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Marginalization of Women by Women in the Contest for Elective Positions in Nigeria: A Reconstruction Paradigm

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Abstract:

This paper analyzes women marginalization of womenfolk in the contest for elective positions in Nigeria with emphasis on Nigeria general elections. It exemplifies the comparative trend since the return of democratic elections in 1999. This comes from the backdrop of raging agitations, campaigns, protests and persistent clamours to grant women soft-landing in electoral contests with the accompanying belief that the clamour would play key roles in steering their political participation. The study observes persistent decline in women representation in elective positions and analyzes the identified hindrances to their elective ambitions. The data are mainly from secondary source. In the same vein, structural functional theoretical framework and content analysis models were adopted to explain the variables and in a great measure, the problems women usually encounter in their electoral bids. This has always been blamed on socio-cultural, religious and economic inhibitions, insensitivity or tacit conspiracy against women by men dominated political gladiators; bad political environment that promotes violence and insecurity. While all these factors are significant, the problem is more on the character of the womenfolk. While the study notes that women have benefited virtually nothing from party waivers, it also holds a strong view that prevalence of envy and jealousy among womenfolk affects the elective ambition of women aspirants/candidates. This dimension has not been interrogated while examining women marginalization in politics. It recommends the restructuring of the political system and clearly providing for sharing or rotating of elective offices between men and women to end marginalization. With this arrangement, envy and jealousy will become internal to women without option for men to usurp the loophole, which has always resulted from feminine related cold war.

Keywords: Women marginalization, womenfolk, elective position, Nigeria, and elections; reconstruction, paradigm

1. Introduction

The year 1999 marked a significant threshold in the history of Nigeria's transition from militarism to democracy and electioneering. It evidently demonstrates the fact that, "democracy is a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials. It further shows that democracy is a social mechanism for the resolution of the problem of societal decision-making among conflicting interest groups that permits the largest possible part of the population to influence these decisions through their ability to choose among alternative contenders for political office..." (Adhiambo-Oduol, 2002). As a system of government, it has gained more popularity now in contemporary societies than in the years past. The reasons for this development may not be unconnected with the fact that democratic system abhors segregation in the area of gender when it comes to participation in election (Gberevbie, and Oviasogie 2013).

- One of the features of democracy that makes it unique is equality of participation in decision making on issues affecting all segments of the society. The exclusion of any body from the political process based on gender is seen by scholars as a negation of the true values of a democratic society (Gberevbie and Oviasogie 2013).

Democracy is associated with fundamental principles that underscore its essence and practice. One of them is regular election conducted at intervals to select political leaders. Election, to that extent, no doubt, significantly reduces or escalates conflicts associated with selection of leadership at all levels of human organization. It not only streamline the practice of freedom of choice but bridges the barrier of social, economic, religious, class, gender and political discriminations in modern electoral process. Once there is any form of discrimination in the politics of any nation, it faces litany of problems. Apart from ideological and economic related disparity, gender has been very sensitive and potent source of controversy in most political societies. The contestation and agitation by women for political environment that is inclusive and creation of equal opportunities to occupy elective positions as men in view of their numerical strength and sensitivity, appears to be a global agenda. This was unveiled in the Beijing 35 percent Affirmative Action, and several other measures adopted to serve as mediums for authoritative allocation of political positions to women based on mutual understanding of each political community. In the case of Nigeria, some political parties have since practiced waiver or free party nomination form for their intending women aspirants.

Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, Nigerian women have tried to gain access to political decision-making positions by contesting for elective positions at various levels (Omolara, 2015). Though the women folk constitute over 50% of registered voters

and form majority of those that are effectively mobilised for electoral process, their marginalization in elective positions seem to be a dirge of historical apoplexy. It signposts the skewed prejudice against women's quest for elective positions; and underlies the practice of politics and democratic elections in most societies. The trend therefore attracts research attention, to examine the extent women participate in politics; the level they have attained in elective positions, the general nature of the political environment and how 35% Beijing Affirmative Action and other related international treaties and domestic legislations, add value to their inclusiveness in leaderships. This is against the backdrop that women are important segments that realistically inject meaning into elections and are highly valued because of immeasurable contributions they make as bridge builders in Nigeria's democracy and governance. In the light of this, the study poses two critical questions formulated to investigate the key variables.

1. How does envy and jealousy affect the ambition of women to clinch elective political positions in Nigeria?
2. How does waiver for party nomination form that political parties grant women aspirants boost or hinder their participation in politics?

The specific objectives, therefore, are to evaluate how envy and jealousy among themselves affect their clamour for clinching elective positions and secondly, how party waiver translates to women aspirants emerging as party candidates for election. Their performance in general elections since the return to democratic governance in 1999 will be partly understood from these standpoints.

