

African ‘Demo’ With Difference: Analysis of Unconstitutional Celebrated Position of ‘First Lady’ In Africa

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Abstract: *First Lady recognition in African democracy related with similar historical, social and political antecedents seems predestined. The paper is a discourse on the illegal and aberration of conspicuous appearance and influence of first lady in African democracy. In this study, Social Divisions Theory was used to explain inequality as a social construction, in and of itself as justification for breach of constitution based on internalized belief about what the gender difference means socially. The study examines the constitution position on who constitute executive arm of government in the Federal, States and Local Government Areas respectively. The study evaluates the perceptiveness of the political class and gender advocate on the emergence of first lady in Africa politics which indicates a total departure from western democracies. The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Interviews were conducted among past political leaders which include former governors, past national assembly members, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and gender advocacy groups, while secondary source of data includes publications, articles, textbooks, newspapers and internet materials on the subject studied. The study observed that first lady unconsciously assumed the position of executive. Data were analyzed using descriptive methods and content discussion. It concludes with adherence to constitution will enable operation of modern presidential democracy like western world in Africa (Nigeria).*

Keywords: democracy, African ‘demo’, first lady, executive arm, gender emancipation

INTRODUCTION

Democracy as a concept was first practised in the ancient Greek. Indeed, the word democracy has its root in two Greek words ‘demo’ meaning (the people) and ‘kratratier’ meaning (to rule). Thus democracy in ancient Greek was understood as direct democratic rule by people or the whole body of citizens Akinlade and Ibitoye, (2023). However, modern societies are very large societies and the greater the number of people involves less meaningful and possible their actual participation in government. This complexity has been ameliorating through

introduction of representative democracy which citizens elect their representatives to the government. Therefore, modern democracy is a government of elected representative rather the direct participation of the people.

Historically, development of modern democracy is a very complex one. It started after the fall of Greek City State. It was not until the American Revolution of 1776 and France revolution of 1789 that representative's democracy fully came alive. American Revolution saw the beginning of a sense of political return such as introduction of universal male suffrage, which is the right of all men to vote in 1845. Five years later in 1850, women's suffrage was introduced in America. The French revolution of 1789 also proclaimed the right of the people to choose those who will rule them and since that revolution election and plebiscite/ referendum, based on universal suffrage have become a familiar feature of French (Akinlade and Ibitoye, 2023). Be as it may, a form government that envisaged elected or selected representatives. Often termed democracy or representative government, it is the government in which people can indirectly make important decision. The word is derived from Greek words 'Demo' meaning people and 'kratos' meaning rule (Olaleye, 1998)

The view of Appaduria (1942) corroborated the above submission that democracy may be described as a system of government under which the people exercise the government power either directly or through representative periodically elected by themselves... It essence is the right of every man bound by the decision of government to contribute (whatever is in him to contribute) to the making and remaking of those decisions. Other scholars contend that democracy means among others, the involvement of the people in the running of the political, social economic and cultural affairs of their society.

Conceptual Clarifications

African 'Demo'

African demo in this context intends to explain democracy based on how it is viewed, practiced and structured premised on cultural, religions, tribal and primordial influences. Although, democracy is often claimed to be best form of government. This ideal is being practised in the global north countries and has been conversed, and at times coerced on global south countries through threat of sanction for democratization process. Most developing countries have accepted the ideal not in principle but also in practice. Military dictatorship is no longer tolerated globally.

African countries where parliamentary democracy was showcased and failed. This abounds as a result of power tussle ensured between prime minister and president. Patrice Lumumba (PM) of Republic of Congo (now DR Congo) and his president Khassavubu between 1961 and 1965. Thier inability to solve the issue on superiority led to the assassination of prime minister and eventually military took over power under leadership of Lt. cornel (later president) Mobutu Sesesoko. Similarly, the legitimacy crisis between Major Paul Koromah and President Ahmed Tejan Kasbah in Sierra Leone 1991 that warranted military intervention of the ECOMOG forces is another good example. Although, Nigeria scenario in first Republic did not introduced escalated crisis but there were notably tribal toxic comments from both Igbo tribe and Hausa/Fulani on who head the country between Alhaji Tafawa Balewa (PM) and Dr. Nnamdi

Azikwe (President). Notably, almost all African countries embraces presidential democracy which is replica of traditional kingship which dominated African continent before colonialism. B as it may, changes occur daily which may be environmental, not in human alone but also in non human realms. These changes may be technological, economic, social or political whatever. All these may render previous belief and observed political behaviour untenable and therefore a cumulative development of knowledge about political behaviour is made difficult. It is observed that democracy in Africa is and depict ethno-cultural arrangement and practice in close influence of heritage and norms.

