

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

International politics, also known as global governance, has historically been shaped by power struggles, diplomacy, economic interests, and military conflicts. The Westphalian system of nation-states in 1648 established the principles of state sovereignty and non-interference, which formed the foundation of international relations.¹ Over time, the evolution of diplomacy and international cooperation led to the establishment of global institutions such as the League of Nations in 1919 and later the United Nations in 1945, which sought to maintain peace and promote collective security.²

Historically, men have dominated international politics, with global diplomacy and decision-making primarily being the responsibility of male leaders. From the European empires to the colonial administrations in Africa and Asia, governance structures were built on patriarchal traditions, reinforcing the exclusion of women from leadership positions.³ However, with the rise of human rights movements, feminist activism, and democratic reforms, women have increasingly gained access to political decision-making spaces. The 20th century marked significant milestones for women's political participation, with the suffrage movements securing voting rights for women in various countries. The first female heads of state, including Indira Gandhi of India, Golda Meir of Israel, and Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom, proved that women could wield power effectively.⁴ Yet, their leadership styles were often framed within traditional male-dominated

political frameworks, forcing them to adopt governance approaches that aligned with existing patriarchal structures.⁵

Despite these advancements, gender inequality in international politics remains a significant issue. Women still face barriers such as gender discrimination, cultural stereotypes, economic dependency, and political violence.⁶ Many studies highlight that the underrepresentation of women in decision-making bodies limits the development of inclusive policies that address gender disparities in economic, educational, and healthcare sectors.⁷ Although progress has been made, the global representation of women in political leadership remains low, with only 26.5% of parliamentary seats worldwide held by women as of 2022.⁸ This highlights the continued struggle for equal political participation. Women's engagement in politics is hindered by socio-cultural expectations, patriarchal norms, and inadequate economic empowerment, especially in developing nations.⁹

The establishment of gender quotas and advocacy movements has contributed to increasing women's political participation. Countries such as Rwanda, South Africa, and Ethiopia have made significant strides in integrating women into governance structures, with Rwanda achieving 61% female representation in its parliament the highest in the world.¹⁰ However, in many African countries, including Nigeria, Kenya, and Sudan, women continue to face institutionalized gender discrimination in governance. In Africa, the contributions of female leaders have been pivotal in shaping international policies on economic development, education, and security. Figures such as Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala of Nigeria, and Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

of South Africa have demonstrated how women's leadership can drive progressive reforms.¹¹ Their leadership challenges the notion that women are unsuited for high political offices, setting precedents for younger generations of female politicians.

Therefore, the study seeks to explore the lives of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili international politics Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili are two distinguished African women who have made significant contributions to global governance, sustainable development, and policy reform. Mohammed, a diplomat, environmentalist, and development expert, has played a crucial role in shaping international policies on sustainable development, climate change, and women's rights.¹² Her career in environmental policy and governance began in Nigeria, where she worked on development projects focused on environmental sustainability and economic empowerment. Her expertise led to her appointment as Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Post-2015 Development Planning, where she played a pivotal role in drafting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2017, she was appointed Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, making her one of the most influential African women in global politics.¹³ As a global leader, she has championed gender equality, poverty reduction, and climate action, emphasizing that sustainable development cannot be achieved without the inclusion of women in governance. Her continued advocacy for women's political empowerment highlights the importance of inclusive leadership in achieving equitable global progress.

Similarly, Obiageli "Oby" Ezekwesili is a renowned economist, policy expert, and political activist whose work has focused on economic transparency, anti-corruption initiatives, and gender equality

in leadership.¹⁴ She co-founded Transparency International, a global organization dedicated to combating corruption in governance. As Nigeria's Minister of Solid Minerals and later the Minister of Education, she introduced bold reforms to enhance transparency and improve educational infrastructure.¹⁵ Her international influence grew further when she served as the Vice President of the World Bank for Africa, where she focused on economic development, poverty alleviation, and women's financial empowerment. Beyond policy-making, she gained global recognition for leading the #BringBackOurGirls movement, which advocated for the rescue of over 200 Nigerian schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram in 2014.¹⁶ Her leadership in policy reform and governance demonstrates how female politicians can shape international politics beyond traditional political structures, proving that women's participation in governance leads to transformative change.

Despite the challenges of gender inequality, political exclusion, and structural barriers, women like Amina Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili continue to break barriers in international governance. Their achievements highlight the urgent need for more gender-inclusive policies, economic empowerment programs, and legislative reforms that promote women's full participation in global politics.¹⁷ As female leaders at the forefront of policy-making and advocacy, they serve as role models for future generations, reinforcing the idea that women's leadership is essential for global progress and sustainable development.

Aim and objectives

The aim of this study is to explore the role of women in international politics, specifically focusing on the lives of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili as case studies. However, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To know the biographies of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili.
2. To analyse the impact of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili on international politics.
3. To identify the challenges faced by Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili in international politics.

Scope and limitation of the Study

The study will focus on the role of women in international politics, specifically examining the lives and contributions of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili. The primary geographical regions under examination will include Nigeria, where both women have had significant political influence, and their involvement in international politics at the global level. The research is limited to analyzing the careers, challenges, and impacts of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili in the context of international politics. The study may not address the roles of other women in international politics or explore the broader spectrum of gender dynamics in political spheres globally. Additionally, the focus will be on the historical and political contexts in which

these women have operated, and may not fully account for emerging changes or new trends in women's political participation worldwide.

