

**Language and Gender Imbalance in Nigerian Politics: Focus on Gendered Expressions in the  
Nigerian Politics**

By

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**Abstract**

One thing that has often astounded and confounded thinkers and scholars is language, the human-specific system of communication through conventional signs and representations. Though often taken for granted, a short reflection on language reveals the pervasive influence it exerts on every stratum of life and society. In our world of words and, the concomitant information explosion, there is no keeping out language as all issues are language issues, to paraphrase George Orwell. As language manifests certain peculiarities based on regional/geographical, social, educational and functional differences, language varieties are distinguishable in various contexts. The language of politics manifests this linguistic situation and it is marked by certain features that make it distinctive. This paper discusses language and gender imbalance in Nigerian politics: Focus on Expressions in the Nigerian Politics that Depict Gender Imbalance. Gender imbalance in politics has been a problem. Furthermore, there has been an imbalance in the number of positions occupied by males and females in politics, the number of males in politics outnumber that of the females. In this article, the researcher clarifies outstanding concepts, highlights some expressions on politics that depict imbalance, discusses women in time perspectives, explains the attempts by women to come out of the shadows and move to prominence, discusses the factors which stood between women and self-actualization and proffers solutions to the imbalance. Qualitative Descriptive method was used. The researcher made use of the theory of communicative competence propounded by Dell Hymes (1966). The data for this study was gathered

from secondary sources which include libraries, published research papers, published books and websites. From the discussion so far, the findings show that there is gender imbalance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Language, gender, imbalance, Nigeria, Colonialism

## **Introduction**

Greenberg (1) states, “Language is unique to man”. No other species possesses a truly symbolic means of communication and no human society, however simple its material culture, lacks the basic human heritage of a well-developed language. Language is man’s all-in-all as a genetic inheritance, a mathematical system, a social fact, the expression of individual identity. “The expression of cultural identity, the outcome of dialogic interaction, a social semiotic, the intuitions of native speakers, the sum of attested data, a collection of memorized chunks, a rule-governed discrete combinatory; system of electrical activation in a distributed network” (Cook and Seidlhofer, 4). Read (4) observes that language is “enigmatic and mysterious because, despite its being man’s primordial and most often used possessions (man inhales 438 cubic feet of air, speaks at least 48,000 words, breaths 23,000 times, discharges two pints of perspiration and loses 7.8 pounds of waste in 24 hours”. As Halliday (3) opines, types of linguistic situation differ from one another in three major respects: what is actually taking place; what part the language is playing and who is taking part. He goes further to say that these three variables taken together determine register, the range within which meanings are selected and the forms of which are used for their expression.

The relegation of women in politics has been an age-long issue. Available data show that women are discriminated against in all spheres of life. A critical examination would reveal the fact that political practices underpin this situation. Sequel to this relegation is the imbalance existing between women and their male counterparts in every area of human endeavor. However, this is most obvious in the political milieu. In this arena, the women experience glaring discrimination and neglect. Very

insignificant number of women are elected or appointed into public office. Culturally, almost every evil occurrence in society is attributed to women who are often humiliated and held responsible for the deaths of their husbands and children. Women all over the nation face prejudices, grave discrimination which constitute barriers to their advancement politically and economically. And even in the very essence of life.

Men have control of these spheres for years and have exploited this to their advantage. Taylor (189) opines that, “men have successfully kept women in the shadows rather than provide equal opportunities for both sexes”. They also use hate language expressions to depict imbalance in politics. Widowhood practices also expose some of the ways women are discriminated against. Most women, at the demise of their spouses, are disposed of the property by their in-laws. The women in traditional African society is viewed as one not entitled to own property. The reason for this, is not far from the assertion that women are considered items of property themselves. In response to these discoveries of the level of neglect, several conferences, seminars and talk shows are being organized all over the world. These gender discourses at conferences, seminars and talk shows centre on this issue of gender imbalances. They are geared towards restoring the dignity of womanhood and helping women re-discover themselves. Incidentally, most of these discourses end up giving the women false hope, casting aspersions on the men and helping women build castles in the air. This article will be taking a balanced look at the issues so as to enable us make rational and unbiased recommendations. Therefore, contrary to the popular expectations, the article sets out to state the facts the way they are. This is believed, would help the women face the hard truth and not continue to deceive themselves.

