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CONTENTS

Editorial	1
<i>Fauziah Fathil</i>	
Articles	
In the Middle Kingdom: A Historical Survey on the Arabs and Persians' Ventures in China, 600s–1300s	4
<i>Aditya Pratama Widodo</i>	
Rereading the Biblical Story of Sarah and Hagar: A Note for Interfaith Activists	21
<i>Fachrizar Halim</i>	
The Role of Muwalladun, Mozarabs and Jews in Paving the Way for Coexistence in Andalusia 912 CE- 1110 CE: A Socio-Cultural Analysis of La Convivencia	32
<i>Muhamad Nor Aiman Bin Mohd Nor Zaidi</i>	
Women of Andalusian Court: Kingmakers, Advisors and Regents	43
<i>Noor Syuhada Binti Shahidan and Nurul Shahirah Binti Majlan</i>	
A Historical Look at the Transformation Agenda: Patriarchal Structures, Hegemony and the Fate of Nigerian Women	54
<i>Dauda I. Jimoh</i>	
The Reformation Encounter: Martin Luther's Assessment of Islam and the Turks in the Aftermath of Constantinople's Fall	71
<i>Abdulwahed Jalal Nori and Sarkawt Tawfeeq Sidiq</i>	
Challenges of Online Learning Faced by IIUM Malay Undergraduates during COVID-19: A Case Study	82
<i>Nur Atiera Binti Yunus and Iyad M. Y. Eid</i>	

The Challenges of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) in Nigeria: From Environmental Movement to Movement for Self-Determination <i>Adam Umar Musa and Idris Saminu</i>	97
Islamic Ethics and Liberal Democracy: A Critical Analysis of Mustafa Akyol's Perspectives <i>Mohamed Fouz, Mohamed Zacky and Inaz Ilyas</i>	114
Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Traditionalism <i>Mehmet Vural</i>	126

A Historical Look at the Transformation Agenda: Patriarchal Structures, Hegemony and the Fate of Nigerian Women

Dauda I. Jimoh¹

Abstract: Development plans and economic manifestoes have become common for setting the goals and pace of administration in modern Africa. There are differences between plans and the realities of executing them. Many reasons mark the failures of such development agendas, especially when they involve women's empowerment. Nigeria adopted a 5-year development plan under the presidency of President Goodluck Jonathan, known as the Transformation Agenda. The extent to which the Agenda affected Nigerian women and the attendant weaknesses of the project in the context of Nigeria's status as a developing economy and patriarchal structures and hegemonic control is the main focus of the study. The paper relied on both primary and secondary sources in a chronological and thematic analysis of the subject matter. It was realised that the patriarchy and the attendant political instability, neo-liberal economic system, mismanagement and corruption, which dogged the Administration of President Jonathan and cultural influences were crucial to the persistence of gender inequalities in Nigeria.

Keywords: Transformation agenda, Nigeria, women development, economic plan, Patriarchy and Gender inequality

Introduction

Throughout history, Nigerian women have played pivotal roles in both the private and public spheres to advance their country's development before and after independence in 1960. Their participation in modern development has been hampered by colonial and post-colonial administrations in Nigeria. The realities of existence within a developing Sub-Saharan region with limited economic and political progress also weighed heavily against the rapid actualisation of gender equality despite Nigeria's commitment through its signatory to related United Nations conventions. Furthermore, Nigerian women have often faced limitations and discriminatory practices entrenched within the patriarchal society. As the country embarked on a transformative journey through various governmental strategies and policies during 2010-2015, an analysis of the impact on women's lives became essential. This historical discourse delves into President Goodluck Jonathan's administrative framework from 2010-2015, the Transformation Agenda, as a defining era in Nigeria's history that illuminated Nigerian women's fate while uncovering strides toward empowerment. Globally, the political

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marginalisation of women remains an issue impacting gender equality (“Global Gender Gap Report,” 2024). Despite this fact, incremental achievements were made for Nigerian women under President Goodluck Jonathan's leadership; however, challenges beyond administrative interventions continue to impede progress.

