



HISTORICISING WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN THE NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC

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The main aim of this paper is to critically historicise the nature and dynamics of women's representation in democratic governance within the 24 years of the birth of the Nigeria's Fourth Republic. It argues that though the representation of Nigerian women in political governance pre-dated the birth of the Fourth Republic, since the birth of the republic, the participation of women in party politics had witnessed major transformation. It argues that in spite of this development, Nigerian women were underrepresented at all levels of democratic governance since the birth of the republic, especially with reference to the United Nations Economic and Social Council Resolution of 1990 which recommended 30% minimum proportion of women in leadership position. This paper is a complement to the existing literature on the history of women's representation in governance in Nigeria. The methodology adopted in this study is historical, analytical and multidisciplinary, utilising materials from both primary and secondary sources of data collection.

Key words: women, representation, democracy, governance, Nigeria

JEL: Y80, Z10

1 INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt the fact that there is a wide gender gap in political representation in democratic governance between men and women in Nigeria since the return to civil rule in 1999. Although the challenge of gender equality in democratic governance is a general phenomenon, a number of countries had made and still making appreciable progress towards the attainment of Goal 5 (Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls) of the Sustainable Development Goals. Extant studies

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revealed that since the birth of the new millennium, there was an impressive rise in women's political representation around the world, with the global average in the share of women in national parliaments in particular, and all regions of the world are making substantial progress towards the implementation of the 30% affirmative action for elective and appointive positions for women as recommended by the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. While other countries of the world are making appreciable progress towards the implementation of this recommendation, Nigeria since the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999 has continued to record major decline and instability. For instance, according to Okafor and Ileyemi, Nigeria was ranked the lowest amongst the 54 independent countries as regards percentage of female representation in democratic governance in 2022, securing 54th position with a 5.45% female representation, while Rwanda was ranked the first with 47.95% (Okakor and Ileyemi, 2023).

It is imperative to point out here that the history of political marginalization of women in Nigerian politics was not a recent phenomenon. Its evolution could be traced to the colonial period, which was facilitated by the British colonial policy of administration. While the men were given limited access to political representation in governance by the colonial government, the women were not. The native administration was mainly male-dominated. This was quite different from the pre-colonial experience in which women participated actively in mainstream political activities with relatively few restrictions (Adjepong, 2015). As argued by Fields and others, women formed an important component of the host of officials in most of the pre-colonial West African states, kingdoms and empires, serving as founders, rulers, political advisers, lawmakers, regents, chiefs and so on. Thus, the liberation of women from political domination by their men counterpart in the politics of Nigeria during colonial period was as a result of the brevity of women themselves, occasioned by continued colonial emasculation through heavy economic burden of taxation (Anya, 2003). In other words, the women took the bull by the horn through fighting for their political right and emancipation. This political trend which was laid during the colonial period was further consolidated in the post-colonial period.

It is against this background that this study intends to historicise women's representation in democratic governance in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic between 1999 and 2023. This paper is divided into five sections. The first section is introduction and methodology used. The second section focuses on conceptual clarifications. The third part deals with historicising Women's Representation in Governance up to 1999. The fourth section centres on the Fourth Republic and Women's Representation in Democratic Governance, 1999-2023. The last section is concluding remarks. The methodology adopted in this study is historical, analytical and multidisciplinary, utilising materials from both primary and secondary sources of data collection.

2 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Governance is an important concept which scholars have viewed from different perspectives. As argued by Arisi and Ukadike (2013), governance is a relationship between rulers and the ruled, the state and society, the governors and the governed. Coleman sees governance as the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented. According to the UN Human Development Report (2004), governance has two faces. First, the leadership which has responsibilities derived from the principles of effective governmental organisations. Secondly, the governed, that is the citizens, who are responsible for making relevant inputs to the socio-economic and political affairs of their society (UNDP, 2004). In all, governance involves relationship between the leaders and the followers as well as how rules are made in the society by the leaders, which are to be accepted by the followers as legitimate in order to enhance values with the society. This form of governance is mainly possible in a democratic society.

Democratic Governance: Democratic governance is a system of governance that allows and promotes active and popular participation of citizens of a state in decision making processes through democratically elected structures such as the formation of political parties. According to Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, democratic governance is a system of government where institutions function according to democratic processes and norms, both internally and in their interaction with other institutions. In democratic governance, leadership recruitment into various political offices is not only based on strict adherence to the ideals principles of democracy, but also on the principle of equality for all.

Women Representation: The word representation simply refers to as the act of speaking or acting on behalf of someone in place, either informally or formally. With specific reference to governance, representation entails the process by which someone voluntarily submits himself/herself or nominated for political position or is either appointed or elected to represent a section or a group of people's interest in the administration of a state or country. Therefore, our concept of representation in this paper is limited to political representation of women in the administration of Nigeria since 1999. Women's Representation in democratic governance in Nigeria in this paper entails the following: voluntary submission to contest for elective position, nomination by political party for elective position and appointment into various public offices both at the federal and state levels.

3 HISTORICISING WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA UP TO 1999

Historically, the history of women's representation in governance in Nigeria generally spanned through three distinct historical phases, namely pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. Each phase was marked by its own distinctive characteristics.

