The Role of Deliberate Inclusive Policy on Women Participation in Governance in Kogi State

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Abstract:
In addition to meeting the Human Right requirements of the common laws of modern states, involvement of women in governance is very imperative to achieving sustainable peace, democracy, and development. However, this study is worried at the inertia of most countries in the developing world to demonstrate this commitment through convincing deliberate initiatives despite being signatories to several relevant global conventions and protocols. This study therefore examined the activities of Kogi State Government in terms of practical steps taken towards achieving inclusiveness of female gender in the planning and execution of policies in the last six years (2011-2021). While this study relied on both primary and secondary sources for generating the expected facts, Survey design was adopted for drawing the necessary data from the primary source while Systematic Random Sampling Technique was used to generate responses from the sampled population. To analyse the facts of the study, Likert's five-point rating scale was used. The study was able to establish the ecology of the Nigerian democracy and the inherent obstacles to the involvement of women in governance in Kogi State. It recommended more effective strategies for achieving genuine inclusive governance in Kogi State.

Keywords: Democracy, Government, Governance, Inclusiveness, Gender, Equality.

Introduction
The moral basis for the existence of the State and its government is effective enforcement of the common law for the promotion of the general well-being of the people of a given political community. While government is bound to keep this faith both in process (election) and in action (performance), the people reserve the right to direct its activities to either prevent possible arbitrariness of its actors or react to any failure which may summarily contradict the principle of the social contract (Mukherjee & Ramaswami, 2008; David & Nduke, 2017).

Emphasizing on the sanctity of the terms of the terms of this contract, Locke and Rousseau posited that political behaviour include constant
reference to objective laws, which spell the conditions that necessarily limit the powers and tenures of government to refresh the citizens contract with the operators of government. It is in line with the above that scholars of liberal democratic tradition have viewed state and its government as composed of multiple centres of power which can only find accommodation in a political environment that offers a ventilated process of free and fair competition for power without any individual or group suffering any prior deprivation or alienation.

From the foregoing, the increasing wave of democratization across Africa (Nigeria inclusive) over the past decades have underscored the fact that any government that is bereft of properly constituted collective consent of the people runs the risk of losing the benefits of their collective conscience (McFarland, 1979). Accordingly, it is incontrovertible that any government that aims at tackling effectively (and efficiently), the declining standard of living, deteriorating socio-economic infrastructure or precarious security situation, etc. must be sufficiently opened up for people’s participation through genuine democracy (Kaufmann, 2004). Thus, according to Diamond (1996) in Egwu (2003), democracy is a political system in which there is the choice of leaders by the people through competitive elections, guarantee of existence civil and political rights, the rules of law and public accountability.

While the above definition intersects properly with the classical Greek meaning of democracy which is ‘people’s rule’, it equally captures the core elements of the Lincoln’s popular definition of the concept which is ‘government of the people, by the people and for the people’ (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999). Here, mandate or consent which properly defines ‘who owns the state power, who designs its character and for what purpose; are sufficiently addressed. Here too, the integrity of any democratic government is only defined by its degree of responsibility and responsiveness to the needs of the people, irrespective of their social, economic or gender category.

In Nigeria even though there are several policies aimed at guaranteeing gender equality, practices in various sector and institutions of government are yet to approximate the real meaning of equality as defined by the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as Amended) looking at the ratio of female to male in the distribution of powers and administrative responsibilities. It is on this note that this study examines the activities of Kogi State government in relation to gender mainstreaming between 2011 and 2021.

The general objective of this study is to assess the impact of deliberate policies government on the level of participation of women in Governance. Within this broad aim, the specific objectives of this research are as follows:

- To identify the level of participation of women in the Governance of Kogi State (2011-2021).
- To examine the constraints to active participation of women in governance in Kogi State.
- To assess the effects of gender inequality on the growth and development of the economy of Kogi State.

To assess the strategy put in place by the government to enhanced women participation in governance in Kogi State.

**Literature Review**

**Government, Governance and Equality in the Nigerian Political Environment**

Perhaps, what distinguishes the modern state from the Hobbesian ‘state of Nature’ is the legitimacy it draws from the general will of the people. In this civilized arrangement might was substituted for right in defense of the common good of all. Accordingly, within the terms of the social contract, all citizens are not only seen to be equal but government and governance is equally packaged and operated on the basis of equality of all the citizens.