## **Theoretical Studies**

This paper adopts the theory of Communication Competence. Communicative competence theory was developed by Dell Hymes in (1966), as a reaction to Noam Chomsky's (1965) linguistic competence which focused on correctness in grammar; that is, knowing and adhering to the rules of grammar. According to Hymes, having an accurate knowledge of the grammar rules of a language is not enough to make the learner competent in the use of that language for communication. The learner also needs communicative competence which entails knowing what to say, to whom, in what circumstances and how to say it. In other words, communicative competence refers to the language user's grammatical knowledge of his language and as well as his social knowledge about how and when to use this language to accomplish specific communication goals. Communication competence is also helpful in this study because, it is one who is competent enough in the global English that will be able to allow this language to influence his own language, culture and others. Similarly, the English language teacher also needs to be competent in the processes of teaching the language globally.

## **Research Methodology**

In order to obtain an in-depth and thorough information on Language and gender imbalance in Nigerian politics, the study uses qualitative descriptive design method.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to:

1. Clarify outstanding concepts.

2. Highlight expressions that depict gender imbalance.
3. Discuss women in time perspective by focusing attention on the different periods beginning from pre-colonial through the colonial to the post-colonial period.
4. Discuss the attempts by women to come out of the shadows and move to prominence,
5. Explain the factors which stood between women and self-actualization
6. Proffer solutions.

### **Research Questions**

1. Are there political expressions that depict gender imbalance in Nigerian politics?
2. Was there any time women participated in politics at all?
3. What attempts have women engaged in to help them come out of shadows and move to prominence?
4. What factors stood between women and self-actualization?
5. How can these problems be solved?

### **Conceptual Clarification**

In order to carry out this study, there is need for conceptual clarification on major terms used in this study as such will get a better understanding and insight of the terms. The terms have been listed in the keywords section

## **Language**

Language and politics meet at the threshold of power (Adedimeji, 2006:251). Language is a powerful weapon and politics is itself concerned with the use of power (Bolinger, 1980; Airelough, 1989). Indeed, men are engaged in politics as they try to define positions in society. As they struggle for scarce resources, and as they try to convince others to accept their points of view (Anifowose, 1999:1), Adedimeji, 2006:251). The language of politics largely oscillates between deception and persuasion (Jones and Wareing, 1999). In other words, the goal of political language is either to deceive or persuade in any given context. Humans have the gift of creativity in language to capture the uniqueness of each context and language situations. Examining the way people use language in different social contexts provides a wealth of information about the way language works, as well as about the social relationships in a community and the way people convey and construct aspects of their social identity through languages. “Our language changes to meet the needs of people” (MacCallum, 1990). This definition shows that language is not only central to man but also flexible, adaptable, and productive. Language therefore, cuts across the social structure of a people and the study of the people’s language can reliably predict the social situations under which the language is generated.

## **Gender**

Gender refers to the sex of a person or organism or a category of people or organisms. Traditionally, gender has referred to grammatical classifications in languages while sex referred to the biological classifications to which gender is analogous to distinguish sexual ones. Gender is, thus, a cultural concept while sex is a biological one. Sex roles are universal. They are supra-cultural. Such roles include giving birth to children, breast feeding, and others by the females. The men, on the other hand,

impregnate the women. All these roles (both male and female) are facilitated by distinctive biological features and are natural. For instance, the women can give birth to a baby because of her possession of a vagina. The man can get the woman pregnant because of the penis which he has.

On the contrary, gender roles are learnt. They vary from culture to culture. In traditional African society, the girl child is taught how to take care of her siblings, sweep and maintain a home, help her mother in the kitchen. She also learns domestic duties such as how to smoke fish, weed grass and cultivate crops like pepper, *okro*, cocoyam, cassava, vegetables to mention but a few. The boys, on the other hand are taught how to split firewood, keep the lawns clean, fish in the rivers (for the fishing houses) and cultivate crops like yam.

