

Governance and Women in Politics: A Case Study of Kogi State, Nigeria

Aisha Sani¹, *Michael E. Ibanga²

¹Department of International Relations and Diplomatic Studies, Ave Maria University, Nigeria

²Department of Political Science and Diplomacy, Veritas University, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The incessant low levels of women's participation in leadership is often attributed primarily to patriarchal dominance. In developing countries like Nigeria, this aspect of the social system in which the woman's role and status are relatively recognized to be of less importance to those of a man across political, social, and economic life affects the ability of women to ascend governance positions. This study investigates the involvement and participation of women in governance in Nigeria, using Kogi State as a case study. The study is anchored on the Feminist Theory, which refers to public support and belief in equal rights for women on the grounds of gender equality. Four research questions were formulated for the study. A quantitative method was adopted for the study using questionnaires. The data were analyzed using simple percentage, frequency distribution table, mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed, among others, that the current level of women's representation in governance in Kogi State has not been effective overtime, and that gender roles significantly influence women's representation in Kogi State. The study concludes that women's participation in governance has positive implications for promoting gender equality, inclusive policymaking and improved social and development outcomes. Increasing women's representation in governance is an important requirement for sustainable development in Kogi State and Nigeria as a whole. The study therefore recommends awareness campaigns and advocacy programmes, as well as implementation of available laws by governments, stakeholders and political parties that will be effective in promoting women's participation in governance in Kogi State.

Keywords: Women. Governance. Politics. Kogi State. Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, Nigeria has struggled to achieve meaningful representation of women in politics. However, despite constitutional guarantees of equality, women remain underrepresented in governance structures, with significant implications for policy-making and development (Okeke-Ihejirika, 2018). The underrepresentation of women in politics is a global issue, but it is particularly pronounced in Nigeria, where cultural, social, and institutional barriers hinder women's participation (Agbiji & Omede, 2019). For instance, the Nigeria 2023 Female Candidacy Analysis, EU-SDGN II (2023) argues that there are 68 women out of the current 1,543 elected government officials, putting women's representation in Nigeria at 4.43% nationally. This data includes elections into offices such as those of the President, Vice President, Governors, Deputy Governors, National Assembly members and State Houses of Assembly members. From this data, it is evident that Nigeria still lags far behind in its gender parity obligations, especially in the sphere of politics and governance. Thus, the United Nations Beijing Declaration for Women on Political Participation emphasizes the need for inclusive governance and equal opportunities for women (United Nations 1995). Nigeria, as a signatory to this declaration, has a commitment to promote women's participation in politics and governance. However, the country's progress in this area has been slow, and more needs to be done to address the barriers facing women in politics.

The importance of women's representation in governance cannot be overstated. Studies have shown that women's participation in politics leads to more inclusive and responsive governance, with policies that address the needs of women, children, and marginalized communities (Bauer & Okeke-Uzodike, 2018). In Nigeria, women's representation in governance can help address pressing issues such as maternal mortality, education, and economic empowerment, as well as have a positive impact on policy outcomes, particularly in areas like health, education, and economic development (World Bank 2020).

The underrepresentation of women in governance and politics is a persistent challenge in Nigeria, particularly in Kogi State, despite constitutional guarantees of equality and efforts to promote gender inclusivity. This underrepresentation has significant implications for the state's development, democracy, and human rights. The problem is further compounded by various socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors that limit women's participation in politics and governance. These factors include patriarchal norms, lack of access to resources and opportunities, inadequate representation in political parties, and limited support structures for women in politics.

In Kogi State, women's participation in governance can help address the state's development challenges, including poverty, inequality, and lack of access to basic services. This is because women's participation in governance is crucial for promoting inclusive decision-making and addressing the unique needs of women and girls. Although women's participation in governance is influenced by a range of factors, including education, economic empowerment, and social support (Okeke-Ihejirika, 2018), cultural and traditional norms, traditional leaders and institutions play a significant role in shaping women's roles in society, and they can either support or hinder women's participation in governance (Agbiji & Omede, 2019). Therefore, any efforts to promote women's participation in governance in Kogi State must engage with traditional leaders and institutions. However, Studies suggest that women in Kogi State face significant challenges in accessing political power, including limited access to education, economic opportunities, and social networks (Ojo, 2020). These challenges are compounded by cultural and traditional norms that often restrict women's roles in society.

Hence, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of research on women's participation in Nigerian politics, with a specific focus on Kogi State. Therefore, the findings of this study will have implications for policy-makers, advocacy groups, and women's organizations seeking to promote gender equality and inclusive governance in Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. What is the current state of women's representation in governance in Kogi State, Nigeria?
- ii. How do cultural, social, and institutional factors influence women's representation in Kogi State politics?
- iii. What strategies and interventions can be employed to increase women's Participation and representation in governance in Kogi State?
- iv. What impact does women's participation in governance have on policymaking and development outcomes in Kogi State?

