

**WOMEN'S POLITICAL MARGINALIZATION IN NIGERIA
A POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF REPRESENTATION DURING THE FOURTH
REPUBLIC**

BY

**Augusta Kenechukwu ANAZODO (Ms.)
PG/NLS2216185**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation titled "**Women's Political Marginalization in Nigeria : A Political Analysis of Representation During the Fourth Republic**" was written by me and is a product of my research effort. It has not been presented in any previous application for an award of Masters in Parliamentary Administration. All quotations are indicated and have been duly distinguished and appropriately acknowledged by the means of references.

Augusta Kenechukwu ANAZODO
PG/NLS2216185

DATE

CERTIFICATION

The Dissertation titled "**Women's Political Marginalization in Nigeria a Political Analysis of Representation During the Fourth Republic**" meets the regulations governing the award of Masters in Parliamentary Administration, of the School of Post Graduate Studies, National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies/ University of Benin.



Dr. Ndanusa M. Manzuma
Supervisor

22-09-2025

Date

Dr. Asimiyu Abiola
Director, Department of Studies/Chief Examiner

Date

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation titled "**Women's Political Marginalization In Nigeria: A Political Analysis Of Representation During the Fourth Republic**" has been read and approved as meeting the requirements of the University of Benin/NILDS for the award of Masters Degree in Parliamentary Administration.



Dr. Ndanusa M. Manzuma

Supervisor

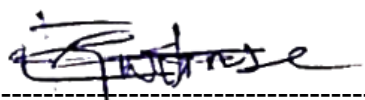
22-09-2025

Date

Dr. Asimiyu Abiola

Director, Department of Studies/Chief Examiner

Date



Dr. Mrs. Catherine Enatta Ikokoh

Internal Examiner

16-10-2025

Date

Prof. Olu Okotoni

External Examiner

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, who saw me to the end of the programme, and also to my lovely parents and siblings.

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ABSTRACT

Women aspiring to political leadership often faced unique challenges, including heightened public scrutiny and unrealistic expectations compared to their male counterparts. The study examined women's political under-representation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999–2025). It aimed to examine the effect and nature of women's Parliamentary representation, appraise the implications of their marginalization, and assess its impact.

The study population comprised 620 officials from key political and administrative institutions relevant to women's political participation in Nigeria. This study employed a mixed-methods design, integrating both survey and descriptive strategies. The descriptive design provided a qualitative framework for in-depth exploration of complex issues. This combined approach was appropriate for gathering broad perspectives through questionnaires while also capturing detailed, expert insights through interviews, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of women's political participation in Nigeria. The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula for a finite population with a 3% margin of error. Therefore, a minimum sample size of 400 was targeted (collecting data from 400 respondents via questionnaires and 20 interviews).

The findings revealed that 85% of respondents perceived women's representation as ineffective. The nature of participation was peripheral, with only 20% contesting elections. The primary implication was significant voter apathy (45%), and 45% cited structural barriers as limiting women's impact. A Chi-square test confirmed a significant relationship between marginalization and participation ($\chi^2=12.34$, $p<0.05$).

The study concluded by affirming that the under-representation of women in the Nigerian Parliament was not an accidental outcome but a direct result of an entrenched patriarchal system. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, the practical experience for women was one of systemic exclusion.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras, women in Nigeria were systematically marginalized in political life and governance. Historical accounts reveal persistent male dominance and the relegation of women to symbolic roles in public affairs (Jacob *et al*, 2023). An examination of Nigeria's formal political structures from the colonial period onward reveals a framework that was overwhelmingly oriented towards men (Williams, 2019). However, this narrative of systemic marginalization requires nuance. It is crucial to distinguish between the institutional design of the state and the historical agency of women. The influential roles of pre-colonial figures like Queen Idia of Benin, Moremi of Ile-Ife, and Queen Amina of Zaria, alongside the anti-colonial activism of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti in the post-independence era, demonstrate that women have always been potent political actors (Dagunduro & Adenugba, 2020). Their legacies highlight that the patriarchal nature of the modern Nigerian state was not an inevitability but the result of specific historical processes that suppressed pre-existing avenues of female authority.

The formal inception of Nigeria in 1914 under British colonial administration effectively curtailed widespread political participation among indigenous populations. The Clifford Constitution of 1922, however, introduced electoral representation, albeit initially accessible to a select few male elites. Consequently, figures such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and Anthony Enahoro emerged as the first Nigerian politicians during the colonial period. From its creation, colonial policy deliberately centered men in the formal political life of the new state, thereby institutionalizing a patriarchal political order (Oyedepi, 2017). This is evidenced by the exclusive appointment of men as Warrant Chiefs and the initial restriction of the franchise to male elites. The onset of colonialism, therefore, marked the beginning of systematic political disenfranchisement for Nigerian women a process that solidified gender discrimination as a colonial legacy by dismantling indigenous structures of female authority (Eneh, 2024)

Following independence, women's representation remained minimal. In the First Republic (1960–1966), only four women entered legislative roles: Wuraola Esan and Bernice Kerry in

the Federal Parliament, and Margaret Ekpo and Janet Muokelu in the Eastern House of Assembly; none held ministerial portfolios. During the Second Republic (1979–1984), female representation was similarly sparse, with only a handful of women serving as senators or members of the House of Representatives, and none holding seats in any of the nineteen State Houses of Assembly or local government councils (Okondu, 2023).

Periods of military rule further entrenched women's marginalization. The elevation of military spouses to 'First Lady' roles served to confine women's political engagement to ceremonial functions, rather than addressing substantive gender inequities in policy and governance. As a result, women's concerns became relegated to the private domain of political leaders' wives (Aina, 2012), and their advocacy was largely confined to the influence of the First Ladies. Notably, this phenomenon, referred to as First Ladyism, has led to the endorsement of various international agreements aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination against Nigerian women, encompassing socio-cultural, economic, and political inequalities.

Since Nigeria's re-embrace of democratic governance in 1999, following years of military regimes and political instability, the country has struggled to meaningfully integrate women into political leadership. While democracy has offered a new platform for broader civic participation, the pace of gender parity in public office has remained disappointingly slow. More than two decades into this democratic era, the imbalance between male and female representation in elective and appointive roles continues to be stark. Women aspiring to public office often face heightened scrutiny and unrealistic expectations compared to their male counterparts a reality poignantly summarized by former Finance Minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who remarked that "there is no right way to be a woman leader" (Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2020).

Despite increased mobilization and advocacy, no woman has held the office of president, vice president, or governor since 1999. The Senate has never included more than nine female lawmakers out of its 109 seats in any legislative term, which underscores the entrenched nature of this gender imbalance. This study seeks to analyze the consequences of these persistent disparities in the composition of the National Assembly, especially as Nigeria marks over two decades of continuous democratic rule.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Since Nigeria's transition back to democratic governance in 1999 after years of military regimes and political instability, the country has encountered numerous obstacles in its democratic evolution, particularly concerning women's involvement in politics (Hoffmann & Wallace, 2022). Even after a quarter-century of democratic rule, gender parity remains elusive in both elective and appointive political offices. Women aspiring to political leadership often face unique challenges, including heightened public scrutiny and unrealistic expectations compared to their male counterparts. This sentiment is aptly reflected in the words of former Minister of Finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who remarked, "There is no right way to be a woman leader" (Gillard & Okonjo-Iweala, 2020). Since 1999, no woman has ascended to the office of president, vice president, or governor in Nigeria. The legislative arm has seen similarly limited female representation, with the Senate never having more than nine women among its 109 members in any given session, underscoring the persistent gender imbalance in Nigerian politics. This study investigates the implications of such underrepresentation in the National Assembly, two and a half decades after the restoration of democracy.

