

# Party Politics and Gender Disparity in Nigeria's National Assembly from 1999 to 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

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## Abstract

This paper examines party politics and gender disparity in Nigeria's National Assembly from 1999 to 2019 general election in Nigeria with the objectives of finding out the role of party politics in perpetuating gender disparity in Nigeria's Federal Legislature and to ascertain the effects of gender disparity in Nigeria's National Assembly on women's political development in the country. We adopted ex-post-facto research design and documentary method of data collection. Liberal feminism was adopted as framework of analysis. The study found that the inability of political parties in Nigeria to reserve some proportions of elective positions for women accounts for gender disparity in the National Assembly. The paper recommends that political parties in Nigeria should reserve some proportions of electable seats for female candidates during elections to National Assembly. This will ensure adequate representation of women in the country's parliament.

**Keywords:** Political Parties, Gender Disparity, Democracy, National Assembly, Women

## Introduction

### Introduction

Gender disparity in Nigeria's National Assembly is one issue that has led to series of debate on the status of women in the country's political development. Nigeria operates multi-party system. However, political parties that have the responsibilities of nominating and campaigning for candidates for elections have not addressed the problem of low representation of women in parliament which made gender disparity a recurring decimal in the country's democratic process.

Nigeria returned to democratic rule in May 29, 1999 after decades of military rule and it was hoped that democracy would pave way for equal participation of all citizens in the country's political process irrespective of gender (Oluyemi 2016). However, Ojo (2013) observed that from the fourth republic, men dominated every political offices namely: the ministries, National Assembly, State House of Assembly, and other political offices. Men constitute the largest percentage in democratic political decision making in Nigeria between 1999-2019, very few women were elected into political offices thus; the female folk have few numbers in the political occupation of Nigeria.

The participation of women in politics has recently gained prominence across the globe. It was because of this reason that during the Fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, China in 1995,

it was agreed that 30% of both elective and appointive positions should be reserved for women (The United Nations 1995). A resolution which points to the fact that women's political participation, is crucial as it is used to measure the status of women politically in every country. However, Nigeria has not been able to implement the Beijing Declaration as well as the National Gender Policy of 35% for women in political representation. Agbalajobi (2010) avers that Nigerian women face a lot of problems when they contest for elective position with men such as cultural stereotype, abuse of religion, traditional practice and patriarchal societal structures. During election period about 51% of women come out to vote, however their numbers in both elective and appointive positions remain low (Oluyemi 2016). The overall political representation by women in government of Nigeria across board has remained as low as 7% (Agbalajobi 2010). This situation prompted Ette (2017) to note that Nigerian women have continuously been underrepresented in the decision-making process.

Between 1999 to 2019, the percentage of women in the Senate and House of Representatives stood at 5% while no woman has been elected to head the Senate and the only woman elected Speaker of the House of representative Patricia Etteh was removed from office through impeachment by male dominated members of the House (Awofeso and Temitayo, 2014). During campaigns and rallies, women form large chunk of the population in attendance adorned in attires of their political parties thus, mobilized for the success of their male counterpart during elections (Okoronkwo-Chukwu 2013). Awofeso and Temitayo (2014) observed that the population of women who registered as voters and those who come out to vote during elections surpass that of men, yet their election into elective positions (such as National Assembly) continued to be low. According to Asaju and Adagba (2013), the British Council's report on gender parity in 2012 as well as that of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) put Nigeria at 118 out of 192 countries which shows that the level of women's participation in politics and decision-making in the country is very low.

According to Nwanebo and Odigbo (2012), even though there is no constitutional restriction on women's participation in politics in Nigeria, there are some constraints in the society that obstructs women to realize their political aspirations. There is an ongoing debate that since women constitute large percentage of the country's population, they should be given the opportunity to be represented in the governance of the country. They further argued that the Nigerian Constitution at Sections 40, 42, and 77 guarantees equal rights to both men and women to participate in governance. Onyenwere (2017) noted that despite the meteoric rise of Nigerian women in educational and economic status as well as their huge population which is estimated to be about 50% of Nigeria's total population, their level of participation in active politics is very low which put Nigeria at 133<sup>rd</sup> position in the Index of World Female Representation in Parliament. This situation is attributed to the male dominated nature of Nigerian society which is characterized by some belief that hold women to be inferior to their male counterpart (Onyenwere 2017; Sarumi, Faluyi and Okeke-Uzodike (2018) estimated that females constitute over 49.5% of Nigeria's population, a numerical strength which is enough for them to make impact in the political process in the country.

To ensure a more gender-balanced society, Oluyemi (2016) noted that the National Gender Policy (NGP) recommends at least 30% representation of women in governance at elective, appointive and public service positions. However, Onyeji (2018) observed that Nigeria has not been able to meet the recommendation, the country ranks lowest in West Africa in terms of female representation in

parliament. The Inter Parliamentary Union in 2017 ranked Nigeria 181 out of 183 countries because only 6% of elected members of the National Assembly which comprise 7.3% in the Senate and 5.3% in the House of Representatives are women (Oluyemi 2016). However there is dearth of academic research on the role of political parties in perpetuate gender disparity in the country and in the light of the above, the central concern of this study is to examine party politics and gender disparity in Nigeria's National Assembly, 1999-2019.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Since Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999, the National Assembly has been dominated by males. Ojo (2013) blamed this on the patriarchal system existing in our political and socio-economic life that seems to restrict the role of women in political process in favour of their male counterpart and thus creating an imbalance in political participation and representation. Ojo (2013) further pointed out that Nigeria's situation in terms of women representation in parliament is very worrisome as the country continues to record low female representation despite of global clamour for gender parity in parliaments.

Nigeria is a signatory to several International Conventions that eliminates any discrimination against women and advocates for equal opportunities for both women and men in decision and policy making bodies such as the Legislative Assembly. They include: the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that enshrines equal rights of men and women including the right to participate in government; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966; the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 1979) which the Nigerian government ratified in 1985 without reservations as well as it's Optional Protocol in 2000 which Nigeria ratified in 2004; the 1995 UN Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which mandated member States to take measures to ensure women's equal access and full participation in power structures and decision-making; African Charter on Human and People's Rights, 1981 as well as its Protocols and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, 2004. Yet gender disparity continues to be high in the National Assembly.

Most of these instruments have not been domesticated even though Nigeria's Constitution 1999 (as amended at section 12) requires that an international treaty must be domesticated in order for it to apply. To worsen the issue, a bill sponsored by Senator Biodun Olujimi in 2016 seeking to domesticate and incorporate these instruments has not been passed by both Chambers of the National Assembly after it scaled second reading (Eniola 2018). Furthermore the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria provides that for one to become a member of the National Assembly, he or she must be elected by a political party in their primary election. Under representative democracy as noted by Pierre, Warren and Brand (2014), political parties are important institutions, because they sponsor candidates in elections. Researchers overlooked how political parties contribute in promoting gender disparity in National Assembly as they often concentrate on patriarchal, cultural and religious factors, as well as economic and educational factors that cause low women representation in representative democracy in Nigeria and overlook the role of party politics in perpetuating gender disparity in Nigeria's National Assembly. The paper seeks to fill the gap by addressing the problems discussed above and to provide answer to the following research questions:

1. Is party politics in Nigeria responsible for gender disparity in the National Assembly?

2. Does gender disparity in Nigeria's National Assembly affects women's political development in the country?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of this study is to examine how parties' politics contribute to gender disparity in Nigeria's National Assembly between 1999-2019. The specific objective is:

1. To find out the role of parties politics in gender disparity in the Nigeria's National Assembly.
2. To ascertain the effects of gender disparity in Nigeria's National Assembly on women's political development in the country.

### **Hypothesis**

The following hypothesis guided the study.

