Intra-gender Victimization: An Hamper to the Affirmation of Women's Political Rights in Nigeria[1]

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Abstract:

Appreciable women's political participation in Nigeria is yet to be a reality even after several years of advocacies, policies and litigations and a court order. Women's poverty, patriarchy, culture, religious among other factors beyond women's control have often been highlighted as being responsible for hindering their political participation. Springing from the perspective of victim culpability introduced into victimology by Mendelsohn, this paper argues that there are some forms of passive and active intra-sexual victimization that actually are lending support to these other limiting factors already identified by most scholars. Intra-sexual victimization among women expresses itself through failed socialization function, ineffective negotiation, intra-sexual envy and unhealthy rivalry, greed and selfishness, failure to make significant difference with few opportunities. etc. To this end, it is recommended that in the pursuit of this course, women be more united, take advantage of their socializing function, invest more in personal development, shun all forms of corrupt practices, take more deliberate steps towards mentorship and sponsorship of potential and suitable female candidates, explore the informal mode of negotiation and practice the principles of nego-feminism.

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Introduction

Intra-sexual victimization is used here as some forms of oppression, deprivation, sabotage or opposition of a sex by members of the same sex. It may also refer to the indifferent attitude of member of a gender towards the advancement of the interest of their members. This conveys a similar idea with what kiner (2020) refers to as female rivalry except for the fact that her conceptualization was narrowed towards the female sex. This type of victimization might be very destructive because as Enyia, Ayuk, Otu, Andrew, Njong, Ebagu, Unwanade, and Okpa (2023:245) noted, a kingdom divided against itself shall not stand.

In many parts of the world, even among united nation subscribers and the first world countries, women have been blatantly victimized particularly in deprivation of prominent political offices. Akuindo's (2023) world list of elected and appointed female Heads of States, and Government proves that when compared to their male counterparts, the number of female Presidents or Heads of States and Vice or Deputy past and present is very negligible. For instance, the United States of America since her independence in July 1776 has never produced a female President till date even though according to Abel (2023), her first female presidential candidate Victoria Woodhull contested in 1872. It was only in 2020 that the US will even have the first female Vice President in the person of Kamala Harris. The United Kingdom has had only three Prime Minister- Margaret Thatcher, Theresa May, Ms Liz Truss (Finnis, 2022). The continent of Asia has had a handful of female number one citizen, Africa has had 4 Acting, 1 Interim and 5 elected female President.

Nigeria as an African nation since 1963 she became a republic is yet to have a female President/Head of State, Vice President, Senate President, nor Governor/Military State Administrator apart from Dame Virgy Etaiba who acted as the governor of Anambra state for 6 month following the impeachment of her principal- Peter Obi. Only a few states have had female Deputy governors and Speakers of the House of Assembly. The only female Speaker of the lower chamber Patricia Etteh who was latter forced to resign on corruption allegations, Olu (2023) observed, served between June and October of 2007. Even the 35 percent Affirmative Action for women prescribed by the National Gender Policy since 2006 is yet to be actualized (Alliance for Africa, 2022) now after 17 years. This is however not to say that some commendable efforts have not been made by some political administrations both at the federal and the state level.

This apparent subjugated position of the women in political leadership over the years, scholars have attributed to many factors inter alia: patriarchy (Uwa, John, Dauda & Onyidamola 2018), female poverty (Abdo-Katsipis 2017), low education among female (Zembere, 2020), culture (Andrew & Ashibi, 2022; Eniola, 2018), religion (Eniola, 2018), violent nature of politics (Nwabukeonye, 2014) among others. The three established waves and most popular existing strands of feminist theory such as gender schema, radical feminism, liberal feminism, radical feminism, black feminism, African feminism among others have pointed to other factors other than the women for their lower status in society. By this the female gender is portrayed as mere victims of circumstances in which they have no hand. Specifically, the male gender has received most of the blames from these theorists for the political situation of women. In the light

of the identified factors, solutions have been proffered which some nations have adopted to improve the political conditions of women to an appreciable extent. However, there are paucity of scholarly efforts invested in the critical consideration of the possible role women might be passively and actively playing to scuttle their chances in politics. Without any attempt to deny the much men often manipulate to keep women out of political lime light, it might not be sacrosanct to assume that men are omnipotent in this situation as they have been projected. There are possibilities that the female folk are doing or failing to do somethings which has helped sustained the status quo. In fact, Abekwe (2017) arguing from the 'how women look at women's perspectives of the Feminist film theory advanced by Rachael Sampson suggested that women contribute to their subjugation in the society. It is against this backdrop that this article was conceived and perceived a worthwhile venture.

