

Gendering Political Party Financing in Nigeria: Evidence from the 2023 General Elections

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Abstract

The funding of political parties during the electoral process in Nigeria is gradually undermining democratic competition, accountability, transparency and opportunities for the weak and dominated sections of the society. The legal provisions in both the 1999 Constitution and the Electoral Act 2022 unequivocally set out the ceiling on expenditure, description of legal sources of campaign expenditure, ceiling on contributions and associated penalties for violations. Unfortunately, experience, particularly in the 2015, 2019 and 2023 parliamentary elections, has shown excessive spending, breaches of the rules and impunity for violations that were not sanctioned by the relevant authorities. This study therefore examines how the party funding process has disadvantaged and excluded women from participating in elective offices, resulting in an extremely small number of women winning in the recently concluded 2023 general elections. The study is based on a qualitative-descriptive research design. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with informants and focus group discussions as well as personal observation of participants. The data collected was grouped into themes and discussed using tables, charts and empirical analyses. The study reports that women are marginalised, dominated, overshadowed and oppressed by men in Nigerian politics because of men's overspending. The study recommends, among other things, that policies, including harsh penalties, should be applied to offenders who spend beyond the limit in order to control money politics and create a level playing field.

Keywords: 2023 General Election, Nigeria, Political Participation, Political Party Financing, Women.

Abstrak

Pendanaan partai politik selama proses pemilu di Nigeria secara bertahap menggerogoti persaingan demokratis, akuntabilitas, transparansi, dan peluang bagi kelompok masyarakat yang lemah dan terdominasi. Ketentuan hukum dalam Konstitusi 1999 dan Undang-Undang Pemilu 2022 secara tegas menetapkan batas pengeluaran, uraian sumber sah pengeluaran kampanye, batas sumbangan, dan sanksi terkait pelanggaran. Sayangnya, pengalaman, khususnya dalam pemilihan parlemen 2015, 2019, dan 2023, telah menunjukkan pengeluaran yang berlebihan, pelanggaran aturan, dan impunitas atas pelanggaran yang tidak dikenai sanksi oleh otoritas terkait. Oleh karena itu, studi ini mengkaji bagaimana proses pendanaan partai telah merugikan dan mengecualikan perempuan dari partisipasi dalam jabatan terpilih, yang mengakibatkan sangat sedikitnya jumlah perempuan yang menang dalam pemilihan umum 2023 yang baru saja selesai. Studi ini didasarkan pada desain penelitian kualitatif-deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan informan dan diskusi kelompok terfokus serta observasi pribadi terhadap partisipan. Data yang dikumpulkan dikelompokkan berdasarkan tema dan dibahas menggunakan tabel, grafik, dan analisis empiris. Studi ini melaporkan bahwa perempuan terpinggirkan, didominasi, dibayangi, dan ditindas oleh laki-laki dalam politik Nigeria akibat pengeluaran laki-laki yang berlebihan. Studi ini merekomendasikan, antara lain, agar kebijakan, termasuk sanksi yang berat, diterapkan kepada

pelanggar yang membelanjakan uang melebihi batas untuk mengendalikan politik uang dan menciptakan kesetaraan.

Kata Kunci: Pemilu Umum 2023, Nigeria, Partisipasi Politik, Pendanaan Partai Politik, Perempuan.

INTRODUCTION

Democracy is praised as the best form of political organisation, not because it dominates in all countries of the world, but because it is known for its tolerance and promotes freedom, fair representation, accountability, transparency and political representation and participation in some states (Ceron, 2019). The 21st century is the age of democratic dominance, with more than four-fifths, or nearly 95%, of the world's countries practising one form of democracy or another, if not in practise, then at least in theory (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Strong institutions are needed for democracy to succeed. One of these institutions is the political party (Norris, 2018). A political party is a vehicle through which politicians come to power in political competition and election campaigns in democracies. Political parties mobilise, organise, recruit leaders and members, educate, play the role of opposition, promote ideology and community services, and most importantly, provide a platform for power struggles to advance ideology, policy and goals (Maisel, 2022). But parties do not play these roles in a vacuum. They need resources, both material and human, to perform these functions appropriately.

The process by which parties compete for power, design and implement policies, and promote their values is called campaigning. Campaigns are conducted with enormous resources, regardless of the democratic system, be it liberal, or social. Parties must take responsibility for raising their revenues and covering their expenses. Therefore, the entire strategy and process of generating revenue and expenditure for political parties and their candidates is referred to as party financing (Piccio & Van Biezen, 2018). Party financing is subject to laws, regulations and strict monitoring in many democracies. The maximum spending limit for elective offices, donation limits, donation bans, legal sources, sanctions, disclosure, and other related regulations are designed by countries based on the context and nature of their political systems. In some states, parties and candidates are supported with public money, in others funding is both public and private, and in still others it is entirely a private matter (Ohman, 2018). In most Western liberal democracies, the most widely practised political system in the world, private funding is used to ensure accountability, credibility, integrity and transparency of the process. Unfortunately, party funding brings with it a major weakness for democratic accountability. Corruption has occurred in elections and politics, which has had various repercussions (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016).

The democratic accountability of political parties is critically challenged by the loopholes in the party funding process. Once integrity is lacking in an election cycle, the election is deemed not credible. The electoral cycle consists of accountable and transparent activities from the voter register through the campaign process, including robust transparency of party funding, to the final election in a peaceful and fair atmosphere (Norris, 2023). In Africa, as in other continents (Ohman, 2014), party financing is associated with corruption, vote buying, excessive spending, regulatory violations, weak and ineffective monitoring and misuse of state resources (Ohman, 2018). This is essentially the state of party funding globally. Even though some African countries such as Nigeria have strong party funding laws (Sule, 2021), but weak enforcement, ineffective monitoring and regulatory violations compromise electoral integrity (Sule et al., 2017a).