The first phase of representation of women in governance in Nigeria began in the pre-colonial period. In other words, existing literature revealed different roles women played in the pre-colonial political administrations in different parts of Nigeria. During this phase, the women served in varying capacities among which were founders/rulers, regents, political advisers, lawmakers, queens, queen mothers and chiefs of some empires, kingdoms and states. For instance, while Queen Amina became a ruler of Zaria by right of succession and took over the throne of the state through popular consent in 1576, Pupupu was the founder of Ondo dynasty and became the first Osemawe of Ondo Kingdom (Omojeje, 2015). Also, Queen Kambasa was one of the founders of the state of Bonny and ruled the state around 1500s (Alagoa, 1992). In the South-western Nigeria, there were evidences of the emergence of female as rulers of some kingdoms in places like Ondo, Sabe, Oyo and so (Ikpe, 1997). In Ibadan and Egba Societies, there was the institution of the Iyalode who represented the women's interests in the courts. A good example was Madam Tinubu who was behind the installation of Oyekan as the Alake of Egba in 1878 (Ikpe, 1997). There were women among the Ilaris (travelling agents/emissaries) of the Kings, who reported happenings in the outlying territories to the courts in some Yoruba kingdoms (Ikpe, 1997). Aside highest political offices, women were involved in administrative positions most especially in the palaces, where they served as advisers and lawmakers. For example, in Kanem-Bornu Empire, the Queen Mother (known as Magira) did influence certain decisions of the Mai (Adjepong, 2015). In Benin Kingdom, Ogbomo argues that women were among the 31 Ogiso (paramount chiefs) who ruled the kingdom during Ogiso dynasty (Ogbomo, 2005).

During the colonial period, the representation of women in modern political governance was restricted by the British colonial policy of administration. In other words, the indirect rule system did not give the women the opportunity to serve their people unlike during pre-colonial period. Prior to the introduction of elective principle which granted franchise to the citizens, the British made use of traditional rulers, who were all males as sole native authorities. In a society where centralised system administration did not exist, like among the Igbo, the British made use of some chiefs who were designated as "warrant chiefs" (Falola et al, 1991). Following the introduction of elective principle through the Clifford Constitution of 1922, only few educated men was granted the opportunity to be represented in political governance of their country. The elective principle was restricted to Lagos and Calabar (Akinyele, 1997). Even the franchise that was introduced was a restricted one. It not only excluded the women, but also did not grant opportunity to all men the right to vote. According to the 1922 Constitution, four Nigerians were to be elected on an income qualification of £100 per annum, three from Lagos and one from Calabar (Akinyele, 1997). As argued by Ikpe and Mba, colonialism was unfavourable to the women. Colonial rule was mainly carried out by male chauvinists. For instance, while Mba explains that women under colonialism felt victimised and deprived (Mba, 1982), Ikpe posits that the basis of women's political

actions that culminated in various women protest movements, which were prevalent in both Southern and Northern Nigeria was as a result of their political marginalisation and economic exploitation (Ikpe, 1997).

In order to free themselves from colonial exploitation and political marginalisation, the women staged several protests. For example, there was Aba Riot of 1929 (Women's War) in Eastern Nigeria, which led to the breakdown or demise of the warrant chief system. Also, Obasa formed the Lagos Women's League (a pressure group) for better sanitary conditions and women education. Lady Abayomi formed Women's Party in 1944. The party agitated for welfare issues and the equality of sexes. Funmilayo Ransomed-Kuti formed Abeokuta Ladies Club, which metamorphosed into Abeokuta Women's Union in 1946 and later the Nigerian Women's Union in 1949 (in order to extend its scope). Through this political platform, she fought for women political freedom. For example, through AWU, Funmilayo led a protest against a tax on women in Abeokuta which led to the temporary abdication of the then Alake of Egba in 1949 (Awe, 1992).

During the decolonisation process, the women were actively involved in the establishment and growth of some major political parties that dominated Nigerian politics from 1951 till the political independence. These parties were Northern People's Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG), National Council of the Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU). Through the women's wing of the parties, women could mobilise grassroots women for their parties. However, only very few women were privileged to be admitted into the upper echelons of the parties. Many of such women included the wives of the leaders of the parties. However, a few women were able to distinguish themselves. One of such women was Margaret Ekpo of the NCNC. She was a veteran politician who won election on her own merit into the Eastern House of Assembly in 1953–1954 and attended constitutional conferences. Other prominent women Nigerian politicians during this period were Lady Abayomi, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Miss Young, Hajiya Gambo and Femi-Pearse (Ikpe, 1997). For instance, Hajiya Gambo Sawaba, a Northern female Nigerian politician, nationalist, women's rights activist, and philanthropist was a strong member of NEPU in Zaria. Through the influence of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti on her, she embarked on door-to-door meeting with women who were not allowed to attend political activities because of their gender and purdah practice. She openly campaigned against the marriage of underage girls, unfair taxes, the use of forced labour, canvassed for jobs for women and advocated for western education for girls and full voting rights for women in the North. In 1956, Gambo and her supporters marched to the office of the regional premier, Sir Ahmadu Bello, in Kaduna to demand the franchise for women in the north in future parliamentary elections. This protest was informed by the granting of a limited franchise to women in Southern Nigeria in 1951 (Agunbiade, 2021).

In the post-colonial period, which spanned through 1960 to 1999, the representation of women in governance could be examined under two different systems of administration, namely civilian and military. The representation of women during his period could be both in appointive and elective positions. In the build up to the independence of Nigeria in 1960, elections were conducted in 1958 and 1959. Some women most especially from the Southern Nigeria participated in these elections. For example, through active involvement in the modern politics of Nigeria, Wurola Adepeju Esan of the AG in the 1958 elections got appointed as the first female member in the Senate of 36 members. She was nominated as a senator from Ibadan West of the Western Region. No woman was elected into the 312-member House of Representatives and none was in the federal cabinet. During the First Republic, 1960–1966, there were only four female legislators in the whole of the country both at the federal and regional levels (Oni and Joshua, 2012). They were Senator Wurola Adepeju Esan and Senator Bernice Kerry in the National Parliament; and Margaret Ekpo and Janet Muokelu in the Eastern House of Assembly. There were no female Ministers in the Federal Cabinet (Anyia, 2003). The development continued until the demise of the First Republic in 1966, occasioned by the 15 January 1966 coup led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu.

