

Women in African leadership: democracy and gender equality.

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WOMEN IN AFRICAN LEADERSHIP: DEMOCRACY AND GENDER EQUALITY

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Abstract

Democracy and gender inequalities are elusive and contested concepts as evidenced by the struggles of the suffragettes. This important recognition of women's resistance towards the implementation of gender parity through various movements, and advocacy groups highlighted the gaps between ideological pronouncements and quotidian practices. This research examines the praxis of women's leadership, representation in power, political parties, discrimination against women, tokenism, and the implications for African democratic progress. How have the institutional processes encouraged or discouraged African women's leadership and its impact on democracy in Africa? This study reflected on the various historical developments of both political ideology and mobilization of countries such as Nigeria and Liberia, the findings reveal a democratic deficit and radical shift towards a stated commitment to gender-based equality.

This is a qualitative study that employed democracy and gender equality theories combined with the aid of legal instruments such as CEDAW and the Banjul Charter, The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and The Maputo Protocol. The study also chronicles the challenges and prospects of democracy and the instrumentalism of democratic accountability, the rule of law, and other institutions in achieving political developments and stability in Africa. This further fuel the central thesis as well as contribute to a societal vision of contemporary African democracy, which can only be consolidated if there are more women leaders. Particularly, the COVID-19 pandemic has unearthed some of the global implications of gender disparities in the leadership context.

Keywords: African Leadership; Conflicts; COVID-19, Democracy; Gender Equality, Women and Politics.

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Introduction

Idyllically, in true democratic settings, both sexes that are, men and women ought to be equals in the place of power, positions, and influence (Mithun 2021). More so these sexes should both be equally regarded as patrons to the workforce (African Barometer, 2021). However, the reverse seems to have been the case as gendered leadership has been a major challenge, women seldom occupy the offices of political party leaders (Matthews and Whiting, 2021). Women's right to their country or communities' administration and rights to prominent political positions are burning concerns in varied parts of the world (Obasoro and Adebile, 2021). It is further disturbing that some elites (men) consider this issue to be unnecessary with allusion to their cultural, religious, and social proclivities (Wang, 2021). Hence, this problem of gender equality in leadership has continued to be met with criticism and cynicism (Obasoro and Adebile, 2021). It has often been argued that the oppression against women lacks credence yet the absence of gender equality in political leadership is a fundamental flaw of democratization (Sylla, 2020).

The norm has always been the dominance birthed by patriarchy, and to capitalize on the widely acceptable physical attributes. Women may have weaker vessels compared to typical muscular men (Follet, 2019). However, it is also a known fact that women are humans just like men and they can engage and also perform excellently in political, and socio-economic activities as their male counterparts (Obasoro and Adebile, 2021). Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a Nigerian woman who is currently the Director-General of the World Trade Organization is a noticeable example (BBC News, 2021). Nonetheless, gender inequalities and democratic deficits have remained incessant topical areas under investigation (Rensburg, 2021). This research is therefore focused on the issue of democracy and gender equality in African leadership. It evaluates the methodology adopted for the study, the theoretical framework, and the conceptual analysis of the study. It further addresses the essence of gender representative democracy, whether or not it is realistic or tokenistic. This study further examines gender institutional processes and improvements with a focus on Nigeria and Liberia as case studies. The legal framework or legal interventions is also considered, and the study concludes and proffers three-fold, triangular recommendations.

Methodology

This study implements the qualitative research method particularly the descriptive research design, which is exploratory, explanatory and from a democratic theory lens. This is also known as the

desk or library-based research relying on the extant reviewed literature of other publishers. These sources of data majorly include pertinent textbooks, peer-reviewed journal articles, statistical reports, and e-resources from the internet. This study also relied on the data generated from the phenomenological elucidations of diurnal practices as further elucidated in some of these sources of data collection. These data are collected, generated, and compared, before subsequent textual and contextual analysis (Osugwu, 2020). This was further supported by an interview discussion to ascertain the opinions of prominent politicians.

Theoretical Framework

Gender equality and democracy theories best anchor this study as democratization is fundamental in modelling the correlation between women's social outcomes and institutional representation (Sanghee and Jiaqi, 2019). Examining these two theories, in turn, begs the question: Can there be democracy without gender equality?

