

## Gender Inequality and Women's Representation in Democratic Governance in Adamawa State

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### Abstract

This paper examines gender inequality and women's representation in democratic governance in Adamawa State. The underrepresentation of women in political leadership in Adamawa State is a significant concern, reflecting broader societal issues of gender inequality. The patriarchal structure prevalent in Nigerian society, including Adamawa, continues to limit women's access to political power and decision-making processes. From 2019 to 2023, the political landscape in Adamawa has shown minimal improvement in women's representation. The objectives of the study are to identify the factors that combined to enforce discrimination against women in the 2019 and 2023 general election in Mubi-North, Yola-North and Numan Local Governments and to assess the impacts of gender disparity on democratic governance and societal progress in Adamawa State. The study adopts Marxist feminism as the theoretical framework. The used purposive sampling techniques while 150 questionnaires were distributed purposively for the study in the three senatorial zone in the state. The study used descriptive research design and chi-square was adopted as the method of data analysis. the study discovered lack of temporary quota system and inclusive, gender sensitive leadership promotes gender inequality, wrong societal mindset towards women participation in democratic governance and religious ideology limiting the roles of women in political participation. The study recommends adoption of quota system for women participation by political parties and waiver of payment of nomination fees by women in the state should be encouraged and all cultural and customary practices which discriminate, subordinate, oppress and hinder women participation in governance in Adamawa state should be abolished.

**Keywords:** Gender Inequality, Women's Representation, Democratic Governance and Adamawa State.

### Introduction

In recent years, there has been a global movement advocating for the adequate representation and participation of women in governmental roles, both in the legislature and executive branches. This movement is founded on the principles of human rights and gender equality, as well as the belief that inclusive growth and general development are enhanced by women's political participation. Equal involvement of women in decision-making at all levels is crucial for achieving equality, democracy, peace, growth, and sustainable development, as it incorporates their experiences and perspectives into the policymaking process (Mlambo & Kapingura, 2019). Furthermore, evidence suggests that greater political empowerment of women is often correlated with improved standards of living and positive developments in education, infrastructure, and health (OECD, 2018). Mavisakalyn (2012) observes that women's presence at decision-making tables is linked to increased spending in these sectors. Their inclusion in politics ensures that decision-making bodies reflect the diversity of society and provide a balanced perspective in designing and implementing policies, thereby fostering an inclusive approach to policymaking and service delivery (OECD, 2014).

Despite these benefits, women in the 21st century continue to encounter significant challenges in public life and service, both locally and globally (Kumar, 2018). Women remain underrepresented in legislative and executive positions worldwide. The United Nations (2019, p.1) states that "while the world has made progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment under the Millennium Development Goals (including equal access to primary education for girls and boys), women and girls continue to face discrimination and violence in all regions.

In accordance with the preceding discussion, Nwankwo (2012) notes that women are still not proportionately represented in positions of authority in public life worldwide. The awareness of gender as a fundamental aspect of everyday life and society has become increasingly widespread. It is crucial to recognize the significant role women play in every society, as they are central to development. Women manage most of the non-monetary economy (such as subsistence agriculture, childbearing, and domestic labour) and play an important role in the monetary economy through trading, wage labour, and employment. As highlighted in the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2019), women's equal participation with men in power and decision-making is a fundamental right and central to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Efforts to enhance women's participation in politics have been promoted through conventions, protocols, and international agreements for gender mainstreaming (Mlambo & Kapingura, 2019). However, these measures have not yet been effective in achieving gender parity in the highest government positions (Morobane, 2014). A significant milestone in the global women's movement was the Seneca Falls Convention held on July 16, 1848, in New York, organized by local female Quakers, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lucretia Mott. The convention demanded equal treatment for men and women, including the right to education and the right to practice any occupational skill (Faulkner, 2011). Therefore, over the years, women have continued to experience neglect and marginalization regarding gender equality, political participation, and representation in Adamawa State. This ongoing issue underscores the necessity of a study aimed at determining the extent of women representation in democratic governance in Adamawa State from 2019 – 2023

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is Marxist feminism. According to Ferguson and Hennessy (2010), Marxist feminism is a branch of feminism that focuses on investigating and explaining the ways in which women are oppressed through systems of capitalism and private property. Marxist feminists argue that women's liberation can only be achieved through a radical restructuring of the current capitalist economy, where much of women's labor is uncompensated.

Influential work by Marx and Engels (1848) laid the foundation for early discourse on the relationship between capitalism and oppression. Marx's (1859) theory and method of study, termed historical materialism, recognize the ways in which economic systems structure society as a whole and influence everyday life and experience. Historical materialism emphasizes the role of the economy in determining the base of society. According to Engels (1884), the shift from feudalism to private ownership of land has significantly affected the status of women. In a system of private ownership, individuals who do not own land or other means of production, Engels argues, are in a situation of enslavement—they must work for the landowner to live within the system. Engels (1884) explains that this transition resulted in the creation of separate public and private spheres and disproportionately assigned access to waged labor to men.

