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The role of gender in democratic governance: A study of selected Nigerian literature

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Abstract

The participation of women in governance and decision making is of strategic importance not only for women empowerment, but because it has extended development benefits and impact. In Nigeria, like many developing countries, women represent about half of the country’s population, yet poorly represented in governance and decision making at all levels of governance. Experience has shown that the 2006 national policy of 35% representation for women in leadership has not been achieved. This is due to the socio-cultural problems and stereotyped assumptions about women as incompetent for positions of power. Personal integrity and character can be more important than money in politics. Consequently, Nigerian writers have observed this trend and expressed themselves through fiction, drama, and poetry. This paper is a review of selected texts which address the role of women in politics. It highlights some of the victories, impediments, and flaws that these writers have identified. It evaluates works from poetry, drama, and prose. The selected authors include Alu, A. Nesther, Azuike Amaka, Miri Angela, Salami Isoken Irene, Ayoola. A. Kehinde and Ojaide, Tanure.

Keywords: African, democracy, gender, feminism. literature, Nigeria

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Public Interest Statement

This research re-emphasizes the necessity for the active involvement and participation of women in the political arena as their roles cannot be undermined. The searchlight in this study on the women academics in the various literary genre stands out as it depicts the extent in which constructive and progressive influences could be made in national development.



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Introduction

Democratic leadership has a long history. Many countries in the world practice democracy, and it has undergone some transformation. According to Zimmermann, democracy was introduced in ancient Greek political and philosophical thought:

From Athenian democracy, three main branches were established: Assembly of the Demos, the Council of 500 and the people's Court... Democracy as we know it was not truly defined until the Age of Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries. The term democracy; has evolved to mean a government structured with separation of powers, provided basic civil rights, religious freedom and separation of church and state (Zimmermann np).

There are three tiers of government in a democracy: the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary. These branches provide checks and balances to curtail the abuse of power. As a country, Nigeria has experienced military and civilian rule. Military rule in Nigeria is considered as totalitarian and undesirable. According to Adejare:

Prolonged Military Dictatorship stunted Nigeria's democratic growth and its socio-economic development. Dictators created and fostered a culture of impunity not only within its own ranks but in the entire executive and judicial arms of government. They abrogated the Legislative arm and ruled by decrees. Their decrees were supreme unchallengeable law of the land and Tribunals vested with final and un-appealable adjudicatory authority were created. There occurred a glaring diminution of the jurisdiction, discretion, work, role and integrity of the judiciary in Military Rule. But the soldiers and their civilian side-kicks paid loud lip service to Human Rights and the Rule of law but ceaselessly violated citizen's fundamental rights keeping the famous preventive Detention Decree (Decree 2) throughout the entire period of Military Rule. The role and function (including the mentality) of the judiciary and its personnel under Military dictatorships cannot be equated with its role under the present civilian democratic rule. The training, organization and even personnel may be the same but the institution has been strengthened to exist as a true check on excesses of executive and legislative arms (np).

After independence in 1960, Nigeria experienced its first coup in 1966 and soon after a civil war broke out, lasting from 1967 to 1970. A young democracy sprang up but was bedeviled by military coups and counter coups until 1999 when General Abdulsalam Abubakar handed over power to the democratically elected president in the person of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo on 29th May 1999. Since then, Nigeria has successfully handed over power democratically through elections. It is from this background that democracy emerged in Nigeria. A discussion of gender according to feminism and philosophy is no longer a simple dichotomy between the male and female specie. According to contemporary philosophy of sex, there is a strong contention from groups often agitating their marginalization in the political decision making. These are the trans-