LITERATURE REVIEW

State of Women's Representation in Governance

The global statistics on the status of women in leadership and governance is alarming. Globally, there are only 31 countries where 34 women serve as Heads of State or Heads of Government as at 1st January 2023. Only 19 countries have a female as Head of Government, and another 17 nations have a female Head of State - two leaders hold the positions of both heads of state and heads of government (UN Women, 2023a). Women represent nearly 29 percent of Cabinet members heading ministries, leading a policy area with common portfolios as Family and Children Affairs, Women and Gender Equality, Social Protection and Social Security,

Social inclusion and Development, and Indigenous and Minority Affairs. In such a situation, gender balancing in the highest positions of power will be difficult to attain as it would take another 130 years to achieve (UN Women, 2023a).

Data from 136 countries indicate that women constitute 34% (nearly 3 million) of the elected members in local deliberative bodies. Only 20 countries have more than 40% women in local government and only two countries have reached 50%. There exists regional variations for women's representation in local deliberative bodies. As of January 2022, Western Asia and Northern Africa, 18%; Sub-Saharan Africa, 25%; Latin America and the Caribbean, 25%; Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, 28%; Oceania, 32%; Europe and Northern America, 36%; and Central and Southern Asia, 41% per cent (UN Women, 2023b).

In National parliaments, women make up 32% of parliamentarians in Northern America and Europe, and hold 36% of parliamentary seats in Latin America and the Caribbean. In Sub-Saharan Africa, there are 26% of women legislators followed by Eastern and South-Eastern Asia with 22%. Oceania has 20%, Western Asia and Northern Africa have 18%, and Central and Southern Asia have 19% of women Members of Parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023). Only six (6) countries have 50% or more women in parliament in single or lower legislative Houses - Cuba (53%), Rwanda (61%), Nicaragua (52%), New Zealand (50%), Mexico (50%), and the United Arab Emirates (50%). Furthermore, 23 countries have surpassed or reached 40%, including 6 countries in Africa, 13 countries in Europe, 1 country in Asia, and 3 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (Inter-parliamentary Union, 2023).

Arguably, since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, women representation in political leadership has remained less than ten percent. Results from previous elections indicate a decimal number of women emerging victorious in electoral contests, compared to men. Although Nigerian women participate in voting and other political activities, such as organizing party rallies, these activities do not reflect their representation in strategic public offices, nor does it improve their chances of vying for office or attaining leadership positions (EU-SDGN II, 2023).

However, despite the 1979 and 1999 constitutions underscoring the equality of Nigerian citizens, the country has consistently had one of the lowest representation of women in politics in Africa and globally. As of 2021, Nigerian women accounted for 49.5% (105.57 million) of over 213.4 million people, which is nearly half of the Nigerian population (Statista, 2022). Nigerian women do not just constitute half of the Nation's population, they have equally been active contributors to the country's development since independence, occupying lead position as entrepreneurs and playing pivotal roles within families, communities, and the society at large. Despite this, women remain severely underrepresented in the country's political and decision-making positions. (EU-SDGN II, 2023)

Inclusive Governance

The term governance is widely used in describing legitimate power that guides society's functions taking into cognizance who makes decisions, those with the authority to act on behalf of government, and those accountable for how government and its subjects perform and behave. Governance also looks at the process through which actions, norms and rules are programmed, regulated, held accountable and sustained. Governance that is good is characterized with effectiveness, efficiency participation, and consensus orientation, rule of law, inclusiveness, equity, transparency, and accountability. Hence, governance is inclusive when it engages and serves all people effectively and takes into cognizance gender and other facets of personal identity, as well as when policies, institutions, services, and processes are accountable, accessible, and responsive to the entire society. To foster governance that is inclusive, it is essential to advance democratic values, including peaceful pluralism and respect for human rights, diversity, and equality before the law (Canada, 2023).

Inclusive governance manifests in so many ways including stressing on governance principles such as transparency, participation, and accountability; and for authorities to establish constructive state-society relations (social contract), and emphasize on the involvement of citizens and civil society in decision-making (Abdullahi & Gana, 2017; European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM, 2021).

Governance is largely about the kind of society that people want to create. It is about how power is exercised and resources are allocated among different groups within society. (Canada, 2023). In many countries, women's rights are limited, not promoted or protected, excluding women from economic and political life. The weak enforcement of women's rights around the world is a serious obstacle to sustainable development. (Canada, 2023).