Nigeria is an interesting study area for party financing because it is the largest democracy in Africa and demographically one of the largest in the world. Furthermore, Nigeria has managed to establish democratic rule that has surpassed previous experience in the collapsed First, Second and aborted Third Republics (Agbu, 2016). Under the Fourth Republic (1999–2024), the country experienced seven uninterrupted regular general elections. Party funding laws and regulations in Nigeria are gradually evolving through the Fourth Republic. Apart from the provisions in Sections 225 and 226 and their subsections in the 1999 Constitution, party financing laws were enacted in Sections 88, 89 and 90 and their subsections in the Electoral Act 2006, the Electoral Act 2010 and the Electoral Act 2022 now in force (Sule, 2023). Party funding in Nigeria has changed from public funding or mixed funding (public and private) to a fully private funding process between 1999 and 2010. There are well-articulated laws including expenditure cap, contribution cap, contribution ban, disclosure principles, interpretation of legal sources, monitoring and sanctions and other related laws. Unfortunately, it is reported (Nwagwu et al., 2022) that Nigerian political party funding is embroiled in corruption, bribery, vote buying, excessive spending, utilisation of public funds and lack of transparency. It is also observed that the laws have overlooked disadvantaged and less privileged groups such as women, youths and the middle class (Ohman, 2018).

The female gender is disadvantaged by the influence of money in the party funding process. The Nigerian state has been labelled patriarchal (Sambo et al., 2021), as affirmed by the history of pre-colonial Nigeria though, with some exceptions. For example, Queen Amina of Zazzau and Queen Daurama of Daura held leadership positions in pre-colonial Nigeria and achieved tremendous success during their reigns (Crowder, 1986). Although there are some exceptional cases, this is an achievement that post-colonial women in Nigeria have not accomplished since political independence. However, colonialism has expanded the domination of the female gender in Nigeria through political activities. This phenomenon has only recently been reversed in the name of gender equality and other campaigns, after serious damage was previously done (Sambo et al., 2021). Nevertheless, since political independence, no female gender has succeeded in attaining electoral executive office in an area such as a state as Queen Amina did in Zazzau.

Women's active participation in politics, especially holding high office at national and parliamentary levels, is less than 15% against the universal target of 30% set in the Beijing Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UN Women, 2020). Women are marginalised, disadvantaged and dominated by men in politics, even in advanced democracies (Sambo et al., 2021). Women in Nigeria are overshadowed by men due to patriarchy, perceived anatomical differences and the division of labour in responsibilities. Men are exposed to activities and businesses that have brought them great fortunes, including politics. Women are also excluded from this, but assuming executive political office is a mirage for them. Through these activities, men secured the added advantage of controlling politics (Sambo et al., 2021). This was evident in the recently concluded 2023 General Elections in Nigeria, where the cost of nomination forms, campaign expenditure and political competition became the bane of women's participation in the political process, resulting in some insignificant seats. In many political parties, especially the APC, reducing the cost of nominating women should give them the opportunity to participate more actively, but the opposite is the case.

The study is significant in that it contributes to a neglected area of research on party financing in Nigeria. While there are many studies on party financing in Nigeria that focus on vote buying, money politics, violations and excessive spending, bribery and corruption, and ineffective monitoring and sanctions, none has adequately addressed how the process of party financing excludes women from attaining meaningful elective office due to the cost of campaigning and the intensity of money politics.

Other studies on the marginalisation of women in politics cite many factors, such as patriarchy, culture, poverty and disempowerment. However, no study assumes that the type of party funding is as decisive a factor as the one presented in this study.

This study therefore examines the process of party funding as a bane to women's political participation in Nigeria, using the 2023 General Elections as a case study. A qualitative descriptive research design was adopted. Data were collected through in-depth personal interviews with selected informants, group discussions, participant observation and documented sources. The collected data was discussed and interpreted using thematic analysis. The paper is organised into six categories. The first section is an introduction, a literature review section on the dimensions of party financing in Nigeria, women and political participation in Nigeria and the 2023 General Elections, the theoretical framework section, methodology, discussions and findings, a conclusion and recommendations.

The study seeks to understand the relationship between party funding and the chances of female candidates in Nigerian elections, with two key questions guiding the inquiry: why party funding is considered an obstacle to women's electoral success, and how party funding specifically affected the performance of female candidates in the 2023 General Elections. Accordingly, the main objectives are to examine the extent to which limited access to financial resources hinders women's ability to compete on equal footing with their male counterparts and to analyze how the structure and dynamics of party funding in Nigeria shaped the outcomes for female candidates during the 2023 electoral cycle.

Literature Review

This section examines some critical relevant issues on the subject matter of the study, including dimensions in political party financing in Nigeria, women and political participation in Nigeria, and the 2023 General Election.

Dimensions in Political Party Financing in Nigeria

The financing of political parties is a global phenomenon that affects important actors in democratic good governance. The desire for a fair and equitable process of political participation for all segments, including gender, age category, social status and physical appearance, calls for increased demands for greater accountability and transparency in party funding (Rush, 2023). Party finance is the entire process that governs the financial activities of parties and candidates in the electoral cycle. It consists of the sources of income for parties and their candidates, their expenditure incurred on media advertising such as posters, billboards, jingles and short clips, the campaign entourage and its transport, accommodation, catering and logistics, the payment of party representatives and loyalists, the hiring of experts and analysts and all related activities (Stonestreet, 2023). In addition, there are the regulations and constitutional provisions on party funding, the powers of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) to monitor and sanction, and the role of civil societies and citizens in closely monitoring party income and expenditure are all activities involved in the party funding process (Stonestreet, 2023).

