factor. The general feeling among the women was that the cost to campaign is very expensive. Women would have a challenge raising money as opposed to men. With regard to marriage, all of the women believed that support from the husband was very important; yet only four of the married women indicated that they had full support.

The fourth research question asked what kind of resources or strategies need to be implemented to help Nigerian women effectively participate in the political sector. Although a number of suggestions were offered, few seemed to agree on any single proven strategy that would effectively increase women political participation in politics. Harriet suggested gender sensitivity training, while yet another participant considered women pulling together and forming a group. Another suggestion was a program that

empowers women economically and financially. Yet, another participant suggested legislative intervention.

Discrepant Cases

In qualitative research, discrepancy may occur when participants' responses run counter to any particular category or specific pattern. Although this study did not present any surprises or clear cases of discrepancy, it was interesting to hear that one participant suggested that being elected or appointed may be more related to qualifications rather than gender. For example, Harriet believed that most of her success stemmed from her educational qualifications and not necessarily gender related. She added, "He [the President] admires people who are well educated."

Another discrepancy seemed to be with responses to the fourth research question. When I asked participants what kind of resources or strategies need to be implemented to help Nigeria women effectively participate in the political sector, I received different replies. None of the participants seemed to agree on any single proven strategy that would effectively increase women political participation in politics.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

To address credibility, several measures were taken so that the interpretations were not only credible, but also transferable. These measures included member checking and peer review. After data were transcribed, the participants were provided an opportunity to review a summary of their transcribed interpretations for accuracy via email. None of the participants chose to review transcripts; however, one participant requested that I let her know the outcome of the study. In addition, I requested a

colleague with her PhD to review a sample of the transcripts and provide honest feedback on the findings. Suggestions were made on how to present the narrative. Finally, the dissertation committee members continue to serve as peer reviewers.

Guidelines for the ethical protection of the participants were followed to ensure that all ethical implications established by the IRB were addressed. None of the participants was subjected to any substantial risk or harm. All participants were properly informed of the purpose of the study and participated voluntarily. All signed consent forms along with other artifacts such as the transcripts, notes, confidentiality forms, and tape recording were properly stored in a secured and protected area where they will remain for the duration of the study.

Summary

In this chapter, the results of the study were presented, including the participants' demographics, and the results for the four research questions. The purpose of the study was to explore and understand the perspectives of Nigerian women as they relate to gender inequality issues that affect Nigerian women's participation in the political sector and key leadership positions. The participants were 10 native Nigerians who presently lived or had lived and worked in Nigeria. The data source was the digital taped semistructured interview. Data were transcribed, analyzed, and coded in search of common patterns and themes.

The answers to the first research question presented in this research study showed that women felt they were underrepresented in the political administration of Nigeria. The answers to the second research question revealed that gender equality, male

dominance and the lack of financial support were the main obstacles that restrict the ability of women to participate in the political sectors and other positions of leadership. The answers to the third research question showed that although education empowered women, it was not a defining factor. There were women without terminal degrees in political leadership positions. Finances were determined to be more of a factor. The cost of a political campaign is expensive and the spousal support was considered very important. The fourth research question that examined the resources or strategies that need to be implemented to help women so they can effectively participate in the political sector recommended initiatives such as legislative intervention, gender sensitivity training for everyone. Other recommendations suggested by the participants include the use of women's support groups. The results of this study presented seven major themes: Underrepresentation in the political process, gender inequality, male dominance, women empowerment, spousal support/approval, financial support, and legislation reform. The interpretations of findings are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

The focus of Chapter 5 is to provide a summary of the findings, conclusions, recommendations, and social significance of this study based on the insights gleaned from the personal interviews conducted. This body of research focused on gender inequality of women in Nigeria relating to women's participation in the political sector and key leadership positions in Nigeria. A basic interpretative qualitative study design was employed to gain deeper insights into the problem and generate ideas about solutions to gender inequality in Nigeria among women. Data were generated from primarily two sources, personal interviews and an in-depth literature search, which included a review of documents from governmental and NGOs. Personal interviews were conducted with 10 women purposefully selected from different administrative and political sectors of Nigeria.