Prospects of Women's Participation in Governance

The role women play in the growth of rural and urban communities has expanded exponentially in recent decades, with women taking up leading roles in basic sectors as agriculture, provisions, cosmetics, fashion design and more roles in medical, engineering, and constructions, among others. For instance, women comprise 43% of the global agricultural labour force, and even rising to 70% in some countries. Taking Africa as an example, 80% of the agricultural production come from small farmers, most of whom are rural women. Yet, it is a widely acceptable phenomenon that agriculture can be the engine of growth and poverty reduction in developing nations (Global Volunteers, 2023). If women can play such significant roles in agriculture, then they can do the same in a nation's governance.

Increased recognition of women's issues in public policy can only be achieved when adequate representation is given to women in local, regional and national governance. Over the years, many development commentators shared their experience about the impact of women in governance and societal development, and the outcomes have revealed key roles and impacts through addressing critical challenges affecting the society across education, healthcare, water management, and domestic violence (Global Volunteers, 2023). Evidence from Africa reveal that having more women as part of peace building and conflict resolution efforts significantly contributes to lasting and sustainable peace. Women naturally pay closer attention to community and people's needs, and are inclined towards collaborative solutions and conflict prevention (Asuako, 2020). This means that the time to encourage more women is now in order to have more women in decision making and governance cycles.

With more women, there would be prioritization of policies that would improve lives for everyone including social justice, quality education, and healthcare service delivery. Women in leadership are also considered to adopt more empathetic and consensus building leadership styles that are key to inclusive national progress. Women's parliamentary presence could also have a role model effect. A study underscored the importance of women role-models for individuals of all genders to normalize "the idea and practice of women holding power" (O'Neil et al, 2015).

Challenges to Women's Participation in Governance

There are numerous barriers to address in order to enhance women's participation in decision-making. The incessant low levels of women's participation in leadership is often attributed primarily to patriarchal dominance. This aspect of the social system in developing countries which the woman's role and status are relatively recognized to be of less importance to those of a man across political, social, economic life is affecting the ability of women to ascend governance positions. Customs, laws and even religious practices have also been used to justify and perpetuate these differential roles to the extent that some women themselves seem to have accepted and internalized them. Other factors include limited knowledge and prioritization of Gender Equality in the leadership or governance architecture, increasing cost of political participation, and decreasing advocacy by gender advocates and women led groups due to poor financing and limited resources (Asuako, 2020).

Part of the general beliefs that seem to have a consensus in less developed communities and reinforce the acceptance of the responsibilities and behaviours for women and men as true are firmly situated within the structuration of fundamentally internalized social and cultural values. It is propounded within the contours of an 'essentialist framing' that those ascribing to traditional gender role beliefs hold, on the one hand, that a man's role entails providing his family with financial support as its sole breadwinner; and on the other hand, that a woman's role is limited to that of a home caretaker (Corrigal & Konrad, 2007; Korir & Amunga, 2021).

The participation of women in governance is not just a right, but fundamental in achieving equitable and sustainable development. In democratic societies, it is pertinent that every aspect of society is equally represented in governance structure. Having both women and men involved in governance broadens perspectives, reduces conflicts, increases creativity and innovation, improves the process of decision-making, and diversifies the pool of talents and competences. Indeed, the participation of women has immeasurable benefits not only to fellow women but to the society as a whole. At the moment, the levels of women participation is generally low because of factors such as cultural and religious norms, corrupt and patronage-based political systems, lower levels of education among the women, poor women and inclusion-centred legislations, lower capital and resources in women's disposal, and decreasing deliberate efforts towards enhancing women empowerment through politics and governance. "When women are empowered and can claim their rights and access to land, leadership, opportunities and choices; economies grow, food security is enhanced and prospects are improved for current and future generations." Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women.

However, patriarchal bias has confined women to the peripheries of leadership, where a woman who ventures into governance contest is more likely to receive a backlash or, in the worst-case scenario, even assaulted physically. Married women are the most disadvantaged in such a manner as many of them interested in vying for political positions are forced to choose between the leadership or families due to the coercive nature of their husbands, who hold that women ought not to run for these positions in the first place (Owuor, 2016; Ringera, 2017). Ringera (2017) opined that it is probably most practical that insufficient funding and capital for women hinders their governance ambitions. Unlike male counterparts, numerous women that are interested in political seats are precluded from accessing the same sources of funding as they find themselves bereft of overt financial support either from influential persons, the established systems, or from businesspersons (Biegon, 2016; Ringera, 2017). There is further evidence of men ganging up against women running for the same seats as them by meting violence to intimidate them. Women facing formidable opposition from influential male candidates have had to seek protection in subsequent elections because of incessant threats (Anyango et al., 2018).