Party funding is becoming a worrying phenomenon for global actors in the field of democratic accountability and transparency because, as Rose-Ackerman and Palifka (2016) have noted, it is linked to political corruption. Clientelism arises from party funding, where voters are treated as clients by patrons, who are politicians or their financial sponsors, who receive favours in return for votes (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). Powerful politicians circumvent constitutional laws and pave their way to electoral victory by any means, including money (Fiorelli, 2021). The common practises observed in party financing in Africa, America, Antarctica, Asia, Europe and Latin America, and the Caribbean (Ohman, 2014) are the

unique problems of inadequate laws, regulatory violations, excessive spending, the great influence of monetary policy, weak sanctions, ineffective monitoring, the use of state resources in campaign financing, the marginalisation of the female gender and political corruption (Schnurr, 2023).

The funding of political parties in Nigeria is governed by three important laws: Sections 225 and 226 and their subsections in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, which give INEC the power to set financial ceilings for parties, monitor their financial activities and audit their accounts (INEC, 2005). Another source of law is the Electoral Act 2022, section 88 and its subsections establish the spending limit for all elective offices, the contribution limit, and the penalties for violations of the provisions of the sections. Section 83 and its subsections provide INEC with oversight powers and Section 90 provides for mandatory disclosure. The third source is the Company and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) 2020. The party financing regulations in Nigeria have undergone several structural changes. In the Fourth Republic, public funding existed until 2010 when the new electoral law in 2010 banned it and only allowed private funding. The Fourth Republic witnessed significant changes in the adoption of appropriate party funding laws in the Constitution (Sule, 2023).

The laws on party funding in Nigeria are considered quite good (Sule, 2021) but are inadequate in some areas. The most difficult aspect is the enforcement, monitoring and sanctioning and overall appropriate application of the laws (Nwangwu and Ononogbu 2016; Okeke and Nwali 2020; Sule et al. 2022). Politicians and political parties break the law with impunity. Nigerian party funding is riddled with misuse of state funds, bribery, corruption, vote-buying, excessive spending, contributions beyond the maximum limits, illegal sources and, above all, money politics (Walecki 2003; Adetula 2008; Adeyi 2008; Ohman 2014). Many studies (Wakili et al., 2008; Anyadike & Eme, 2014; Lawal, 2015; Onyekpere, 2015; Olorunmola, 2016; Sule et al., 2017a; Sule et al., 2017b; Sule et al., 2018a; Sule et al., 2018b; Sule et al., 2018c; Ayeni, 2019; Sule et al. 2019; Sule & Sambo, 2021; Sule, 2023) report on violations of party funding rules and the dangers of money politics in Nigeria. Nigerian democracy is being hijacked by money politics to such an extent that only plutocrats can contest for elective offices. The disadvantaged groups, such as the youth, the poor, the female gender and the working class, are being isolated from the power struggles, while the level of corruption in the process threatens the accountability, credibility, integrity and transparency of elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (Baje, 2022).

Women and Political Participation

Political participation is an essential aspect of democratic governance. Political participation means mobilising all political actors to actively participate in the political processes, from party membership and recruitment to party primaries, voting, interest group and civil society formation, decision-making and political contributions, and opposition politics (Evans, 2020). Political participation in Nigeria is much more difficult due to political apathy, the conspiracy orchestrated by the elite to deliberately keep the governed at a distance, weak institutions and weak political parties that have failed to organise and mobilise adequately (Sambo et al., 2021). Most groups are vulnerable and unable to actively participate in Nigerian politics. One of these vulnerable groups is women. Nigeria signed the CEDAW Convention in 1985, but it has been noted that the proportion of women in elections and appointments has not exceeded 10 percent since 1999. This is despite the fact that women make up 49 of registered voters overall (Sambo et al., 2021) and 51.1 percent in 2023 (INEC, 2023).

It has been stated that (UN Women, 2020) the equal participation of women in politics and leadership positions is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. But the global outlook shows that such a goal may not be achievable worldwide. For example, women hold the office of head of

state or government in only 22 out of 189 countries in the world (UN Women, 2020). At this rate, gender equality could not be achieved in the next 130 years. Globally, only 21% of government ministers are women, and only 14 countries achieve 50% or more female representation in cabinets (UN Women, 2020). It can be observed that where women are appointed to ministerial positions, they are usually limited to the portfolios of women's affairs, family promotion, children's affairs, social affairs and inter-ministerial affairs (UN Women, 2020). The same situation exists in national parliaments around the world. Women make up only 25% of parliamentarians worldwide and only 4 countries have 50% or more women in their national parliaments: Rwanda, Cuba, Bolivia and the United Arab Emirates (UN Women, 2020). But another 19 countries have reached or exceeded 40% women parliamentarians. 9 in Europe, 5 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 4 in Africa and 1 in the Pacific. Data from 133 countries show that women make up only 36% of elected members at local government level (UN Women, 2020). The political marginalisation of women is therefore not a problem that is unique to Nigeria. It is a global phenomenon.

There are several reasons why it is difficult for women to actively participate in politics. Patriarchy is an important factor. Men have established themselves as the natural successors in social esteem, thereby relegating women to domestic guardianship (Forest, 1993). This cultural belief is not supported by the history of the Nigerian pre-colonial period where Queen Amina of Zazzau and Queen Daurama of Daura successfully held the position of chief executive in the Northern Nigerian Hausa kingdoms (Crowder, 1986). Furthermore, religions have not supported the view that anatomical differences justify the marginalisation of women. An example of this is the status accorded to Mary, the mother of Jesus, in the Abrahamic religions and the many instances of women assisting the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) on the battlefield and in decision-making (Rismawati et al., 2023). Some feminists (Foucault, 2012; Butler, 2004) argue extensively against perceived patriarchy or perceived differences in anatomy that should confine women to domestic tasks, or reductionism when it comes to getting ahead in social life. Furthermore, cultural perceptions, poverty, discriminatory customs and laws, and structural imbalances in terms of resources distribution, access to opportunities, and holding political power are the reasons why women are excluded from political participation (Sambo et al., 2021). However, some efforts are being made to emphasise the need for equal inclusion of women in politics and other societal affairs. At the international level, the CEDAW Convention, the efforts of UN Women and other groups are putting pressure on national governments to reconsider the status of women in political appointments and elective offices. In Nigeria, several civil societies, women's groups, advocacy groups and activists are pushing the government towards an inclusive government (Sambo et al., 2021).