1. The inability of political parties in Nigeria to reserve elective positions for women accounts for gender disparity in the National Assembly.
2. Gender disparity in Nigeria's National Assembly hinders women's political development in the country.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Political Parties and Gender Disparity**

A political party according to Adams, Merrill, and Grofman (2005) is an interest group whose aim is to come to power so as to achieve its interests through the government. In the opinion of Klimovski, Karakamisheva-Jovanovska, and Spasenovski (2016), a political party refers to an association motivated by a certain belief upon which it creates its political programme and the objective of its implementation, whose target is to come to power, individually or in partnership with other parties, or to stay in power as long as possible for the interests of its members.

Li (2015) noted that political parties support democratic foundations of the society, they are needed by even dictators in authoritarian regimes to cling on to power and sustain governance. Political parties are important in the society because they help to stabilize a democratic system and aid political negotiation which could effectively balance the interests of citizens. Li (2015, 9) further asserts that:

“If democracy is a machine, then political parties are the operators and engineers of it who do maintenance works and put efforts in making it productive. They safeguard the liberal foundations of the society such as freedom of speech and right to own property, also fight for the interests of the general public and work to find the optimal point”.

In another development, Roskin (2008) posited that political parties operate as a link between people and the government in a political system, they also mobilize people and voters to elect leaders who form the government. For Pogonson (2012), political parties are crucial part of democracy because by contesting in elections, parties give citizens the opportunities to be involved in governance through their political involvement. They are also a means through which elected individuals are held accountable for their actions while in power (Pogonson 2012). Political parties are the cornerstone of democratic societies and democratic states. Without them it would be difficult and almost impossible to conduct a true political recruitment and incorporation of the citizens, to express their interests, to

establish public policies, to mobilize political leaders, and to organize the key political institutions in the country – the parliament and the government (Pogoso 2012). In the same manner, Ebeling (2017) posited that in modern democracies, political parties are major stakeholders in every representative democracy as practiced in the world today.

On the features or characteristic of political parties, Marume, Chikasha and Ndudzo (2016) found that a political party makes efforts to nominate and campaign for its members during elections so as to put them into elective positions where the programmes of action of government are determined. These offices include the legislature that makes law and the executive that implements that laws. What Marume, Chikasha and Ndudzo (2016) were able to bring to bear here is that nomination of candidates for elective positions and campaigning for them to win is a major function of political parties.

The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (as amended) gave political parties overwhelming powers to nominate and sponsor candidates in elections. Section 221 of the constitution stipulates that: “No association, other than a political party, shall canvass for votes for any candidate at any election or contribute to the funds of any political party or to the election expenses of any candidate at an election”.

Also, Section 40 provides that: “Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his interests.”

Specifically section 65 (1b) maintains that: “A person shall be qualified for election into the Senate and House of Representatives if he is a member of a political party and is sponsored by that party”. In all these constitutional provisions, it is clear that in Nigeria the organic law of the land gave political parties the sole authority to nominate and sponsor candidates to all elections in Nigeria especially election to National Assembly without any provision on how to address gender inequality. This is where the problem of gender disparity took its root.

Ibeanu (2009) noted that men are in dominance of party hierarchy in Nigeria and this affect women’s chances of being selected during party nomination. Another impediment against them during party nomination is lack of financial resources compared to their male counterparts (Ibrahim, 2006). Ashefon (2011), noted that a former senatorial aspirant in Lagos State, in 2011 election, Chief Onikepo Oshodi lamented that women came out in large numbers for the party primaries during 2011 election but they were badly treated by the party machineries. Chief Onikepo Oshodi further lamented that women face hostilities from political bigwigs who pressures on them to step down despite their popularity in their various constituencies and those delegates were wooed with cash which these women could not afford (Ashefon, 2011).

### **Party Politics in Nigeria 1999-2019**

Obi-Ani and Obi- Ani (2019) noted that the fourth republic was heralded with the Local Government election of 1999 where over eleven political associations contested the elections in Nigeria. Of this number only three met the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) requirements for

registration as political parties. These are: Peoples Democratic Party, (PDP), All Peoples Party (APP) and Alliance for Democracy (AD). The three registered political parties were adjudged to have satisfied some of the requirements such as: (a) Ensure that membership of the association is open to every citizen of Nigeria irrespective of his place of origin, sex, religion or ethnic grouping; (b) a copy of its constitution is registered in the principal office of the commission in such form as may be prescribed by the commission; (c) the name of the association, its emblem or motto does not contain any ethnic or religious connotation or give the appearance that the activities of the association are confined to a part only of the geographical area of Nigeria, (d) the headquarters of the association is situated in the capital of the federation, and (e) the names and addresses of its national officers are registered with the Independent National Electoral Commission (Nwabueze 2002 cited in Obi-Ani and Obi- Ani 2019). In 2003, 20 political parties contested the general election. Some of the parties were: PDP, AD, ANPP, APGA, UNPP and National Conscience party led by Gani Fanwehimi (International Republican Institute, 2003). In 2003, 30 political parties contested the 2003 elections but only 20 presented candidates for Presidential election which was an improvement from the 1999 election where only three political parties contested (Oji, Eme and Nwoba 2007). In 2007, the General election was held on 21 April 2007 for the election of the president as well as members of the National Assembly. About 50 political parties contested for elective seats in 2007 (Omodia and Egwemi 2011). In 2011, 63 Political parties were cleared to contest the general election, the major parties that contested the election were the people's Democratic party (PDP), In 2015 the number increased to 74 political parties while in 2019 the number meteorically rose to 91 political parties (INEC, 2019).

### **Profile of Major Political Parties in Nigeria 1999-2019**

#### **The People's Democratic Party**

The People's Democratic Party, PDP is a union of different associations among whom are those who opposed Late General Sani Abacha's self-succession agenda, some serving military and retired military officers interested in protecting their interests in the emerging civilian regime. Some second Republic politician who were alive then joined in the formation of the party. The party was officially formed in the Federal Capital Territory Abuja on July 28, 1998 by leaders of different political associations who want the enthronement of electoral democracy. A group known as the "G34" led by former Vice President Dr Alex Ekwueme were dominant in the formation of the party. The fundamental mission which this group set for itself was the total and unconditional demilitarization of Nigerian politics. (Osumah and Ikelegbe, 2009). The Party produced Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Musa Yar'adua, and Goodluck Jonathan as presidents of Nigeria. However, things changed in 2015 general elections where the party "PDP" lost its status as the dominant party during 2015 general election. A new party the All Progressive Congress (APC) won the election of that year. The party had controlled the National Assembly between 1999 and 2015 but lost grip of the Assembly in 2019 election.

#### **Action Congress of Nigeria**

The party originated from the merger of Alliance for Democracy, the Justice Party, the Advance Congress of Democrats, and several other minor political parties in September 2006 (Mazen 2013). In 2007, the former Vice President Atiku Abubakar contested the Presidential election on the platform of that party.

### **All Progressives Congress**

The All Progressives Congress was formed due to coming together in an alliance by four political parties namely: the Action Congress of Nigeria, the Congress for Progressive Change, the All Nigeria Peoples Party, and the All Progressives Grand Alliance (Premium Time 2013; Olowojolu 2015). Furthermore Egwemi (2009) noted that on February 6, 2013, the All Progressive Congress (APC) was born and that the rise of the party was very significant because previous efforts in the past to form a mega party in the country were unsuccessful. The party thereafter went ahead and won the 2015 General Election which produced the current President.

### **All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)**

The party was formed prior to 2003 elections. In February 2013, a faction of the party merged with the Action Congress of Nigeria, the All Nigeria Peoples Party, and the Congress for Progressive Change to form the All Progressives Congress (APC). The party also won for the first time a seat in the Senate after a by-election (Mazen 2013).

### **Gender Disparity**

On gender disparity, European Institute for Gender Equality (2019) argued that the differences in women and men's access to resources, status and well-being, which usually favour men and are often institutionalized through law, justice and social norms. Gender disparity in Nigeria's National Assembly has been a matter of concern to many scholars, since 1999 when the military returned power to civilian regime, there have been huge gap between the populations or number of women elected into the Federal Legislature compared to their male counterpart (Ojo 2013; Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013; Awofeso and Temitayo, 2014 and Oluyemi, 2016). On average, Nigeria has 6.54% of female representation in parliament and one of the lowest in the world and ranked 186th in the World Survey of Female Political Representatives (Inter Parliamentary Union, 2015).

