

## **REVIEW OF THE DETERMINANTS OF WOMEN INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS. THE KOGI STATE EXPERIENCE.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Kogi state in Nigeria, particularly in the Kogi East Constituency, is characterized by high poverty and gender disparity. This study is aimed at examining the factors responsible for this development and providing potential solutions for women's involvement in politics. The study employed documentary approach in gathering data and feminist theory as its theoretical base. The research found that poverty, lack of education, systematic underdevelopment, and lack of empowerment are significant contributors to women's low involvement in politics. To address this, the study suggested providing women with civic and technical support, particularly through educational opportunities, to stimulate their interest and engagement in political affairs. Social capital, which is influenced by their capacity for organization and mobilization, should also be considered. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between gender inequality, poverty, and the female gender. It advocated for a well-balanced representation of both genders in the political arena to foster a positive transformation and contribution to women's involvement in politics. The study suggested strong commitment to gender mainstreaming by the government, National Orientation Agency, political parties, the organized business sector, investors, and women organizations in Kogi East. The achievement of these goals can be facilitated by involving more women as stakeholders and policy makers, promoting gender parity, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 in the Kogi East region.*

***Keywords: Gender disparity, Politics, Political Participation, Poverty and Kogi East***

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## INTRODUCTION

In the present-day global context, humanity has undergone substantial development and experienced notable transformations throughout history. The current surge in scholarly interest around politics and gender issues, which has captured the attention of academics, researchers, and social observers, has sparked a fresh worldwide debate on the sociology of developing nations. This emerging wave of study represents a significant development in the field. The topic of why and how individuals develop an interest in power politics as a result of societal development, structure, and functioning is a subject of frequent debate among social scientists. The study of human and social problems and the analysis of functioning or dysfunctional institutions in political relations are recurring and ongoing discussions in this field. However, despite the emergence of these notable achievements and increased awareness, the current state of women's leadership and political engagement at all levels of decision-making globally, with the aim of attaining gender equality, remains significantly distant from the desired outcome. This observation is supported by several organisations including the United Nations, as evidenced by available statistical data. Based on the present trajectory, it is projected that achieving gender equality in the most influential jobs will require an additional 130 years. According to the calculations conducted by the United Nations Women in the year 2022.

The aforementioned discovery necessitates a significant enhancement in the level of women's involvement in politics, both inside Nigeria and on a global scale. According to Yakubu and Eromosele (2022), the Gender Strategy Advancement International Report has highlighted concerns regarding the level of women's political participation in Nigeria. The report reveals that the current percentage of women in elective and appointive positions in the country stands at 6.7%. This figure is notably lower than the global average of 22.5%, the African regional average of 23.4%, and the West African sub-regional average of 15%. The aforementioned worldwide phenomenon has extensive implications throughout the African continent, particularly for the Igala women residing in the Kogi East region.

The current situation is becoming concerning, as recent statistical data indicates that only six nations have achieved a representation of 50% or more of women in their cabinets. Furthermore, women constitute a mere 21% of government ministers, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women (2020). This necessitates a purposeful and mindful collaboration between individuals of both male and female genders in order to establish a more equitable representation of political power worldwide. Therefore, it is

imperative to place greater emphasis, particularly in the current context, on the need of gender mainstreaming as both a framework and approach in political involvement. To promote gender equality and mitigate bias in Africa, it is imperative to use gender mainstreaming as a strategy. This approach involves integrating a gender perspective into the many stages of policy planning, development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, as well as regulatory frameworks and expenditure programmes. It is essential to prioritise amplifying the voices of women, ensuring their messages are conveyed with more clarity and resonance. This will necessitate engaging in active and attentive listening, while approaching the learning process with humility.

The female population, which constitutes a majority of the global population, plays a significant role in fostering societal progress. However, in Nigeria, the political landscape is predominantly influenced by male individuals, leading to a lack of female representation in both political and societal domains. Politics is an academic discipline that focuses on the analysis of power dynamics and the process of resolving conflicts. It revolves around the exercise and distribution of governmental authority, and it is essential for individuals to actively engage in governmental decision-making and exercise their political agency. Political participation involves the proactive involvement of people and collectives in political processes that directly impact their lives. These include traditional forms like voting, running for office, and supporting a political party. Women in Nigeria, as well as other sub-Saharan African countries, face challenges such as discriminatory practices, insufficient financial resources, and societal perceptions that stigmatize female politicians.