The 2023 General Elections

The 2023 General Elections was the seventh uninterrupted elections in the Fourth Republic. This means that democracy in Nigeria is at a stage of stability compared to the previous republics where only five elections were held in total. The elections were held between 12 February and 18 March 2023 for the Presidential, National Assembly, Governorship and State House of Assembly elections. A total of 93.4 million voters were registered, 9.5 million more than in the last election. A total of 18 political parties contested for numerous political offices at various levels. The parties fielded 18 candidates for the Presidential Election, 4,223 for the National Assembly elections and 11,000 for the Governorship Elections and the state House of Assembly elections (INEC, 2023).

The primaries for the 2023 General Elections between the ruling party, the All Progressives Congress (APC), and the main opposition party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), have been overshadowed by controversies over excessive money politics, violence, marginalisation of the female

gender and low youth participation in the contests. The cost of expression of interest and nomination forms has been prohibitive for vulnerable and less privileged groups such as women and youths, especially in the APC and PDP (Itodo, 2022). Not even the concessions made by some parties to the youth and women have helped the female gender to win more elective offices in the elections. There have also been massive allegations of corruption in party primaries through the buying of delegate votes and other illegal practises (Adedayo, 2022). The last or general elections and their campaign activities were characterised by unprecedented use of ethnicity, regionalism, religion and money politics compared to previous elections in the Fourth Republic. The voting process was improved by the introduction of the Bimodal Verification Accreditation System (BVAS). The usual two-person race that dominated the presidential election was fiercely challenged by the emergence of a third force, the Labour Party (LP), as evidenced by the results.

The APC presidential candidate emerged victorious with 8,794,726 million votes, the runner-up, the PDP candidate, polled 6,984,420 votes and the third force, the LP candidate, polled 6,101,533 votes (INEC, 2023). The results of the 18 March Governorship Elections show that the ruling APC won 19 states, while the opposition PDP won 12 of the 31 states where the Elections were held (INEC, 2023). In the National Assembly, the APC won 59 Senate seats, the PDP 36, the LP 8, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) 2, the New Nigerian National Party (NNPP) 2 and the Young Progressive Party 1, and the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) won 1, totalling 109 (INEC, 2023). In the House of Representatives, the APC won 176 seats, the PDP 118, the LP 35, the NNPP 19, the APGA 5, the SDP 2, the African Democratic Congress (ADC) 2 and the YPP 1, while 2 seats were declared vacant pending the by-election, making a total of 360 (INEC, 2023). The election was accompanied by many outcries of rigging, irregularities, court cases and allegations of falsification of results, especially from the opposition PDP and LP (European Union, 2023).

Other issues emerged that had not occurred in the previous six elections, such as the controversy over the 25% requirement in the FCT Abuja, the role of a third force, the mandatory use of BVAS in the electoral process and excessive money politics. Women remain marginalised, with insignificant seats at the level of the state and National Assembly. No woman has made it to the Governor's seat; only two have been elected as Deputy Governors. Women make up less than 10% of the members of the Senate and House of Representatives (European Union, 2023). For example, only 3 (2.7 per cent) out of 109 women are elected in the 10th Senate and 17 (4.7 per cent) out of 360 in the 10th House of Representatives, and none at the Governorship level in the 36 states (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2023). The low performance or low presence of women is attributed to extreme money politics and the phenomenon of women's powerlessness escalated by marginalisation. With a 49% share of the total electorate, women have the ability to vote their fellow citizens into power, but the politics of vote-buying, favouritism, patronage, patriarchy and manipulation has limited them to voting for men.

From the issues analysed above in the various literature on party funding in Nigeria, it is evident that the gender aspect is not addressed. This is the major gap that this study examines and presents as a contribution to the discourse on party funding in the electoral process in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework: Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a concept that involves the assertive dominance of men over their female counterparts in society. This concept is more about perception, feelings, actions and culture than an actual physical configuration. In many societies today, men are culturally prepared for a greater fate because they toil in life and provide for the family's livelihood. Men undertake more dangerous adventures than women, and in some less modern societies women are confined to housework and domestic labour. Factors that contribute to this formation are culture, social values, religious practises, poverty and social configuration

(Sambo et al., 2021). The phenomenon of patriarchy described in the literature section is not limited to Nigeria (Nash, 2020; Strid & Hearn, 2022). The practise occurs in Africa and all countries of the world. It is a global problem. The main difference is that some societies are progressing and making progressive efforts to create opportunities for greater political participation by women, while others are immobile. Patriarchy can be traced back historically over many centuries. Women are seen as physically weak, vulnerable, fearful, more sympathetic, less active and disinclined to undertake harmful endeavours (Anifowose, 2004). In this traditional configuration, men are assumed to drive and dominate economic, political and social activities in society. While gender naturally allocates some anatomical characteristics and roles to men and women, gender is socially and culturally constructed. This is because most of what men can do, women can also do if they have the chance (Butler, 2004; Foucault, 2012).

However, Nash (2020) argued that patriarchy is a belief system and not a natural phenomenon or configuration. Values embedded in political, social and economic systems that structure inequality between men and women can be observed in many societies (Nash, 2020). Nash (2020) claims that this is a postulate that has been debunked by feminists because it has no scientific basis in contemporary discourses of social interaction. Strid & Hearn (2022) argue that patriarchy is a traditional term for the subordination of women to men and that it varies from society to society. In some societies, women are recognised as having a special status, while in other societies they are relegated to subordination. Patriarchy not only enforces male dominance and the subordination of women to men, but also reinforces global violence against women because they are perceived as inferior beings who should undoubtedly be submissive (Swart, 2015). All these theoretical assumptions to portray the domination of the male gender over the female postulate global problems and their applicability, which means that it is not a specific problem of Nigerian politics but a universal one. In the Nigerian context, the field of enquiry, patriarchy, was consolidated and expanded by colonialism.