The results of the analysis presented seven major themes: underrepresentation of women in political administration, gender inequality, male dominance, women empowerment, spousal support/approval, financial support, and legislation reform. The participants across the interviews believed women were underrepresented in the political administration of Nigeria. Gender equality, male dominance, and the lack of financial support were the main obstacles that the women believed restricted their ability to participate in the political sectors and other positions of leadership. Many of the participants felt that their educational backgrounds empowered them, but it was not a defining factor for their getting elected. Financial support was determined to be more of a factor. The cost of a political campaign was expensive, explained the women. Spousal

support/approval was also considered very important. The women felt that legislative intervention and gender sensitivity training were necessary for everyone. Other recommendations offered included women groups and the use of NGOs to help women.

Interpretation of the Findings

The problem this qualitative study sought to address was gender inequality and issues that affect Nigerian women, specifically those in key leadership positions and in the political sector of Nigeria. The contention was that many African governments, including Nigeria, have failed to protect the rights of women and advance gender equality, especially in key social, economic, and political sectors (Chamley, 2011). At the onset of this study, women were still facing an uphill struggle when it comes to political participation. Although many international laws recognized and gave rights to women to participate in politics, this participation still remained very low in Africa, including Nigeria (Chuku, 2009; Nebolisa, 2009).

The first research question of this study asked how women describe their participation in the political sector and key leadership positions in Nigeria. Each participant described her participation in the political sector by the position she held or had held previously. The findings suggested that African women continue to be underrepresented in all structures of power and decision-making. The information obtained indicated that 70% of the participants had or presently held an appointed or nominated position; however, only one woman had held an elected position. From personal knowledge of Nigeria government, being a political appointee means positions selected by lawmakers based on their affiliations. Politically elected positions include

presidency, governorships, and parliamentary seats. Based on these findings, the main theme was underrepresentation of women.

The findings were consistent with the literature and clearly suggested that little has changed in recent years. Women continue to remain underrepresented in the political administration of Nigeria. For instance, for 27 years, 1980 to 2007, women have not had more than 8.3% representation in the National Assembly. In 1980, out of the 57 seats in the Senate, 56 men were elected and one woman was elected, and there were 442 men and three women in the House of Representatives for the same period (Agbalajobi, 2009). Of the 10 women interviewed in the present study, only one woman was elected.

The second research question examined the obstacles that Nigerian women believed restricted their ability to participate in the political sector and other positions of leadership. This question generated a significant number of responses, which allowed for some general comparisons between the participants with regard to the status of women's leadership and an overview of the challenges women face. The main themes garnered from analysis were gender inequality, male dominance, and the lack of financial support. These themes were totally consistent with the literature.

Historically, Nigerian women face enormous barriers to their entry into politics (Okpara, 2006). Once elected or appointed, they may face additional barriers to their performance, including discrimination, stereotyping, the double burden of family and public life, and being a "token" woman in office. The general overall attitude was that to be effective in this environment, women must develop strong constituencies that demonstrate their legitimacy and network with allies (women and men) to strengthen

their positions and protect their interests. Although the traditional social networks of male elites often excluded women, denying them access to power and information, these women seemed to become adept at forging alliances to promote their political agendas.

Women in Nigeria continue to face productivity, employability, and income-earning barriers, despite the fact that their level of participation in the public sphere has increased over the years (Ademiluyi & Adedamola, 2010). Gender inequalities still exist with respect to pay, working conditions, and level of participation. A 2007 Women Aid Collective (WACOL) focus group discussion with female political and aspirants from the South-East and South-South geopolitical zones in Nigeria showed formal institutions to be not only male-dominated but also based on the belief that men are superior to women (Ezeilo, 2011). Legal, regulatory, and cultural barriers are keeping women more disadvantaged than men in terms of access to health, education, financial, and agricultural extension services (Mberu, 2007). Although most felt that their husbands were barriers to their progress, at least four of the women reported that their husbands were supportive.

The third research question examined asked about how education, economic, and marital issues affect women's ability to participate in political leadership in Nigeria. All of the women were well educated, as presented in their individual profiles. Each held at least one degree in higher education. Education was viewed as empowering by the women. All were well educated and had successful careers. However, one woman felt that lesser educated men received preferential treatment compared to educated women.

Finances were determined to be a major factor in gaining political positions. The general feeling among the women was that the cost to campaign is very expensive.

Women would have a challenge raising money as oppose to men. With regard to marriage, all of the women believed that support from the husband was very important; yet only four of the married women indicated that they had full support. Consistent with the literature, the women believed that despite numerous efforts to improve the situation, women's lack of education and wealth, aided by the discriminatory laws that have limited women's access to resources, made it difficult for them to pursue their interests or embark on political agendas (Dauda, 2007).