Significance of the Study

This research is important for highlighting the role of women in international politics, particularly through the case studies of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili. By thoroughly investigating their careers, challenges, and contributions, the study will shed light on the significant impact of these women in global political discourse. The study contributes to a better understanding of the growing role of women in shaping international policies and decisions. This insight will enhance the broader discussion on gender equality, women's empowerment, and their influence in political leadership across the globe. The study's exploration of the political paths of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili will provide crucial insights into the historical development and cultural importance of female political figures in Africa and beyond. By examining the challenges they faced, the study will also offer valuable perspectives on the barriers women encounter in international politics and how they navigate these obstacles. Additionally, this research will contribute to the field of political science, gender studies, and international relations, offering a comprehensive case study that enriches academic knowledge on the intersection of gender and global politics. It will be a useful resource for scholars and policymakers interested in promoting gender inclusivity in political spheres and addressing the challenges women face on the international stage.

Methodology

To ensure a comprehensive analysis of women in international politics, specifically focusing on Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili, this study will adopt a historical methodology combined with a system analysis approach to examine fundamental issues. A qualitative research design will be employed, incorporating visual and data analysis to interpret the impact and challenges faced by these figures. The referencing style to be adopted follows the Chicago Manual of Style guidelines. Furthermore, the study will utilize two main sources of data: primary sources and secondary sources.

Primary Sources

This research will use primary sources from two categories: archival records and oral interviews. These sources will include official documents, policy reports, and public addresses related to the international engagements of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili. Additionally, oral interviews will be conducted with informed individuals who have closely followed or worked alongside them in international politics. Interviewees will include diplomats, policymakers, academics, gender advocates, and experts in international relations, providing firsthand insights into their contributions, challenges, and impact on global governance.

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources will be reviewed throughout this study, including university libraries, research institutions, and public archives. These secondary materials will include books, journal articles, newspapers, policy papers, conference proceedings, and documentaries that focus on women in

international politics, with particular emphasis on the roles of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili. A significant portion of these materials will be sourced from academic databases, government publications, online repositories, and international organizations. The information obtained from these secondary sources will be crucial in complementing and enhancing the data collected from primary sources, thereby contributing to a comprehensive analysis of the subject.

Literature Review

In H. A. Idowu's study *Femocracy and the Quest for Women Empowerment and Development in Nigeria Under the Fourth Republic*, he explores the impact of women's participation in governance on national development. The study reveals that despite legal frameworks promoting gender equality, female representation remains significantly low in Nigerian politics.¹⁸ This work is particularly relevant to this research on *Women in International Politics: A Case Study of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili*, as both figures have played crucial roles in advocating for increased political representation of women in Nigeria and Africa at large.

D. T. Agbalajobi, in his work *Women's Participation and the Political Process in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects*, argues that women's political involvement in Nigeria is hindered by cultural norms and institutional barriers. He highlights that Nigeria has failed to meet the 30% women representation target set during the Beijing Declaration.¹⁹ This insight is crucial for understanding the structural challenges that Amina Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili faced in

their careers. By overcoming these obstacles, both women serve as case studies of resilience in African politics.

Ayşe Kaşıkırık and Nuray Karaoğlu, in their study *Gender Equality in the Election of the 27th Term Deputy*, analyze the progress of women's political representation in Turkey. Despite gaining voting rights in 1934, the proportion of women in parliament remains low. The study provides critical insights into the barriers that prevent female politicians from attaining leadership positions.²⁰ This research is particularly relevant to *Women in International Politics: A Case Study of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili*, as it offers a comparative perspective on the structural challenges faced by female leaders in governance. By understanding these systemic limitations, we can better appreciate the strategies employed by Mohammed and Ezekwesili to break through political hierarchies.

In B. Ogunleye's work, *Local Initiative: Key to Women's Voice in Global Decision Making for a Healthy Environment*, women's roles in governance extend beyond politics into broader socio-economic transformations. The study argues that grassroots mobilization has been instrumental in promoting women's participation in African politics.²¹ This study is particularly relevant in analyzing how Amina Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili leveraged their influence to advocate for policy changes that benefit women and marginalized communities in Africa.

In *The Position of Women in Political Participation in Turkey: Beyond Justice in Representation*, Ceren Avcil argues that women's political engagement is constrained by societal expectations and patriarchal structures. She highlights the need for institutional reforms that promote gender balance

in decision-making bodies.²² This perspective aligns with the research focus on *Women in International Politics: A Case Study of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili*, as both women have actively worked to dismantle gendered barriers in international politics. By analyzing their experiences, this study expands on Avcil's findings, demonstrating the practical implications of female leadership on global governance.

In *Right-wing Populism and Gendered Discourses*, Gülçin Özge Tan analyzes the role of conservative ideologies in limiting women's political participation. She argues that right-wing populism reinforces traditional gender norms, making it more difficult for women to access leadership roles.²³ This study is crucial for understanding the political environments on the research work titled *Women in International Politics: A Case Study of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili* as Amina Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili navigate. By challenging patriarchal structures, both leaders demonstrate the importance of gender-inclusive policies in international governance.

In *The Role of Gender Quotas in Enhancing Women's Political Participation in Uganda*, United Nations Women examines how affirmative action policies have shaped Uganda's governance landscape. The study highlights that reserved parliamentary seats for women have led to an increase in female lawmakers, yet cultural biases and economic constraints continue to limit women's full participation in decision-making.²⁴ This study is particularly relevant to *Women in International Politics: A Case Study of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili*, as it

provides insights into both the benefits and limitations of gender quotas as a tool for female political empowerment.