Theoretically, gender equality is centered on feminist advancement which extends from liberal to radical and Marxist feminism. Some of the major proponents of these feminist theories are Mary Wollstonecraft (1797); Sojourner Truth (1883); Emmeline Pankhurst (1928); Simone de Beauvoir (1986); Malala Yousafzai (2014); Emma Watson (2016); and Germaine Greer (2017). The central tenet of the feminist theories is to enlighten all on the roles and responsibilities of men in our contemporary societies. They also examine the understanding behind women being labeled as victims, while men are considered to be unfair or discriminatory (Wang, 2021). These feminist proponents adduce that male-dominated offices are domineering (AfricanBarometer, 2021). They believe that women are invaluable in societal development and share diverse perspectives on the subordination between men and women (Rubenstein, Bergin, and Rowe, 2020). They argued that women's oppression inhibits them from maximizing their full potentials and societal participation (Akinoyemi and Afolabi, 2021). Marxist feminists view gender inequality as a result of capitalism as women unlike men are regarded as the lower class, the proletariat (Okoli, 2021).

Prominent African feminists like the Late Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, advocated for women's economic rights whereas Margaret Ekpo, another feminist, criticised the lack of women's involvement in politics (Akinoyemi and Afolabi, 2021). Feminism is committed to the liberation of women from the structural, cultural, and connected inhibitions of the patriarchy (Hyland, Djankov, and Goldberg, 2021). Feminism seeks to eradicate women's oppression and the emancipation of

unequal powers between men and women. Liberal feminists are focused on promoting women's equality with men in all spheres of life to ensure development and transformation that makes equity and social inclusion co-exist (Okoli, 2021).

The theory of democracy on the other hand is also essential and broad. This theory is the perfect fit for this study not just because it is complementary but because it also reiterates the necessity of gender equality. The theory of democracy has diverse sub-forms such as liberal or Western democracy, representative democracies, direct democracy, constitutional democracy, and monitory democracy. The major proponents of this theory can be dated back to Aristotle (322 BCE); Plato (429 BCE); John Locke (1697); John Dewey (1916) and more recently John Rawls (1920) and Reynolds, (1999). Sally (2020) adduced that gender equality and democracy are imperative human rights in fostering sustainable development and achieving diversity, inclusion, and equality. This is because human rights and women's rights are inseparable and essential to any democratic framework. Un-deprived women who have access to make an impact on political participation, economic, and social conditions would inadvertently mitigate poverty, reinforce women's liberation, and a better egalitarian society (Wang, 2021). Equal political participation is a germane element of democracy, and women's effort towards this is in itself an exercise of their human rights in political processes (Sylla, 2020). This, therefore, proffers the rationale for eradicating marginalization in politics, and including women in electoral competition and processes. Hence, male-influenced and dominated elections should be jettisoned especially in an egalitarian society. This should therefore translate to free, fair, and flexible elections that encourage women's participation in electoral processes (Mithun, 2021).

Conceptual Analysis

The concepts of democracy and gender equality must be elucidated within this context to set the right parameters and lay a solid foundation for further evaluation. It is recalled from elementary social studies that democracy is the government of "the people by the people and for the people". The emphasis on this definition is aligned on "people" which then begs the question, who are the people? People in this context are simply human beings. Therefore, democracy is not the governance of men by men nor of women by women. Rather, it is a combination of both sexes, men and women, the people, meaning collective human beings. Essentially, democracy refers to an all-inclusive fair, equal, proportionate representation, and consideration of all interest groups in

the society, which essentially encompasses both genders (African Barometer, 2021:18). The lack of women's representation, access, and input on decision-making in prominent political offices is therefore a violation of the core principle of democracy (Hyland, Djankov, and Goldberg, 2021).

Democracy is an all-inclusive system of government. Regardless of wider geographical coverage and larger population, every citizen should be a part of policy formulation and decision-making through adequate, competent, capable, direct, and or indirect representatives (Rubenstein, Bergin, and Rowe, 2020). Accordingly, these representatives must be elected by the people (men and women) themselves through the sanctity of electoral processes that are periodic and popular (African Barometer, 2021). At the heart of democracy lies people-centeredness, collective involvement in various aspects of political administration, equal participation, fairness, and justice in government vis-à-vis people relationships (Mithun, 2021).