The history of pre-colonial Nigeria, religious beliefs and culture show a positive view of the status of women in society. Women are highly respected in the Abrahamic religions (Sambo et al., 2021). For example, Islam emphasises that the mother is the most exalted being on earth and that obedience to her is tantamount to obedience to Allah (SWT). In addition, women in Islam are entitled to a shared inheritance and the protection of human rights, as stated in the Prophet's (PBUH) farewell sermon, and they have the right to legally divorce in the case of harmful marriages, can trade, as the first wife of the Prophet (peace be upon him) did, and are often consulted in strategic decisions, even in warfare, as in the case of the consultation of the Ummu Salmah by the Prophet (peace be upon him) during the Sulhu of Hudaibiyyah (reconciliation) (Rismawati et al. 2023). However, a peculiarity of the Abrahamic religions with regard to the occupation of administrative and political offices is similar to today's political marginalisation in modern democracies. Christianity, Islam and Judaism have also never encouraged the female gender to hold higher political offices.

As mentioned earlier, the colonialists did not make serious efforts to recruit women for administrative and political offices. Even women like Margaret Ekpo, a nationalist, were not elevated to a higher rank during the colonial and post-colonial period. Once the country had a free hand, it always showed a willingness to promote women, as in the case of Professor Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, the Director-General of the WTO, and Hajiya Amina Muhammad, the UN Deputy Secretary-General. Although insignificant compared to those who are marginalised, it shows that such cultural assumptions that women are inherently weak compared to men cannot stand the test of scientific evidence. This study posits that the culture of money politics and excessive spending on party funding are the reasons for the marginalisation of women, not the culture or history of the country. However, the doctrine of patriarchy is

much more relevant in this context because there is a cultural perception in Nigerian society that men are superior to women, even though the practical evidence here suggests otherwise. Cancellation of perception is the most important factor here. Perhaps it is this perception that has deterred the majority of female voters from supporting their female counterparts, in addition to the influence of money in the process.

RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative survey design was used for the study. Data was collected from various sources, including in-depth interviews with informants, group interviews and active participant observation, in addition to documented sources. Informants selected included the national party executives of the three major competing parties, prominent politicians, senior officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), academics, women's groups and representatives, and members of civil society.

A total of 19 informants were selected and interviewed, categorised into six categories. The informants were given a code consisting of the letters A, B, C, D, E and F to make it easier to recognise them. Category A are the national executives of the three major parties: APC, LP and PDP. From each party, 1 person was selected, making a total of 3. Category B are prominent national politicians who are accessible to the researchers because of their familiarity and connections. In this category, three persons were selected from each of the major parties, APC, LP and PDP. Category 3 are senior officials of INEC, two of whom were interviewed. Category D are academics, three of whom were selected from reputable national universities from some geopolitical zones. In the North-West, a Professor of Political Science was selected from Bayero University, Kano, another from the University of Ibadan and one from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The academics were selected from the Department of Political Science who are experts in Nigerian elections and party politics. Category E is made up of women's groups and representatives from different walks of life, 4 of whom were identified in Abuja. Category F represents members of civil society, four of whom were selected and interviewed from the Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room (NCSSR). Three main criteria were used to select the informants. The accessibility of the selected informants, the possession of high-quality relevant information and the fulfilment of the criteria proposed by Yin (2018) for case study research for the selection of informants which are a minimum of 4, an average of 16 and a maximum of 30. The in-depth interviews with the informants were conducted using unstructured questionnaires to allow flexibility and a free flow of information among the informants. Of the total of 19 people, 13 were interviewed physically, 5 were interviewed via WhatsApp and 2 responded via email. The questions were forwarded to them via email and they answered and emailed back their responses.

The group interview was conducted in Abuja. The researchers took advantage of a moment at a workshop organised immediately after the 2023 General Elections, which was attended by several experts and stakeholders in Nigerian elections, including women's representatives and groups. Six of them were specifically approached and interviewed as part of a roundtable discussion. The in-depth interviews with the informants were conducted with unstructured questionnaires to allow flexibility and a free flow of information among the informants. Of the total of 19 people, 13 were interviewed on site, 5 were interviewed via WhatsApp and 2 responded by email. The questions were sent to them by email and they answered them and sent their answers back by email.

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specifically approached and interviewed in a round table discussion. Unstructured questionnaires were used and the interview was recorded, transcribed, grouped into themes and presented in discussions.

In the third category of primary data, active participant observation, some of the issues that arose during the conduct of the 2023 Presidential Election were personally observed by the authors as election officials during the 2023 General Election. They are both electoral officers for the Presidential Election, National Assembly Elections, Governorship Elections and House of Representatives Elections, two of them in north-eastern states and the other in a north-western state in Nigeria. After submitting their results, they later attended the national tally live, where they watched the broadcast of the results from the various states directly on television, recording the raw results, grouping them and analysing them for research purposes. The other category of non-primary data are documented sources. Existing works were consulted for a critical literature review and the formation of a theoretical framework, and through this process the gap in the study and its contribution to knowledge are identified. The data obtained from primary sources was statistically analysed using tables, charts and a map. The data from the interviews with informants and the FGD were transcribed, grouped and extracted into themes for descriptive analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is divided into three themes based on the views and statements of the informants on the ground. The themes are the cost of nomination forms, party primaries and the performance of women in the 2023 General Elections.

Cost of Nomination Forms

A major obstacle to women's participation in the 2023 General Elections, especially as candidates for key political offices, was the cost of nomination forms. The two major parties, APC and PDP, have raised the cost of expression of interest and nomination forms to an unbearable level that only the super-rich can afford. Since access to power in Nigeria is linked to access to wealth and more than 90% of elective and appointive offices are dominated by men, women are at a disadvantage when competing with men. Table 1 shows the comparison of the cost of nomination forms for various elective offices in the APC and PDP and why they were out of reach for women and other disadvantaged groups. Even when the ruling APC granted a 40 per cent discount for women and youths to secure the form, the amount stipulated is far beyond the means of these groups.