Despite a growing interest among Nigerian women in political affairs, their actual presence in elected offices has remained discouragingly low (Sogbesan, 2015). The peak representation of women in the Senate occurred in 2007, with only nine women elected out of 109. Similarly, the House of Representatives reached its highest female membership in 2011, when just 26 out of 360 seats were held by women (Onyinyechi Eke, 2022). At the subnational level, 27 women have held the office of Deputy Governor since 1999, yet no woman has ever been elected as Governor. The only exception, Virginia Etiaba, briefly served in that role without being elected (Adetayo, 2023), thus leaving the tally of elected female governors at zero.

Ahead of the 2023 general elections, 360 women entered the race for federal political offices. Among them, only one woman, Ojei Princess Chichi, contested the presidency under the Allied Peoples Movement (APM), a minor party. In other key races, women made up 0% of vice-presidential candidates, 6% of gubernatorial contenders, 24% of deputy governor aspirants, 8% of senatorial hopefuls, 9% of House of Representatives candidates, and 10% of those running for State House of Assembly (Alabi, 2022). These figures expose the inadequacy of internal party mechanisms in promoting gender inclusion (INEC, 2023). The dominant political parties have been notably sluggish in creating opportunities for women to engage meaningfully in national elections. The 2023 election cycle reaffirmed this trend, as

only a small proportion of women were allowed to contest high-level positions pointing to a critical need for enhanced intra-party trust and commitment to women's political empowerment (Elor, 2023). The table below sums up the representation of women in the key elected positions since 1999.

Table 1.1 Women Representation in Key Elective positions since 1999

Office	Seats	1999 Women	2003 Women	2007 Women	2011 Women	2015 Women	2019 Women	2023 Women
President	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vice President	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Senate	109	3	4	9	7	7	7	4
House of Reps.	360	12	23	27	26	20	11	23
Governor	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dept. Gov.	36	1	2	6	3	6	4	3
State HA	990	12	38	34	62	-	40	50

Source: Adopted from Ohaja et al, 2022

The table referenced earlier depicts the gradual trajectory of women's involvement in Nigeria's political leadership since the return to democracy in 1999. That year marked the beginning of female representation in governance, with only three women elected to the 109-member Senate and 12 women securing seats in the 360-member House of Representatives. Furthermore, just one woman held the position of deputy governor, while no woman attained the offices of governor, vice president, or president.

By 2003, there was a slight growth in the number of women holding leadership roles, though this excluded the top executive offices. A notable milestone was reached in 2007, when Nigeria witnessed its first and only female governor assume office, alongside a rise in the number of women elected as lawmakers and deputy governors. That year is often regarded as the high point of female political representation. However, the subsequent election cycles of 2011, 2015, and 2019 witnessed a disappointing regression in women's political visibility.

Although there was a modest increase in female deputy governors in 2023, women's legislative representation remains minimal and troublingly static.

Nigerian women have continued to grapple with numerous deep-rooted and structural obstacles in their quest for political equality. These impediments have evolved over time but remain persistent, affecting both aspirants and women who manage to secure party nominations. Women within the larger, more influential political parties face especially intense challenges. This section critically examines the systemic barriers encountered by women in politics since 1999, focusing on issues such as constitutional loopholes, religious and cultural norms, biased information flows, internal party politics, male-dominated alliances, and the often-symbolic roles allocated to female leaders. It raises a central question: what systemic factors continue to obstruct women's full and active engagement in Nigeria's political landscape?

Nigeria's constitutional history has largely failed to accommodate the interests of women. Although the introduction of the National Gender Policy (NGP) marked a progressive shift, its lack of legal enforcement renders it largely declarative rather than actionable. Numerous legislative attempts to implement affirmative action through binding policies have been thwarted by the male-dominated legislature. For instance, in 2019, a bill presented by Ibrahim Sodiq proposing gender-based legislative quotas was swiftly rejected (Agunbiade, 2020). A similar outcome occurred in 2021, when several gender equality proposals were voted down, often based on trivial arguments such as objections to the term "equality" itself (Ikhenaoe, 2022). Although civil society advocacy led to some partial concessions, the legislative gains were modest. Among the revised provisions were clauses enabling foreign spouses of Nigerian women to gain citizenship, granting women the right to be recognized as indigenes of their husband's state after five years, and reserving 35% of political seats and party leadership roles for women (Adetayo & Egbejule, 2022).

Beyond legal structures, social norms and inheritance laws continue to undermine women's political and economic agency. Patriarchal inheritance customs favor male descendants, thereby limiting women's access to assets such as land and property (Olueze, 2021; Eze, 2022). Practices such as early marriage further disrupt girls' education and curtail future leadership opportunities (McGovern et al., 2021). Gender roles deeply embedded in Nigeria's traditional cultures especially in rural areas reinforce a hierarchy that views women as subordinate, often confining them to domestic responsibilities and discouraging ambitions in

public leadership (Nawrozzada, 2022; George, 2019). These socio-cultural limitations contribute significantly to the continued political marginalization of women and constitute a major focus of this research.

1.3 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the effect of women representation in the Nigeria Parliament?
- ii. What is the nature of women representation in the Nigeria Parliament?
- iii. What are the implications of women marginalization in Nigeria Parliament?
- iv. How does women participation in politics impact Nigeria's Parliament?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to examine the extent and implications of women's political marginalization in Nigeria during the fourth Republic (1999-2023). The specific objectives are;

- i. examine the effect of women representation in the Nigerian Parliament;
- ii. investigate the nature of women participation in Nigeria Parliament;
- iii. appraise the implications of women marginalization in Nigeria Parliament; and
- iv. assess the impact of women participation in politics on the Nigeria Parliament.

1.5 Hypotheses

The following are the hypotheses that would be tested by the study:

H₀: there is no significant relationship between women marginalization and participation in the Nigerian Parliament.

H₁: there is a significant relationship between women marginalization and participation in Nigeria Parliament.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research seeks to examine the extent and implications of women's political marginalization in Nigeria, with a specific focus on the Fourth Republic. It aims to recommend strategies for fostering robust and inclusive political participation for women by promoting policies that are gender-sensitive and aligned with broader political inclusion agendas. The study will also explore and assess the concepts of politics and their implications for Nigerian women's involvement in the political process. The findings will serve as a vital source of information for gender mainstreaming and will reflect the growing political interest of women in Nigeria.

The study bears academic, policy-related, and practical significance. From an academic standpoint, it will enrich the existing body of knowledge on women's political engagement in Nigeria. By generating empirical insights and scholarly interpretations, it will contribute to the growing literature on gender and governance, thereby enhancing understanding of Nigeria's political development within a global context.

From a policy perspective, the research will underscore the urgency of expanding the political landscape to allow greater participation by women. The insights gained could assist the federal government in designing more effective and inclusive policy frameworks that accommodate the political aspirations and rights of Nigerian women. Furthermore, the study may inform future administrations about necessary policy adjustments aimed at bolstering women's involvement in governance.

The study will also benefit international relations experts and foreign policy formulators by deepening their understanding of the intersections between politics and gender in Nigeria. It is anticipated that the findings will support efforts to address the declining political engagement of Nigerian women and inspire renewed policy commitment from government actors and development partners. Ultimately, the study will serve as a valuable reference for future researchers and scholars interested in gender, politics, and democratic governance in Nigeria.

1.7 Scope of the study

This study explores the concept of politics and the rising political engagement of Nigerian women, with particular emphasis on their participation in Parliamentary representation during

the Fourth Republic (1999 to present). This period was selected because it marks Nigeria's return to democratic governance following successive military regimes and is characterized by a notable increase in political activity and citizen engagement, especially among women. It also represents a time when female political participation reached significant levels, thereby contributing meaningfully to national political development.