Scholars have attributed this disparity in female representation in Nigeria's National Assembly to many factors. Makama (2013) observed that one of the factors is patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society which encourages male domination over women. According to him, in Nigeria, it is perceived that the best place for women is in the 'kitchen' and this negative perception reduced womanhood to a second-class citizen. Thus, there are tremendous misrepresentation of women right from the family to the circular society. Tripp 1999 (as cited in Okumagba 2016) noted that women's disregard to participate in politics actually took effect from the family where the family institution is built on Patriarchal system. The scholar further explained that the concept of patriarchy explains gender inequality meaning "the father rules the house" which is a feature of African traditional culture where men are placed higher in society than women (Tripp 1999 cited in Okumagba 2016). This scenario has long crept into public life especially in the economic and political sphere and has reflected in state activities. Onyenwere (2017) opined that a lot of barriers that exists in the society obstructs women from participating fully in political activities but gender roles caused by patriarchy persist.

Yahaya (2012) cited in Gberevbie and Oviasogie (2013) observed that participation in politics in Nigeria, especially in seeking elective office is very costly as it requires huge sums of money which a large majority of women cannot afford due to their poor financial state and this is one of the barriers women face while aspiring for an elective position. However, despite the fact that many political

parties reduced the cost of obtaining their nomination form for elective positions for women, they still find it difficult to meet up with the cost of getting elected except where there is a “God Father” to help. Okumagba (2016) posited that the history of women's discrimination puts them at a disadvantage economic position as they rely on their husbands for financial support. Women find it difficult to be involved in politics even when the opportunity is given to them because they lack financial backings. Political involvement and campaign are too expensive and require solid financial backings for success (Okumagba 2016).

Although standing for election demands huge sum of money, between 2011 and 2019, a number of political parties in Nigeria provided nomination form to female candidates free of charge. Yet, other practices of these political parties failed to enhance equal opportunity for women during primary elections.

Ojo (2013) attributed the disparity in female representation in Nigeria to cultural and religious factors and argued that it also inhibits women’s participation in politics. Ojo (2013) specifically identified that Purdah system in some parts of Northern Nigeria is an example of the cultural and religious factor which could constitute barriers to women participation in politics. Kira (2003) noted that religion is one of the instrument that makes women to remain second class citizens and under-represented in decision making of government. Sibani (2017) observed that religion has influence on the political process of every society and the interpretation of religious texts do not seem to favor women in achieving their political aspirations. Metcalfe (2011) equally agreed that cultural and religious factors account for low participation of women in the political process as well as in economic activities and these have contributed to their poor state of life.

This position could be challenged because under the current regime of Muhammadu Buhari, several women such as current Finance Minister Zainab Ahmad, Sadiya Farouq, Maryam Yalwaji Katagum, Gbemi Saraki and Ramatu Tijani who came from the North where the Purdah system is practiced were appointed ministers. During Late Yaradua’s regime, females like Aishatu Jibril Dukku, Fatima Balaraba Ibrahim, Halima Tayo Alao, Saudatu Usman Bungudu were appointed ministers, yet they all came from the part of Northern region where the Purdah system is practiced. During the regime of Goodluck Jonathan as well as Olusegun Obasanjo, several women from the Purdah prone part of the country were given ministerial appointment. In the same manner from 1999-2019, female candidates from states where Purdah is practiced were also given other appointments yet religion and culture did not stop them from taking up the appointments or performing their official duties.

Okoronkwo-Chukwu (2013) attributed gender disparity and low women representation to stereotypical constraints and argued that a married woman finds it difficult to participate actively in politics without her husband’s approval, otherwise the woman will be labeled a prostitute or promiscuous, same also applies to spinsters or divorcees In the same manner, the nocturnal hours when most political meetings are held also deter women from following the electioneering process. Consequently, women themselves see the name calling and odd hours fixed for meetings as plans by men to remove them from the happenings in the political circle. This accounts for the reason why women prefer to be voters, mobilizers, praise singers and supporters of male candidates instead of contestants (Okoronkwo-Chukwu 2013). According to Okafor, Fagbemi and Hassan (2011)



stereotypical constraints hinders women from participation in politics; domestic duties and procreation are seen as the exclusive preserve of women while men are destined to participate in governance and decision making even in area where it affected women. Ngara and Ayabam (2013) found that gender disparity and low women representation in Nigeria's parliament is attributable to the perception of politics as a dirty game which women are not ready to play in order to protect their image.

Peschard (2003) observed that women's lack of access to university education hinders their access to parliaments while Adjepong (2015) found that the type of western education that came with colonialism was for the benefit of men because only a few women gained access to western educational system during the colonial period. This led to male domination and marginalization of women in the political process. Orji, Orji and Agbanyim (2018) in their study found that women's political representation in Nigeria is further constrained by the level of their education and training despite that this gap in educational status is closing and that many women lack the political training required to participate effectively in the political arena. This leaves them with very little capacity such as political and interpersonal skills as well as public speaking ability for coordinating campaigns (Orji, Orji and Agbanyim, 2018). Ozigbo (1998) (cited in Osimen *et al.*, 2018) found that traditional Nigerian society paid particular attention to women education in the home as women are rarely motivated to go to school, instead they are trained in the art of cooking, domestic chores and child rearing unlike their male counterpart and this scenario impedes their political participation.

Again the argument that gender disparity in the Legislative Arm is due to low level of education of women could be challenged. In various universities in Nigeria today, female students constitute large number of undergraduates and thus universities in the country for over a decade now have been churning out large number of female graduates some of whom graduated with first class and thus excelled in their respective field of study. Yet, it has not translated to robust political participation among women.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study employed liberal feminism which is a strand of the theory of feminism. Feminism as a theory has different strands such as Liberal, Radical, Cultural, Difference, Lipstick, Marxist, Equity Feminism among others. Liberal feminism originated from the works of First wave feminists such as Mary Wollstencraft, John Stuart Mill and Helen Taylor, as well as Second Wave Feminists such as Betty Friedan, Gloria Steine, Simone de Beauviour and also Rebecca Walker. (Third Wave Feminist). The theory was popularized by Alison M. Jagga (1983) in his book *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*.

The theory is based on the following assumptions:

1. That society holds the false belief that women are by nature, less intellectually and physically capable than men; thus the society tends to discriminate against women.
2. That female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that block women's entrance and success to the so-called public world (Tong 1989).
3. That the exercise of personal autonomy depends on certain enabling conditions that are insufficiently present in women's lives.

4. That social arrangements often fail to respect women's personal autonomy and other elements of women's development.
5. That the State should be the women's movement's ally in promoting women's autonomy.

Liberal feminism focuses on women's ability to maintain their equality through their own actions and choices. It centers on the core ideas of women's autonomy, universal rights, equal citizenship, and democracy (Tong, 2009). Liberal feminism according to Duncan (2017) is a movement to achieve equal opportunities for women and men in every area of life. Women believe that whatever opportunities men can have, women must be able to have them too. In the context of gender equality, liberal feminists advocate for a society in which women hold political equality with men. They also wish to dismantle the patriarchal character of social institutions (notably within the political realm) that force women to suppress their natural femininity. According to Serva (2018), Liberal feminism aims for individuals to use their own abilities and the democratic process to help women and men become more equal in the eyes of the law in society by organizing women into larger groups that can speak at a higher level, lobbying legislators and raising awareness of issues; they use available resources and tools to advocate for change.

### **Application of the Theory**

On the assumption that society holds the false belief that women are by nature, less intellectually and physically capable than men; thus the society tends to discriminate against women as well as the assumption that female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that block women's entrance and success to the so-called public world, it is incontrovertible that Nigeria is a patriarchal society where men dominated women in all spheres because of the belief that men as stated by the theory are endowed physically and intellectually more than their female counterpart. Consequently, political parties in the country since 1999 have denied women the equal opportunities given to men in terms of nomination to party positions as well as nomination to elective positions such as election to National Assembly. Instead, all the processes that lead to representation in the parliament were tailored to favour men, and they include but not limited to time of holding political meetings which is usually held in the night when women are in their homes performing their domestic duties as well as the violence associated with party politics in the country which because of the vulnerability of women largely constraint them.