Table 1. Comparison of ticket costs for APC and PDP party primaries in the 2023 primaries

Position	APC	PDP
Presidential Ticket	N100 million	N40 million
Governorship Candidate	N50 million	N21 million
Senate	N20 million	N3.5 million
House of Representatives	N10 million	N2.5 million
State House of Assembly	N2 million	N1.5 million

Source: Itodo 2022 (conversion into a tabular form was made by the authors).

Given the high cost of nomination forms, women and other groups could not afford them. For instance, among the 25 APC presidential candidates who bought the form for N100 million each, there were no female candidate. The same thing happened with the PDP where out of 15 candidates, no woman made it. It was suspected that the cost of nomination was deliberately inflated to discourage weak and vulnerable groups from running.

"The major parties believed that candidates would have a greater chance of success if they ran on their platform. This led them to deliberately set the cost of the expression of interest and nomination forms so high that they were prohibitively expensive for weak and vulnerable groups. In this way, women, youths and better candidates were excluded from participating in the elections" (in-depth interview with a Category D informant on 16 March 2023).

The determination of the costs of the nomination forms is an exclusive right of the parties, as it is an internal matter which:

"INEC or any other party has no power to alter it. The role of the electoral body is to ensure that the guidelines for the conduct of party primaries are strictly adhered to. What the parties determine as the cost of the nomination forms is an exclusive matter for the party and its members" (in-depth interview with a Category C informant on 26 March 2023).

However, the major parties, APC and PDP, could not escape pressure to reconsider the set cost of nomination. Several efforts were made by:

"Women's groups, civil societies, youth organisations, international donors and observers, in collaboration with groups such as UN Women, USAID and others, that they should reconsider the cost of nomination forms to enable vulnerable groups, especially women, to afford them." Some of the parties have responded. For example, the APC announced a 40 per cent discount for women and youth groups, but the set cost is still prohibitive for these groups. This explains the weak presence of women in the campaign" (in-depth interview with a Category E informant on 23 March 2023).

However, the parties argued that determining the cost of nomination forms is a collective decision of party actors.

"Before determining the cost of the nomination forms, all stakeholders were invited to a meeting and considerations were made on inflation, current reality, party revenue and expected expenditure. All groups agreed to the decision". (Detailed interview with an informant in the category A on March 25, 2023).

The members interviewed in group discussion expressed their views and reasons on the impact of costs of nomination forms as summarised in figure 1.

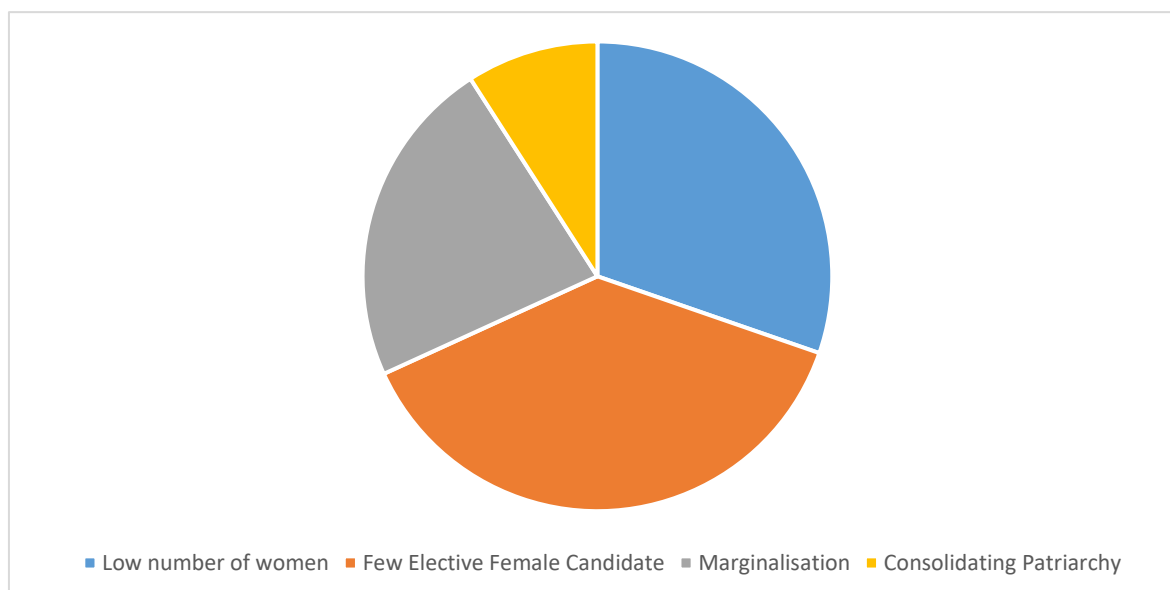


Figure 1. Impact of Cost of Nomination Forms on Women Participation in 2023 General Election

Source: Field Work 2023.

FGD members are divided on the impact of the cost of nomination forms on women's participation in the 2023 National Assembly Elections. Out of the 6 participants, 4 agreed that it has led to low number of women candidates, 5 agreed that it has caused the phenomenon of few women being elected into various offices in the 2023 General Elections, 3 agreed that it has exacerbated the marginalisation of women in Nigerian politics and 2 opined that it has reaffirmed patriarchy. Many studies (Walecki, 2003; Adetula, 2008; Adeyi, 2008; Ohman, 2014). Many studies (Wakili et al. 2008; Anyadike & Eme, 2014; Lawal, 2015; Onyekpere, 2015; Olorunmola, 2016; Sule et al. 2017a; Sule et al. 2017b; Sule et al. 2018a; Sule et al. 2018b; Sule et al. 2018c; Ayeni, 2019; Sule et al. 2019; Sule & Sambo, 2021; Sule, 2023) reported that money policy and excessive expenditure are the main problems in Nigerian party funding that prevent non-privileged groups from competing. Furthermore, the above views confirm the position of patriarchy as observed by Strid & Hearn (2022) that patriarchy extends the domination and subjugation of women which emanates from the labelling of women as subordinates by men. Patriarchy enforces the marginalisation of women through party funding because the more the process is intentionally favoured to give men more opportunities, the more the male gender will continue to have access to privilege and state resources to amass more wealth and position themselves more financially to prevail over the marginalised female gender in future elections with more money.