Behavioural patterns are also tailored along gender lines. The girl child is trained to see herself as a subordinate in the family. She watches as her mother is left out in family discussions though she may be directly affected. In some areas, the girl watches as her father acquires women as one acquires property. The woman who is seen as a weakling is left to carry out the less prestigious tasks. She is to be seen not heard. Ritzer (458) aptly sums it up this way:

Women's situation then, is centrally that of being used, controlled, subjugated, and oppressed by the men. This pattern of oppression is incorporated in the deepest and most pervasive ways into society's organization, a basic structure of domination most commonly called patriarchy.

Gender has, over the years, portrayed women as the weaker sex. The concept of gender presents the woman as one who is superficial, with interest mainly in fashion, beauty and little love for deep thinking. The marginalization and exclusion of women in almost every sphere for centuries emanate from this development. Gender is mobilized to also take away the voice of women, and their power to be heard. It is the reason females are clamped under a husband or brother in whatever they do. This

finally robs the women of some personal rights. Everyone has the right to be treated fairly and to have the opportunity to fulfill their potential, society is more united and peaceful in an equal setting where everyone feels included. It is pertinent to note that the clamor for gender equality came with increasing materialism and individualism. The women now want to own things. They want to compete with their male counterparts. All these are products of capitalism, which in itself is competitive.

### **Imbalance**

Imbalance is a noun which means lack of proportion or relation between corresponding things. It also means the state of being out of equilibrium or out of proportion. An imbalance occurs when there is too much of some things and too little of others. If there is an imbalance in a situation, the things involved are not the same size, or are not the right size in proportion to each other. Imbalance in this research means that the males are mostly found vying for political positions while the females are just few.

### **Nigeria**

This is a country on the coast of West Africa, bordered by the Bight of Benin, Cameroun, Chad and Niger. It shares maritime border with Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, and Sao Tome. It has the largest economy in Africa. It is projected to rank among the world's top ten economies by 2050. It has abundance of resources like oil and gas. It holds the largest natural gas reserves on the continent, and it is Africa's largest oil and gas producer.

### **Politics**

Politics refer to activities associated with government. It is the theory and practice of government, especially those activities related to governing, obtaining legislative or executive power or forming

and running organizations. Politics also refers to interrelationships between the people, groups or organizations connected with government. It is the art or science of government concerned with guiding or influencing governmental policies. In addition, politics is the art or science concerned with winning and holding on to control over a government. It is this last definition that this paper depends on.

### **Expressions in the Nigerian Politics that Depict Gender Imbalance**

Politics is a game that appeals to individual and group social behaviour and language is a condition sine qua non for such a game. Language is the second most important social behavior and an orderly system of communication. That is why Ezike (26) was right when he said that language is vital for the preservation of socio-political status-quo through maintenance of peace, harmony and stability and the creation of common sense of identity through fostering of group solidarity. A candidate who during electioneering campaigns manipulates language effectively always sounds convincing and pulls the crowd as he/she campaigns for votes. Correct use of language enables a speaker communicate an infinite number and variety of messages, meanings, intentions, thoughts, requests and items of information. It is important not only because of its grip over man's mind, feelings, reason and action, not just because a firm grip of it helps in building up solid personality, but according to Okonkwo (87), "because it is the indispensable instrument for the furtherance of group solidarity through meaning-sharing".

At the commencement of colonialism, rigid binaries about everything including gender perceptions were imposed on the African mind. Thereafter, the woman's role has come to be limited. So, it is in politics. As language forms the basis of communication, politics is thus affected by sentiments towards a party, a politician will carefully craft his manifesto in order to convince the reader of his credibility.

Lang and Lang (16) posit that there is a “relationship between language, gender and power”. They argue that women speak differently from men and that women’s language or way of speaking expresses powerlessness. This powerlessness stops them from participating fully in politics thereby causing imbalance with the men.

Similarly, the former President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari once in the Nigerian Senate emphasizes that “there are very few women representatives in politics and leadership positions”. According to him, only seven out of 109 and 22 out of the 360 House of Representative members are women. To him, this is an imbalance in politics. Furthermore, Ogechi Ekanyanwu from the conversation Africa asked Dannilola Agbalajobi, political Scientist and gender specialist, to explain the lack of representation and why there is an imbalance in the number of males and females in politics. Her answers were: some of my answers are related to the political party systems and structures. High cost of politics prevents women from standing for positions. Women don’t have money to pay for the mandatory expression of interest and nomination forms required by political parties to run for positions on their platforms. Election campaign costs are exorbitant. Societal factors include cultural or religious norms surrounding marriage, indigenship - a concept that recognizes only ethnic group native to a particular state and the structures that portray women as subordinate to men. She continues, the media also give poor coverage to female candidates. It is not the same as the coverage men get. Women candidates are often subjected to gender related electoral violence threats and hate speech because of the perception that women want to get what is traditionally men. Looking at the answers above, one can deduce that, there is imbalance in the number of males and females because of high cost of politics, high cost of election campaign and societal factors which also include cultural and religious norms.