women or transgender women who maintain that they must be accepted not as special or difficult cases but in the same category as the dominant and popularly accepted dichotomy of male or female. Talia Mae Bettcher insists that it must first be defined who a woman is according to sub-culture of trans-women in order to redefine who this word stands for. It is this philosopher’s view that “the decision regarding which perspective to take (the dominant or the resistant one) is a political one. So, whether a trans-woman counts as a woman is again a political decision. By contrast a non-trans-woman will count as a woman regardless of such political decisions. There is an asymmetry (243).” For Bettcher, the use of language to describe trans-women or trans-men is one of the ways they experience discrimination. This philosopher suggests that there should be a reclassification and understanding of trans-subculture to assimilate them into greater society. According to E. Diaz Leon, when it comes to the meaning of ‘woman’ neither sex-based views nor gender views are satisfactory as other feminist philosophers have argued. It seems ‘woman’ is a contextually-shifting term. Therefore, a woman should be considered one depending on how she self-identifies as a woman regardless of her biological configuration.

Discussion

The National Population Commission has recently put Nigeria’s population at over 200 million. As at April 2018, 51% of males and 49% of females was the gender ratio. According to the Centre for Democracy and Development, no female politician occupies any of the positions of President, Vice President and Governors. Thus, it is at the level of deputy governorship position that women have achieved the highest level of representation in Nigeria. The percentage of women deputy governors in Nigeria is 16.7% nationally. The states with the most women occupying deputy governorship seats include Osun, Lagos, Ogun, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Enugu all in the southern region of Nigeria. All states in the Northern region have no women as deputy governors. At the legislator’s level in the National Assembly, there are 7 women senators and twenty women in the House of Representatives. At the state level, the numbers dropped in 2019, from fifty-five to forty legislators (Onyegi). Table 1 below tells the story in more details.

Table 5.5: Representation in the National Parliament by Year and Sex

Legislator	1999-2003	2003-2007	2007-2011	2011-2015	2015-2019	1999-2003	2003-2007	2007-2011	2011-2015	2015-2019
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
SENATE										
Male	106	97.2	106	97.2	100	91.7	102	93.6	101	92.7
Female	3	2.8	3	2.8	9	8.3	7	6.4	8	7.3
Total	109	100	109	100	109	100	109	100	109	100
HOUSE OF REPS.										
Male	348	96.7	339	92	335	93.1	336	93.3	337	93.6
Female	12	3.3	21	5.8	25	6.9	24	6.7	23	6.4
Total	360	100	360	100	360	100	360	100	360	100
BOTH HOUSES										
Male	454	96.8	445	94.9	435	92.8	438	93.4	438	93.4
Female	15	3.2	24	5.1	34	7.2	31	6.6	31	6.6
Total	469	100	469	100	469	100	469	100	469	100

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2019)

According to the Centre for Democracy and Development, it is imperative to learn from the states that have succeeded in recording a good percentage of women occupying elective and appointive positions in government to build on the gains and develop a robust pathway for enhancing women's participation in Nigeria. "More prominent, established parties tend to be more internally undemocratic as they have more structures and linkages that advantage male candidates and disadvantage female contestants, especially in the absence of party mandated quotas (p11)" this organization suggests that women could leverage the opportunities presented by the newly emerging smaller parties that create a broader political space for projecting women's voices. They also suggest that women could leverage the platform of these smaller parties to build a political base through networking and connecting with voters at the grassroots level provided that the smaller parties do not remain intractably locked out of power in the political contestation of the state. It advocates that Nigerians must interrogate and better understand the political environment that has led to the relatively huge success of women's participation in the South-West region. Political parties must increase internal party democracy to ensure that men and women have equal opportunities.

The Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) has stated that four of the world's top ten countries, in terms of women's share of single or lower house parliament, are in Sub-Saharan Africa; Rwanda, Seychelles, Senegal, and South Africa, while Nigeria has achieved little progress. The problem of women's underrepresentation in Nigeria is seen as a question of women's lack of resources including traditional values and norms, community expectations conservative family upbringing, lack of good education, lack of work or professional experience, structural and physical violence against women and discriminatory roles assigned to women in political parties. Although several attempts have been made to forestall these challenges, such as educating, mentoring, expanding network and providing financial assistance, insignificant results have been achieved. In order to fast track progress towards gender parity, the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre suggest that stakeholders should see women's political underrepresentation as a question of discrimination against women rather than women's lack of resources. The strategy for addressing women's political underrepresentation should focus on changing how the political institutions themselves work, rather than on adjusting the resources and capacities that women do or do not possess. Therefore, an introduction of electoral gender quota for the recruitment and election of female candidates is required to enhance gender equity. Political representation of women should begin at the local and provincial levels to allow women and men to develop political careers on equal footing. More so, it is the role of political parties to adopt and implement party specific gender quotas, informal targets, and other positive action mechanism at all official levels. This also includes internal party positions. While civil society groups have the role of conducting information and awareness-raising campaigns to encourage women to stand for elective offices, in the process, contributing through the development of skills, experience, knowledge and resources of women in the pipeline for elected office. Other factors militating against women's participation in politics include excessive use of money in politics, expensive campaign procedures, the influence of party elders, deliberate obstruction, and violence. Therefore, successful political careers by women are predicated on serious adjustments in lifestyle that many women find difficult to afford.

Nevertheless, successful women politicians find it useful to have the support of their family,

constituency, civil rights organizations, fellow women and the opportunity to participate in the political process so as to gain the needed experience. This is pivotal to increasing the participation of women in politics.

Reflections from Nigerian Poetry

Alu's poem "For Kudirat" brings focus to the personality of Kudirat Abiola. She was a heroine of democracy in Nigeria after the incarceration of her husband MKO Abiola who is believed to have won the June 12, 1993 presidential election in Nigeria. The election was annulled by the military government of General Sani Abacha. "On June 4, 1996 she was going to keep an appointment with the Canadian Embassy when Abacha's killer squad intercepted Kudirat's car and machine-gunned her and her driver Dauda (Okogba np). According to Okogba, excerpts from Jamiu Abiola's books titled *The President Who Never Ruled* and *The Stolen Presidency* reveal that Kudirat was not fighting for her presumed position as first lady but to get her husband out of solitary confinement. She contacted Western governments to join forces in fighting for the release of her husband but was disappointed by their lack of genuine interest. In the end, MKO Abiola and Kudirat paid the ultimate prize for their struggle. Kudirat argued that the military's action amounted to a violation of the fundamental right of Nigerians to elect their government.

The first stanza Alu's poem paints the picture of a life forcefully and unjustly taken "silenced by assassins' bullet/ which embalmed and immortalized your name-lifeless though, in obedience to the creator's creed/ Your footprint boldly marked on the sands of time." In these lines, the persona's words produce a deific upliftment of Kudirat's personality contrasting yet to her submission to the creator's creed. This refers to the inevitability of death for all mortal beings. The following part of the stanza describes the reaction of many Nigerians to the news of her death. The dictator is described thus: "of the stone-hearted lion in his den/ how could he descend so low as to/ Send killers to hunt you like an antelope (line 11)? Alu's poem is an elegy for Kudirat. Her virtue which the poet describes is full of strength, moral conviction having the effect of exalting the image of womanhood:

Kudi
You're ever to be remembered, even
By those who see women merely as weaker sexes
Who say women are objects and properties
Either of Fathers or husbands –
And never really to be heard –

The above lines attest to the indomitable courage inherent in women to stand against the stereotypical mold that society imprints on women. Kudirat defies such assumptions through her will-power. She stands side by side with her husband as a formidable force able to against tyranny. So strong is her influence that after MKO Abiola's incarceration, she continues to bellow out in defiance against military oppression. The poem's apostrophic quality comes out forcefully in the third stanza. Although the poem begins in a melancholic tone, it rises to attain some crescendo. The speaking voice compares Kudirat's voice to "asp poison (line 24). Here the persona exalts

freedom of speech, comparing it to the fatal poison, the first found in Egypt and adjacent countries. This comparison is a metonymy for Africa. Indeed, Kudirat's voice rang across Africa to the world as she received global attention for the cause of democracy. As the speaking voice extols Kudirat's courage, there is a direct address to Kudirat in the grave, using the euphemism of "your silent chamber (line 37)": He wanted another tenure to rule and ruin/ There was a million march in March/ The usual queues of sycophants! (Lines 38-40).

