

**WOMEN IN POLITICS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF DORIS AYANKA IMALELE**

BY

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

FACULTY OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

JULY, 2021.

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE BACHELOR
OF ARTS (B.A) DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES AND DIPLOMACY.**

JULY, 2021.

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by **Ejohwomu Oghenefega Elizabeth** and is adequate in scope, content and quality in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an award of a Bachelor of Arts (B.A) Degree in International Studies and Diplomacy.

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Project Supervisor

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Ag: Head of Department

Date.....

Date.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Almighty God for his never ending mercies, his protection and guidance in my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to give God all the glory as it is said give honor to whom honor is deserved. My academic journey was not an easy or smooth one but with his grace I pulled through undefeated. Thank God for putting me in places where I was meant to be. Without God none of this would be possible.

My utmost gratitude goes to my supervisor, Mrs. I. Osemwengie for her patience and guidance throughout the course of this project. It wasn't easy but you gave me hope when all was gone and in the end, the result is short nothing of beautiful. God bless you Ma.

I would also like to thank Dr. Iweze and Dr. Osiki for their impact throughout the making of this project work. My gratitude also goes to all my lecturers for their impactful knowledge.

I must also thank my dear parents, Prince Gregory Ejohwomu and Mrs Blessing Ejohwomu for their continuous support, advice and guidance. They were my lecturers outside my school field and taught me the ways of life that guided me through my years in UNIBEN. My undiluted appreciation also goes to my grandma, Queen Elizabeth Eghenure Ejohwomu for her relentless desire to keep teaching me on holidays and her assistance throughout my stay in school. Infact my acknowledgment wouldn't be complete if I do not thank my entire family, my uncles, my aunties, and my siblings, Ruru, Ejiro, Oke, Edirin, Naomi and Nicole who pushed me to do better and be better, I love you all.

I would never forget to mention the people who gave me happiness when I was down, never left me lonely, stayed up late nights reading or chatting with me, cooked for me, prayed for me when all was lost and cared for me when I was sick. To Vera, Debby, Omone, Naomi, Lois, Anita, Jessica, Ebube, Gracious, my roommates in my first year, Vanny and Tega you all are the real

MVPs. The list goes on but thank you all for your support, comfort and snaps, lol, I'll keep them for life. We meet to part and part to meet but you will always be one of my most precious memories on a dull and even brighter day. My academic journey wouldn't be such without Elvis Brown, thank you for sharing your knowledge with me and for your wise and kind words on hard days.

My regards to Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele for giving me the honor of writing about her and her assistance in this project work. Also I must thank Mr. Stewart Osasuzuwa who was responsible for involving me with Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele and making this work a reality.

And I must not forget to pay tribute to my course mates in ISD, you all helped me grow in one way or another. Same goes to UNIBEN, I came in here a lost girl searching for a path and now I leave a woman creating her own path and destiny.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Women are major contributors to the human society (mostly in the rural communities) due to the economic and socio-political activities which they engage in. It is undoubtedly true that for any nation to achieve significant and sustainable growth and development, the plight of women are to be given paramount attention. The issue of empowerment needs to be addressed in other for women to have access to most of the deprivatives that have immensely contributed to their present state in the society. It was in line with this that the international community in the year 2000 identified promotion of gender equity and women empowerment in its number 3 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The relegation of women to the background in Nigeria has attracted the attention of many scholars. Historical evidences are available to prove that Nigerian women have for long been playing crucial role in political life of the country, and this has contributed in no small measure in shaping the political system of the state. For development of any kind to be successful, a vantage position needs to be accorded the women, as they constitute larger proportion of the population.¹ In this regard, they should not be left out in the issues of decision making that bothers even on their lives as a people.

Today, women are participating more actively in political issues than even before as a result of political re-awakening and awareness. More often than not they are besieged with challenges of which discrimination is rife. Majority of the men (with chauvinistic disposition) are preoccupied with the notion that decision making is exclusively for the men folk while women are to be instructed on what to do.² History reveals that Nigerian women have faced a wide spectrum of experiences in navigating through several hindrances that have confronted them. The intrinsic culture of patriarchy, male chauvinism and general anarchy has often undermined the rights of women and have led to their exploitation and marginalization both at the private and public sphere of their developmental affairs.

In spite of the above, Nigerian women has played significant roles in their various communities and enterprises. They have continued with their political ambition, contributing enormously to the political and national development in their own way as if the challenges militating against them are not present; although Nigeria is yet to have a female president either in the executive or parliamentary arms of government. Thus, Nigerian Women over the years could be said to have recorded some measure of appreciable political achievement in other political fields of endeavours, meeting their political objectives with limited support and resources at the disposal.

Nigerian women have participated actively in both the private and public spheres from pre-colonial era till date, though with an exception of women in the northern part of the country due largely to the limitations placed on them by traditional Islamic laws. However, the famous tales of Queen Amina who became the undisputed ruler of Zazzau in 1576 proved that women in the northern part of pre-colonial Nigeria still made a strong impact on the socio-political landscape of the region. More so, the Igala chiefdom was said to have been established by a woman in person of Queen Ebele Ejaunu (originally Ebeljawno).³ The ancestress queen was said to be the daughter of Abutu Eje, a noble of the Jukun court at Wukari. It was recorded that Abutu Eje left Wukari with a large crowd as a result of political reasons and migrated westwards along the southern bank of the river Benue and came to a temporary halt in the vicinity of Amagede (now in Omala L.G.A.) where he Abutu Eje died. Consequent to her father's death, Ebele Ejaunu, stepped into her father's shoes and led her people from Amagede to Idah where she was installed as the first Attah Igala.⁴

In the South there is the recorded the exploits of Queen Idiah of the ancient Benin Kingdom whose act of bravery depicts the strength and wisdom of the African woman. Also, in both the Old and New Oyo, women were also recorded⁵ to have played various important and strategic roles in the administration of the palace, notably the Oba's wives. Then, among the Igbo

and Ibibio, women were said to control their own affairs and possessed political influence on the basis of collective strength. Additionally, women of high status in socially stratified societies always occupied a higher social status than the 'commoner' men and women alike.⁶

Furthermore, the Yoruba wars, such as the popular Kiriji war, was said to have demanded extraordinary services from both men and women; and in instances where women were able to rise to the occasion, they were often rewarded with greater political responsibility as in the case of the Iyalodes of Ibadan and Egba. Meanwhile another sequence of historical events soon emerged, adversely affecting the political role of women in that it changed the complimentary position of women in pre-colonial African society to that of subordinate roles to men as portrayed by situations and events in colonial Africa, in this case colonial Nigeria.