The collapse of the First Republic resulted in the emergence of military rule. Generally, there were two major phases of military rule, namely first phase, 1966–1979 and second phase 1983–1999. During the first phase, which lasted for thirteen years, Nigeria was governed by four successive military rulers, namely Major General JTU Aguiyi Ironsi, General Yakubu Gowon, General Murtala Mohammed and General Olusegun Obasanjo. During this first phase, there was neither a female military head of state nor a female military governor. This development could be attributed to the nature, character and disposition of the military to women. Prior to this time, women were not expected to belong to the combative force of the military, which translated into not playing any role in military administrations. The marginalisation of women by successive military regimes in governance was manifested with the use of male civilian counterparts' political administration like Chief Obafemi Awolowo as the Federal Minister of Finance during Gowon regime. The situation continued until the return to democratic rule in 1979, leading to the birth of the Second Republic, where the hope of the Nigerian women in terms of their participation in the governance of their country was rekindled. During the republic which lasted between 1979 and 1983, the women participated actively in the politics of Nigeria. Few women were represented in the ruling bodies of all the parties. This affected their representation in both executive and legislative positions at the Federal and State levels. As argued by Ikpe, women during this republic were pushed to the women's wings of the political parties to continue as voter-catchers (Ikpe, 1997) rather than major players. However, some women were presented in governance during this republic. For example, Oyibo Odinamadu was elected as the first National Vice-President of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). In the Second Republic 1979–1983, there was one

female Senator out of 95, 11 female House of Representative Members out of 450 and 3 Women Ministers in Federal Cabinet. There were only few Women were in States Houses of Assembly while there was no Woman Chairman (chairperson) of Local Government (Anya, 2003).

The Second Republic collapsed in December 1983 as a result of the overthrow of Alhaji Shehu Shagari government by Major General Muhammadu Buhari. This led to the emergence of the second phase of military rule, which lasted till 1999. Although women suffered political neglect during this phase of military rule, they, however, enjoyed little limited political right during General Ibrahim Babangida, who made attempt to give Nigerian women a chance in the politics of Nigeria through the creation of Office of the First Lady that initiated some programmes. Some women ambassadors were appointed by his regime. He also directed all Military governors to appoint at least one woman into their cabinets (Ikpe, 1997). In his transition programme, which later became an aborted Third Republic, the women participated actively in the political process of that era. During this period, women were able to get both elective and appointive positions, namely two females out of 19 Political Bureau members, two Female Military Deputy Governors (Pamela Sadauki and Alhaja Lateefat Okunnu), two Female Civilian Deputy Governors (Chief Sinatu Aderoju Ojikutu and Cecilia Ekpeyong), three females out of 591 Chairmen (Chairpersons) in the 1991 LGA elections, 27 females out of 1172 State Houses of Assembly Members, 14 females out of 589 House of Representative Members, one female out of 91 Senators, eight female Presidential aspirants in 1991 and one female Presidential aspirant in 1993 (Anya 2003, p. 66). The annulment of the 12 June 1993 Presidential election made the transition programme unsuccessful.

Following the annulment of the Presidential election, General Babangida step aside and inaugurated an Interim National Government (ING), with Chief Ernest Shonekan as the Chairman in August 1993. The ING which was short-lived had three women as Secretaries. The ING was overthrown by General Sani Abacha in November 1993. Although the new military regime initiated a transition programme, it was not brought into logical conclusion as a result of the sudden death of General Sani Abacha in June 1998. He was later succeeded by a new head of State, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, who eventually returned Nigeria to civil rule in 1999, marking the birth of the Fourth Republic.

4 THE FOURTH REPUBLIC AND WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE, 1999–2023

Here, attempts would be made to identify and critically analyse the participation of women in the successive general elections held between 1999 and 2023 as well as their eventual election and appointment into various political offices both at the federal and state levels during this period. In analysing the representation of women in democratic governance during this republic, both chronological and thematic approaches would be

adopted in this section. It is important to point out here that the level of participation of women in the politics of Nigeria during this republic was critical to their eventual representation in democratic governance. However, before interrogating this, it is imperative to have a glimpse of the circumstances that culminated in the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999.

The birth of the Fourth Republic on 29 May 1999 was traced to the military regime of General Abdulsalam Abubakar, the eight military Head of State of Nigeria. Although the process of transition to democratic administration was started by General Sani Abacha, it was truncated as a result of his sudden death on 8 June 1998. General Abdulsalam, who took over the reins of power, had transition programme as part of his agenda for the country. Thus, in his broadcast to the nation, he publicly announced that he would hand over power to a democratically elected president on 29 May 1999. In the pursuit of this political programme, he dissolved the five political parties registered by National Electoral Commission of Nigeria under Abacha regime and set up new electoral commission known as Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) (with Justice Ephraim Akpata as the pioneer Chairman), which later began the process of registration of new political parties. Initially, INEC wanted to grant provisional registration to nine political parties, with the condition that after the local government elections, political parties that had 10% votes and above in at least 24 states of the federation would qualify to contest the state and federal elections (Dode, 2013). However, INEC succeeded in registering only three political parties which participated in the first general elections that were conducted in the republic. These political parties were Alliance for Democracy (AD), All People's Party (APP) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Following the success of presidential election of February 1999, which was contested by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the PDP and Chief Olu Falae of the AD/APP, on 29 May 1999, General Abdulsalam handed over power to Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who was declared winner by INEC. This development marked the genesis of the birth of the Fourth Republic.