Furthermore, Lang and Lang (27) also say that “newspaper deny the electorate from forming their opinion on who to vote for in elections when they underreport some aspirants, especially women, or

when they give their complete coverage black out, this assertion is corroborated by Isa (30) who declared that this would not enable the women folk to play crucial and sustainable roles in politics”. This imbalance made Okeke (13) to ask questions like “how do the mass media portray women in politics?” Why is it that women are not given equal representation like their male counterpart or is there an atom of patriarchy in politics?

Ako (1) surmises, “I have warned you several times that you must jettison this unrealistic ambition of becoming the Governor of the state” .... “Politics is not a child’s play. It is a serious game meant for only men who are serious minded”. This expression shows that it is only men who are serious minded and can handle politics and not the women. In this case, the expression portrays that women are not serious minded and so cannot handle politics.

Consequently, Okolocha (7) opines, “when they come to become, they will know that we, the men of timber and caliber and of caterpillars and bulldozers have come to stop all stoppables and bulldoze the bulldoze-ables which women cannot do in politics”. Okolocha emphasizes that it is only men who can handle what is in politics and not the women. The above expressions have made the researcher to believe that most men go for politics while women are afraid to participate in it. This has given room to an imbalance in the number of males and females in politics. In the same vein, language is the life-wire of politics just as blood is the life-wire of human body. Any political system needed language in order to be successful. It is through political language that the people will be informed of their rights and responsibilities.

### **Was there any time women participated in politics at all?**

An imbalance has always existed between women and their male counterparts in politics since antiquity. This imbalance is experienced in all facets of life. In this section, the researcher looks at

women in politics at different points in Nigerian history. The researcher also outlined the number of males and females in the years used.

### **Pre-Colonial**

Some scholars like Omunubi (17) and Ahmed (52) argue that “women in pre-colonial Nigeria were an integral part of the political set-up of their communities”. The women, they assert, carried out functions which though separate from those of men, were fully complementary. These scholars cite women like Queen Amina of Zaria in Hausaland who built a high wall round her kingdom. They also cite women in Bornu who took active parts in the administration of the state. Ola (78) says that “these women held very important offices in the royal family, including the offices of the Megira (the Queen mother) and the Gumsu (the first wife of the Mai or king). In Yorubaland, some scholars point to the “Oba who ruled with the assistance of a number of women referred to as the ladies of the palace” (Awajiusuk, 95). These ladies of the palace consisted of eight titled ladies of the highest rank.

Such scholars also point to the significant role played by prominent women such as Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin and Omu Okwei of Ossomari in pre-colonial Nigeria. Moremi and Emotan were great amazons who displayed tremendous bravery and strength in the politics of Ife and Benin respectively. While Omu Okwei dominated the corn mercial scene of Ossomari in present day Delta state (Omu and Makinwa, 19). In present-day Rivers State, there are also prominent names like Queens Karibasa and Okuru of Bonny. A close examination of the women cited above reveals an interesting fact, namely that they are all of noble birth. They have a connection with royalty one way or the other. Their noble descents facilitated their playing outstanding roles and prepared them to achieving such great feats. It is common knowledge that in most communities, whether ancient or modern, the daughters of aristocrats usually have social statuses which shield them from discriminations.