The secondary method is adopted for data collection; and content analysis is also used for discussion and reporting of the findings. It is a qualitative research. In view of the fact that politics encompasses role playing activities within institutional settings, where groups and individuals interact simultaneously in pursuit of divergent goals; structural functional framework of analysis becomes apt for the study. It illustrates how the structures perform expected functions, and the activities or roles of various agents in the system. The essence is to reconstruct the arguments on marginalization and explain what roles women play to perpetuate their deficit in elective positions.

2. Contextual Debates on Women in Politics and Leadership in Nigeria

Women participation in politics remains a thorny issue in academic circles and elicits plethora of debates. Each perspective is country sensitive (developed and developing, colonizers and colonized) and presents dynamics that derive their substance from varied premises. However, Gberevbie & Oviasogie, (2013) exemplify the roots of women's political participation in Nigeria from historical dimension. According to them, prior to colonialism, some notable women played prominent roles in governance of their respective kingdoms, empires and emirates. Among such women include: Queen Daura of Daura emirate in the present day Katsina State, Queen Amina of Zazzau, now Zaria, of the Zaria emirate in the present day Kaduna State, all from the northern part of Nigeria; Ogiso Orhorho and Emotan of the famous Benin Kingdom (south), in the present day Edo State. With the prominence of these women pacesetters, they argue that women marginalization in political affairs could be seen as one of the negative attributes of colonial legacy in Nigeria, which was re-enforced by the different governments of post-colonial Nigerian society after independence.

Jacobsen (2011) examines the forms of gender inequality that significantly whittles the sustenance of these prominent roles of women in leadership. These include, economic, political, social and demographic typologies; and each is very much relevant in Nigeria electoral process. In economic gender inequality, women still make less than men in the formal work sector, they are more likely to live in poverty, less likely to participate in the formal work sector, and do a larger share of work in the household sector. The political gender inequality perspective includes women's lower representation in elected office and lower representation in political and corporate appointments, etc. Nzomo (2003) and Nwankwo (2009) using Nigeria as a case study, analyze the multiplier affects of gender inequality on political participation and identified that the gender specific unevenness of electoral politics manifest itself in the following forms:

- i. The persisting social resistance and / or lukewarm acceptance of women's participation in political leadership. This is in spite of the spectacular performance of the few women who held sway as heads of ministries and parastatals in this dispensation.
- ii. Culture of electoral violence that tends to be harsher towards female than male candidates;
- iii. Feminization of poverty that renders women more financially constrained to manage a campaign than men.
- iv. Lack of adequate political socialization for leadership that manifests itself in women's exclusion from access to strategic political information and general inability in the art of public oratory and populist campaign and
- v. Women's marginalization in mainstream political party hierarchy and hence, inability to shape rules of engagement (especially at the nomination stage), which are defined and organized around male norms and values.

In a related study, Wonuola, (2015) citing Nwammu, (2012) and World Bank, (2005) asserts that prior to the 21st century, most Nigerian women tended to be indifferent towards politics. This could be attributed to some issues or factors ranging from the nature of the Nigerian society which is patriarchal with the prevalent notion that politics is not for women, and also the high illiteracy rate among women. Also, Eme, Onyishi & Nwaoha (2014) note that despite the widespread movement towards democratization in most polities, women are highly under represented at most levels of government, especially in ministerial and other executive bodies. Consequently, they have made little progress in attaining political power in legislative bodies or in achieving the target endorsed by the Economic and Social Council of having 30 percent women in positions at decision making levels by 1995. This is in spite of the fact that 47 million Nigerians registered as eligible voters in the 1999 elections, and of this figure, 27 million were women representing 57.4% of registered voters. Gabriel (2015), in similar spheres, reiterates that over the years, Nigerian women have continued to record very poor performances in elective political offices. In a comparative study on the trends of women representation in elective positions that dwelt essentially on 2003 and 2011 elections for the analysis, she contends that in the past general elections in Nigeria, female candidates consistently performed badly.

- In the 2003 elections, there were 4 (3.67%) female senators. Out of the 360 available seats in the Federal House of Representatives, women won only 19 (5.27%). In 2011 for instance, only 32 women were elected to the national assembly out of 469 members, which is barely 8% representation. Out of the 109 Senators who emerged winners at the 2011 polls, only 7 (6.4%) were women.

The UNDP Report (2015) amplifies the assertion, stressing that for millions of Nigerian women, taking part in elective politics is not easy. Women often do not receive the support and mentoring they need to compete with their male counterparts. In turn, many voters do not fully appreciate the benefits of having a mix of men and women in government. As a result, there is currently a low representation of women at all levels of government in Nigeria. In other words, Adesuwa (2015) notes that despite efforts by developmental agencies like the UNDP, who started providing budding female politicians with training and support, complemented by community enlightenment campaigns, many women have failed to scale the hurdles before them. Nigerian women have not had it smooth in terms of representation in top public offices. Clark (2012) examines the effects of such prejudice in a nation's political development. He opines that gender equality and women's empowerments are not only human rights; they are also imperative for achieving inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. Women's political participation is central to these goals, and political parties are among the most important institutions for promoting and nurturing such participation.