Political involvement is recognized as a fundamental political right by the United Nations, and both women and men possess equal entitlements to engage in political activities and decision-making. Active engagement of both genders in exercising their rights to participate can significantly impact decision-making processes, and it is crucial for the state to provide equitable political and decision-making engagement for all genders.

Nigeria's political landscape has historically marginalized women, with a notable increase in women's representation in the national parliament from 3.1% in 2002 to 7.5% in 2008. However, women continue to be underrepresented despite constituting 50% of the nation's population. The Electoral Institute (Abuja) data from the 2007 to 2019 elections shows a significant marginalization of women in Nigerian politics. Out of 7160 candidates, 628 were women, with only one female candidate in the presidential race. In the 2011 presidential election, Sarah Jibril was the sole female candidate. In the House of Representatives, 14 women were elected in

2015, followed by an additional 5 in 2019 Only 48 women were elected in the States Houses of Assembly in 2023, 3 female senators, 7 female ministers out of 43. The patriarchal structure in Nigeria, characterized by male authority and governance, significantly influences women's political interactions. Tribalism, a form of gender-based discrimination, restricts women's participation in political processes and governance. Several factors pose challenges to women's effective participation in politics, including socio-economic and socio-cultural factors, the specific characteristics of Nigerian politics, indigenous factors, religious influences, women's perspectives on politics, the demands associated with political engagement, the risk of violence, funding constraints, and substantial costs associated with elections. Political awareness is essential for promoting gender equality in politics, but it is not an isolated phenomenon.

Gender inequality contributes to the increasing underrepresentation of women in the political sphere within the extractive sector, which may be attributed to long-standing religious and cultural practices. The lack of adequate education and orientation contributes to a systematic cycle where women are forced to endure and accept poverty. The issue of gender mainstreaming and its impact on the feminization of poverty and women's political engagement in Kogi East presents a significant academic study vacuum. This research aims to provide solutions to improve the situation faced by Igala women in Kogi East and contribute to the process of societal transformation.

### **Methods and Materials**

The study employed documentary approach to understand how 35% gender affirmative action contributes to socio-economic and political development of women in Nigeria. The choice of documentary analysis was pertinent because the work is primarily concerned with identifying and selecting relevant literature and evaluating evidence in academic research. Duffy (2005) cited in Avidime and Obi (2020) stated that the documentary analysis approach is dynamic in nature because it can be used as the central or exclusive method of research. Johnson (1984) had earlier explained that documentary analysis is useful in research that focuses on organization policy or evaluating government reports. Hakim (2000) and Elton (2002) viewed documentary analysis as examining information that came into existence during a particular period of study. This study was undertaken in the essence of critical inquiry to bring to the limelight, the contributions that 35% gender affirmative action could bring to socio-economic and political development in Nigeria, in the face of constraining factors to political participation by women.

## FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

### Women's Political Participation during The Colonial Period

African women lost power and authority during colonialism. Britain ruled Nigeria based on its gender ideology of separate spheres for men and women, with women handling domestic matters and men handling economic and political matters. Thus, women lost political power, (Mba, 1982). Thus, Nigeria's constitutional history of women's political inactivity dates back to political and economic colonialism, when women were disenfranchised.

TABLE 1. CONSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN NIGERIA POLITICS

YEAR	CONSTITUTION	SUFFRAGE
1914	Constitution	None
1922	Clifford	Adult males with annual income of \$100
1946	Richards	Adult males with \$50
1951	Macpherson	Adult males who paid their taxes
1954	Lytelton	Adult males + females in east and west
1960	Independence	Adult males + females in east and west Adult males and females

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1951	Macpherson	Adult males who paid their taxes
1954	Lytleton	Adult males +females in east and west
1960	Independence CONSTITUTION	Adult males + females in east and west
1979	Presidential	Adult males and females (18 and above)
1999	Presidential	Adult males and females (18 and above)
2003	Presidential	Adult males and females (18 and above)
2011	Presidential	Adult males and females (18 and above)
2015	Presidential	Adult males and females (18 and above)
2019	Presidential	Adult males and females (18 and above)

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SOURCE: Authors calculations with data from Obi and Ocheja, (2016)

Men started voting in 1922, and women nationwide in 1979, a gap of fifty-seven years. Women's activism led to the founding of a welfare-focused women's association in the 1940s. These groups aimed to influence politics, government, and education. Despite restrictions, women resisted decision-making, leading to the 1929 Aba and 1947-48 Abeokuta women's riots. The Colonial masters excluded women from western education, leading to a different curriculum for boys and girls. This increased men's chances of leadership and higher school status after independence in 1960.