On the assumption that women's needs and interests are insufficiently reflected in the basic conditions under which they live, and that those conditions lack legitimacy because women are inadequately represented in the processes of democratic self-determination, women in Nigeria are discriminated against in the appointive or elective position where policies that affects them are formulated. Nigeria's National Assembly is constitutionally empowered to make laws for the overall good governance of the country, however due to low number of women in the Assembly, bills capable of benefitting Nigerian women and the vulnerable ones do not see the light of the day and this trend justifies this assumption.

The assumption of the theory that the exercise of personal autonomy depends on certain enabling conditions that are insufficiently present in women's lives as well as the assumption that social arrangements often fail to respect women's personal autonomy and other elements of women's development point to the fact that in Nigeria's party politics, women are not autonomous as those

conditions capable of liberating them from their subordinate status are lacking in the country's democracy and this has continued to affect them in their political development. Furthermore, this lack of autonomy explains why there is gender disparity in Nigerian parliament.

One of major functions of a State is to ensure equal opportunities for every citizen as guaranteed and protected by law. The assumption of the theory that the State should be the women's movement's ally in promoting women's autonomy points to the fact that women are supposed to be treated equally irrespective of their gender or biological dispositions in the political process to National Assembly. The theory therefore explained why the failure of Nigerian State in this regard as well as in implementing those policies that may favour women such as the 35% affirmative action as well as the 30% in the country's gender policy gave rise to Gender Disparity and low representation of women in Nigeria's parliament.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted ex-post-facto research design. The design was adopted in this paper to look at "before" and "after" observation of party politics and gender disparity in Nigeria's National Assembly 1999-2019. Documentary method of data collection was adopted for the study. Data were sourced from secondary sources such as institutional and official documents, journals, articles, periodicals, Government publications, textbooks, newspapers, magazines, and other written materials that contain information on the topic of the study. Data sourced therein were deployed to investigate the research problem and find answer to the research questions. Content analysis was used to analyze data generated for the study. It was used because data for the paper contained unstructured materials from different sources which we systematically analyzed.

## Discussion and Analysis

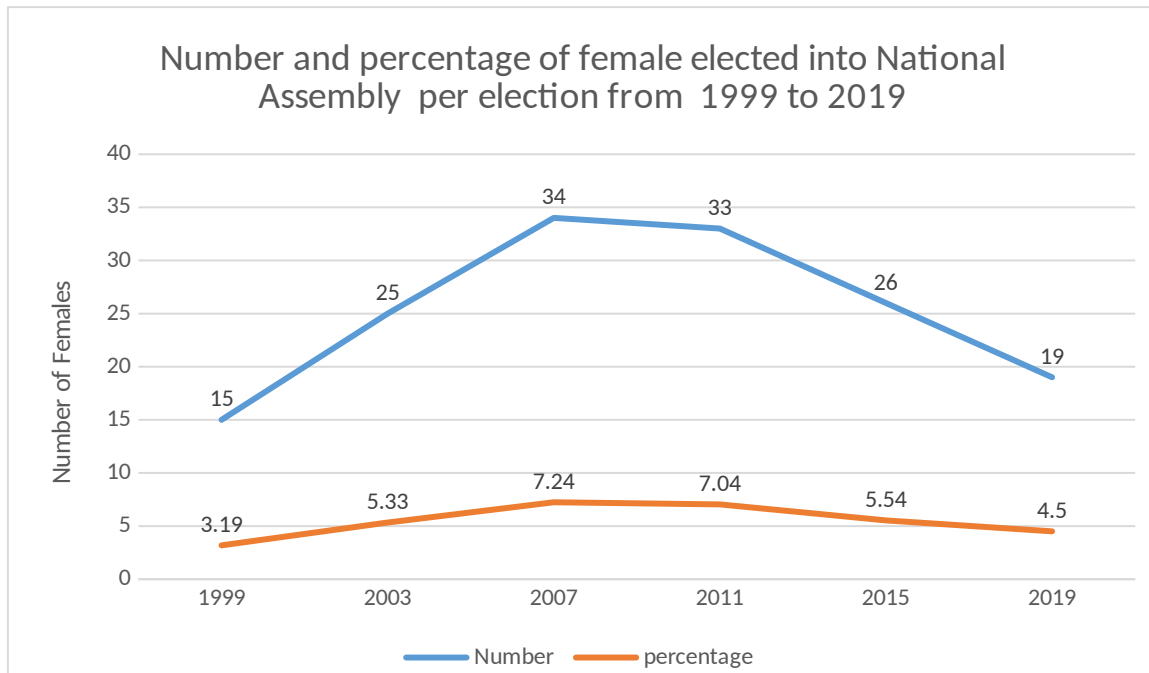
Table 1: Percentage of Female Representation of the First 12 Countries of the World plus Nigeria

Countries	Percentage (%)
Rwanda	61.3
Cuba	52,2
Bolivia	53.1
Mexico	48.2
Grenada	46.7
Namibia	46.2
Sweden	46.1
Nicaragua	45.7
Costa Rica	45.6
South Africa	42.7
Finland	42.1
Senegal	41.8
Nigeria	6.4

Source: Inter parliamentary Union cited in Thornton (2019)

Table 1 shows that countries like Rwanda, Cuba, Bolivia, and Mexico. Grenada, Namibia, Sweden Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Finland and Senegal have over 40% of their women elected to their various parliament. However, Nigeria is trailing with about 6.4% despite the fact that over 50% of Nigerian women registered as voters in the country (Onyenwere 2017).

Figure 1: Showing Number and Percentage of Females Elected into National Assembly per Election from 1999 to 2019



Source: Oluyemi (2016). Monitoring the Participation of Women in Politics in Nigeria

In 1999, only 15 women representing 3.19% were elected to National Assembly out of the total of 469 seats available. In 2003, the number increased to 25 women representing 5.33% while in 2007, it increased to 34 representing 7.24%. However, in 2011, it dropped to 33 representing 7.04%, In 2015 it further dropped to 26 representing 5.54 % and in 2019, the number drastically reduced to 19 representing 4.05% 2019 (INEC 2019). These statistics are graphically presented above.

Table 2: Number of Political Parties that have Contested for Elections in Nigeria 1999-2019

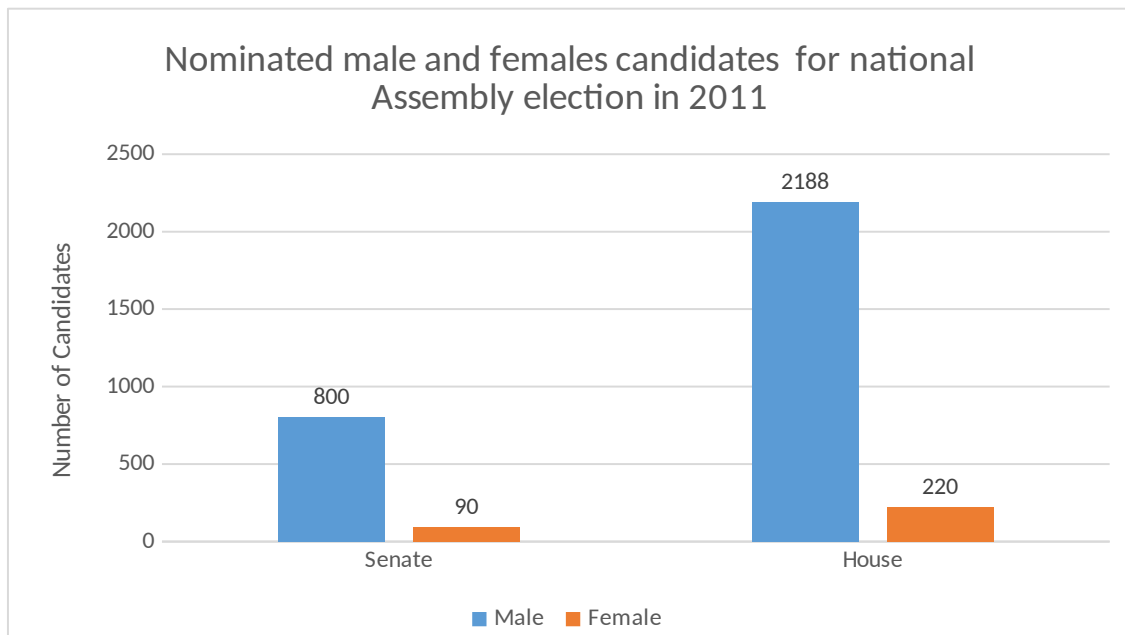
	Number of Political Parties	Source
1999	3	Orji, Eme and Nwoba (2007)
2003	30	
2007	50	Omodia and Egwemi (2011)
2011	63	INEC (2011)
2015	74	INEC (2015)
2019	91	INEC (2019)

Source: Compiled by the researcher from different sources.