Akor (2015) diagnoses women's participation in the general elections from multifaceted perspectives. He observes that the clamour for increased participation of women in politics particularly in elective positions has been going on for long. He identifies several factors such as our patriarchal society, culture, religion, money politics, and violence among others as militating against women's participation in politics in the country. According to him, there is growing concern amongst women that the percentage of their participation in elective positions in the country witnessed decline or nose-dived from 2007 to 2011 and now 2015. He argues that with the recent 2015 general elections, it seems women's low participation in elective positions have grown from bad to worse. Women had contested for different positions in the four elections held by the country since its return to democratic rule in 1999 but have had poor results, minimal gains and slow progress. For instance in 2003, women made up only three percent of elected officials, in 2007 they made seven percent and in 2011 they made up about five percent. The Report of National Democratic Institute (NDI, 2012) on the 2011 Nigerian Elections corroborates this view thus:

- As far as running for election goes, many women are dissuaded due to "high levels of competition, the often violent nature of Nigerian politics and deeply held prejudices against female politicians", with some women reporting pressure to withdraw their candidacies, harassment and physical attacks.

Omoye (2012) cites the reports by Human Rights Watch to show that Nigeria is still a nation where political violence (rioting, bombing, destruction of property) is prevalent not only in the lead-up to the Election Day but also the aftermath. The 2011 Northern Nigerian post-election violence resulted in 800 deaths (HRW). According to the report, political violence is a huge barrier for Nigerian women's participation in elections due to the violent and intimidating behaviors that constitute election crime. However, Bucknor-Akerele, in Adesuwa (2015) examines the multifaceted dimensions of marginalization that women suffer. He shows that at present, in the Senate, none of the principal officers is a woman, and only 8 of the 109 senators are women. The House of Representatives has only one female principal officer. Only 24 (7 per cent) of the 360 members are women. He went further to posit that these figures are in contrast with the situation in countries such as Rwanda, where women make up 61 of 106 parliamentarians (58 per cent), and Senegal where women occupy 65 of the 150 parliamentary seats (43 per cent). More so, in Nigeria's 36 states, there is no female governor, and the country does not appear ready to have a woman as president, although a woman ran for that office in 2015. All of these realities exist despite the National Gender Policy's promise to support women to occupy 35 per cent of elective positions in Nigeria.

Omolara, (2015) makes a similar case, arguing that not only has there been marginal gain over the years which in itself is not very encouraging, but a decline in the number of elected female politicians in the 2015 General Elections shows a manifestation of female political disempowerment and this is more worrisome. In the 2015 General Elections, Nigerian women as usual came out and participated in all aspects of the electoral processes. The zeal and vigour with which the few ones who contested for elective positions campaigned and engaged in electioneering demonstrated their resolve to be relevant in governance. According to him, given the ground swell and campaign for popular participation by women in the general elections, the poor performance is indeed very troubling.

There is global perspective to women marginalization; hence it is not a secluded province for Nigeria's electoral system or those of third world. McCann and Wilson (2014) observe that across Australia, women continue to be significantly under-represented in parliament and executive government, comprising less than one-third of all parliamentarians and one-fifth of all ministers. Internationally, Australia's ranking for women in national government continues to decline when compared with other countries. The representation of women in Australia's parliaments hovers around the 'critical mass' of 30 per cent regarded by the United Nations as the minimum level necessary for women to influence decision-making in parliament. They note that there is no consensus amongst researchers in the field as to why women continue to be under-represented in Australia's system of parliamentary democracy. According to them, a number of factors contribute to the gender imbalance, some of which are the type of electoral system, the culture of political parties, and the nature of politics and the parliamentary environment in Australia. Funk and Gathmann (2014), citing many analysts and scholars including Andersen et al., (2008); Gneezy, Leonard and List, (2009); The Economist, (2012) and Norris and Krook, (2011); buttress the reasons that women are under-represented in most legislatures around the world. According to them, on average, only one in five members of national parliaments is a woman. The situation is even more dismal at the top of national governments: only 20 out of 180 worlds' heads of state are women. As a result, women's voices are more likely to go unheard than those of men.