Having provided brief background of the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999, our main focus now is to critically interrogate women's representation in democratic governance within the 24 years of the birth of the republic (1999–2023). In analysing this, we shall restrict ourselves to the representation of women at both federal and state levels, with major emphasis on elective and appointive positions both at the executive and legislative arms of government. Between 1999 and 2023, seven successive general elections were conducted by INEC in which democratic governance was consolidated both at the federal and state levels. Within this period, the participation of women in the politics of Nigeria at these two governmental levels witnessed major transformations. Significantly, evidences from the extant literature revealed that the level of involvement of women in the politics of Nigeria during this period varied across the 36 states of the federation, including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, as well as in the six geo-

political zones of the federation. It was shown that no state or geo-political zone was left out as regard women's representation in democratic governance either at the state or federal level, whether as elected candidates or appointees of the government. Also, the percentage of women's representation in democratic governance during this period both at the state and federal levels varied and depended on the political dispensation that emerged. The major transformations that occurred with respect to the representation of women in democratic governance between 1999 and 2023 would be critically analysed here.

4.1 Women's representation at the federal level: executive and legislative positions

The representation of the Women in democratic governance at the federal level would be examined in terms of participation as candidates in the general elections as well as appointees both at the executive and legislative arms of government. At the executive arm of government, there were records of women who contested as Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates in the general elections between 1999 and 2023. Although the number of women who vied for the presidential and vice-presidential positions in the general elections during this period was very low, there was little increase in the number of women showed interest in these positions. In the first-four general elections conducted between 1999 and 2011, there was no record of any woman who vied for either the presidential or vice-presidential position.

The active participation of women in these two positions began during the 2015 general elections. In the 2015 general elections, of the fourteen presidential candidates that participated in the election, only one was female known as Professor Oluremi Sonaya. She contested under a minority political party, that is KOWA Party (KP). Also in the election, of the fourteen vice-presidential candidates, four were female. In the 2019 general elections, of the 73 presidential candidates that participated in the elections, six were women, with 22 female vice-presidential candidates, and they all contested under minority political parties (Opejobi, 2019). There was a little increase in the number of women who vied for these positions, from one in 2015 to six and four to 22 in 2019. However in the 2023 general election, the number of women who participated in the election as presidential candidate dropped to one, with no female presidential candidate. The representation of women in terms of contest for elective presidential and vice-presidential positions between 1999 and 2023 though changed, it was generally low. All the women that contested for these elective positions during this period were candidates of minority political parties. None of the major political parties namely Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) between 1999 and 2023 and All Progressives Congress (APC) between 2015 and 2023 presented women as their candidates for the two executive elective positions.

Table 1: List of female ministers during chief Olusegun Obasanjo Administration, 1999–2007

<i>No.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Ministry</i>	<i>Period</i>
1	Kema Chikwe	Transport Aviation	1999-2001 2001-2003
2	Aisha Ismail	Women Affairs and Youth Development	1999-2003
3	Rita Akpan	Women Affairs	2003-2005
4	Mobolaji Osomo	Housing, Land and Urban Development	2003-2005
5	Funke Adedoyin	State for Health	2003-2005
6		State for Education	2003-2005
7	Maryam Ciroma	Women Affairs	2005-2007
8	Obiageli Ezekwesili	Solid Minerals Education	2005-2007 2006-2007
9	Halima Tayo-Alao	State for Education State for Health	2005-2006 2006-2007
10	Helen Esuene	State for Health Environment	2005-2006 2006-2007
11	Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala	Finance Foreign Affairs	2003-2006 2006
12	Nenadi Esther Usman	State for Finance Finance	2003-2006 2006-2007
13	Joy Ogwu	Foreign Affairs	2006-2007
14	Leslye Obiora	Solid Minerals	2007

Source: The Punch, 1999; The Guardian, 2003; The Tribune, 2005; The Premium Times 2007.

In terms of appointive positions, women served in the cabinet of successive democratic governments as ministers, ambassadors, advisers between 1999 and 2023. Evidences from the literature revealed that women served in the government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, 1999–2007, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2007–2010), Goodluck Jonathan (2010–2015) and Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023), though in varying number. The tables below show names and ministries of some of the women that served in different successive democratic administrations in the Nigeria's Fourth Republic between 1999 and 2023.

Table 2: List of female ministers during Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua administration, 2007–2010

<i>No.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Ministry</i>	<i>Period</i>
1	Adenike Grange	Health	2007-2008
2	Halima Tayo-Alao	Environment & Housing	2007-2008
3	Diezani Alison-Madueke	Transport Mines & Steel Development	2007-2008 2008-2010
4	Grace Ekpiwhre	Science & Technology	2007-2008
5	Saudatu Bungudu	Women Affairs & Social Development	2007-2008
6	Dora Akuyili	Information & Communication	2008-2010
7	Salamat Hussaini Suleiman	Women Affairs & Social Development	2008-2010
8	Fatima Balarabe Ibrahim	State for Energy (Power)	2007
9	Fidelia Njeze	State for Defence State for Agriculture & Water Resources	2007-2008 2008-2010

Source: The Punch, 2007; The Guardian, 2008; The Tribune, 2010.

Table 3: List of female ministers during Goodluck Jonathan administration, 2010–2015

<i>No.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Ministry</i>	<i>Period</i>
1	Fidelia Njeze	Aviation	2010-2011
2	Dora Akuyili	Information and Communication	2010-2015
3	Ruquayyah Ahmed Rufai	Education	2010-2015
4	Diezani Alison-Madueke	Petroleum	2010-2015
5	Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala	Finance	2010-2015
6	Josephine Anenih	Women Affairs & Social Development	2010
7	Stella Oduah	Aviation	2011-2015
8	Erelu Olusola Obada	State for Defence	2011-2015
9	Olajumoke Akinjide	State for FCT	2011-2015
11	Viola Onwuliri	State for Foreign Affairs	2011-2015
12	Mobolaji Johnson	Communication Technology	2011-2015
13	Zainab Ibrahim Kudi	State for Niger Delta Affairs	2011-2015
14	Zainab Maina	Women Affairs&Social Development	2011-2015

Source: The Punch, 2010; The Guardian, 2010; The Tribune, 2011; The Premium Times, 2015.