In 1999, only three political parties namely the AD, PDP and ANPP contested general election including election to National Assembly. In the year 2003, the number increased to 30 political parties (Orji, Eme and Nwoba 2007). In 2007, the number further increased to 50 political parties (Omodia and Egwemi 2011). In 2011, 63 Political parties were cleared to contest the general election (INEC,

2011), also in 2015 the number increased to 74 political parties while in 2019 the number meteorically rose to 91 political parties (INEC 2019).

Figure 2: Nominated Male And Females Candidates For National Assembly Election In 2011



Source: Ngara and Ayabam (2013)

In 2011 a total of 3,298 candidates scaled through the hurdles of their party's nomination to contest for National Assembly Election, only 310 females were nominated (90 for Senate and 220 for House of Representatives) representing 9.4% while their male counterpart were 2, 988 (800 for Senate and 2188 for House of Representatives) representing 90.6%. The figure further showed that despite the registration of more political parties in 2011 the number of female nominated by parties remained low.

### Candidates Nominated by Political Parties for 2015 General Election

Table 3: Number of Female Candidates Nominated by Different Political Parties for 2015 Senatorial Election

S/N	Party	Number	S/N	Party	Number
1	APC	7	13	UDP	7
2	UPP	5	14	PDP	9
3	ACCORD	9	15	CPP	5
4	MPPP	16	16	DPP	4
5	PPA	6	17	ADC	6
6	ID	7	18	SDP	4
7	PPN	5	19	KOWA	8
8	NCP	3	20	APA	2
9	PDM	1	21	ACD	4
10	LP	7	22	APGA	2
11	NNPP	6	23	ACPN	2
12	AA	1	24	PDC	1
<b>13</b>				<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>

Source: INEC (2015) Candidates for Senatorial Election 2015 Election

A total of 127 female candidates were nominated by 24 out of 74 political parties that fielded candidates during the 2015 Senatorial election. The table showed that only MPPP party nominated 16 female candidates for the election. However, none of them was elected. ACCORD and PDP followed with 9 female candidates each nominated for the senatorial election. Kowa party nominated 8 female candidates, APC, UDP, LP, ID, nominated 7 female candidates each. PPA, NNPP and ADC nominated 6 female candidates each while the remaining 13 political parties nominated between 1-5 female candidates. From the table it can be deduced that only one political party, the MPPP, which has never won any elective seat in Nigeria that nominated more than 10 female candidates for the 2015 senatorial election. The two dominant parties that have produced Nigeria's Presidents as well as members of National Assembly, APC and PDP nominated less than 9 and 7 female candidates respectively; bringing the total for the ruling and major opposition parties to 16 female candidates out of which only 8 were elected to the upper legislative chamber.

Table 4: State-by-State Record of Male and Females Nominated by Political Parties in Nigeria for Senatorial Election in 2015

States	Female	Male	States	Female	Male
Abia	1	18	Kastina	0	13
Adamawa	5	17	Kebbi	0	25
Akwa Ibom	3	9	Kogi	2	20
Anambra	11	31	Kwara	7	20
Bauchi	1	14	Lagos	10	9
Bayelsa	1	9	Nassarawa	0	16
Benue	1	10	Niger	3	13
Borno	1	18	Ogun	11	17
Cross River	3	9	Ondo	0	20
Delta	12	22	Osun	10	20
Ebonyi	2	16	Oyo	2	16
Edo	0	16	Pleateau	5	7
Ekiti	1	12	Rivers	3	12
Enugu	9	18	Sokoto	4	39
Gombe	0	11	Taraba	1	12
Imo	9	25	Yobe	0	7
Jigawa	0	11	Zamfara	2	36
Kaduna	2	16	FCT	4	7
Kano	1	20	<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>611</b>

Source: INEC (2015) Candidates for Senatorial Election 2015 Election

A total of 127 female candidates were nominated by Political Parties for the 2015 Senatorial election as shown in table 4, breakdown according to the 36 States and FCT Abuja shows that in Delta State, 12 female candidates were nominated followed by Anambra and Ogun States with 11 female candidates each. In the same manner, Lagos and Osun nominated 10 candidates each. In Gombe, Edo, Jigawa, Nassarawa, Ondo and Yobe States no female candidate was nominated. In the remaining 25 States and Federal Capital Abuja, between 1 to 9 female candidates were nominated for the election. However on the side of male candidates, a total of 611 candidates were nominated by political parties that contested the elections. Breakdown by State showed that Sokoto State had the highest number 39 male candidates, followed by Zamfara with 36 male candidates, Anambra State with 31 male candidates while in Kebbi and Imo States, 25 male candidates each were nominated. In the remaining 31 States and FCT Abuja, between 4-22 candidate were nominated in them.



Table 5: Total Number of Male and Female Candidates Cleared by INEC for House of Representatives Election 2015

<b>Number of Candidates</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Parentage</b>
Female	238	12.63
Male	1647	87.37
<b>Total</b>	<b>1885</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: INEC (2015) Candidates for House of Representatives Election 2015 Election

In 2015 House of Representatives election, 63 out of 74 political parties nominated 1885 candidates that contested the election; out of which 238 representing 12.63% were female candidates while 1647 candidates representing 87.37% were males candidates.

Table 6: Breakdown of Candidates Nominated for House of Representatives Election in 2015  
According to Political Parties

S/N	Party	No of Female Candidates	S/N	Party	No. of Female Candidates	S/N	Party	No. of Female Candidate
1	ACD	4	21	PPC	3	44	NIP	3
2	APC	7	22	RP	3	45	PDC	1
3	FJO	2	23	DA	6	46	AGP	1
4	ADC	15	24	MPM	14	47	NAC	3
5	ANP	1	25	NRM	3	48	APGA	2
6	ZLP	5	26	GDPN	1	49	DPC	2
7	AGA	2	27	NUP	1	50	APDA	1
8	JMPP	8	28	LP	10	51	AD	3
9	ACD	2	29	NEPP	2	52	GPN	10
10	PT	5	33	ID	7	53	ADP	6
11	NPM	2	34	A	13	54	NDCP	1
12	DPP	7	35	ASD	5	55	MRDD	3
13	KP	5	36	DA	4	56	UPP	6
14	C4C	3	37	HDP	1	57	APA	3
15	PPN	8	38	NFD	1	58	MAJA	1
16	PDP	10	39	SDP	4	59	CAP	6
17	NCP	5	40	ACPN	4	60	APP	1
18	UPC	1	41	AAC	1	61	NPC	1
19	APN	1	42	YPP	2	62	PPA	2
20	APM	2	43	MMN	1	63	UPN	1
<b>Total</b>								<b>238</b>

Source: INEC (2015) Candidates for House of Representatives Election 2015 Election

The Table showed Party by party account of female candidates nominated by 63 political parties for the House of Representative election in the following order: ADC 15 candidates, MPM 14. A Party 13, PDP 10. LP 10 and GPN 10. The remaining 57 political parties each nominated between 1 and 10 female candidates including APC that nominated only seven female candidates. Just like in 2011, two out of the 63 political parties that contested the election MPM and A Party, nominated the highest number of female candidates with 14 and 13 respectively. However, none of the them won any seat. The ruling party, the APC and the main opposition party the PDP nominated only 10 and 7 female candidates respective bringing the total to 17.