Statement of the problem

Nigerian women appear to have lots of opportunities and advantages that have the potential to change their political lots for good. Nevertheless, they have remained in the background maybe because of their failure to recognize these opportunities or the potentials therein. Consequently, instead of using their chances to their advantage they use it against themselves and then turn back to blame the men for their political retrogression. Hence, women are observed publicly vituperating fellow women who appear to be making headway in politics or even in life generally. Women also publicly show their preference for male politicians as against their fellow women and teach their wards to do same. They campaign, spend finances in support of men, for cheap selfish political interest as against the promotion of the course of their gender even when it is readily obvious that a female will do better. They socialize their children to believe that only men should take political positions among other misogynistic expressions. These express and sometimes subtle show of intra-gender animosity has persisted alongside all efforts to actualize gender equality by local and international civil societies which have not engendered the expected result.

To this end, this article seeks to emphasize the blameworthiness of women in their political backwardness, and suggest some workable solutions that may help ameliorate the situation.

The paucity of women political leaders in Nigeria

Nigeria since her independence has been through the military political dispensations and the democratic which happens to be the current dispensation with so many leaders but only a few women has been a part the leadership. Throughout the military Era, no woman was given the opportunity to head a state or be a part of the supreme military council. In the democratic era, since 1999 specifically till date, no woman has been a President, Vice President nor a State Governor. Within the same period, (1999-2023), Okafor and Ileyemi (2013) observed that only 157 women have been elected into the National Assembly compared to 2,657 men. The 2023 election results announce in 2023, indicate that only 18 women (3 Senators and 15 House of Representative members) are part of the National Assembly. In the same vein, Alliance for Africa (2022)

noted with dismay that in 2022, out of the 109 Senators in the National Assembly just 9 happen to be women and of the 360 member of the house of representatives, only 27 were women. This is a conspicuous far cry from the 35% Affirmative Action of the national gender policy.

For appointed positions, women have also suffered setback through Nigerian History. National Bureau of Statistics reported that between 1999 and 2022, women had only occupied 13.73 percent of Ministerial Offices, while the remaining 86.27 were taken by men (Oluwafemi, 2022).

Legal Framework for Women's Political Participation in Nigeria

The Constitution, the National Gender Policy, International obligations and commitments and the Court Judgement are some legal backings for women's right to political leadership at any level in Nigeria.

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is the first and supreme legal document which contains the basic principles of the laws of the nation in its chapter IV. In this chapter, it guarantees equality and non-discrimination in all areas of life on account of sex. The National Gender Policy stipulates that the implementation of a 35 percent quota reserved for women in politics and the economy as a temporary measure to bridge the gender gap.

Also, Nigeria is a signatory to a good number of women friendly regional and international treaties. Notable among these are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women (The Maputo Protocol) the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act Cap 10, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) (1995), and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals

Furthermore, in 2022, a Federal High Court in Abuja ordered the federal government to comply with the 35% affirmative action for women following a suit filed by nine civil society organizations against the Federal Government on August 24, 2020. The civil society groups include: Women Empowerment and Legal Aid (WELA) Initiative, Nigeria Women Trust Fund (NWTF) International Federation of Women Lawyers, 100 Women Lobby Group, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD- West Africa), Vision Spring Initiative (VSI), YIAGA Africa and Women in Politics Forum (WIPF) (Ejekwonyilo, 2022).