According to Bello (2007), Government entails those political processes that have to do with the
authoritative formulation of rules, and policies that are binding and pervasive throughout a given political community. To him, government is the machinery through which a state performs its functions or exercises its authority. As a state in action, government’s functions cover the entire spheres of lives of the citizens and the choices they make whether political, social, economic. To carry out these complex roles therefore, government is broken down into three fundamental structures namely, the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary in addition to respective functional institutions, agencies, and Units.

Governance on the other hand refers to “how” people are ruled and “how” the affair of a state is administered and regulated. In the same vein, World Bank (2004) shared the same opinion as above when it defines governance as the process and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised which include how governments are selected, held accountable, monitored, and replaced. By implication, governance does not just define government actions but equally extends to the citizens involvement in the right quality and capacity of leadership ensuring effectiveness and consistency of policy and the development of the right institutions to deliver public goods and social services. While all these are facilitated by the ability and willingness of all the citizens, it is further enhanced by proper distribution of opportunities to competent citizens.

Equality on the other hand, from etymological point of view (whether from French ‘Equalité’ or Latin’s ‘aequalitatem’ means smoothness, uniformity, or parity with respect to a given genetic community. It is the quality of being the same in quantity or measure of value or status.

The general principle of equality and non-discrimination is a fundamental element of international Human Rights Law. Thus, the right to equal treatment requires that all persons, irrespective of the colour, race, creed or gender should be treated equally before the law without discrimination. According to Dimitrina Petrova (2007), these principles include the following among others:

- The right to recognition of equal worth and equal dignity of each human being.
- The right to equality before the law.
- The right to equal protection and benefits of the law.
- The right to be treated with the same respect and consideration as all others.
- The right to participate on equal basis with others in any area of economic, social, political, cultural, or civil life.

From the foregoing, if the reason behind social contract where people accepted to migrate from the State of Nature to the State of Law is to correct the imbalances in power distribution for the common good of all, the continued application of arbitrary powers to secure advantage under any guise in this modern era is not only anachronistic but equally a sore contradiction to the expected morality of modern state, government and governance.

**Gender Inequality and Women in Governance in Nigeria**

Beside the declaration of the section 14(1) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) that “the federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice, section 17(1) categorically maintained that “the state social order is founded on ideals of freedom, equality and justice (see chapter II, pages 16, & 20). In chapter iv section 33(i-x), the Constitution guarantees the citizens’ Rights to: life; dignity of human person; personal liberty; private and family life; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of expression and the press; peaceful assembly and association; freedom of movement; freedom from discrimination etc.

In addition to the above constitutional provisions, the multi-party democracy which Nigeria adopted since 1999 etymologically connotes ‘peoples in power. Thus, participatory democracy emphasizes the need for citizens to take their ownership of the state powers beyond just forming government to broad and active involvement in the direction and operation of a given political system. It is therefore premised
on deliberate process of creating and broadening people’s access to political decisions and opportunities right from voting to directly influencing the implementation of public policies, irrespective of their personal identity or socio-economic status.

From the above, exclusion is more aptly measured when one realizes that given the enormous power at the disposal of the State as an autonomous decision-making unit (with unique set of options and diverse outcomes) any structural restraint which limits any individual or group’s access to the process of governance, constitutes a stark restriction to full exercise to their fundamental rights (Varma, 2003). Thus, governance is said to be inclusive when it effectively serves and engages all the people; considers, gender and other facets of identity; and when institutional policies, processes and services are accessible, accountable and responsive to the members of the society. In other words, inclusive governance essentially advances democratic values, including peaceful pluralism and respect for diversity, human rights and equality before the law (The Government of Canada, 2023).

While diversity remains the hallmark of every democratic environment, no component had suffered more exclusion from governance like the Female gender. Thus, in the world over, women have been systematically kept away from decision making centres despite their global demographic strength and their propensity to excel at any leadership opportunity. In Nigeria, the statistics of gender-based discriminations across all spheres of leadership space is as worrisome as their consequences on objective national development. Thus, despite decades of 30% affirmative action declared at the 4th world conference of women at Beijing-China (4th-15th September, 1995) and the subsequent extant National Gender Policy (NGP)’s recommendation of 35% of both elective, political and appointive Public Service positions, Nigeria has continued to record as low as 6.7 elective/appointive positions against the global average of 22.5% and African Regional Average of 23.4% (Edokwe, 2021).