Gender equality is an important point of all modern women's rights movements or associations across the world. Starting with every single struggle for women's political, legal, social, and economic rights since the early 19th century, the movement for the freedom and liberation of women has hit an extreme height. The United Nations General Assembly in 1979 adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and this came into reality when a treaty was signed on September 3rd, 1981 (UN SDG resource document, 2015). The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015. The United Nations' seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out clear visions, principles, and commitments to a proper and more sustainable world for all. Gender equality which is the fifth goal of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed to end all forms of discrimination against females and empower them, implementing policies and laws that eliminate any forms of ferocious or violent attack against all women and girls in the private and public domain, including sexual abuse, exploitation, and human trafficking, as well as putting an end to harmful practices like; child labor, early and forced marriage, female genital mutation, and promoting social protection policies for the female gender among others (UN SDG resource document, 2015).

The concept is to ensure that women take full and active participation and have equal opportunities for leadership roles at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public areas of society. All genders should have equivalent rights and opportunities to participate fully in any aspects desired and at all stages of political processes. Political participation is not only about the right to vote, it is also about the right to power sharing, decision-making, and policy formulation and implementation at all levels of governance (UNICEF, 2022).

Historical Overview of Women and Political Participation in Nigeria

Women's participation in politics and the series of their engagement in election processes and activities is an essential marker of the maturity and efficacy of democracy. The pre-colonial era where cultural values were respected; was also characterized by ignorance and deprivation. Men were considered superior and the various

existing traditional and customary beliefs and practices relegated women to the background in society (Sule & Haour, 2014). Women suffer different discrimination, exploitation, and rejection because they were considered weak-hearted and moved by what they see; they were regarded as second-class members of society, but that does not prevent them from playing instrumental roles in the progress of the societies. They played prominent roles in politics before the arrival of the British government and Islam; for example, Moremi of Ile-Ife, Idia and Emotan of Benin and Queen Amina of Zaria, (Kinni, 2015).

During the colonial era, society did not see the female gender as important but as inferior to the male gender. Colonialism disrupted the diversity balance which had characterized pre-colonial African states; they deliberately created different classes in their colonial African states (Adenuga, 2022). But the increasing discrimination and consistent exploitation of women in Nigeria birthed the emergence of female pressure groups such as Lagos Market Women's Association (LMWA) in the 1920s, Nigerian Women's Party (NWP) in 1944 Women Movement in Nigeria (WMN) in 1952, Federation of Nigerian Women Societies (FNWS) in 1953 and National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS) in 1959. Women felt the need to defend themselves, they did not want to fold their arms anymore or to remain stagnant and relegated to the background in the society (Dagunduro & Adenugba, 2020). Prominent women like Mrs. Charlotte Obasa, the late Mrs. Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti, Mrs. Margaret Ekpo, Mrs. Janet Mokelu, Hajiya Sawaba Gambo etc., helped in liberating the women and in mobilizing support for women politically. Although women were not fully recognized in politics, there was the formation of different political parties and there was no role for women at that time because they possessed little or no functional relevance in politics (Ogunsheye, 2021).

The post-colonial era awakened the female gender to the need to participate in politics and decision-making processes of the country. This political awakening can be attributed to the restoration of the franchise to women in some regions of the country, although women's participation was far from satisfactory, they began to show their competencies and abilities. The 1979 constitution made provisions and guaranteed women's rights and forbade any form of gender discrimination. Unfortunately, some socio-cultural factors and colonial influences still prevailed and affected the level of women's participation in politics (Rojas, 1994). Mrs. Wuraola Esan represented the western region and the likes of Mrs. Margaret Ekpo and later Mrs. Janet Mokelu represented the eastern region in parliament (Tribuneonline, 2019). Some other women in politics included Mrs. Janet Akinmade, Mrs. Nike Oyagbola, Alhaja Latifat Okunu, Mrs. Pamela Saduki, Mrs. Cecilia Ekpenyong, Mrs. Onikepo Akande, and Dr. Laraba G. Abdullahi in 1998 as the minister of women affairs (Salami, 2014), among others.

In contemporary times, especially when the country returned to civilian rule in 1999, the number of women increased when it comes to political participation but it was still obvious that the female gender practically is still lagging behind and has a long way to go in accomplishing equality when it comes to politics and other aspects alongside the male gender. Since the beginning of Nigeria's third republic, in 1999, women accounted for only 1.82% (28) of the 1,533 elective offices (excluding the local government offices); if the councillorships and local governments are added, the proportion reduces to 1.62% (SB Mintel, 2023). Women's representation further increased to 4.2% in 2003 and 6.4% in 2011, before declining in the last two elections to its current level, which is below the global average of 22.5% and regional average of 23.4% in Africa. Presently, only 8 (7.3%) women out of 109 are serving as Senators and 13 (3.6%) out of 360 elected members in the House of Representatives in Nigeria's National Assembly are women (EU-SDGN II, 2023).