## Colonial Era

During the colonial period, one would naturally have expected that the advent of Europeans would help the fate of women in Nigeria. Unfortunately, with colonialism came Christianity and its attending doctrines. Some of the doctrines discouraged women from speaking out. While the colonial masters worsened the state of the women, Christianity appeared to be a nail in women's coffin. Kukah (45) opines that "Christianity and Islam were major source of discrimination during the colonial era". According to him, both religions contributed and still contribute to the continuation of discrimination against women. For instance, women were prohibited in both religions from holding leadership positions. Christianity, especially the early type, was against the leadership of women. Not taking the Corinthian background into consideration, the missionaries taught that the women were to be seen and not heard. They are to keep silent in church and reserve all questions till they get home; then they could ask their husbands (1 cor. 14:34-35). The men are presented as the head of the women and the women are to totally submit to their husbands as unto the Lord (Eph 5:22 -24). The mainline churches did not encourage the ordination of women. Even in the Catholic Church where women are consecrated as reverend Sisters, they are not allowed to run parishes. This, of course, did not help the psychology of women. The women felt even more oppressed with this new religion.

Colonialism affected Nigerian women adversely as they were denied the franchise to participate in politics. It was also only in the 1950s that women in Southern Nigeria were granted the license. Very few of the women were offered any political or administrative appointments. In the 1950s, three women were appointed into the house of chiefs, namely: Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome –Kuti (appointed

into the Western Nigeria House of Chiefs), Mrs. Margaret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu (both appointed into the Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs).

**Post-Colonial**

The post-colonial period did not witness significant change in the gender imbalance in politics. This implies that colonialism was not the actual culprit but deep-rooted cultural practices and beliefs. Such practices as patriarchy did not do the women any good. Awajisuku (101) opines that “marital practices which submerged the personhood of the woman in that of her husband, inheritance patterns, property sharing and violence against women all took the person out of the woman”. However, there have been some improvements (though not astronomical) on what obtained during the colonial era as the table below shows:

<b>Year</b>	<b>No of Women</b>	<b>No of Men</b>	<b>Total</b>
1999	1 (Deputy Governor)	35	36
1999	3 (Senate)	106	109
1999	13 (House of Representatives)	334	347
1999	12 (State Houses of Assembly)	978	990
2003	2 (Deputy Governors)	34	36
2003	9 (Senate)	100	109

2003	21 (House of Representatives)	339	360
2003	39 (State Houses of Assembly)	334	373
2007	6 (Deputy Governor)	34	40
2007	9 (Senate)	100	109
2007	26 (House of Representatives)	334	360
2011	1 (Deputy Governor)	35	36
2011	7 (Senate)	102	109
2011	12 (House of Representative)	348	360

From the above table, it is obvious that the number of males in politics outnumber their female counterparts. Similarly, it is obvious that there was a tremendous improvement in the political participation of women in politics during the fourth republic. However, it would be interesting to note the decline in the number of women who won elections during 2011 general polls.

**What attempts have women engaged in to help them come out of shadows and move to prominence?**

Women are known to play their roles from the shadows. This accounts for their roles in Nigeria's politics not being reflected sufficiently. This is most visible in terms of appointments to policy making. In spite of massive support given to various political parties by women, women organizations, market women movements and others, until recently, very few women have benefitted from political

patronage. Women act as “wee-hours or 2-4am legislatures”. They move motions and contribute to policy making in the wee-hours of the day rather than in broad daylight. They do this on their matrimonial beds rather than in the legislative chambers. Interestingly, women all over the world are making concerted efforts at pulling themselves out of the shadows. Internationally, several conventions have been ratified to protect women. Nigeria is a signatory to the conventions which protect and uphold women’s right to be involved in politics. Incidentally, despite these conventions, discriminations against women have continued. Rewards for women’s contribution at home and at the national level are not commensurate with their efforts. This situation necessitated the convening of another conference by women – the Beijing Conference of 1995. This conference brought hope to women worldwide.

In Nigeria, women have consistently and tactfully been pulling themselves out of the shadows. For instance, in 1954, Beatrice Adunni Oluwole formed a political party. Women like Mrs. Fumilayo Ransome-Kuti, Lady Oyinkan Abayomi, Mrs Kofoworola Pratt, Margret Ekpo, Janet Akinrinde, Janet Mokelu, Hilda Adafarasin and Oyibo Odinamadu tried and pulled themselves out of the shadows. They impacted on the Nigerian political scene tremendously. There was a twist in the 2011 electioneering campaigns. The first lady of Nigeria, Dame Patience Jonathan led other women in campaigning for her husband. The wives of their governors followed suit in their various states. The First Lady noted that women occupy less than ten percent of government positions, against the recommended thirty percent that was increased to thirty-five percent by President Olusegun Obasanjo.