African brand share the fundamental objectives on how to govern the society in such a way that power actually belong to all the people. However, democratic governance is taken for granted in most Euro American countries while is still in the kindergarten stage in most less developed countries of the world like African continent where position of laws and constitution are jettisoned to favor individual leaders primordial interest presumably contributed to emergence of first lady in African democracy . The narration in the practice and operation of tenets of democracy globally is a product of cultural influence of each political setting. Nyansigbe Nyadema of Tanzania once described African democracy as one that is highly attached to sole leadership words: “Nhuru na Njama et Nhuru na Mandelo” i.e. Sole leadership is a tradition in Africa, where one man beats the chamber and others dance to the tune. This statement actually objected parliamentary democracy as its being practiced in Great Britain.

First Lady

Conceptualizing first Landy in this context includes all wives of the President and state Governors, especially the first wife in case the chief executive married more them one wife. Historically, there was no record of first lady in Nigeria first democracy. This could be as a result of parliamentary System of government operated in Nigeria then. Where we had President and Prime Minister. Nigeria Presidentialism in Second Republic did not record emergence of first Lady, premised on the fact that Alhaji Shehu Shagari the first executive President had many wives. Evidence of First Lady started with Military administration. Gen (Rtd) Yakubu Gowon became the Head of state before he got married to a Nurse; he only changed the status of nurses in Nigeria by upward review of their salary and benefits. Presumably, Winnie Mandela would have being a prominent first lady in South Africa as widely celebrated woman of integrity and virtue when Nelson Mandela became the first indigenous President of South Africa. But shortly after the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela, Winnie was alleged of infidelity during the incarceration of her husband that ended her prestigious position as first Lady in South Africa in 1990.

Prominently, the issue of first ladyship became a tradition from military era of Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida in 1985. This inordinate ambition of Maryam Babangida started in 1983 when she became the president of the Nigerian Army officer's wives Association (NAOWA). She encouraged other African First Ladies to take active roles in societal development in 1985, after the coup that removed Gen Rtd Ibrahim Buhari. According to Head of State Gen Badamosi Babangida said “I served as Head of State and Commander - chief, Maryam and I were a team, leading the government.” He remarked further that our constitution does not recognize the role of a first Lady, so each occupant must define the role. Maryam took things to another level (IBB, 2025). Under Mrs. Maryam Babangida , the Ministry of Women Affairs

was under her control with different policies such as Better Life for Rural women, women empowerment programme in 1987. She arrogated power to herself to the extent of influencing who became Military Administrator of state and where state Capital should be located for example Delta State- Asaba her hometown. Lt Gen. Rtd Raji Rasaki A.D.C to the first lady became Military Administrator of Lagos State through her influence.

During the regime of Gen. Rtd Sanni Abacha as Head of state in Nigeria after interim Government headed by Earnest Shonekon. Mrs. Mariam Abacha continued with idea of first ladyship as laid down by the wife of former Head of state (Ibrahim Babangida).she was so strong and influential in the Government she presented a 29years old Captain, who was her Aid as Military Administrator of Nassarawa state. After the demise of Gen. Sanni Abacha in 1987, Gen. Rtd. Abdulsalami Abubakar became Head of State in Nigeria. During his tenure there was no record of first Lady because Fatimat Abubakar was preoccupied with judicial activities as a judge to the Federal Court. Gen Abdulsalami Abubakar handed over to civilian Administration in 1999 under the auspices of chief Olusegun Obasanjo . Mrs Stella Obasanjo became another First Lady in Nigeria, but not as powerful as the First Ladies during Military regime.

After two terms tenure of chief Olusegun Obasanjo, Late Shehu Yara'dua became president but very Short-lived, he was a polygamist so no first Lady. Dr. Goodluck Jonathan continued with the administration. This brought another sinnerro of first Lady in Nigeria Democracy. Mrs. Patience Jonathan was another influential First Lady is Nigeria politics; she was promoted to the rank of permanent Secretary in Bayelsa state despite her preoccupation with activities of first ladyship at the federal Government Executive Arm.