In pursuit of development, Nigeria has implemented several National Development Plans (NDPs). The initial plan was introduced in 1962-68 (World Bank, n.d.), followed by the second NDP that covered 1970-74 (Nigeria, 1970; Bhatia & Engstrom, 1972) and the third plan from 1975-80 (Nigeria, 1975). The Fourth NDP (1981-1985) adopted the objectives of earlier plans as observed by Iheanacho, (2014), Okojie, (2002) and Oladapo (2004). In 1994, Nigeria adopted Vision 2010. Under President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration in 2003, deregulation and liberalisation processes were revived through the NEEDS strategy which had its origin in the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). In addition to that initiative, Vision 20: 2020 inspired Yar' Adua's Vision 2020 Seven Point Agenda (SPA) in Nigeria. Following Umaru Yar'Adua's death on May 5th, 2010, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan was sworn into office as his successor, becoming Nigeria's fourteenth Head of State a day later (Smith, 2010). He won re-election after completing his predecessor's tenure.

Before Goodluck Jonathan's presidency began there had been interventions from Nigerian government agencies for women's development. Since 2006, the National Gender Policy (NGP) has been formulated to promote affirmative action for women at a rate of thirty-five per cent. This policy requires that thirty-five per cent of representations be granted to women across all governance processes within Nigeria. The NGP is recognised but lacks effective structures and processes within Nigeria.

Literature Review

In dealing with the topic on women's development under the former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan's Transformation Agenda, this paper went through the introduction of the reform programmes and then followed by the focus and impact of the Agenda on women's empowerment. In this regard, the underrepresentation of Nigerian women in politics has received attention from scholars concerned about gender equality despite modernising trends within society. Female political representation through elections has remained poor in Nigeria due to natural and societal barriers (Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013). Between years spanning from 1960 till 1999, only three-point one per cent (3.1%) and five per cent females were elected into political offices. Since the return to democracy in 1999, females holding elected or appointed positions have increased, but they still experienced severe marginalisation due to male dominance over politics (Ngara & Ayabam, 2013). Even with these gains, female candidates performed poorly during the general election in 2011, where out of 469 members only 32 women were elected to the National Assembly representing barely 8% representation (Akpan, 2018).

According to a school of thought, it is a common trend in Africa that women, particularly those from the elite class, have not fully addressed gender inequality through activism and NGO activities (Fasoro, 2012). It has been argued, however, that the Nigerian government has not completely overlooked the critical issue of women's empowerment since returning to democratic administration in 1999. There were some notable successes in advancing women's empowerment during Olusegun Obasanjo's presidency (1999-2007). The

gap identified was in successive governments' inability to achieve real development for the country, which could have had a considerable impact on women's empowerment. In another context, Jaja (2015) argued that increased access to Western education and empowerment initiatives allowed women to play a significant role in shaping Nigeria's development under Jonathan's administration.

Regarding female political participation in Nigeria specifically, Ikeh (2021) observed that two successive administrations appointed female ministers into governance without commensurate benefits for Nigerian women as a whole. This view was shared by Adeline (2014), as it concerned Goodluck Jonathan's Administration. President Goodluck Jonathan aimed at achieving 35% representation of women in governance during his tenure (Obuh, 2014). Gado and Abdulwasiu (2017) identified setbacks to overall women's empowerment as failures associated with implementing numerous economic policies and reforms since Nigeria gained independence in 1960. Poor administration practices along with inefficient public service delivery created dismal growth while insecurity persisted due to lack of coordination between political office holders and bureaucrats. Gyong's analysis of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's Transformation Agenda emphasised creating jobs, reducing poverty, and reorienting citizen values towards strong inclusive non-inflationary growth goals over five years; however, the execution was hampered by incompetent leaders' development goals, corruption accountability issues along with a lack of sync energy between public & private sectors (Gyong, 2012).