An article published in Wikipedia, entitled “Women in Canadian Politics” notes that Gender representation has been a significant issue in Canadian politics. As of 2010, Canada ranked 50th in the world for women's participation in politics, with women holding just 23 per cent of the seats in federal, provincial and territorial legislatures.^[2] At the federal level, Canada was tied with Mauritania for 49th place.^[3] Some have attributed this to the belief that the voting public still consciously or unconsciously ascribes leadership qualities much more to men than to women. Research studies by Cornwell (2000) on gender and development in Sub-Saharan Africa; Swers (2002) on gender differences in policy priorities at the congressional level in the United States of America; and Aiyede (2007) on women's political leadership potential in Nigeria reveal that involvement of women in governance prove to be key to unlocking the inherent development potential of the south. The representation of women's interest requires a greater inclusion of women leaders in public office; and removal of all forms of discrimination against women is seen as basis for their meaningful contribution towards development in Nigeria respectively.

The foregoing debates concentrated on emphasizing the marginalization of women in elective and leadership positions. The emphasis focuses more on factors fuelling the trend; the challenges they pose to nation's political stability; its development and national integration; the sustainable economic growth and inclusive political environment. None interrogates the character of womenfolk, whether they are always supportive or opposed to leadership aspiration of their colleagues and why their numerical strength does not translate to electoral assets in their favour. In the same vein, none also discussed the implications of waivers for party nomination form; whether it has paved way or impeded their emergence in party primaries and eventual victory in elections. This strand of views is what this study contributes to existing literature on the subject.

3. Thematic Theoretical Issues

This study is anchored on structural-functional approach in political analysis. It is a variant of systems theory. Some of the expository works of the intellectual navigators of the approach include Easton (1957), Parson (1959), Almond and Powell (1966), etc. They contend that political system performs three fundamental functions and they are mutually inclusive.

- i. Process Function – involving interest articulation, interest aggregation, policymaking, policy implementation and rule adjudication.
- ii. System Function – including political socialization, recruitment and communication, and
- iii. Policy Function – relating to the output of the political system and their substantive impacts on the society, the economy and culture. Policy functions are synonymous with the performance of the political system.

Almond and Powell (1966) further posit that political system refers to a set of interactions, institutions and agencies concerned with formulating and implementing collective goals of a society, and list political parties, interest groups, legislature, executives/bureaucracies, and the courts, as political structures located within the modern political system. The core assumption of the approach in explaining political phenomena is that:

- A universal set of political functions could be defined and associated with different structures in different political systems. In other words, all political systems perform the same core set of functions, although these functions may be performed by different structures from one society to another.

The roles they perform can be qualified differently although the main emphasis of the approach in accounting for structural dynamics of political phenomena or administrative system focuses on:

- i. Identifying the roles of every structure or institution in a society
- ii. Explaining the relationship existing between the various structures in a system, and
- iii. Enhancing communication flow within, between or among the structures constituting a system.

Political party is primarily vested with recruiting of membership, constituting the leadership, nominating candidates that contest election, raising funds, campaigning and forming government when elected into office. Each political party has specific procedures for its organization. As a group activity, women constitute an integral component and are of significant population which is the beacon of modern democratic practice. This is considered a very important factor both for party's internal activity and electioneering process. In other words, the form of party organization determines its functions and in turn influences the form of patterned behaviour towards its activities. In this includes how women articulate and promote their interests for mutual benefits, in response to the prevalent system norms. Their attitudes towards each other while performing political roles determine to what extent their participation could harness or waste opportunities which cohesive group action avail each sub-group seeking to use the party platform to ascend unto elective political positions. Key to this process is the interplay of structure and function which shape participatory roles in terms of who does or does not benefit and the why question.

Political participation is a function or activity defined in terms of structures and functions. They manifest in the forms of policy making and enforcement strategy; the manipulative tendencies that underlie political interaction and the pattern of responses from the environment. It offers a premise for identification of what hinders participation and what women always blame for their predicament. It nonetheless, brought to fore the causal effects of their voting behaviour that tends to demean their efforts in contesting, winning and occupying elective positions.

4. Theoretical Discourse

4.1. *The Thesis of Envy and Jealousy among Womenfolk*

Over 60% of Nigeria population are women. The 2006 census puts Nigerian women at about half the population of the country. But despite this numerical advantage and the massive participation in voting, less than 20% of political offices are held by women

(Gabriel, 2015). Similarly, women are the most active party machinery, always committed to party functions and voting in elections more than men but most times playing subordinate roles. Though many women are not politically ambitious, they readily show aversion to those of their peers that try to exhibit such disposition. Women are naturally born jealous, especially towards one another (Okafor, 2016). Envy and jealousy are their common plague and they pose major hindrance to their efforts to unite for mutual political action. Greater percentage does not love each other; they cajole, blackmail, and lampoon one another. Their clamours for 35% affirmative action which litmus test is in elective position end up in lip service and near failure. Sarah Jubrin got only one vote when she contested the PDP presidential primary election in 2011 despite the fact that many women were delegates in the election. In the same vein, out of the 14 candidates that contested for the seat of the president, the only woman amongst the contenders (Prof Oluremi Sonaiya of KOWA party) came out in the 12th position (Uzoanya and Awodipe, 2015). It shows an amazing betrayal of their quest for equal opportunities with men in elective positions.