The role of the "First Lady" in many African nations has long been a subject of intense scrutiny, particularly regarding its constitutional and institutional legitimacy. Although not explicitly enshrined in the majority of African constitutions, the position of the First Lady has often been celebrated and institutionalized through the personal initiatives of political leaders. These roles, which vary in scope and influence, challenge the formal structure of political power, often existing in a grey area between public and private domains. The unconstitutionality of the position, which lacks a defined legal framework, raises critical questions about its impact on governance, democracy, and the functioning of state institutions (Adebayo, 2020). The presence of the First Lady often brings about debates regarding the gendered nature of power and authority, wherein such roles are not only seen as symbols of soft power but also as agents of political influence in the decision-making process (Ayodele, 2019).

In many African countries, the position of the First Lady has become an avenue for unaccountable power, bypassing constitutional mechanisms designed for public officeholders. First Ladies often assume roles that are not directly accountable to the electorate, thereby creating a governance dynamic where they wield significant power without constitutional backing or institutional oversight (Obi, 2018). For example, the First Lady may influence policy decisions, distribute government resources, and even intervene in foreign diplomacy, all without a defined legal status or public mandate. This blurred line between formal political office and informal influence has been noted as a significant feature of African political systems, which are often criticized for their lack of separation between state and personal interests (Chilufya, 2021).

Furthermore, the celebration of the First Lady's role in African nations often comes with a paradoxical stance of acceptance and criticism. While such positions are celebrated for their philanthropic efforts and advocacy on social issues, the lack of constitutional recognition perpetuates an undemocratic element in the governance structure. The elevation of First Ladies as national figures, despite their lack of formal electoral support, can create an imbalance of power and lead to undermining the principles of representative democracy (Okoro, 2022). This dynamic is particularly evident in cases where First Ladies take on significant public roles in their own right, leveraging their position for political influence that often surpasses the limits of their official duties.

This paper seeks to explore the complexities surrounding the unconstitutionally celebrated position of the First Lady in Africa. By analyzing the implications of this role across different African nations, the study will examine its legal, political, and social consequences, highlighting the need for a more robust debate on constitutional reforms and the formalization of such positions in African governance structures. Understanding the position of the First Lady as an unofficial yet influential figure is essential to grasp the broader challenges facing political accountability, democratic integrity, and the evolution of state institutions in postcolonial Africa.

According to 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (with Amendments, 2011). Chapter vi (130), emphatically states that There shall be for the Federation a president. The president shall be the Head of state, the Chief Executive of the Federation and Commander - in - chief of the Armed Forces of the Federation. 141 of Chapter vi presents that "There shall be for the Federation a vice- President. 142 (i) In any exertions to which the foregoing provisions of this part of this chapter relate , a candidate for an election to the office of President shall not be deemed to be validly nominated unless he nominates another candidate as his associate from the same political party for his running for the office of President shall be deemed to have become duly elected to the office of Vice President who nominated him as such associate in duly elected as President in accordance with the provisions aforesaid . Chapter vi (147) (I) There shall be such offices of Ministers of the Government of the Federation as by the President. (2) Any appointment to the office of Minister of the Government of the Federation shall, if the nomination any person to such office is confirmed by the Senate be made by the President. (3) Any appointment under sub section (2) of this section by the president shall be in conformity with the provision of section 14 (3) of this constitution.

Part ii state executive 176(I), There shall be for each state of the Federation a Governor. (2) The Governor of a state shall be the chief Executive of that State. 187(I) In any election to which the foregoing provisions of this part of this chapter relate, a candidate for the office of Governor of a state shall not be deemed to have validly nominated for such office unless He nominates another candidate as his associate for his running for the office of Governor, who is to occupy the office of Deputy Governor; and that candidate shall be deemed to have been duly elected to the office of Deputy Governor if the candidate who nominated him is duly elected as Governor in accordance with the said provision. 192 (I) there shall be such offices of Commissioner of the state as may be established by the Governor of the State. (2) Any appointment to the office of Commissioner of the Government of a state shall, if the nomination of any person to the office is confirmed by the House of Assembly of the state, be made by the

Governor of that state and in making any such appointment, the Governor shall confirm with the provisions section 14 (4) of the constitution. (1999 Constitution of the FRM 2011 amendments). Obviously, there is no provision of the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria of 1999 as amended in 2011 where First Lady is included as member of Executive either at Federal Level or state level. Without prejudice, unnecessary Usurpation and arrogation of executive power by first lady (wife of President and State Governors) is an aberration and breach of Constitutional stand.