According to Okoh (15), “the various efforts of the women have started producing results”. Some of these results are the election of women into offices. In Rivers state no woman was elected into the

State Assembly until 2003 when only one was elected. In 2007, three were elected and in 2011, three were also elected. There has also been an appreciable increase in nomination and appointments into political offices. With this, the demand for thirty-five percent representation is beginning to bear fruits. We have more female ministers, advisers and commissioners than before. In Rivers State, there is an increase in the number of women appointed into the state executive council. Between 2007 and 2011, four female commissioners were appointed. Governor Rotimi Chibuike Amaechi instructed that for the 2011 Local Government elections, any woman who picks a form to contest under PDP as a counselor should be given automatic placement. This is very commendable but what happens to the chairmanship? Does it mean the women cannot manage local government areas?

In contemporary Nigeria, we remember women like Prof. Dora Akuyili (former NAFDAC boss and Minister for Information). Mrs. Obiageli Ezekwesili (Madam Due Process). Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Former Finance Minister). Mrs. Farida Waziri (Former EFCC boss), and so on. In the African continent, a woman has also been elected President. Mrs. Eileen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia is the first African woman to be elected President. Wangari Maathai, Former Environmental Minister in Kenya, also won the Noble Prize 2004. The number of women legislators is also on the increase. For instance, Burundi and Tanzania have been recorded and recognized to be countries with women legislators' crossing over the thirty percent bar. In line with the Beijing Spirit and the Southern African Development Community Targets, it was raised from twenty to thirty percent. Nigeria as the giant of Africa is very far from that target although there are calls for thirty-five percent affirmative action although current developments on the political scene may not take us there yet. The national policy on women in Nigeria, in line with the Beijing Agenda adopted the regulation that thirty percent of the seats be reserved for women in both elective and appointed offices. But from the above records, Nigerian women are still below that average in elective positions whereas records from some African

countries like Tanzania and Rwanda have shown significant improvement in the performance of their women in elections. In the Republic of Tanzania, the proportion of women legislators is steadily on the increase. In 2005, it recorded an impressive 30.4 percent. This has remained the highest percentage recorded so far in a majority vote electoral system.

### **What factors stood between women and self-actualization?**

Despite the colossal efforts being made by women to pull themselves out of the shadows, the gender imbalance in politics persists. Women, unlike their male counterparts, are facing difficulties in the political arena. It has become an uphill task for them to be accepted in this sphere of life.

For the researcher to effectively proffer solutions to this age-long gender imbalance in politics, there is need to, as Omoregbe (ix) prescribes, “diagnose its root causes”. Only an appropriate diagnosis, can lead to appropriate prescription which will ultimately result in the desired effect: “a cure”. Some of the factors responsible for this imbalance include cultural inhibitions which tend to portray women as inferior to men, or best suited for domestic engagements. Female children are trained to see themselves as second-class citizens in the homes and to perform interior roles. On the contrary, boys are shown more love and trained to play leadership roles from infancy. Many men, because of misinformation and self-interest, are actively engaged in sustaining the age-long inequality between men and women in governance.

Again, her biological roles/experiences such as child bearing, menstruating and the challenge of running home take their toll on the careers and political aspirations of women. The psychological effect of playing menial roles has culminated into a subservient spirit which has possessed the woman. Therefore, when venturing into politics, the woman does so, not with the aspiration of vying for elective positions. On the contrary, she does so with the hope of being used in the logistics arena such

as catering and decoration of event venues. There is also the issue of dual nativity which, though some view as having put women at an advantageous position, has in reality, rubbed some of the positions which could have been theirs. For instance, a woman who marries outside her ethnic group is deprived of political position both in her natal and matrimonial home. The demands of politics such as late-night meetings, extensive and frequent travelling and backstabbing, all combine to work against the woman who wants to venture into politics. This is worsened by the perceived and real interpretation of the mentality or belief that women are not masters of themselves but “owned” by men.