Economic empowerment and political empowerment in which Nigerian women are encouraged to participate for political issues are essential aspects of community development. Nigeria cannot achieve sustainable development if women continue to be disenfranchised or experience discrimination. Therefore, improving women's participation in the political administration of the nation and increasing their access to resources such as education, economic resources, and legal protection is not only a necessary but a very important goal, especially for a less developed country such as Nigeria.

Although Nigerian women have been oppressed and suffered all forms of abuse, the struggle for women's empowerment has not yet yielded equal and significant results in Nigeria. Unfortunately, in traditional African societies, a woman still is not expected to be an equal of a man. Lack of adequate education and economic and political development has been identified as major factors for poor performance at the level of women empowerment programs in Nigeria (Dibie & Dibie, 2012).

Historically, Nigeria has sustained the British form of government that excluded women from all activities, including politics (Dauda, 2007). Despite numerous efforts to improve the situation, women's lack of education and wealth, aided by the discriminatory laws that have limited women's access to resources, make it difficult for them to pursue their interests or embark on political agendas. Okpara (2006) believed that women do not have the same chances of escaping poverty because of their share of domestic commitments, which do not allow them to go after new opportunities as easily as men. The women also faced obstacles that included discrimination in education, training, hiring, access to credit, the right to own and inherit property, and promotion for equal work. These sentiments expressed by the participants were consistent with those expressed in the literature.

The fourth research question explored the kind of resources or strategies necessary to help Nigerian women to effectively participate in the political sector. The responses from the women varied widely and ranged from gender sensitive training to legislation interventions. Aligned with the literature, no one strategy seemed to provide all the answers. As revealed in the literature, the problem with Nigeria is that on comparing the achievement of women in Chile to their Nigerian counterparts, a major difference appeared to be the lack of a unified women's movement; women can benefit when movements acting on their behalf are able to organize collectively and make political demands (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002). Dibia and Dibia (2012) maintained that prejudice against women continues to exist in most African nations, which limits women from enjoying the same employment and educational and economic

opportunities as men and prevents them from participating in both the private and public sectors.

As supported by theoretical framework, the social role theory, prescribed roles and societal cultural stereotypes appear to inhibit and prevent the women from asserting themselves as the men can. Therefore, Dibie and Dibie (2012) insisted that gender balance will not come about until government and NGOs take crucial actions to promote effective proper education and gender balanced policies that will help change some cultural stereotypes. That means the responsibility for dealing with the underrepresentation of women needs to rest collectively with the government, the private sector, and NGOs (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005). Governments at all levels, international and local NGOs and the private sector, including other civil societies, need to collaborate to develop gender-sensitivity trainings and gender balanced policies that will help women improve the tools or resources to successful participate in all aspects of the political process.

The findings were supported by two theories, which provided a valuable framework for conceptualizing gender equality issues, the focus of this study. These were the social role theory and the LCT. The social role theory supports the idea that gender differences occur as a consequence of two related processes: social learning and societal power relation's behavior (Kacmar et al., 2011). The key premise is that what may be considered as gender-appropriate behaviors are usually learned through social modeling and reinforced through society's power and status structures. Kacmar et al. (2011)

argued that people internalize gender roles defined by that society and tend to behave in ways that conform to the societal expectations associated with these roles.

The social role theory (Eagly, 1997) recognizes the historical division in labor between women, who often assumed responsibilities at home, and men, who often assumed responsibilities outside the home. As indicated in the findings, individual beliefs and stereotypes regarding men and women's roles within society have cast both men and women into certain roles. Because of societal expectations, the women in the present study seemed to indicate that gender differences in power are slowly eroding. The premise is that as women gain more access to positions typically associated with power, their social role seems to be changing (Diekmann, Goodfriend, & Goodwin, 2004).

Limitations of Study

A key limitation was the small sample size. Although the sample of 10 was appropriate for this qualitative study, these data and conclusions may not be generalizable to all women in Nigeria and other regions of Africa. Additionally, I only focused on the participation of Nigerian women in the political administration or who held key positions of leadership. The experiences and positions varied wide widely and could affect their responses. An additional limitation may have included skewed results, due to the marital status of participants, for example, whether the women were married and whether their husbands supported their careers.