Affirmative Action for Nigerian women in politics

Affirmative Action (AA) refers to temporary policy measures designed to favour a disadvantaged group or reverse discrimination to create a sense of fair representation. Robert (2009) opined that it is a policy program that seeks to redress past discrimination through active measures to ensure equal opportunities as in education and employment. American Association For Access Equity and Diversity - AAAED (2023) argued that AA has its origin in the civil rights movement of the United States of America when President

John F. Kennedy on March 6, 1961 by Executive Order 10925 established the President's Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity which demanded Federal contractors with American Government to take affirmative action to ensure the avoidance of any form of discriminatory treatment on the basis of race, colour or nationality towards applicants and employees. The Affirmative Action eventually was solidified by the Civil Right Act of 1964 sponsored by Senators Joseph Clerk and Clifford Case. Subsequently in 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson amended his 1965 order which was a reiteration of Kennedy's to include sex. (AAAED, 2023). From the foregoing, it is evident that the term affirmative action did not begin with inclusion in political leadership nor was it specifically designed for the sake of women although has grown to encompass it.

In the Nigerian political space, it is necessary to note that some commendable efforts have been made by various government administrations towards the affirmation of women's political leadership. In the year 2000, President Olusegun Obasanjo introduced the National Policy on Women and in 2006, in a bid to improve policy, he went on to introduce the National Gender Policy. President Goodluck Jonathan Achieved about 33% of women appointees in Political Offices besides the many women empowerment programs initiated. By this, his administration became the best in terms of AA for women's political representation in comparison to others before and after him (Ibekwe & Chidiobi, 2022). The Buhari's administration also witnessed a few empowerment programs for women and most interestingly, the initiation of the Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill still waiting to be passed.

A Snapshot on Feminism

As a theoretical standpoint, feminism seeks to advocate for the equality of the male and the female gender in all spheres of human endeavor. Various waves of feminism have their unique emphasis and achievements just as various strands have their different explanations to women's denigration.

First wave

The wave is formally traced to the Seneca Fall Convention in 1848 when three hundred men and women rallied in pursuit of equality for women (Rampton, 2015). The first wave which adopted mass protest as its prominent approach finally archived a major success in 1920 when the Congress passed the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote Grady (2018).

Second wave

According to Grady (2018) the wave majorly began with the Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique, of 1963 with the* theme that justifies that the unhappiness of housewives owing to their relegation was rational and was for no fault of theirs. Grady (2018) further argued that another prominent figure in the second wave was Carol Hanisch who argued in her 'the personal is political' that domestic labour, access to abortion were systemic, political and central to the fundamental rights of women. This phase thus pursued the outlawing of marital rape, raising of awareness about domestic violence, legislations against sexual harassment in the workplace, the right for women

to hold personal credit cards and to apply for mortgages as ways to achieve gender equality.

Third wave

Grady (2018) contends that third wave is pegged to two things: The Anita Hill case in 1991 which revolved around work sexual harassment and the emergence of the riot *grrrl* groups in the music scene of the early 90's.Tthe emergence of Timothy in the Supreme Court despite the testimony against him opened up a new dimension of women's struggle for political representation because they believed Anita's case would have received a more intense attention if they had political representation in leadership. To this end the wave struggles and achieved 24 seats for women in the House of representative and 3 seats in the Senate Rampton (2015).

Black Feminism

According to Richardson (1987), Maria W. Stewart one of the major proponents of black feminism identified race, gender, and class as the major reasons for Black women's poverty and therefore admonished African-American women to reject the negative images of Black womanhood so prominent in her time. Maria specifically charged black women to use their special roles as mothers to forge powerful mechanism of political action.

African Feminism

One of the first African feminist texts was Awa Thiam's *Black Sisters Speak out: Feminism and Oppression in Black Africa* (1986). This presented story of African women, particularly in Senegal, and called on black women to speak out against polygamy, forced marriages and female circumcision. For Thiam (1986:118), "the Black woman of Africa suffers a threefold oppression: by virtue of her sex: she is dominated by man in a patriarchal society; by virtue of her class, she is at the mercy of capitalist exploitation; by virtue of her race she suffers from the appropriation of her country by colonial or neo-colonial powers". African feminism perspectives share similar views whether they be called womanism, stiwanism, motherism, snail-sense feminism or nego-feminism. It is however important to note that these differ a little in their proffered solution to gender inequality.