### Women Political Participation in the Post-Colonial Era

Post-independence politics in Nigeria were characterized by acrimonious, ethnic, paternalistic, and personality-based practices, which negatively impacted women's political participation. Women were forced to support ethnic politicians, losing their collective power. Indigenous political leadership in 1960 relegated women to the background, and women were almost invisible in executive bodies. The first female member of the federal parliament was Wuraola Esan in 1960, and in 1961, Margret Ekpo won the Aba urban north constituency election. After independence, Northern Nigerian women were unable to vote or be elected. The second Republic (1979-1983) saw more progress, but the autocratic military regimes advanced women's rights through unconstitutional decrees. The Babangida regime (1985-1993) promoted gender awareness and rights, but the unconstitutionality of the military regimes led to insufficient tangible gains for women. Babangida's transition programme had the most women in politics and governance.

### The 1999 Constitution and the Place of Women in Nigeria's Politics: Issues Arising

The Nigerian Constitution guarantees democratic governance for all citizens, with Section 40 stating that every person is entitled to assemble freely and associate with others, including political parties and trade unions. Section 42(1) prohibits discrimination based on community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion, or political opinion. The Constitution also prohibits all sex discrimination. Section 77 states that every senatorial district or federal constituency must return a member elected to the House of Representatives. The

Constitution does not discriminate against anyone, man or woman, in socio-political terms. However, since democratic governance began in 1999, women have held few public offices, Senate, and state, Houses of Representatives and Assemblies. Nigerian political science scholars attribute this low participation and representation of women to theoretical and ideological reasons, despite the constitution's clear emphasis on gender equality.

### Women and Party Politics in Nigeria's 4<sup>th</sup> Republic

During the Fourth Republic, many political parties supported women, with two of the thirty parties having women as presidential candidates and three other women nominated as vice presidential candidates. However, women faced challenges in 2002-2003 party primaries, with few female politicians participating. The PDP National Assembly primaries in Anambra North Senatorial district were shocking, with inconclusive results and "successful aspirant" supporters joking about casting their votes. Oluremi Adikwu-Bakare, a businesswoman and former gubernatorial candidate, was asked to travel to Akure for clearance before primaries, leading to her leaving the party immediately after. Barrister Nkoyo Toyo, a Federal House of Representative candidate, faced similar issues, like having to take permission from the state governor to run for office. The anti-democratic nature of modern society was evident in the lack of political will and commitment to party principles at all levels of the party, especially with exercising party internal democracy.

### Women in Governance (Representative Government) In Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Even though Nigerian women face a lot of social, economic, and political problems, they have had a lot of "success" in getting women into leadership roles, especially in politics. The years 1999 to 2015 are important to remember. In 1999, for example, women were elected as deputy governors, senators, and honourable members of both the federal and state assemblies. (Anya, 2004:16) summed up the number of women in elected positions in 1999 as follows:

- 3 women out of 109 senators
- 12 women out of 360 House of Representative members
- 12 women out of 990 state House of Assembly members
- 143 women out of 8810 local government councilors
- 9 women out of 774 local government chairmen.

Of course the offices of the president and vice president and 36 state governors were no-go- areas for women in the 1999 election.

### Comparative analysis of the distribution of the 469 legislators at the joint session in the National Assembly by gender 1999-2019

Legislative Session	1999-2003		2003-2007		2007-2011		2011-2015		2015-2019	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	454	96.8	443	94.5	433	92.32	438	93	440	93.82
Female	15	3.2	26	5.5	36	7.68	34	6.6	29	6.18
Total	469	100	469	100	469	100	469	100	469	100

Source: Office of the Clerk of the Senate and House of Representatives, National Assembly Abuja 2008 in NASS Statistical information Vol. 2 no. 1 2008 and NASS Data 2014; National Assembly Gender Strategy 2014; PLAC's compilation.