To a very large extent, colonial rules and policies weakened the enjoyment of social, economic and political rights of women. Though women were given the right to vote in the 1950s and 80s in the South and North respectively, women's representation in the public sphere was very low. Also, continuous support of patriarchy and individualism created new economic opportunities thereby seriously disrupting the existing gender relations between women and men. Colonial rulers were very oblivious of the economic role granted to women within traditional cultures, and systematically

overlooked women.⁷ The Aba Women's Riot of 1929, where Igbo women protested against British taxation, is a notable example of women using their traditional powers against colonial authorities. This was repeated again in 1948 when Abeokuta market women revolted against colonial taxes and the failure of the traditional rulers to defend their interests by challenging the colonial masters. A notable personality in this "women's movement" was Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, at that time the head teacher at the Abeokuta Grammar School, who learnt about the (women's) struggle and formed the Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU) where the 'elite' Abeokuta ladies joined in solidarity with the market women of Egba land to work together to find a way to stop this practice of excess and unnecessary tax collection.⁸

In 1957, during the pre-independence era of Nigeria, a couple of female political activists such as Mrs. Margaret Ekpo, Mrs. Janet Mokelu and Mrs. Young were members of the Eastern House of Assembly. The late Mrs. Fumilayo Ransome Kuti, though not a full-fledged politician was a very strong force to reckon within the politics of the Western Region. And Hajia Gambo Sawaba waged a fierce battle for the political and cultural emancipation of women in the North. One can say that women have always played viable political roles in Nigeria in spite of all the limitations and encumbrance.⁹

Some women who have made impact on Nigeria's political space include, Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo Iwela, former minister of finance, who saved the

country records of billions of Naira as a result of her hardworking nature as a public officer. Mrs. Obi Ezewesiu also laid a landmark in the history of Nigeria politics. Professor Dora Akunyili, the former NAFDAC boss also performed credibly leading the fight against adulterated pharmaceutical drugs, her name can never be forgotten in the annals of history. There are myriads of women in politics even presently that have done very well and are still performing excellently well, amongst whom are Aisha Alhassan (aka Mama Taraba) who (but for an Appeal Court reversal judgment) almost became the first female Governor of Taraba State and in Nigeria in 2015, to mention a few.

Currently, although the right of democratic governance is an entitlement conferred upon all Nigerian citizens by law, implying that there is no legal exclusion of women in the country's democratic process; however, the numerous promises of equal political participation for women (through quota system) remains yet unrealized. Women can therefore only make meaningful impact after they have reached the critical mass needed.

It is to this extent this study undertakes a research into "Women in politics and their contributions to the socio-economic development in Nigeria; a case study of Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele", Former Senior Special Assistant (SSA) to Edo State Governor, Godwin Obaseki, on Education Planning.

Aim and Objectives

The specific aim of this study is to examine the role of women in politics and their contributions to the socio-economic development in Nigeria, a case study of Doris Ayanka. The broad objective of this study is to:

1. examine the role of women in Nigerian politics.
2. examine the early life, academic and political background of Doris Ayanka Imalele.
3. examine the contributions of Doris Ayanka Imalele to the socio-economic development in Nigeria through political participation, within the contest of the larger Nigerian women.
4. assess the impact(s) of the contributions of women (with reference to Doris Ayanka Imalele) to the socio-economic development of Nigeria, through political participation.

Scope of Study

The scope of this study covers the role of women in Nigerian politics, the contributions of women to the socio-economic development in Nigeria, and the impact(s) of the contributions women to the socio-economic development of Nigeria. All these will be discussed with specific reference to the case study, Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele.

Methodology

This study sourced information and opinion through the use of both primary and secondary materials. The primary materials comprise oral interviews while the secondary materials include textbooks, articles in learned journals and materials from the internet.

Literature Review

Indeed, a sheer volume of literature exist on the role of women in politics and their contributions to the socio-economic development in Nigeria, hence the need to undertake a review of some that are relevant to this study.

Monica Adele Orisadare in her article titled “An Assessment of the Role of Women Group in Women Political Participation and Economic Development in Nigeria”¹⁰ opined that the exclusion of women in politics has been identified in recent times as one of the major setbacks for economic development. According to her, women’s groups are a strong pillar for grassroots politics; and a drive for more women participating in politics at the grassroots still faces a lot of challenges, making it difficult for them to harness available opportunities for economic development. Thus, the opportunity therein for more women’s participation in politics and women empowerment is yet to be exploited by the women’s groups in Nigeria. The study assessed the role of women’s groups in politics, identifies their challenges and also explores its implication for economic development in Osun State, Nigeria. Findings

from the study indicate that women's groups do not have political agenda; mostly, their goals do not align with any political agenda, although their members accept appointments, and also enjoy government patronage. There was also an indication that there exists a high illiteracy rate among the members of the women's groups and most of them are not aware of existing National or International gender equality laws or affirmative action. Thus, it is difficult to participate in politics and contribute their voices to political issues. The study concludes that the present role played by women's groups at the grassroots level may not be adequate in encouraging more women's participation in politics and in influencing economic development. Thus, there is need to step up their activities and embrace political issues if they are to help more women participate and be relevant in politics. The study therefore suggests that more empowerment programs, especially in the area of decision making and participation in politics, should be targeted at women's groups at the grassroots levels by the governments and all stakeholders as a matter of priority.

In her article, "Nigerian women, politics and the national identity question",¹¹ Adenike O. Olufade posits that women involvements in political activities in recent times have been on the decline as often times women's right is denied against the provisions of the constitution and other international instruments of human rights and this does not allow them to participate in

government adequately. According to the author, it takes conscious political actions to address the issue of women's political marginalization and disallowing women from political participation enhances women invisibility in government and strengthens men's arrogance in power. The paper focuses on the issues attributed to women's attitude to politics and the challenges of women in leadership positions. Going by the recent number of appointments of female ministers and senators in Nigeria, the paper reveals the potentials of women leaders in government and the emancipation of favourable laws in the interest of women. The paper then concludes by analysing the problems and prospects of women involvement in political activities towards promoting good governance in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Christiana O. Ogbogu, in her article titled "The Role of Women in Politics and in the Sustenance of Democracy in Nigeria"¹² examined the role of women in politics and in the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. The author in this article elicited their challenges, experiences and contributions to the democratic process. Strategies that can assist women realize their political leadership potentials were proffered. Results in the article revealed that women are marginalized and feature minimally in government because Nigeria lacks a legislative framework that secures quotas for women in political parties. Patriarchal attitudes, poor informal networks/mentoring, finance, religion and educational status were found to militate against women's

participation in politics and governance. To overcome these problems, the study recommended amongst others, the development of electoral reforms that promote equitable representation of women and respect for due process. Empowerment of women by ensuring their access to credit facilities was proffered. The study concluded that the institutionalization of varieties of special mechanisms is most needed in increasing women's participation in governance.

Also, "Women's participation and the political process in Nigeria: Problems and prospects"¹³ by Damilola T. Agbalajobi, reveals that Nigerian women constitute about half of the population of the country and are known to play vital roles as mother, producer, time manager, community organizer and social and political activist. But despite the major roles they play and their population, the society has not given recognition to these and to the fact that they are discriminated against. This, according to her, is due to some cultural stereotype, abuse of religion, traditional practices and patriarchal societal structures. Nigerian women have therefore over the years become target of violence of diverse form based on their positions in promoting transformative politics. The paper examined the theoretical perspective of the discrimination and inequality suffered by women; secondly, access the current status of women in politics and the various efforts made by them for their political empowerment; thirdly, identify problems women face in their quest to

participate in politics and lastly suggest possible measures for their political empowerment.

In “Women Participation in Politics and National Development”,¹⁴ Fiemotongha Christopher argues that the contribution of women to the socio-economic and political development of any modern democratic state is essential and indispensable. This paper examines the extent of women participation in politics and national development in Nigeria. According to the author, the constraints of women participation in politics pose a hindrance to national development in Nigeria. It is discernible from this study that cultural, environmental, educational and gender factors are major barriers to active women participation in politics. The study recommends that Government at all levels should embark on enlightenment campaign to sensitize the public on the need for more women to embrace and pursue education as this is a catalyst for active women participation in politics. It is also recommended that coercive legislations should be made at all levels against every form of discrimination against women.