Recommendations

Gender equality in the political participation is a vital facet of any democratic governance. Women should have equal opportunities and the same rights as men to be

able to fully participate in all levels of the political processes of any community. The findings indicated that Nigerian women still do not have the same access and are not able to exercise the same equality rights as men. The first recommendation is the enactment of laws that will provide equal rights and opportunities to both women and men in all aspects and levels of the political processes of Nigeria. The second recommendation is to implement gender sensitivity training for men, women, and children. This kind of training would benefit to both men and women in eliminating stereotypes and creating open-mindedness.

The third recommendation is to support the effective participation of women at all levels of government, especially in leadership. Women need to be provided opportunities to participate by increasing their participation in all levels of governments and providing funding for them to participate in the political process. Election financing was a key concern and expressed as a barrier for seeking elected positions.

Education is determined to be the most effective way to enhance Nigerian women's political awareness and effective participation. Therefore, there is need to address the attitude of both men and women toward formal education at the higher level beyond secondary school. Although there is a need for the federal government to promote female education, with financial and material support, to be able to implement appropriate programs, current bureaucratic structures to help provide gender equality have not helped much (Dibie & Dibie, 2012). In fact, women's economic positions have eroded when compared to those of the men. This underrepresentation of women in the political sector is unacceptable.

The enforcement of policies, therefore, cannot be left to the men in top leadership positions and to government alone. International and local NGOs, other civil society groups, and the private sector must all play a role, working together to ensure that women can contribute in the development process. Given this scenario, there can be “concrete resolution of the constraints militating against women’s participation in the development” and Nigeria might be able to move faster in its industrialization process (Dibie & Dibie, 2012, p.119). The NGOs can help promote gender awareness and be used to help influence policies that will improve the status of women. There is need for the government to take appropriate measures to implement and enforce laws and policies directed towards enabling women to have the same rights as Nigerian men.

Recommendations for Future Studies

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of Nigerian women on the topic. Based on these discoveries, men contribute to the gender inequality and oppression of women. A future qualitative study is needed to understand how men perceive the present situation in Nigeria. This is warranted to identify the available resources and ways men can help remove the barriers to women involvement in the political sectors. Moreover, the findings indicated that participants were concerned about women supporting women in their efforts to obtain the same rights as men. A quantitative survey study of women throughout Nigeria on the topic may be more generalizable and reveal different results.

Reflections

As I reflect on the research process, I acknowledge there was much to learn as a novice qualitative researcher. As a native Nigerian, I found myself immersed in the

participant views and accounts, and found it challenging to remain neutral throughout the interviews. Nevertheless, I was able to set aside preconceived ideas and remain open to hearing the voices of the participants as they shared their stories. These feelings were more apparent as I began to listen to the audio files, which provided me with an opportunity to reflect on the process and experience of interviewing and to evaluate critically what it takes to become a successful interviewer.

Implications for Social Change

This study examined the experiences of women in public service positions in Nigeria. Results showed the importance of increasing awareness of their lower social status and the gender inequality inherent in these positions. The implications for positive social change include informing women of the experiences of others in seeking and holding public office, as well as informing and educating other individuals, communities, and organizations. The goal is that women will be empowered to participate fully and effectively in public policy and administration positions, in order that they may help to advance gender equality and be respected for their contributions to the work of the nation.

In addition, although women are currently represented in various political and administrative positions, Nigerian society in general must strive for full equality between the genders. Women should continue to lobby and advocate for women's equality through gender sensitivity education and legislative initiatives. Such change cannot take place simply through tokenism and the limited appointments that women currently hold. It must start through education, which the only way to overcome centuries of societal

cultural norms and beliefs. A second implication for social change is to inform educators, policy makers, and families that democracy is more likely to thrive, and Nigeria to develop economically and in other ways (Dibie & Dibie, 2012), when women are mobilized in politics and governance. To this end, all children must be taught from an early age that men and women are equal and that women have a great deal to contribute in public life.

A third implication for social change is informing women who may wish to run for public office of the lived experiences of the women in this study. Their positive experiences and the stamina to overcome many obstacles may be an inspiration for others. A fourth implication for social change may result from distributing the findings of this study to the public and to youth in secondary schools to increase awareness. Fifth, the study could be the foundation for women's empowerment workshops or conferences in areas where grassroots movements are evolving. Finally, international organizations could be informed, with the prospect of their enforcing initiatives that transform gender relations and help bring about gender equity and social justice.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine why women are underrepresented in positions of power and leadership in Nigeria, Africa. As the findings confirmed, women's level of participation in politics was low and women were underrepresented in the political administration of Nigeria, representing only a small percentage of national legislators and others in public office. This study was important to address gender

inequality, based on experiences of these women in Nigeria: Women, if empowered to do so, can contribute to the development of Nigeria in more influential ways than they currently are able to contribute.