Gender Emancipation

Historically, records show that even pre - colonial Nigeria and other African countries was patriarchal, women were not left out completely from political scene. Generally , women's political power varied from one place to another , While in some societies women shared equal power with men , in other , their roles were complementing or Subordinate (Awen , 1992) From the analysis of Pre - colonial power structure noted three categories of women's involvement in the power Structure were noted . They include palace women (e - g Idia- King Esigie's mother), Leaders of women (Efunsetan lyabode of Ibadan) and rulers (e.g. Queen Amina of Zaria). Similarly, she noted further that;

Most Africa oral traditions, surviving religious cults and extant political tradition still attest to the significant position of different African Communities. Such evidence also shows that there was not merely a passive and supportive role but was also dynamic and constructive. Indeed, it has been suggested that an analysis of the leading figures of pre - twentieth Century Africa will show that there were more women than men in the forefront of social, political and economic life, than in contemporary Africa, and that during that period, the dominant position which the women held was both quantitative and qualitative

As it is well known, Colonialism created a new coop of privilege elite, which paradoxically spearheaded the nationalist for independence in Nigeria. Because it was virtually only men who acquired the elitist education and hence enjoyed a head - short in socio- economic progress, combined with the extent patriarchy and corresponding low status of women, the nationalist movement effectively excluded women in the institutional frameworks of the struggle for independence where women participated in the political struggle; it was mainly or common fodder, visible only in auxiliary activities of the nationalist political parties. The era of colonialism did not favor women fork despite the fact that they constituted 49.80% of the Population; they are poorly represented at the gladiator level. Like colonialism, authoritarianism mode of governance took power away from Nigerian women and other African countries. It took from women, their ability to influence their leaders, which totally negates the principles of democratic governance that was central to anti - colonial struggles.

The drive to promote women and ensure their emancipation has gained momentum in Africa continent. In 2006- 2018 Hallen Johnson sir leave became the first female president in Africa in Liberia. The United Nations Department of Public information (1996) stated that the Beijing conference was a landmark in the history of women struggle and was the largest outing ever recorded in the history of world conferences on women. The conference has three major objectives, history of the world Conferences Equality, Development and Peace. The Conference adopted a declaration for actions, which had specific of making a difference in the following.

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- Action to protect and promote the human rights of women and girl child as an integral part of universal human rights;
- Action to remove the obstacle to women's full participation in public life and decision making at all levels including family;
- Actions to ensure equal access for girl, children and women to education and health services;
- Action to promote economic autonomy for women and ensure their access to productive services and others.

The declarations made by participating governments was made to act a treaty - like binding force by which the governments one bound to bring into consideration the aims and objectives of the conference. One Significant observation made in the declaration of the conference. One Significant observation made in the declaration is that the participating governments dedicated themselves to addressing the constraints and obstacles, and enhancing further the advancement and empowerment of women all over the world (R - 1 - Nai and Nweburmer, 2013) . But this declaration of participating governments and their declaration to uphold the aim and objectives of the Conference was not expected to contravene the constitution by allowing the wives of Executives to assume the position of executive technically in which their opinions and Interests are paramount in decision and policy - making . Claude Akee (1991) among others expresses the view that issue of democratization and human rights are increasingly dominating the global agenda in Africa. As a result of these global developments increasing the representation of women in politics and decision - making processes consequently become one of the most compelling requirements of civility in the late twentieth Century and the 21 century.

In the preamble to the Vienna Declaration adopted on June 25, 1993, the world Conference on Human Rights recognized that;

All human rights from the dignity and worth inherent in the human persons, and the human person in the Central subject of human rights and fundamental freedoms and consequently should be the principal beneficiary and should participate actively in the realization of right and freedom. (Awe, 1992) It is evident that, the feminist struggle and their demand was a result of Beijing conference of 1995 which advocates for the global interest is human right and in particular the rights of women as demonstrated at Beijing has encouraged women all over the world. More then ever, they are insisting on women's rights as human rights and it is becoming conditionality for international assistance.