It must be noted however that in both Christian and Islamic traditions, the Holy books had revealed several feats that were achieved by different matriarchs of faith. For instance, in the Christian scriptures, such giants of faith like Deborah, the wife of Lepidototh judged Israel for several years under the palm of Deborah (Judges 4:4): Esther delivered the entire Jewish race from Haman’s extermination plan (Esther 5:7-16). Mary Magdalene demonstrated an uncommon courage when she led the delegation of other women to the sepulchre of Jesus even when men (disciples) were in fears. She was the first to declare the resurrection of Christ (Matthew: 28:1).

In Islam too, the Holy Qur’an and Hadith contain names of several women of character, faith and exceptional leadership skills such as the first wife of the prophet, Khadijat bint Kchwaylid. She was the prophet’s chief adviser as well as his first and foremost supporter during the formative days of Islam. Also, the prophet’s third wife, Aisha Abu Bakr, a well-known authority in medicine, history, and rhetoric, who often accompanied the prophet to battles and even led an army to the Battle of the Camel; and the Queen of Sheba who represented a ruler in Ethiopia and made important decisions on behalf of her people.

In recent Nigeria history too, several women in leadership positions have not only distinguished themselves with outstanding performances in their respective jurisdictions but have equally attracted global attention (Olowojolu et al., 2019). Perhaps the potential of female gender is better appreciated when we make a brief roll call of these very few women who seized their opportunities to turn-around their given frontiers of responsibilities. For instance, the echoes of the performances of Prof. Dora Akunyili (NAFDAC and Federal Ministry of Information and Culture), Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili (Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit-BMPIU) and Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Federal Ministry of Finance), etc, went beyond the shores of Nigeria not just because of the visibility of their offices but because of their process-led, people-centred and
result-driven leadership philosophies (Olaiya, Oladoyin & Oladele, 2006; Akunyili, 2009).

Despite the foregoing feats achieved by women, the Nigerian governance space has serially denied the opportunity to deploy their huge potentials for national development. For instance, Akiyode and Arogundade (2003) in Oni and Joshua (2012) and Okonkwo-Chukwu (2012) presented a graphic concern of marginalization of female gender in the distribution of appointive/elective positions in Nigeria between 1999 and 2015.

**Historicity of Women in Governance in Nigeria**

Though traditional Nigeria society had numerous records of women with outstanding roles in governance, the emergence of colonial administration and the consequent patriarchal approach did a significant damage to the evolution of women in governance. Thus, even though the Nigerian journey towards independence was dotted with numerous women political activities such as Aba women riot of 1929, Ngwa women’s protest against municipalization of their community in 1964, the Eastern Region women’s opposition against new school fees regime in 1958 and a series of protests between 1946 and 1958 by the Abeokuta women’s union led by Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, the women suffrage was only made possible in the south in 1959 General election while that of their Northern counterpart was in 1976 (54 years after the introduction of elective principles in 1922) (Enemuo, 1999). In the appointment into the Nigerian Upper House in 1958, Wurola Esan was the only female elected to senate of 36 members while no woman was elected into the 312-member House of Representative and none was in the federal cabinet (Nwanko, 1996; Oni & Joshua, 2012). The reason was simple: membership or proprietorship of political parties in Nigeria was male gender biased.

### Table 1. Analysis of Women in Elective Positions in Nigeria (1999-2015)

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<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. President</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House of Reps.</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Governor</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House of Assembly</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairperson of States’ Houses of Assembly</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lords</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councilors</td>
<td>8,810</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>6,368</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>6,368</td>
<td>235</td>
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</table>

**Source:** Hundred years of Nigerian woman: Nigeria centenary country report on women in Nse Etim Akpan (2015)
In the post-colonial political system, further damage was done to women participation by the ethnic and personality-based paternalistic and acrimonious politics while the military era, was an all-males affair. Though 1999 has often been described by some commentators as a new era in women participation in politics, a breakdown of women in elective/appointive position was still worrisome. Only 187 out of the available 11,881 elective positions were won by women across the country (Akiyode & Arogundade, 2003; Oni & Joshua, 2012).

The breakdown showed that only 5 senators out of 109 elected were women while 13 (3.6%) out of 360 elected members of House of Representatives were women; no governor was a female and it was only Lagos that produced a female Deputy Governor in person of Chief Kofoworola Akerele-Bucknor; out of 990 state Assembly seats, 12 (1.21%) were won by women. At the Local Government Level, 9 out of 774 Local Government chairmen were women while 14 out of 8,700 councilors were women (Babatunde, 2003). Below is the analysis of women’s share of some strategic elective positions between 1999 and 2015.