Table 7: Male and Female Nominated across the 36 States and Abuja for House of Representatives Election in 2015

State	F	M	Total	State	F	M	Total
Abia	6	38	44	Kastina	1	32	33
Adamawa	9	31	40	Kebbi	5	43	48
Akwa Ibom	8	26	34	Kogi	7	66	73
Anambra	13	64	77	Kwara	7	50	57
Bauchi	1	43	44	Lagos	21	33	54
Bayelsa	4	40	44	Nassarawa	4	41	45
Benue	8	39	47	Niger	6	34	40
Borno	1	38	39	Ogun	5	56	61
Cross River	3	35	38	Ondo	4	37	41
Delta	13	55	68	Osun	14	54	68
Ebonyi	3	31	34	Oyo	9	51	60
Edo	3	30	33	Pleateau	4	36	40
Ekiti	3	24	27	Rivers	13	46	59
Enugu	14	37	51	Sokoto	5	97	102
Gombe	6	36	42	Taraba	2	44	46
Imo	15	90	105	Yobe	1	13	14
Jigawa	1	28	29	Zamfara	0	74	74
Kaduna	5	51	56	FCT	11	21	32
Kano	3	83	86	<b>Total</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>1647</b>	<b>1885</b>

Source: INEC (2015) Candidates for House of Representatives Election 2015 Election

Data in Table 7 showed State by State account of male and female candidates nominated across the 36 States and FCT Abuja for House of Representatives election in 2015. The table showed that in Lagos State, 21 females were nominated by political parties for the election, 15 in Imo and 14 in Enugu and Osun State respectively. In Anambra, Delta and Rivers States 13 females were nominated by each of the states, while in FCT Abuja, 11 females were nominated by political parties. No female candidate was nominated in Zamfara State while in the remaining 28 States less than 10 candidates were nominated by different political parties. The table also showed that on their male counterpart, Sokoto State had the highest number of candidates nominated by political parties for the election with 97 male candidates, followed by Imo State with 90 male candidates, Kano State with 83 male candidates, Zamfara with 74 male candidates, Kogi State with 66 candidates and Anambra State with 64 male candidates. In the remaining States and Federal Capital Territory, political parties nominated between 21-56 male candidates.

### Candidates Nominated by Political Parties for 2019 General Election Senatorial Election

Table 9: Total Number of Candidates Nominated by Political Parties and Cleared by INEC for 2019 Senatorial Election by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	225	11.96
Male	1656	88.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>1881</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: INEC (2019) Final List for Senatorial Candidates, 2019 General Election

In 2019, out of 1881 candidates nominated and cleared by INEC to contest for Senatorial election, female candidates were 225 representing 11.96% while male candidates constituted majority with 1656 candidates representing 88.04%. Out of the total number only 8 female senators were elected.

Table 10: Number of Nominated Female Candidates According to Political Parties for 2019 Senatorial Election

S/N	Parties	Number	S/N	Parties	Number	S/N	Parties	Number
1	ACD	4	21	MMM	1	41	PT	5
2	APC	7	22	APN	1	42	FJP	2
3	CAP	6	23	AD	1	43	DA	6
4	GPN	8	24	NRM	3	44	RP	3
5	JMPP	8	25	NIP	3	45	ZLP	5
6	LP	10	26	NEPP	2	46	ASD	5
7	MPN	14	27	NUP	1	47	BNPP	5
8	YPP	2	28	HDP	1	48	ADP	6
9	AAC	1	29	MAJA	1	49	DPP	7
10	ACD	15	30	ABP	1	50	SDP	3
11	ADC	5	31	NCP	5	51	UPC	1
12	ACPN	4	32	UPP	6	52	PDC	1
13	PPC	3	33	APM	2	53	KP	5
14	PDP	10	34	ANP	2	54	NPM	2
15	NPC	1	35	APGA	2	55	DPC	2
16	PPA	2	36	UPN	1	56	GDPN	1
17	PPN	8	37	MRDD	3	57	NFD	1
18	NAC	3	38	C4C	3	58	APDA	1
19	APA	3	39	NDLP	1	59	A	13
20	AGA	3	40	ID	8	60	P	1
	<b>Total</b>				<b>225</b>			

Source: INEC (2019) Final List for Senatorial Candidates, 2019 General Election

Table 9 indicates that among the 60 political parties that contested Senatorial election in 2019, ACD party nominated 15 female candidates, MPN nominated 14 female candidates, A (acronym for the party) for party nominated 13 female candidates, LP and PDP nominated 10 candidates each while the remaining 55 political parties nominated between 1-8 female candidates. From the table, the two major parties controlling Nigeria's Senate after 2019 general election APC and PDP nominated only 7 and 10 female candidates respectively bring the total to 18.

Table 11: Male and Female Candidates Nominated for 2019 Senatorial Election across the 36 States and the FCT

States	Female	Male	Total	States	Female	Male	Total
Abia	6	38	44	Kastina	1	32	33
Adamawa	9	31	40	Kebbi	5	43	48
Akwa Ibom	8	26	34	Kogi	7	66	73
Anambra	13	62	75	Kwara	7	50	57
Bauchi	1	42	43	Lagos	20	34	54
Bayelsa	4	40	44	Nassarawa	4	41	45
Benue	8	39	47	Niger	3	37	40
Borno	1	38	39	Ogun	7	54	61
Cross River	3	35	38	Ondo	4	37	41
Delta	12	56	68	Osun	14	54	68
Ebonyi	3	31	34	Oyo	3	57	60
Edo	3	30	33	Pleateau	4	36	40
Ekiti	3	24	27	Rivers	13	46	59
Enugu	13	38	51	Sokoto	5	97	102
Gombe	5	37	42	Taraba	2	44	46
Imo	14	91	105	Yobe	1	13	14
Jigawa	1	28	29	Zamfara	0	73	73
Kaduna	5	51	56	FCT	10	22	32
Kano	3	83	86	<b>Total</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>1656</b>	<b>1881</b>

Source: INEC (2019) Final List for Senatorial Candidates, 2019 General Election

On state by state account of male and female candidates nominated for 2019 Senatorial election across the 36 States and FCT, Lagos State nominated the highest number of female candidates with 20 candidate followed by Imo and Ogun States with 14 candidates each. Also Anambra, Enugu and Rivers States nominated 13 female candidates each. Delta State nominated 12 female candidates while other states except Zamfara state which has no nominated female candidate nominated between 1-10 female candidates. Similarly in Sokoto State, 97 male candidates were nominated, followed by Imo state with 91 candidates and Kano state with 83 candidates. Others are Zamfara state with 73 male candidates while the remaining 32 States and FCT nominated between 13-66 male candidates.

### House of Representatives Election

Table 12: Total Number of Candidates Nominated by Political Parties for House of Representative Election 2019 and Cleared by INEC

<b>Number</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Female	545	11.72
Male	4106	88.28
<b>Total</b>	<b>4651</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: INEC (2019) Final List for and House of Representative Candidates, 2019 General Election

In the House of Representatives election 2019, as shown in table 12 below, 74 political parties nominated 4651 candidates to contest for seats. Of this number only 545 were female representing 11.7% while male candidates nominated were 4106 representing 88.2%.