Classifications of Victims on the basis of culpability

Benjamin Mendelsohn (1900-1998) besides coining the term victimology in 1947, is renowned for his classification of victims from the angle of victim's culpability (Clevenger, Navarro, Marcus & Higgins, 2018). His classification is particularly of interest to this study because it serves as a springboard from whence the central idea of the article was conceived. Citing Schafer (1977), Clevenger, Navarro, Marcus & Higgins (2018) noted that Mendelsohn in 1956 classified victims as follows:

1. Completely innocent victim: This refers to a victim who bears no responsibility at all for victimization; but victimized simply because of his or her nature, such as being a child.
2. Victim with minor guilt: This refers to a victim who is victimized due to ignorance; a victim who inadvertently places himself or herself in harm's way
3. Victim as guilty as offender/voluntary victim: This refers to a victim who bears as much responsibility as the offender: a person who, for example, enters into a suicide pact and blood covenant relationship.
4. Victim more-guilty than offender: This refers to a victim who instigates or provokes his or her own victimization.
5. Most guilty victim: This refers to a victim who is victimized during the perpetration of a crime or as a result of crime he or she is trying to commit.
6. Simulating or imaginary victim: This refers to a victim who is not victimized at all but, instead fabricates a victimization event.

One thing that this categorization helps to establish which is central to this study is the fact that some victims contribute to their own victimization. However, although the classification of victims is not necessarily the point of interest to this study Mendelsohn's typology is still applicable if victims are considered as a group and not necessarily individuals. In this regard, victims with minor guilt might be exemplified by women who expose the weaknesses of their fellow female politicians for some unscrupulous male politicians to explore. Women may become victims as guilty as offenders when they try to adopt the mainstream unsavory political tactics to gain advantage over their male or female competitor. More so, women may fit into the categories of victims more-guilty than offenders when they decide to go confrontational against the political status quo. Beyond the purviews of this typology, there exist other aspects of women's culpability which the authors now discuss in the next segment.

Other areas of culpability of Nigerian women in the failure of the affirmation of their political rights

Socialization function:

Marxist Feminism contends that women are kept at home to do unpaid jobs as homemakers, "labor force manufacturers", character molders (socializers), and supports givers. This particularly mirrors the situation in Nigeria where socialization function culturally and practically is largely left for cisgender woman by default as housewives. According to Soetan (2014), some men prefer to pay their own wives salaries and wages rather than allow them work in any organization. Even a good number of working women today tend to have more opportunities with their children than the men partly because of the prevailing cultural orientation. Socialization is a very strong tool that can be exploited by women to change the mindset of men from childhood and secure a

more accommodating society for the female gender. This may inform why Maria one of the foremost black feminists, charged black women to use their roles as mothers to forge a strong mechanism for political action (Richardson, 1987). But some mothers, instead of teaching their boys the essence of treating their girl counterparts as equals, tend to make them feel superior to the girls. They allow them exercise aggression and other forms of subtle behavior that female politicians today complain about their male counterparts. At the same time, the girl child is sternly discouraged from most of these behaviours that are tolerated in boys. These boys grow up to maintain the trend of perceiving and treating women as second class citizens and the negative cycle continues. On the other hand, some mothers both working and stay-at-home ones contract out the socialization functions of their children to Nannies, relatives and other domestic servants. By this, they ignorantly compromise their chances of reshaping the misogynistic social structure to reflect the much desired balance in the nearest future.

Effective Negotiation:

The extent to which persistent and humble negotiations can go in bringing about change cannot be over emphasized. Nnaemeka (2004) in her strand of African Feminism known as nego-feminism argued that for African women to achieve and enjoy the elevation of status, feminists must negotiate and compromise enough as this is required to deconstruct patriarchy and obtain freedom from oppression. Women have good opportunities as beloved wives, revered mothers, cherished daughters and valued friends to negotiate for a good social standing politically with men on a daily basis. But it appears that instead of maximizing informal channels of negotiations available to them to the of benefit their gender, what is mostly observed is the formal negotiations by women organizations and CSOs which is yet to accomplish the desired result.