The limited existing literature on President Jonathan's administration, as observed in this paper, fails to address the underlying causes of Nigerian women's marginalisation and gender inequality despite the administration's purported commitment. Therefore, this paper will focus on a historical analysis of President Goodluck Jonathan's tenure from 2010-2015, specifically examining his efforts towards Nigerian women's development and the reasons behind their failure to bring about significant change. The significance of this study lies in its ability to facilitate a deeper understanding of why Nigerian women continue to be marginalised despite successive governments' attempts at redress. The study highlights cultural and traditional belief systems that resist modernising trends concerning gender equality and women's empowerment. It underscores how these factors have affected progress towards empowering women within Nigeria's diverse religious society as demonstrated by their experiences under the Transformation Agenda led by President Goodluck Jonathan.

Transformation Agenda and Women's Development

Nigeria, with an estimated population of 159,608,173 in 2010 when President Jonathan assumed office, is the most populous country in Africa. By the end of his administration, the population had increased to 187,301,926 ("National Population Estimates," n.d.). Of particular interest to this analysis is the significant increase in female demography from a total population of 78,208,005 in 2010 to 91,777,944 by 2015 ("National Population Estimates," n.d.). This implies that any genuine intention to close development gaps between Nigerian men and women must take into account the rapid increase in their numbers annually.

The new president took oath on May 29th, 2011, and introduced the developmental plan, termed as Transformation Agenda (Stearns, 2011). The agenda aimed at strong inclusive non-inflationary growth; employment and poverty alleviation; and re-orientation of national

values across thirteen key areas including improving economy as the a whole along with the lives of white men among other things. This paper examines how the Transformation Agenda impacted Nigerian women within existing patriarchal structures and masculine hegemonic tendencies. Although it was understood that every Nigerian would benefit from this plan for clarity's sake, we focus on aspects affecting Nigerian women.

The Transformation Agenda proposed repositioning of the economy by addressing issues such as poverty, unemployment, and insecurity, as well as diversifying the entire economy from total reliance on oil to a significant reliance on non-oil-driven economies. The Agenda also revolved around good governance, power, security, the development of non-oil sector manufacturing and solid minerals, investment in infrastructure, education, and an anti-corruption crusade. It also sought to transform the Nigerian people into a catalyst for growth and national development. There was an emphasis on good governance, the provision of infrastructure and industry. Also, human capital development, such as education, healthcare delivery, skills acquisition, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were prioritised. To realise the goals set, efforts were made to fast-track policies and constitutional reforms to provide the needed framework for the policy packages (Gyong, 2012). The aim was to transform Nigeria to meet its future needs. The policies, programmes, and projects of the Transformation Agenda were scrutinised by a Presidential Committee inaugurated on Thursday, 17 February 2011, under the chairmanship of the honourable Minister of the National Planning Commission (NPC). In pursuance of the main goals of the Transformation Agenda, several reforms and initiatives were pursued in key sectors of the economy to consolidate growth. It sought to transform Nigeria into one of the world's 20 largest economies by 2020.

On the question of women's development, unprecedented changes have been witnessed in Nigeria since 1985, when the military ruler, General Ibrahim Babangida and his wife separately initiated notable women's development policies and projects respectively. President Jonathan from 2010 to 2015 showed a personal commitment to women's development through their appointment into cabinet positions and increased representation at various levels of governance, except the Legislature, meant for elected members only. The government moved closer to the 35 per cent Affirmative Action goal through the appointment of 13 female ministers out of 42 and four special advisers out of 18. To further underline his commitment, women were appointed as ministers in some of the most important ministries and positions.

Justice Aloma Mariam Mukhtar was appointed as Chief Justice of Nigeria; Dr. (Mrs.) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was the Coordinating Minister for the Economy and Minister of Finance; Diezani Alison-Madueke was the Minister of Petroleum Resources and Mrs. Omobola Johnson was the Minister of Communication Technology. Furthermore, Mrs. Hadiza Ibrahim Mailafa became Minister of Environment; Hajia Zainab Maina handled the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development; Sarah Reng Ochekepe was appointed Minister of Water Resources, Princess Stella Oduah as Minister of Aviation and Aerospace, and Lady Amal Pepple as Minister of Land, Housing and Urban Development. Others included Professor Ruqayyatu Ahmed Rufa'i at the Ministry of Education; Professor Viola Onwuliri at the Ministry of State (1) for Foreign Affairs. Oloye Olajumoke Akinjide at the Ministry of State for Federal Capital Territory (FCT); Erelu (Dr.) Olusola Obada headed the Ministry of State for Defence and Hajia Zainab Ibrahim Kuchi at the Ministry of State for