Ferguson and Hennessy (2010) argue that gender oppression is deeply intertwined with class oppression, likening the societal relationships between men and women to those between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. They posit that women's subordination stems from class oppression, perpetuated similarly to racism because it benefits capital and the ruling class by creating divisions between men and women. Vogel (2013) elaborates that under capitalism, two types of labor exist: productive labor, which results in goods or services with monetary value and is compensated, and reproductive labor, which involves unpaid domestic tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and childbearing. Both forms of labor are essential, but access to them varies based on identity.

Women are predominantly assigned to the domestic sphere, where their labor remains uncompensated and unrecognized. This exploitation of women's labor benefits both public and private institutions by providing a cheap means of supporting the workforce. Hartmann (1981) highlights that within the nuclear family, power dynamics dictate that women are responsible for domestic work, freeing other family members from such tasks. Marxist feminists contend that excluding women from productive labor reinforces male dominance in both private and public spheres. They advocate for women's liberation through the dismantling of the capitalist system, which they believe will be achieved via a socialist revolution, leading to improved conditions for women.

Marxist feminism is instrumental in elucidating gender inequality and women's representation in democratic governance in Adamawa State. This theory provides a framework for examining the oppression of women through capitalism and private property ownership. It posits that women's subordination is not due to biological factors but arises from social relations and men's institutionalized control over women, reinforced by patriarchy. The division of labor assigns wage-earning productive work to men, while women are relegated to unpaid reproductive labor. As a result, women are marginalized from the public sector, reserved for men, and confined to domestic roles. These dynamics foster women's financial dependence on men. Furthermore, societal norms dictate that women remain in the private sphere, and their participation in the public sector, such as politics, is often deemed deviant behavior due to its association with violence and its consequences.

### **Empirical Studies**

Enemuo (1999) argues that gender is commonly understood as the culturally defined and socially constructed identities of men and women, which vary across cultures and are subject to change. This implies that gender represents the different and unequal roles, perceptions, and rewards that society assigns to men and women through its cultural norms, leading to socially constructed inequality. Duru (2014) defines gender as "social attributes acquired during socialization, including activities, responsibilities, and needs associated with being male or female." She explains that masculinity and femininity refer to traits considered appropriate for males (e.g., physical strength, aggressiveness) and females (e.g., care, emotionality).

It is crucial to recognize that gender roles are not natural but are socially constructed. Unlike sex, which refers to the physical differences between males and females, gender pertains to psychological, social, and cultural differences. While sex differences are natural and consistent across cultures, gender differences are created and perpetuated by societal traditions and norms. Traditional stereotypes often depict women as submissive and emotional, while men are seen as competent and independent. These stereotypes support a traditional ideology that relegates women to domestic roles while promoting men as providers and authorities (Udegbe, 1998).

Enemuo (1999) reiterates that these gender characterizations are socially constructed and not determined by nature, resulting in women's subordination to men. Nwofia and Emezi (2014) assert that gender as a socio-cultural construct assigns different behaviours and access to power and status to men and women, varying across societies and perpetuating inequality. Gender inequality manifests in both private and public life. Howard (2009) notes that gender inequality and exploitation are prevalent in most societies, but more severe in developing countries. Examples include biased divorce laws, barriers to women's access to commercial credit, the "double day" of work and domestic responsibilities, and restricted opportunities for women in government and well-paid jobs. In Nigeria, these issues exemplify the gender inequality faced by women.

Fab-Ukozor (2007) supports this view, noting that women suffer from various forms of deprivation in education, health, employment, and politics, leading to their marginalization and exposure to violence. This gender gap is evident in all spheres of life and favours men. Governance, according to Atu, Odibo, Uduimoh, and Egbuchulam (2015), is the administration of a state with the objective of effectively and equitably delivering public goods to citizens. They emphasize that good governance is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, equitable, inclusive, and rule-following. Heywood (2007) defines governance more broadly as the coordination of social life, with government being one of the institutions involved. Boeninger (1991) views governance as the good management of society, with the capacity for efficient problem-solving and conflict resolution.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The research design used in this paper is descriptive design which seeks to describe the existing status of gender inequality and women representation in democratic governance in Adamawa state. It helps the researcher to know where variables are obtained and how the objectives could be achieved.

### **Population of the Study**

For the purpose of this study, the population is made up of active women in politics and governance in the three senatorial Districts which consist of Adamawa North, Adamawa Central and Adamawa South.

### **Sample size and Sampling Techniques**

The study will adopt purposive sampling techniques to ascertain the level of gender inequality and women's representation in democratic governance in Adamawa State, precisely the three senatorial zones in the state. Therefore, the sample size used in this paper consists of 30 respondents in Adamawa North, 45 participants in Adamawa Central and 75 respondents in Adamawa South Senatorial District.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The study used primary method of data collection via questionnaires distributed to the respondents purposively for the purpose of the study on gender inequality and women representation on democratic governance in Adamawa State.