These lines are an indisputable reference to the doctored campaigns in the public and media houses calling for the continuation of General Abacha's reign. Also displaying a pun in the words: "millions march in March, it is a historical fact that Daniel Kanu's led political organization YEAA, (Youths Earnestly Ask for Abacha) lead the two-million-man march on 3-4 March 1998. The persona's continuing address culminates with informing Kudirat that the harbinger of her death has also been visited by his own death. Ending the poem in a rhetorical note, the speaking voice says: "But for the breeze/ who could see the chicken's yash? (43-44). In common expression, the question means, if not for death, or some other mystery of life; many things would never be exposed.

Hafsat Abiola Costello has founded a pro-democracy movement called Kudirat Initiative for Nigerian Democracy (KIND) which narrows its focus to promoting women's participation in forging a democratic state. The organization's sectors include human rights, gender equality, development, project support and human resources.

In Azuike's "Fugitive Senator" the poem decries the state of god-fatherism in Nigeria which catapults some female contestants into public office. The poem's persona is scathing in scrutinizing the shortcomings of such candidates. The first stanza describes the façade of such candidates as: Opinionated/Full-figured/Strong-willed/Dancing naked on national stage of public/scrutiny/Heading for a Presidential disgrace/ Weaving a customised smile (line1-7). For the speaking voice, these women appear to have a semblance of capability to perform the task of holding public office but soon expose themselves as fraudsters because of their lack of integrity. The politics that hinges upon party elders' approval, party pimps and nepotism for nomination at party primaries, and eventually at inter-party level gives some women undue advantage against other women who can actually deliver the dividends of democracy. To further buttress this point, the fugitive senator is described as:

Arse-licking daughter of an ex-convict
You waltzed into ludicrous politics
And catastrophic governance
For daddy's sake
Driving a customized car (lines 9-13)

The imagery of waltzing into ludicrous politics connotes a carefully orchestrated performance of passing power from patron to daughter in full view of an entertained audience. This audience is synonymous with the nation being deceived by false appearances of a legitimate democratic process. The following lines, give a metaphorical image of the vehicular destiny of a nation being driven into catastrophe through inheritance of power from one incompetent

government to the next. Because the 'car' is 'customised' it is programmed to move the nation into a premeditated and malfunctioning direction.

The interjections between the stanzas serve as a foreshadowing technique depicting the fear of retribution. The third stanza is a lament of the senator's character and performance. The senator displays some ambiguity in character as she sounds appealing as "a distinguished orator by day (p. 16)" transforms into "a demonic vampire at night (p. 17)." The poem bemoans the short-lived tenure characterized by a parasitic relationship between the senator and the people she is meant to represent. Her tenure is satirized as being distinguished for her flamboyant display of "trendy outfits", "borrowed wigs" "painted lips" and "customized hips" all describing a caricature character. The speaking voice blames the blindness the people who voted her into power: "An insane community/Voted in the fugitive senator/An insane people/Testified to her callous disregard for equity and justice (lines 24-28)." The poem further proscribes the senator and her cohort as a negative force tainting the image of the entire nation. The persona assumes a prophetic voice as it proclaims a doomed destiny for the senator and an anticipation of certain karma.

Miri's "For Women" is a long poem which eulogizes the achievements of women in all areas of influence. The persona in Miri's poem gives a preamble which praises the "Women warriors of Plateau State (line 1) but the poem does not begin without paying tribute specifically to a retinue of historical heroines. Personalities such as Queen Amina of Zaria; Moremi of Ife; Madam Tinubu of Lagos; Margaret Ekpo; Hajiya Gambo Sawaba; Chief Laila Dogonyaro; and Chief Funmilayo Ransome Kuti. The persona applauds their virtues, struggles, and achievements. In the poem, the speaking voice expresses a strong sense of pride in the trail blazing and courageous personalities of these women.

