# Gender, Political Participation and Representation: The Nigeria Story

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*Authors' contributions*

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author NPK designed the study, analyzed the data, partly searched, wrote the literature review and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author KW processed and calculated the raw data, partly searched, wrote the literature review and edited the draft. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## ABSTRACT

**Aims:** This article aims to examines women's political participation and representation in Nigeria. The study employed the 2019s Nigeria general election data with an emphasis on the number of men and women candidates for various seats and posts.
**Study Design:** The study implemented quantitative and qualitative research approach.
**Place and Duration of Study:** The study was held in Nigeria between February and March 2019 within the duration of the General Elections (GE).
**Methodology:** Data dwelled more on the secondary data from the Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) such as Final List of Senatorial Candidates, Final List of Governorship Candidates, Final List of Presidential Candidates, Final List of State House of Assembly Candidates, and Final List of Candidates for House of Representatives followed by interviews.
**Results:** The findings indicate that even though women in Nigeria are politically active, they are

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not considered equal to their men counterparts - a product of patriarchal inclination. Certainly, Nigerian society still subscribes to the senseless connotation of: 'women', what do they know? A common phrase employed even in an ordinary family conversation. Besides, women participants lack financial backup and social support for political positions.

**Conclusion:** Women's low proportion of political representation at the highest levels of politics is a persistent issue in gender stratification in Africa, but paramount in Nigeria. Despite advances in women's educational level and economic participation, the findings in this study have shown that women in Nigeria have little or no significant progress with respect to political representation in the country's political sphere.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*"Women's ability to make an impact on male-dominated institutions will be limited until they are represented in numbers large enough to have a collective voice until they reach a 'critical mass"* [1].

This article examines women's political participation and representation with the 2019s Nigeria general election. The notion of political participation and representation is vivid to any with well-informed political discourse. Those with little or no political circumstantial understanding will either misinterpret them or simply assume anything or many things. Yet, both notions are anything but similar. Essentially, political participation among other things includes voting, campaigning, participation in political rallies, adhering to the political ideology, slogan, using languages or speeches that will influence or sway other people's political views or voting patterns.

Political participation, however, is a basic concept in political science understood differently by scholars and others alike. [2] view it as the actions of private citizens seeking to influence or support government and politics. These writers noted that this is a relatively broad definition since it also includes ceremonial and supports activities [2]. Yet, in broader understanding, [3] concerning Hong Kong, states:

*"Political participation refers to lawful or unlawful activities of support, making demands, debates, and other forms of expression communicated verbally and/or through the media targeted at the People's Republic of China (PRC), Republic of China (ROC) and Hong Kong Governments. Acts of political participation also include political activities that are targeted at private institutions, such as university administrations and business, and that they are designed to pose challenges to existing rules, norms, and practices."*

Political participation can be voluntary or obligatory. In democracies, however, [4] maintains, it is in most cases, 'voluntary'. Thus, in a democracy, one is not obliged to participate either politically or socially. Nonetheless, one of the most important principles of a democracy is the freedom to decide autonomously whether one participates or not.

On the other hand, political representation is making sure there is someone, ensuring your right, voice, demands, ethnicity, religion, or gender is embodied in a political sphere. According to [5],

*"The normative theories of democracy suggest that elections perform two essential functions. First, elections should ensure that governments are accountable for their actions to the citizens who elected them. Second, elections should perform a representative function, by ensuring that the legislature broadly reflects the distribution of opinions within the electorate."*

These writers noted that there is a dynamic relationship between governments and voters. Their study suggested that democracy is based on a process of on-going representation that occurs through retrospective as well as prospective evaluations of government performance. Besides, [6] stressed that an essential feature of political representation is that a mediating assembly is set between the citizenry and political decision making. They observed that representation involves indirect