

POLITICAL PARTIES AND WOMEN 'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN WEST AFRICA

Adebajo Adeola Aderayo¹

Abstract

Women in African states have contributed immensely to nation-building and socio-economic development of their various societies. Despite, it has not translated into more women occupying political leadership positions in West Africa. The article critically analysed the role political parties play in preventing women from occupying political leadership positions. Political parties in some West African states are not committed to gender equality as leadership structure, nomination of candidates and campaign financing are biased against women. Lack of internal democracy and male-style politics dominate party affairs which limit women participation in politics and a confrontational approach instead of seeking collaboration and consensus is also relevant for understanding this scenario. Patriarchy dominates the activities of political parties thereby limiting women which further perpetuate gender inequality in politics. It recommended that political parties should implement proportional representation/quota system to encourage more women to contest for elective posts.

Keywords: Political parties, political participation; patriarchy; male-style politics, gender

Resumo

As mulheres nos Estados africanos têm contribuído imensamente para a construção da nação e o desenvolvimento socioeconômico de suas várias sociedades. Apesar disso, isso não se traduziu em mais mulheres ocupando posições de liderança política na África Ocidental. O artigo analisou criticamente o papel que os partidos políticos desempenham na prevenção da ocupação de cargos de liderança política por mulheres. Os partidos políticos em alguns estados da África Ocidental não estão comprometidos com a igualdade de gênero uma vez que estrutura de liderança, a nomeação de candidatos e o financiamento de campanhas são tendenciosos contra as mulheres. A falta de democracia interna, estilo masculino de política e uma abordagem de confronto em vez de buscar colaboração e consenso também são relevantes para a compreensão deste cenário. O patriarcado domina as atividades dos partidos políticos, limitando assim as mulheres, o que perpetua ainda mais a desigualdade de gênero na política. Recomendo que os partidos políticos implementem um sistema de representação proporcional/quota para encorajar mais mulheres a concorrer a cargos eletivos.

Palavras-chave: Partidos políticos, participação política, patriarcado, política ao estilo masculino, gênero.

¹ Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun. Email: adebajoaa@tasued.edu.ng e adebajoade@gmail.com.

Introduction

Right from immemorial times, women played significant roles in public realm which cannot be downplayed but most of the time are glossed over. Women had been contributing to positive impacts in uplifting their societies. In West Africa, even before the advent of colonial rule, women made immense contributions to the socio-political development of their societies. For instance, women played critical roles both in the spiritual and political spaces. Women worked as diviners, priestesses, masked spirits, goddesses, to mention a few. In the pre-colonial West Africa, women played critical roles in the traditional political system of administration. For instance, in Ghana, the Asantehemma (queen mother) belonged to the groups of paramount chiefs and took part in the administration of the state. It is significant to point out that eight clans of the Asante land were governed by sub-female chiefs. Also, Asantehemma had input in the enthronement of the new king when the old king died. Same role was played by Iyalode in Yoruba land in Nigeria in the administration of the affairs of the state. Iyalode wielded legislative, executive and judicial powers, making her prominent among other women of her time. Women in West Africa served as the saviours of their societies such as Queen Daura of Zazzau, Queen Kambasa of Bonny kingdom, Queen Idia of Benin kingdom, among others. Women also participated in making and unmaking of war and allocation of land and other basic resources.

In Buganda, there were powerful female royal title holders. The queen mother and the queen had their courts with their titled officers. The Ankole also recognised a royal sister and mother and their offices were essential to the continuation of the monarchical stool (NZEMEKA, 2009). There were female chiefs among the Tswana and Shona kingdoms of Southern Africa, and they were also prominent among the Mende and Serbro of Sierra Leone in West Africa. High ranking women chiefs wielded power among the Tonga of Zambia and the Nzinga of Angola who effectively resisted the Portuguese invasion (NZEMEKA, 2009). In the opinion of Tenu (2019), women played active roles in the pre-colonial Africa, particularly in Ghana as they occupied the positions of Queen mothers, Queens and even warriors through which they impacted their societies positively. Stressing further, Tenu noted that women presided over administrative regions, enthroned chiefs and also resolved issues that affected domestic realms in their jurisdictions. There were instances in which women wielded

power singularly without any form of complementarity with the male counterparts. In the administrative system of Ashante in Ghana, the female joint ruler exercised powers greater than men. Her court was quite different from that of the king and was fully in charge of the royal stools and Royal ancestral cult (AMADIUME, 2015 cited in TENU, 2019).

Colonialism properly laid the legacy of marginalisation of women in the political process in West African societies. Like in most colonised African states, women's power was eroded, relegated and even replaced with men by the colonial administrators. The legal and cultural mechanisms put in place by the colonisers contributed immensely to the relegation of women. The Europeans believed in Victorian ideology which espoused that women should be visible at the domestic arena while public space should be the exclusive preserve of men. The use of the warrant chiefs in the non-centralised states also contributed to the erosion of women's power. As the case in Nigeria, Ahebi Ugbagbe, was the only woman among the warrant chiefs while other women were removed and replaced with men. Colonial administrators undermined the traditional base of power of women while men's dominant roles were entrenched. As argued by Ndeda (2010), as the European women gained power in the formal political structures in their various societies, African women were undermined due to colonial imposition.