Consequently, the growing violence in politics has also contributed to the inability of women to participate effectively in governance. Women candidates are brutalized by their male opponents, therefore making it difficult for them to come out with zeal to contest elections. Many women were frustrated out of the primaries by the powerful clique holding the Nigerian political space hostage. Lack of fund and support from family members are some of the other difficulties women face in their desire to venture into politics. In Nigeria where god-fatherism is deeply entrenched especially in the political sphere, lack of political mentors becomes a militating factor against women. The stigmatization of women in politics is a major deterrent to women especially the married women. Women who progress politically are tagged wayward.

Women are also, sometimes, liable for their own subjugation. The female folk hardly support one another in their bid for political office. The unfortunate and embarrassing incident of Mama Sarah Jubril is a case in point. Moreover, the women are eager to settle for crumbs and leavings from the political tables of men. To cite Sarah Jubril again, it will be recalled that when she vied for a presidential position, Dr Goodluck Jonathan was just a gubernatorial running mate. Today, no sooner

had she lost the People's Democratic Party (PDP) nomination to Jonathan than she accepted an insignificant position as Special Adviser on Ethics and Values.

### **Solutions**

There is no problem without solutions. Having carefully examined the symptoms and diagnosed the disease, the researcher is in a better position to prescribe curative steps. One such step is self-belief. Nigerian women need attitudinal change. The women need to believe in themselves and in their ability to creditably discharge the functions of high public offices. They must believe and demonstrate that they have a lot to contribute to the development of the country Nigeria, socially, politically, economically and in all spheres of life. Secondly, women must reject "tokenism" in appointments and stand by the thirty-five percent representation in the Federal and State cabinets, and in their party nominations for the Senate, House of Representatives and the various State Houses of Assembly. Thirdly, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, and foreign and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should organize seminars and take other initiatives to empower women with skills and strategies needed for confidence-building and political mobilization. Fourth, women can start the campaign in their homes by preparing their female children for political challenges.

In contemporary Nigeria, it is no longer a total truism to say that women are precluded from full participation in governance consequent upon their educational handicap. The women are educated enough to make a mark in the political milieu. Women are acquiring education at an unprecedented velocity. In recent times in most Nigerian universities, female students outnumber the male students in enrolment. We have women intellectuals and professionals who can steer the ship of leadership in our country. What is needed is for these categories of women to come out and vie for elective positions.

Politics should not be left for the female dregs of society. Educated and enlightened women should come out and be interested in politics. Male politicians should not see women as threats. As women re-discover themselves and their roles in governance, they should demand a level-playing field; they should be given the opportunities to fulfill their aspirations. Women presidents are no longer a rarity in the world. Great Britain, India, Pakistan, Germany, Liberia and the Philippines, to mention but a few, are among countries that have been ruled by women. They have amply demonstrated that able leadership is not the exclusive preserve for men. Women should do away with the idea of forming “parallel” professional bodies for themselves, instead of remaining in the present body and fighting for space with the men. It appears to be defeatist. Organizations like Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), FIDA are examples of such women groups. These groups should support the women who come out to contest elections. They can do this by running free documentaries on them using language and also inviting them to the studios for interviews, giving them wide coverage and showcasing them to the world through advertisements which can be free or subsidized. Finally, Nigerian women should close ranks and support one another to attain political power. A house divided against itself cannot stand, hence, they must unite.

### **Conclusion**

Politics is one of the issues in Nigeria as a nation where language is seriously used. Without language, politics cannot thrive. While it is true that language is a prerequisite in politics, it is only one who is competent in language use that can make use of language in politics because one in politics needs to persuade others to agree with one. This can only be achieved through competency in language use. It is obvious from the available data that an imbalance exists between males and females in all spheres of life in Nigeria, and in politics in particular. This discrimination is deeply rooted in culture and has culminated in the unequal distribution of political power between males and females. It has also bred

psychological demeanor and a feeling of inferiority among the women. This paper proposes that women should rise up and take their destinies in their own hands. Women should stop complaining of their under-representation in governance. They should take decisive actions and build confidence in their ability to contest, win and hold political offices. Moreover, women in Nigeria have the numerical advantage over men. They should utilize this. They should support those of their kind who come out to contest elections and not pull them down. With this, they should, be able to turn the table against men if politics is, indeed, a game of numbers. The women must demand their due place in governance. Nevertheless, women can do this if and only if they are united while remaining resolute.

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