Also, Cynthia Cockburn’s book titled *In the Way of Women: Men’s Resistance to Sex Equality in Organisations*,¹⁵ denounces patriarchy as a system that sets out to oppress and exploit the female gender. Cockburn explained that male resistance to the urge of their female counterpart to change the status quo in the society is logically out of place as it would result in

diminished prestige. She then added as a note of diminished that the society needs a thorough socialization to enable men support women's participation in politics.

Furthermore, J. A. Tickner in her book, titled *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspective on Achieving Global Security*,¹⁶ avers that international politics is a man's world, in that it is a world inhabited by diplomats, soldiers and international civil servants most of whom belong to the male gender. She goes further to state that there is limited evidence that women played much of a role in shaping foreign policy in countries of the world, particularly in the so called "third world" countries in the twentieth century. According to Tickner, masculinity and politics have a long and close relationship, given the fact that the features associated with 'manliness' – such as toughness, courage, power, independence and even physical strength – have throughout the course of history, been those most valued in the conduct of politics and its affairs, particularly international politics. Continuing Tickner adds that manliness has also frequently been associated and has been seen as acts of bravery and applauded in the name of defending one's country. This celebration of male power, Tickner avers, produces more of a gender dichotomy than actually exists in reality. While this book is rich in content, it however did not feature discussions on the core aspects of this research work.

Chapterization

Chapter one: Background To The Study

This chapter began with a background information and brief introduction to the research topic in view. It further revealed the aim and objectives of the study, the scope of, as well as the methodology employed in the study. Also, it attempted a review of some related pieces of literature, and finally a chapter synopsis of the research topic.

Chapter Two: A Brief Introduction of Nigerian Women in Politics

This chapter discusses Nigerian women in politics, with a background from pre-colonial times to post-independence Nigeria.

Chapter Three: A Biographical Sketch on Doris Ayanka Imalele

This chapter attempted a biographical sketch of Doris Ayanka Imalele. It discusses her family background, early life and education.

Chapter Four: Doris Ayanka Imalele in Politics

This chapter examines Doris Ayanka Imalele emergence in active politics.

Chapter Five: Challenges Confronting Women in Politics: Doris Ayanka Imalele as a Case Study

This is the final chapter of this study. This chapter examines the challenges of women in Nigerian politics as well as assesses their role and contributions to the growth and development of the country's politics.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER TWO

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF NIGERIAN WOMEN IN POLITICS

According to Karunmi, Nigerian women have generally not had the same opportunities which men have had overtime in terms of political participation in the country. This she argues is a consequence of the nature of socialization the women acquire of their expected role pattern in the society as women are culturally expected to be seen but not heard, as he succinctly states below:

... Nigerian society measures the success in life of a woman on how well she performs the tasks or roles of a wife, mother and home manager ...¹

She further asserts, that “societal expectation from women frown at their active participation in politics”.² This nature of socialization which the society fosters is a social construct greatly encouraged by cultural practices and other societal factors.

Women activities have been relegated to the background acting as a supportive agent to the men, fulfilling the adage, “that behind every successful man there is a woman”. Due to the above reasons, society still negates them in doing some jobs with the feeling that as weaker beings, they can only be reckoned with after the men. This has greatly affected the participation of women in most developmental programmes, politics and administration in particular.

Meanwhile, the 1999 constitution clearly prohibits all forms of discrimination in contesting for elective posts, including gender based discrimination. Hence, the social conditions are significantly responsible for the perceived discrimination and lack of active involvement of women in politics. In recent times however, civilization and exposure to formal education has made it possible for women to participate in those activities which were exclusive reserve of the men. Also, considerable attention have been focused on making women more prominent in terms of contributing to the economy and development of their countries, hence their participation in politics have been viewed to be of a major purpose nation building.³

Female education which has hitherto been neglected by the society has received an upward attention and this has more importantly ignited women to be more aware of the roles they could play in developing the nation through active participation in politics, as they have come out en-masse to vote and be voted for. Women's education has indeed been a strong force for women to attain self-fulfillment.

Nigerian Women in Politics in the Pre-Colonial Era

Prior to their colonial experience, Nigerian women played active and productive roles in their respective traditional political governance.⁴ Although women's political participation during pre-colonial era was not equal to that of men, the position of women in governance, according to Eno Blankson Ikpe,

was complementary rather than subordinate.⁵ Even in the most conservative of societies of Nigeria, women contributed tremendously to the development of their societies. In pre-colonial Nigeria, women occupied important roles in the traditional political life and in their different regions, they were actively engaged in politics and held decision-making roles in the governmental institution in their respective regions.⁶ The extent of women's participation in the public sphere in the pre-colonial Nigeria however, depended very much on how their particular society was organized, whether in the form of monarchy like the Yoruba kingdom or as republican like the Igbo tribes.⁷ The traditional Nigerian society was segregated between genders which enabled the measurement of power and achievements. The complementary role of women was however embedded in sex segregation, which determined gender position, status and power in the society and provided them their own spheres of operation and control.⁸ Certain political structures, which allowed for power sharing between men and women were articulated and firmly put in place. Women for instance, had access to political participation through a complex and sophisticated network of relationship, rights and control of power with men in certain societies, their role were complementary or subordinate in others.⁹

This however, does not mean that women occupied equal roles with men in the society, as there were very few women who possessed political

power in the pre-colonial Nigeria. Only very few women were initiated into traditional cults such as Ogboni, Osugbo, Ekpo, Ekpe, Eyo, etc.¹⁰ Some notable women in the traditional political governance in the South West Nigeria included the Erelu, Ayaba and Olori (king's Wives, Iyalode (Women's Leader), Iyalaje (Market Women's Leader), Yeye Oba (King's Mother) and Iya-olosa (Goddess priests), Moremi of Ife, Efusetan of Ibadan and Emotan of Benin. Also, one cannot undermine the significant role of Iya Afin, Iya Agan and Iya Abiye to the palace administrations of the various kingdoms.¹¹ Similarly, the influence and contributions of Queen Amina of Zaria to the political development of the Northern Nigeria's emirate and the achievement of Kambasa of Bony in the dim pre-colonial past are by no means negligible. The change of government from the Hausa aristocracy to the Fulani/Muslim hegemony however, totally excluded women from the public sphere. After the reign of Amina in the pre-Islamic past of Zaria, there was no woman who sat in the court of any Hausa ruler.¹² As argued by Ibrahim Suleiman, Islam made strict division of the spheres for the different genders, and women were not to be seen in the public spheres.¹³

Furthermore, Ikpe contends that that women's participation in public life in pre-colonial Benin Empire was limited as "there was no women representation among the various grades of chiefs". She opined that men dominated the different craft guilds and even controlled the markets as agents

of the Benin King.¹⁴ The only important female political figure then, according to her, was the Iyaoba (King's Mother) with her court at Urelu. She did not sit in the Oba's council and as such did not take part in decision making. Some of them, such as Iyaoba Idia, reputed to have contributed personally to the success of Esiegie's campaigns against Idah, were powerful and contributed to the successful reign of their sons. They however, did not act as spokespersons for women in Benin.¹⁵