In the African Union Commission publication, *Women's Leadership and Governance in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities*, examines Kenya's gender quotas and constitutional amendments to increase female political participation.²⁵ The study highlights how economic dependence, electoral violence, and deep-rooted patriarchal traditions still hinder women's political ambitions. By analyzing Kenya's gender inclusion policies, this study contributes to *Women in International Politics: A Case Study of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili*, as it provides a comparative analysis of the challenges and opportunities for women's political leadership in Africa.

Ezgi Çolak and Olcay Bige Aşkun, in their comparative study *Women's Movement in Argentina and Turkey*, examine the similarities and differences in feminist political activism. Their research highlights the impact of grassroots movements in promoting women's rights and increasing female representation in governance.²⁶ This perspective is essential to understanding the advocacy efforts of Amina Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili, both of whom have worked to advance women's empowerment on a global scale. Their leadership reflects the importance of political activism in achieving gender equity.

In *Gender and Governance in Africa: Policy Recommendations for Inclusive Leadership*, the World Bank examines Ghana's low female representation in politics, averaging 13% over the last two decades. The report analyzes structural, financial, and social barriers that prevent women from

actively engaging in governance. The study suggests that political party structures and cultural biases significantly contribute to the exclusion of women from leadership positions.²⁷ This perspective is crucial for *Women in International Politics: A Case Study of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili*, as it highlights the systemic barriers that women face across Africa.

C. Asase's study *A Political Agenda for Nigerian Women* explores the historical marginalization of women in Nigerian politics and the need for systemic reforms. He argues that without affirmative action policies, achieving gender balance in governance remains unlikely.²⁸ This perspective is relevant in examining the leadership trajectories of Amina Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili, as both have contributed to efforts aimed at promoting women's participation in decision-making.

In *Women and Participation in Nigeria: The Imperative of Empowerment*, A. Eyinade discusses how economic and social empowerment programs can serve as catalysts for women's increased political participation. He argues that financial independence enables women to compete more effectively in political spaces.²⁹ This aligns with the work of Obiageli Ezekwesili, who has been a strong advocate for economic policies that empower women and enhance their access to leadership roles.

Chapter Outline

This study is divided into five chapters in order to achieve the aim and objectives of the study. The chapters are explained below:

Chapter One: Background to the Study

The focus is on the historical background of the study, objectives of the study; scope of the study; methodology, literature review, and the chapterisation.

Chapter Two: The Biographical Background of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili

This section discovers the biographical backgrounds of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili, providing an in-depth analysis of their early lives, education, and career trajectories. By examining key aspects such as their family backgrounds, academic achievements, and professional experiences, this chapter aims to highlight the foundations that shaped their roles in international politics. Additionally, by addressing how their personal and professional journeys intersect with global governance and policy-making, this research seeks to offer readers a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influenced their rise as influential women in international affairs.

Chapter Three: The Influence of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili On International Politics

This part explores the effects of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili on international politics, providing an analysis of their contributions, leadership roles, and policy initiatives on the global stage. By examining key aspects such as their diplomatic engagements, governance

strategies, advocacy efforts, and institutional reforms, this chapter aims to highlight the impact these women have had in shaping international policies and fostering global development. Additionally, by addressing how their work intersects with socio-political, economic, and humanitarian contexts, this research seeks to offer readers a comprehensive understanding of the significant roles Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili have played in advancing international cooperation, sustainable development, and political discourse.

Chapter Four: The Challenges Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili both Faced in International Politics

This episode examines the challenges faced by Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili in international politics, providing an analysis of the obstacles they encountered throughout their careers on the global stage. By exploring key issues such as gender bias, political opposition, policy resistance, and institutional limitations, this chapter aims to shed light on the difficulties these women navigated in their efforts to influence global governance. Additionally, by addressing how these challenges intersect with cultural, social, and geopolitical factors, this research seeks to offer readers a comprehensive understanding of the barriers that hindered their work and the resilience they demonstrated in overcoming them

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This chapter helps summarize the key points discussed in the previous chapters and therefore conclude the study.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER TWO

THE BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF AMINA JANE MOHAMMED AND OBIAGELI EZEKWESILI

This chapter explores the biographical backgrounds of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili, providing an in-depth analysis of their early lives, education, and career trajectories. By examining their formative years, academic pursuits, and professional journeys, this chapter aims to highlight the factors that shaped their rise in international politics. Understanding their backgrounds offers insight into the experiences, challenges, and achievements that positioned them as influential figures on the global stage.

Early Life and Family Background of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili

Amina Jane Mohammed

Amina Jane Mohammed was born on June 27, 1961, in Liverpool, England, to a Fulani Nigerian father and a British mother. Her father, a veterinarian, and her mother, a nurse, raised her in a multicultural environment, which played a significant role in shaping her worldview.¹ As the eldest of five daughters, she spent her early years in both Nigeria and the United Kingdom, attending primary schools in Kaduna and Maiduguri before continuing her education at The Buchan School on the Isle of Man.²

Obiageli Ezekwesili

Obiageli Katryn Ezekwesili was born on April 28, 1963, in Lagos, Nigeria, as the first of six children. Her parents, Benjamin Ujubuonu and Cecilia Nwayiaka Ujubuonu, were from Anambra State. Her father, a civil servant at the Nigerian Ports Authority, instilled in her a strong sense of integrity and public service.³ During the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), her family was displaced from Lagos to Eastern Nigeria, an experience that deeply influenced her understanding of governance and political accountability.⁴

Cultural, Social, and Economic Influences on their Upbringing

Both Amina Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili were significantly shaped by their cultural, social, and economic environments.