Gender as a Social Construct

Correspondingly, gender is considered to be a social construct that divides the roles and responsibilities of men and women (Akinyemi and Afolabi, 2021). Gender is a basis of social relationships centered on distinguished roles, mental and emotional characteristics. In addition, it is an observed difference as developed by society for men and women (Okedele, 2021). Gender is also attributed to relationships and opportunities associated with being male or female (Shvedona, 2019). Moreover, it is sometimes addressed from the binary perspective which regards women as the second fiddle, the other sex, and not as equals in terms of political participation. Thus, the ludicrous justification for men's monopoly of prominent political seats of power (Rensburg, 2021).

These definitions are influenced by generational inferences, customs, and practices which subsequently internalize them as generally acceptable and universal. Eventually, these definitions tend to hinder improvement and limit the utilization of potentials (Akinyemi and Afolabi, 2021). However, for this research, gender equality is simply parity concerning political leadership positions, rights, treatments, opportunities of both men and women, boys, and girls. The word men and women are neither tiered nor binarily opposed. It does not translate to both sexes being the same biologically rather, opportunities and responsibilities should be non-dependent on sexes. Men and women should equally actualize their unhindered human rights and the actualization of their political leadership positions (Okedele, 2021). Gender equality further connotes that both

men and women should contribute and benefit from socio-economic, political, and cultural advancement (Shvedona, 2019).

Structures that preserve equal as opposed to unequal relationships between the sexes must be maintained (Tebbe, 2017). Men and women's priorities, needs, interests, diversity, and differences must be taken into consideration in a democratic regime (Sanghee and Jiaqi, 2019). These considerations must be recognized, accepted, and valued in societies (Akinyemi and Afolabi, 2021).

Gendered leadership change is imperative for democracy to thrive since it is sustained on essential indices such as equality, transparency, accountability, and mass participation (Matthews and Whiting, 2021). The continuous rotation of old men elites and their circle who are neither accountable nor refuse to renounce power makes democratic processes tenuous, fumbling, wobbling, and incapable of blossoming without compromise (Obasoro and Adebile, 2021). Women's empowerment and engagement are vital factors for improving the quality of life for communities, families, men, and women, and the overall sustenance of economies (Matthews and Whiting, 2021). It is not enough that everyone should have and observe the equal right to vote, there must be trust and wilful involvement in the government (Sandhu, 2021).

The Essence of Gender Representative Democracy

Gender representative democracy fosters women's political participation which ultimately impacts their families and societies at large (Mithun, 2021). Gender equality is a precondition to achieving justifiable progress (Schwindt-Bayer and Alles, 2018). Women proffer substantive representative democracy, and it is no gainsaying that the opposite attracts because they can enhance and complement each other in strengths as well as understand and overcome weaknesses (Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer, 2019); (Shvedona, 2019) and (Dean and Perrett, 2020). More so, women's presence in political administration and leadership has a positive influence on citizens (Wang, 2021). It also encourages younger women's zeal for political participation, engagement, representation, and general supportiveness (Schwindt-Bayer and Alles, 2018). Gender representative democracy as evident in the Liberia case study leads to positive changes in political, social, cultural, educational, economic, and protection from discrimination, and violence (Sylla, 2020).

Gender equality enhances the expressive participation of women in political decision-making (African Barometer, 2021). Beyond democracy and moral imperative, women truly belong in all places where decisions are made (Rubenstein, Bergin, and Rowe, 2020). Gender equality is similarly germane for sustainable development (Steele and Miyake, 2021). Therefore, the exclusion and marginalization of women have negative impacts (Wang, 2021). More so, Sanghee and Jiaqi, (2019) corroborate that gender equality is a necessary feature for broader socio-economic and cultural benefits. Women are fundamental to ensuring a new breed of uncorrupt democratic representation (Obasoro and Adebile, 2021). Imperatively, gender diversity is crucial for the truest democratic representation of society. More so, the global COVID-19 pandemic has further enlightened us all on the importance of gender equality (Okedele, 2021). Arguably, the coronavirus pandemic has tested every leader globally and it has eroded some of the progress made as well as signaled the need to do more than ever before (Obasoro and Adebile, 2021). The global pandemic further exacerbated some of these issues of gender marginalization (Dean and Perrett, 2020). Lack of participation means that programs and policies designed are not directed towards women's issues. This in turn is undemocratic as their interests and issues cannot be effectively represented (Tebbe, 2017).