The input was strongly upheld in the fourth world conference on women which has called for at least 30 percent representation by women in national Governments. Since 1995, major world gatherings and institutions have conformed to all for gender balanced policies and institution. For example September 2000 at the UN millennium Summit held in New York, World leaders pledge to promote gender equality, which Nigeria Parrish status changed (R - 1 and Iwebumor, 2013) The table below shown, women representations in Important political institutions in Nigeria as at 2025

Table 1: women representations in Important political institutions in Nigeria as at 2025

Position	Men	Women	Total
Senator	105	4	109
House of Rep	343	17	360
Ministers	41	7	48
Speakers	36	0	36
Governors	36	0	36
Local Govt. Chairmen	745	29	774

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2025.

In some developing and advanced democracies, concerted efforts are being made to better lots of women. In the United Kingdom and the United States respectively there were 9.1 and 9.0 percent of female representatives in their parliaments as at 1994. While in 1980 they were 29 percent respectively. Although, Norway and Sweden they have as much as 38 percent representatives. Nigeria only 3 percent in 1992) as (Naria , 1994) . In South Africa so far has led efforts to mainstream women in decision - making. Through a quota system, Uganda and Mozambique house achieved measurable results. In Peru there is 25 percent quota for women's participation in parliament. That century has also set up an Ombudsman mechanism for women and established a Ministry for Women's development. Moreover, women have gained seats on the Peruvian Supreme Court (Ebenezer and Ojo 2005).

From the foregoing, men had enough leisure to pursue public affairs, politics and art. However patriarchal culture ensures that this exclusion from political sphere is seen as demonstration of women's love for their family. Though liberal democracy allows full participation of women in politics through voting and holding elective and appointive offices but women still remained at the periphery of real politicking (Ebenezer & Ojo, 2005). Below table shown the distribution of important political offices by sex in Nigeria from 1st Republic to 1999.

Table 2: Distribution of important political offices by sex

Date	Office	Female
1 ST Republic	Senate	1 woman out of 6
	House of Rep.	0 out of 312
	Federal Cabinet	0
1969	Senate	2 female nominated senators
1979	Senate.	4 female Contestants women out of 57
1983	Senate	1 elected out of 52
	House of Rep	11 female out of 445
Babangida Transition		
1985	Political Bureau	2 women out of 19 members
1990	Local govt. Elections	3 women out of 55
	House of assembly	14 women of 559
	Senate	1 out of 91

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1991	Presidential aspirants	8 out of 30
1993	Presidential aspirants	1
1989	Constituent Assembly	5 out 150
1990	1,297 Local position nationwide	206 (15 %)
1992	Senate	1 elected out of 91 members
	House of Rep	12 out of 638 (1.8 %)
	NRC/ SDP Party executive	1,833 out of 44,696
1999	Senate	Females 3 out of 109
	House of Rep	12 out of 360
	State House of Assembly	13 out of 990
	Speaker	1 out of 36
	Gubernatorial	0 out of 36
	Local Govt. Chairmen	46 out of 774
	Counsellors	510 out of 8810
2003	Senate	Females 3 out of 109
	House of Rep	21 out of 360
	State House of Assembly	39 out of 990
	Speaker	1 out of 36
	Gubernatorial	0 out of 36
	Local Govt. Chairmen	15 out of 774
	Counsellors	500 out of 8810
2007	Senate	Females 9 out of 109
	House of Rep	26 out of 360
	State House of Assembly	36 out of 990
	Speaker	1 out of 36
	Gubernatorial	0 out of 36
	Local Govt. Chairmen	25 out of 774
	Counsellors	600 out of 8810
2011	Senate	Females 7 out of 109
	House of Rep	24 out of 360
	State House of Assembly	62 out of 990
	Speaker	1 out of 36
	Gubernatorial	0 out of 36
	Local Govt. Chairmen	35 out of 774
	Counsellors	700 out of 8810
2015	Senate	Females 7 out of 109
	House of Rep	22 out of 360
	State House of Assembly	54 out of 990
	Speaker	1 out of 36
	Gubernatorial	0 out of 36
	Local Govt. Chairmen	40 out of 774
	Counsellors	700 out of 8810

2019	Senate	Females 8 out of 109
	House of Rep	13 out of 360
	State House of Assembly	44 out of 990
	Speaker	0 out of 36
	Gubernatorial	0 out of 36
	Local Govt. Chairmen	30 out of 774
	Counsellors	600 out of 8810
2023	Senate	Females 3 out of 109
	House of Rep	17 out of 360
	State House of Assembly	48 out of 990
	Speaker	0 out of 36
	Gubernatorial	0 out of 36
	Local Govt. Chairmen	35 out of 774
	Counsellors	700 out of 8810

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2025.