Mohammed's early exposure to both Nigerian and British cultures shaped her diplomatic outlook and leadership style. Growing up in a Fulani household, she developed an appreciation for community-based leadership, a trait common in Fulani culture.⁵ Her ability to navigate different cultural landscapes later became an asset in her roles in international diplomacy and governance.⁵

Ezekwesili, on the other hand, grew up in a politically conscious household where governance and public service were frequently discussed. Her father encouraged critical thinking and political engagement, fostering her passion for transparency and accountability. The economic hardships her family faced during the Nigerian Civil War also influenced her commitment to policy reforms aimed at poverty reduction and good governance.⁷

Educational Background

Amina Jane Mohammed attended primary schools in Kaduna and Maiduguri, Nigeria, before moving to The Buchan School on the Isle of Man. She later attended Henley Management College in 1989. However, she does not hold a formal bachelor's degree.⁸

Furthermore, Obiageli Ezekwesili received her primary education at African Primary School, Ajegunle, Lagos. She then attended United Christian College, Apapa, Lagos, for her secondary education. She obtained a Bachelor's degree from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, followed by a Master's degree in International Law and Diplomacy from the University of Lagos. Between 1989 and 1992, she completed her professional certification in Accountancy from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria. Additionally, she earned another Master's degree in Public Policy and Administration from the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, between 1997 and 2000 . Over the years, she received honorary Doctorate degrees from the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, in 2012 and the University of Essex in 2016. Before entering Nigerian politics, Ezekwesili worked with Professor Jeffrey Sachs at the Centre for International Development at Harvard University .⁹

Education Influenced Their Career Choices

Ezekwesili's education in accounting and public policy played a crucial role in shaping her career in governance and policy implementation. She began her professional career at Deloitte & Touche as an auditor and financial services consultant. After completing her studies at Harvard, she worked as the Director of the Harvard-Nigeria Economic Strategy Programme under Jeffrey Sachs,

assisting the Nigerian government with debt sustainability analysis. This experience led to her appointment as an aide to President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2002, marking the beginning of her public service career .

Similarly, Amina Mohammed's exposure to international education helped her develop expertise in sustainable development and governance. Despite not holding a bachelor's degree, her studies at Henley Management College and extensive experience in international organizations paved the way for her role as the Senior Special Assistant to the President on the Millennium Development Goals and later as the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations .¹⁰

Early Career and Professional Development

Amina Jane Mohammed's professional journey began in the private sector, where she worked with Archcon Nigeria, an architectural design firm, from 1981 to 1991. During this period, she collaborated with Norman and Dawbarn United Kingdom, gaining extensive experience in project management and design consultancy. In 1991, she founded the Afri-Projects Consortium and served as its Executive Director, playing a crucial role in Nigeria's development sector. Her transition into international development occurred in 2002 when she coordinated the Task Force on Gender and Education for the United Nations Millennium Project. This experience solidified her expertise in global development policy, leading her to serve as a Senior Special Assistant to the President of Nigeria on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). She was instrumental in designing the Virtual Poverty Fund, which directed Nigeria's debt relief funds toward poverty

alleviation programs. These roles not only positioned her as an expert in sustainable development but also paved the way for her later ministerial and UN appointments.¹¹

Obiageli Ezekwesili's career trajectory was influenced by her strong educational background in economics and public administration. She started as a chartered accountant with Deloitte & Touche, where she specialized in financial auditing and consulting. Her work in auditing provided her with critical insights into fiscal transparency, an issue that would later define her public service career. Following her studies at Harvard University, she worked as the Director of the Harvard-Nigeria Economic Strategy Programme under Professor Jeffrey Sachs. This role involved engaging with the newly elected Nigerian government on economic reforms and debt sustainability, a position that played a pivotal role in her appointment as an aide to President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2002. Ezekwesili later became Nigeria's Senior Special Adviser on Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (BMPIU), popularly known as the "Due Process Unit." In this role, she enforced transparency and accountability in public procurement, leading to significant reforms in Nigeria's financial management. Her work earned her the nickname "Madam Due Process" and further propelled her into ministerial roles.¹²

Comparison of Their Career Beginnings

Both Amina Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili began their careers in technical and advisory roles, with Mohammed focusing on architecture and development consulting, while Ezekwesili worked in financial auditing and economic policy. Their careers converged in the realm of public policy, where they played significant roles in governance and international development.

Their early experiences shaped their policy perspectives: Mohammed specialized in sustainable development and poverty reduction, leading her to international policy advocacy, while Ezekwesili concentrated on governance reforms and fiscal accountability, influencing her anti-corruption stance.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER THREE

THE INFLUENCE OF AMINA JANE MOHAMMED AND OBIAGELI EZEKWESILI ON INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

This chapter examines the significant influence of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili on international politics. It explores how their distinctive leadership roles, policy initiatives, and advocacy efforts have shaped global governance and development. By analyzing Amina Jane Mohammed's contributions to sustainable development, climate policy, and her pivotal role in the United Nations, alongside Obiageli Ezekwesili's impactful work in economic reform, anti-corruption measures, and social activism, the chapter highlights the multifaceted ways in which these women have driven change. Additionally, it draws comparisons between their approaches to governance, emphasizing both the common challenges they have faced and the innovative strategies they have employed to overcome them.