From the international scene, the poem extols the capabilities of figures such as Margaret Thatcher, Corazon Aquino, Violetta Chimorro, Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto and Winnie Mandela. The poem hails them with the title "real woman" in several lines of the poem, enlisting their specific qualities and achievements.

This poem draws inspiration from their glorious history to reflect upon the current position of women in Plateau state. Among them are Hajiya Aisha Mohammed Mana, Mrs. Pauline Tallen, Mrs. Uwa Lohor, Mrs. Susan Janfa, Mrs. Loko Danjin, Mrs. Ruth Gershon Guyit, Mrs. Theresa Wuya, Mrs. Helen Gomwalk, Mrs. Sarah Ochekepe. In the 31st stanza, the poem approaches its denouement:

Successful, celebrated women of Plateau state
The pendulum of success swings around you all.
With consuming passion, you attained success;
Not by sheer luck but through dint of hard work,
Stressful hard work, natural intelligence,
Humane inter and intra-personal relationships (p. 155-160).

Women have from time immemorial been a unifying force from their own homestead to the larger society. Distinguished women, whether educated or not still leave their mark on the sands of time

through their wisdom, courage, sacrifice, hard work and heroism. Like the poem says:

You work in silence

Not like petrol to cause fire

Nor like gas to cause explosions;

You are the proverbial salt of the earth

You sweeten our nation and make it taste better (p. 172-176).

This poem is an ebullient celebration of all women who dare to leave their mark the world.

Reflections from Nigerian Drama

The satirical nature of how Nigerian writers portray democracy has been discussed in Wadinga's "A satirical view of Democracy in a Selection of Nigerian Literature" the selected texts include Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* and Salami's *More Than Dancing*. To avoid over flogging Rotimi's play; it is imperative to note that Salami's play narrows to focus on women's participation in politics. It is therefore necessary to revisit this play. Through the dialogue between top female members of the United Peoples Liberation Party (UPLP), it is clear that the men folk discourage active participation of women in politics through the relegation of women as useful only for votes, entertainment, and distraction with petty gift items. When apprehended, they often resort to threats which suggest that the women are powerless because they lack money. Tired of being sidelined, the women decide to nominate a female candidate to represent them. Nona, the protagonist of the play, holds onto the tenets of African feminism where gender complementarity is encouraged. According to Fwangyil:

African women believe in complementarity between the sexes and motherhood. An understanding of these strong beliefs prepares the minds of women before venturing into any area of specialisation. This posture enables women to strike between their responsibilities at the home front and in the public domain (p. 27).

In *More Than Dancing* the female candidates warn themselves to steer clear of pitfalls in politics such as ethnic sentiments, sentiments about seniority and godfatherism instead of the meritocracy and values of the candidate. Among the two assistants for the woman leader, Aisha is nominated but she steps down for personal reasons and because she believes in Nona's capabilities and is willing to cooperate with her. The unity of the women and their willingness to support each other proves to be a binding force that their opposition cannot surmount. Their choice of candidate also proves that there needs to be a place for fresh candidates to emerge in order to gain the needed experience in the political arena. This also gives an opportunity for new ideas and strategies in governance. Nona's dialogue with a dream character called Mama Nigeria, reiterates the fact that women must boldly and courageously arise. Salami uses Nona's dreams to engage with the heroines of old who recount their own challenges and victories in the presence of Mama Nigeria, the matriarch.

From the dream experiences of Nona, she draws strength from the stories of heroes past to continue fighting for the rights of women and maintaining her determination to carry on with

her ambition. As Hakeem aptly explains:

Alhaji, the challenge is beyond ensuring the election of more women into the National Assembly. Patriarchy, subordination of women and the deep rooted belief that public affairs are reserved for men and that social contact is about the relationship between men and government and not citizens, come together to exclude women notwithstanding constitutional rights and democracy (*More Than Dancing*, p. 36).