In the riverine Igbo societies such as Onitsha, Asaba, Osomari and Illah, there was the institution of the queen, the Omu. Though the Omu wielded great authority in the society among the women, her position was based on loyalty to the Obi (king), thus limiting the power of the office. Nevertheless, the administrations of the community's affairs in Igboland was not without due consultation between the men and women groups.¹⁶

Despite the lack of sufficient literature and history that captures the relevance of women in that era and the fact that conventional African history provides only fragmentary images of women, the pre-colonial Nigeria though a patriarchal society, women were not completely left out of the political scene. However, the coming of Westernization destroyed their political positions and then marginalized them in the modern political institutions.¹⁷

Nigerian Women in Politics in the Colonial Era

According to M. Lewu, women's poor participation in politics, like many other problems in Nigeria, has a deep root in the system carved and imposed by colonialism.¹⁸ This according to the author began with the colonial occupation, starting with the fusion of the three regions (Yoruba in the southwest, the Igbo in the southeast, and the Hausa/Fulani in the North) to the Nigeria's independence and its governance, and then to the post independent Nigeria. Colonialism played a significant role in the political participation of women in Nigeria. The advent of colonialism and its attendant political and economic subjugation subsequently entrenched the masculinity of politics and subordinated the women under the men. Colonial administration created a patriarchy government in which women were not allowed to hold any authoritative positions.¹⁹ Thus, the lack of recognition of the Nigerian women political/leadership role in the mainstream politics in Nigeria today is traceable to colonial invention.

According to Ajayi, colonial administration restructured the feminine relevance in governance by divesting the women of their political powers.²⁰ This was exacerbated by the policy introduced in which men were believed to have the potential of activeness in the society; and those that were lucky to receive some education got recruited into the colonial overlords. The colonial administration gender policies eroded female participation both in politics and

economy as women were denied both electoral and job opportunities. This practice, to a large extent, served to reinforce and generalize patriarchal values in the country and significantly marked the beginning of low participation of the females in the formal agencies of government, a phenomenon that has continued till date.²¹ As Ajayi points out, a section of the women in South Western Nigeria voted for the first time in the nation's electoral history in the 1959 general elections, while their Northern counterparts were disenfranchised and it was not until 1976, fifty-four years after the elective principle was introduced to Nigeria, that the Northern women first enjoyed franchise rights.²²

In furtherance of the colonial masters' attempt to restructure the traditional African economies in order to make them ready market for European manufacturers and sources of cheap raw materials for their factories, only men were granted economic power in the production of export crops while the women were left to concentrate on the production of food crops.²³ All these have resulted in gender insensitivity in the design and implementation of public policy and have significantly assisted in perpetuating gender inequality in various gamut of the country's social-economic life. At the same time, the masculinity of politics was so entrenched that the machinery put in place during the colonial period systematically rendered women invisible as they were considered unsuitable for the rigours of public life;

hence they were not allowed to vote, to contest elections, to sit in parliament or to be employed in the civil service.²⁴

Despite the alienation of women from the mainstream of Nigerian politics during colonial administration, the Nigerian womenfolk made itself relevant by its contributions to nationalist movements, which constituted vanguards against the colonial administration. Women political activism dates back to 1929/30 Aba women riot against colonial tax policies. The Ngwa women's opposition against the municipalisation of their community in 1954, the Eastern Region women's opposition to new school fees in 1958; and the series of protests between 1946 and 1958 by the Abeokuta Women's Union led by Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti were invaluable in the country's struggle for independence.²⁵ A major landmark achievement in the political development of women during the colonial era was the formulation of a women's political party in 1944 spearheaded by Mrs. Oyinkan Abayomi.²⁶ At the individual levels however, women, notably: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Margaret Ekpo, Gamboare Sawaba, participated in the anti-colonial political struggle, and took part in the negotiations for independence.

Sadly, the limited gains made by women did not translate into participation in decision making during this colonial period. Men dominated in the first political parties while actively depending on material and mobilization support from women. The Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP),

National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), and Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) garnered varying levels of support from women's groups. However, women did not feature prominently in the leadership of these and other parties during the nationalist era and after independence. In the 1958 elections for instance, only Wurola Esan got appointed to the Senate of 36 members, while no woman was elected to the 312-member House of Representatives and none was in the Federal cabinet.²⁷

Nigerian Women in Politics in the Post-Colonial Era

Ayandiji Daniel Aina asserts that the low participation of women in politics was fostered by the nature of post-colonial politics. He argues that though women's political participation witnessed a rising trend but showed a disturbing low profile participation in political development of Nigeria state.²⁸ Similarly, Emmanuel Ojo opines that the 'acrimonious' politics of the post-independence era was detrimental to women's participation. Politics and political parties became ethnic, paternalistic and personality based. Women were expected to support politicians from their own ethnic area without any consideration whatsoever for their personal interests.²⁹ As party and ethnic allegiance became more important than gender solidarity, women lost their power of collective action, which was important in their agitations during the colonial era.

From 1960–1965 there were only two female legislators in the federal parliament and three others in the Eastern House of Assembly. Four female legislators in the whole of the country were a number that was so negligible as to give women the necessary influence over decision-making. The imposition of military, an era that followed this period from 1966 did not foster the participation of women in politics and very little was heard of women at the helm of affairs.³⁰ Military rule was an all-male affair and while it lasted women played only a peripheral role. No woman was appointed military governor, though there were some qualified women in the military set-up. However, in 1967, when Nigeria was divided into 12 States by General Yakubu Gowon, 1 woman was appointed each as commissioners into East Central and Lagos, while Oyo State had two women commissioners.³¹ The Constituent Assembly of the General Olusegun Obasanjo regime in 1975 had no single female members out of its 50 members. It was the era of military dictators who had little regards for the much cherished constitutional interest balancing. It also disturbed the proper functioning of women organization as pressure groups since they were banned. Women did not feature prominently during the preparations made by the Murtala/Obasanjo regime for returning power to civilians. No woman was appointed to the fifty-member Constitutional Drafting Committee, very few women were elected into the Local Government Councils during the 1976 elections, and only Mrs. Janet

Akinrinade was elected to the Constituent Assembly. Four other women were appointed to the 250 member assembly.³²

The second republic did not witness any significant difference with respects to women political participation despite renewed efforts to give women a chance to contribute to national development. Although from 1979, women have made desperate efforts to enter into representative politics but with little success, women recorded low representation in the Senate, the House of Representative and the States House of Assembly. Only 3 ministers, 1 out 96 senators and 11 out of a total of 450 members of the House of Representatives were female. In all the 19 states of the federation, there was no female representation in all the State Houses of Assembly, neither was there a female chairperson nor councilor at the local government level.³³ With the collapse of the second republic, women again fizzled out of relevance in the two-year regime of General Mohammed Buhari. From the mid-1980s however, the military started appointing a few women now and then to positions of authority. Thus the coming of General Ibrahim Babangida in 1985 changed the attitude of military rulers to women leadership. One important aspect of the rising profile of women in political life was the phenomenon of First Lady Syndrome.³⁴ Under this auspices, the Better Life for Rural Women was created and was later renamed Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) by the succeeding First Lady.