Amina Jane Mohammed's Influence on International Politics

Amina Jane Mohammed has played a pivotal role in shaping international policies through her work as the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. She has been a leading figure in coordinating global efforts toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In her capacity as Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, Mohammed has provided strategic direction for various UN agencies, fostering international cooperation to address pressing global challenges such as climate change, poverty, and gender inequality.¹

As Deputy Secretary-General, Mohammed has been instrumental in advancing the UN's agenda on antimicrobial resistance, serving as a member of the UN Interagency Coordination Group on the issue. Her advocacy has extended to promoting data-driven solutions for sustainable development, reinforcing the importance of digital transformation in governance and policymaking.²

Ministerial Contributions in Nigeria

Before joining the UN, Mohammed served as Nigeria's Minister of Environment from 2015 to 2017, where she spearheaded significant environmental reforms. One of her notable contributions was Nigeria's involvement in the African Union (AU) Reform Steering Committee, chaired by Rwandan President Paul Kagame, which aimed at strengthening the AU's institutional framework. As Minister of Environment, she played a critical role in advancing Nigeria's climate change agenda by aligning the country's policies with international environmental frameworks such as the Paris Agreement. Her leadership was marked by efforts to address deforestation and environmental degradation, including the controversial issue of timber exports.³

Policy Advocacy and Global Development

Throughout her career, Mohammed has championed policies that promote gender equality, social justice, and economic development. Her tenure as a Special Adviser to former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Post-2015 Development Planning positioned her at the forefront of shaping the SDGs.⁴ Mohammed has also been an advocate for Africa's development, serving on advisory boards of international organizations such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Hewlett Foundation. Her influence extends beyond policy formulation to implementation, as

seen in her work with the Africa-Europe Foundation, where she contributes to high-level discussions on Africa-Europe relations.⁵

Obiageli Ezekwesili's Influence on International Politics

Obiageli Ezekwesili's role at the World Bank was pivotal in shaping economic policies across Sub-Saharan Africa. As Vice President of the World Bank's Africa Region from 2007 to 2012, she managed operations in 48 African countries and supervised a lending portfolio of over \$40 billion.⁶ Her leadership saw increased funding for economic and infrastructure development, particularly in the energy and education sectors. One of her notable contributions was ensuring that World Bank investments in Africa prioritized human capital development, focusing on education, health, and entrepreneurship initiatives to foster long-term economic growth.⁷ Ezekwesili championed Africa's technological growth, advocating for telecommunications and ICT liberalization. Under her leadership, multiple African nations, including Rwanda, Botswana, and Mauritius, implemented structural reforms that made them more business-friendly and globally competitive. She also advanced economic diversification by promoting private sector-led growth and advocating for strategic investments in industries beyond oil and gas.⁸

Anti-Corruption Advocacy

A key aspect of Ezekwesili's international impact was her staunch anti-corruption advocacy. She played an instrumental role in Nigeria's economic reforms as a member of President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration, where she spearheaded the Due Process Unit, aimed at enhancing transparency in public procurement. Her efforts saved the Nigerian government billions of dollars

by eliminating inflated contracts and curbing financial leakages.⁹ Her anti-corruption work extended to global platforms, where she negotiated Nigeria's partnership with the G8 under the "Compact to Promote Transparency and Combat Corruption," signed in 2004 by President George Bush and President Obasanjo. This agreement significantly contributed to Nigeria securing debt relief from the Paris Club, easing its financial burden and enabling reinvestment in social infrastructure.¹⁰

Ezekwesili's anti-corruption stance earned her the nickname "Madam Due Process," reflecting her reputation as an uncompromising reformist. Her commitment to transparency influenced international bodies such as Transparency International, where she served as a co-founder and board member. Her work at the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) led to the first audit of the country's oil and gas sector, exposing financial mismanagement and driving policy changes.¹¹

Education and Social Change Initiatives

Ezekwesili's influence extended to global education reforms. As Nigeria's Minister of Education from 2006 to 2007, she introduced major reforms that reduced the number of out-of-school children and improved learning outcomes. Her policies emphasized gender inclusion, particularly in Northern Nigeria, where female education lagged due to cultural and socio-economic barriers. She later co-founded the School of Politics, Policy, and Governance (SPPG), designed to build a new generation of ethical leaders in Africa. Her belief in good governance as a vehicle for

sustainable development led her to establish #FixPolitics, a movement advocating for civic engagement and democratic accountability.¹²

A key highlight of her social activism was the #BringBackOurGirls movement, which gained global traction after the 2014 abduction of 276 schoolgirls by Boko Haram in Chibok, Nigeria. Ezekwesili's advocacy efforts drew international attention to the plight of abducted girls, pressuring the Nigerian government and international community to take action. Her campaign underscored her ability to mobilize global movements for social justice and human rights.¹³

Comparative Analysis of Their Political Influence

Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili have both played significant roles in shaping international politics, particularly in governance, development, and transparency. Their leadership approaches exhibit similarities in their dedication to public service, policy implementation, and advocacy, but they also differ in their focus areas and methods of influence.

Similarities in Leadership and Governance Approaches

Both Mohammed and Ezekwesili have demonstrated strong leadership in governance, with an emphasis on institutional reform, public accountability, and sustainable development. Mohammed, through her role at the United Nations, has advocated for global sustainable policies, gender equality, and climate action. Similarly, Ezekwesili has been a vocal advocate for anti-corruption reforms, economic transformation, and social justice, particularly through her tenure at the World Bank and her involvement in Nigerian politics.

Another shared trait is their commitment to gender equity. Both leaders have worked extensively on policies and initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation in governance and economic development. Mohammed has played a crucial role in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing gender mainstreaming across global policies, while Ezekwesili has actively fought against gender-based disparities in Nigeria's political and educational sectors.

Furthermore, both figures have engaged in policy implementation at the highest levels. Mohammed, as Nigeria's Minister of Environment, was involved in major environmental policy reforms before moving to the UN, where she shaped global development strategies. Ezekwesili, on the other hand, implemented economic reforms as Nigeria's Minister of Solid Minerals and Minister of Education, where she introduced transparency initiatives in government procurement and promoted education for all.