Follet, (2019) reasoned that gender equality is a prerequisite for building good democratic governance. The issue of gender representative democracy became even more significant in a crisis (Wang, 2021). COVID-19 reveals that women are as capable of leading just as men or even better (Mithun, 2021). Women's sixth senses, soft yet superpowers, leadership skills, and perspectives must be complementary to men's leadership. Sidelining women from leadership positions is a great loss (Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer, 2019). Gender inequalities in political administration are therefore a continued injustice because as a matter of justice, equity, and fairness. It is grossly unjust and undemocratic to exclude women from political leadership (Rubenstein, Bergin, and Rowe, 2020).

The African Union recognizes that gender equality is a fundamental human right and an integral part of economic growth, regional integration, and social development (African Barometer, 2021). This is *in tandem* with the African Union Aspiration 6, (2063) states the emphasized need to include women in all aspects of continental development to achieve gender parity in public administration (Akinyemi and Afolabi, 2021).

Gender representative democracy promotes effective functioning and the provision of a balance that precisely echoes the structure of the society (Tebbe, 2017). Women comprise over fifty (50) per cent of the overall population of many countries thus, gender inequalities in political administration are essentially excluding half of the population from fundamental decision-making (Rubenstein, Bergin, and Rowe, 2020). For instance, the exclusion of women experts in tackling transmissible viruses (in Africa compared to the UK for example) would inadvertently neglect the diverse population that ought to be reflected to ensure diverse life experiences. In other words, women understand women's issues best which means that their marginalization is detrimental to the impact of male-dominated expert advice (Obasoro and Adebile, 2021). The coronavirus pandemic intensified the unacceptable gender inequalities in political and leadership representation.

Gender equality is the initial standard of the new democracy founded on the principles of non-sexism and non-racialism (Tebbe, 2017). A healthier outcome for gender representative democracy is for women to re-evaluate institutional frameworks and be affirmative and attentive to changeable leadership styles during and post-crisis periods (Rubenstein, Bergin, and Rowe, 2020). It is therefore imperative to embolden more women to engage as active citizens in the involvement, and participation of decision making and policy formulations. This is arguably a definite technique of ensuring that women's specific needs are being catered to as well (Follet, 2019).

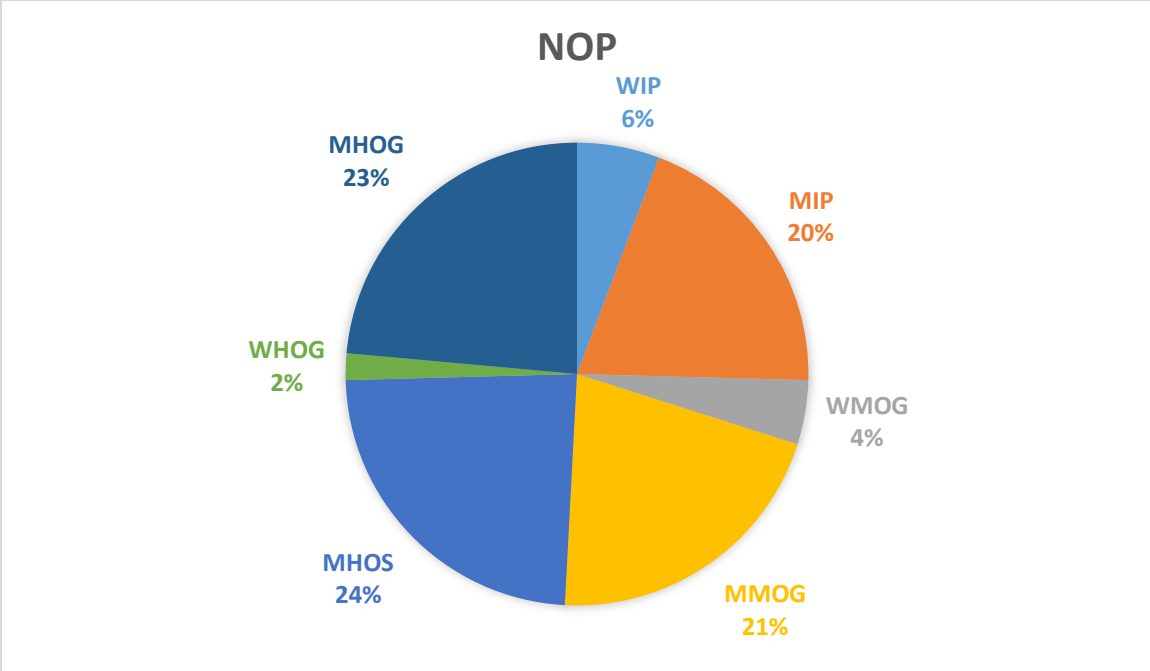
Democracy and Gender Equality: Realistic or Tokenistic?