Women's individual rights and freedom, as compared to those of men, are limited, thereby creating and promoting a culture in which women are confined primarily to domestic responsibilities. This limitation has made it difficult for women to enjoy equal opportunity in education, find positions of leadership and power outside the home, and otherwise participate politically. Women's equality must be developed and reinforced, and that opportunity resides in the public sphere.

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Appendix A: Letter of Invitation to Participate

Dear Mrs. XXX XXXX,

I hope you are very well. I would really appreciate your help. Dr. XXX XXX, the former Minister for the XXX and XXX from XXX to XXX referred me to you.

I am in the final stages of obtaining a Ph.D. from Walden University. **The purpose of this basic interpretive qualitative study is to explore and understand the perspectives of Nigerian women as it relates to gender inequality and issues that affect Nigerian women participation in the political sector and key leadership positions.** I feel that this is a neglected area of research. Therefore, insights from study will contribute to knowledge, which could further empower and enrich the lives of Nigerian women. I am seeking to interview professionals like you who have held public office.

Having read your professional work experience, I see that previously you were the former Minister of XXX. Your extensive professional experience and achievements have been well noted. I would sincerely appreciate if you would be one of women I could interview for my study. The interview will last about one to two hours, arranged at a mutually-agreeable time, will focus on your professional experience in Nigeria.

Thank you very much for considering participating in the study. I will contact you by email within a week to ask whether I may count on interviewing you for your valuable input. cooperation and kind intervention. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me if you have questions. My contact details are outlined below. Again, thank you.

Best wishes,

Annette Anigwe

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of the Perceptions of Women in the Political Sector and Leadership Positions of Nigeria. To participate in the study, you have to be a female, over 21 years old, presently hold or have held a political leadership office with the last 3 years and have been involved or seeking involvement in the political sector. You were chosen for the study because of your knowledge and experience on the subject matter. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Annette Anigwe, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the perspectives of Nigerian women as it relates to gender inequality and issues that affect Nigerian women participation in the political sector and key leadership positions.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Meet with the researcher at a mutually agreeable location for a duration of approximately 1 to 2 hours
- Participate in an interview that will be audio-recorded for later transcription and analysis, and in which the researcher will take field notes.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate will be respected and no one will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. Feel free to refuse to answer any given question. If you feel stressed during the study, or for any other reason, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal or, for whatever other reason, you decline to answer.

Confidentiality: Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study. The information on each person will be reported in the aggregate. To keep the details of the interview private, fictitious names will be used and the position/status including your employment will be broadly described. All electronic data and notes will be protected in a locked file cabinet in the closet of the researcher’s home office and the researcher will be the only person who will have access to the key. These will be locked for a period of seven years, at which time it will be destroyed.

Benefits:

Although there may be no immediate benefits to you for participating in this research, your input would assist political leaders in providing opportunities so women in Nigeria can participate freely in the political affairs of the country. The purpose of the study is to help improve the social status of women in Nigeria by improving their human or social conditions, promoting women enlightenment programs, the development of individuals, communities, and communities and organizations.

Compensation:

Participating in this study will be voluntary and there will be no compensation for participating in this research.

Risks:

While this research may pose only minimal risks to participants, the risks that can occur will not be disregarded. Although there are no specific foreseeable risks, this research may engender emotional responses to the researcher's questions or activities. Embarrassment, humiliation, or anxiety can occur in response to insensitively phrased questions. Despite confidentiality, people may be upset at how they are portrayed in research reports. Therefore, the researcher will be sensitive to research participants' feelings at all times during the interviews. This may mean monitoring participants' body language for signs of fatigue or distress and responding to such signs by suggesting that data collection be suspended or stopped. It may also mean enabling people to decline to answer particular questions or discuss specific issues if they become uncomfortable.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via _____ or _____. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 001-612-312 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is **05-21-13-0036292** and it expires on **May 20, 2014**. Dr. Jacqueline Thomas is the researcher's supervisor and can be reached at _____.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I agree to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Written or Electronic* Signature

Researcher's Written or Electronic* Signature

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Annette Anigwe

Interview Questions:

1. Can you begin by telling me something about yourself, such as your present job, your educational background, and marital status?
2. How do you describe your present position? Was it an elected position or political appointment?
3. What challenges, if any, did you face in obtaining this position?
4. How would you describe your role or responsibilities in this position?
5. What are your thoughts regarding your educational background as a factor in obtaining your current position?
6. To what extent do economics (if any) affect women ability to participate in the political leadership of Nigeria?
7. What are your thoughts regarding your present economic status and your present position?
8. How do you think a woman's marital status affect her ability to participate in political leadership in Nigeria?
9. What are your thoughts regarding your marital status and your present position?