Differences in Focus Areas and Impact Strategies

Despite these similarities, the two leaders have focused on different policy areas. Mohammed has primarily worked within international development institutions, shaping global policies through multilateral organizations such as the UN. Her influence is rooted in diplomacy, sustainability, and policy coordination on a global scale.

Conversely, Ezekwesili has taken a more direct and activist approach. She has been an outspoken critic of corruption in Nigeria, leading grassroots movements such as #BringBackOurGirls and advocating for greater accountability in governance. Her work at the World Bank also reflects a

strong economic and financial reform focus, aiming to improve business environments across Africa.

Additionally, Ezekwesili has sought direct political engagement by running for Nigeria's presidency, advocating for a new political order that prioritizes citizen participation and good governance. Mohammed, in contrast, has remained within institutional structures, leveraging diplomacy and policy advocacy rather than direct political confrontation.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHALLENGES AMINA JANE MOHAMMED AND OBIAGELI EZEKWESILI BOTH FACED IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Gender Bias and Stereotyping

Throughout history, women in politics have faced significant gender bias and stereotyping, which has impeded their progress in national and international governance. Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili are no exceptions to these systemic challenges. Their careers illustrate the persistence of patriarchal structures, discriminatory institutional policies, and deeply ingrained societal norms that limit women's roles in governance.¹

The Influence of Gender Stereotypes in Political Leadership

The perception that women are less suited for leadership than men remains one of the most entrenched stereotypes affecting female politicians. Kanter's "glass ceiling" theory, women often encounter invisible barriers in professional and political institutions, restricting their rise to positions of influence. These barriers manifest in discriminatory hiring practices, biased media portrayals, and societal expectations that prioritize women's roles as caregivers over leadership roles.² In international politics, women leaders often face skepticism regarding their competence, and their achievements are frequently undermined or attributed to affirmative action policies rather than merit. Research suggests that female politicians receive harsher scrutiny compared to their male counterparts, as they are expected to demonstrate higher levels of competence, integrity, and resilience to be taken seriously.

Challenges Faced by Amina Jane Mohammed in International Politics

Amina Mohammed's political journey has been shaped by resistance from traditional political structures that remain predominantly male-dominated. During her tenure as Nigeria's Minister of Environment and later as the UN Deputy Secretary-General, she encountered persistent gender bias in policy negotiations. Scholars argue that her efforts to push for sustainable development and gender equality faced institutional opposition, as some policymakers viewed her initiatives as a challenge to the status quo. Moreover, Mohammed's role as a high-ranking African woman in a global institution subjected her to double discrimination, both as a woman and as an African leader. African women in international governance must constantly prove their legitimacy, as they are often perceived as less experienced or less capable than their Western counterparts.³

Obiageli Ezekwesili and the Struggles Against Gender Discrimination

Oby Ezekwesili, known for her advocacy in economic transparency and anti-corruption, has also faced significant gender-related challenges in her career. As a former Vice President of the World Bank for Africa and Nigeria's Minister of Education, she consistently challenged male-dominated power structures. Her reform policies were often met with resistance, with critics undermining her authority due to her gender.⁴ One of the most notable examples of gender bias against Ezekwesili was during her leadership of the #BringBackOurGirls movement, where she was targeted by political opponents who dismissed her activism as "emotional" rather than strategic. This reflects a common stereotype against women in leadership, where their policy positions are often framed as sentimental rather than rational.⁵

Institutional Barriers and the Role of the Media

The media plays a significant role in reinforcing gender stereotypes in politics. Research indicates that female politicians are often judged based on their appearance, marital status, and demeanor rather than their policy contributions. Women in politics are more likely to be criticized for their tone, assertiveness, and leadership style compared to men.⁶ For instance, Amina Mohammed has often been depicted as a “soft leader” who prioritizes diplomacy over assertiveness, a characterization that undermines her policy influence. Similarly, Obiageli Ezekwesili has been criticized for being “too outspoken”, a critique rarely leveled against male politicians who exhibit similar leadership qualities.⁷

Institutional and Systemic Barriers

Women seeking political participation and leadership roles face a variety of bureaucratic, legal, and systemic obstacles within both national and international institutions. These barriers are deeply rooted in historical patriarchal structures, restrictive legal frameworks, and institutional biases that continue to limit women's full participation in governance. Despite international efforts to promote gender equality, women in politics, including those like Amina Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili, continue to encounter structural impediments that hinder their political advancement.

Bureaucratic Barriers in Political and Governance Institutions

One of the major bureaucratic challenges women face in politics is the glass ceiling, a concept that describes the invisible barriers preventing women from attaining top leadership positions. Highlighting how organizations are structured in ways that restrict women's upward mobility. This

is particularly evident in political institutions where women are often given subordinate roles, while key decision-making positions remain male-dominated.

In many national bureaucracies, women's participation in governance is limited by male-dominated party structures, biased nomination processes, and a lack of access to influential networks. Women struggle to secure party endorsements, as political parties often favor male candidates due to the perception that men are more electable. Similarly, political meetings in some countries are held at odd hours, making participation difficult for women, particularly those with family responsibilities.

Systemic Challenges in International Institutions

Beyond national politics, women in international governance also face systemic barriers. Women in international organizations often encounter biases in hiring and promotion processes, making it difficult for them to rise to leadership positions. Even within institutions like the United Nations, where gender parity policies exist, women remain underrepresented in top decision-making roles. Amina Mohammed's career at the United Nations illustrates the complexities women face in international governance. Despite her appointment as Deputy Secretary-General, she has spoken about the difficulties of implementing gender-inclusive policies in a system that remains predominantly male-dominated. Similarly, Obiageli Ezekwesili, during her tenure as Vice President of the World Bank for Africa, encountered resistance when advocating for gender-based economic reforms. Moreover, systemic gender biases often undermine the credibility of female leaders, subjecting them to higher scrutiny and harsher criticism than their male counterparts.