Power. Moreover, there were eleven Nigerian female Ambassadors/High Commissioners and seven female special advisers to the president (Ajani, 2013; Akande, 2022).

President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, for the first time in the country, ensured the recruitment of females interested in becoming combatant officers for the Nigerian armed forces at the Nigeria Defence Academy, Kaduna, Nigeria. Before then, the Nigerian army had female armoured tank drivers, female para-troopers, jumpers, and so on ("Jonathan orders admission", 2011). Moreover, the federal government initiated skills acquisition centres nationwide for the economic empowerment of women. Many of such centres were completed by the end of 2012. Moreover, N261 million was invested in the Women's Fund for Economic Empowerment (WOFEE), being implemented in partnership with the Bank of Agriculture (BOA) as guaranteed credit for small and micro enterprises. The Business Development Fund for Women (BUDFOW) was established as another funding window for women entrepreneurs. The sum of N89 million was disbursed to several women entrepreneurs in the 6 geopolitical zones (Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Research, Documentation, and Strategy, Abuja, 2012).

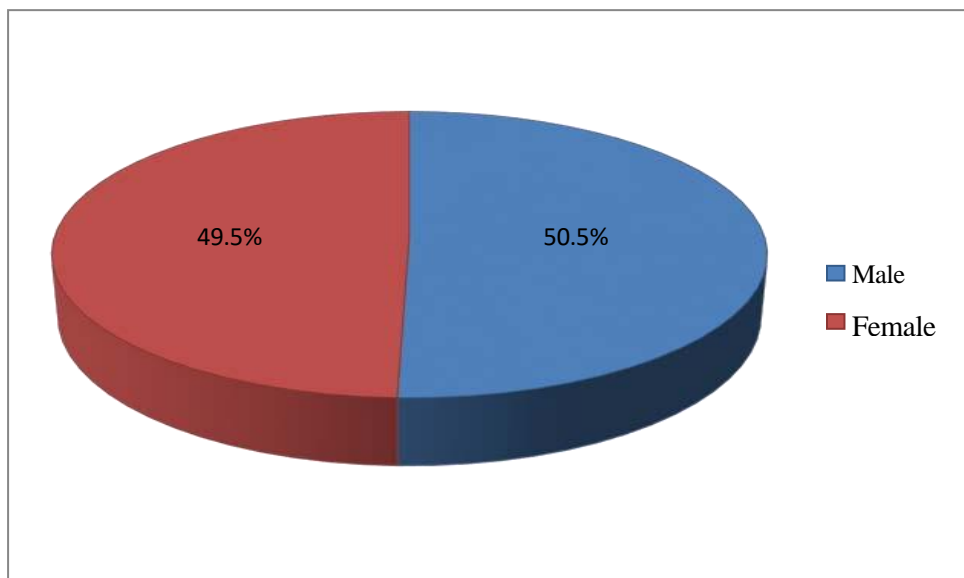


Figure 1. Percentage Distribution of the Population by Sex 2015

Note. From Figure 2, Percentage Distribution of the Population by Sex 2015; National Bureau of Statistics (2016). 2015 Statistical Report on Women. p. 2.

In the education sector, Goodluck Jonathan established 9 new federal universities and strengthened existing ones to increase access to tertiary education, fulfilling the target of having at least one Federal University in each state of the federation (Ibekwe, 2015). The Government established 125 Almajiri schools across 13 northern states to improve literacy in the north and introduced Girls Education Programmes with 27 special girl schools ("The Almajiri and girl-child school", 2013; Adesulu, 2015). As indicated in Figure 1, an extract from the National Bureau of Statistics (2016), women had relatively a population close to that of men in Nigeria during the period under study, as they constituted 49.5 per cent and men 50.5 per cent of the population.