From Table 1 above, the post of President of the country, the President of the Senate and the Governors of the 36 states of the federation remained exclusive preserves of the male gender between 1999 and 2021. Accordingly, the mean (\(\bar{X}\)) percentage ratio of female to male of the sampled elective positions stood at just 3.25:96.75%. Such poor outing of women from the early stage of the democratic experiment probably precipitated the convening of National Summit for all Women Politicians organized by the International Human Right Law Group, Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) and Gender and Development Action (GADA), held on June 28th 2002 in Abuja with the objectives of enhancing women active participation in Nigeria politics (Akiyode & Arogundade, 2003; Oni & Joshua, 2012).

### Table 2. Elective/Appointive Positions in Kogi State (1999-2022)

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy governor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House of assembly</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioners</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1 (5.2%)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council chairman</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council vice chairman</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council leaders</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>21 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor s</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>6 (2.5%)</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>1 (0.4%)</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>1 (0.4%)</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>2 (0.8%)</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>42 (17.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Kogi State Ministry of Women Affairs, Lokoja
In Kogi State, despite the existence of a plethora of Government Blueprints and declarations on gender balancing of the respective administrations, analysis of their elective/appointive positions never reflected any genuine commitment to this agenda as indicated in the Table 2.

From the above table, the mean (\( \bar{X} \)) percentage of women in the distribution of elective positions in Kogi State between 1999 and 2021 stood at a paltry 6.0% which was far below the 35% affirmative action’s benchmark. Worthy of note too was the fact that some key positions such as the Governorship, Deputy Governorship, the Speaker of the House of Assembly, etc, were treated as exclusive reserves of the male gender while others often allocated to females, were mostly nominal in nature and merely to score political points rather than any genuine implementation of any gender mainstreaming protocols.

A comparative analysis of women participation in politics shows that Nigeria is far behind its peers in Africa and elsewhere in the world. For instance, Nigerian Tribune (2022), reported that 61.3% of Rwandan’s Parliament consists of women; Cuba, 53.4%; Nicaragua, 50.6%; Mexico and United Arab Emirate (UAE), 50%; Newzealand, 49.2%; Iceland, 47.6%; South Africa and Namibia, 40%; and USA, 27.7%.

In this report, it was noted that countries that had achieved these feats had first adopted certain deliberate strategies, including strategic quota policies. For instance, following the Argentina’s enactment of a special gender quota legislation in 1991, most Latin American countries have adopted it as a legal requirement for political parties to set aside certain proportion of their Legislative seats to women. Also in Rwanda, their 2003 Constitution allocated a 30% benchmark of elected positions to women and by 2008, women constituted more than 50% of the Rwandan parliament and subsequently rose to 2/3 in 2013. The same goes for Iceland where the four (4) major political parties had adopted gender parity of between 40 and 50% in both electoral lists as well as representations in their respective political party’s governance.

In the contrary, Mariya Abdullahi (Nigerian Tribune, 2022), noted that not only had Nigerian politicians typically adopted the ‘use and dump’ attitudes towards the female gender but many had also (reluctantly) participated in formulating the very few women-friendly Bills ‘out of sympathy’ rather than any genuine concern for gender parity.

Obstacles to Effective Participation of Women in Governance in Nigeria

Many factors have been identified as impediments against participation of women in politics and governance in Nigeria. According to Ugwuegede (2014) such factors include: Discriminatory socio-cultural and religious practice; patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society; Financial constraints, given the expensive nature of political process in Nigeria; Political Party discrimination with characteristic allocation of position with brazen disregard for women; wrong perception of women in politics where those who venture into the terrain are (wrongly) tagged with unprintable names; and Lack of support from family, fellow women and media; and unhealthy political environment such as widespread political violence before, during and after elections, etc.