- Many women do not have confidence in the leadership abilities of their fellow women. Although factors like envy, jealousy and other problems associated with interpersonal relations are common with women, generally, most women would rather vote or support men to win election than their fellow women in spite of their numerical strength. This has often given the men an upper hand when it comes to mobilizing support for elections (Ngara and Ayabam, 2013).

More often than not, the female gender is easily mobilized for the election victory of male candidates who are more financially buoyant than their female counterparts. Women are also known to have registered as voters more than men in successive voter's registration exercises, while statistics equally support that women turnout in successive elections in Nigeria are usually greater than that of men (Awofeso and Odeyemi, 2014). Similar cases abound where women forgo one of their own and commit political apostasy. There is no denying the fact that as womenfolk,

- ...we are the enemies of ourselves. We do not love each other, if we have a female and a male candidate, instead of us to vote for the woman, we vote for the male because we do not have confidence in the woman. This is due to envy and jealousy. It will take a lot of time to orientate the womenfolk on the need to love one another (Amusan, 2015).

It is also argued that apart from poverty, illiteracy, low awareness, cultural and religious inhibitions; women are still bugged by the issue of jealousy and envy that make them not to support themselves when aspiring to public offices (Akinpelu, 2015). Part of the reasons is that there is less networking on the part of women politicians to achieve a common aim and it is a challenge that has to be surmounted (Jimoh, 2015). The failures in big parties provide even a better insight into their voting behaviour. In virtually all the states in Nigeria, women constitute majority in voter registration and turn-out on Election Day but about 98 percent of them that contest elective position still lose out. What does that portend? It indicates that the marginalization of women in elective positions is partly a self-inflicted injury. This is attributable to envy and jealousy rife among the womenfolk.

Social psychologists like Smith and Kim (2007), Van de Ven et al., (2009) and Tai et al., (2012), have researched extensively on the effects of envy and jealousy in goal attainments. They have also examined the behavioural features that shape the life of women that could manifest even in politics. They opine that women are naturally dependent, prone to subordinate roles, weak, fearful; jealous and envious by their nature and feel more comfortable and protected under men. Being collective personality traits, Allport (1937) defines personality trait as "the dynamic organization within the person, of those psychological systems that create the person's characteristic pattern of behaviour, thought and feelings". This pattern of behaviours, thoughts and feelings take concrete forms in the course of interpersonal relationships. They are sometimes shaped by environmental factors which in the process of adjusting or adapting to its pressures, results in developing a patterned behaviour. Studies have found that materialism is the biggest trigger and the emergent value system is rooted in the culture of free economic enterprise where personal achievements are the measure of wealth, influence and power. In countries with high incidence of poverty, participation in politics focuses more on what economic/material rewards are accessible and who intends to benefit more than the others. Out of envy and jealousy, many women try to deny each other access to exclusive material privilege or positions of influence. They act in manners that foreclose the determination of their colleagues to excel in virtually all endeavours including politics. This does not create favourable atmosphere for women in elective contests.

As a consequence of negative value orientation associated with materialism and free economic enterprise, it is contended that it promotes the worst kind of human behaviour, and must be rejected if moral human action is to prevail. In other words, it promotes jealousy, envy, and greed (Cleveland, 2013). In most instances during interaction in political and economic sectors of the society that is fraught with inequalities and scarce resources, women appear more prone to manifest envious character than men, in everything but more so in dealing with their fellow women. This has been the bane of women in their participation in politics and other fields of endeavour in Nigeria, thereby widening the gap of their marginalization by men.

5. Logic of Waivers for Women Aspirants and Party Intrigues

The year 1999 marked the rebirth of democratic governance in Nigeria. Ever since, women have demonstrated uncommon zeal to break away from cultural, economic, educational, religious and other system-breeding barriers so as to engage in active party politics. The attendant monetization of party politics remains a great inhibition for those seeking elective offices. Political parties charge high fees for "Expression of Interest and Nomination Forms". These forms are fundamental precondition for participation in a party's primary elections, from which a successful aspirant become a party candidate and then qualifies to contest final election. Many women are unable to pay the exorbitant fees charged and as a result, are excluded from vying for elective positions.