Despite the close gender demography, as shown above, parity was absent from the entire social and economic indices auspicious for gender equality, as shown in Tables 1 and 2 below, capturing the situation in the field of Nigerian education.

Zone	Female	Male
North west	38.0	57.5
North east	41.9	53.1
North central	62.0	76.4
South west	92.6	93.7
South south	94.8	95.0
South east	95.4	94.3

Table 1. Percentage of Women and Men age 15-24 years who are literate (2016-17)

Note. Sourced from Table 3.1: Percentage of Women and Men age 15-24 years who are literate (2016-17) National Bureau of Statistics (2018). 2017 Statistical Report on Women and Men in Nigeria, p. 14.

University	F	M	% F	% M
Federal	273,657	487,706	35.94	64.06
State	171,942	243,384	41.40	58.60
Private	33,750	39,203	46.26	53.74
Total	479,349	770,293	38.36	61.64

Table 2. Student's Enrolment in Nigeria Universities by Sex (2012/13)

Note. Sourced from Table 3.9: Student's Enrolment in Nigeria Universities by Sex (2012/13), National Bureau of Statistics (2018). 2017 Statistical Report on Women and Men in Nigeria, p. 21.

It is important to make some important observations from both Tables. President Jonathan made impact on girls' education at the national level, as earlier observed, but it was not adequate to be termed revolutionary. Therefore, other explanation would suffice on the momentum towards gender parity in Nigerian education. Generally, there had been decades of development of the Nigerian educational system since 1960 when the country attained independence from Britain, and part of that growth was the movement toward gender parity. That was majorly a result of greater awareness of the importance of Western education as a vehicle for the overall progress of both the individual and society at large. In spite of that positive development, as indicated on Table 1, a huge gulf still existed between the northern and southern parts of Nigeria, in the context of Western educational impact. A consequence was the comparative economic backwardness of the Muslim dominated Northern states, which to date continually affect women's lower standards of living in that region. Moreover, Table 2 further revealed that female enrolment was higher in Nigerian private tertiary institutions. This unprecedented development was an indication of a major positive shift in the Nigerian society's attitude toward female education, especially among the educated elite, who could afford the high cost of private university education.

Persistence of Gender Inequality

One of the primary factors hindering women's development in Nigeria under successive Heads of State is patriarchy, which pervades all aspects of Nigerian society. Patriarchy refers to a social arrangement where men monopolise high-status positions in important institutions such as social, economic, legal and religious ones (Glick & Fiske, 2000; Walby, 1989). In this context, male dominance is perpetuated by their access to privileged positions at the expense of most women who lack such access themselves. Biological determinism and culture have also aided patriarchal rule by justifying male advantages across various sectors including politics, economics, military service and religion. All these structures embody male privileges and hegemonic hierarchical order that have perpetuated male dominance since Nigeria's inception.

Patriarchal structures wield an even stronger influence in public spheres like government institutions due to mostly male politicians' domination over the political system. Patriarchy embodied authority, control and domination and functions to create a culture of women's dependency on men. Women were further constrained by their burden for procreation and childcare while cultural norms exacerbated gender inequality. It is necessary to understand the background of the Nigerian patriarchal structures. It began during colonial times when British policies undermined African female participation in public services through institutionalised discrimination. In modern-day Nigeria, since independence, both elected male politicians and senior public servants who dominated politics and the bureaucracy formed part of state patriarchy that continually hindered the actualisation of gender equality due to power struggle for wealth accumulation rather than policy-making aimed towards promoting equality between genders. The perpetuation of state patriarchy in Nigeria hindered President Jonathan's Transformation Agenda that aimed to prioritise women's empowerment.