Furthermore, an analysis of the list of candidates from previous elections, the number of women occupying key governance positions in Nigeria, and the 2023 General Elections candidates list published by INEC, paints an unimpressive picture of the country's drive towards achieving gender parity in politics and governance, thereby not conforming to ratified international, regional, and national laws/conventions (EU-SDGN II, 2023). Under the international standard, both the male and female should have equal rights and opportunities when participating in politics, governance, and decision-making processes that involve their lives. Therefore, promoting women's participation in politics is one of the core values of the sustainable development goals targeted on gender equalities (Olajubu, 2022).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs the Feminist Theory to analyze women's representation in governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The theory originated from Plato who identified women's "natural capacities that are equal to that of men to govern and defend ancient Greece" (History.com, 2022). Other major proponents include Christine de Pizan, Margaret Cavendish, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Abigail Adams (History.com, 2022). Feminism refers to public support and belief in equal rights for women on the grounds of gender equality (Stanford Encyclopedia of Education, 2022; History.com Editors, 2022). The quest for women's rights was categorized into waves. The first was the clamour for the right to vote by women. The second wave of struggle was the fight for equal opportunities for women in education, at home, and at work. The third wave identified the need to end discrimination against racism, religious minorities, and immigrants (History.com, 2022; Pasque & Wimmer, 2021).

However, Jones and Budig (2008) identified varieties of feminism including: Liberal feminism; positing that women are oppressed due to lack of equal legal, socio-economic, and political opportunities. The liberal feminists advocate for equal rights for men and women in education, political participation, and the workplace. Another variety is radical feminism which argues for the oppression of women in sexual matters. This group advocates against violent control of the bodies of women through objects such as the culture of patriarchy and religious beliefs in men's superiority over women. Another group is the Marxist and Socialist feminism which are against the exploitation of women through family duties that attract no pay and low-cadre jobs with low pay. They advocate for restructuring the responsibilities within the family, opportunities for women to engage in education, and better economic and political opportunities for women.

Feminist theory, liberal feminism, is relevant to this study because of its specific relevance to political participation. Political participation covers participation in campaigns, voting, contesting for positions, and being part of the decision-making process. The low representation of women in governance, among other reasons, has been attributed to the relegation of women by cultural practices/patriarchy, religious beliefs, and discrimination by men. The oppression of women in governance has relegated women to clappers, campaign singers, and mere voters without needed access to political positions where policies affecting them can be influenced.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted the survey design method. The design method was deemed most appropriate because it deals with a large population. Although, it was difficult to study the entire population, but a representative sample was drawn to generalize the population under study.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised residents of Kogi State, Nigeria. This research specifically targeted youths, civil society members, and other adult women residents of four LGAs of Kogi who have some form of knowledge about politics and issues surrounding governance, namely, Kogi, Lokoja, Ajaokuta and Okene Local Government Areas.

Sample Size

A sample size of 200 respondents was determined for the study. In selecting the sample, efforts were made to ensure representation across different areas and demographic groups within the selected LGAs of Kogi State. Out of the 200 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 187 representing 93.5% were returned and found fit for analysis.

Sampling Techniques

This study adopts a purposive and convenience sampling technique in selecting respondents. These techniques were chosen due to their suitability for studies that seek the opinions and perceptions of individuals with knowledge or experience relevant to the subject matter - in this case, governance and participation of women in politics.

Therefore, the convenience sampling technique was employed to reach participants based on their availability and willingness to respond. This method enabled the researchers to collect relevant data from easily accessible respondents across different locations within the state, including markets, campuses, and public institutions. By combining purposive and convenience sampling, the study ensures that the data collected reflects both relevance and feasibility, while still offering insight into how residents of Kogi State.