Predicted composition of male and female legislators in NASS for the years 2015-2031\*

Gender	1999-2003	2003-2007	2007-2011	2011-2015	2015-2019	2019-2023	2023-2027	2027-2031
Male	96.2	94.5	92.19	89.7	87.4	85.07	82.73	80.38
Female	3.2	5.5	7.81	10.2	12.6	14.93	17.27	19.62

Source: NASS Statistical information vol. 2 no.1, 2008, page 48; National Assembly Gender Strategy 2014.

\*Predictions were contained in a 2008 National Assembly Statistical document based on realities at the time. Predictions for the 2011, 2015 & 2019 elections did not manifest. 2023 and 2027 predictions no longer considered realistic in light of dwindling numbers. In absence of clear affirmative action, numbers may actually get worse.

Estimated number of bills directly affecting women presented to NASS from 1999 to 2019 (4th to 8th Assembly)

Item/Session	8th (2015-19)		7th (2011-15)		6th (2007-11)		5th (2003-07)		4th (1999-03)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of bills related to women introduced	49	1.9%	45	3.5%	35	3.57%	7	0.89%	14	2.43%
Number of bills related to women's political participation & elections	7	0.27%	4	0.3%	1	0.7%	1	0.12%	1	0.17%
Number of women related bills passed (by at least one chamber)	6		10		6		3		5	

Source: PLAC's compilation of total number of bills on women is based on information available.

Gender-targeted Bills in Nigeria have faced challenges in passing into law due to various factors, including the nature of the Bill, the influence of its sponsor, legislative interest, and stakeholder engagement. Failures have been attributed to misconceptions, lack of strong political sponsors, insufficient research, and inability to resonate with Members. These Bills also impact different genders, established norms and values, men's political power, and evidence of support from development partners. The bills are often poorly drafted, with weak proposals that do not effectively justify women's representation in the Nigerian electoral process.



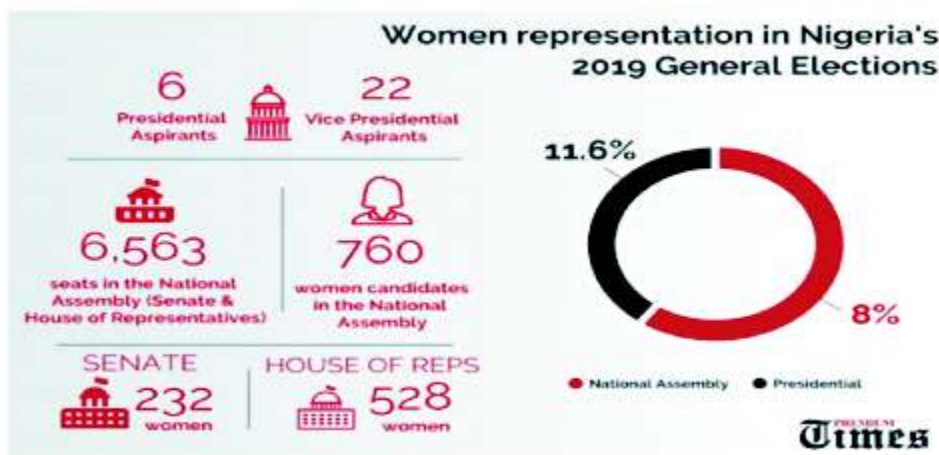
## ANALYSIS: SCORECARD OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA'S 2019 ELECTIONS

The withdrawal of Ezekwesili, the only woman running for president in the 2019 election, has raised questions about the country's ability to truly elect women. Despite being one of six women out of 73 candidates, her candidacy was significant as it rejected gendered stories that portray women as unqualified and unable to compete in politics. This decision demonstrates that women continue to be marginalized in Nigerian electoral processes, both in terms of running for office and reaping the benefits of democracy.

The low level of female participation in Nigeria has many implications for the country's efforts to become more democratic and ensure equal rights for men and women in Africa's largest economy.

Gender issues and women's political and economic empowerment are becoming increasingly important around the world, but Nigeria appears set on remaining at the bottom of the political empowerment ladder for women. Women hold only 5.6% of all elected positions at the national and subnational levels. Mrs. Ezekwesili's abrupt departure disappointed not only her supporters but also those who support equal rights for men and want more women to run for office.