The widespread agitations against systematic exclusion of women from leadership positions across Africa got the attention of various stakeholders in the politics and formed an agenda upon which decisions were reached to open more political spaces for women. Accordingly, the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, requires "political parties to adopt legislative and

administrative measures to guarantee the rights of women (Article 8) and create the necessary conditions for the full and active participation of women in the decision-making process and structures at all levels'' (Women in Parliament – Inter-Parliamentary Union, www.ipu.org/pdf). Nigeria is a signatory to this Charter thus resulting in pressure for compliance with the provisions to stop women marginalization experienced during 1999, 2003 and 2007 elections. There was partial compliance with some provisions in the Charter which aimed at ensuring an enabling environment for women to participate in the 2011 general elections. Some political parties adopted palliative measures to give women sense of belonging. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) first granted women aspirants, waivers not to pay fees for nomination forms but to pay only ₦200, 000 as expression of interest fee (Idowu, 2010). All men aspirants were made to pay for the forms thus:

Elective Offices	PDP		FORMS	
	Expression of Interest	Nomination	Total	
President	N1m	N10m	N11m	
Governor	N500,000	N5m	N5.5m	
Senate	N300,000	N2m	N2.3m	
Reps	N200,000	N1m	N1.2m	
State House	N100,000	N500,000	N600,000	

Table 1: Cost of Expression of Interest and Nominations Forms charged by PDP in 2011 Primaries
Source: Compiled by the author from PDP Guidelines for Primary Elections

Other political parties subsequently followed the trend in addition to other measures introduced to boost women participation in elective contests. The cases in point include the establishment of National Gender Policy on 15 August 2008, which promised 35% affirmative action; the Nigeria Women Trust Fund inaugurated on 24 March 2011 by the Ministry of Women and Social Development that earmarked N100m to finance the campaign of about 230 female aspirants irrespective of their political party (Udodinma, 2013). More so, the Women for Change Initiatives established by the wife of the president, Dame Patience Jonathan was handy for support to women. As a result of these action packed programmes, “the total number of aspirants both men and women were 3306, with 3004 (90%) male and 302 (9.1%) female” (Udodinma, 2013). At the end, only a marginal number of female emerged as party flag bearers and few of them won final elections. The development was not only disparaging; it also questioned the essence and sincerity with which parties offered free nomination forms to women apart from other alluring support packages promised women and the structures put in place to assist in their elective ambitions. Before those palliatives, women fared better both in the number of aspirants, the number that secured party tickets and the number that were successful in the final election. Using the 2007 elections for example, about 1200 women entered the contest, 660 won the primaries while 93 emerged winners. Out of these winners, 6 were deputy governors, 9 senators, 27 members of the House of Representatives and 52 won the State House of Assembly seats (Udodinma, 2013). The drop in the number even with free nomination forms shows that it did not prod women to enlist massively for elective positions. Many had contended that what women sought for was unconditional entry into the contest which N200,000 expression of interest fee contradicts. Others were bugged by the high cost of campaign at the level of party primary and few others questioned the role of political party in financing the campaign of its candidates. It became obvious that waiver is a drop of ice in an ocean and not sufficient to midwife electoral opportunities for women. There were hopes that the 2015 elections would witness a landmark improvement with intensive sensitization and education of women politicians on the need to mobilize seriously and contest elective positions. Apart from extending free nomination forms to women, many parties raised the cost of the forms to pose hurdle for men who would contest any elective position. It was so much that General Muhammadu Buhari had to take bank loan to be able to pay for the All Progressives Congress (APC's) forms and about N100.5m was donated for President Jonathan to purchase the PDP's form (Adibe, 2014). Many men of low economic status were barred from contesting and it turned out an exclusive preserves for the rich and money-bags. See table 2 below.

Elective Offices	PDP FORMS			APC FORMS			UPN FORMS
	Expression of Interest	Nomination	Total	Expression of Interest	Nomination	Total	Nomination
President	N2m	N20m	N22m	N2.5m	N25m	N27.5m	N5m
Governor	N1m	N10m	N11m	N500,000	N5m	N5.5m	N2.5m
Senate	N500,000	N4m	N4.5m	N300,000	N3m	N3.3m	N2m
Reps	N500,000	N2m	N2.5m	N200,000	N2m	N2.2m	N350,000
State House	N200,000	N1m	N1.2m	N50,000	N500,000	N550,000	

Table 2: Cost of some Party Nomination and Expression of Interest Forms for 2015 Elections

Source: Study Analysis. See Andrew Agbese & Saawua Terzungwe, “High fees may shut out aspirants from vying in APC, PDP”. Daily Trust Online Newspaper, Oct 14, 2014, in <http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/index.php/politics/36722>, accessed July 7, 2016.