The unstable complexion of Nigerian politics left women with little chance of gender parity from independence in 1960 to the violent collapse of the First Republic in 1966, to a long period of military dictatorship from July 1966 to 1979. The Second Republic 1979-1983 was truncated by another military junta that was led by the General Muhammadu Buhari from 1983 to 1985, when General Ibrahim Babangida seized power. He had to step aside in 1993 because of the political chaos that resulted from the annulment of the June 12 presidential elections. The succeeding Interim Government of Ernest Shonekan from 1993 did not survive the ambition of another military General, in person of Sanni Abacha by November of that year. Abacha was in office until his demise in 1998. General Abdulsalami Abubakar, was in office till May 1999 when the current 4th Republic began. This long history of political instability was not palatable for women's participation due to the social, economic and political upheavals (Soyinka, 2012; Suleiman, 2012; Adekunbi, 2012; British Council, Nigeria, 2012).

Moreover, the unending *Boko Haram* insurgency was a menace to peace and economic development, especially in the North of the country. Religious violence is not new. The *Maitatsine* sectarian group attempted it in 1981, leading to large-scale uprisings. Since 2009, the country has been stormed by large-scale and unimaginable violent attacks and kidnappings by the *Boko Haram* movement (Bagaji & Ogbadu, 2012; Adekunbi, 2012; Falode, 2016). Consequently, the gender gap in development was widened by long history of

both military and violent prone-civil rule to the extent that the Jonathan's tenure was unable to change the tide. Therefore, during the period 2010-2015, President Jonathan's Transformation Agenda did not affect any real positive change in the elective offices as it did in the appointive positions he initiated for Nigerian women as shown in Table 3, 4, and 5 at the three tiers of government in the country.

LEGISLATORS	2007		2011		2015	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Senate</i>						
Male	100	91.7	101	92.7	100	91.7
Female	9	8.3	8	7.3	9	8.3
TOTAL	109	100	109	100	109	100
<i>House of Reps.</i>						
Male	334	92.8	338	93.9	337	92.8
Female	26	7.2	22	6.1	23	7.2
TOTAL	360	100	360	100	360	100
<i>Both Houses</i>						
Male	434	92.5	439	93.6	437	92.5
Female	35	7.5	30	6.4	32	7.5
TOTAL	469	100	469	100	469	100

Table 3. Summary of Seats held in the National Assembly by Type, Sex and Year

Note. From Table 10: Summary of Seats Held in National Assembly by Type, Sex and Year "National Bureau of Statistics (2016)." 2015 Statistical Report on Men and Women in Nigeria p. 22.

TYPE	2007		2011		2015	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Hon. Members</i>						
Male	933	94.2	835	94.1	935	94.4
Female	57	5.8	52	5.9	55	5.6
TOTAL	990	100.0	887	100.0	990	100.0
<i>Committee Chairpersons</i>						
Male	933	94.2	626	90.2	935	94.4
Female	57	5.8	68	9.8	55	5.6
TOTAL	990	100.0	694	100.0	990	100.0

Table 4. Seats Held in State Assemblies by Type, Year and Sex

Note. From Table 11: Seats Held in State Assemblies by Type, Year and Sex in National Bureau of Statistics (2016). 2015 Statistical Report on Men and Women in Nigeria p. 23.

LEGISLATORS	2007		2011		2015	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<i>LGA Chairpersons</i>						
Male	510	90.1	738	96.1	740	95.6
Female	56	9.9	30	3.9	34	4.4
TOTAL	566	100.0	768	100.0	774	100.0
<i>Counsellors</i>						
Male	5828	89.8	5175	87.5	6828	90.2
Female	665	10.2	738	12.5	740	9.8
TOTAL	6,493	100.0	5,913	100.0	7,568	100.0

Table 5. Summary of Seats Held in Local Government by Type, Sex and Year

Note. Table 12, Summary of Seats Held in Local Government by Type, Sex and Year “National Bureau of Statistics (2016).” 2015 Statistical Report on Men and Women in Nigeria p. 24.