Geographically and temporally, the study encompasses the political administrations of President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007), President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2007–2009), President Goodluck Jonathan (2009–2015), President Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023), and the current administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. In its effort to analyze the nature and evolution of politics in Nigeria, as well as its implications for governance and inclusion, the research is confined to developments within this democratic dispensation.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

While conducting this research, several practical constraints emerged that delineated the scope of the study.

First, the availability of recent and specific academic literature on the subject posed a limitation, potentially narrowing the depth of the theoretical framework.

Second, the fixed timeframe of the academic calendar inherently limited the period available for extensive, nationwide data collection. This temporal boundary necessarily focused the research on a more targeted analysis.

Third, logistical and bureaucratic restrictions at some institutions, coupled with protocols for data privacy, impeded access to certain primary sources and archival records, which limited the comprehensiveness of the field data gathered.

Despite these limitations, the study utilized all available and accessible data to present a credible and insightful analysis of the subject matter.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Women: adult female members of society who are entitled to equal right, participation, and representation in political, social, and economic life.

Politics: refers to the systems and processes through which societies are governed and collective decisions are made.

Political Participation: includes both conventional actions (voting, campaigning, contacting officials) and unconventional actions (protests, demonstrations). The key operational elements are voluntary citizen actions intended to affect political outcomes, either directly or through elected representatives.

Representation: The act of having elected individuals or groups stand in for others in decision-making bodies, reflecting their interest and voices.

Marginalization: a condition where certain groups, like women, are excluded or pushed to the edge of political, social, or economic decision making processes.

Women Political marginalization: The systematic exclusion or underrepresentation of women in political structures, processes, and decision making positions.

Fourth Republic: the current democratic era in Nigeria, which began in 1999, marked the return to civilian rule after years of military governance.

Gender Equality: The state in which men and women have equal access to opportunities, rights, and participation in all areas, including politics.

Patriarchy: A social system where men hold primary power and dominate political leadership, moral authority, and control over property.

Empowerment: The process of increasing women's capacity to make choices and transform those choices into desired political and social outcomes.

Women in Politics: it measures the percentage of women in Parliamentary seats, cabinet positions, and leadership roles, tracking progress toward gender parity in political leadership and policy influence across local, national, and international governance structures.

Parliament: it performs three core functions: law-making (drafting, debating, and passing legislation), representation (serving as citizens' voice in governance), and oversight (monitoring executive branch activities). It serves as the primary institution for democratic deliberation and policy formulation.

Nationalism: it manifests as loyalty to one's nation, prioritizing national interests, and pursuing political sovereignty or self-governance. It typically involves common elements of language, culture, history, and territory that unite a population.

Country: it constitutes a geographic territory with a permanent population, organized government, capacity to enter relations with other states, and recognition by the international community. It represents the fundamental unit of the international political system.

1.10 Organization of Chapters

The study is structured into five chapters, each focusing on distinct aspects of the research process.

Chapter One provides the general introduction and background to the study, outlining the statement of the problem, research questions, study objectives, significance, scope, limitations, and the organization of the chapters.

Chapter Two is dedicated to a comprehensive review of relevant literature, including the conceptual framework, empirical studies, and theoretical framework e.t.c.

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology employed in the study.

Chapter Four presents and analyzes the data collected, followed by a discussion of the research findings.

Finally, **Chapter Five** offers a summary of the study, conclusions drawn from the research, and policy recommendations based on the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature and theoretical foundations relevant to the study of women's political marginalization in Nigeria. The primary objective is to situate this research within the existing body of knowledge by critically examining key concepts, synthesizing empirical findings from previous studies, and evaluating pertinent theoretical perspectives. The chapter begins with a conceptual review that clarifies and operationalizes core ideas such as politics, Parliament, political marginalization, and patriarchy, framing them specifically within the context of gender and power in Nigeria. This is followed by a theoretical review that explores feminist political theory, intersectionality, and representation theory, leading to the selection of a robust theoretical framework to guide the analysis. Subsequently, an empirical literature review synthesizes existing research on the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers inhibiting women's participation. By integrating these components, this chapter not only establishes a foundational understanding of the problem but also clearly identifies the research gap that this study aims to address, thereby justifying its scholarly contribution.

2.1 Conceptual Review

This section critically examines the key concepts that form the foundation of this study. The aim is not merely to define these terms, but to unpack their dimensions and establish their specific relevance to the analysis of women's political marginalization in Nigeria.

2.1.1 The Concept of Politics: Power, Allocation, and Exclusion

Politics is fundamentally about the distribution of power, resources, and authority within a society (Heywood, 2013). As reported by McMurray and Pullen (2019) classic definition "who gets what, when, and how" encapsulates this struggle. However, a critical dimension for this study is the question of "who is excluded?"

Traditional conceptions of politics often focus on the public sphere the state, government, and formal institutions. A feminist analysis, however, reveals that the "personal is political," meaning that power relations in the private sphere (the family, household) are foundational to public power dynamics (Kantola & Lombardo, 2017). In the Nigerian context, this means that

the domination of men in household decision-making is directly linked to their domination in the political arena. This perspective challenges the Aristotelian view of politics as solely the "affairs of the cities" (Henriksen, 2025) and reframes it as a pervasive force governing all power relations.

For this study, politics is conceptualized as the gendered process of contesting and exercising power. It is the arena where societal rules are made, and where the systematic exclusion of women from this rule-making process constitutes a core form of marginalization. The concept thus moves beyond a neutral description of governance to an examination of power asymmetries that privilege men and masculinity.

2.1.2 The Concept of Parliament: Representation and Legitimacy

A Parliament is the supreme legislative body in a democratic system, vested with the powers of law-making, oversight, and representation. Its primary function is to serve as the people's assembly, reflecting the will and interests of the populace (Lijphart, 2012). The historical evolution of the British Parliament, the "Mother of Parliaments," from a royal council to a bicameral legislature, underscores its role in dispersing power and ensuring accountability (Norton, 2013).

The most critical concept here is representation. Pitkin (1967) as cited in Russo and Cotta (2020) provides the seminal distinction between:

- **Descriptive Representation:** This refers to the extent to which a legislature mirrors the sociological characteristics of the society it represents in this case, gender. When over 50% of the population (women) holds less than 5% of legislative seats, there is a clear deficit in descriptive representation.
- **Substantive Representation:** This refers to the activity of representing that is, acting in the interest of the represented. It raises the critical question: Can the interests of women be effectively represented in a Parliament dominated by men?

Therefore, for this study, Parliament is conceptualized not just as a governmental institution, but as a barometer of democratic inclusion. The severe under-representation of women in the Nigerian National Assembly is not a minor issue; it is a fundamental flaw that challenges the legitimacy of the institution and the very meaning of representative democracy (Phillips,

1998). It signals that the Parliament is not fully "the people's" house, but predominantly "the men's house."

2.1.3 The Concept of Political Marginalization: From Passive Exclusion to Active Suppression

In response to global demands for gender inclusiveness, Nigeria adopted the National Gender Policy in alignment with the Beijing Conference's recommendations from 1995 (Ahmad, 2003). The policy outlined a 30% minimum quota to promote women's political participation and remedy long-standing disparities in representation (Ejekwonyilo, 2022). Despite these intentions, actual implementation has lagged, and women remain significantly underrepresented in positions of power (Nkereuwem, 2013). This ongoing marginalization highlights the urgent need for stronger, enforceable frameworks to eliminate barriers to women's full political participation. Without such measures, Nigerian women will continue to be relegated to peripheral roles, and their contributions to governance will remain vastly underutilized (Amata, 2023). Political marginalization is the systematic process through which a social group is denied meaningful access to and influence within political power structures. It is not a passive state of being absent, but an active process of being pushed to the periphery (Pelc, 2017).