Democracy is the intrinsic instrumentalism of the rule of law in achieving gender equality, political development, and stability in Africa (Okedele, 2021). Democratic political participation and representation is beyond institutions of power, it is about the exercise of power and outcomes such as who wheels and occupies these powerful positions of authority? (African Barometer, 2021) Good governance and human rights in Africa are intricately linked to gender equality (Mithun, 2021). Therefore, women's political apathy that is, non-involvement in contesting for political offices and or unbothered about political matters logically renders them non-citizens in decision-making. Consequently, the outcomes of policies further amplify their inferior status.

Fundamentally, an effective way to resolve these conflicting issues is an international institution that is specifically constructed to address this issue of global democratic governance and embrace a common best interest.

The poor representation of women in global democratic governance could be depicted through the following graph and chart. Tabular illustration of a global network of female politicians in 2019

S/N	Political Positions	Numbers of Politicians
1.	Women in Parliaments	22.7%
2.	Men in Parliament	77.3%
3.	Women Members of Government	17.7%
4.	Men members of the Government	82.3%
5.	Women Heads of State	6.6%
6.	Men Head of State	93.4%
7.	Women Heads of Government	7.3%
8.	Men Heads of Government	92.7%



According to the Women political leaders’ summit 2019, the void needs to be filled globally. The scale ought to be balanced. Women are needed in political offices, ministerial positions members of parliament, mayors, etc. According to Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister, “Women’s participation in decision-making processes will undoubtedly create higher quality decisions compared to those made only by men” (Women Political Leaders Summit, 2019). In addition to the above, Nigeria is a stereotypical society where women are yet to occupy up to 15% of elective positions. Women account for poor representation in Nigeria’s 20 years of democratic rule that is, 1999 to 2019 (Onyeji, 2019).

The Absence of Women in Decision Making

Globally, women are majorly absent from local as well as national decision-making. Some of the challenges that result in women’s political apathy are gender discrimination, low socio-economic status, lack of support, and patriarchy which extends into religious, cultural, and social relations (Mithun, 2021). Women face gendered barriers to union leadership (Dean and Perrett, 2020). And as Mithun further opines contemporarily, being financially liquid is a dominant and undeniable consideration for political empowerment which also sidelines women directly or inadvertently.

African women have repetitively been called a powerful untapped source (African Barometer, 2021). Patriarchy sets the stricture for women’s reliance on their husbands for basic economic

welfare and unequal positioning which hinders personal contribution to societal enhancement (Mithun, 2021).

A man can never be a good mother because that's not his forte. In the same vein, politics is a man's job, (old men) women cannot handle it, they are not wings of the same bird, and the hormones that cause emotional imbalances are in higher concentration in women. Besides, women have their own "specific duties", and politics is not just one of them".

(Anonymous and prominent Nigerian politician)

The above assertion further spins the parameter for male dominance, exploitation, gender-based violence, discrimination, and marginalization in the realm of political leadership (Okedele, 2021). The commendable and heroic legacies of women in the pre-colonial era seem to have been completely eroded. Patriarchy fuels inequalities as it further puts women in disadvantageous positions. Whereas it accords men of highly esteemed supremacy entrenched in their psychics such that it is consciously and unconsciously demonstrated (O'Brien, 2021). Patriarchy resonates deeply in African society as a hindrance to women's leadership (Rubenstein, Bergin, and Rowe, 2020). It denies women the right to see themselves and men as equals. It is taboo for women to see themselves as being able to make decisions and lead just like their male counterparts (Akinyemi and Afolabi, 2021). In addition, it demands that women be accepting, docile, obedient, easy, and submissive as society shames and questions women who seek equality in politics (Okedele, 2021). In essence, the lack of freedom from the inherent shackles of patriarchy is still a major basis for the display of gender inequality in the leadership corridor.