Framework of Analysis

The tenet of democratization across the globe and the attendant increasing need to include women in governance. Have made scholars to come up with theories to support the quest for women representative, empowerment and emancipation in governance. Thus, Parpart and Standt (1989) have researched into areas of women and state in African and have so far addressed themselves to the effect the colonial and pre-colonial state on women. They noted the ways in which both periods have enhanced male power have women, and the in which the state has been a vehicle of male elite interest.

The study adopts liberal feminism rooted in social contract of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Theory was distinguished from previous political theories partly the instance that all forms of social authority needed to justify. This was premised on the fundamental equality of all men (and women) based on their allegedly equal capacity to reason. Liberalism promoted the social ideals of liberty and equality (Leke, 2005).

Paramount in liberal feminism, the exponents favour gender equality in the sense of equal opportunities for women and men, and focus on the rights of the individual. Prevailing interpretation of this approach tend to add women to the status quo attempting to incredible opportunity and equality within society as it is presently constructed (Pereira,2001). Be as it may, ensuring gender equality in any society requires political commitment. An explicit manifestation of that commitment is a gender policy and it has to be accomplished by an action plan to ensure gender equality needs to be monitored and evaluated. for examples, in Ghana , authorised of the Electoral Commission (EC) have established a gender desk in recognition of the importance of women participation in the electoral process . In the Democratic Republic of Congo , one of the seven members of Electoral commission (CENI) was designated as a gender focal point and assisted in the creation of a unit within the CENI unit is composed of two women ,a coordinator and assistant. The objective of the gender unit is to develop mechanism to promote gender mainstreaming within the institution. In Sudan 2010, a UNDP Gender advisor was co-located with the NEC and provided policy advice on the integrated of

a gender equality perspective into the election planning process. South Africa established civic and voter education policy leading up to the 2009 election took a targeted approach to ensure that groups who are often invised in general education programmes were reached (Nepal 2010). Nevertheless, women were not given vote until the 1959 elections and then only southern women indeed, it was their anti- colonial struggle that laid the foundation for women's political emancipation, equality and empowerment under the leadership of Mrs. Kuti women movement spread far beyond south –western part of Nigeria and in 1947 Nigeria saw the first truly national body organised across class, regional lines. In 1953 the Federation of Nigerian Women Societies (FNWS) was formed. In all facets, its was political in character and content. For the first time, under the banner of FNWS, women demanded political participation and direct representation in all legislative houses. Its primary regular demand was one third of seats. The one-third remains a popular demand for women today in many countries in sub-sahara Africa (Udegbe, 1997).

METHODOLOGY

The study employed both Primary and Secondary sources of data .The primary data was solely sourced through interviews conducted among past political leaders, national assembly members Civil Society Organisation (CSO) and gender advocacy groups, while Secondary source of data includes publications, article, textbooks, newspapers and internet materials on the subject studies.

RESULTS

Having established the fact that, African women are far under-represented and greatly marginised too, this paper proffers the following strategies based on findings from interviewers, these will enhance full participation of women in democratic process as well as removing barriers that inhabit a greater participation of women in public sphere and as well promote women into leadership positions instead of going through illegal ways, Firstly, the ideology of India on interpretation of a quota for women into the constitution for legal effect indeed relevant . Nigeria 20 percent demand for women representation at the decision making level should be considered at the 1999 constitution review in Nigeria anytime its come up.

Former house of rep member Hon. Bimbo Daramola was of the opinion and suggested that it is expected that women need to be empowered at the grassroot level for them to full such allocated quota. Mrs. Alo Alomo (member of gender advocacy group) recommends that there is need for women to be given concession for them to have financial stand that required for electioneering campaigning like their male counterparts .Barr. Michael Olaleye (a political gladiator) remarks that mass media has crucial role to play in re-orientating the womenfolk that what men can do, women can do same, if not better, especially in rural areas though fair in the urban centres. Former Deputy Governor Chief Paul Alabi was of the opinion that women emergency at the corridor of power came from chief executives who believe that first ladies are very useful in gathering womenfolk to their side and win election premised on the fact that women population is more than that of men unconsciously First Ladies take advantage of chief executive and influence them in decision making. Ajayi, P.O, comments on womenfolk by saying that African continent still has a lot to do in building sense of confidence in our

womenfolk. Further, that question remains unanswered that if a woman is fielded as either gubernatorial or presidential candidate, would the womenfolk ready to vote en mars for such candidate? Obviously, if womenfolk themselves do not repose confidence in their Colleagues that implies that the land of canan for them may still be too far. This is not unconnected with the fact that some studies have found out that females also show bias against female manager (Henreux - Barrett, 1991) .