While all the above factors had consistently weakened the capacity of women to be active in politics, none had stunted their boldness to make political choices like the raging political violence across the length and breadth of the Nigerian political space. For instance, Adebanjo (2022) reported that while about 1,850 persons were killed in election-related violence between 1964 and 2019, the state-by-state analysis of such incidents between 2014 and 2022 showed that of the 350 person that were killed in electoral violence across the country, Kogi State was among the highest in the class of Rivers, Lagos, Ondo, and Ekiti States. These were in addition to 51 others (mostly officials of Independent Electoral Commission-INEC) who were abducted under electoral circumstances). Other
forms of violence referred to above include arson, assassination, ballot box snatching, coercion and voters’ intimidation, hate speech, forceful disruption of campaign activities, shooting and thuggery, etc, which most women try to avoid. It is worth mentioning here that the incidence in 2019 Governorship election where a former Councillor and a PDP women leader, Mrs. Salome Acheju Abuh was burnt death when her house was set ablaze at Ochadamu in Ofu Local Government Council Area remained a gory picture of what political participation meant among women in Kogi State (Sule & Akowe, 2015; Sule, 2019).

Consequences of Gender Imbalances on the Performance of the Nigeria Economy

Analysis of the Nigerian economy in recent times has shown a worrisome contradiction between resources endowment and real time development. With a population of about 180 million people, Nigeria is ranked among the first 10 most populous nations in the world: the largest oil producing nations in Africa and the 6th largest oil producing nation in the world. She also the largest economy in Africa with the GDP of $594 billion, 257 billion higher than the closely ranked South Africa with $341.216 billion and Egypt with $275.748 (Onuoha et al, 2015; Aigbalajobi, 2010).

Despite the above potentials, successive global performance ranking has continued to show that Nigeria had remained a complete paradox of this overt abundance of resources. For instance, using the indices of infrastructure, technological readiness, higher education and innovation capacity, the Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) of 2017 – 2018 had ranked Nigeria as number 125th out of 137 countries surveyed. While in this report, Nigeria was just above 12 countries in this ranking, it was more worrisome when the performance of the Nigerian economy was examined among its peers in Africa. For instance, on higher education Nigeria was number 125th, Mauritius (52nd), South Africa (77th), Botswana (88th), Kenya (97th), Ghana (99th) and Rwanda (114th). Nigeria continued to trail these countries on the technological readiness as it occupied number 105th while Mauritius (66th), South Africa (49th), Botswana (86th), Kenya (89th), Ghana (95th) and Rwanda (100th). On business sophistication, Nigeria occupied (99th) position while Mauritius (37th), South Africa (30th), Botswana (100th), Kenya (47th), Ghana (68th) and Rwanda (64th). On innovation, Nigeria occupied number 113th while Mauritius (67th), South Africa (35th), Botswana (84th), Kenya (36th), Ghana (69th) and Rwanda (47th).

Beside the above global position on the Nigerian productivity status, the findings of the National Bureau of statistics (NBS) for the year 2016 further indicated that even though Nigerian worked more hours in 2016, than any other year in the last five years, output had continued to wane. Within this puzzle, NBS noted that the constraint on productivity of labour and other factor inputs had continued to put a drag on the whole economic growth and development. According to Oni and Segun (2012) this worrisome reality was more as a result of neglect of a critical component of the population which they identified as women. According to them, the Nigerian capacity deposits are incontrovertibly domiciled in its population but over the years, gender balance has remained a contentious issue as female gender had been culpably undervalued, under explored and underutilized. In this sustained error, the Nigerian economy had been exposed, not only to innovation gap but has also infamously nose-dived into precarious productivity inertia.

For the purpose of the study, conflict theory as advanced by Carl Marx’s was adopted. From this perspective, conflict occurs when unequal number of resources and power exist and the people with more power and resources try to maintain them and may even do so by repressing those with less power and fewer resources (Hayes, 2022; Akinbode, 2019). Central to conflict theory from this perspective are the following:

- There are multiple groups in society.
- Resources (power, wealth, and privileges) are unevenly distributed.
Those who have power want to gain more and lose none while those who do not are constantly in the struggle to get.

Striking any balance in society is only possible through a radical shift in power dynamics rather than through consensus.

In the context of gender inequality, conflict theory posits that marginalization of gender occurs as men attempt to create and/ maintain advantages in power and privileges to the detriment of women. While it is natural for men to hold unto this mindset, women may only alter this social order if they are conscious of their current disadvantaged position; choose a course of action to change the status quo; sustain the struggle to weaken the grips of men; and must rally round each other to achieve this purpose. Accordingly, just as Marx urged the proletariats to revolt because they had nothing to lose except their chains, Emmeline Pankhurst also urged women to put their enemies where they belonged, insisting that women’s freedom was beyond mere sympathies from their male counterparts. To her, women should:

…rather have an angry man going to the government and saying, my business is interfered with and I won’t submit to its being interfered with any longer because you won’t give women the vote than to have a gentleman come on to our platforms years in and year out and talk about his ardent sympathy with women sufferage” those who make women in governance impossible are simply saying, “government rest upon force; the women have no force, so they must submit. Well, we are showing them that government does not rest upon force at all. It rest upon consent and as long as women consent to be unjustly governed, they can be, but directly women say: “we withhold our consent, we will not be governed any longer so long as that government is unjust; not by the forces of civil war can you govern the weakest women. You can kill that women but she escapes you then, you cannot govern her.