Party Primaries

Party primaries in Nigeria are exclusively for the rich and financial moguls. As mentioned earlier, acquiring nomination forms is a herculean task that only the wealthy can afford. Once the forms are acquired, another battle for money begins. Party primaries for the 2023 General Election for the major parties differ from one party to another. For instance, the PDP rules that primaries can be conducted through delegates or consensus; the APC has three modalities consisting of direct primaries, delegates and consensus; and the LP uses delegates and consensus. In most or all cases, those with a higher bid have determined the outcome. The use of delegates is a common practise used by all major parties in primaries. However, delegate primaries are believed to be the most corrupt electoral process in Nigeria. Delegates are compromised, votes are negotiated, votes are bought and the process is subverted. For example, it is reported from the arena of the PDP presidential convention at Eagle Square in Abuja that some candidates offered delegates \$5,000, others \$10,000 and some even \$15,000 to secure their votes (Adedayo, 2022). The scenario caused the value of the naira to plummet against the dollar a few days before the congress. The naira had been trading between 550 and 570 naira in the black market for the past two months before it rose to an all-time high of 595 naira just a week before the APC and PDP convention as politicians hoarded dollars to buy the delegates (Mudashir et al., 2022). The same scenario occurred during the APC primaries. Similar phenomena occur at all levels of party primaries. In this regard, an informant emphasises:

"Party primaries have the highest impunity of political corruption in Nigeria and only the rich can afford to win. Those with less financial power are forcefully pushed out of the contest" (detailed interview with a Category B informant on 22 March 2023).

In addition, party primaries have disenfranchised many potential candidates and their supporters:

"The exorbitant costs that vulnerable groups cannot afford push potentially credible candidates out of the equation, and their supporters, angered by this development, decide to stay away from the election" (in-depth interview with a Category F informant on 24 March 2023).

The explanation as to why women and youths could not contest in the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria is also not far-fetched:

"The excessive use of money in the primaries that these vulnerable groups could not afford. Less than 5% of women made it to the final election" (in-depth interview with a Category E informant on 27 March 2023).

The group discussions' views on party primaries in the 2023 General Elections revealed different opinions and perceptions. In summary, the informants interviewed in all agreed that:

"Party primaries in Nigeria are a money affair and women could not compete equally with men in Nigeria because of their different social status." Women have performed poorly not because they lack the will to run or participate, but because they are forcibly sidelined by the fierce competition in spending money" (extensive roundtable interview, 26 March 2023, Abuja).

The above views are supported by many works of literature (Nwangwu & Ononogbu, 2016; Ohman, 2018; Sule, 2019; Sule, 2022; Okeke & Nwali, 2021; Nwagwu et al, 2022) which state that party primaries in Nigeria are a money affair and only the highest bidders win. The studies further note that this process permanently prevents vulnerable groups, including youths, women, average citizens and the poor, from contesting for political office in Nigeria. This confirms the assumptions of patriarchy that male dominance in Nigeria is historically rooted in pre-colonial, colonial construction, and postcolonial machinations of men by exploiting their power over women. Through the cultural dominance of women, men have asserted their financial position in Nigerian politics and this continues to give the male gender the advantage of amassing more wealth to comfortably contest against the vulnerable groups of women, youth and poor candidates in future elections.

How Women Fare in the 2023 General Elections

Party funding is seen as the bane of women's performance in the 2023 General Elections due to the extent to which money politics plays a role in the cost of nomination forms and expenditure in party primaries, as analysed above. As a result, women perform abysmally poorly in the contests and in winning electoral seats. This is according to an informant:

"There is need to rethink democratic accountability and transparency. Otherwise, Nigerian elections will continue to be a regular ritual for the rich where the poor and marginalised groups like women are compensated for being allowed to vote in return for a favour" (In-depth interview with an informant in category D on March 21, 2023).

Moreover, women fared poorly in the midst of an almost parity electorate because:

"Women are overwhelmed by male dominance, even though they have about 49% of all registered voters, the female delegates vote for the men and the female voters vote for the men, then who will support the women? Of course the money they don't have enough to compete with their male counterparts." (In-depth interview with a Category E informant on 24 March 2023).

Furthermore, there is not enough pressure to negotiate positions for women, as follows:

"Despite all the pressure our groups have put on INEC to put in place modalities that will allow for a gender level playing field and to get the parties to consider gender or risk losing our votes, INEC is unable to do so while the parties ignore our demands and our members obey their conscience, collect money and unfortunately vote for men (In-depth interview with category E and F informants on 26 March 2023).

Similarly, the roundtable interaction revealed many reasons why women performed extremely poorly in the 2023 National Assembly Elections, as summarised in figure 2.