Table 4: List of female ministers during Muhammadu Buhari administration, 2015–2023

<i>No.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Ministry</i>	<i>Period</i>
1	Zainab Ahmed	State for Budget & Planning Finance Finance, Budget & National Planning	2015-2018 2018-2019 2019-2023
2	Amina Mohammed	Environment	2015-2018
3	Kemi Adeosun	Finance	2015-2018
4	Khadija Bukar Abba Ibrahim	State for Foreign Affairs	2015-2018
5	Aisha Abubakar	State for Industry, Trade & Investment	2015-2019
6	Aisha Alhasan	Women Affairs & Social Development	2015-2018
7	Aisha Abubakar	Women Affairs & Social Development	2018-2019
8	Sharon Ikeazor	State for Environment State for Niger Delta Affairs	2019-2022 2022-2023
9	Ramatu Tijani Aliyu	State for FCT	2019-2023
10	Sadiya Umar Farouq	Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster & Social Development	2019-2023
11	Mariam Yalwaji Katagum	-	2019-2023
12	Gbemisola Saraki	State for Transport State for Mines & Steel Development	2019-2022 2022-2023
13	Pauline Tallen	Women Affairs & Social Development	2019-2023

Source: The Guardian, 2015; The Tribune, 2019; The Premium Times, 2023.

Table 5: List of female ministers under Bola Ahmed Tinubu administration, 2023

<i>No.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Ministry</i>	<i>Period</i>
1	Barr. Hannatu Musawa	Art, Culture and Creative Economy	2023
2	Betta Edu	Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation	2023
3	Hon. Nkeiruka Onyejocha	State for Labour and Employment	2023
4	Lola Ade-John	Tourism	2023
5	Hon. Uju Kennedy Ohaneye	Women Affairs	2023
6	Iman Suleiman Ibrahim	State for Police Affairs	2023
7	Doris Aniche	Industry, Trade and Investment	2023

Source: The Premium Times, 2023.

Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 above revealed list of female ministers that served in five different democratic administrations in the country between 1999 and 2023. From the tables, women were represented in the federal executive council of each government, though in varying number. In fact, some women served in two to three ministries under an administration, while some served under two different administrations. With the exception of the second term of President Olusegun Obasanjo in which 30% of women were ministers, in the others the percentage of women in the cabinet ranged between 14% and 25%. While during Yar’Adua, it was 18%, during Goodluck Jonathan, it was 25%. Also, during Buhari administration, women representation was 14% during first term and 16% during second term. Of the 45 ministers appointed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, seven (representing 16%) were female.

At the level of National Assembly, which comprises two houses of legislature (Senate-Upper House and House of Representatives-Lower House), women were represented between 1999 and 2023. Although the number of women’s representation in the National Assembly varied across the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, there was no election year in which at least one woman would not be elected into either the Senate (which made up 109 members) or House of Representatives (which made up 360 members). The tables below showed computed number of seats won by women vis-à-vis men between 1999 and 2023 in the two houses of legislature.

Table 6: Number of women elected into the Senate, 1999–2023

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total number of seats and percentages</i>				
	<i>Number of seats</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>%</i>
1999	109	106	97.2	3	1.8
2003	109	105	95.8	4	4.2
2007	109	101	91.92	8	8.08
2011	109	102	92.86	7	6.4
2015	109	102	92.86	7	7.14
2019	109	102	92.86	7	7.14
2023	109	106	97.25	3	2.75

Source: Eke, 2022.

The above table shows the number and percentage of women versus men elected into the Senate between 1999 and 2023. From the table, there was increase in the number of women that were elected into this upper house of legislature between 1999 and 2007. It started declining and remained static between 2011 and 2019, and dropped drastically in 2023. Within this period, women recorded the highest number in the Senate in 2007, with the total number of eight.

With respect to the elected principal officers at the Senate during this period, there was equally women's representation, though not encouraging. Between the 4th and the 10th Assembly (1999–2023), no woman was elected as either Senate President or Deputy Senate President. However, in the 4th Assembly, which was inaugurated in 1999, Senator Stella Unuezi Omu of the PDP from the Delta South Senatorial District of Delta State was elected as the Chief Whip. Also, in the 8th Assembly a female senator was elected as Deputy Minority Whip. Aside being elected as principal officers, majority of the female senators that were elected into the Senate during this period, were appointed as Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of various Senate Committees.

Table 7: Number of Women Elected into the House of Representatives, 1999–2023

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total number of seats and percentages</i>				
	<i>Number of seats</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>%</i>
1999	360	347	96.4	13	3.6
2003	360	339	94.17	21	5.83
2007	360	335	93.06	25	6.94
2011	360	345	92.78	15	3.7
2015	360	338	93.89	22	6.11
2019	360	349	95.65	11	3.05
2023	360	345	92.78	15	3.7

Source: Eke, 2022.

The above table shows the number and percentage of women versus men elected into the House of Representatives between 1999 and 2023. From the table, there was increase in the number of women that were elected into this upper house of legislature between 1999 and 2007. It declined in 2011 and increased in 2015. It equally dropped drastically in 2019 and increased in 2023. Within this period, women recorded the highest number in the Senate in 2007, with the total number of 25. Generally, the representation of women in the House of Representatives was not stable.