Following the above scenario, the current power struggle between male and female members of the Nigerian society or any fair equilibrium may never be easily achieved through consensus, sympathy, or adaptation as long as resources remain scarce and access to them remains competitive. Like the proponents of this theory envisaged, unless the oppressed (women) arise with sustained resistance, the power equilibrium may not shift in their favour.

**Methodology**

This research adopted a Survey Design for the purpose of covering the entire population under study through their representatives. Although the study’s population consists of the 1,641,140 population of women in Kogi State (Census 2006), a sample size of 3000 made up of women and other critical stakeholders distributed within the three Senatorial District of Kogi State at ratio 50:30:20 for Eastern, Western and Central Senatorial Districts respectively using stratified Random technique. This Technique was adopted to give every segment of the population the opportunity of being represented.

The sources of data for the study were primary (questionnaire, interviews and personal observations of the researcher) and secondary (Textbooks, journals, memos, legal documents etc). The validity of the questionnaire was established by exposing the instrument to independent experts for critiquing while its reliability was based on Test-Retest outcome of 0.96 Correlation Co-efficient of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient

\[
r = \frac{n(\Sigma xy) - (\Sigma x)(\Sigma y)}{\sqrt{(n\Sigma x^2 - (\Sigma x)^2)(n\Sigma y^2 - (\Sigma y)^2)}}
\]

where:
- \(r\) = Reliability
- \(n\) = total number of occurrences
- \(\Sigma\) = summation
- \(x\) = first set of scores
- \(y\) = second set of scores.

The data generated by the study was analyzed using Likert’s five-point rating scale (of strongly agreed, Agreed, undecided, disagreed and
strongly disagreed at 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 rating scales respectively). The opinions of the respondents were classified, using Mean Weight (\(\bar{X}W\)) of each fielded question while an opinion as expressed was either accepted at Mean Weight (\(\bar{X}W\)) = or > than 3.0 or is otherwise rejected.

**Results**

This research adopted a Survey Design for the purpose of covering the entire population under study through their representatives. Although the study’s population consists of the 1,641,140 population of women in Kogi State (Census 2006), a sample size of 3000 made up of women and other critical stakeholders distributed within the three Senatorial District of Kogi State at ratio 50:30:20 for Eastern, Western and Central Senatorial Districts respectively using stratified Random technique. This Technique was adopted to give every segment of the population the opportunity of being represented.

The sources of data for the study were primary (questionnaire, interviews, and personal observations of the researcher) and secondary (Textbooks, journals, memos, legal documents etc). The validity of the questionnaire was established by exposing the instrument to independent experts for critiquing while its reliability was based on Test-Retest outcome of 0.96 Correlation Co-efficient of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient

\[
\rho = \frac{n(\Sigma xy) - (\Sigma x)(\Sigma y)}{\sqrt{(n\Sigma x^2 - (\Sigma x)^2)(n\Sigma y^2 - (\Sigma y)^2)}}
\]

where:
- \(\rho\) = Reliability
- \(n\) = total number of occurrences
- \(\Sigma\) = summation
- \(x\) = first set of scores
- \(y\) = second set of scores.