Table 13: Party-by-Party Records of Nominated Female Candidates for House of Representatives Election in 2019

S/N	Parties	Number of Female Candidates	S/N	Parties	Number of Female Candidates	S/N	Parties	Number of Female Candidates
1	RP	4	26	NEPP	1	51	BNPP	1
2	ADC	23	27	NRM	10	52	UPN	3
3	DPP	10	28	SNP	6	53	MMM	3
4	GPN	19	29	ACD	10	54	YDP	1
5	ANDP	2	30	PPA	9	55	ADP	6
6	AGA	1	31	ASD	5	56	LPN	1
7	SDP	20	32	CAP	26	57	NNPP	3
8	PPC	8	33	GDPN	2	58	RNBP	2
9	PPN	30	34	FJP	2	59	ANP	4
10	YES	2	35	NUP	2	60	YPP	5
11	APC	13	36	UPC	4	61	ANRP	1
12	APM	8	37	KP	9	62	UPP	8
13	ACPN	4	38	SNC	2	63	APN	1
14	PDC	6	39	ANN	2	64	NDLP	2
15	APDA	6	40	PRP	4	65	NAC	3
16	MPN	28	41	ABP	6	66	MAJA	1
17	HDP	5	42	APP	6	67	NDCP	1
18	LP	10	43	APGA	6	68	NFD	1
19	PDP	21	44	APA	6	69	AAC	1
20	ADC	28	45	NPC	1	70	DPC	1
21	JMPP	13	46	C4C	3	71	APAP	1
22	AAP	2	47	ZLP	4	72	PPP	2
23	A	42	48	DA	38	73	ID	10
24	AA	4	49	PT	13	74	Z	1
25	N	2	50	AD	3		<b>Total</b>	<b>545</b>

Source: INEC (2019) Final List for and House of Representative Candidates, 2019 General Election

Among the 74 Political parties that fielded candidates for 2019 House of Representatives election as shown in Table 13, page 40, A party, nominated the highest number of female candidates with 42 in number followed by DA with 38 female candidates, MPN and ADC with 28 candidates respectively and the PPN with 30 candidates However none of them won any seat. The remaining 68 political parties nominated between 1-29 female candidates. Only PDP and APC with 23 and 11 female candidates respectively won only 11 seats.



Table 14: Male and Female Candidates Nominated for 2019 Senatorial Election across the 36 States and FCT

States	F	M	Total	States	F	M	Total
Abia	25	80	105	Kastina	6	135	141
Adamawa	9	68	77	Kebbi	5	70	75
Anambra	35	156	191	Kogi	24	129	153
Akwa Ibom	22	73	95	Kwara	10	73	83
Bauchi	2	138	140	Lagos	71	205	276
Bayelsa	8	77	85	Nassarawa	4	56	60
Benue	11	122	133	Niger	11	118	129
Borno	5	68	73	Ogun	16	153	169
Cross River	6	74	80	Ondo	10	86	96
Delta	26	108	134	Osun	30	90	120
Ebonyi	9	50	59	Oyo	26	181	207
Edo	11	48	59	Plateau	6	70	76
Ekiti	6	35	41	River	26	130	156
Enugu	13	77	90	Sokoto	16	230	246
Gombe	8	54	62	Taraba	4	76	80
Imo	40	223	263	Yobe	4	23	27
Jigawa	1	79	80	Zamfara	0	119	119
Kaduna	8	235	243	FCT	14	43	57
Kano	17	454	471	<b>Total</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>4106</b>	<b>4651</b>

Source: INEC (2019) Final List for and House of Representative Candidates, 2019 General Election

On State by State account of candidates nominated by political parties, Lagos State topped the list with 71 female candidates followed by Imo and Anambra States with 40 and 35 female candidates respectively. Osun has 30 female candidates Delta, Oyo and Rivers states have 26 each female candidates, Anambra 25 female candidates, Kogi 24 female candidates, Akwa Ibom 22 female candidates. The FCT and the remaining States except Zamfara nominated between 1 and 20 females candidates.

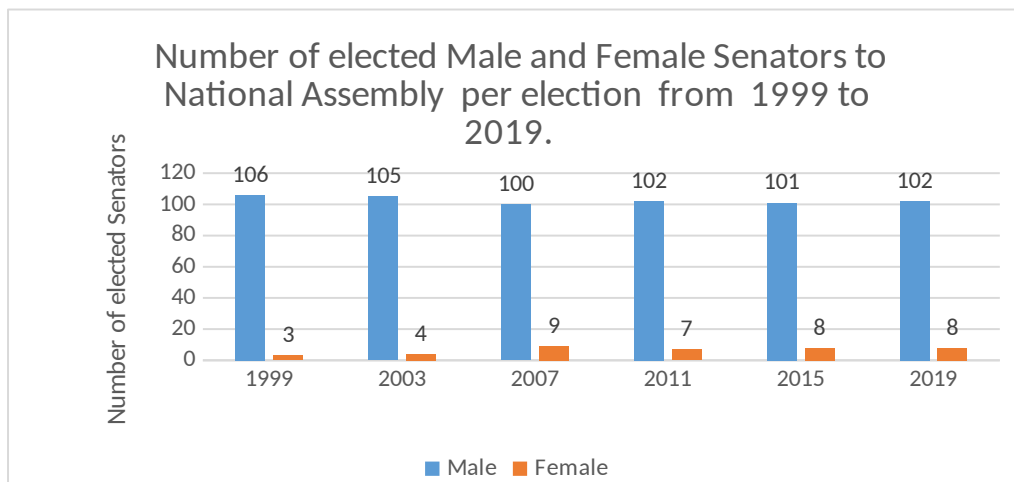
Table 15: Gender Index of Candidates Nominated for National Assembly Elections between 2011-2019

Gender	2011	%	2015	%	2019	%
Male	2988	90.6	2258	86.08	5762	88.21
Female	310	9.4	365	13.92	770	11.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>3298</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2623</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6532</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: INEC (2019) Final List for Senatorial Election and House of Representative Candidates, 2019 General Election

Gender index of candidates nominated for National Assembly elections between 2011- 2019 shows that in 2011, 310 female candidates representing 9.4% were nominated by political parties for National Assembly elections while 2988 male candidates representing 90.6% were nominated. In 2015, 365 female candidates representing 13.92% were nominated to contest 2015 National Assembly elections while 2258 male candidates representing 86.08 were nominated. In 2019, political parties nominated 770 female candidates representing 11.79% for National Assembly election, while male candidates nominated were 5762 representing 88.21%. This figures showed that the number of female candidates nominated by political parties are far below the resolution of 1995 United Nations sponsored World Conference on women in Beijing China which recommended that 30% National Gender Policy which suggested reserving 35% respectively for women in both elective and appointive position.

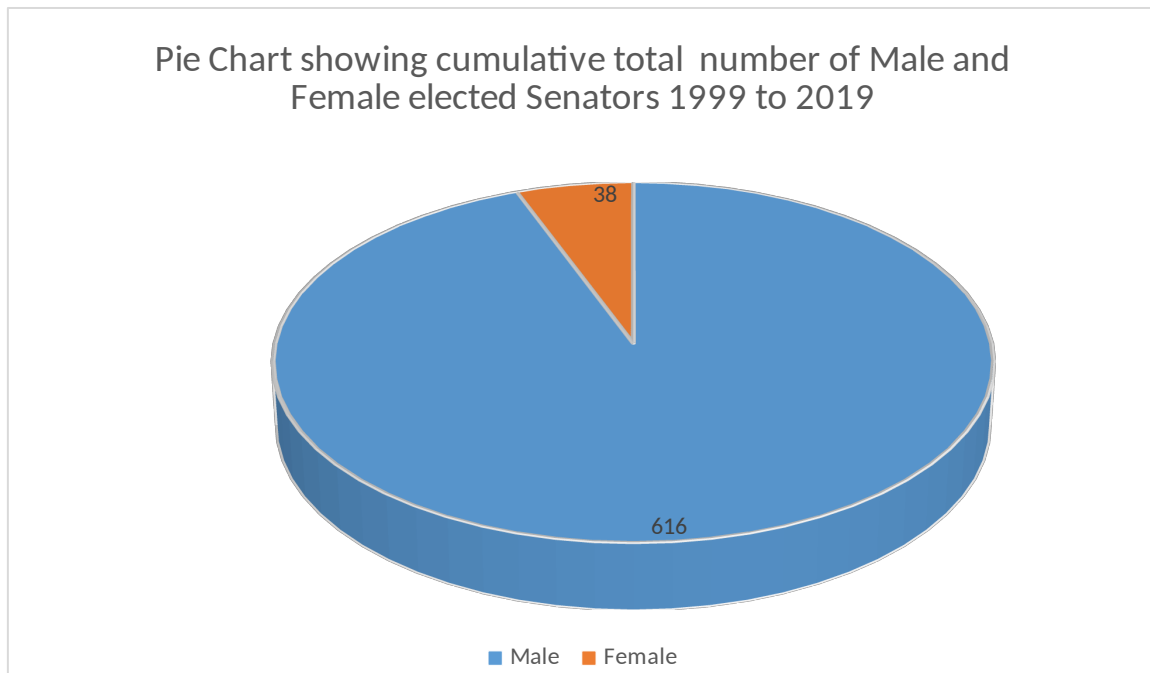
Figure 2: Total Number of Elected Male and Female Senators to National Assembly 1999-2019