To overcome the problem of funding, different women groups gather to make contributions for Nona's campaign. These women cut across ethnic and religious and professional bodies debunking the belief that women can never unite. Intrigued by the men-folk to nominate Nona's husband Uyi, as a running mate for Alhaji Bawa fails miserably. Next, they offer a substantial amount of money to him if he can convince her to quit running for the presidential ticket. This also fails, until they suggest that Uyi's identity will be subsumed in Nona's. This idea strikes their target; it also implies that the question of identity is delicate especially for men because the African society often naturalizes the idea that a woman's identity is lost to the identity of her husband through marriage. It is seen as an anomaly when a man is identified through the prominence of his wife. This aspect of the play highlights the need for a rock solid family support for all female candidates in politics. All kinds of under hand methods are employed to derail Nona from her ambition, but she finally overcomes them all.

Nona's conversation with Mama Nigeria draws attention to the marginalization of women in media coverage which is very vital for any successful campaign. Next, the quota system is also criticized as an avenue for men to select only women they can manipulate as token representatives. After every other intrigue fails, the men of the UPLP party have no choice but to join Nona as she is presented as the party's presidential candidate.

Reflections in Prose

In Ayoola's short story titled "The Portrait" the author uses grotesque imagery and excremental postcolonialism to describe her Excellency, "Chief Dr. Mrs. Adaora Sumi- Dondo, first lady and wife of the council chairman (p120)" this story is strongly satirical of the miasma of corruption evident in the actions and lifestyle of elected officials. The description of Adaora mirrors how her physical body transforms into a monstrous, gluttonous and disgusting sight. Esty Joshua explains:

Postindependence African fiction features a striking conjunction of scatology and political satire, borne out most clearly in two landmark novels of the 1960s: Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* (1965) and Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968). In *The Interpreters*, a story of intellectuals in decolonized Nigeria, Soyinka uses excremental language to present political and corporate misdeeds in terms of unhealthy digestion. In Armah's grotesque vision, shit (not to mention its corporeal familiars phlegm, drool, vomit, sweat, piss, and blood) emerges as an index of moral and political outrage in a new Ghana bedeviled by greed and bureaucratic corruption.

These works--along with such notably excremental contemporaries as Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* (1964) and Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother* (1971) --suggest that scatology has a formative (and underexamined) significance in the development of contemporary African literature (np).

Ayoola is successful in describing how Adaora's changed features reflect an ugly picture of corruption. It creates a sense of watching the metamorphosis of a gory, creature evolving in plain sight. The reason for this transformation is revealed:

It is the practice of the day that when one's husband is elected into a powerful office, the wife is expected to use the husband's position to fabricate a funnel for draining as much wealth as possible into the family vault. After all, if you a mad man a hoe, he mows towards himself. This is how the Dondoos came up with the novelty known as SACA... With this charity, Adaora is able to corner so much cash and influence with which she arrogates a great deal of authority to her person and wealth for her family (p. 122).

Adaora's greed and laziness allows her to create a toilet right in her living room. It is meant to be a discreet way of allowing the first lady to use the convenience without having to leave her food or guests waiting. She presses some secret buttons releasing a pleasant deodorant, another to increase the volume of music to cover any undignified noises, another to spray perfume; the last is to release water needed water for the evacuation. These descriptions are metaphors describing the process of corruption as improvised to siphon public funds in plain sight. Because corruption is a chain reactor; the council's internal auditor approves the bills to get some for himself as he rationalizes that: "No decent person steals alone. You chop-I-chop is the name of the game (p. 123). They have twelve TV sets installed in the mansion: "a comprehensive televisionization of the council chairman's residence (p. 126)" she does not care to notice that her maids always go hungry. From time to time, her conscience pricks her but it never lasts for long as she derives pleasure in taking rather than giving. Her doctor warns that her intake of cholesterol is putting her heart at risk but she picks offence at the comment. The doctor quickly placates her with some flattery. Her friends are depicted as social climbers and opportunists.