**Table 3. Data Analysis on the Participation Level of Women in Governance in Kogi State**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N No.</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>SA (5)</th>
<th>A (4)</th>
<th>U (3)</th>
<th>D (2)</th>
<th>SD (1)</th>
<th>FW</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(\bar{X})</th>
<th>REM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The participation rate of female gender in politics and governance in Kogi State is low</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>3.942</td>
<td>1,018</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The governance space in Kogi State at present is male- dominated.</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3.958</td>
<td>1,018</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The Socio-cultural environment of Kogi State at present does not encourage optimal participation of female gender</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3.828</td>
<td>1,018</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The current political structure/schedule of activities do impede on the participation of female gender in critical political decision making</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3.952</td>
<td>1,018</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Appointment of women into political offices are based on</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3.951</td>
<td>1,018</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Values</td>
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<td>Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Access to Elective/Appointive positions in Kogi State is based on political visibility of Actors</td>
<td>500 (2500) 215 (860) 111 (333) 102 (204) 90 (90)</td>
<td>3,987</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Most women in Kogi State lack adequate capacity to be visible before and during elections.</td>
<td>459 (2290) 268 (1072) 92 (276) 104 (208) 96 (96)</td>
<td>3,942</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The violent political atmosphere of Kogi State impedes women participation in politics</td>
<td>506 (2530) 198 (792) 108 (324) 106 (212) 100 (100)</td>
<td>3,958</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The high financial cost of elections limits women participation in politics in Kogi State</td>
<td>432 (2160) 204 (816) 180 (504) 108 (216) 94 (94)</td>
<td>3,826</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>In most elections, electoral security is not adequate to guarantee freedom of choice and expression of support for a candidate of interest</td>
<td>458 (2290) 268 (1072) 92 (276) 112 (224) 88 (88)</td>
<td>3,950</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Most women are yet to be adequately conscious of the prevailing gender imbalances in the state</td>
<td>505 (2525) 196 (784) 109 (327) 109 (218) 99 (99)</td>
<td>3,953</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Alertness and responses of critical institutions, agencies and persons to gender equality campaigns in Kogi State is grossly inadequate</td>
<td>500 (2500) 215 (860) 111 (333) 102 (204) 90 (90)</td>
<td>3,987</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Deliberate exclusion of women has largely narrowed the productive space of Kogi State</td>
<td>472 (2360) 209 (836) 150 (450) 110 (220) 77 (77)</td>
<td>3,943</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>The exclusion of women has substantially reduced opportunities for competitive human capital utilization in Kogi State</td>
<td>479 (2395) 240 (960) 100 (300) 105 (210) 94 (94)</td>
<td>3,959</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Low participation of women in governance</td>
<td>425 (2125) 216 (864) 181 (543) 102 (204) 94 (94)</td>
<td>3,830</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Female gender related policies were never adequately promoted</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>3,953</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(2530)</td>
<td>(792)</td>
<td>(324)</td>
<td>(202)</td>
<td>(105)</td>
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<td>1,018</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Women in political offices are yet to adequately mentor the upcoming ones</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3,951</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2360)</td>
<td>(836)</td>
<td>(444)</td>
<td>(244)</td>
<td>(67)</td>
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<td>1,018</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td></td>
<td>496</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>3,989</td>
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<td>(2480)</td>
<td>(884)</td>
<td>(333)</td>
<td>(204)</td>
<td>(88)</td>
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<td>1,018</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s survey (2022)

The data generated by the study was analyzed through the use of Likert’s five-point rating scale (of strongly agreed, Agreed, undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed at 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 rating scales respectively). The opinions of the respondents were classified, using Mean Weight ($\bar{X}_W$) of each fielded question while an opinion as expressed was either accepted at Mean Weight ($\bar{X}_W$) = or $> 3.0$ or is otherwise rejected.

On the level of participation of women in governance in Kogi State, indices measured included effective roles in political partier’s leadership, participation in elections, access to power after elections, level of influencing government decisions and demand for accountability. Responses indicated that women participation at this level was low at An Average Mean Weight ($\bar{X}_W$) of 3.86.

On the constraints to active participation of women in politics and governance in the state, the indices evaluated included high financial cost, unsafe political environment, uncooperative attitudes of family members, friends and the Press, Patriarchal disposition of socio-cultural environment of Kogi state, weak support base from the female gender community, poor awareness of women on the need to change the narrative. The responses indicated the prevalence of these constraints at an average mean weight ($\bar{X}_W$) of 3.85.

On the consequences of the low participation of women in politics and governance in Kogi State, responses to the evaluated indices such as poor attention to female-related policies/interventions, poor attitudes of women to participatory development, continued invisibility of women for political positions, increasing level of female unemployment, increasing rate of male-driven corruption, etc, indicated high prevalence rate at an Average Mean Weight ($\bar{X}_W$) of 3.87.

Conclusions

The participation rate of female gender in politics and governance in Kogi State was low as the governance space in Kogi State during the period under review was male-dominated.

The socio-cultural environment (including religion and cultural practices) in Kogi State did not give adequate recognition to the female gender nor encouraged women to optimally participate in politics and governance in Kogi State.