Source: Oluyemi (2016). Monitoring the Participation of Women in Politics in Nigeria

Data in the table above shows that, after 20 years (1999-2019) of representative democracy, only 37 female senators representing 5.7% have been elected into the upper legislative chamber out of 654 senators while their male counterpart were 617 senators representing 94.7%.

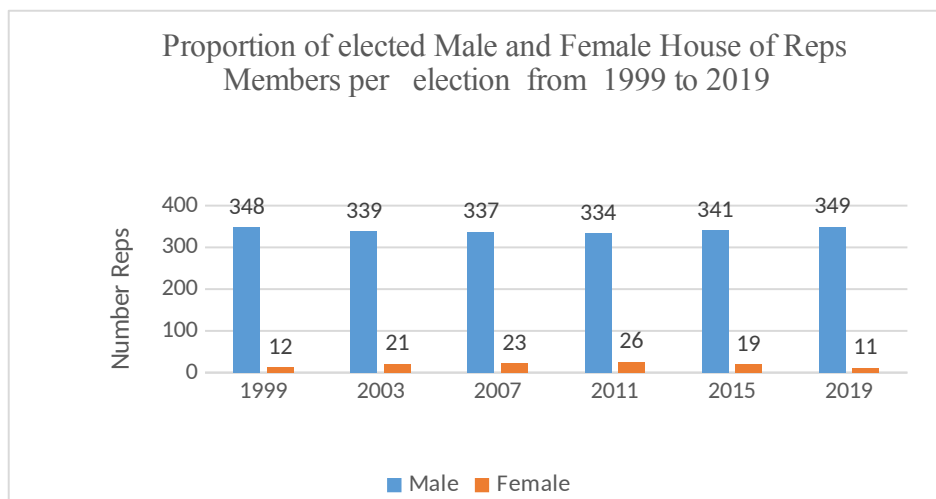
Figure 3: Total Male and Female Elected Senators 1999-2019



Source: Oluyemi (2016) Monitoring the Participation of Women in Politics in Nigeria

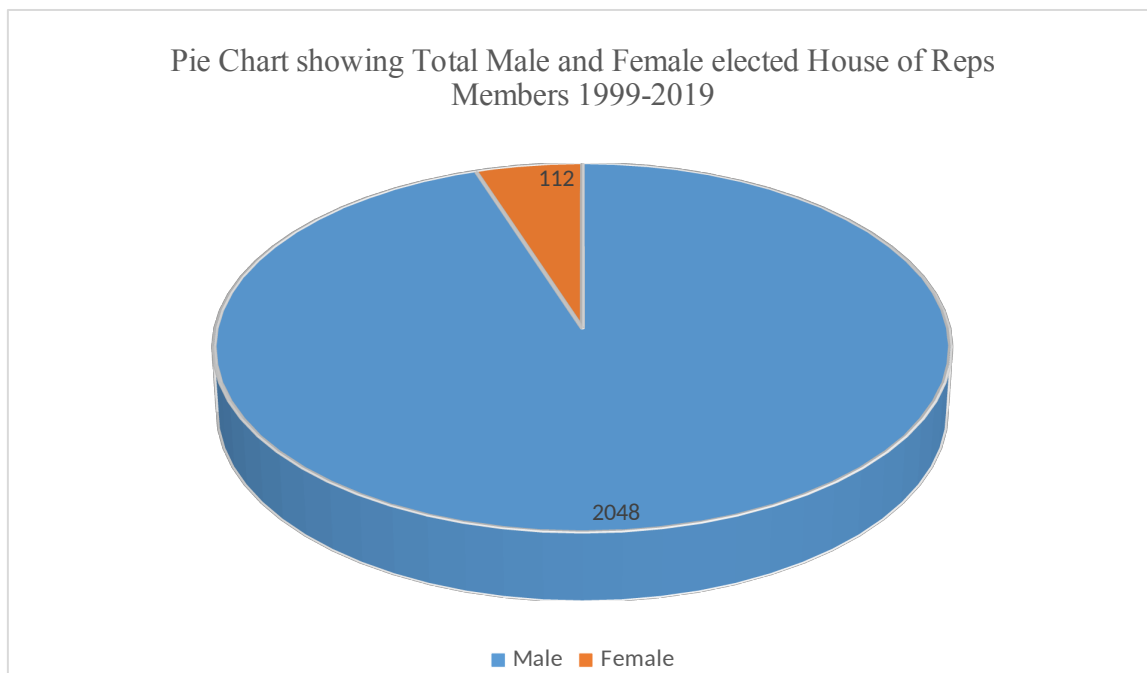
From a total of 2160 elected members of House of Representative from 1999-2019 only 112 female were elected, representing 5.2% while the remaining 2048 Members were males and representing 94.8%.

Figure 4: Proportion of Elected Male and Female House of Representative Members per Election from 1999 to 2019



Source: Oluyemi (2016), Monitoring the Participation of Women in Politics in Nigeria; INEC (2019)

Figure 5: Total Male and Female Elected House of Representative Members 1999-2019



Source: Oluyemi (2016) Monitoring the Participation of Women in Politics in Nigeria

### Conclusion

Under representative democracy, both men and women have equal rights and opportunities to participate at all levels of political processes. However, in Nigeria, such equal rights and opportunities were not given to women by political parties during nomination of elections candidates thereby creating a ground for men to grab large number of all electable positions and this contributed to gender disparity in the National Assembly, which has adversely affected the full operation of representative democracy in the country. Nigeria as a country, despite its pride of place in Africa and World politics, is ranked among the lowest in Africa and the world in general after countries like Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Muslim countries that just recently started granting women the right to vote and be voted for in terms of female representation in parliament. Passage of gender friendly bills have always met a brick wall as a result of domination and control of National Assembly by male Legislators.

The 1999 constitution of Nigeria as amended which is the organic law of the country, gave political parties the sole responsibility of nominating, funding and campaigning for candidates contesting for elective positions in the country such as in the Federal Legislature, however, these parties do not give equal opportunities and access to women in comparisons to their male counterparts. Apart from Women Leader, from Ward to National level, women are hardly elected into the Party Executives where important decisions concerning nomination of candidates, funding and campaign for elections are discussed and approved. During primary elections, where candidates that will fly the flags of political parties to contest an election are elected, the party hierarchy do mobilize their party members to vote and nominate male candidates with the exclusion of females.

We found that the inability of political parties in Nigeria to reserve some proportions of elective positions for women account for gender disparity in the National Assembly.

### Recommendations

Based on our finding, the study recommends that political parties in Nigeria should introduce a policy that will address gender disparity in National Assembly by reserving some proportions of electable seats for female candidates during elections to National Assembly.

Political parties in Nigeria should tow the path of Rwanda that reserved 40 % of elective seats in parliament for women in their constitution. This will enable Nigerian women to enjoy the benefit of representative democracy.

The National Assembly should review the constitution of Nigeria to provide for compulsory implementation of the 1995 Beijing Conference recommended 30% and National Gender Policy recommended 35% respectively for both appointive and elective positions to be reserved for women so that political parties shall implement it.

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