This story also satirizes the council chairman and his wife for showing little concern for the electorate except when seeking for their votes. They are surrounded by fair-weather friends who continually massage their ego to gain favours. The real business of their government is to steal as much as possible. The council chairman himself composed a saying:

You pass this way once
Whatever food or drink you find
Grab, eat and gobble it up now for
You may never pass this way again.

In “The Portrait” Ayoola condemns the abuse of power by women who are married to elected government officials. He cautions that they are in a position to improve the lives of the people which live in their constituency if they refuse to succumb to greed and corruption.

Ojaide’s *The Activist* is a novel with strong feminist undertones. The heroine of the novel does not bend to societal expectations for approval. The hero of the novel; also known as the Activist serves as an embodiment of a character who complies fully to the principles of the name by which he bears. Through this technique Ojaide proposes that individuals in society live positively according to the names by which they wish to be identified. The Activist is presented as a character who is an international protestor fighting for worthy causes concerning the world economy, ecology and the marginalization of the Niger-Delta community. His female companion called Ebi is an educationist who joins the cause of women of the Delta Forum (WODEFOR). These women take a stand against the blatant disregard and betrayal they suffered from The Federal Military Government, Oil companies, greedy traditional rulers, selfish academics, and a silent media. After experiencing the loss of precious lives and environmental degradation, the women resort to organizing a nude protest by elderly women. This is a taboo which attracts a curse. Peter Okadike; a character in novel, explains that: “women’s nude protest is the worst curse possible in the traditional society. It’s a curse invoked when all measures to seek redress or justice have failed (p. 212).” The protest was squashed by collaboration between the military government and the oil company, and some women are raped and robbed of their belongings. Despite this abuse, the head of Bell Oil Company and the head of the Federal Military Government died a week later.

Ebi becomes the manager/publisher of *The Patriot*, a newspaper established specifically serve as a voice for the Niger-Delta people and a means of publicity for future political agenda. The novel shows how the community can collaborate in freeing themselves from tyranny and oppression if they are motivated by altruistic motives. The Activist finds allies in a cult leader who he reeducates, a reformed miscreant, and his own wife to systematically bring real change to his community. Ebi writes a bi-weekly column titled “Women Matters” which addresses contemporary issues in general, bringing more attention to women’s perspectives and personal experiences. The Newspaper also exposes the secrets which the Federal Military Government had repressed through the years by printing real images: “The only frogs seen were deformed-one eyed or one legged. Blind turtles were caught on land. Deformed babies were not left out of the pictures (p. 231)” on the other hand, *The Patriot* Newspaper emphasized on folklore and made people more aware of what united them. The Activist is portrayed as one who believes in the equality of women in every respect. Ebi is involved in every business or activity and she makes valuable contributions. At the end of the novel, the Activist and his wife Ebi, join protesters in a march against capitalist institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund as they visit Washington DC.

This novel underscores the importance of women in society as crucial to development in all spheres of life. It is a balanced view of women not only as care-givers, mothers and wives but nation-builders and strategists.

Conclusion

From the discussion, it is evident that there is a balanced assessment of gender representation in governance, as reflected in the three literary genres highlighted in this investigation. Fundamentally, a frequent decimal which cuts across these genres is that of marginal representation of the female gender in the pre and nascent democratic setting in Nigeria. The male dominance of key positions contradicts the ideal practice, which calls for equal gender representation. In consonance to this, Bayer and Brown assert succinctly that: ‘until women hold at least a third of the positions in legislative bodies, a significant change to traditionally gendered approaches to policy is likely to occur’. However, since studies show that gender in every society is socially defined by members of these societies, this review calls for a shift in Nigeria to redefine these roles in favor of the female gender in order to achieve a balanced form of governance. The flaws identified in some of the female characters represented in this paper are not specifically gender assigned but can manifest in male characters as well. It is rather the integrity, passion, and vision that set up the characters in a high pedestal.

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