With respect to the elected principal officers at the House of Representatives during this period, there was equally women's representation in some of the principal officers of the House during this period. The representation of women in the principal officers of the House of Representatives between 1999 and 2023 was very encouraging unlike in the Senate. For instance, in the 6th Assembly which was inaugurated in 2007, a woman was elected as the Speaker of the House, known as Rt. Hon. Olubunmi Patricia Etteh (who represented (Ayedaade /Isokan/Irewole constituency in Osun State). She was the first female Speaker in the history of Nigeria's House of Representatives. However, she barely spent five months before was impeached on allegation of corruption, which was yet to be proved. In the 7th Assembly, which was inaugurated in 2011, Hon. Mulikat Akande Adeola of the PDP (who represented Ogbomoso North, South and Orire Federal

Constituency in Oyo State) contested for the position of Speaker, but later stepped down for Hon. Aminu Tambuwal. She was later elected as the Majority Leader of the House, becoming the first woman to hold that position. Also, in the 8th Assembly which was inaugurated in 2015, Hon. Fatima Binta Bello of the PDP (who represented Kaltungo/Shongom Federal Constituency in Gombe State) was elected as the Deputy Minority Whip of the House. In the 9th Assembly, which was inaugurated in 2019, Nkeiruka Chiduben Onyejeocha of the APC (who represented Isuikwuato/Umunneochi Federal Constituency of Abia State) contested for the position of Speaker of the House against Femi Gbajabiamila. She later stepped down and was elected as the Deputy Chief. Also, in the 10th Assembly, which was inaugurated in 2023, Adewunmi Oriyomi Onanuga of the APC (who represented Ikenne/Sagamu Remo North Federal Constituency) was elected as Deputy Chief of the House. Apart from being elected as principal officers of the House, majority of the female lawmakers that were elected into the House during this period, were appointed as Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of various House Committees such as Trade and Investment, Health, and Women Affairs.

4.2 Women's representation at the state level: executive and legislative positions

Generally, at the state level, women's representation could be seen both at the executive (serving as governor, deputy-governors, commissioners and special advisers) and legislative positions (serving as speakers and deputy speakers). At the executive position level, our discussion would be restricted only to the governorship and deputy governorship positions. First, at the executive position level, no woman had been elected as the Governor of any state in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023. However, following the impeachment of the then incumbent Governor of Anambra State by the Anambra State House of Assembly under the Hon. Mike Balonwu as the Speaker in November 2007, Dame Virginia Etiaba who was then the Deputy Governor was sworn in as the first female governor of Anambra state in particular and Nigeria in general. She barely ruled for three months (November–February), when Peter Obi was returned as the governor by the judiciary. Between 1999 and 2011 general elections, there was no active participation of women in terms of standing in as governorship candidates of either major or minor political parties. However, during the 2015, 2019 and 2023 governorship elections, there were evidences of women active representation as governorship candidates of both majority and minority political parties. While in the 2015 governorship election, 24 out of 380 candidates were women (representing just 6%), in the 2019 governorship election, 80 out of one, 66 were women (representing 8%). There was just 2% increase in the number of women who vied for governorship seat between 2015 and 2019. In the 2023 governorship election, the number of female contestants dropped to 24 out of 420 contestants. One major development with respect to the representation of women in elective position especially during the 2015 and 2023 general elections was that for the first time in political history of the Fourth Republic, women emerged as governorship

candidate of one of the major political parties in Nigeria, that is, All Progressives Congress (APC). In the 2015 governorship election, of the 24 women that were candidates, one was from the major political party (that is APC) known as Senator Aisha Jummai Al-Hassan (popularly known as Mama Taraba), others were from the minority political parties. Senator Aisha participated in the gubernatorial primary election, defeated other candidates and emerged as APC candidate in Taraba State. In the main governorship election, he contested against the then incumbent Governor of the State, Alhaji Darius Ishaku of the PDP. The election was initially declared inconclusive. In the rerun election, Senator Aisha was defeated.

Also, in the 2023 governorship election, Senator Aishatu Dahiru Ahmed (popularly known as Binani) emerged as the APC gubernatorial candidate in Adamawa State. She did not just emerge as the governorship candidate of the APC through consensus arrangement, but through a competitive and keenly contested primary election that involved prominent figures such as former Governor of Adamawa State, Muhammadu Jibrilla Bindow, pioneer Executive Chairman Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nuhu Ribadu, and influential Federal legislator and chairman of the House Committee on Army, Abdurazaq Namdas. She defeated the three major male candidates by securing 430 votes with the runner-up, Nuhu Ribadu, receiving 288 votes (Daily Trust, 2023). In the main governorship election, Senator Dahiru contested against the incumbent governor, Alhaji Ahmadu Fintiri of the PDP. The election was equally declared inconclusive. In the re-run election, Fintiri was later declared winner of the election by INEC. Aside Senator Aishatu Dahiru, there were other 22 women who contested as governorship candidates during the 2023 general elections but under minority political parties such as Social Democratic Party, Peoples Redemption Party, Action Alliance Party, Action Democratic Party, Zenith Labour Party, Labour Party, Allied People's Movement, All People's Party, Action Alliance, Boot Party, National Rescue Movement, All Progressives Grand Alliance and Young Progressives Party.

Another major development with respect to the representation of women in elective executive position at the state level was in the deputy governorship position. Without doubt, between 1999 and 2023, women have done fairly well. Although the representation of women in this leadership position during this period varied across the 36 states and 6 geo-political zones of the federation, no single geo-political zone that was left. While the South West (with Lagos and Ogun States with highest number of female deputy governors: three times each) recorded the highest number of female deputy governors since the birth of the Fourth Republic (8), North East had the least with just only one (Adamawa State). The table below shows the current and previous names and states of female deputy governors in Nigeria.