Women's Political Participation in Nigeria; 1999–2015

The fourth republic which began in 1999 saw women taking a similar low participation in the Nigeria's political process. The 1999 general elections saw only 181 positions won by women out of the 11, 881 available positions throughout the country. The elections saw only five (4.6%) women out of 109 senators elected into the Senate, while 13 (3.6%) women were elected into the House of Representatives of 360 seats i.e. 6.3 percent women representation in the national parliament. While there were 36 gubernatorial seats, no female featured. Nigeria had only one female deputy Governor– Chief Kofoworola Akerele-Bucknor, Deputy Governor of Lagos State (1999–2003), and of the 990 seats available for the States House of Assembly in the country only 12 (1.21%) women were elected. At the local level, out of the 774 local government chairpersons across the nation, only 9 were women and only 143 out of the 8,700 councillors were women.³⁵

The poor performance of women in this election was the basis for the national summit for all women politicians organised by the International Human Rights Law Group, Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) and Gender and Development Action (GADA) held on June 28, 2002 in Abuja. The objective of the summit was to enhance women's active participation in Nigerian politics. Despite all efforts geared at improving women's participation in politics in Nigeria, the 2003 elections did not witness

any significant improvement. In the elections that held that year (2003) only 21 (6.1%) women out of the 339 member worn seats in the House of Representatives. Similarly, of 109 senatorial seats, only 3 (2.7 %) women were elected in to the Senate, which is just 8.8 percent women representation in the national parliament.³⁶ Of the 36 gubernatorial seats available, no woman was elected and of the 990 seats available for the States House of Assembly in the country, 38 (3.84%) women were elected (Adu, 2008:27). In 2007 only 25 (6.9%) women out of the 358 seats were elected into the House of Representatives and 9 (8.3%) women out of the 109 seats were elected in to the Senate, that is 7.3 percent women representation in the national parliament while, out of the 36 gubernatorial seats available, no woman was elected and of the 990 seats available for the States House of Assembly in the country, 54 (5.5%) women were elected.³⁷

Available records from the database of the Independence National Electoral Commission (INEC) reveals that in the 2007 general elections, a total 7160 candidates (both men and women) contested in the April elections. Of this number, only 628 women representing 8.8% of the total candidates participated. A total 3141 candidates contested for seats in the National Assembly (799 candidates for the senate and 2342 candidates for the House of Representatives). Of this number, only 209 or 6.7% were women (59 or 7.4% women for Senate and 150 or 6.4% women for House of Representative). The

analysis above indicates a 2%, 4% and 6% women representation in 1999, 2003 and 2007 respectively.

Though poor, the trend however shows an improvement in women representation. This can be attributed to the conscious affirmative efforts of the Obasanjo administration to involve more women in his political administration. Consequently, political parties took a decision to waive for the women the payment of pre-registration levies for political aspirants in the country. In addition the national summit for all women politicians organised by the International Human Rights Law Group, Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) and Gender and Development Action (GADA) held on June 28, 2002 in Abuja with the objective of enhancing women's active participation in Nigerian politics and the awareness campaigns by these and other gender-related organisations and NGOs spurred women in the federation to vie for political candidature in the 2003 and 2007 general elections.³⁸

In the history of Nigeria, there has been no woman ever elected as state governor, while only 6 women have ever been elected as deputy Governors (from Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Imo, Plateau and Anambra States respectively). Thus the perception that democracy would automatically boost women political participation has not been validated after several years of return to civilian rule. Nigeria still falls short of the desired result of giving females the

opportunities and access to opportunities to advance socially, economically and politically.

The 2015 General Elections allowed democratic nations a chance to celebrate the rebirth of values of popular representation of the interest of the people. Nigerians have, through the recent 2015 General Elections, celebrated this important aspect of democracy. More importantly, the loss of an election by an incumbent Nigerian President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan to an opposition candidate and the acceptance of the unprecedented situation signify the coming of age of an ideal democracy. Meanwhile, it has not indicated a marked departure from the entrenched 'tradition' of circumscribing women's role in the political engineering process of even the 'benefits' accruing to them for their efforts. Gender cleavages still dictates who wins and who losses election.

Women Participation in Elective Positions in Nigeria

The Presidential Level

Professor Oluremi Sonaya, the first woman to ever qualify as a presidential candidate in Nigeria came on board in the 2015 general elections. She was involved in a primary with three other aspirants and emerged as the party's nominee as the presidential candidate of the party. The presidential result revealed that women participation can actually influence the politics of the country. The only female candidate polled some votes in all the states of the country. The result showed some reasonable votes where male candidates

were unable to get as much. For example, in Nasarawa State where Citizens Popular Party (CPP) candidate polled four votes, she polled forty eight votes. Also, the total number of votes she secured surpasses that of HOPE Democratic Party and United Democratic Party (UDP) parties during the election. While the total number of votes for HOPE was 7,393 and UDP was 9,147 votes, KOWA party had 12,524 votes.³⁹ With this development, experts and gender activists have continuously advocated the active participation of women in governance for the good of society. The result of the 2015 general elections in the country has however, not shown improved women representation in elective positions in the country. It should be noted that out of the fourteen candidates that contested for the seat of the president, the only woman amongst the contenders came out in the twelveth position. Just as men have always dominated the National Assembly, the 2015 election result did not present a different picture in the number of women who will represent their constituencies in the next four years. However, many Nigerians saw in the audacious candidacy the possibility of real change and a clear departure from what the country experienced so far as a nation.

The Gubernatorial Level

The gubernatorial candidate of the All Progressive Congress, APC in Taraba State Aisha Jumai Al-Hassan would have made history in the last gubernatorial election in the state as the first woman to scale the hurdles of

electioneering campaign and break the jinx that has befuddled Nigerian women over the years from emerging successful at the polls as governors, but for the outcome of the election which was not in her favour in the gubernatorial election. “Mama Taraba” as she was fondly called, almost made it but then, the near success syndrome that has been the lot of many Nigerian women in politics cut short her joy. Her expectations were high that she would emerge successful considering the direction of some results earlier reeled out by INEC.⁴⁰ But suddenly, the result of the election was declared inconclusive and then, a re-run that finally dashed her hope when the PDP candidate was declared winner.

The Legislature Level

In all, eight women made it to the 109 members’ senate as opposed to the seven elected in 2011. Three of the eight women senators are of the All Progressive Congress (APC) while the rest five are from the People Democratic Party (PDP). The 2015 general elections was able to add one female to the seven in the 2011 Senate.⁴¹ This is still far from what is expected of a balanced assembly.

Deputy Governorship Position

The 2015 gubernatorial elections produced four women deputy governors. They are Oluranti Adebule (Lagos State), Yetunde Onanuga (Ogun State), Ipalibo Banigo (Rivers State) and Cecilia Ezeilo (Enugu State). It is

disheartening to observe that only few women emerged winners in the various positions they contested for both at the party primaries and in the general elections. Despite improved political consciousness of women and the various objectives of the National Gender Policy, it is disappointing that women still occupy less than eight percent of elective positions at all levels of governance in the country. The “domino theory” of patriarchy and masculinity which predominantly characterised the Nigerian society is still a dominant force that controls the entire polity.⁴²

Men still exclusively dominate Nigeria’s political landscape and this reflects in the gap in the number of seats won in general elections from 1999 till date on the basis of gender. Be that as it may, women have benefitted more in selective or appointive positions since 1999 and in fact, in some instances, they have been compensated with 35% inclusion in all appointive positions. Women have occupied many sensitive appointive positions which have expectedly improved their voices in public affairs. For example, Dr. Okonjo Iweala (who served as Minister of Finance and coordinating minister for the Nigerian economy), no doubt, has played significant role in not only the political economy of Nigeria, she has also set a pace at the international scene. In a nutshell, the empirical evidences as given above depicts the potency or otherwise of the contribution of women in the formation and restructuring of the Nigerian economy and politics in general. It then means that women can

play active roles in shaping the direction of Nigerian politics even far beyond the imaginations of the male folk.