Method of Data Collection

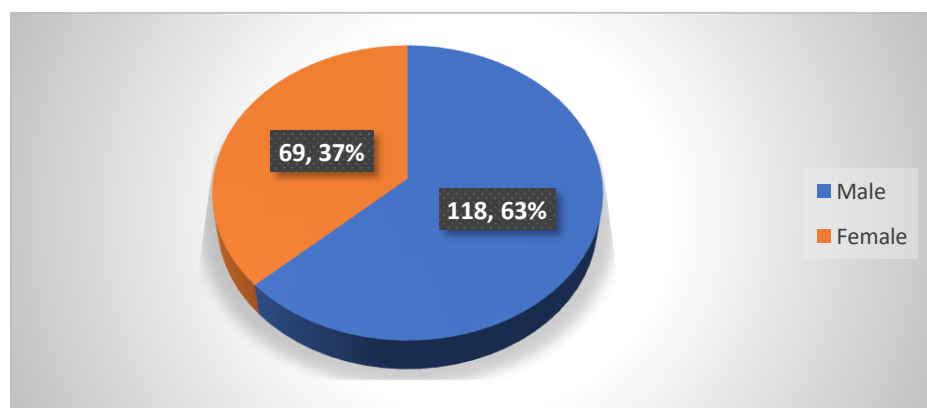
In collecting the data, the questionnaire method was employed as part of the primary data. The questionnaire was administered to both the literate and non-literate respondents. Care was taken to explain the instructions on how to complete the items on the questionnaire. This was necessary to reduce to the barest minimum the problem of multiple ticking of responses which could render such items invalid during collation. The questions were read out to the non-literate respondents, and their responses were recorded in the appropriate spaces provided in the questionnaire, while the literate respondents personally completed it.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Analysis of Demographic Data

Gender

The distribution of respondents by gender as presented in Figure 1 shows that 118 (63%) of the respondents who participated in the study are males while the remaining 69(37%) are females. This implies that more males participated in the study compared to their female counterparts.



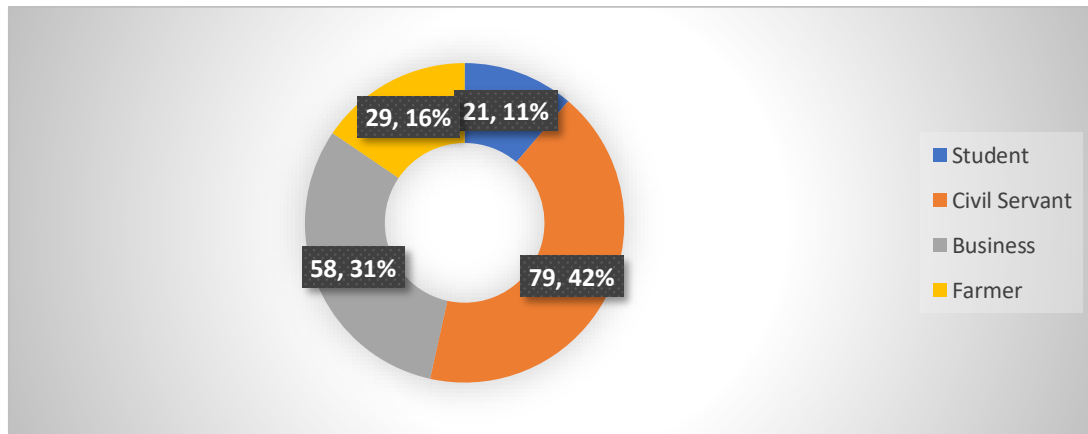
Field Research, 2025

Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Occupation

Respondents in the study area are involved in one form of occupation or another. These occupations include; students, civil servants, businessmen/women and farmers. Figure 3 reveals that 79 (42%) of the respondents are civil servants with 21 (11%) who are students. From the Figure, it can be deduced that more civil servants participated in the study. This could be attributed to the fact that urban migration shapes income and occupation choices, particularly as civil servant positions are being perceived as more stable and financially secure compared to other rural occupations like farming or informal business activities.

Figure 2: Occupation of Respondents



Field Research, 2025

Answering Research Questions

What is the current state of women's representation in governance in Kogi State, Nigeria?

Response on the current state of women’s representation in governance in Kogi State as obtained from the questionnaire were used to answer the research question as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Current State of Women’s Representation in Governance in Kogi State

/N	Current State of Women’s Representation in Governance	Frequency	Percentage
	Effectiveness of women in leadership positions in Kogi State	23	12.3
	Women's participation in government has improved in Kogi state over the years	26	13.9
	Support for women's empowerment initiatives in Kogi State	15	8.0
	Women in Kogi State face significant barriers to participating in governance	41	21.9
	The current level of women's representation in governance in Kogi State has not been effective overtime	82	43.9
	Total	187	100.0

Field Research, 2025

Table 1 shows the current state of women’s representation in governance in Kogi State. The Table revealed that 82 (43.9%) of the respondents indicated that that the current level of women’s representation in governance in Kogi State has not been effective overtime. On the other hand, 15 (8.0%) of the respondents indicated that Kogi State support women's empowerment initiatives in Kogi. From the Table, it can be deduced that women’s representation in governance in Kogi State has not been effective as this item attracted the highest value of over 40% response.

How do cultural, social, and institutional factors influence women's representation in Kogi State politics?