10. What are the employment policies (if any) are in place to increase the number of women in leadership positions in Nigeria's political sector?
11. Can you please identify the employment policies that you think could increase the number of women in leadership positions in the political sector in Nigeria and explain how they can be effective?
12. Can you describe the current political climate with regard to women holding leadership positions in Nigeria?
13. What factors do you believe encourage or discourage women taking key leadership positions in political administration of Nigeria?
14. What are your future career aspirations? And under what circumstances do you think it might be feasible in Nigeria? And under what circumstances do you think it might be feasible in Nigeria? Do you think that the enactment of a specific legislation or a training on gender empowerment will help you attain these aspirations?

Thank you for participating in this interview.

Appendix D: Alice Coded Interview Transcript

INTERVIEW 1**Alice**

Interviewer: Can you begin by telling me something about yourself, your present job and your educational background and marital status?

Respondent: I am an advisor; I have a law degree, married with children.

Interviewer: What about your present position?

Respondent: I am an advisor to a commissioner in Nigeria.

Interviewer: What challenges of any did you face in obtaining this position?

Respondent: Before I became an advisor, there were many challenges. There were many men that were approved, without qualifications or specialized licenses. It is usually male dominated. I was fortunate enough in my career that as a civil servant, to have a lot of support. The head of my department recommended me to the commissioner. Some men are appointed who do not have degrees.

Theme: Inequity in Appointments

Interviewer: How has your educational background served as a factor in obtaining your position?

Respondent: My educational background has helped me a lot. I was a lawyer, and I have a Master's Degree. If I did not have a law degree; I would not have gotten this position. Even men who have no degrees get these positions. You also need more qualifications as a woman.

Theme: Gender Inequity

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on your economic status in your current position?

Respondent: I am comfortable, it is ok and I can take care of my family. I also know that some my colleagues who are men, who do the same job but make more than me.

Theme: Financially Stable**Theme: Salary Inequity**

Interviewer: What are your thoughts regarding your marital life and present position? How do you think a woman's political status affects the political position in Nigeria?

Respondent: It has a huge impact. It is expected that women be good wives, many expectations and men do not feel that kind of pressure. Keeping the family together and having a career.

Theme: High Expectations of Wife's Role

Interviewer: Do you think your husband has been supportive in your being able to participate in the politics?

Respondent: The expectation is that should be a good wife no matter. This is very little that can do other than encourage me. It is very challenging.

Theme: High Expectations

Interviewer: What are your current thoughts on your marital position?

Respondent: I really do not have any problems.

Theme: Stable Marriage

Interviewer: What are the employment policies that are in place to employ more women in political positions?

Respondent: It is manipulated by men. There may be some policies in place, but we are not always aware of that. It is male dominated. More women should be encouraged to apply. If there are any specific employment policies, I do not know about them.

Theme: Male domination

Theme: Employment Policy unknown

Interviewer: Describe the current political climate as it relates to women in Nigeria holding office.

Respondent: Elections are associated with violence. Policies should be in place to control the violence between the different parties. In some cases, the politics are so violent, it is a normal process in Nigeria.

Theme: Violence in politics

Interviewer: What factors encourage or discourage women to participate in the political process in Nigeria?

Respondent: Too much violence.

Theme: Violence

Interviewer: What are your future career aspirations in Nigeria and what are your chances that you will be visible in Nigeria?

Respondent: My career aspirations are to make it to the top of the political ladder and to develop economic and employment policies and to learn how to get involved in politics. They should teach women how to get involved in politics. They may exist, but I do not know how. Women need to be at the same level. Women need information to gain access to the politics. Different levels of violence exist among women too.

Theme: High Aspirations

Participants	Categories	Emerging Themes
Alice	Challenges Educational Background Marital Life Political Status Husband Support Employment Policies Career Aspirations	Inequity in Appoints Gender inequity Financially Stable Salary Inequity High Expectations of Wife Stable Marriage Male Domination No Employment Policy Violence in Politics High Aspirations

Curriculum Vitae

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