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is imperative to note that women partial absence in active politics are pressed on various factors as being identified as constituting unnoticeable appearance of women (First ladies) in executive position in African political arena. Often cited factors include social-inequality, realization of minutes of Beijing Conference on woman rights, that exposes women to the right to occupy elective position and appointments in government and public offices. Further, that leading roles are not birthright of their male counterpart. it is observed that women education and sensitization towards their political rights needs expansion through media and mobilization agencies. Also, women emancipation and empowerment programmes must be all- inclusive, that is not too elitist in nature must be prepare to accommodate grassroots women.

The position of the "First Lady" in many African countries continues to be a subject of complex constitutional and political debate. Despite the absence of a formal, legal framework for the role in most African constitutions, the position has often been constitutionally elevated through the actions of political leaders. As highlighted by Adebayo (2014), the first lady's role is typically shaped by informal power dynamics rather than clear institutional guidelines, often allowing for increased political influence, especially in nations with weak democratic structures. The persistent celebration of the "First Lady" role has contributed to the normalization of unaccountable political positions, creating a situation where individuals, usually wives of presidents, exercise significant influence without the checks and balances typically afforded to elected officials.

The consolidation of power within the office of the first lady has led to significant concerns regarding governance and gender dynamics. As observed by Okunoye (2017), this unelected position frequently bypasses democratic processes, undermining the principle of separation of powers that underpins constitutional democracy. In many instances, first ladies engage in social programs or philanthropic initiatives, but such endeavors often serve as vehicles for advancing personal or familial political agendas rather than addressing real societal needs. The unchecked political roles assumed by first ladies may reinforce the patriarchal structures of many African nations, perpetuating inequality and diminishing the role of formal democratic institutions.

The entrenchment of the "First Lady" phenomenon across the African continent suggests a lack of political will to reform or challenge such positions. Although African states have made strides toward democratization, the persistent elevation of first ladies remains a paradox within the democratic framework. As noted by Asante (2019), the failure to restrict or clearly define the role within legal and political systems suggests a broader reluctance to embrace genuine democratic practices. Instead, the symbolic and often real power held by first ladies highlights the persistence of informal governance structures that threaten the legitimacy of constitutional

democracies in Africa. The need for a reevaluation of the role of first ladies in African governance is imperative for the long-term health of democratic institutions. Legal reforms that clearly define or limit the powers of unelected figures, such as the first lady, are essential to ensure that governance remains transparent, accountable, and inclusive. It is vital that African nations adhere to constitutional principles, ensuring that political power remains vested in institutions that are accountable to the people, rather than extending political power to figures outside the formal structures of governance.

To enhance women emancipation in politics in Africa, the followings are recommended. There should be adequate sensitization of womenfolk about their rights to participate actively in politics instead of playing the second fiddle roles by forming associations like wives of African President where Senator Oluremi Tinubu and Fatima Biu are currently part of the executives, (During inauguration in Feb. 16,2005) Association of wives of state Governors in Nigeria, Association of wives of Local Government chairmen , wives of university vice chancellors , wives of permanent Secretaries and others .

Leaders in these respect, leaders tapped the advantage to diverse state funds to finance Seminars and Conferences that are not in real sense translate to productive projects that can impact the lives of general public. Secondly , there must be constitutional amendment that will legally promote emancipation of women such as guarantee of equality 5.42(I) of 1999 constitution which forbids discrimination on the ground of origin , sex , religion or political opinion either expressly by , or in the practical application of any law in force in Nigeria should be adhere to strictly . On the contrary, in the 1996 constitution of the Republic of South Africa, reinforcing the concept of man at the paradigm of humanity, in the process rendering women experience invisible and insignificant (Effa chukwumma, 1999) needs to be amended.

It is presumed that the individual gender conveys special competence. So the notion, " of if a woman is unable to effectively respond to house call relating to domestic abuse (something women are stereotypically to be better at), she is likely to face a greater backlash than her male counterparts needs to be condemned.

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