The Influence of Traditional African Proverbs

Numerous African traditional proverbs continuously degenerate into women's exclusion, mental slavery, discrimination, and bias in African political affairs (Dickson and Mbosowo, 2014). These semantic traits transmit the nuances of negativity such as portraying women as parasitic, chatty, unintelligent, lazy, and weak as presented in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, (1964). These barbaric African customs envision and address women with undignified names such as a pot of sweetness, farm tractors, shallow-minded, objects, chefs, night toys, servants never leaders, and egg-laying machines (Dickson and Mbosowo, 2014). Traditional attitudes towards women influence their political participation and advancement into leadership roles. Women are generally burdened with household chores and sometimes inequitable access to higher education. This limits

their ability to relish the benefits and prospects in the political sphere that are accorded to citizens, and on equal footing, as their male counterparts (African Barometer, 2021).

Furthermore, the Ibibio proverb describes women as merely beautiful on the outside and likened them to coffins - *Ibaàn etiè nte àkebe-okpò*. The protuberant and controversial issue of bride price is argued to further subjugate African women as an item for sale or to be prawned for cash. More so, women as considered the weaker sex who must marry because their identity is dependent on their husbands. Once she eventually marries, she is then criticized as her husband's property, regarded as unfocused and consequently unworthy of top leadership positions in society. Whereas, when a man finally feels the need to marry, he is usually perceived as more responsible, a family man who caters to his household (Akinyemi and Afolabi, 2021). Conversely, a Yoruba proverb posits that the woman is 'the neck' while a man is 'the head' - *Okurin Lori, obirin lorun* which supports the essence of collaboration and complementariness between men and women. Nonetheless, the imbalance of power and perspectives triumphs over the logical essence of gender-representative democracy.

World Economic Forum and COVID's Influence

According to the World Economic Forum, (2021) with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, it would take over a hundred years for the world to achieve full gender equality in all spheres. Gender equality as envisioned by the United Nations Sustainable Development goal five (5) for 2030 and African Union 2063 would never become a reality if Africa does not change its system (African Barometer, 2021). Practices and strategies must be formulated to ensure that there are more women at the political decision-making table (Tebbe, 2017). According to the dictates of our customs and traditions, it dictates that a woman has no voice in the council of elders, and she can never be equal to a man, a man was born to lead and a woman to follow (Wang, 2021). It is about time we changed these persistent yet obsolete traditions that continuously tension as well as cause women's sustained exclusion from party leadership (O'Brien, 2021).

Furthermore, Akinyemi and Afolabi (2021) adduced that a quota system of equal percentages amongst the sexes, for vying candidates of political parties, is the best way to proceed. However, even though this might be helpful, it is also questionable and a somewhat superficial vision for gender representation. These are necessary factors to support networks and bolster gender equality

and workplace democracy (Dean and Perrett, 2020). This is where globalization in our contemporary digital world, especially via the indispensable social media platforms for advocating and sensitizing for change, comes into play. This does not attack the issue of gender disparities in political governance at its grassroots level.

Striving for gender equality in the sham of a democratic nation where accountability is rare right from the presidency can be extremely difficult. Corrupt, greedy, patrimonial, and patriarchal leaders leading patriarchal institutions with roads named after them and their faces affixed on national currencies further makes the issue complex (Akinyemi and Afolabi, 2021). Currently, the practice of having majorly men in leadership perfunctory is symbolically undemocratic, and minimal effort of putting women in subordinate hideous positions is mere tokenism (Okedele, 2021). It only gives the appearance of gender equality within a workforce when it is in reality, shambolic.