Trends in women's exclusion indicate that some of the gains made by women in recent elections are being reversed. The number of women in elected and appointive positions fell in 2015, and this negative trend has continued. In 2024 Gender and women's issues are often excluded from high-stakes political discussions in Nigeria, which is dominated by concerns about safety, the economy, and corruption. Mrs. Ezekwesili may have made it more difficult for women to be heard by withdrawing from the presidential race.



The current political environment in Nigeria is dominated by men, and women's determination and refusal to give up may eventually force a change in the political environment and reduce the male dominance of politics and power. Despite a record number of women running for office or becoming political candidates, the number of women who win campaigns has remained a subject of debate. Identity politics, causing division and making it easier for women to be left out, is a significant issue. Women are often blamed for their marginalization, but this is partly true. They are social actors, aware of and participating in social, economic, and political processes that shape the state. They are full citizens with the same rights and duties as men and do not like stories that make them out to be victims.

### **Feminization of Poverty**

The feminization of poverty is a trend of increasing inequality in living standards between men and women due to the widening gender gap. This is the experience in Kogi State. This issue is not just limited to income, but also encompasses population shifts over time that favor women in a particular region. Feminization refers to the process of adding more women to an impacted phenomenon for various social, political, cultural, or other causes. Poverty and gender inequality are two morally repugnant phenomena that are combined in the feminization of poverty. Poverty has been argued several times, with the platform for Action of the fourth world conference on women in Beijing (1995) stating that women bear a disproportional burden attempting to manage household consumption and production under conditions of increasing scarcity. Women's poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy, lack of access to economic resources, lack of education and support services, and their minimal participation in the decision-making process. The majority of debates on the feminization of poverty are characterized by the social conceptualization of women, with the method used to compile poverty data encouraging this trend. However, the three international indexes of gender development index, gender empowerment measure, and the human poverty index can be used to measure feminization of poverty.

Both concepts of poverty and feminization must be examined more thoroughly to comprehend the complete process. In Kogi East, women are more prone to vulnerability and poverty than men, working in unstable jobs with poor pay and less likely to have access to education, credit, or landholding rights. They are progressively denied the right to fight against stigma and poverty, and suffer overwhelmingly from the consequences of poverty itself and human rights violations. The socio-economic status of women plays a significant role in enhancing their participation in political

decision-making bodies. The UNIFEM report of 2006 highlights the disproportionate social economic precarity women face relative to men due to gender stereotypes and norms, systemic disparities such as unpaid domestic labor and gender-based violence. This has deepened the disempowered status of women particularly in Kogi State.

### **Gender Inequality and Feminization of Poverty in Kogi East**

The economic challenge of Kogi state is the increasing inequality between women and men, which has led to concerns for all genders, particularly the feminine gender. The concept of "feminization of poverty" has gained popularity in poverty assessments and reduction approaches. However, the relationship between gender and poverty is complex and divisive, and more research is needed to fully understand and operationalize this relationship. A strategy for gender-sensitive poverty alleviation has emerged, focusing on women through pet projects, handouts, and charity or humanitarian platforms. However, poverty indices and incidence still exist among rural dwellers, with farming being the predominant occupation. Gender mainstreaming is emerging as a more nuanced view of poverty and gender inequality, while acknowledging gender differences in poverty experiences. This gender-aware approach to ending poverty is being borne out of this, and gender mainstreaming can be used to improve situations around feminization of poverty.

The fight against poverty is crucial for community and societal development, and a high percentage of poor people can slow development. This study considers gender mainstreaming as a focus of policymaking to improve women's poverty level and participation in politics. Efforts at poverty alleviation and poverty reduction in Kogi state and its local areas must be intensified. Encouraging entrepreneurship and supporting women in business is a midterm intervention that is urgently needed.

### **Gender Mainstreaming and Women in Politics of Kogi East**

Political parties in Nigeria primarily support gender equality but face issues such as undemocratic management, a lack of gender-responsive political culture, hostile practices to women, and technical expertise to incorporate gender issues into party politics. Women often avoid politics due to perceived "dirty games" performed solely by men, family obligations, and childbirth. This apathy is correlated with poverty, as many women are forced to leave the full-time workforce to become heads of households. Gender mainstreaming has the potential to correct gender issues in politics by providing a range of decent opportunities and a network of social services that support families. However, special targeted interventions are still necessary to promote

women's empowerment and gender equality in Kogi East. The concept of gender mainstreaming involves addressing gender quotas for women in communities, provincial assemblies, and the national parliament, examining women's performance in general elections, and focusing on the position and significance of female politicians within their own political parties. The Paris Agreement acknowledges the need to advance gender equality in climate and political change mitigation efforts and encourages a gender-based approach in local and global policies. Gender mainstreaming is a strategic approach to breaking barriers in gender disproportionality and women under representation in Africa, but its absence accounts for the feminization of poverty and low women participation in politics. Mujwahuzi (2017) posits that gender mainstreaming is the process of determining how intended actions affect both women and men at all levels.