In the context of this study, the political marginalization of women manifests through multiple, reinforcing mechanisms, as evidenced in the Nigerian context (Abdullah, 2018; Madunagu, 2010):

- **Access Marginalization:** Barriers that prevent women from entering the political arena, such as prohibitive campaign costs (Ibrahim, 2019), discriminatory party nomination processes (Nwankwo, 2018), and cultural norms that discourage female candidates.
- **Voice Marginalization:** The silencing of women's perspectives within political discourse, both in the media and in legislative chambers, where they may be ignored or patronized.
- **Power Marginalization:** The confinement of women who do enter politics to less influential committees and "soft" ministries, away from the core centres of power like finance, defense, and petroleum (Pelc, 2017).

This concept allows us to analyze the situation of Nigerian women not as a lack of interest or capability, but as the result of a structured system of exclusion that actively suppresses their political agency.

2.1.4 The Concept of Patriarchy: The Architecture of Male Dominance

Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, and control of property (Mbah and Oti, 2015). It is not merely the sum of individual sexist attitudes, but an overarching, institutionalized system that is sustained by cultural norms, religious doctrines, economic structures, and legal frameworks. In the African and specifically Nigerian context, this system has deep historical roots, positioning women as secondary to men in social, religious, and political activities (Suleiman, 2017).

In Nigeria, patriarchy provides the fundamental architecture that explains the persistence of women's political marginalization. It is the "why" behind the "what." It operates by:

- **Naturalizing Male Authority:** Framing leadership as an inherently male trait (Aina, 2012).
- **Enforcing Gendered Roles:** Assigning the private, domestic sphere to women and the public, political sphere to men, a division of labour that has historically limited women's political aspirations (Lamphere, 2024).
- **Controlling Resources:** Limiting women's access to the economic capital needed for political campaigns, thereby sustaining the "feminization of poverty" (Charmes, 2015) and reinforcing dependency.

For this study, patriarchy is the master concept that links the political, economic, and socio-cultural barriers faced by women. It is the deep-seated system that the Nigerian political landscape reflects and reinforces (Mama, 2018). Understanding patriarchy is essential for moving beyond a superficial listing of challenges to a critical analysis of the power structure that produces and sustains them.

2.1.5 The Historical Trajectory: From Pre-Colonial Authority to Colonial Disenfranchisement

The conceptual architecture of patriarchy and political marginalization in Nigeria is not a recent phenomenon but has a distinct historical trajectory. A critical examination of the historical record reveals that the systematic exclusion of women from the modern political sphere stands in stark contrast to the realities of many pre-colonial societies. Understanding this shift is crucial to contextualizing the contemporary struggle for representation, as it demonstrates that women's political marginalization was not an inevitability but the result of specific historical processes that actively dismantled indigenous structures of female authority (Mama, 2018).

In pre-colonial Hausa societies, women held significant authority, exemplified by figures such as Queen Amina of Zaria and Queen Daura. Other titled women Magajiya, Iya, and Mardanni also occupied senior offices and exercised considerable influence over urban governance. This robust female participation persisted until the early nineteenth century, when the jihād of 1804 ushered in Islamic reforms, including the introduction of purdah, which imposed strict limits on women's public and political roles.

Among the Yoruba royal courts likewise, featured powerful women. Palace women often wives of kings or serving as priestesses bore titles such as Iyamode, Iyemole, Iyemonari, and Iyale-ori, while the queen mother (Iya Oba) commanded immense respect and authority. The historical record, including the work of Smith (1969) cited in Richardson (2019), confirms that powerful women were integral to pre-colonial governance. For instance, of the more than thirty-eight sovereigns preceding the current Oba of Benin, five were women. This very fact underscores the profound shift that occurred later: the influential political roles women once held were systematically eroded by the patriarchal models of colonial and post-colonial administration, reducing their influence from sovereign authority to a struggle for basic representation (Mama, 2018).

In pre-colonial Igbo communities, the umuada a council of married women served as a potent political force, advocating communal interests and adjudicating disputes. However, during the colonial era, this influence waned markedly (Ijomah-Reynolds, 2024). Colonial rule further eroded women's status. As Parpart (2019) observes, European administrators disregarded indigenous female institutions, stripping many African women of both political and economic

standing. Resistance to these oppressive measures culminated in the 1929 Aba Women's Riot, when Igbo women rose up against colonial policies. A similar uprising occurred in Egba land in 1948, when some twenty thousand women, led by Madam Fumilayo Ransome Kuti, forced the dethronement and exile of King Ademola II after he colluded with colonial authorities to impose unpopular taxes.

Throughout the colonial period, several pioneering Nigerian women among them Fumilayo Ransome Kuti, Margaret Ekpo, Beatrice Adunni Oluwole (who sought to establish the Nigeria Commoners Party), and Hilda Adefarasin (former president of the National Council of Women Societies) struggled to carve out a political space against formidable institutional barriers. Their efforts, including the monumental Aba Women's Riot of 1929 which directly challenged colonial oppression, demonstrate persistent resistance (Msengeti, 2020). However, this resistance was met with a colonial administration that refused to grant their demands institutional legitimacy. The colonial powers provided no official pathways for women's political representation, ensuring that even powerful movements of protest did not translate into sustained political power within the colonial system (Mbah and Oti, 2015).

Therefore, the political marginalization of women in contemporary Nigeria can be seen as the culmination of a long-term process that began with the colonial encounter. The active suppression of pre-existing female political institutions solidified a patriarchal political order that the post-colonial state has largely inherited and maintained. This historical context underscores that the current under-representation is not a reflection of women's inherent apathy or inability but rather the outcome of a structural and historical system of exclusion, providing critical empirical depth to the concepts of patriarchy and marginalization

2.2 Theoretical Review

This section reviews the key theoretical perspectives that explain women's political marginalization, providing a foundation for selecting the most appropriate framework for this study.

2.2.1 Feminist Political Theory

Feminist political theory challenges the gender-neutral pretense of traditional political science. It argues that political institutions, concepts, and practices are inherently gendered

and have been constructed to privilege men and masculinity (Wesoky, 2022). Its primary focus is on dismantling patriarchy as a system of power. This theory is potent for explaining the historical and structural nature of women's exclusion in Nigeria, from the male-only Clifford Constitution to the contemporary male-dominated party hierarchies.

2.2.2 Intersectionality Theory

Pioneered by Esposito (2024), intersectionality theory posits that social identities like gender, race, class, and religion are interconnected and create overlapping systems of discrimination or disadvantage. A woman's experience in Nigerian politics is not shaped by gender alone but by the intersection of her ethnicity (e.g., Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba), religion (Christian or Muslim), and class. This theory is crucial for understanding why the barriers faced by a wealthy, Christian woman from Lagos differ significantly from those faced by a poor, Muslim woman from Kano. It prevents the oversimplification of women's political experiences.

2.2.3 Representation Theory

Childs (2024) distinguished between descriptive representation (standing for) and substantive representation (acting for). This theory asks critical questions: Does having more women in Parliament (descriptive representation) automatically lead to policies that benefit women (substantive representation)? And must a representative be a woman ("standing for" women) to effectively "act for" women's interests? This framework helps evaluate the potential impact of increasing women's numerical representation in the Nigerian National Assembly.

The reviewed theories provide distinct yet complementary lenses. Feminist Political Theory offers the macro-level explanation of the patriarchal system, while Intersectionality Theory introduces necessary nuance by highlighting the differentiated experiences within the category of 'women.' Representation Theory, in turn, provides the conceptual tools to measure the ultimate goal of political inclusion. While Intersectionality Theory is indispensable for a granular understanding, Feminist Political Theory provides the most comprehensive overarching framework for analyzing the systemic nature of women's marginalization in Nigeria. Therefore, this study will primarily adopt a Feminist Political Theory lens, while remaining sensitized to the insights of intersectionality. This combined approach will guide the analysis in the subsequent theoretical framework section.

2.3 Empirical Review

This section synthesizes findings from empirical research on the factors constraining women's political participation in Nigeria. It moves beyond theoretical concepts to examine the evidence-based realities of the barrier's women face.