Political reforms could facilitate considerable increase in women’s Representation in politics as exemplified in both Rwanda and Senegal. Before President Jonathan’s Administration, in Rwanda, through liberal reforms, gender mainstreaming was achieved from 2003, when Rwanda approved a new constitution that included quotas for women at all levels of government. This reform resulted to over thirty percent elected women representatives (Rwanda Constitution, n.d.; UN Women, 2018). Senegal also gained international recognition through its Gender Parity Law enacted in 2010 aimed towards promoting political participation by women leading towards increased numbers held by them over time. (UN Women, n.d.) Both experiences revealed affirmative action policies’ effectiveness, ensuring more females assumed leadership roles with power to change the collective destiny of women.

The problem was not just a top-down scenario, as women’s relative backwardness also resulted from the society itself. At the micro level, individuals in Nigeria, despite the diversity of cultures, were generally socialised by cultural norms and values. In this regard, the two global religions of Islam and Christianity were crucial and encouraged the belief in male headship of the home and their role as breadwinners. One tradition that strengthened the patriarchal structure and the attendant subordinate role of women was the gerontocratic order of the traditional family in which the husband was usually older than the wife. Women occupied an unequal position in matrimony, with the men folk having greater leverage in decision-making. Disrespect from the wife was not tolerated and if it persisted could rupture the marriage. In order of priority, marriage and the resultant children were higher than careers and most women in Nigeria chose to be passive to save their marital lives. This was a fundamental reason most women in Nigeria stayed away from any activity, especially politics and activism that could jeopardise their family values.

Without the presence of women in large numbers at Nigeria’s National Assembly, where laws were made, male domination persisted in robbing the country of valuable laws that can enhance women’s empowerment. Political apathy had been a general problem in Nigeria. This negative trend had been due to fear of becoming victims of political violence, intrigues, persecution and corruption that characterise politics in the country. A considerable

number of Nigerians even abstain from voting during elections on this account. Moreover, most Nigerians who are conservative Muslims and Christians avoid politics because it is prone to corruption, intrigues and violence. This factor extends to the belief among many Nigerians that females are not supposed to rule or occupy elective political posts. Therefore, women's low participation in political context in the period 2010 and 2015 had low political success. Also, the relatively few interested women are stigmatised as prostitutes, who associate with males other than their husbands and relatives.

Similarly, female politicians are not looked upon as responsible citizens because of the perception that Nigerians in government, either under military rule or democratic dispensation, were fraudulent and unworthy of people's trust. Proven cases of misconduct against several bureaucrats and political office holders, female officials included, abound. Finally, female politicians had a weak political structure in most of the political parties because of the influence of 'money' and the attendant control by very wealthy political patrons that sponsored mostly male political contestants, considered more promising to deliver victory at the polls. Additionally, women faced greater difficulty reconciling political obligations with those of their families and homes due to traditional gender roles that place care giving responsibilities solely upon them. This is known as the "economy of care," which influences social attitudes worldwide and presented an actual barrier to female aspirations generally. The gender divide in power relations was also evident through the sexual division of labour, where the ability of a wife to bear male children was of utmost importance as they were more highly valued due to their potential perpetuation of family names and legacies. These social norms, among the Nigerian populace were considered to have greater significance than government prioritisation of women's empowerment initiatives. There were, of course regional variations to note. Some Nigerian societies in Muslim dominated Northern Nigeria regarded men who focused on their careers as good providers, while condemning mothers who did likewise as bad wives and mothers. Although caring for children at home is an important role, unless it also comes with status or power attached to it, women would remain marginalised.

At the federal level, women's empowerment has received prioritisation; however, state and local governments - equally significant players in Nigeria's federal structure - have not made it a priority. Running for political office incurred costs, which disproportionately affected women who were economically dependent on others, such as their spouses, fathers or brothers. In essence, most women lack the financial foundation to even consider pursuing a career in politics. Nigeria's political structure comprises three levels of government: central or federal government; 36 states plus a federal capital territory; and seventy-seven local governments sharing powers according to Nigeria's constitution. The exclusive list covers broad powers reserved for the federal government while concurrent lists include shared responsibilities between states and the states; residual lists assign duties specifically to local government authorities. Reformative policies, like the Transformation Agenda, especially when they conflict with religious and cultural values often fail in Nigeria due partly to the federal arrangement which makes domestication of new reforms by states a necessity before they can be enforced at the local levels. In this regard, moreover, male-dominated federal legislators through their constituencies were cultural gatekeepers and were instrumental in maintaining the patriarchal wall of defence against bills on gender equality to date.