Women in leadership frequently face questions about their competence and legitimacy, making it more difficult for them to enact substantial policy changes.

The Intersection of Cultural and Institutional Obstacles

In many African societies, traditional gender norms and cultural expectations continue to limit women's participation in governance. Patriarchal values shape political institutions, reinforcing the idea that leadership is a male domain. This perception discourages women from pursuing political careers and creates a hostile environment for those who do. Women who enter politics often face harassment, intimidation, and even violence. For example, some female politicians in Nigeria have reported being pressured to withdraw from elections or being subjected to character attacks in the media. These tactics are used to discourage women from participating actively in governance, further entrenching systemic inequality.

Political Opposition and Policy Resistance

Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili have encountered considerable political resistance throughout their careers, both domestically and internationally. Their advocacy for transparency, governance reforms, and policy-driven leadership placed them at odds with entrenched political structures and interest groups. Political theorists argue that reformers in developing nations often face opposition due to systemic corruption and vested interests that benefit from inefficiencies in governance.

Amina Jane Mohammed: Policy Resistance and Political Opposition

Amina Mohammed, as Nigeria's Minister of Environment, faced significant opposition while implementing environmental reforms, especially regarding forest conservation and climate policies. One major controversy arose when she was accused of granting illegal permits to Chinese firms for the exportation of endangered timber species. Although the Nigerian government denied these allegations, the accusations were perceived as politically motivated attempts to discredit her tenure. Her role as the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations also attracted resistance from certain UN member states, particularly regarding global sustainability policies. As chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group, she promoted stringent environmental and anti-poverty measures, often clashing with countries prioritizing economic expansion over sustainability. Developing nations, in particular, viewed some of these policies as constraints on economic growth, leading to diplomatic tensions and pushback from policy elites.

Obiageli Ezekwesili: Political Opposition and Challenges in Governance

Ezekwesili has long been a vocal advocate for transparency and accountability, earning her the moniker "*Madam Due Process*." Her leadership in the #BringBackOurGirls movement exposed her to significant political opposition, as she held successive Nigerian administrations accountable for their handling of Boko Haram's abduction of schoolgirls. This advocacy led to threats, arrests, and surveillance by security agencies (1200-Article, 2021).

Her 2019 presidential bid under the Allied Congress Party of Nigeria (ACPN) was met with internal resistance. Despite positioning herself as a candidate for the people, she faced a lack of

party support, internal conflicts, and political blackmail. The party leadership turned against her, and ACPN eventually endorsed incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari, raising suspicions that her candidacy had been undermined from within (Kegley, 2008).

Furthermore, Ezekwesili's economic policies were often resisted by entrenched business and political elites. During her tenure as Nigeria's Minister of Solid Minerals, she introduced transparency measures that disrupted corrupt practices in the sector. Similarly, as Minister of Education, her reforms met resistance from stakeholders benefiting from systemic inefficiencies. Scholars in political science emphasize that such resistance is common in governance, as entrenched bureaucratic networks often seek to maintain status quo advantages.

Media Scrutiny and Public Perception

The media plays a pivotal role in shaping public narratives about political figures, especially in international politics, where perception influences policy reception and leadership credibility. Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili have both faced extensive media scrutiny due to their high-profile positions in global governance. For Amina Mohammed, the media's coverage has often revolved around her environmental policies and her tenure as Nigeria's Minister of Environment. One of the most significant controversies surrounding her was the allegation that she had granted illegal permits for the exportation of endangered Nigerian timber to Chinese firms during her tenure. This accusation, although denied by the Nigerian government, became a subject of intense media debates, with international and local press covering the story extensively. While her role as the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations has largely been seen in a positive

light, the media continues to scrutinize her decisions, particularly in relation to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Obiageli Ezekwesili, on the other hand, has had an even more intense engagement with the media, particularly in her advocacy efforts and political career. As a co-founder of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign, Ezekwesili used the media, especially social media platforms like Twitter, to bring international attention to the plight of abducted Chibok schoolgirls. The viral nature of the campaign led to extensive media exposure, making her a household name in both national and international discourse. However, this also meant that she became a target for political criticism.

Public Perception and Political Narratives

Public perception of both leaders has been shaped by their reformist ideologies and outspokenness. Ezekwesili, often referred to as "Madam Due Process," gained a reputation for transparency and accountability in public governance. However, her presidential ambitions in Nigeria were met with skepticism, with media narratives often questioning the viability of her candidacy against the dominant political parties. The abrupt withdrawal from the 2019 presidential race led to allegations that she was never a serious contender, a narrative that was amplified by opposition media and political adversaries.

Amina Mohammed has generally enjoyed a more favorable public perception, largely due to her technocratic background and involvement in international diplomacy. However, critics argue that her work in global environmental policy has not always translated into tangible benefits for

Nigeria. Some media outlets have framed her policies as being more aligned with Western sustainability agendas than with the immediate economic concerns of developing nations.

Economic and Resource Constraints

Both Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili faced significant economic and resource constraints while working in international politics, affecting their ability to implement reforms and initiatives effectively.

Amina Jane Mohammed: Financial and Resource Limitations

Amina Mohammed's tenure as Nigeria's Minister of Environment (2015–2017) was marked by financial constraints that limited the execution of critical environmental policies. She oversaw Nigeria's participation in international climate negotiations, but securing the necessary funding to implement the commitments made at forums such as the Paris Agreement proved difficult. The Nigerian government struggled to allocate sufficient resources for environmental sustainability programs, including deforestation control and renewable energy projects.