2.3.1 Socio-Cultural and Religious Barriers

Empirical research consistently identifies socio-cultural and religious norms as the most deeply rooted barriers to women's political engagement. In Northern Nigeria, a study by Imam (2017) quantified this resistance, finding that over 75% of male and 68% of female respondents in Kano and Sokoto states believed political leadership was a male domain, citing religious and traditional injunctions. This normative bias has a direct impact on political behaviour. Qualitative fieldwork by Madaki (2019) documented how practices like *purdah* (seclusion) physically restrict women's ability to campaign and engage in public rallies, effectively excluding them from the visual and interactive aspects of electoral politics.

Beyond the North, studies show that cultural biases are pervasive nationwide. Research by Aina (2012) in South-western Nigeria revealed that while overt resistance may be less pronounced, subtle stereotypes portraying women as lacking the "toughness" for politics persist. This is empirically linked to what Agbalajobi (2010, p. 78) termed the "virility deficiency syndrome," where voters and party leaders associate political leadership with masculine attributes of strength and aggression, a perception that systematically disadvantages female candidates. These studies collectively demonstrate that cultural and religious norms are not abstract concepts but active forces that shape voter perceptions and limit women's political ambitions.

2.3.2 Economic and Financial Constraints

The role of money in Nigerian politics has been extensively documented as a critical barrier for women. An empirical analysis of campaign financing by Ibrahim (2019) found that the average cost of running for a seat in the House of Representatives was 350% higher than the average annual income of a professional woman in Nigeria. This creates a prohibitive financial barrier. The study further revealed that male candidates were more than twice as likely as female candidates to receive financial backing from corporate sponsors and business

elites, who perceive men as safer investments with better chances of winning and returning favours.

This "monetization of politics" is compounded by the expectation of patronage. Ballington and Kahane (2014, p. 45), in a cross-national study that included Nigeria, found that the constant financial demands on candidates to provide gifts and cash to constituents and party agents a practice known as "stomach infrastructure" disproportionately exclude women. Women often control fewer economic resources and have limited access to the informal financial networks that sustain political machines (Bauer & Burnet, 2013). This financial exclusion ensures that many qualified women are filtered out of the political process long before Election Day.

2.3.3 Institutional and Party-Political Barriers

Empirical evidence points to political parties as the key gatekeepers of women's exclusion. A longitudinal study of party primaries from 1999 to 2019 by Nwankwo (2018) provided concrete data: women constituted less than 11% of aspirants for legislative seats across all major parties, and of these, only 15% received their party's official nomination. The research identified several institutional mechanisms for this exclusion, including exorbitant nomination form fees, a lack of transparency in candidate selection, and the dominance of men in party executive committees where zoning and nomination decisions are made.

The ineffectiveness of voluntary affirmative action policies has also been empirically demonstrated. Abdullah (2018) analyzed the implementation of Nigeria's 35% affirmative action policy and concluded that its non-justiciability meaning it is not legally enforceable, rendered it largely symbolic. Her research found that without legislative quotas or sanctions for non-compliance, political parties and government appointing bodies have consistently failed to meet the target, with actual appointments hovering around 20% at their peak. This gap between policy and practice underscores the lack of internal party democracy, a point emphasized by activist Okei-Odumakin (2018), who argues that the absence of a level playing field within parties is the primary bottleneck for female candidates.

2.3.4 Violence and Gendered Disinformation

Empirical studies have begun to document the unique forms of violence and intimidation faced by women in politics. Bardall (2011) categorized electoral violence into physical, psychological, and sexualized forms, finding that female politicians in Nigeria are disproportionately targeted by character assassination, cyberbullying, and threats of sexual violence, which are designed to scare them out of the public sphere. A case study analysis of the 2019 elections by Oyewale (2022) on the assault of a prominent female candidate in Kogi State highlighted the near-total impunity for perpetrators of such gendered political violence, with no convictions recorded, creating a chilling effect for other women.

Furthermore, emerging research on gendered disinformation reveals its use as a strategic tool. A report by the Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism (BRAVE) project (2021) documented how false narratives, often targeting a woman's morality, marital status, or religious fidelity, are weaponized online to undermine their credibility. This "weaponized gossip" serves as a low-cost, high-impact tool to dissuade women from running and to erode their support base without resorting to physical violence, representing a modern, digital frontier of political marginalization.

2.4 Identification of the Research Gap

The existing empirical literature provides a robust diagnosis of the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers to women's political participation in Nigeria (Imam, 2017; Ibrahim, 2019; Nwankwo, 2018). However, a critical analysis reveals that this body of work exhibits four key limitations that this study seeks to address.

First, while numerous studies document women's exclusion, few are grounded in a comprehensive Feminist Political Theory framework that analyzes the Nigerian state itself as a patriarchal institution. Many works treat marginalization as a cultural or behavioural anomaly rather than a systemic feature of the political structure (Aina, 2012; Madunagu, 2010).

Second, the literature is often thematically fragmented, focusing on isolated barriers—such as financial constraints or party politics—without synthesizing them into a unified analysis of how these factors interact to create a self-reinforcing system of exclusion.

Third, there is a disconnect between historical and contemporary analysis. While historians have documented the erosion of women's pre-colonial authority (Singha and Singha, 2024; Sserwadda, 2025), contemporary political studies often fail to explicitly link this historical disenfranchisement to the institutional design of the modern Nigerian state.

Finally, there is a need for a focused longitudinal political analysis of women's representation across the entire Fourth Republic (1999-present), moving beyond descriptive statistics to examine the evolution of party behaviour, legislative performance, and institutional resistance to gender inclusion.

Therefore, this study fills these gaps by conducting a theoretically-informed, longitudinal, and synthesized analysis of women's political marginalization in the Nigerian National Assembly, using Feminist Political Theory as its primary lens to explain the persistence of this exclusion.

2.4.1 Gaps in Knowledge

While numerous studies have analyzed women's underrepresentation using sociological or cultural explanations (e.g., Aina, 2012; Madunagu, 2010; Abdullah, 2018), few have grounded their analysis in Feminist Political Theory as a comprehensive framework for explaining the structural nature of patriarchy within Nigerian politics. Most existing works treat women's exclusion as a cultural or behavioural problem rather than as a systemic political construct embedded in state institutions. This study addresses this gap by employing Feminist Political Theory to interrogate the Nigerian political system itself as a patriarchal institution and not merely a gender-neutral field where women "fail to participate."

Existing scholars often focuses on isolated aspects of women's exclusion such as cultural norms (Imam, 2017), financial constraints (Ibrahim, 2019), or party structures (Nwankwo, 2018) without synthesizing these dimensions into a unified conceptual framework. This fragmented approach obscures how these barriers interact to produce a systemic pattern of political marginalization. This study bridges this gap by conceptualizing marginalization as a multi-dimensional process, economic, institutional, and cultural rooted in patriarchy and reinforced through political practice.

Although some historians (e.g Singha and Singha, 2024; Sserwadda, 2025) have documented women's pre-colonial leadership roles, few contemporary political analyses connect these historical trajectories to the current patterns of exclusion. The historical dismantling of

indigenous female power structures during colonial rule is often treated as a background issue rather than a causal factor shaping modern political institutions. This study fills this gap by explicitly tracing how colonial and post-colonial patriarchy institutionalized women's exclusion, linking past disempowerment to present realities.

While much empirical work exists on women's general political participation, fewer studies have conducted a focused political analysis of women's representation during the Fourth Republic (1999–present). Most existing analyses either stop at descriptive statistics or address specific electoral cycles without longitudinal examination of representation trends, party behaviour, or institutional performance. This study therefore contributes by conducting a political analysis of women's representation across successive administrations of the Fourth Republic, highlighting both progress and persistent structural barriers.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily anchored in Feminist Political Theory. This framework was selected because it provides the most comprehensive macro-level explanation for the systemic, historical, and institutionalized nature of women's marginalization in Nigerian politics. While Intersectionality Theory and Representation Theory offer crucial complementary insights, it is Feminist Political Theory that most directly addresses the root cause of the problem: patriarchy as a governing power structure.