By any standard, however, women participate in politics as voters, party supporters and usually attend political rallies in large number. Some even run for top political offices (the example of Sarah Jibril and Professor Oluremi Sonaya of the KOWA Party who contested for the office of President with Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari respectively and Hon. Mulikat who unsuccessfully (albeit robustly) vied for the seat of Speaker, House of representative is apt in this direction). The 2006 census puts Nigerian women at about half the population of the entire country. Despite this numerical advantage and the massive participation in voting, less than 20% of political offices are held by women. Women representation in Nigeria politics has, over the years, been less than encouraging. This poses a challenge and narrows the chances of getting more women in decision-making structures.

Women have actually proved their strength and competence in the society in all spheres even in male dominated professions but women involvement in public decision making processes in the emergent Fourth Republic in Nigeria has been characterized by low representation. For all intents and purposes, it appears that the Nigerian situations seem to defy the political theory that political power derives from political participation because women participate fully in elections in Nigeria but without full representation.

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CHAPTER THREE

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH ON DORIS AYANKA IMALELE

The backgrounds of most female politicians are sometimes defined by their upbringing. Many of the female politicians in Nigeria today are so because they had parents in the field of politics who influenced them. An example of such female politician in Edo is Omosede G. Igebinedion who is the daughter of Esama of Benin, Chief Gabriel Osawaru Igebinedion¹, she is described as someone who has a privileged background.² Another example is Mrs Eghe Ogbemudia, senior daughter of former military governor of Old Mid-West (Bendel) State, late Chief Samuel Ogbemudia,³ e.t.c. These women already have a way paved for them on politics. However it is not true that women from backgrounds with no political connection are non-existent. It might be difficult for these women as they are the ones creating their pathway in the field of politics but they certainly make history. A clear example is Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele.

Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele is a politician, business woman and Pastor. She is a native of Eku, Ethiope East Local Government Area although she finds herself largely drawn to Edo as her maternal great-grandmother was from the Ikpeyan family of Edo State and her husband Mr. Christopher Oghofomwande Imalele hails from Edo as well. She was born in Warri, Delta

State, on 4th May, 1965 to a family of six, four girls and two boys. She is the last child of (Late) Pa Oboh W.Ayanka and (Late) Mama E.Ayanka. She grew up in an average family as her father was a teacher and businessman and her mother a trader, sadly she lost her father at a tender age which prompted her to look up to her elder brother as a father. She grew up with her elder sister in Lagos where she spent a significant part of her growing years.⁴



Dr. (Mrs.) Doris Ayanka Imalele.

Family Life

Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele is happily married to Mr. Christopher Oghofomwande Imalele and they are blessed with four (4) children. She is also a grandmother. According to Dr. (Mrs.) Doris Ayanka Imalele, her husband is her backbone and has been her strength, pushing her to accomplish her dreams as a wife, mother, teacher, businesswoman and politician. Her children have been a constant reminder to strive to be greater as she wants to be part of the change in the world world for the betterment of the younger generation.⁵

Educational Background

Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele had her primary education in Surulere, mainland Lagos where she lived with her elder sister and her husband. She had her secondary education at Apapa Methodist School. Consequently, her elder sister's husband was transferred to Benin City where she continued her education at Victory Preparatory School off Ewa Road, Benin City. Along the line she moved to Itohan Grammar School where she sat for her West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). She had only two Credits 'C' and Pass 'P' in the other subjects. Thus, Dr. (Mrs.) Doris Ayanka Imalele went to the Institute of Continuing Education (I.C.E) Benin City for her Higher Secondary Certificate (H.S.C); though she couldn't finish- a reason she attributed to negative peer pressure.⁶

Later on, she moved to Warri where her WASSCE result got her admitted into College of Education, Warri. During her course of study at the College of Education in Warri she resided with her elder brother, Late Dr E.E Ayanka sometimes shuffling to stay with her mother who also lived in Warri, Delta State. Unable to get into the university with only two ‘Credits’ in ^{her} WASSCE she had to reseat another WASSCE in order to further her education. Thus she took another WASSCE at Ugbokodo Secondary School in Delta State where she made an outstanding result of all ‘A’s.’⁷

She also sat for the famous Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination but couldn’t make it. She therefore applied for Direct Entry into Bendel State University, Abraka where she graduated with a Second Class Upper in Fine and Applied Arts. After finishing her first degree at the Bendel State University she wanted to further her education so she went for her Master’s Degree in Education Administration and Management in the University of Benin (UNIBEN), Benin City, while she was pregnant with her twin babies. She has the spirit of a warrior one might say as she had to stay up late night reading or climb flight of stairs to get to her class. Mrs. Doris Ayanka kept reaching for the sky and after acquiring her Master’s Degree at the University of Benin she acquired her PhD in Education Administration and Management from Delta State University (DELSU), which she stated was greatly influenced and inspired by her elder brother, (Late) Dr. E. E Ayanka

who was a Doctor and life patron at University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH).⁸

Doris as Business Career

During her course of study in the college of education Warri, she worked per time with her elder sister at Trans-Marine West Africa, as the Public Relations Officer (P.R.O). She became a secondary school teacher at Adolor College in 1990/91 with her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Fine and Applied Arts from Bendel State University, Abraka. However just as soon as she got the teaching job it was terminated by the then military government of Oyarebulem in 1991; an occurrence she recounted as ‘devastating’. Sequel to the termination of her appointment at Adolor College, she became a full time housewife; a situation she was not happy and satisfied with which made her sought for employment in the private sector. She was offered the job of an instructor by (Late) Prof. Wangboje in his Art Gallery at Wire Road. Later on she went into her private business known as Twins Plaza (named after her twin babies) which comprised a supermarket and general merchandise. Her business was growing rapidly and in addition she began production of water (commonly known as pure water) production. Her business thrived and in no time she opened other branches. This was before her involvement in politics.⁹

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CHAPTER FOUR

DORIS AYANKA IMALELE IN POLITICS 2010-2021

There's been a barrier between women and politics for so long and this is owing to various reasons like patriarchy and corruption in the political system. According to Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala these barriers halt the progress of many women and give rise to the pipeline problem: the chant that there cannot be equal numbers of women presidents and prime ministers because they are not enough women and parliamentarians or ministers or members of political parties and it is impossible to end up being a leader without first being in one or all of these groups¹. However various women have chosen to break this barrier and have made a name for women in the Nigerian political sector. Some of the likes of such women are Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala who is presently the Director General of World Trade Organization and was the former Finance Minister in Nigeria in 2006. She's not only the first African to lead the organization but also the first female to occupy that position.² Other examples are Mrs. Franca Afegbua, Aisha Jumai Al-Hassan e.t.c. They may not have the same history and background but in common they share the same passion for politics just as Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele.