Envy and unhealthy competition:

Envy keep women apart with distrust and competitiveness. It encourages them to hide their strength and failures from other women for fear they may not measure up (Matsoso, 2022). This makes it almost impossible to develop a strong team spirit within the gender that can help them actualize their dreams in politics. Kara-Yokoubian (2022) noted that there have been reports by women about frequent indirect victimization on them by other women simply because they possess some desirable qualities. Reenkola (2022) argued that inferiority complex and humiliation which are major instigators of envy usually trigger the devaluing, spoiling and destroying the enviable. Women mostly use negative gossips as an aggression tactics against same sex competitors (Kara-Yokoubian 2022).

In politics, women compete among themselves through wiles, innuendos and other forms of manipulations. Marcus (2016) contended that the male dominated workplace set women up to compete against themselves due to scarcity of top position for them. In the view of Kiner (2020), when women adopt the scarcity mindset and fight among themselves, it holds all women back. This is particularly true in politics and unfortunately, women have fallen for the temptation of intra-gender rivalry due to the fact that they have a few 'vacant' positions for women to occupy. This competitive

behavior among them limits their chances as a whole and has further given men the advantage over them till date.

Women may also be tempted to victimize fellow women in politics because they see most male politicians adopting similar strategy. But the challenge with this approach is that if men who has been favored by the system compete among themselves, women who are seeking to gain entry may not have such luxury as they may need to maintain a common front to make a mark.

Distrust and doubts in women's capability:

Some women sincerely do not believe that women can do anything better than men in political leadership. They have been brought up to believe that men are always superior, more capable, and more competent than women and they have continued in this mindset. This according to Kiner (2020) is referred to as 'internalized sexism'. To this end, they throw their support behind male political candidates financially and otherwise to the detriment of a female candidate. They don't just support and garner support for men, they also denigrate women and find ways to deflate their confidence. In the same vein, Rivers and Barnett (2018) argued that when male politicians are seen as power seeking, both men and women interpret it as assertiveness and competence but when women candidate express the same power seeking behavior, fellow women line with men to label such women as "unsupportive and uncaring" and express anger and disgust towards them.

Greed and Selfishness:

In Nigeria, money bag politics has been the prevailing culture for many decades and not much has changed till present (Andrew, Egbe & Ayuk 2023). Even in the just concluded 2023 elections, it was strongly alleged that most politicians virtually in all the political parties bribed heavily to secure their party's tickets and to emerge elected candidates for the contested state and national political offices. Women are also caught up in this web as they collect money to support men against women who may not have so much money to throw around. By this behavior, they sell off their chances and political future for immediate parochial and selfish benefit thereby pegging themselves at the mercy of the same men who have not been 'able' to successfully implement the gender policy stipulated 35% quota for women since 2006 till date.

Failure to make significant difference in Political Offices

Among the significant difference Nigerians long for is a clear demonstration of transparency and capacity among politicians. These were the attributes among others that were observed in Peter Obi the Labour Party Presidential Candidate which suddenly made him a household name and a formidable political force to reckon with.

For some of the female political appointees in the past, there were alleged issues of incompetence, corruption and fraud just as obtainable among their male counterparts. Ibekwe and Chidiobi, (2022) contended that these negative behaviors have affected the course of women politically. They went on to cite the classical case of alleged corruption and financial misappropriation involving Mrs. Dieziane Allison Madueke the first female

minister of petroleum in Nigeria who was alleged to have diverted over ₦20billion of the ministry into her private purse. Also mentioned, was the case of was involving Senator Stella Odua who was accused of inflating the contract for the procurement of BMW armoured vehicles to the tune of 225M. On the issue of incompetence, a significant number of women underperformed in office. For instance, Mrs. Ruqqayyatu Rufai as the Minister of education then, couldn't resolve the impasse between the federal government and the Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU). In addition, there was low enrolment of pupil at both primary and secondary levels across the nation during her time (Ibekwe and Chidiobi, 2022).

As already mentioned, the issues leveled against women is not unique to them. However, for a group facing strong resistance from male chauvinists while seeking acceptance among a citizenry desperate for salvation from bad political leadership, they just cannot afford to play the conventional politics.