The core tenets of Feminist Political Theory, as articulated by scholars like Wesoky (2022) and Pinto (2024), form the analytical lens for this study. This theory interprets society as a domain of gendered conflict, where politics, being fundamentally about the production and distribution of value, is shaped by economic foundations that, in turn, influence societal structures (Eboson, 2023). Historically, the dominant class at the economic base has been the male class, which exercises dominance over women. As Eboson (2023) noted, the transition to settled communities expanded men's roles while confining women to domestic responsibilities, establishing male authority in the household that was later extrapolated into the public realm. This evolution resulted in a patriarchal and male-centred political system that alienated women from political spaces.

This framework will guide the entire analysis in the following ways:

- It will be used to interpret the Nigerian state and its institutions, including the National Assembly and political parties, not as neutral entities but as structures constructed upon and designed to perpetuate patriarchal norms.
- It will frame the empirical findings on socio-cultural, financial, and institutional barriers not as isolated challenges, but as interconnected manifestations of a single patriarchal system designed to maintain male dominance.
- It will provide the normative foundation for evaluating solutions, judging their effectiveness based on their capacity to dismantle patriarchal structures rather than merely integrate a few women into them.

The relevance of this framework is starkly illustrated by empirical data from the Nigerian context. The economic dimension of this subjugation is reflected in the relegation of women to low-income, less prestigious jobs (Wilhoit, 2021), which directly impacts their ability to compete in a political system dominated by money politics. The persistent underrepresentation of women in elected office evidenced by INEC data showing only 25 female gubernatorial candidates out of 380 in 2015, and a decline to just 14 women in the House of Representatives and 7 in the Senate that same year is not an anomaly but the logical outcome of this patriarchal system. The combination of cultural, economic, legal, and organizational constraints has perpetuated a perception of women as domestic figures rather than public leaders, a reality this framework is uniquely equipped to analyze.

To ensure a nuanced analysis, this primary framework will be consciously complemented by the other reviewed theories:

- **Intersectionality Theory (Esposito, 2024)** will serve as a sensitizing concept, ensuring that the analysis does not treat "Nigerian women" as a monolith. It will remind us that the experience of political marginalization is intensified or altered by the intersection of gender with ethnicity, religion, and class.
- **Representation Theory (Childs, 2024)** will provide the critical vocabulary to assess the desired outcome. It will frame the discussion around whether increased descriptive representation (standing for) of women leads to their substantive representation (acting

for) in policy outcomes, thus connecting the struggle for political presence to tangible improvements in women's lives.

This integrated theoretical framework posits that the marginalization of women in Nigerian politics is a direct function of its patriarchal structure. It will guide this study in diagnosing the depth of this problem and in critically evaluating pathways toward a truly inclusive and equitable political system, including the implementation of affirmative action measures that mandate equitable representation. Only through such a structural transformation can the democratic principle of equal participation be truly realized.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has established a comprehensive scholarly foundation for the study by reviewing relevant literature and theoretical perspectives on women's political marginalization in Nigeria. The conceptual review critically defined and operationalized core concepts politics, Parliament, political marginalization, and patriarchy framing them as interconnected elements of a system of gendered power and exclusion. The theoretical review then evaluated three key perspectives Feminist Political Theory, Intersectionality, and Representation Theory culminating in the selection of an integrated theoretical framework. This framework is primarily grounded in Feminist Political Theory to analyze the patriarchal structures of Nigerian politics, while incorporating intersectional sensitivity and the concepts of descriptive and substantive representation.

The empirical literature review systematically synthesized evidence of the multi-faceted barriers women face, spanning socio-cultural and religious norms, economic and financial constraints, institutional party politics, and gendered violence and disinformation. Collectively, these sections demonstrate that the problem is extensively diagnosed in existing research. However, the chapter identified a critical gap: a predominant focus on explaining failure and exclusion, with insufficient empirical attention paid to the strategies of navigation and success employed by women who overcome these barriers. Therefore, this study is justified in its aim to investigate these strategies of resilience, thereby contributing a vital, solution-oriented dimension to the literature. The ensuing chapters will build upon this foundation to present the study's methodology, findings, and conclusions.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research design, population, sample size, sampling techniques, and methods for data collection and analysis employed in this study. It also details the measures taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods design, integrating both survey and descriptive strategies. The survey design facilitated the quantitative collection of data from a sample of the study population, allowing for the generalization of findings. The descriptive design provided a qualitative framework for in-depth exploration of complex issues. This combined approach was appropriate for gathering broad perspectives through questionnaires while also capturing detailed, expert insights through interviews, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of women's political participation in Nigeria.

3.2 Population of the Study

The study population comprised 620 officials from key political and administrative institutions relevant to women's political participation in Nigeria. The distribution is presented in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Population of the Study

SECTORS	POPULATION
Senate	100
House of Representatives	200
ECOWAS Parliament	120
Ministry of Women Affairs	120
National Council of Women Society	80
TOTAL	620

Source: prepared by the Author (2025).

3.3 Sample Size

A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted to ensure both representation and depth.

Sample Size Determination:

The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula for a finite population with a 3% margin of error.

$$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$$

Where:

n = Sample Size

N = Population Size (620)

e = Margin of Error (0.03 or 3%)

1 = Constant

Calculation:

$$n = 620 / [1 + 620 \times (0.03)^2]$$

$$n = 620 / [1 + 620 \times 0.0009]$$

$$n = 620 / [1 + 0.558]$$

$$n = 620 / 1.558$$

$$n \approx 398.0$$

Therefore, a minimum sample size of 400 was targeted.

Sampling Procedure:

1. **Disproportionate Stratification:** The population was first stratified into the five sectors listed in Table 3.1. A disproportionate allocation method was used to ensure that smaller

strata, like the Senate and NCWS, had a sufficient number of respondents for meaningful analysis, which a purely proportional allocation would not yield.

2. **Purposive Sampling within Strata:** Within each stratum, respondents were purposively selected based on their specific roles and expertise. For the legislative bodies, this included members of gender-related committees and senior administrative staff. For the Ministry and NCWS, it involved directors and program officers directly involved in women's empowerment and political advocacy.

Table 3.2: Questionnaire Distribution

Sectors	Population	Sample (Questionnaires)	Sample (Interviews)
Senate	100	65	4
House of Representatives	200	129	6
ECOWAS Parliament	120	77	3
Ministry of Women Affairs	120	77	4
National Council of Women Society	80	52	3
TOTAL	620	400	20

Source: prepared by the Author (2025).

3.4 Method of Data Collection

Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Secondary data were gathered for contextual analysis.

Primary Data Collection:

- **Questionnaires:** A total of 400 questionnaires, featuring a close-ended questions, were administered. The instrument was divided into two sections (A–B) covering demographics and the core research objectives.
- **Interviews:** Twenty (20) semi-structured interviews were conducted with purposively selected experts, including four (4) Senators and House Members on gender committees, three (3) officials from the ECOWAS Parliament, four (4) directors from the Ministry of

Women Affairs, and three (3) executive members of the NCWS. This provided nuanced, qualitative data to supplement the survey.

Secondary Data Collection:

Secondary data were sourced from academic journals, books, and official publications from institutions like the National Bureau of Statistics and INEC to provide background and support the analysis.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

To ensure the robustness and credibility of this study, stringent measures were taken to establish

- **Validity:** Content and face validity were ensured through expert review by the researcher's supervisors and a pilot test. The instruments were refined based on the feedback received.
- **Reliability:** For the quantitative data, a pilot test yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient above 0.7, indicating high internal consistency. Methodological triangulation (using both questionnaires and interviews) further enhanced the reliability of the overall findings.