Doris Entrance into Politics

Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele began her political journey in the year 2010 with her first appointment as a member of the governing council in Eki Adolo and she was the second member. While she was there she got the experience of governing in schools and running it smoothly. There was politics in the council as they were fractions against the Provost and she was the only one against the aggression. She managed to unite them. When it came to the raising of funds she suggested pure water to raise the IGR level. She was also in a committee for upgrading the school and they got an approval for Eki Adolor to be upgraded to University standard; giving degrees in university level. She was proud of the accomplishment and was fulfilled as she had impacted greatly in the school.³

Doris Political Contribution in Edo State

After acquiring her PhD, in Educational Management and Administration, Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele focused on becoming relevant in the state. She eventually started working with the Governor Godwin Obaseki and chief of staff, Taiwo Francis Akerele. She was interviewed face to face by the governor who expressed his wishes to work with her. Consequently she was appointed Senior Special Assistant (SSA) to Governor in Education Planning in 2017. She represented the governor and Chief of Staff at functions

in and outside Edo State. She also replied letters and interviewed people who wanted to see the governor and chief of staff. During one of the functions she represented Edo State at the British Consulate to deliberate on matters concerning education. She succeeded in inviting them to Edo States to impact their ideologies on the Edo educational system which they honored.⁴

Later on, still an SSA, she was appointed Manager of National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) in Uhumwode and Orhionmwon local government areas in Edo State in 2018/19. She described this job as her most challenging in the field of politics. The caterers were to be chosen specifically from the community where the school is located as stated by the governor but foreign caterers from other communities wanted to also be on the job, this created tension which Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele sorted out. She also visited the community to meet with the Enogies and Odionweres. The job also required a lot of travelling so most times she was on the road. However after so much hard work and turmoil, the school feeding programme was a success and Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele doesn't take all the credit. According to her, The School Feeding Programme was achieved through collaboration with the Ministry of Education, SUBEB (State Universal Basic Education Board), Ministry of Agriculture and the community people as well. They were able to flag off in January, 2019 and the Vice President, Professor Yemi Osinbanjo was present to do the flag off. It was a huge success.⁵



Dr. (Mrs.) Doris Ayanka Imalele, (last on the left) at the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP).

Over sixty (60) schools benefitted from the School Feeding Programme in Uhumwode and Orhionmwon local councils, adding that over 261 caterers were engaged and earned a daily income from the programme. The programme also boosted the local agricultural economy as farmers in the communities supplied the products used in the NHGSFP.⁶ Edo State Programme Manager, National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP), Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele, said that Governor Godwin Obaseki supported the scheme by

ensuring that pupils in primary 4 to 6 are included in the programme, as against that of the Federal Government which takes care of only those from primary 1-3.⁷



Happy pupils who benefitted from the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP)

Consequently Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele went on a leave to take care of her daughter and newly born grandchild and on her return; her seat in the office was replaced with someone else. Moving on she got an appointment with the Ministry of Education in Edo, 2019. She was put in a committee to

reappraise the senior secondary school curriculum which was done successfully. Unfortunately after the election in 2020, her appointment as SSA to the Governor was terminated.⁸

In addition, Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele has held other positions in politics. In 2020, she headed her unit in government and was able to deliver her unit and monitor her result to the polling collation center. She was in the Strategic Campaign Team for her Excellency, Mrs. Betsy Obaseki, she described the experience as great and her Excellency as her mentor. She's also a member and the woman coordinator in Edo State wing of NACCIMA (Nigeria Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture), an association that ensures the creation of a conducive atmosphere for the pursuit of commerce, industry and all other forms of economic activities of interest to the private sector. Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele is currently vying for the position of commissioner and has other plans for politics in the nearest future. She has been greatly influenced in politics by her Excellency, Mrs. Betsy Obaseki and other state women leaders such as Lady Uwa, Mrs. Osamo etc. Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele has been involved in some goodwill such as sharing of nose mask for the residents of Edo state during the COVID19 period.⁹

Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele recalled events of people she trusted backstabbing her which mostly occurs in the game of politics as most people want all the power for themselves. However Mrs. Doris describes herself as godfearing and puts those that wish her ill or evil in the hands of God. They were lies and rumors spread about her during her involvement in politics to scare her away from participating in politics but she stood firm and her family stood by her through all the odds.¹⁰

Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele advises young girls to focus on their education and keep furthering their education by getting Masters, PhD and so on. Education according to her gives women power and politics is power. According to her the major challenge of women in politics in Nigeria is the patriarchy system that endows the man and subordinates the woman. It makes men feel a woman shouldn't lead them because they are the weaker gender. This, she also experienced in politics. She advises that women should support and show more love to each other in order to promote women involvement in politics. According to Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele, it is true that the subjugation of women in Nigeria politics by old political warhorses and suffragists is commonplace in our communities. But what is common is not normal; it is high-priority that we aggressively refuse to see it as normal. We cannot continue to live in an era of complaints when actions would yield tangible results, therefore women should come together as a force against all the

challenges posed against women who are in politics or aspire to be in politics.¹¹

Mr. Stewart Osazuwa, the then Chief Press Secretary of the local government recalls his experience of working with Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele as wonderful.¹² He was given the opportunity of working with her during the Edo State Clean Up Drive in 2020 where the state governor instructed state holders to gather volunteers to get the local government and market places cleaned up. The exercise which held simultaneously across the state was coordinated by the chairmen of the 18 local government areas, the Ministry of Youths, Edo State Waste Management Board, the state's Social Investment Office, Edo State Skills Development Agency (EdoJobs) and the Edo Volunteer Voters Assembly (EVVA), among other youth groups.¹³ Members of local government houses and other key players participated as well as volunteers from respective spheres. Mr. Stewart states "Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele's interest to getting things done is quite encouraging , although she may not be part of the planning process but in terms of getting the work done her activism is resourceful."¹⁴

Mrs. Judith Uduebholo who was a caterer employed during the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP) describes Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele as a time conscious person and motivator pushing them

to do their best in the kitchen. She described her as generous as she shared money on most days to the staff who were on duty to buy food or drinks for themselves.¹⁵

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- 14 Oral interview with Mr. Stewart Osazuwa.
- 15 Oral interview with Mrs. Judith Uduebholo, 41 years, caterer/market woman, Uselu Market, 25th July 2021.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHALLENGES COMFRONTING WOMEN IN POLITICS: DORIS

AYANKA IMALELE AS A CASE STUDY

Women's participation and access to formal political power structures vary across countries. This chapter being the final chapter of this study focuses on some of the challenges militating against active participation of women in Edo state politics.

Socio-Economic Development

Alexander and Welzel refer to this theory as economic modernity: the classical modernization perspective.¹ This is of the view which focuses on economic development and considers increases in democracy and human choice as direct outcome of economic development. In relations to gender equality, this approach holds that economic development is central to increasing the pool of women eligible for positions of social power.² Hence it is argued that a country's level of development correlates with women's participation in politics and decreases existing barriers to political activity and participation. These scholars establish that increased economic development associates with a more broad based distribution of educational and occupational resources. Greater access to educational and occupational resources increases women's chances of professional development, creating a

larger pool of women eligible for power positions such as political office. Others note that higher levels of economic development bring more social services to societies. These developmental measures such as increase in per capita, gross domestic product, women in the work force and women literacy positively influence the percentage of women's political participation.³

However, though greater access to educational and occupational resources increases women's chances of professional development, creating a larger pool of women eligible for power positions such as political office, Dr. (Mrs.) Ayanka Omalele noted that it was also one of the challenges that her political enemies used against her at certain times. According to her, they saw her academic qualification/portfolio (Ph.D.) as a threat to their ambition as most of them only had first degrees and Master's Degree.⁴ Therefore, despite the fact that socio-economic advancement increases women's chances and eligibility of active political participation, it also possess a threat to others, particular the uneducated or averagely educated ones.