Complacency

While credit should be given to a few women who are making serious efforts in developing themselves and taking up opportunities in legitimate fashions, it is very important also, to note that some women's visions are so myopic that they tend to be comfortable just being the first lady or *Side-chick* of political office holders. Others are okay being the women leader or at most deputy governor and nothing more so long as they are able to gain access to some funds and a few contracts. Sometimes, complacence is mistaken for contentment but the difference according to Cheng (2023) lies in the fact that while contentment results from realizing that one has everything that can make one happy, complacency on the other hand connotes doing little or nothing to change situations one is not truly satisfied with maybe as a result of lethargy. Matlock (2021) observed that complacency brings the feeling of being "overly content" and needing no further advancement. According to Sanz (2023), complacency is the reason people place the responsibility for their shortcomings on others rather than themselves. It is responsible for why they play the victim and convince themselves that external factors are the cause of their frustration and unhappiness. Hence, they relax and refuse to make any personal attempt at changing their situation. This disposition has contributed to weakening the possibilities of women in political leadership over the years and not so much positive change may be experienced if the attitude of remains among them.

Mentorship and sponsorship functions.

Not many women are sincerely interested in raising younger generation of women particularly non-relatives on the part of life where they have recorded success. There are a few female politicians like Kofoworola Bucknor of Lagos State, Dr. Hadiza Balarabe Sabuwa of Kaduna among others who rose to the level of deputy governors in Nigeria. There are other, Senators and some who have not necessarily occupied any office but yet very influential. Despite the presence of these women not so much is being heard about their mentorship programs for women interested in politics. Yet, mentorship of younger women by older female politicians have been advocated as a

necessary strategy to increase the presence of women in political leadership with international organization like United Nations, and a few other CSOs leading the way.

Conclusion and Recommendations

For women's political leadership to be affirmed in Nigeria, women themselves, need to begin by looking within their gender circle with the aim of identifying possible encumbrances to the fulfilment of this dream. So much efforts and resources have been expended on trying to handle the "enemy without" without much results. This work argues that there are some women consciously and some unconsciously sabotaging the affirmative action through failure in their socialization function, complacency, greed, selfishness, envy and unhealthy competition, ineffective negotiation strategies, distrust and doubt in women's capacity and inadequate mentorship programs. The work also argues that except within-group positive change occurs the struggle may persist for unnecessarily long a time without victory. In relation to these the following recommendations were made:

1. Unity of Purpose:

Efforts should be channeled towards achieving unity among women in politics without which progress may remain utopian. Women leaders and other influential female politicians can begin a serious campaign in that direction and also show serious commitment by exemplary living towards achieving unity.

2. Adoption of the *Negofeminism* principles

Women should use every available platform to negotiate their way up in politics with humility. They need not view men as foes who should be defeated by confrontation or brute force. Particularly, they should employ the informal channels as mothers (as Stewart already advised), wives, sisters and friends of male politicians to secure the much needed political ground.

3. Intense Mentorship Programmes

Women who have gained some advantageous heights in their political careers should begin deliberate and intense mentorship programmes to encourage and groom younger female politicians. Financially buoyant women can support this vision with their resources to the extent which they can.

4. Selflessness

Women politicians should embrace and reflect selflessness in their dealings. They need not seek personal interest at the expense of group interest as self-interest will always remain a divisive tool in the hands of some who would not see women actualize their political dreams in the country.

5. Continuous self-development

Continuous self-development among women will help them build capacity that will change the negative mindsets of other women who believe that men are always superior to women particularly when it comes to political leadership.

6. Proper socialization

Women should take advantage of the time they spend with their wards to teach them the essence of gender balance. Boys particularly should be trained to come to respect, see the leadership potentials of women and accommodate them. No iota of boy child preference should be exhibited by women in their homes so the children do not grow up with the stereotypic believe that men are always superior to women.

7. Self-Actualization

Women should not be content with themselves until they have been able to actualize all their positive potentials even in leadership. The fact is that social potentials such as leadership has nothing to do with sex of a person and a woman can be better endowed than a man.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that they have no financial interest in this manuscript.

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