### **Administration of the Instrument**

The researcher administered questionnaires in the three senatorial zone reflecting the level of women participation in politics and governance. 30 questionnaires were distributed purposively to the respondents in Adamawa North, 45 in Adamawa Central while 75 were distributed in Adamawa South Senatorial zone with highest level of women participation in politics and

governance in the state compared to the two senatorial zones. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed purposively.

### Method of Data Analysis

The study adopts chi-square analysis. The data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS version 22.

### Result and Discussion

The analysis in table 1 reveals that Lack of political awareness among women in Adamawa State causes gender inequality and lack of women participation in politics in 2019 and 2023 general election, lack of temporary quota systems and inclusive, gender sensitive leadership promote gender inequality in Adamawa State, women in leadership at all levels including at peace negotiation tables and democratic good governance in Adamawa State foster women equality in the State, and funding grassroots organizations that build the capacity of girls and women to participate both individually and collectively in social, political and public life alleviate gender discrimination in Adamawa State is significant at 5% same level ( $p < 0.05$ ) with chi-square value of 113.929, 163.716, 53.149 and 124.851.

This implies that Lack of political awareness among women in Adamawa State causes gender inequality and lack of women participation in politics in 2019 and 2023 general election, lack of temporary quota systems and inclusive, gender sensitive leadership promote gender inequality in Adamawa State, women in leadership at all levels including at peace negotiation tables and democratic good governance in Adamawa State foster women equality in the State, and funding grassroots organizations that build the capacity of girls and women to participate both individually and collectively in social, political and public life alleviate gender discrimination in Adamawa State have negative significant impact on the improvement of women participation in politics in 2019 and 2023 general elections in Adamawa State. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and accepts the alternative hypothesis which state that there is significant improvement on women participation in politics in 2019 and 2023 general elections in Adamawa State.

**Table 1: Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant improvement on women participation in politics in 2019 and 2023 general elections in Adamawa State.

Variables	Chi-Square Value	DF	P-Value
Lack of political awareness among women in Adamawa State causes gender inequality and lack of women participation in politics in 2019 and 2023 general election.	113.929 <sup>a</sup>	4	.000*
Lack of temporary quota systems and inclusive, gender sensitive leadership promote gender inequality in Adamawa State	163.716 <sup>a</sup>	4	.000*
Women in leadership at all levels including at peace negotiation tables and democratic good governance in Adamawa State foster women equality	53.149 <sup>a</sup>	4	.000*
Funding grassroots organizations that build the capacity of girls and women to participate both individually and collectively in social, political and public life alleviate gender discrimination in Adamawa State	124.851 <sup>a</sup>	4	.000*

Source: Computed result, 2024

\* = Significant at 5%

The analysis in table 2 below indicates that religious practices restrict the role of women in democratic governance in Adamawa State, wrong Societal mindset towards women contributes

to women inequality and discrimination in democratic governance in Adamawa State and economic disadvantage is responsible for women failure in democratic governance in Adamawa State is having negative effects of women participation 2019 and 2023 general elections in Adamawa State.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and accepts the alternative hypothesis which state that there are significant impacts of gender disparity on democratic governance and social progress in Adamawa State.

**Table 2: Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There are no significant impacts of gender disparity on democratic governance and social progress in Adamawa State.

Variables	Chi-Square Value	DF	P-Value
Religious practices restrict the role of women in democratic governance in Adamawa State	77.121 <sup>a</sup>	4	.000*
Wrong Societal mindset towards women contributes to women inequality and discrimination in democratic governance in Adamawa State	110.525 <sup>a</sup>	4	.000*
Economic disadvantage is responsible for women failure in democratic governance in Adamawa State	110.028 <sup>a</sup>	4	.000*

Source: Computed result, 2024

\* = Significant at 5%

### Findings

The study discovered the followings as the major findings of the study thus:

- i. Lack of temporary quota systems and inclusive, gender sensitive leadership promote gender inequality in Adamawa State.
- ii. Religious practices restrict the role of women in democratic governance in Adamawa State
- iii. Wrong Societal mindset towards women contributes to women inequality and discrimination in democratic governance in Adamawa State
- iv. Economic disadvantage is responsible for women failure in democratic governance and participation in Adamawa State

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The study is based on the global agitation and attention to the role or absence thereof, of women in politics as a way of human right, gender equality, inclusive growth and general development. It attempts to assess the extent of women's political participation and representation in democratic governance in Adamawa State, and to identify the factors hindering their political involvement. The findings indicate a significant gender disparity in Adamawa politics, with women still not actively participating in politics compared to their male counterparts.

The study recommends the following:

- i. Adoption of quota system for women participation by political parties and waiver of payment of nomination fees by women in the state should be encouraged.
- ii. Government should partner with women's movements and civil society to embark on aggressive awareness and enlightenment campaign towards changing societal perception that women are inferior to men.
- iii. There is need for legal backing to make the 35% Affirmative Action binding at all levels of governance to enhance women political participation
- iv. Cultural and customary practices which discriminate, subordinate, oppress and hinder women participation in governance in Adamawa state should be abolished

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