With the introduction of multi-party politics in West African states, women began to reclaim their lost positions through contested elections on the platforms of different political parties. Women have been able to make headway to become Presidents, Prime Ministers, Ministers, Commissioners in their countries in tough political terrains. For instance, Elizabeth Domitien of the Central African Republic (1975-76), Carmen Pereira of Guinea-Bissau was acting President in 1984, Agathe Uwilingiyimana, was a Prime Minister of Rwanda between 1993-94, Sylvie Kinigi of Burundi was acting President between 1993 and 1994, Mame Madior Boye was the Prime Minister of Senegal between 2001 and 2002. In addition, Ivy Matsepe- Casaburri acted as President in 2008 in South Africa, Lansa Diogo was a Prime Minister between 2006 and 2010 in Mozambique, Helen Johnson Sirleaf became the president of Liberia between 2006 and 2018, Cecile Manorohanta of Madagascar was the Acting Prime Minister in 2009, Cisse Mariam Kaidama Sidibe of Mali was the Prime Minister between 2011 and 2012, Adiato Njalo Nandigna of Guinea - Bissau occupied the post of the Acting Prime Minister in 2012, Joyce Banda became the President Malawi

between 2012 and 2014, Aminata Toure of Senegal was the Prime Minister between 2013 and 2014, Catherine Samba-Panza of Central African Republic acted as the President between 2014 and 2016, Saara Kuugongelwa of Namibia is the Prime Minister from 2015 till date, Sahle-Work Zewde of Ethiopia is the President from 2018 till date and Rose Christiane Raponda, the Prime Minister of Gabon, 2020 till date (FAYOMI, SALAU, POPOOLA & ADIGUN, 2021).

It is instructive to state that post-conflict African nations are pacesetters as regards women political representation with more women in executive leadership positions, as Rwanda has more than 50% representation of women in the parliament, making it the highest in the world (RAMTOHUL, 2021). As noted by Ramtohul (2021), Rwanda ranks 61.3% in the lower House of Parliament and 38.5% in the Upper house. Women's representation in Rwanda's lower house of parliament rose from 61.3% to 67.5%, still making it the highest globally (RAMTOHUL, 2021). In both lower and upper houses of parliament, women constitute 46.2% in Namibia. While South Africa, Senegal and Mozambique trail behind Namibia, ranking 10th, 12th and 15th (ibid). With the little inroads made by women into political leadership in Africa and West Africa to be specific, it remains insignificant and not commensurate to the impacts of women in societal development. Even though political parties serve as tools in actualising inclusive governance world over, they still constitute inherent barriers towards emergence of women as party representatives in election into political offices.

Political parties have inadvertently contributed to low representation of women in party politics thereby perpetuating gender inequality in politics which denies the societies of the benefits of inclusive governance and steady development. Therefore, it is imperative to examine the roles political parties play in constituting roadblocks to women participation in party politics in West Africa. The paper is divided into four parts including the introduction, historical overview of participation of women politics in West Africa, political parties as barriers to women participation in politics in West African nations using Nigeria and Ghana as selected cases, the legal/institutional frameworks put in place by political parties will also be examined and then the conclusion and recommendations. The rationale for selecting Nigeria and Ghana among other West African nations is because both states have maintained uninterrupted democratic rule since 1999 and 1992 respectively. Also, Nigeria and Ghana have succeeded in conducting five and six periodic elections which can be regarded as consolidating democracies.

Participation of Women in politics in West Africa: A Historical Overview

Literature abounds on participation of women in politics in West Africa. Right before the introduction of multi-party elections in Africa, women made contributions to societal development. In Liberia, the role of chief Suakoko, a well-known female leader from Liberia's largest ethnic group known as Kpelles, she was able to bridge the gap between natives and indigents in Liberia. Also in Sierra Leone, women were involved in pre-colonial administrative system. For instance, Sierra Leone, Constance Cummings-John, was the first and youngest female to be elected to the legislature in African colonies. She was able to serve for 28 years as municipal councilor of Freetown between 1938 to 1942 and from 1952 to 1966 (OKOOSI-SIMBINE & OBI, 2021).

It is important to note that the leader of Mende was a woman, as women rulers predominantly came from the Mendes. Women in the eastern and southern part of Sierra Leone played prominent roles in protecting their territories from attack by other warring ethnic groups like Temne and Limba when inter-tribal wars were ravaging African soil (ROGERS, 2011). There were also women paramount chiefs such as Chief Madam Yoko (Moyamba district) in the south, Madam Humarya (Kenema district) in the east. The two women paramount chiefs were among the decision makers in the 1960s during colonial era in Sierra Leone. Nancy Tucker (Bontre district, in the South), Ella Kobilu Gulama (Moyamba district in the South), Madame Wokie (Kenema district in the East) in the 1960s and 1970s (Rogers, 2011).

Also, women like Kadi Sesanyi (Bombali district in the North), a former Minister of Development, Zainab H. Bangura (Tonkoliki district in the North, Foreign Minister), Christiana Thorpe from the Western Area was the Chief Electoral Commissioner, Hajia Hafsatu Kabba from the Western Area was Minister of Energy and Power, Elizabeth Alpha-Lavallie was the Deputy speaker of the parliament, all of these women have made positive impacts in the political arena.