3.6 Methods of Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the 400 questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages). Research hypotheses were tested using the Chi-square (χ^2) test of independence. The qualitative data from the 20 interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Data were stored securely and used solely for the purpose of this academic research.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected from 400 questionnaires and 20 in-depth interviews. The presentation is structured around the study's specific objectives, utilizing quantitative data from questionnaires and qualitative insights from interviews to provide a comprehensive discussion of the findings. The stated hypothesis is also tested and discussed.

4.1 Analysis Based on Specific Objectives

4.1.1 Objective One: To examine the effect of women representation in the Nigerian Parliament

The data indicate a strong consensus on the ineffectiveness of current women's representation.

Table 4.1: Perceived Effectiveness of Women's Representation

Assessment	Frequency	Percentage
Ineffective	340	85%
Effective	60	15%
Total	400	100%

Source: Fieldwork, May 2025

Discussion: The overwhelming perception of ineffectiveness (85%) is rooted in systemic barriers. Interview data revealed that even when women are present, their impact is often muted. A director from the Ministry of Women Affairs stated, “The few women who get into the National Assembly are often isolated. The male-dominated culture dictates the agenda, and gender-sensitive bills are frequently stalled or diluted”. This finding, aligns with the feminist theoretical perspective that mere descriptive representation does not automatically translate to substantive influence in a patriarchal system (Pitkin, 1967; Pateman, 1988).

4.1.2 Objective Two: To investigate the nature of women participation in Nigeria Parliament

Participation is heavily skewed towards supportive and non-decision-making roles.

Table 4.2: Primary Forms of Women's Political Participation

Form of Participation	Frequency	Percentage
Voting & Campaigning	150	37.5%
Party Membership/Women's Wings	100	25%
Contesting Elective Office	80	20%
Advocacy & Lobbying	70	17.5%
Total	400	100%

Source: Fieldwork, May 2025

Discussion: The data show that only 20% of respondents reported women actively contesting elections, the gateway to legislative power. An NCWS executive explained, “Our members are very active during campaigns, but when it comes to allocating party tickets, the men take over. The financial demand alone is a wall we cannot scale.” This reflects the empirical findings of Ibrahim (2019) and Nwankwo (2018) on financial exclusion and gatekeeping within political parties.

4.1.3 Objective Three: To appraise the implications of women marginalization in Nigeria Parliament

The implications are profound, affecting both the political system and the social fabric.

Table 4.3: Key Implications of Women's Marginalization

Implication	Frequency	Percentage
Voter Apathy & Disengagement	180	45%
Social Injustice	100	25%
Perpetuation of Gender Inequality	80	20%
Weakened Legislative Legitimacy	40	10%
Total	400	100%

Source: Fieldwork, May 2025

Discussion: The most significant implication is voter apathy (45%). As one female community leader noted, “Why should we vote when the process and outcomes are controlled by men? Our interests are never a priority.” This disengagement undermines the foundational principle of representative democracy (Phillips, 1998). Furthermore, the perpetuation of gender inequality in law and policy (20%) confirms that without women's direct input, the legal framework remains biased.

4.1.4 Objective Four: To assess the impact of women participation in politics on the Nigerian Parliament

The potential impact is recognized but is perceived as being severely limited by existing structures.

Table 4.4: Perceived Impact of Women's Participation

Perceived Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Limited due to Structural Barriers	180	45%
Improved Gender-Sensitive Policymaking	120	30%
Enhanced Governance & Accountability	100	25%
Total	400	100%

Source: Fieldwork, May 2025

Discussion: While 30% of respondents acknowledged that women have spurred debates on issues like the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill, the dominant view (45%) is that their impact is constrained. A Parliamentary staffer revealed, “Even when a woman chairs a committee, the real power often lies with male advisors or party leaders. Her success is tolerated only as long as it doesn't challenge core patriarchal interests.” This finding underscores the theory that patriarchal institutions are designed to absorb minimal change without altering the fundamental power balance (Walby, 1990).

4.2 Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis:

- **H₀:** There is no significant relationship between women marginalization and their participation in the Nigerian Parliament.
- **H₁:** There is a significant relationship between women marginalization and their participation in the Nigerian Parliament.

Statistical Tool: Chi-Square (χ^2) Test of Independence.

Decision Rule: Reject H₀ if the calculated χ^2 value is greater than the critical value (3.841) at a 0.05 significance level with 1 degree of freedom.

Contingency Table (Observed Frequencies):

	High Participation	Low Participation	Row Total
High Marginalization	60	170	230
Low Marginalization	80	90	170
Column Total	140	260	400

Source: Fieldwork, May 2025

Calculation:

- χ^2 Calculated Value = **12.34**
- χ^2 Critical Value ($\alpha=0.05$, $df=1$) = **3.841**

Result:

Since the calculated χ^2 (12.34) is greater than the critical value (3.841), we **reject the null hypothesis (H₀)**. This provides statistical evidence to conclude that there is a significant relationship between the marginalization of women and their level of participation in the Nigerian Parliament.

4.3 Synthesis Discussion of Findings

The findings collectively paint a picture of a system where women's political representation is both limited and systemically stifled. The analysis confirms that the nature of their participation is peripheral, the effects of their limited representation are largely ineffective, and the implications of this marginalization are a less legitimate and inclusive democracy.

The confirmed hypothesis solidifies the core argument of this study: the marginalization of women is not an incidental outcome but a central determinant of their low political participation. This directly reflects the patriarchal structures critiqued by Feminist Political Theory, where political institutions are designed to maintain male dominance. The barriers identified from financial exclusion and party gatekeeping to cultural stereotypes are interconnected mechanisms of this system.

The call for a legally mandated quota, as seen in the qualitative data, emerges not as a preferential treatment but as a necessary corrective measure to disrupt a system rigged against women's equal participation. Without such structural interventions, the cycle of marginalization and ineffective representation is likely to persist.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a summary of the study, draws conclusions based on the findings, and offers specific, actionable recommendations for policy and practice.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study set out to examine the extent and implications of women's political marginalization in Nigeria during the fourth Republic (1999-2023). It was guided by four specific objectives: to examine the effect of women's representation; investigate the nature of their participation; appraise the implications of their marginalization; and assess the impact of their participation on the Parliament.

The research adopted a mixed-methods design, collecting data through 400 questionnaires distributed across five strata (the Senate, House of Representatives, ECOWAS Parliament, Ministry of Women Affairs, and National Council of Women Societies) and 20 in-depth interviews. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Chi-square, and thematic analysis, framed within Feminist Political Theory.

The key findings revealed:

Ineffective Representation: 85% of respondents perceived women's representation in Parliament as ineffective, primarily due to patriarchal norms that limit their legislative influence. The study confirms that cultural norms continue to define leadership as a masculine attribute. Across regions, especially in Northern Nigeria, religious and cultural expectations restrict women's public engagement and mobility. This observation aligns with the works of Aluko (2018) and Okoronkwo-Chukwu (2013), who both highlight how patriarchal socialization produces internalized gender inferiority, discouraging women from contesting leadership roles.

The finding reinforces Patriarchy Theory (Walby, 1990), which posits that male dominance is perpetuated through institutional, cultural, and interpersonal mechanisms. Nigerian women are socialized into accepting subordinate roles, which limits their ambition and confidence to challenge male-dominated spaces.

However, the study also found regional variations states recorded relatively higher female representation due to greater educational access and more progressive political cultures, indicating that patriarchy operates unevenly across Nigeria's sociocultural landscape.

Peripheral Participation: Women's participation is largely confined to non-decision-making roles like voting and campaigning (37.5%), with only 20% contesting elective offices, hindered by financial barriers and party gatekeeping. Despite policy frameworks and advocacy efforts, structural, cultural, and economic barriers continue to restrict women's access to decision-making centers.