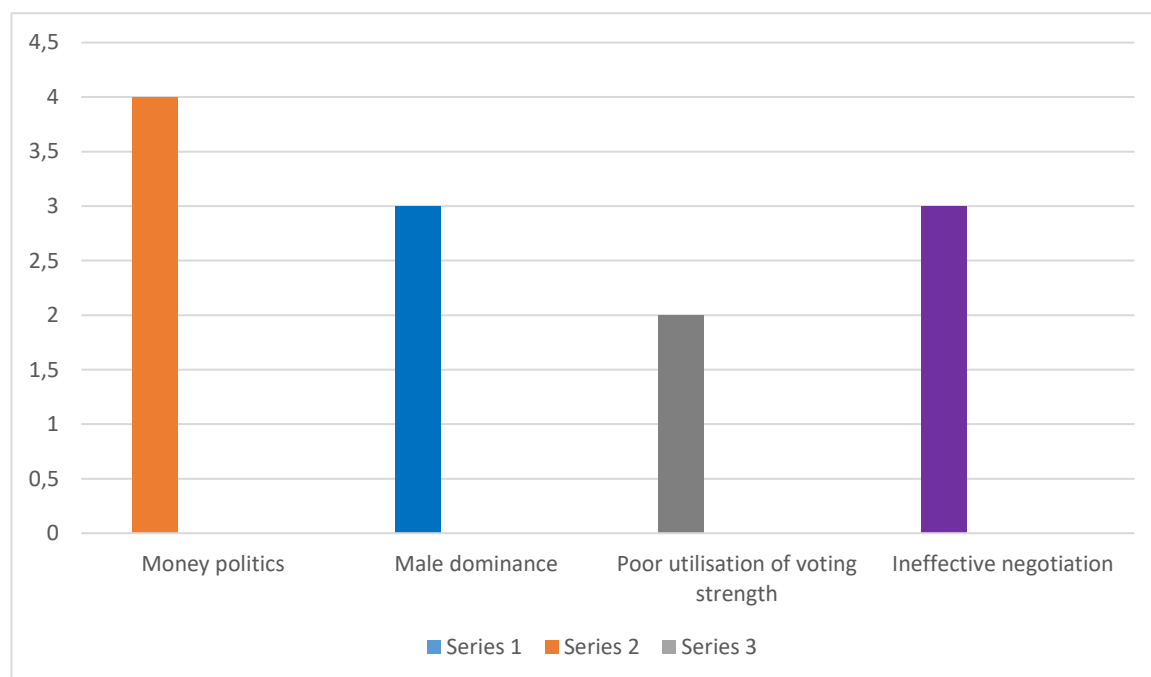


Figure 2. Summary of FGD views on the reasons for women's poor performance in the 2023 General Elections

Source: Field Survey 2023.

To illustrate the extent of women's low participation in the 2023 General Elections only in terms of winning elective offices, Nkereuwem (2023) argues that women's representation in Nigerian politics has steadily declined since 2011, with women now occupying only three per cent (3) of seats in the Senate and four per cent (1) in the House of Representatives, a decline of 19 per cent compared to the 9th National Assembly. Nkereuwem (2023) further argues that party primaries are the biggest obstacle to women's political representation in Nigeria because excessive money politics hinders women's competitive advantage in politics. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Nigeria ranks in the bottom ten globally for women's representation in national parliaments, although the proportion of registered voters is almost equal (Nkereuwem, 2023). Across all national and sub-national categories, women represented just over 10 per cent of the more than 15,000 candidates who ran for President, National Assembly, Governorship and State Houses of Assembly in the 2023 Elections (Nkereuwem, 2023). Nkereuwem (2023) adds that 90 per cent of female candidates ran on the platforms of minor parties because the major parties could not give them a chance. The outcome of the 2023 primaries and the cost of nomination forms showed that the time is not yet ripe for women, despite the vaunted 35% affirmative action, according to Njoku (2022). Even though the National Gender Policy 2006 recommends 35% affirmative action for women, sections 42, 147 (3) and 14 (3) of the 1999 Constitution as amended prohibit all forms of gender and other discrimination, and Article 19 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, adopted by the Federal Executive Council in 1983, enshrines the right to self-determination for all genders, this is far from being realised (Njoku, 2022). Anthony (2023) goes on to argue that female politicians failed to win a good number of seats in the 2023 General Election because they had to compete with their male

counterparts. This competition came at a high financial cost as they had to secure an expensive nomination and buy delegates in the primaries, which is costly and only the rich can afford (Anthony, 2023). Thus, patriarchy in Nigeria is perceived to reinforce male dominance or patriarchy in Nigerian society as observed by Anifowose (2004), Swart (2015), Nash (2020), Sambo et al. (2021) and Strid & Hearn (2022).

CONCLUSION

and representation in the 2023 General Elections. Nigeria has well-designed party funding regulations enshrined in the 1999 Constitution and the 2022 Electoral Act. However, monitoring is weak and enforcement ineffective, with violations of the regulations, excessive spending and the influence of monetary policy led to corruption in elections and politics, which gave men an advantage over women and thus excluded them from active electoral campaigns. The study reports that the cost of expression of interest and nomination forms, party primaries and campaign spending prevented women from winning seats at all levels in the 2023 General Elections. Accordingly, women performed miserably, winning only 3 percent of seats in the Senate and 4 percent in the House of Representatives. Women were also poorly represented at all levels in the elections for Governorships and state legislatures. This is despite the fact that women make up almost half of all registered voters, Nigeria is a signatory to CEDAW and 35 percent of national laws provide for women's representation.

Therefore, this study is of the opinion that such a trend should not continue. It is suggested that women's groups, in collaboration with similar grassroots civil societies, undertake massive campaigns to raise awareness on the need for equitable gender representation. It is also recommended that women groups consider forming a political party with the sole aim of promoting the political presence of women in the Nigerian political space. In addition, international donors and partners for democracy and good governance should put pressure on the major parties to include a significant proportion of women in party primaries. Women's groups should also threaten the parties and negotiate concessions on some electoral seats, otherwise they risk losing the votes of mobilised women in future elections.

In addition, the study recommends that a further study is important that takes up the previous topics and current findings from this investigation and integrates them for future research. For example, one area that could be considered for an interesting study is to explore women's voting strength, which stands at 51.1 per cent in the 2023 General Elections, and analyse why and how women are unable to leverage their numbers and demystify the politics of moneybags, as well as examine the corresponding role of women's groups in promoting opportunities for female candidates.

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