It is doubtful that any Nigerian woman would voluntarily pay such amount in a fluid game called politics. The waiver for women ensured that Prof Oluremi Sonaiya of KOWA party contested 2011 presidential elections and Sarah Jubril of PDP contested for the presidential primary with President Goodluck Jonathan in 2011 and 2015 respectively. The free forms threw up many surprises; the

number of women aspirants was not too impressive as before. The 29 states where gubernatorial elections held in 2015, the representation of women seeking the office of governor and deputy governor was 87 out of the 380 candidates (22.9 per cent) running for the positions. In the contest for senatorial seats, 122 women out of 747 candidates, representing 16 per cent, were cleared by the Independent National Electoral Commission to run in the March 28 election. The number is not better in the contest for the lower chamber of parliament. Only 267 women out of a total 1774 candidates ran for seats at the House of Representatives, representing 15 per cent (Sogbesan, 2015).

Considering the level of losses women had in the 2015 elections, it suggests that the beneficiaries of the party waiver wrongly perceived and subsequently abused the essence. While the intent was to encourage women participate in elective positions as men, it never contemplated a platform that allows unserious political scavengers join in the elective contests. In this category falls the only woman aspirant (Tina Agbara) that participated in Edo State governorship primary for the 10th September 2016 elections, who despite getting the nomination forms free (Ugwu, 2016), made no impact. The same could be said of Sarah Jubril of PDP. There is significant difference in the efforts and seriousness showed by these women when compared with the levels of commitments by late Dora Akunyili, Senator Chris Anyanwu, Senator Joy Emordi or Rep Uche Ekwunife etc, when they appeared for the contests. It is a truism but ironically though, that not all the women aspirants nursed the ambition to occupy elective office; many had narrow objective of ego advertisement, as pacesetters. So many others were sponsored to play spoiler game and create bumpy track for serious challengers in the rival party while the few that appeared serious were misconstrued and rated from the lenses the unserious women were sighted. Featuring at party primaries is wrongly perceived by many women as an avenue to showcase oneself for possible political appointment if the party wins the election. This perception makes most women who participate to end up printing posters, hiring political jobbers to paste them around and reaching out to the party stakeholders to announce intention and create only awareness. It is synonymous with the proverbial tale of tilling the soil and planting no crops, which makes an aspirant look unserious and undetermined in politics.

However, the political parties have not been fair to women aspirants in spite of the fact that women also help to perpetuate this fate. Party primaries still lack in internal democracy and are conducted in an atmosphere of inequity to the disadvantage of women. The party structure is constituted in discriminatory ratios. Most importantly, funding of party is sometimes used as part of criteria applied when evaluating aspirants. This is an area that women do not fare well. Most women, among them the highly placed ones that occupy elective or appointive political offices are parsimonious in nature and find it relatively difficult to part with money to support party activities and boost their support base. They stay aloof watching men bear the financial burden of funding a political party which both hopes to serve as platform for climbing the political ladder. As a result, the money they pay for the expression of interest forms is sometimes regarded as donations to support the party as they do not exert any influence on the party leadership and structure. As a result, women are disposed to peripheral status in the party politics.

- These also affect the extent of their powers and influence within the party structure. Thus during party nomination, they are usually unable to assert themselves or even push for the interest of women leading to the marginalization of women during election'' (Ngara and Ayabam, 2013).

Many of them scarcely pull-through the party primaries and others lose the main election. The National Publicity Secretary of the Labour Party (LP) Barrister Ebere Ifendu observes that "giving us the free-nomination forms is one thing, supporting them to win primaries and the real contest is another, the parties did not do this much for us in the 2015 elections" (Jimoh, 2015). So many factors outside waiver on party nomination forms are responsible for this dismal performance. A cross section of women politicians blame the political parties among other challenges for the dwindling electoral fortune of female contestants culminating in their losses during the 2015 general elections (Jimoh, 2015). Majority of election losers in Nigeria contest in less influential parties. In other words, electoral success depends largely on which party platform a candidate contests. It is always believed that the bigger parties offer a better platform. Unfortunately, the major political parties are structured in ways that manipulate the chances of many women from emerging as party candidates. The delegates for party primary elections are drawn from a mix of party executives, elected and appointed political office-holders who are members of the party and few elected delegates. Women are underrepresented in these hierarchies and therefore in minority in the delegate list for each congress that elects party candidates during party primaries. With insignificant number in the party delegates, many women aspirants are usually left in limbo. It further accentuates the unabated disproportionate playing field which characterizes the Nigerian system. This explains why men dominate women in the party structure which is the precondition for winning party primary and emerging as candidate to contest the main election.

The implication is that despite many political parties making the nomination forms free for the women, the main issue is with the money for the primaries, the campaigns and the election proper (Okafor, 2016). The cost of realizing electoral ambition is still far beyond the reach of even the most highly placed women in the absence of godfather who is willing to "foot the bill in exchange for unlimited favour when the seat is eventually secured (Yahaya, 2012). The problem is that while many candidates receive donations from patrons, there are few patrons willing to risk their money on female candidates, given the low likelihood of them being elected (Gabriel, 2015). A cursory look at figures of women in table 3 below, who successfully won elective positions from 1999 to 2015 general elections, authenticate this assertion.