Literature on pre-colonial Gambia revealed the significant role of Wolof women in traditional administration. Despite they constituted 15% of the population then, Wolof women were politically and economically influential in the society. As a result of their strong connection with the centralised states of Wolof, such as Waalo, Baol, Sine and Saloum, they maintained strong trade relations with the Europeans (FOURSHEY, 2019). Wolof women were members of political councils and members

of the royal families and exercised power over different areas of production and human lives. Women were in charge of the territories occupied by people and also obtained taxes from them by controlling trade in wax, ivory, salt, baoba fruits, cloth, among others (FOURSHEY, 2019). In Baol state, Queen mothers (lingueres) were members of political council (Diambur) which elected the new ruler. For instance, Ndade Yatta Mbodji and Njembo Mbodji, took part in resistance movements in the 19th century. Njebo led as resistance movement against Mauritanian Islamists who invaded Waalo. In addition, she led a seven-year resistance against the French invasion of Waalo state. The Jola, Serahulle, Serer, Banbara, Manjago women, among others, contributed to socio-economic and political advancement of Gambia.

In Senegal, Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, Jola women employed Islam to contest the confinements in their lives and they created different opportunities in the administrative and policy arenas to advance their lots. For instance, a Jola Muslim prophetess in Senegal, Alinesitoue Diatta, defied social, religious and colonial impediments to query the social order, erosion of social values and norms, and marginalisation of a large number of poor people. Also, the role of lady Hannah Mahoney in advocating for alleviation of children's and maternal health issues cannot be downplayed (FOURSHEY, 2019). As a public speaker, she was nominated to the Banjul (Bathurst) Urban District Council in 1941 where she played advocacy role.

In the view of Awe (1992), Ikpe (2004), Adebajo (2008), the pre-colonial Nigerian societies had women traditional political institutions and governance but was not equal to that of men, but rather complementary and or subordinate. The complimentary role was however embedded in sex segregation which determined gender position, status and power in the society. Even though women enjoyed some level of authority and freedom, they were subjected to communal government in which they played peripheral roles. For instance, there was no woman in the various grades of chiefs that dominated the different craft guilds and market agents of the Bini King, the only important female figure was the king's mother with her cult at Uselu, but could not sit in Oba Council, and as such did not take part in decision making (IKPE, 1997). Also, after the reign of Queen Amina in the pre-Islamic in Zaria, women were not seen in public spheres (ABUBAKAR, 1992). In terms of political office, women were not equal to men in most Nigerian societies. Although, there were some women who

possessed political power such as Queen Amina of Zaria, Kambazza of Bonny, Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura of Yoruba.

Since then, women seem to have vacated the centre courts for men and accepted the secondary roles in political affairs. This was probably entrenched during the colonial administration. The colonial administration, its gender policies and economic interests were patriarchal in nature. In the Northern Nigeria, the change of government from the Hausa aristocracy to Fulani/Muslim hegemony totally excluded women from public spheres. The legislative council created in 1922, though with limited African representation had no woman. Yet, the colonial government consciously excluded women from this council (ONI & JOSHUA, 2012).

While women in Southwestern Nigeria voted for the first time in the nation's electoral history in the 1959 general election, their Northern counterpart did not enjoy franchise rights until 1976, fifty- four years after the elective principle was introduced to Nigeria. Women political activism such as Aba women riot against colonial tax policies of 1929/30, the Ngwa women's opposition to new school fees in 1958; and the series of protests between 1946 and 1958, the limited gains made by women did not translate into participation in decision making during this colonial period. Women did not feature in the first political parties (the Nigerian National Democratic Party, NNDP), National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) and other parties during the nationalist era and after independence. The same problems are characteristics of many West African societies.

Political parties as barriers to women participation in politics in Ghana and Nigeria

Empirical evidence abounds on different factors that undermine the substantive representation of women in politics worldwide. Such include religion, tradition, culture, patriarchy, lack of finance, godfatherism and other social factors. However, one of the factors that has not been paid enough academic attention is how political parties in the many West African nations, Ghana and Nigeria to be specific, perpetuate under-representation of women in partisan politics. As the norm requires, political parties are to be the engine rooms for recruitment of candidates in a political system. Political parties are the primary points of entry for candidates including women in partisan politics. They are also gatekeepers that select which candidates will be

representing the parties during general elections. It is important to state that at this entry point, women face a lot of challenges, particularly when they are interested in contesting elective posts. If they are just interested in becoming ordinary members without nurturing the ambition of contesting election, the challenges might not be enormous.

The first challenge is the nomination fee charged by political parties. As a result of the excessive monetisation of politics, the nomination fee for the party members is too high, reserved for the money bags/ godfathers/ political entrepreneurs. As a matter of fact, excessive monetisation of politics has been a strategy deployed to discourage credible candidates, particularly women, from contesting elective posts. From the purchase of nomination form, women are screened out due to its high cost. Political entrepreneurs do not only use the purchase of nomination form as sourcing for money for their parties, but also, as a means of recruiting the wealthy people, who are mainly men, to contest for elective posts. In most cases, parties are used as cartels for the highest bidders to invest in politics for themselves and their cronies.