The existing political parties’ structure as well as their schedule of activities did impede on the participation of female gender in critical political decision making. From the study, not only were the women not trusted to occupy viable positions in the party hierarchies at all levels, scheduling of party meetings and other critical activities of these parties were mostly fixed at odd times, thereby making it difficult for most women to attend.
The violent political atmosphere of Kogi State impeded women’s attitude towards active participation in politics in Kogi State. For instance, not only were security arrangements to enforce security of lives, properties and facilities grossly inadequate, but the impunity with which thugs and party militias operated was very scary and prohibitive.

The huge financial cost of elections in Kogi State constituted an impediment to the participation of female gender in politics in Kogi State. Though most times, nomination forms were declared free for female contestants, the cost of mobilization of supporters/voters, logistics and (likely) legal component, etc. were obviously beyond the reach of women in Kogi State.

Access to Elective/Appointive positions in Kogi State was a function of political visibility of actors and most women in Kogi State lacked adequate capacity to be visible before and during elections given the impediments identified above. Thus, appointments of women into political offices were largely based on arbitrary political discretions of the Chief Executives rather than any affirmative protocols as the percentage of women in critical position in government had consistently remained far below 30% affirmative action.

Sustained compromise of gender equality principles in Kogi State had weakened the power sharing opportunity of the female and other vulnerable groups in Kogi State.

Alertness and responses of critical institutions, agencies, and stakeholders of gender equality campaigns in Kogi State was grossly inadequate. for instance, the State Ministry for Women Affairs, relevant NGOs, National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) and Federation of Women Lawyers, etc were yet to show visible supports to the campaign for gender parity in their relevant areas.

Traditional/religious leaders were yet to adequately mitigate stereotypes on the capacity of women to provide leadership in their distribution of strategic roles and statuses.

In most elections during the period under review, electoral security was never adequate to guarantee freedom of choice and expression of support for any candidate of interest. For instance, Kogi state was among the top five (5) states with the highest fatality rate of electoral violence and raw influence on electoral decisions between 1999 and 2021.

It is worth noting however that since 2019, there had been significant improvements in the involvement of women in the governance of Kogi state. Thus, besides the retention of the positions of the Secretary to the State Government (SSG) and the Head of the State’s Civil Service (HOS) which had remained the signature legacy of the current administration in the State, those of the Vice-Chairmen and Council Leaders of the 21 Local Government Councils of the State have been exclusively ceded to women (see table 2.2). However, there was yet to be any concrete sustainability plan in the form of any supportive policy document.

**Recommendations**

Government should step up protective and preventive policies through deliberate empowerment of women and girl-child irrespective of their localities from gender-based violence and its attendant risks.

Relevant institutions and agencies should increase their efforts towards providing more data for gender-specific issues to provide empirical evidences in order to effectively guide public policies.

Relevant institutions, agencies and NGOs should promote women and girl child’s access to information, knowledge and technologies on their rights in order to build in them the needed confidence to demand for these rights or protect them when necessary.

Political actors should demonstrate genuine commitments to full protection of gender-equality related policies as a component of every intervention and recovery plans by reinforcing mainstreaming of the existing gender sensitive policies.

Political actors should facilitate genuine involvement of women in various strata of
leadership as a pathway towards encouraging women to take active responsibilities in governance.

Women’s should equip themselves for leadership through value-added competency training rather than depending on sympathy-based allocation of positions.

The female gender community should take advantage of their number by supporting their members that venture into politics at any level rather than running them down out of petty jealousy and envy.

Women and other members of gender sensitive community should plan, execute and sustain a program of reactions that would stir the political community into a sustained action of gender balancing. These include regular awareness walks, picketing of relevant institutions and general strikes, etc.

Security agencies should be conscientized to take their mandate of protecting lives and properties very seriously in order to make legitimate choices (including civil and political rights) accessible to women and other vulnerable citizens.

The cost of elections (including electoral litigations) should be deliberately reduced or outrightly waived off for female folks in order to encourage them to venture into the terrain.

Specific gender quota legislation should be enacted in order to provide the required legal benchmark for enforcement, monitoring and control of implementation across relevant institutions.

Girl-child education and strategic programs (e.g., counseling) for enhanced self-esteem should be deployed early and sustained among young females in order to create the feeling of equality among them right from their formative years.

Religious leaders and traditional institutions should balance their messages, admonitions and status/role distributions in order to promote fair sense of competition, accomplishment and belonging among the gender communities.

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