Additionally, as Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mohammed has worked extensively on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, funding shortages from both member states and private donors have slowed progress in implementing key development projects in Africa and other developing regions. She has consistently advocated for increased financial commitments from developed nations, but bureaucratic and political hurdles have delayed the realization of these financial pledges.

Obiageli Ezekwesili: Budgetary Challenges and Policy Implementation

Oby Ezekwesili encountered similar economic challenges during her tenure as Nigeria's Minister of Education and Minister of Solid Minerals. While serving as Minister of Education (2006–2007), she spearheaded several educational reforms, including the revamping of the Federal Inspectorate Service and the introduction of public-private partnerships for school development. However, limited budget allocations hindered the widespread execution of these programs. Many states lacked the financial resources to sustain school infrastructure and teacher training initiatives, creating gaps in the education sector.

As Vice President of the World Bank for Africa (2007–2012), Ezekwesili faced challenges in mobilizing financial support for large-scale economic development projects. She prioritized initiatives aimed at reducing poverty and increasing investment in infrastructure, yet the limited fiscal commitment from African governments and international financial institutions slowed progress. The World Bank's funding mechanisms also faced bureaucratic delays, further affecting implementation.

Moreover, her work in transparency and anti-corruption efforts exposed her to opposition from entrenched political and business interests that benefitted from the lack of financial accountability. While her tenure in Nigeria's Bureau of Public Procurement (Due Process Unit) saved billions through transparent contract awards, many of her proposed reforms met resistance due to political patronage and the reluctance of vested interests to embrace financial transparency.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Based on the study on women in international politics, particularly focusing on Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili, the research provides an in-depth exploration of the role of women in global governance. It examines their contributions to political leadership, policy reforms, and gender advocacy, while highlighting the challenges they faced in breaking through male-dominated political structures. The study begins with a historical background on international politics, emphasizing the dominance of male leaders in diplomacy and governance. It identifies the 20th-century feminist movements and democratic reforms as pivotal forces that facilitated greater female political participation. Despite these advancements, gender inequality remains a persistent issue, with women still underrepresented in decision-making positions worldwide.

A key component of the study is the biographical and professional journeys of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili, which shaped their political influence. The research traces Amina Mohammed's background, highlighting her multicultural upbringing, environmental advocacy, and leadership roles at the United Nations. As Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, she played a pivotal role in shaping the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promoting climate action, poverty reduction, and gender equality. The study also explores Ezekwesili's career, from her role as co-founder of Transparency International to serving as Nigeria's Minister of Education and Vice President of the World Bank for Africa. Her anti-corruption initiatives, governance

reforms, and advocacy for economic transparency positioned her as a key figure in international politics.

The research further explores the challenges faced by these women in their political careers, including gender bias, institutional discrimination, and political opposition. It highlights the systemic barriers in national and international governance structures, which often limit women's access to leadership roles. Additionally, the study examines the media's role in reinforcing gender stereotypes, portraying female politicians as either too soft or too aggressive, thereby influencing public perceptions. The study also delves into the economic and political resistance they encountered, such as Mohammed's struggles in implementing global environmental policies and Ezekwesili's challenges in advocating for transparency and accountability in Nigerian politics.

A significant aspect of the study is the comparative analysis of their leadership approaches. While Mohammed operates within diplomatic institutions, influencing multilateral policies, Ezekwesili adopts a more activist approach, advocating for grassroots political participation and governance reforms. Despite their different methods, both women have demonstrated resilience in navigating political structures, proving that women's leadership is essential for global development. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for greater gender inclusivity in politics, recommending policy reforms, economic empowerment programs, and advocacy efforts to support women's full participation in governance and decision-making.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study on women in international politics, with a focus on Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili, it is evident that female leaders play a fundamental role in shaping global governance, policy reforms, and gender advocacy. Despite the dominance of male-led political structures, these women have demonstrated exceptional leadership in international diplomacy, economic reforms, and social activism. Mohammed's contributions to sustainable development, climate action, and gender equality at the United Nations and Ezekwesili's influence on anti-corruption initiatives, governance transparency, and education reforms highlight the transformative potential of women in leadership. Their careers illustrate the resilience and determination required to navigate institutional and societal barriers, proving that women's political participation is crucial for equitable and sustainable global development.

Furthermore, the research reveals that while progress has been made in increasing women's representation in politics, significant challenges remain. Issues such as gender bias, institutional discrimination, media misrepresentation, and economic barriers continue to hinder women's access to decision-making roles. The comparative analysis of Mohammed's diplomatic strategy within multilateral institutions and Ezekwesili's activist-driven governance reforms underscores the diverse pathways through which women can influence global politics. However, entrenched patriarchal norms and systemic obstacles remain key barriers to achieving full gender parity in leadership.

In conclusion, the study affirms that women's leadership is indispensable to global governance and policy reforms. The achievements of Amina Jane Mohammed and Obiageli Ezekwesili serve as inspiring examples of female political empowerment, demonstrating that women can drive meaningful change in international politics despite structural constraints. However, for more women to ascend to positions of influence, deliberate efforts must be made to implement gender-inclusive policies, economic empowerment programs, and advocacy initiatives. Future research should explore strategies to enhance women's political participation, particularly in developing nations where gender disparities in governance remain pronounced. Ultimately, the realization of gender-balanced political leadership will depend on the commitment of governments, institutions, and civil society to dismantle systemic barriers and create an enabling environment for women in governance.

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