Political parties in West Africa are monopolised by the party barons who do not allow internal democratic process to take place. Cases abound in Ghana and Nigeria, as a lot of money is spent to procure nomination form and win party primaries. For instance, in Ghana, the presidential aspirants paid 100,000 cedis (17,000 dollars) as nomination fees, 100% increase from 50,000 cedis fees paid in 2016. While parliamentary aspirants paid a deposit of 10,000 cedis in 2016 (Electoral Commission Ghana, 2020). The story is the same in Nigeria as All Progressive Congress sold nomination form for 45 million naira, while the People's Democratic Party cost 12 million naira for the presidential candidates. APC governorship nomination form went for 22.5 million naira, that of the PDP cost 6 million naira (EZEAA, 2018). The national secretary of the APC defended the cost of the nomination fee and stated that it had to be so because his party did not want use public money to contest elections.

Although, discount of 50% was given to women by APC, while PDP collected nothing for nomination fee (EWOKOR, 2018). Despite this, no woman emerged a presidential candidate. Women are considered too poor to rule due to lack of financial muscle. In Ghana, the cost of running for political posts has risen due to corruption in form of giving gifts, and other ways of expression of giving gratitude, which is referred to by voters as the "cocoa season". As in the case of Nigeria too, money is spent heavily on campaigns, donations, party workers and adverts and they take a lot of money

(MADSON, ANING, & ADU, 2020). The political party workers constitute men, based and sustained on patriarchal patronage systems. The rule of engagement is masculine which rotates round the male norms. Women need the support of “elders” in the party to be nominated to contest (MADSON et. al., 2020)

Apart from the high cost of the nomination fee paid by candidates, the internal political party structures do not include women where they can make impacts on decision making process. According to Afrobarometer (2021), despite some political parties have quotas for women’s representation in the parliament and local governments, the same quotas are not applied to the internal political party structures. The essence of women holding posts within the internal party structures is to provide support, finance and professional resources for potential candidates, who will be elected to legislative and executive posts. As pointed by Afrobarometer (2021), support for women candidates is to promote and sustain representation of women in the electoral process. As the case is in Nigeria, party structure and organisation involve a top-bottom arrangement from the national level through the state, zones, local government areas and ward levels (OMENMA, 2017). For instance in Nigeria, in the Article 10 of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) constitution in Nigeria, the party organs include ward executive, ward congress, local government area executive committee, congress, senatorial district working committee, state caucus, national working committee, national executive committee, state executive, state congress, zonal working committee, national caucus, national workers committee, national executive committee, board of trustees, national convention, party national executive committee (NEC) (OMENMA, 2017). Virtually all the structures of PDP are controlled by men. Women are secluded from party structures where fundamental decisions emanate and are taken. Party meetings are most of the time held at night which will conflict with the gender roles of the women. Few husbands will support their wives going to political meetings at night.

Evidence from the two major Ghanaian political parties (National Democratic Congress and New Patriotic Party) attests to the fact that women are underrepresented in the party structures and membership, as one woman is a member of the committee of branch executives, she is the woman organizer (ICHINO & NATHAN, 2017). In 1965, 19 women were elected into the Assembly and Mrs. S. Alhassan was appointed as the first female Minister of Social Welfare. In the Ghanaian second republic, one woman was elected to the parliament. Even the Progress Party (PP) which recorded a

landmark victory fielded one female out of 138 candidates. In the third republic, 5 women out of 20 candidates were elected to parliament, 4 women from the People's National Party (PNP) and 1 woman on the platform of Action Congress Party (ACP). Parliamentary and presidential elections witnessed low representation of women. It was only two (12%) women that were presidential candidates, while 4 women were vice presidential candidates which was an improvement on the 2012 election when there were no woman presidential elections (Carter Centre, 2018). Some of the political parties have institutional framework for inclusion of women to ensure gender parity in representation. However, only very few implemented the quotas at the party level.

As it is a common phenomenon across Africa, women only represent 20% in political party leadership as party leaders, secretary general and deputy secretary general (Afrobarometer, 2021). While in West Africa, women represent 11% of political party leadership (Ibid). Poor representation of women in parties has stifled the implementation of quota for women. It is worthy of note that 33 African nations have constitutional or legislated quota, but not all of them have the quotas reflected in their party constitutions including Ghana and Nigeria, representing in the decision-making process. As observed by Pogoson (2014), women find it difficult to break even politically, since political parties are male based, formed and run by male fraternal connections and relationships, run as “old boys” network, which leave little room for women to participate. Men dominate the party membership and when it comes to nominating or selecting party flag bearers, men are mostly used. Of the same opinion of Okoosi-Simbine (2003) who argued that the structures and caucuses of political parties are mostly dominated by men, while women constitute an insignificant percentage of party membership, due to socio-political challenges.

Relating the Nigerian experience regarding the attitude of men towards women's representation of political parties in elections, Fayemi et. Al. (2020) revealed the response of the People's Democratic Party's spokesman when asked why women were not provided more platform to contest in 2019 general elections, “that he did not think that the election was the type women could really do well because of the format of the election”. This implies that there was pre-determined way the elections would go, and women may not be able to cope.

In the opinion of Pogoson (2014), the nature of involvement of women in politics has been subordinate as most of the party constitutions as regards board of trustees, party caucuses and congresses feature very insignificant number of women.