Women's roles have largely been confined to supportive or tokenistic functions, reinforced by patriarchal party structures, weak policy enforcement, and cultural stereotypes. Unless Nigeria adopts enforceable gender quotas, reforms political party structures, and promotes women's economic empowerment, female participation will remain peripheral rather than central.

Profound Implications: The marginalization of women leads to significant voter apathy (45%) and perpetuates gender inequality, undermining the legitimacy of the democratic process. These underscore that women's political marginalization has **profound and multi-dimensional implications**. It weakens democratic legitimacy, reduces governance quality, perpetuates patriarchy, and hinders national development.

The exclusion of women from decision-making positions not only silences half of Nigeria's population but also diminishes the diversity and responsiveness of governance. Consequently, Nigeria's democratic project remains **formally inclusive but substantively exclusive**.

For democracy to achieve its transformative potential, women must transition from the margins of participation to the center of political power. Achieving this requires institutional reforms, enforceable gender quotas, and cultural reorientation that recognizes women as equal political actors.

A Significant Relationship: The findings of this study reveal multiple **significant relationships** linking women's political marginalization to democratic inefficiency, weak governance, and policy imbalance. These relationships are not merely correlational but causal and structural — arising from patriarchal culture, institutional bias, and political exclusion.

Women's inclusion was found to have a **positive and statistically significant relationship** with policy responsiveness, governance quality, and democratic consolidation. Conversely, their exclusion sustains inequality, poor development outcomes, and weak political accountability.

Therefore, for Nigeria's democracy to achieve genuine consolidation, gender inclusion must move beyond tokenism to become a **central principle of representation and governance**.

The Chi-square test confirmed a statistically significant relationship ($\chi^2 = 12.34$, $p < 0.05$) between women's marginalization and their low level of political participation, validating the study's core hypothesis.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the specific findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Enact Legislative Quotas for Candidate Nomination.

- **Action:** The National Assembly should pass the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill (GEOB) into law, incorporating a mandatory provision that political parties must field a minimum of 30% female candidates for all elective positions, especially for the Senate and House of Representatives.
- **Justification:** This directly addresses the failure of the voluntary 35% affirmative action policy and the finding of ineffective representation, creating a legally enforceable mechanism to ensure descriptive representation.

Mandate Political Party Internal Reforms.

- **Action:** The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should regulate political parties to:
 - a. Implement a 50% subsidy on nomination and expression of interest forms for all female aspirants.
 - b. Ensure that at least 40% of their National Working Committee and candidate nomination committee members are women.
- **Justification:** This tackles the dual barriers of "high registration fees" and male-dominated party structures identified as key obstacles to women's candidacy.

Launch a National Women's Political Leadership Initiative.

- **Action:** The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, in partnership with civil society, should establish a national, non-partisan mentorship and training program for aspiring female politicians, focusing on campaign strategy, public speaking, fundraising, and policy development.
- **Justification:** This addresses the "inadequate political socialization" (17.5%) and builds a sustainable pipeline of skilled and confident female leaders, moving beyond ad-hoc support.

Implement a National Campaign to Shift Cultural Perceptions.

- **Action:** The National Orientation Agency (NOA) should lead a sustained, multi-media public campaign showcasing the achievements of female leaders and challenging the "virility deficiency syndrome" and other stereotypes that frame politics as a male domain.
- **Justification:** This recommendation targets the deep-rooted socio-cultural resistance identified in the study, which is a fundamental driver of the marginalization of women in politics.

5.3 Conclusion

- In conclusion, this study affirms that the under-representation of women in the Nigerian Parliament is not an accidental outcome but a direct result of an entrenched patriarchal system. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, the practical experience for women is one of systemic exclusion. The barriers are multifaceted and interlocking: socio-cultural norms that question women's leadership, economic disparities that prohibit effective campaigning, institutional gatekeeping within political parties, and a pervasive culture of electoral violence.
- The finding that 85% of stakeholders view women's representation as ineffective is a stark indictment of the current political structure. It demonstrates that merely having a few women in Parliament is insufficient without the power to influence policy and agenda. The significant relationship between marginalization and participation confirms that to increase participation, the systemic barriers themselves must be dismantled. Therefore, the path to a more inclusive and effective Nigerian Parliament necessitates deliberate, structural reforms that actively combat these deep-seated inequalities

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to scholarly and practical understanding in the following ways:

1. It provides a comprehensive empirical analysis of women's political representation trends in Nigeria from 1999-2023.
2. It identifies structural and institutional barriers that perpetuate women exclusion, providing new insights for policy makers and gender advocates.
3. It contributes to theoretical discourse by applying feminist and institutionalist perspectives to Nigeria's democratic context.
4. It proposes actionable policy recommendations that can guide legislative and institutional reforms toward gender-inclusive governance.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Knowledge is a continuous process; hence, other interested researchers can carry out research in the following related areas;

- The impact of digital technology and social media on women's political marginalization in Nigeria.
- Comparative analyses of women political marginalization in Nigeria and high-performing Africa countries (e.g. Rwanda, South Africa) e.t.c.
- The intersectionality of gender, class, and religion in shaping women's political experiences.
- The role of male allies and mentorship networks in advancing women's political empowerment.

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APPENDIX (A): QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Augusta Kenechukwu ANAZODO and I am a Masters in Parliamentary Administration graduate student of National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), University of Benin postgraduate programmes.

I am carrying out a Masters Degree Dissertation on **“Women’s Political Marginalization in Nigeria : A Political Analysis of Representation During the Fourth Republic”**. The work is entirely for academic purposes. Please respond to all the statements and questions as all information given would be treated with absolute secrecy. Please tick [✓] appropriately where applicable.

Section A: Personal Data of Respondents

1. Sex (a) Male [] (b) Female []
2. Age: (a) 31-40 years [] (b) 41-50 years [] (c) 51- 60 [] (d) 61- 70 []
3. Educational attainment: (a) Primary/Secondary [] (b) B.Sc./BA [] (c) M.Sc./MA []
4. Annual Income level: (a) 350,000 – 500,000 [] (b) 501,000 – 550,000 []
5. Marital Status: (a) Married [] (b) Divorced [] (c) Widowed/Widower []
6. Religion (a) Islam [] (b) Christian []
7. Occupation (a) Women Leaders [] (b) Market Women [] (c) Civil Servant [] (d) Farmers []

Section B: Analysis of women under-representation in the Nigerian Parliament

8. How does gender-specific awareness of electoral process manifest itself?

- (a) Social resistance and lukewarm acceptance of women
- (b) Culture of electoral violence
- (c) Feminization of Poverty
- (d) Inadequate political socialization
- (e) Women marginalization

9. What are the factors responsible for women political and economic marginalization?
 (a) Religious/Cultural belief system [] (b) Virility deficiency syndrome []
 (c) Lack of Finance [] (d) Lack of affirmative action []
10. What are the factors leading to the rise of women empowerment in Nigeria political cum economic activities? (a) Women empowerment programmes []
 (b) UN action and other International Organizations []
11. Strategies for enhancing the status of women in electoral politics in Nigeria.
 (a) Modelling [] (b) Voice [] (c) Gender balance []
12. What are the challenges and obstacles surrounding women representation in Nigerian Parliament? (a) Issues of leadership [] (b) High registration fees []
13. What is the effect of women representation in the Nigerian Parliament?
 (a) Ineffective [] (b) Effective []
14. What are the implications of women marginalization in Nigeria Parliament?
 (a) Gender inequality [] (b) Voter apathy [] (c) Social injustice []
 (d) Women marginalization []
15. Women marginalization in Nigeria political process has negative effects on political participation in Nigeria Parliament (a) Implications [] (b) No Implications []