Table 8: List of female deputy governors in Nigeria, 1999–2023

<i>No.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Period</i>
1	Kofoworola Akerele-Bucknor	Lagos	AD	1999-2003
2	Cecilia Eyo Ekpenyong	Cross Rivers	PDP	1999-2003
3	Salimot Badru	Ogun	PDP	2003-2007 2007-2011
4	Virginia Etiaba	Anambra	APGA	2006-2010
5	Sarah Adebisi Sosan	Lagos	ACN	2007-2011
6	Pauline Tallen	Plateau	PDP	2007-2011
7	Titiloyo Laoye-Tomori	Osun	ACN/APC	2010-2014 2014-2018
8	Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire	Lagos	ACN	2011-2015
9	Valerie Ebe	Akwa Ibom	PDP	2012-2015 2015-2019
10	Yetunde Onanuga	Ogun	APC	2015-2019
11	Cecilia Ezeilo	Enugu	PDP	2015-2019 2019-2023
12	Ipalibo Gogo Banigo	Rivers	PDP	2015-2019 2019-2023
13	Hadiza Balarabe	Kaduna	APC	2019-2023 2023 till date
14	Naimot Salako Ayodele	Ogun	APC	2019-2023 2023 till date
15	Monisade Afuye	Ekiti	APC	2022 till date
16	Ngozi Nma Odi	Rivers	PDP	2023 till date
17	Akon Enyakenyi	Akwa Ibom	PDP	2023 till date
18	Josephine Piyo	Plateau	PDP	2023 till date
19	Patricia Obila	Ebonyi	APC	2023 till date
20	Kaletapwa Farauta	Adamawa	PDP	2023 till date

Source: The Punch Newspaper, 2009, The Guardian Newspaper 2015, The Tribune Newspaper 2019 and The Premium Times Newspaper 2023

The above table shows the list of female deputy governors in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023. It revealed that women were represented in the deputy position at the executive council at the state level. It could be seen from the table that out of the 36 states of the federation, only 13 states had been able to give female the opportunity to be represented in the governorship position level. Also from the table, Lagos State top the list of the 36 states that had produced the highest number female deputy governors in Nigeria (securing three). She was followed by Ogun, Plateau, Rivers and Akwa Ibom, each produced two. Other eight states (namely Ekiti, Osun, Kaduna, Cross Rivers, Enugu, Ebonyi, Anambra and Adamawa) produced one each. The table also revealed that while

some female deputy governors served two consecutive terms in some states (such as Ogun, Akwa Ibom, Enugu, Rivers, Osun and Kaduna), others served just only one term.

At legislative level, women’s representation could be seen in various State Houses of Assembly that emerged in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023. Although the number of female parliamentarians varied across the 36 State Houses of Assembly, women were represented in both the highest and lowest positions in the state parliament. The table below showed computed number of seats won by women between 1999 and 2023.

Table 9: State Houses of Assembly

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total number of seats and percentages</i>				
	<i>Number of seats</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>%</i>
1999	978	966	98.8	12	1.2
2003	951	912	96.0	39	4.0
2007	900	843	94.2	57	5.8
2011	900	832	93.1	68	6.9
2015	979	900	91.9	79	8.1
2019	991	946	95.59	45	4.41
2023	988	940	95.15	48	4.85

Source: Eke, 2022.

The table above showed the total number of female lawmakers at the 36 States of the federation between 1999 and 2023. From the table, there was steady increase in the number of female lawmakers between 1999 and 2015. The number declined during the 2019 general elections, and later increased by three seats in the 2023 general elections. With specific reference to the 2023 general elections in particular, of the 36 states, women were represented in only 21 states (namely Anambra, Kaduna, Bayelsa, Benue, Cross River, Delta, Ekiti, Oyo, Taraba, Nasarawa, Plateau, Kogi, Kwara, Akwa Ibom, Ogun, Lagos, Adamawa, Ondo, Enugu and Ebonyi States), though with varying number of seats in the State House of Assembly. In terms of geo-political statistical analysis, while the South West had the highest number female lawmakers (with 16 seats), North West had the least with just only two female lawmakers (and only from Kaduna State). Other geo-political zones included North Central (12), South-South (10), South-East (5) and North-East (3).

Apart from the emergence of the female lawmakers in the various states Houses of Assembly, their representation in various leadership positions in the state legislature equally deserve interrogation. Between 1999 and 2023, a number of female lawmakers had been represented in some top leadership positions in the States Houses of Assembly among which were Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Leader of the House, Deputy Leader of the House, Chief Whip, Deputy Chief, Clerk of the House, etc. We will restrict ourselves to

Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the House. The tables below show the names of female Speakers and Deputy Speakers of some States Houses of Assembly in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023.

Table 10: List of female speakers of States Houses of Assembly in Nigeria, 1999-2023

<i>No.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Period</i>
1	Margaret Icheen	Benue	1999-2003
2	Titi Oseni-Gomez	Ogun	2003-2008
3	Eucharía Azodo	Anambra	2003-2011
4	Chinwe Nwaebili	Anambra	2011-2015
5	Monsuratu Jumoke Sunmonu	Oyo	2011
6	Rita Mmaduagwu	Anambra	2015-2019
7	Jumoke Akinjide	Ondo	2014-2017
8	Olubunmi Adelugba	Ekiti	2023 till date

Source: The Punch, 2011; The Guardian, 2015; The Tribune, 2023.