Although, most of the political parties have women wings, they are confined to campaigning and canvassing for votes for men during electioneering process. Ideally, political parties' women wings are meant for promotion of gender equality, women empowerment and other issues in development. However, confining gender equality and empowerment to wings of political parties can remove gender issues from their main priorities (KANDAWASVIKA-NHUNDU, 2013).

As it were, most of the women wings are assigned social and welfare roles in line with domestic realm, which really negates equality in representation in political affairs. In Ghana, political parties use women as campaign and food sharing tools. They failed to integrate women into the party structures like men. Also, women's sections in political parties were assigned to function in conducting research on family life, managing food production and carrying out functional literacy programmes for women (KANDAWASVIKA-NHUNDU, 2013). As observed by Badmus (2006), confining women to women's wings of political parties is to ensure the erection of mechanism mainly to retard the participation of women and to resist empowerment of women towards independent and self-enlightened participation. Arguing further, Badmus (2006) observed that, linking women's wings to political parties was to tie women organisation to party dictates and overriding interest, to secure more female votes as much as possible, making women's wings of the political parties the worst enemies of female participation in politics.

Women are underrepresented in the central committee and where they are visible, it is in a less important role. Out of 104 ruling and opposition parties in 54 countries in Africa including Nigeria and Ghana, 34 have women's wings playing ambivalent role. During the single regimes in some West African states, women were restricted to mobilisation of party related mass organisations and women's wings of ruling parties. Also, women wings were only established as the legitimate political spaces for women to operate. Women's wings were established to compensate the involvement of women in the nationalist movements where they were confined, marginalised and depoliticized despite their contributions (RAMTOHUL, 2020).

It is interesting to know that women's wings of the many political parties are led by the spouses of male politicians and protected the interests of men. Some of the women leaders worked in collaboration with the wives of the presidents who teleguided their activities to render further support to their husbands rather than ensuring inclusive participation in governance by women. As Mama (1995) noted, in her ideology of

femocracy, that a group of women's clique constituted an anti-democratic female power structure which claimed to exist for the advancement of ordinary women, but contrarily could not do so. Mama sees femocracy as festering patriarchal ideology, by not querying the entrenched gender inequality, but taking advantage of the global women's movements for gender equality, undermining the female majority to satisfy selfish interest (MAMA, 1995, CITED IN FALOLA, 2019). As FALOLA (2019) sees the clique of women as the wives of men in power who arrogated the authority of women's interests to themselves but lacked authority to perform any functions, but rather gained media presence.

It is interesting to note that women participation in politics in Ghana evolved over time. The first Ghanaian and African woman to be elected into the National Assembly was Mabel Dove Danquah, on the platform of Convention People's Party (CPP) and won the Ga Rural seat (the Dome-Kwabinya constituency) in 1951 elections after polling 3331 votes and defeated Nii Amaa Ollenu who garnered 417 votes, and Imoro Braimah who pulled 226 votes (QUAYE, 2012). There was no woman as parliament member between 1957 and 1960. As a result of the enactment of People's Act, No 8 of 1960, the National Assembly during the administration of Kwameh Nkrumah, made provision for ten women. In 1969, Mrs Lydia Bodin-Po Kugblenu, from the Upper Region of Ghana, became the first woman to be elected to parliament and the second woman was Ms. Catherine Tedam, after winning a bye-election on the platform of the Progress Party from the Chiana-Paga constituency. As Okoosi-Simbine and Obi (2020) observe, evidence exists on the participation of women Ghana politics before the independence in Ghana on the platform of Convention People's Party. When the country returned to democratic rule, 53 women contested for parliamentary seats from National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP) in 1996, only 18 (32%) women won parliamentary seats out of 53 candidates. Thirteen seats were won on the platform of National Democratic Congress and five from New Patriotic Party (OKOOSI-SIMBINE & OBI, 2020).

From 1960 to 2008, out of 1,548 parliamentary seat, 133 seats were occupied by Ghanaian women representing an abysmal 8.6% (Oquaye, 2012). Record revealed that NDC presented the highest number of female candidates, 23.2% of the total number of 95 candidates in September, 2000 election, the National Reform Party (NRP) with 21%, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) with 17.9% , Convention People's Party (CPP),

16.8% while the United Ghana Movement (UGM) had the lowest number of female candidates (4.2%) (ibid). Statistics of women occupying seats parliamentary seats in 1995, out of 200 seats, 16 (8%) seats occupied by women. The number increased to 25 (10.9%) out of 230 seats in the 2004 national election. In 2008 election, 19 parliament women made it to the parliament (Tawiah, 2018). Between 2012 and 2016, the number of women who contested and won the parliamentary seats increased from 29 to 37, 24 on the ticket of NPP and 13 on the auspices of NDC (Ghana General Election cited in Okoosi-Simbine, et al, 2020). In 2012, no woman was nominated as a presidential candidate, while 10% of the parliamentary candidate were women, 4 women were in the cabinet of 19 men. 2 political parties (New Patriotic Party and National Democratic Congress) had women representatives, yet abysmally low. For instance, New Patriotic Party (NPP) had 20 (15.6%) out of 128 seats, and National Democratic Congress had 5 (5.3%) out of 4 seats. However, despite the fact that People's National Convention had 4 seats and 3 seats were accessible by Convention People's Party, there was no woman representative (African Democratic Encyclopedia Project, 2012). However, it is germane to point out that towards the 2016 general elections, the political parties failed to improve on gender equality. For instance, National Democratic Congress (NDC) failed to implement 40% reserve seats for the women. The New Patriotic Party (NPP) out rightly revoked the internal alternative action principle. Despite ratifying Maputo protocol in 2007. 13.45% of parliament members are women (Tawiah, 2018). Despite women are the majority, they did not support a fellow woman political aspirant, due to petty jealousy, ingrained bitterness, selfishness, character assassination, petty squabbles, inferiority complex and other social prejudices (Tenu, 2019) .