Responses obtained from the questionnaire on how cultural, social and institutional factors influence women’s representation in Kogi State politics were used to answer research question two as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Influence of Cultural, Social and Institutional Factors on Women’s Representation in Kogi State Politics

/N	Factors	Fr equency	Per centage
.	Cultural norms and values in Kogi State affect women's participation in politics	19	10.2
.	Gender roles in Kogi State limit women's opportunities for political participation	97	51.9
.	Social support for women in politics impact their representation in Kogi State	14	7.5
.	Social networks and relationships play a significant role in promoting women's political participation in Kogi State	36	19.3
.	Institutional policies and practices in Kogi State affect women's representation in politics	21	11.2
	Total	187	100.0

Field Research, 2025

Table 2 reveals that gender roles in Kogi State limit women’s opportunities for political participation as indicated by 97 (51.9%) response. On the other hand, social support for women in politics is a factor with the least influence on women representation in Kogi State as indicated by 14 (7.5%) response. It is worthy of note to say that gender roles significantly influence women’s representation in Kogi State as this item attracted the highest response of over 50%. By implication, their gender negatively affects their participation in politics as their male counterparts feel women are not supposed to the participating in the State’s politics.

What strategies and interventions can be employed to increase women’s Participation and representation in governance in Kogi State?

The strategies and interventions that can be employed to increase women’s participation in representation in governance in Kogi State are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Strategies and Interventions to Increase Women’s Participation and Representation in Governance in Kogi State

/N	Strategies and Interventions	Fr equency	Per centage
.	Effective would training and capacity-building programs be in increasing women's participation in governance in Kogi State	32	17.1

	Affirmative action policies (e.g., quotas) be an effective strategy for increasing women's representation in governance in Kogi State	29	5	15.
	Mentorship and networking for women in politics	18		9.6
	Awareness campaigns and advocacy programs be effective in promoting women's participation in governance in Kogi State	67	8	35.
	Financial support for women candidates in Kogi State's governance	41	9	21.
	Total	7	18	10
			0.0	

Field Research, 2025

Strategies and interventions to increase women’s participation and representation in governance in Kogi State as presented in Table 3 reveals that 67 (35.8%) of the respondents indicated that awareness campaigns and advocacy programs will be effective in promoting women’s participation in governance in Kogi State. Conversely, 18 (9.6%) of the respondents indicated that mentorship and networking for women in politics is the least amongst the strategies and interventions towards increasing women’s participation and representation in governance in Kogi State. It can therefore be concluded that the major strategy and intervention towards increasing women’s participation and representation in governance is via awareness campaigns and advocacy programs.

What impact does women's participation in governance have on policymaking and development outcomes in Kogi State?

Impact women’s participation in governance have on policymaking and development outcomes in Kogi State is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Impact of Women’s Participation in Governance on Policymaking and Development Outcomes

/N	Impact of Women’s Participation	Fre quency	Per centage
	Women in governance influence policy decisions in Kogi State	19	2 10.
	Women's perspectives in governance lead to more inclusive policy-making	48	7 25.
	Women's participation in governance affects the development of social services (e.g., healthcare, education)	33	6 17.
	Women's participation in governance lead to improved economic development outcomes	14	7.5
	Women in governance contribute to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment	73	0 39.
	Total	187	.0 100

Field Research, 2025

The participation of women in governance has several impacts towards policymaking and development. Table 4 reveals that 73 (39.0%) of the respondents indicated that women in governance contribute to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment while 14 (7.5%) of the respondents indicated that women's participation in governance lead to improved economic development outcomes. From the foregoing, it is evident that majority of the respondents indicated that women in governance contribute to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Kogi State, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study provide important insights into the level of women's representation in governance in Kogi State, Nigeria, as well as the factors influencing their participation and the potential impact of increased representation. This is presented in the order of the research questions.

State of Women's Representation in Governance in Kogi State

The findings of this study revealed that the majority of respondents (43.9%) believe that the current level of women's representation in governance in Kogi State has not been effective over time. This suggests that despite various national and international commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment, women remain underrepresented in political leadership and decision-making structures within the state. This finding aligns with previous studies which argue that women's participation in Nigerian politics remains relatively low, at about ten percent (EU-SDGN II, 2023), due to systemic barriers and societal norms that favour male leadership, corroborating the positions of Okeke-Ihejirika (2018), and Agbiji & Omede (2019).

Although some respondents (13.9%) indicated that women's participation in governance has improved over time, the overall perception indicates that progress remains slow and insufficient. The low level of support for women's empowerment initiatives (8%) further suggests that policies aimed at promoting gender inclusion may not be adequately implemented or may lack sufficient public awareness. This reinforces the broader argument that institutional commitment to women's representation must go beyond policy rhetoric to practical implementation.