Year	President	Vice President	Governor	Deputy Governor	Senate	House of Reps	House of Assembly	Council Chairperson	Councillors
1999	0	0	0	1	3	7	24	13	69
2003	0	0	0	2	4	21	40	15	267
2007	0	0	0	6	9	27	57	27	235
2011	0	0	0	1	7	25	68	-	-
2015	0	0	0	4	7	15	46	-	-

Table 3: Elective position won by women from 1999 to 2015 general elections

Source: Compiled by the author from INEC Election Results Summary

This is out of the 36 gubernatorial seats, 36 deputy gubernatorial seats, 109 senatorial seats, 360 Reps seats, 991 State House of Assembly seats and 774 local government council's Chairmanship positions usually contested in most elections in Nigeria. The number, to say the least, is significantly marginal in its entirety.

Notwithstanding, women often misjudge the potential they have to improve on their elective aspiration. There are many women who have held sensitive positions in government as men and made money that could enable them play the role of godmother if they develop the willpower. Unfortunately, many shy away from investing in female candidates and prefer appointments for themselves or their anointed political daughters to contesting election which its result is always dicey. The reason is that they view spending money on the party structure and electorates as wasteful venture. It is no doubt that politics is like a gamble with monumental risk and women are ill-disposed to anything risk or gamble, unlike men. Experience shows that virtually all political parties select those who have the wherewithal to fund campaign and not lily-livered or featherweights, as their candidates. Looking at Nigeria's party system and the form of competition for resource accumulation between and among class and ethnic challengers; it is untenable that election would become a game of concession in any competitive democratic system with high premium for winning. Not even in advanced democracies like the U.S. is such proven to be practicable. Concession is what Nigerian women hoped would follow the palliative provided by some political parties in response or compliance with the Beijing declaration that contradicts competition which underlies democratic elections. With the dwindling fortune of women in elections, there is no doubt that waiver is a compensation to assuage their agitations against marginalization. It has not enhanced or likely to boost the chances of women winning elective positions or at most serving as an effective mechanism to bridge the subsisting gap between men and women and bring the womenfolk to the mainstream.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The marginalization of women in elective positions in Nigeria has established strong foothold in the system and poses great challenge to democratic practice. It is however acknowledged that since the 21st century, many Nigerian women have not only become actively involved in politics, some of them have also recorded great successes in political circles (Nwammu, 2012). Many successive governments in Nigeria have initiated several policies to boost participation of women in politics. These in earnest, have not performed any magic in breaking the barrier. In most instances, it results in further depletion in the number of women that win party primary elections and the main election. The steady fluctuation in the number between 1999 and 2015 leaves much to be desired. While women are not completely missing from deliberations on the future of the country, there is still an urgent need for their increased political participation (Reports by Wilson Centre, 2015). It was hoped that women will breathe a healthy air of relief with the establishment of women bodies such as the Liberal National Council of Women Societies in Nigeria (LNCWSN), Women in Nigeria (WIN) and the recommendations of various international conferences on women (Wonuola, 2015). More so, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, which granted equality in participation in governance and the United Nations Declaration on Democracy (UNDP) that set aside 30 per cent as the minimum percentage of women representation in all spheres of decision making (Wonuola, 2015).

The problem women faces in elective contests are multifaceted. It has been shown that waivers on party nomination forms are in themselves, unproductive. Most women that revelled in the euphoria of the free largesse found themselves in tight corners at the last minutes. Many could not weather the storm associated with campaign costs and party intrigues, and thereby ended abruptly. This is further compounded by envy and jealousy which are of considerable importance in assessing women electoral roles. Poverty in a free enterprise economy engenders all manner of values. Nigerian women do not yet understand the language of supporting whoever does not spend money on its supporters. This culture is fanned by the general attitude of Nigerian politician who know only himself and the family once elected or appointed into political office. Money politics does not favour women. Many do not have such money to share or influence voters and those who have it rarely participate in elective contest but rather lobby for political appointments. In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that government should enact a law to create rotation of elective offices between men and women and enforce its implementation. This can be made feasible by swapping each position between male and female in such manners that no political ward, local government, federal and senatorial constituencies, states or federal leaderships will be dominated by any sex. This is the only way elective position for women can be guaranteed. On the other hand, it is time women develop gender consciousness. They stand to gain immensely from their numerical strength if they dispel envy and jealousy and settle for redemption of womenfolk from the shackles of men domination. Promoting elective position of whom they accuse of marginalizing them is act of self delusion and hypocrisy of irredeemable proportion.

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