Representative gender democracy is an extreme human rights challenge of our time (Akinyemi and Afolabi, 2021). Patriarchy is ubiquitous in African customary laws (Tebbe, 2017). It devalues and oppresses women with the perception that women are young adolescents, who are neither allowed to hold positions of political power nor permitted to inherit or own properties (Akinyemi and Afolabi, 2021). The adage that a woman should be seen and not heard is obsolete yet subsisting (Schwindt-Bayer and Alles, 2018).

Laws without practical actions showcase democratic deficit at best, without being tinkered. This is further illustrated by the World Economic Forum, (2021)'s report which reveals gender inequality despite the anti-gender discrimination laws of the countries measured, there remains a 25% gap in their political empowerment index. Nigeria is yet to achieve their (35%) national policy agenda's affirmative by the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, Beijing Declaration, and Platform for Action (United Nations, 1981). Correspondingly, the Global Gender Gap Index (2020:11), shows that there is still a 69% gender gap. What then is democracy? Fair election? Rotation of positions, deliberation, and equal representation – what are the indices of the supposed democracy if there is gender inequality in leadership positions? Gender representative democracy is targeted as there has been an increased call for greater democracy. Nevertheless, it is not

sufficient as evidenced by internal factors and there is, therefore, an urgent need to do more to experience a true gender representative democracy.

Institutional Processes and Improvements: A Case Study of Nigeria and Liberia

In Nigeria, women experience discrimination and marginalization which questions the effectiveness of the various national and global feminist movements (Akinyemi and Afolabi, 2021). Despite the numerous feminist movements and agendas to which Nigeria is signatory, women remain unrecognized as the other half of humanity (Mithun, 2021). Women experience substantial labor burdens, prevalent poverty, and limited governance, trade, and industry opportunities (Okedele, 2021). Section 40 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria stipulates that everyone is equal before the law whether a woman or a man and that there shall be no form of discrimination whatsoever (CFRN, 2011). However, this does not reflect in gender representative democracy as per women's non-involvement in elected public positions in Nigeria. Female members' representation in the National Assembly reveals persistent poor participation of women in Nigerian politics. As a result of the unhealthy political environment, together with political thuggery, assassination, death threats, and humiliation, women are not enthused to play active roles in undemocratic politics (Okedele, 2021). However, women are recognized as substantial actors in democracy hence, they must be actively participating and represented in the Nigerian political decision-making. A strategic indicator of democracy is gender equality and the full participation of women in politics and governance (Hyland, Djankov, and Goldberg, 2021).

In Liberia on the other hand, up until 2006, men held the highest political positions as a result of the inherent dominance of patriarchy in political powers. Women's political participation became more pronounced in 2006 when they began to hold top political offices (Sylla, 2020). This is evidenced by the female political participation in their politics and the administrations of Presidents Charles Taylor and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The Liberian historic transition from patriarchal suppression and pre-war, to their role in peacebuilding post-war, was further influenced by the gender legislation that empowered women in seeking political power (Okoli 2021). These policies aided more women into top political positions of authority and power which consequently led to progressive social changes in the economy, education, protection against violence, and discrimination (Sylla, 2020).

Even though the patriarchal system subsists in Liberia, the urge for peace and stability has inspired women to actively participate in politics and they now occupy numerous significant political positions. These women politicians exemplify democratization and in turn motivate several other women to support, actively participate as well as aspire for prominent leadership positions. The Liberian case study is deeply rooted in both evil and opportunity. Evil as a result of the devastating war epochs and the opportunities such as gender representative democracy of its aftermath, post-war (Sylla, 2020). Liberia gained independence in the year 1847 however, female political participation did not commence until 1996 and further gained prominence in 2006. Women finally began to engage in political participation (Sylla, 2020) actively, purposely, and meaningfully. This was majorly spurred based on the several difficulties that they encountered during the civil war, as critical victims of the war (Okoli, 2021).

Liberia however recently reported a major decline in voter turnout as 37% in comparison compared to 72-77% in preceding elections (African Barometer, 2021:26). The pandemic is arguably the contributing factor in low votes as a reduced gender democracy representation. The Maputo Protocol is credited for emphasizing women's rights in political participation and without discrimination. The Protocol has also been reinforced by other instruments like the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (African Democracy Charter 2007), which has been ratified by Nigeria and Liberia amongst other 49 African Union countries.