Cultural Factor

Cultural norms and customary practices have great influence on women's political participation. According to Bari, one of the cultural ideological factors that can affect women's political participation is patriarchy system.⁵ Patriarchy is characterized by male kinship, permanent marriage and

paternal authority. Patriarchy can be defined as a set of social relations with a material base that enables men to dominate women. Here, the central focus of power is the father, and the factual importance of motherhood kinship structure and history is denied.⁶

In other words, patriarchy describes a distribution of power and resources within the family in a manner that men maintain power and control of resources, and women are powerless and dependent on men.⁷ Thus, men dominate the political game, and set the standards for evaluation. This negative factor entrenches feelings of inferiority complex and other vices that perpetually put women at a disadvantaged position. Also, gender role ideology does not only create duality of femininity and masculinity, but also places them in hierarchical fashion in which women are subordinated to men.⁸

Patriarchy as a challenge to women's active participation in Nigerian politics has also been identified by Omalele who pointed out that men gave her a tough time in her political quest simply because she is a woman. According to Omalele, male chauvinism poses a serious challenge to active women participation in politics, as most men in Nigeria's political space still feel that it is culturally out of place for them to be headed by a woman; hence they would do everything possible for women not to achieve their political ambition, especially in key and strategic political positions and offices.⁹

The Institutional Design Factor

This view holds that a country's institutional characteristics either enable or constrain women's political participation. Three aspects of the political system find support in this literature: the strength of democracy, the electoral system, and gender electoral quota systems. Thus democratic institutions that preserve and socialize free and equal citizenship supply women with more rights and more channels for making their voices heard.¹⁰

The impact of institutional variation within democracies on women's political involvement has also been considered. Most prominent among the arrangements considered is the influence of electoral systems. Electoral systems affect women's paths to parliament by structuring party elites' incentive or disincentive to run women candidates. In this regard therefore, proportional representation system has been found to have a positive impact on the percentage of women in parliament.¹¹ This is because these electoral systems have a higher number of seats per district and offer parties a greater chance of winning more than one seat per district.

Lack of True Internal Democracy

Political parties in Nigeria are fond of selecting a consensus candidate as flag bearers of the party during the elections. Democracy is not usually allowed to play its full part in elective positions. In a situation whereby a

candidate is highly favoured, the political leaders will not allow contest to have its full sway. Within a period of time, they would have declared a consensus candidate to the disappointment of other candidates who are willing and even in some cases more qualified for the position.

Lack of Funds

Finance is a major factor for the survival of every organisation. It is the bedrock upon which successful institution rests. First, to understand the financial problem of women in Nigerian politics, we have to fathom the type of politics in Nigeria. Politics in Nigerian parlance could be understood within the framework of monetization. Any political contestant must have prepared to acquire the entire necessary wherewithal to make him or her successful in the electoral contest. The cost of running electoral contestation in Nigeria is too exorbitant for women to bear (this includes; party nomination form which runs into millions of naira, election campaigns, gifts to god fathers, people mobilization and money for political party leaders, etc.). This financial burden discourages women to run in democratic contests.

Women hating on themselves

Women are said to be their own worst enemies. An article by “Women in Higher Education” pointed out that relationships are central to women’s lives and they expect their relationships to be on a level playing field, and that

when something/anything affects this balance, such as promotion, it raises feelings of insecurity.¹²

The article underscores the reasons why on entering a gathering, women quickly, but silently, do an assessment and judge themselves on looks, age and sex appeal. Though women hate to admit it, they still judge others on these. When women find themselves in a marginalised position within the family, they may react by trying to be extremely good, or go on the offensive to prove they are smarter and better than other women. This implies that women are more likely to judge their abilities against those of other female colleagues than males.¹³ Generally, jealousy is usually the problem but it has not been subjected to any serious research. It is just a feeling, and women themselves do confess to it. This point was also confirmed by Ayanka Omalele (during an oral interview), the case study of this research who recounted having similar experiences in her political career on several occasions; even from some of her female friends she considered closest to her.¹⁴

This is manifested in the “pull her down-syndrome” where women condemn female political aspirants by calling them names, assassinate their character and engage in smear campaigns thereby making women enemies of one another. Casual observation will support that women while in authority may be a little harsh over their female counterparts, and men are not spared

sometimes. This also is a major challenge to women voting for their counterparts in politics and this could have been to a large extent a factor responsible for low women support for Oluremi Sonaya of KOWA Party as a presidential candidate in the 2015 general elections.¹⁵ She also added that there is the general stereotype that women at high political levels bought their way to the top by “selling their bodies” to gain political support and favour from their male counterparts.

However, in order to succeed, Mrs. Ayanka Omalele advised women during an oral interview at her private residence that women must cooperate among themselves to win in a man’s world like Nigeria and refused to be used to pull down or limit their fellow women in whatever field of endeavour. They must agree to work together. Women have not been using their numerical strength to their advantage. It is believed that if all women will determine to give their votes to women aspirants, the chances will be quite high for women aspirants.¹⁶ But instead, you see men marginalising women in political party leadership with most parties’ hierarchy dominated by men. This could be linked to the comparably poor financial status of women to fund or support party activities in the country.

Violent Nature of Nigerian Politics

The violent nature of Nigerian politics has also been identified as yet another challenge to women's active participation in the country's politics. During the periods of campaigns, the political atmosphere is usually characterised by waves of assassinations, thuggery, murders, arson, looting and kidnappings. The incidence of Mrs. Emily Olufunke Omope-Aborishade also known as Mrs. Thatcher, who was bathed with acid in Ekiti State in 2002 for her unwavering determination in the state politics was a case in point.¹⁷ The physical battles which often accompany electoral contests in Nigeria need to be addressed and this can be spearheaded by civil society organisations.

Lastly, women also find it hard to participate in politics due to family responsibilities and limited time available to them because of their dual roles in the productive and reproductive spheres. This point played itself in the case of Mrs. Ayanka Omalele who took a leave of absence from duty (when she was the Manager of School Feeding Programme in Edo State in 2019) to attend to her daughter that just put to bed, only for her to return and discovered her seat has been overtaken by "political maneuverers".¹⁸

In conclusion, this study has examined women in politics and their contributions to the socio-economic development in Nigeria; a case study of Mrs. Doris Ayanka Imalele. Despite global campaign for gender equality,

women's political representation in the country has failed to achieve the critical mass of 30% women's representation in the country's politics. The country's socioeconomic factors, political structures, historical heritages, political thuggery and gangsterism, societal norms and beliefs have created a culture that alienates women from the main stream of Nigerian politics. The imperative of democratic consolidation in Nigeria requires that women, who constitute half of the national population, should find prominence in the mainstream political development of the nation since democracy is only achievable on the altar of popular participation of every citizen of the society, males and females alike. It is therefore conclusive that any corrective measure adopted to address the low participation of women in Nigerian politics will only be superficial unless the nation's socioeconomic, cultural and political factors that limit women empowerment are decisively addressed.

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Doris Ayanka Imalele	56 years	Politician/business woman	Home of residence in Wasota.	13/7/2021
Judith Uduebhola	41 years	Caterer	Uselu Market	25/7/2021
Stewart Osasuzuwa	29 years	Politician/Programmer	Office in Wasota.	27/07/2012

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