Legal/ institutional frameworks for increasing gender equality in Ghana and Nigeria

In order to ensure gender equality is encouraged in Ghana's democratic politics, it ratified international human rights treaties including the 1979 convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The 1992 Ghanaian constitution also provided for protection of fundamental human rights and freedom for all its citizens including women. In section 17, subsections 1 & 2, and section 27 of the Ghana constitution, all are against discrimination based on gender and also protected women's rights matters. With the constitutional provision in place and the 51.2% those

women constitute as a population, the under representation of women in positions of power is very glaring (TENU, 2019). Ghana signed and ratified CEDAW in 1980 and 1986 respectively.

To conform with CEDAW, to pave way for more women representation in decision making process at the public realm, Ghana adopted affirmative action of 40% quota for women in government and public boards, commissions, councils, committees and official bodies (TSIKATA, 2009). Also, Ghana is a signatory to the African Charter on Human People's Rights, which became enforced on 21st October, 1986, and ratified in 1989 (TSIKATA, 2009). Article 18(3) provided for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and should be implemented in line with international declarations and conventions. There was African protocol on the rights of women (Women's protocol) adopted on 11th July, 2003 which became enforced in November, 2008, also advocates for the greater inclusion of women in political and decision making processes. In 1995, Ghana adopted the Beijing declaration and Platform for Action which condemned inequality between men and women as regards political power at all levels of governance.

The use of affirmative action was also spelt out in order to protect women's rights and other gender issues. Although, there are criticisms leveled against affirmative action which include the change of reverse against men, unqualified women in position of power, promotion of post- Beijing militancy among women, an elitist agenda to benefit middle class women while rural women were excluded, among others. Despite the international, regional, and national legal frameworks which Ghana has signed and ratified, women still lag behind in political representation. It is interesting to note that in the political history of Ghana, it was Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings and Akuah Donko that had ever contested for the post of President but the two of them did not emerge in 2016 elections. Though, Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings scaled through the nomination hurdles but Akuah Donkor could not. It is instructive to note that between 1992 and 2016, 150 (9.1%) women out of 1,640 were elected to parliament (TENU, 2019). There were 9 women ministers out of 38 in Ghana in 2018. As at 2019, there were 36 women out of 275 parliamentarians (TENU, 2019). Since Ghana returned to democratic rule in 1992, it is important to note that there is increase in the number of women in parliament as against the few numbers in executive positions.

Like Ghana, Nigeria is a signatory and ratifier of the international, regional and national instruments to boost women participation in decision making process. Unlike Ghanaian constitution that made provision for non-discrimination against women in participation in public leadership, Nigeria has come short of this. The Nigerian constitution did not make any conscious and specific provision for women inclusion in politics other than the protection of fundamental human rights for all citizens. In section 33 to 45, it is very clear that the constitution did not make any specific provision for protection and improvement of women's participation in political authority. In a very clear term, the Nigerian constitution only made provision for the protection of the minority groups using the federal character principle (FAYEMI, et al 2020). The principle does not make provision for gender balance but targeted the inclusion of ethnic minority groups in political administration.

As further revealed by Fayemi et. Al. (2020), no provision was made for quotas to boost women political representation. This makes it difficult for the Beijing Platform for Action to be implemented. The only quota system enforceable in the 1999 constitution is the federal character principle which is anti-democratic and anti-inclusive of women as a category. The issue of state of origin inherent in the federal character principle makes it difficult for women married to men outside of their states of origin to contest for elective posts. Most of the elective and appointed positions come from states or local government of origin, it therefore becomes a problem for women seeking executive political positions (ibid).

As can be seen, the 35% affirmative action to boost women representation promised by political parties in Nigeria suffered lack of implementation since there is no legal framework to enforce it. As argued by Okedele (2020), lack of effective legal and enforcement mechanisms for affirmative action for women may be a factor as to why most African countries have not been able to implement such particularly in Nigeria. As revealed by Afrobarometer (2021), out of 33 countries that have legislated quotas at national and/or local level(s), to ensure more representation of women in politics, 20 political parties have incorporated the quotas in their constitutions. The implication is that political parties with institutionalised quotas in their party constitutions have increased number of women.

Since Nigeria returned to civilian administration, there are evidence that women made conscious efforts to participate in the democratic process. Although, Nigerian

women had occupied the parliament even before the fourth republic as Mrs Wuraola Adepeju Esan, contested under the auspices of the Action Group (AG) to become the Nigerian first female senator representing Ibadan West in the Nigerian National Assembly (TRIPP, 2017 cited in OKOOSI-SIMBINE et. al., 2020).