### **Theoretical Review (feminism Theory)**

The feminist movement focuses on the demands for full social, economic, and political equality for women. The feminist theory of gender inequality asserts that women are fundamentally valued as human beings but are persistently undervalued by men. Women have crucial responsibilities as spouses, mothers, caregivers, and contributors to society. Social theories, political movements, and moral philosophies within feminism are inspired by or concerned with the experiences of women, particularly regarding the social, political, and economic inequalities they face.

Socialist feminist school of thought gained attention in the 1960s and 1970s, focusing on the connectedness between patriarchy and capitalism. This movement aimed to bring an end to male domination as a key to social justice and other forms of oppression mutually reinforcing imbalance in society. They campaigned for women's freedom as a platform for social and economic fairness for all people.

The feminist idea postulates that gender can impact how individuals represent reality, leading to disparities in the form and substance of their mental processes. This duality is based on one's self-concept, which is an important regulator of ideas, sentiments, and actions. Feminist theory, developed from a wide range of fields, including research from anthropology, sociology, economics, women and gender studies, feminist literary criticism, and philosophy. It focuses on gender politics, power relations, and sexuality, analyzing gender imbalance and increasing women's rights, interests, and concerns while broadly critiquing social interactions.

There have been two powerful waves of movements that have metamorphosed into feminist schools of thought. The first wave, which

began in the 18th century, fought for the freedom of women from degrading and domineering regimes and norms, leading to the release of consciousness-stinging concepts like *The Changing Woman* and *Truth Sojourner's Speech After Arrest for Illegal Voting*. The second wave, which emerged during the civil and social revolution in America, tried to lessen the focus on sex roles and introduced the term gender.

Feminist philosophy draws reference to the relationships between men and women and their various societal positions, emphasizing the unequal links between men and women in society. Feminist theorists encourage attention to the thinking processes, behavior, values, and power in these relationships. However, the bottom line is that women have been oppressed, repressed, and marginalized in society.

### **Findings**

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of gender mainstreaming on the level of women's involvement in political activities within the Kogi East region of Nigeria. The study goal led to the formulation of a null hypothesis, which posits that there is no substantial impact of gender mainstreaming on women's engagement in politics in Kogi East, Nigeria. The study revealed that the implementation of gender mainstreaming initiatives has had a discernible impact on the level of women's involvement in political activities within the Kogi East region. The concept of gender mainstreaming elucidates the disparities observed in the realm of women's political engagement specifically within the context of Kogi East. The region of Kogi East exhibits a discernible correlation between the practise of gender mainstreaming and the level of women's involvement in political activities. The region of Kogi East has a positive correlation between the practise of gender mainstreaming and the level of women's involvement in political activities. The involvement of women in the political sphere within the Kogi East region is expected to undergo a substantial and proportionate transformation due to the implementation of gender mainstreaming initiatives. The level of women's involvement in politics within the Kogi East region is expected to increase in direct correlation with the advancement of gender mainstreaming efforts.

The objective of this study was to investigate the factors influencing women's involvement in political activities in the Kogi East region of Nigeria. The study goal led to the formulation of a null hypothesis, which posits that there are no statistically significant factors influencing women's engagement in politics in the Kogi East region of Nigeria. The study unveiled that socioeconomic considerations have a crucial role in determining women's engagement in politics in the Kogi East region. This statement is in

line with the argument made by Patnaik (2021) on the interplay of socioeconomic factors in shaping the unique political engagement experiences of women. The results highlight the significance of socioeconomic variables, including as experience, knowledge, and education, in comprehending and forecasting the level of women's political engagement in the Kogi East region. The study conducted by Ikhar, Banerjee, Bandhopadhyaya, Tiwari, and Deshmukh (2022) reveals that there is a substantial correlation between women's empowerment and certain demographic factors. Specifically, the findings indicate that individuals who were older, had greater levels of education, belonged to nuclear households, and were married exhibited higher levels of women's empowerment. This study illustrates the impact of socioeconomic conditions on women's political engagement within the context of Kogi East.