Influence of Cultural, Social, and Institutional Factors

As indicated by 51.9% of respondents, the findings here show that gender roles constitute the most significant factor limiting women's political participation in Kogi State. This demonstrates the strong influence of patriarchal cultural norms that assign leadership roles primarily to men while confining women to domestic responsibilities. These findings support feminist theoretical arguments that gender inequalities in political participation are deeply rooted in societal structures that prioritize male authority (Pasque & Wimmer, 2021). Cultural and traditional expectations often discourage women from participating in politics, while societal perceptions may stigmatize women who pursue leadership positions.

Additionally, social networks and relationships were identified by 19.3% of respondents as influential factors in women's political participation. Political success in Nigeria often relies heavily on patronage systems and networks that are typically dominated by men, making it difficult for women to access the necessary support structures. Institutional policies and practices were also identified as influencing women's representation (11.2%). This suggests that political parties and governance structures may not provide adequate opportunities for women to compete fairly in elections or occupy leadership positions. Overall, the findings confirm that cultural norms, gender stereotypes, and institutional barriers significantly limit women's political participation in Kogi State.

Strategies to Increase Women's Participation in Governance

The findings reveal that awareness campaigns and advocacy programs were considered the most effective strategy for increasing women's participation in governance, as indicated by 35.8% of respondents. This

suggests that public education and awareness initiatives can play an important role in challenging societal stereotypes and promoting gender equality in political leadership. Financial support for women candidates (21.9%) was also identified as an important intervention. Political participation in Nigeria requires significant financial resources, and women often face financial constraints that limit their ability to run for political office.

Training and capacity-building programmes for women (17.1%) were also identified as key strategies to enhance women's leadership skills and confidence in governance roles. Similarly, affirmative action policies such as gender quotas (15.5%) were recognized as mechanisms that could help increase women's representation in political institutions. Although receiving the least support, mentorship and networking programs (9.6%), remain important in helping women navigate political systems and gain access to leadership opportunities. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of awareness, financial support, institutional reforms, and capacity development in promoting women's political participation.

Impact of Women's Participation on Policymaking and Development

The study also examined the perceived impact of women's participation in governance on policy making and development outcomes. The findings revealed that the majority of respondents (39%) believe that women in governance contribute significantly to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. This finding supports existing literature which suggests that women leaders often prioritize policies that address social welfare issues, including education, healthcare, and gender equality (Bauer & Okeke-Uzodike, 2018). Furthermore, 25.7% of respondents indicated that women's perspectives contribute to more inclusive policymaking, suggesting that gender diversity in governance enhances policy responsiveness and inclusivity (O'Neil et al, 2015).

Another significant finding is that 17.6% of respondents believe women's participation improves the development of social services such as healthcare and education. However, only 7.5% of respondents associated women's participation with improved economic development outcomes, which may reflect the limited number of women currently occupying key economic decision-making positions (Asuako, 2020). Overall, the findings demonstrate that increased women's participation in governance can promote inclusive policymaking, gender equality, and improved social development outcomes.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the course of this study to ensure the integrity of the research process and the protection of participants. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before administering the questionnaires. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of the research, and their right to voluntarily participate or withdraw at any stage without any consequences.

Also, confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. Respondents were not required to disclose their names or personal identities in the questionnaire. All responses were treated as confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

Additionally, the researchers maintained objectivity and honesty in the data collection, analysis, and reporting processes. The findings presented in the study accurately reflect the responses obtained from participants without manipulation or misrepresentation. These ethical considerations ensured that the research adhered to accepted academic and professional standards.

CONCLUSION

This study examined women's representation in governance in Kogi State, Nigeria, with particular attention to the current state of representation, the factors influencing women's participation, strategies for improvement, and the impact of women's participation on policymaking and development outcomes. The findings revealed that women's representation in governance in Kogi State remains relatively low and ineffective despite increasing advocacy for gender equality. Cultural and patriarchal norms were identified as the most significant barriers limiting women's participation in politics. These norms reinforce traditional gender roles that

discourage women from pursuing political leadership. The study also found that awareness campaigns, financial support for female candidates, training programs, and affirmative action policies are key strategies that could enhance women's participation in governance.

Furthermore, the study concludes that women's participation in governance has positive implications for promoting gender equality, inclusive policymaking, and improved social development outcomes. Therefore, increasing women's representation in governance is not only a matter of equity but also an important requirement for sustainable democratic development in Kogi State and Nigeria as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the above findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Political parties in Kogi State should give women enough opportunity in governance and representation in the state.
2. Gender roles significantly influence women's representation in Kogi State, as such, it should be encouraged by all.
3. Adequate awareness campaigns and advocacy programmes should be organized effectively in promoting women's participation in governance in Kogi State.
4. The contribution of women in governance cannot be overemphasized in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment Kogi State such should be welcomed by all in the state for development and growth and equal representation.

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