Available evidence show that women contested for the post of president, governor, local government chairman and councilor, some of them made it while others dropped out right from the party primaries. A veteran presidential aspirant Chief Mrs Sarah Jubril contested on the platform of Progressive Action Congress (PAC) and also on the ticket of the People's Democratic Party in 2003 and 2007 respectively but did not emerge a winner. In 2007, out of 25 candidates who contested for the post of a president, one female featured but none won. Five women contested for the post of vice president out of 25 candidates, none emerged. For the governorship, 14 women contested out of 474, none won. While 21 women out of 474 vied for the post of deputy governor, 6 emerged winners. In the senate, 59 women out of 799 candidates featured, 9 seats were occupied out of 109.

The situation in the House of Representatives did not reflect outstanding performance of women as out of 2,342 candidates, 150 were women and 26 won seats out of 360. in 2011 general elections, 1 woman out of 20 candidates contested for presidency, 3 out of 20 for vice president, 13 out of 353 contestants for governorship, 58 out of 347 for deputy governor, 90 out of 890 candidates for the Senate and 220 out of 2,408 for the House of Representatives. It is noteworthy to state that no woman was elected president, vice president and governor. while one became the deputy governor, seven occupied seat in the Senate and 26 women made their ways into House of Representatives. Representation of women did not improve in 2015 general elections. Although one woman out of 14 contested for presidency, 4 out of 14 for vice presidents, 23 out 380 for governorship, 64 out of 380 for deputy governor, 128 out of 746 for senate and 270 out of 1,772 for House of Representatives. Four women emerged the deputy governor, 8 in the Senate and 17 in the House of Representatives.

The performance of women dropped in the 2019 general elections as no woman contested for the posts of president, vice president, governor, while 4 women were elected as the deputy governor, five into the House of Representatives and eleven won seats in the House of Representatives (OKOOSI- SIMBINE, et. al., 2020). The same experience was replicated at the local government level, as councilors and chairpersons were majorly men while women were trailing far behind in 2007, 2011 and 2015

elections. The reasons for the poor performance are not far-fetched as the political parties constitute major hindrances towards women making inroad into political leadership position. There is no doubt that the patriarchal nature of the political parties through which the godfathers/godsons oversee the selective process is affecting women occupying elective posts. The godfathers give political baptism to their godsons and treat women with disdain as just mere extra tyre that may be needed when an occasion calls for it.

Conclusion

Women face a lot of challenges in their bid to contest elections in Nigeria and Ghana right from the party level. Women are restrained by the political parties being the first entry points through excessive monetisation of the process by the party barons. This is manifested in the costly nomination fee, patriarchal party organs/structures and patron-client patronage, confinement of women to party women's wings, outright substitution of women nominated to men due to poor political market value, among others. As revealed in the paper, Ghana has constitutional provision for promoting gender fairness in political representation while Nigeria is not women friendly in its constitution. What could have been a conscious effort towards gender equality Nigeria is subsumed in federal character principle which glosses over under-representation of women in political space. Despite the challenges entrenched in Nigerian and Ghanaian political spaces, women still struggled and managed to have a little representation. For women to make more inroads into the political decision-making processes in both countries, it is important that the following steps be considered.

First, political parties need to expand the electoral basis at the grassroots level so as to accommodate more women to participate. The broader the electoral basis, the greater the probability of women involvement. Second, all party encumbrances in form of high nomination fee should be drastically reduced if not completely eliminated for women in order to encourage more interested women to venture for political positions.

Third, national constitutions should be more women- friendly in aspiring to leadership positions. There should be a national legislated quotas that will make it compulsory for political parties, particularly the ruling parties, to allot a certain percentage of elective and appointive positions to women starting from the party level (OQUAYE, 2012). also, voluntary quotas should be adopted by the political parties and compliance enforced through constitutional provisions. As suggested by Bauer

(2019) and Okoosi-Simbine et. Al. (2020), legislated quotas and reservation of seats for women will provide training ground to contest elected seats to familiarize voters with female candidates. Fourth, unfair and anti-democratic practices and patriarchal system of party administration should be eradicated to allow more women to participate in politics. Fifth, proportional representation should be adopted in the electoral systems of the two countries to pave the way for more women representation.

References

ABBA, Sadeeqe A.; BABALOLA, Dele. Contending issues in political parties in Nigeria: The candidate selection process. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, v. 11, n. 1, p. 118-134, 2017.

ADEBAJO, A. A., & AYODEJI, G. I.. *Insecurity and women participation in the electoral processes in Nigeria*. Usukka, Nigeria: Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA)/University of Nigeria, 2020.

AMADIUME, I.. Gender and political systems and social movements: A West African experience. In: MANDANI M. (ed). *African Studies in Social movement and democracy*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 1994. Pp. 35-68.

BADMUS, Isiaka Alani. Political Parties and Women's Political Leadership in Nigeria: The Case. *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, v. 32, p. 3, 2006.

BAUER, G. (2019). Women in African parliaments: Progress and prospects. In: YACOB-HALISO, Olajumoke; FALOLA, Toyin (Ed.). *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*. Springer International Publishing, 2019. Pp. 335-352.