The findings of the study indicated a substantial relationship between the provision of technical help and the degree of political involvement among women in Kogi East. The results of the study suggest a positive correlation between the provision of technological support and the level of women's engagement in political activities within the Kogi East region. This implies that the provision of technical support might potentially enhance women's political engagement in the Kogi East region.

The study revealed that there is a substantial relationship between social capital and women's involvement in politics in the Kogi East region. This suggests that the social capital possessed by women in Kogi East is significant and has a direct influence on their engagement in political activities. Women possess robust social networks due to their familial and societal duties, notwithstanding the presence of gender-based obstacles that impede their attainment of economic influence. The concept of women's social capital emerged as a consequence of this phenomenon. This conclusion aligns with the research conducted by Annisa et al. (2020), which demonstrates that social capital has a substantial role in influencing women's engagement in political activities. According to the findings of Ikhar et al. (2022), there is substantial evidence to suggest that social capital has a key role in determining the level of women's empowerment.

The findings of the study indicate that the level of women's political engagement in Kogi East is significantly impacted by their ability to organise and exert power. The organisation of power plays a pivotal role in facilitating transformative processes. The findings indicate that the distribution of power plays a crucial role in determining the level of female participation in politics within the Kogi East region. Women have the potential to use their money in order to get the necessary influence to drive desired changes in the political system, mostly through the utilisation of organisational power. The research

findings revealed a significant positive relationship between the degree of organisational power and the level of women's political engagement in the Kogi East region. The augmentation in organisational capacity is expected to result in a corresponding rise in the level of political engagement among women in the Kogi East region.

Gender equality is achieved when individuals of all genders have an equitable distribution of power and influence, equal opportunities for economic autonomy through employment, entrepreneurship, and fair access to education, enabling them to pursue personal aspirations and contribute to societal objectives. In the eastern region of Kogi State, namely within the three selected local government areas of Ankpa, Idah, and Dekina, our research has revealed a significant gap resulting from poverty and its associated factors, particularly inadequate education. It is imperative to acknowledge the diversity within women's groups. This diversity is characterised by variations in the roles they assume, as well as factors such as cultural background, age, social standing, geographical location (urban or rural), and level of educational achievement.

This study has conducted an examination of the concepts of gender mainstreaming, education, and poverty, specifically focusing on their effects and impact on the limited engagement of women in politics within the Kogi East region. The study further determined that gender disparity has resulted in heightened levels of poverty in the Kogi East region. Empirical evidence has substantiated the major impact of gender mainstreaming on women's engagement in politics within the region of Kogi East. The influence of socio-economic factors, including as education, political orientation, technical and tactical support, access to social capital, and the mobilisation of women into a cohesive political group, is apparent in determining the level of women's engagement in politics in the Kogi East region. The present political environment, established traditions and cultural norms, and the fear of diminishing male power are insufficient elements to hinder women's involvement in politics in Kogi East, when they are decisively addressed by government.

### **Conclusion**

The inquiry into the extent of female political leadership in Nigeria holds significant academic significance. The underrepresentation of women in politics has persisted over an extended period, prompting a heightened awareness of the limited presence of women in the realm of public affairs. However, when considering cultural norms and historical precedents, it becomes evident that women have significant challenges when attempting to enter the realm of politics. It is essential to bear in mind that a considerable

number of women expressed concerns regarding the potential challenges of engaging in political activities, as they feared that such involvement would pose difficulties in fulfilling their familial responsibilities. It is often believed that women tend to refrain from engaging in political activities due to concerns about potential disruptions to their familial dynamics, the potential for raising a generation of entitled individuals, and the perceived lack of time available to fulfil domestic responsibilities. The issues pertaining to thuggery, intimidation, and financial matters are downplayed. The lack of motivation or willingness to engage in any activities is a significant challenge. This is attributed to the excessive amount of sedentary behaviour they must endure. It is recommended that seminars and workshops be organised in urban as well as rural areas, with equal encouragement extended to both genders to participate. This initiative aims to enhance women's political knowledge and foster their active participation in political affairs. Certain individuals of the male gender may require further education and exposure to pertinent information in order to develop a sense of ease and acceptance towards the concept of their female spouses exercising their right to vote. This aspect bears significance as a majority of male respondents in the poll hold the belief that individuals engaged in sex work are involved in political activities, while simultaneously perceiving women who pursue political careers as neglectful homemakers.