Legal Framework/Interventions

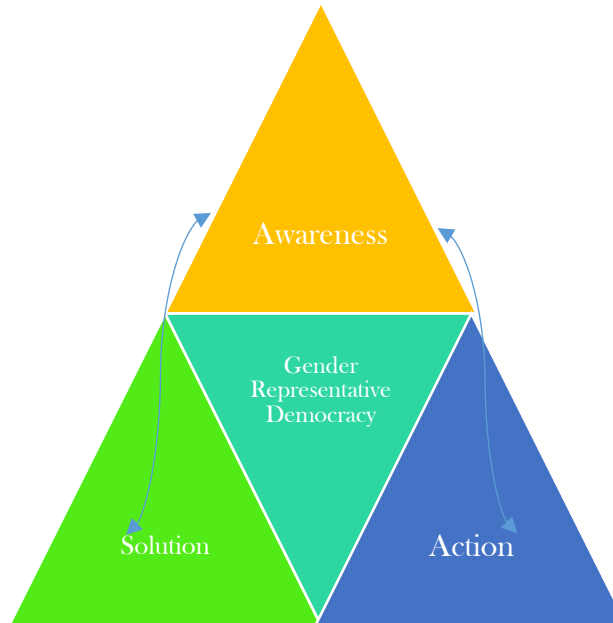
According to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Five (5), the aim is to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women in the public and private spheres as well as commence restructurings to give women equal rights to economic resources and access to ownership of property (United Nations, 2030). Correspondingly, Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063 calls for an all-inclusive people-driven Africa that is collectively active and involved in its decision-making. This master plan and Africa's blueprint emphasized women, youth, and children as fundamental agents in renovating Africa into a refocused and reprioritized global powerhouse (African Barometer, 2021). This strategic and intervening framework consistently highlights the need for inclusive and sustainable development (African Union, 2063). The International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP, 1985) also introduces the medium for the enhancement of the social rights of women.

The international human rights instrument known as the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of Women in Africa, was established by the African Union as a demonstration to devote to the development and empowerment of women, who are the majority population in most African countries (Protocol, 2005). The international declarations reaffirmation against women's discrimination and abuses is appropriate to re-echo the CEDAW's cardinal objectives as well as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, Beijing Declaration and Platform for women empowerment action (United Nations General Assembly, 1979; 1995; 1981). These international declarations affirm that equality is beneficial for all, and that women's rights are human rights (United Nations).

Nationally, the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria also promotes gender equality and democracy yet this grundnorm has not been effectively realized in public political practices (Sections 1, 14, and 42, CFRN 2011). Gender equality's commitment is traceable to the 1948 United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights which advances that freedom and rights will not be limited based on a person's sex and further asserts that 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights (United Nations, 1948). Furthermore, the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) for the African continent provides a wide-ranging set of human rights for African women. It covers a variety of political, economic, civil, social, cultural, and environmental rights.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This article concludes along with the rationale of the United Nations that there should be equal access to opportunities, economic resources, and a level of plain ground in politics, employment, leadership, and decision-making at all levels. Thus, gender inequalities need to be seen as everyone's issue to realize a realistic and unchallengeable difference and this recommendation is triangular or three-fold.



The upper part of the triangle is the personal or individual consciousness to create gender inequalities awareness by simply asking ourselves in all settings and forums of life whether or not, diversity is present. Parliament, regulatory authorities, public and private establishments, individuals, and everyone should pay more attention to gender-representative democracy by so doing. This then leads to the second ambit of this recommendation. That is, the left-hand corner of the triangle labeled the solution which could be affected by sensitizing everyone at every opportunity given on the numerous essences of gender representative democracy, establishing formal and informal networks as well as building bridges between men and women.

The final right side of the triangle is the action part. This entails the question what do I do to help? This includes but is not limited to advocating for gender studies in schools' curricula, mentoring, and empowering. Parents are not left out and should be responsible for injecting into their female and male children, their equal essence in society. These words or and education must also be corroborated by the equal role they should play at home, school, and community. This is essential because the family is the most basic unit of society. This triangular recommendation would ensure an enhanced comprehension of the socio-cultural re-orientation and the perils of gender inequality in political governance.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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