CARTER Centre (2018). *Presidential and parliamentary elections in Sierra Leone*. Final Report. 2018

EWOKERI, C. Why Nigeria's women get a 50% election discount, 2018. Disponível em: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-45450399>. Acesso em 6 jun. 2021.

EZEA, S. (2018). high cost of nominations forms, Nigerian youths and challenges of electioneering. 2018. Disponível em: <https://m.guardina.ng/saturday-magazine/high-cost-of-nomination-forms,-Nigerian-youths-and-challenges-of-electioneering>. Acesso em: 6 jun. 2021.

FALOLA, T.. Writing Nigeria women's political history. In: YACOB-HALISO, Olajumoke; FALOLA, Toyin (Ed.). *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*.

Springer International Publishing, 2019. Pp. 65-86. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-3-319-77030-7168-1>. Acesso em: 6 jun. 2021.

FAYOMI, O. O., SALAU, O. P., POPOOLA, R. O., & ADIGUN, O. W.. Women in executive political leadership in Africa. In: YACOB-HALISO, Olajumoke; FALOLA, Toyin (Ed.). *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*. Springer International Publishing, 2021. Pp. 375-391. Disponível em: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77030-774-1>. Acesso em: 6 jun. 2021.

FOURSHEY, C.. *Women in the Gambia*. Disponível em: <https://digitalcommons.buckwell.edu/fac-books/179>. Acesso em: 6 jun. 2021.

GHANA General Elections. *More women voted into parliament*. Disponível em: <http://ghanaelection2016.ghanaweb-news.com/more-women-in-parliament.html>. Acesso em: 6 jun. 2021.

ICHINO, N., & NATHAN, N. L. *Political party organisation and women's empowerment in Ghana*. International Growth Centre, 2017.

KANDAWASVIKA-NHUNDU, Rumbidzai A. *Political Parties in Africa through a Gender Lens*. International IDEA, 2013.

MAMA, Amina. Feminism or femocracy? State feminism and democratisation in Nigeria. *Africa Development/Afrique et Développement*, p. 37-58, 1995.

MAMA, Amina. Women in politics. In: CHEESEMAN, Nic; ANDERSON, David; SCHEIBLER, Andrea (Ed.). *Routledge handbook of African politics*. Routledge, 2013. p. 163-178. Disponível em: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/104324/978020307068.ch12>. Acesso em: 6 jun. 2021.

MADSEN, Diana Højlund; ANING, Kwesi; HALLBERG ADU, Kajsa. *A step forward but no guarantee of gender friendly policies: female candidates spark hope in the 2020 Ghanaian elections*. The Nordic Africa Institute. 2020.

OKEDELE, Adebunola. Women, quotas, and affirmative action policies in Africa. In: YACOB-HALISO, Olajumoke; FALOLA, Toyin (Ed.). *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*. Springer International Publishing, 2019. Pp. 449-463.

OKOOSI-SIMBINE, A. T. (2003). Politics and power: barriers to women's effective participation in political parties in Nigeria. Trabalho apresentado na NATIONAL

CONFERENCE ON GENDER, POLITICS AND POWER: Overcoming the barriers to the emergence of women political leaders in Nigeria by CSSR & D, Lagos.

OKOOSI-SIMBINE, A.T., & OBI, N. N. Women in political parties in Africa. In: YACOB-HALISO, Olajumoke; FALOLA, Toyin (Ed.). *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*. Springer International Publishing, 2019. Pp. 315-334.

OMENMA, J. Tochukwu; ONU, J. Chisolun; OMENMA, Z. Onyinyechi. Factors Limiting Nomination of Women Candidates for Elections in Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, v. 7, n. 5, p. 202, 2016

ONI, S, & JOSHUA, S. Gender Relations in Nigeria's Democratic Governance. *Journals of Politics & Governance*, v.1.n.2/3 p.4.2012

POGOSON, A. I. Women, political parties and exclusion in Nigeria: 1999-2012. *Political Parties and Democracy in Nigeria*, Kuru: NIPSS, 2014. Pp. 237-264.

QUAYE, M. Ghana: Quest for increased female mps - quaye advocates affirmative action. Disponível em: <http://www.peacewomen.org/content/ghana-quest-increased-female-mps-quaye-advocates-affirmative-action>.

RAMTOHUL, R.. Women, gender and politics in Africa. In: YACOB-HALISO, Olajumoke; FALOLA, Toyin (Ed.). *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*. Springer International Publishing, 2019. Pp. 297-313.

ROGERS, Maseray Ngadie. Women, politics and decision-making in Sierra Leone. *Ghana Journal of Development Studies*, v. 8, n. 1, p. 50-71, 2011.

TAWIAH, E.. *Can women achieve equal political representation in Ghana?* Gender Centre for Empowering Development. 2018.

TENU, C.. *Obstacles to gender parity in political representation: The case of Ghanaian parliament*. Dissertação de mestrado. Department of Political Science, Memorial University of Newfoundland. 2019.

TRIPP, Aili Marie. Women and politics in Africa. In: NGOM, Fallou. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 1-29.

TSIKATA, Dzodzi. *Affirmative action and the prospects for gender equality in Ghanaian politics*. Accra: FES, 2009. Disponível em: <https://www.semanticscholar.org>. Acesso em: 6 jun. 2021.