Furthermore, it is imperative for governments at all levels to exert diligent efforts in facilitating educational opportunities for young women. Any female individual who has reached the age of eligibility for formal education can be compelled to attend a publicly funded educational institution at no cost. This will ensure that women have equal opportunities as their male counterparts. The exclusion of women from economic and political spheres is a derogatory affront to the principles of free market economics and democratic governance. Women have significant agency in shaping and transforming society due to their inherent qualities, numerical representation, and diverse contributions. Consequently, it is imperative to handle and regard them with heightened caution and reverence. The inclusion of women in a society is crucial for its sustained development in social, economic, and political realms. Despite the positive perception surrounding the increasing presence of women in leadership roles within the nation in recent times, it is important to note that this does not adequately reflect the potential rewards and benefits that women deserve based on their population, capabilities, and contributions to the overall progress of the country. Additionally, the implementation of the 35 percent affirmative action policy, which aims to promote justice and fairness, further emphasises the need to address this disparity. The issue of women's political empowerment in



Nigeria is a matter of concern, since societal obstacles and constraints impede their access to increased political influence. This issue poses a challenge for several stakeholders, including governmental bodies, political factions, national and international development entities, civil society groups, non-governmental organisations, and the broader societal framework. In order to address these issues, it is imperative for various stakeholders such as the government, political parties, national and international development organisations, civil society, and non-governmental organisations to collaborate and cooperate.

However, it is imperative that the allocation of political posts adheres to principles of fairness and is predicated upon a quota system that ensures equitable representation among candidates. This implies that both genders will possess equal opportunities to pursue and hold public office positions. Once more, it is imperative for the Federal Government to establish a regulation mandating equal representation of women and men in public employment. By adopting this approach, it would mitigate the potential for men to engage in discriminatory behaviour towards women. Furthermore, it is imperative that Nigerian politics transcends monetary influences, and it is crucial to foster an environment where women who aspire to participate are empowered to do so without any apprehension or bias. Furthermore, it is imperative that female legislators have access to legal resources in order to effectively combat instances of electoral fraud. It is imperative to enhance the efficacy of the theory of affirmative action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in order to exert significant influence on Nigeria's political landscape and effectively eradicate all forms of gender-based discrimination. Additionally, it is imperative to establish a collaborative network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and grassroots women's organisations. This collective effort will aim to provide support and assistance to women aspiring to pursue political office, while simultaneously advocating for their rights and interests. In addition, the implementation of a support system and the provision of potential role models are deemed necessary. This can be achieved by the identification of women who express interest in pursuing political office, followed by the establishment of mentorship relationships between these individuals and seasoned female politicians. Such mentorship initiatives will aim to support and guide emerging female politicians, facilitating the development of their political competencies and capabilities. Women have the capacity to actively participate in decision-making processes that are characterised by safety, efficacy, and the absence of political violence and harassment. The elimination of male hegemony, a prevailing concept in Nigerian politics, is imperative for the advancement of

Nigerian political landscape and increased female participation. If due consideration is given to the aforementioned recommendations, it is indisputable that the political standing of women in Nigeria would see enhancement, hence endowing them with a comparative edge over males in the 21st century and subsequent eras.

### **Recommendations**

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made that:

- i. The text emphasizes the importance of addressing gender disparities in Kogi East by adopting gender mainstreaming, using gender-sensitive terminology, and ensuring equal participation in decision-making processes. The media's role in facilitating this transition is crucial, as it can help reduce poverty among women.
- ii. Women should actively resist oppression, such as illiteracy, discrimination, abuse, and poverty, and advocate for comprehensive implementation of protocols by Kogi state and local councils. Promoting equitable access to social services by both genders is also recommended.
- iii. Policymakers should enforce gender mainstreaming across all levels, enhancing women's involvement in governance and politics. Civic education and orientation can provide women with the knowledge and understanding necessary to assert their rights. A more inclusive approach that acknowledges the existence of a gender continuum can help work towards gender parity in Kogi state.

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