The table above showed the total number of female speakers that had emerged since the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999 across the 36 States of the federation. From the table, one could see vividly that out of the 36 states, female speakers had emerged just in only 6 states. Of these six states, four from the South-West, only one from each of South-East and North-Central. The other three geo-political zones, namely South-South, North-East and North-West had not produced any female speakers. Also, of the six states that had produced female speakers since 1999, Anambra had the highest (3), other five states produced one each. In all, eight female speakers had emerged at the States Houses of Assembly in Nigeria between 1999 and 2023.

Table 11: List of Female Deputy Speakers of States Houses of Assembly in Nigeria, 1999-2023

<i>No.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Period</i>
1	Adefunmilayo Tejuosho	Lagos	2007-2009
2	Felicia Bassey	Akwa Ibom	2019-2023
3	Latifat Ajayi	Ogun	2023
4	Lami Danladi	Benue	2023
5	Afiniki Dauda	Niger	2023

Source: The Premium Times, 2023.

The table above showed the total number of female Deputy Speakers that had emerged since the birth of the Fourth Republic in 1999 across the 36 States of the federation. From the table, one could see vividly that out of the 36 states, female Deputy Speakers had emerged just in only 5 states. Of these five states, two from the South-West (Lagos and Ogun), two from North-Central (Benue and Niger) and one from the South

South (Akwa Ibom). The other three geo-political zones, namely South-East, North-East and North-West had not produced any female Deputy Speaker.

5 CONCLUSION

The foregoing has critically historicise the representation of Nigerian women in governance under three major historical phases, namely pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. These historical phases revealed the change and continuity in the representation of women in governance. With special reference to the Fourth Republic, the paper examined the representation of women in both elective and appointive positions at the federal and state levels between 1999 and 2023. It argued that though women were represented in both levels of governments especially in the executive and legislative arms during this period, the percentage of their representation vis-à-vis men was very infinitesimal. In other words, the representation of women in democratic governance between 1999 and 2023 was very far below the recommendation of the United Nations Economic and Social Council Resolution of 1990 which recommended 30% minimum proportion of women in leadership position. Evidences from the statistics of women's representation in both elective and appointive positions at federal and state levels revealed that the percentage of women in both positions in democratic governance since 1999 had not reached 10% let alone 30% affirmation. In comparison with 54 African countries, Nigeria was ranked the lowest securing 54th position with a 5.45% female representation, while Rwanda was ranked the first with 47.95% (which was even more than UN recommendation. Other worst-performing countries in Africa with poor female representation in democratic governance were Algeria (second with 6.20%), Benin Republic (7.40%), the Gambia (8.6%) and Liberia (11.00%). Aside these five states including Nigeria, no other country in Africa had below 30% affirmation as regard women's representation in democratic governance.

The low representation of women in democratic governance both as elected political officers and appointees of the government during this Fourth Republic was hindered by a combination of factors among which were the nature of party politics, widespread prejudices and biases about women as political leaders, women's lack of interest in politics, women's lack of economic base, cultural factor, inept political leadership of some women politicians and so on. For instance, the nature of party politics of majority of political parties did not favour the women. This starts with the composition of the National Working Committee of the political parties. Aside the position of National Women Leader, which naturally is to be headed by a woman, other positions such as National Chairman, Deputy Chairman, National Secretary, National Treasurer, National Legal Adviser among others are mainly dominated by the men. This is the major body that determines who will emerge as the standard bearer of the party in the general elections both at the federal and state levels. Ikpe describes this challenge as personality dominated and paternalistic nature of political parties (Ikpe, 1997).

Another major challenge of low representation of women in democratic governance is finance. This challenge could be seen in the cost of purchasing mandatory expression of interest and nomination forms as well as the cost of prosecuting both primary and general elections. For instance, while APC pecked the cost of expression of interest and nomination forms for President, Governorship, Senate, House of Representatives and State House of Assembly as follows: N100 million, N50 million, N20 million, N10 million and N2 million respectively, PDP pecked her own as follows: N40 million, N21 million, N3.5 million, N2.5 million and N 600,000. The implication of this high cost of mandatory expression of interest and nomination forms is to discourage those who are not financially buoyant from contesting.

Religious or traditional beliefs and practices equally hinder active participation of Nigerian women in politics. In many of the societies in Nigeria, religious and traditional practices often determine the role women play. Evidence from the literature has shown that due to adopted religion and some traditional practices women are not supposed to be at the helm of affairs where men are concerned. Anya argues that the greatest danger to this practice is the internalization of these belief systems which make women see politics as something out of their sphere (Anya, 2003). This particular challenge majorly affects women in Northern part of Nigeria. The resultant effect of this could be seen in the low rate of women representation in elective positions from Northern Nigeria between 1999 and 2023. There are several states in the North West and North East in particular where no single woman has been elected into either State House of Assembly or National Assembly.

Moreover, widespread prejudice and bias against women as political leaders and the incompetent political leadership of some women who have been assigned political positions in the past have been contributing factors to the low representation of women in democratic governance. Although there some women politicians who had distinguished themselves well in administration, there were some who did not do well. There is general saying that first impression lasts longer. The inept political leadership of some women politicians had led to why some major political parties failed to support female candidacy for some positions such as President, Vice-President, Governorship, Senate President and Speaker of the House of Representatives. These elective positions are seen to be very critical to committing into the hands of female politicians.

The paper, therefore, submits that the need to increase the level of women's representation in democratic governance is critical to the attainment of Goal 5 (Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls) of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Thus, political parties should develop policies that would make it mandatory for certain number of seats (a minimum of 35%) at both the executive and legislative arms of government, to be reserved for women, as being practiced in some countries such as Kenya and Uganda. This should equally be given a legislative backing.

It advocates for political doggedness of Nigerian women in the face of intimidation by and electoral competition against their male counterpart.

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