Gender equality is a critical component of Sustainable Development Goals adopted globally by countries such as Nigeria. Achieving this objective under President Goodluck Jonathan's administration was challenging due to the neoliberal economic policies that had adverse effects. These policies emphasised market deregulation while reducing government intervention leading to predominantly disadvantageous job losses among women, but favouring powerful or wealthy individuals. The foundation for these more market-oriented policy-making approaches began when fiscal challenges prompted austerity measures during the early 1980s. The resultant marginalisation of Nigerian women under the Transformation Agenda can also be linked to the country's economic problems, which have resulted in a significant number of unemployed people, particularly females. Job losses have occurred daily in both the public and private sectors due to economic reforms, numerous mergers and acquisitions since 2009, and increased dependence on technology in the banking sector as a result of "cashless economies". Moreover, poverty and other socioeconomic disruptions have forced many Nigerian women into prostitution within or outside Nigeria. According to UNICRI, there were about 20,000 Nigerian prostitutes in Italy alone (Gosh, 2012).

Another general problem with the inability of the Federal Government to fulfil the promises of the Transformation Agenda was the huge infrastructural deficits that have remained a stumbling block against development under every government to date. Commenting in this regard, the current World Bank's Country Director for Nigeria, Shubham Chaudhuri, expressed his dismay at the Nigerian government's low public spending levels. Development since independence in 1960 remains stunted with countless abandoned projects in the country. Public refineries, to date, are not working, while railroads, roads, airports and seaports are grossly inadequate (The Editorial Board, 2023). Electricity supply remained miserably low at only 50 per cent (Ugwueze 2020), which prompted President Jonathan to declare a state of emergency regarding power supply. Experts projected that it would take approximately N464 trillion to provide uninterrupted electricity throughout the country ("Nigeria requires N464 trillion", 2014). Jonathan played a key role in privatising and reforming the power sector (Adeoye, 2010). In any case, it was not enough since the country is still groping in the dark, as at the time of writing this paper.

Furthermore, the national debt was a huge burden for the Jonathan's Government as it has been for any Federal Administration since the 1980s. The implication it had on women's empowerment was that balancing debt management with more developmental goals was difficult due to its adverse impact on fiscal sustainability and economic stability. As of June 2015, when Jonathan left office, Nigeria's debt profile reached \$63.8 billion, representing its highest level since 2007 (Kadiri, 2021). Corruption has made matters worse for the empowerment of women. In this context, it has become a tradition at both national and sub-national levels to allocate more resources towards recurrent expenditures instead of capital expenditure due to endemic corruption and mismanagement; an independent report by the Department for International Development (DFID, 2017) estimated that up to \$32 billion was lost to corruption under the Jonathan Administration. Jonathan, himself noted that corruption was a common problem in Nigeria because "people do not know what will happen tomorrow...There is no welfare system that can manage people" (Shuaibu, 2022). A National Bureau of Statistics (2019) survey indicated that out of all Nigerian citizens who had at least one contact with a public official, 30.2 per cent paid a bribe or were asked to pay a bribe by a public official. Transparency International (2015) observed corruption is not abating in Nigeria, along with some other countries in Africa, with the implication of worsening

especially, poor women's marginalisation and existing inequalities (Transparency International, 2022).

The inability of successive governments in Nigeria to solve the economic and social problems, with a long history, did not abate when President Jonathan assumed the Presidency. Consequently, the need to focus on the policy of gender equality was sidelined as the country grappled with urban congestion, excessive debt burden, high incidence of diseases and increased maternal mortality, which marked Nigeria as a developing country (Iheanacho, 2014). The overall effect at the end of the tenure of President Goodluck Jonathan was the shortening of life expectancy rates as indicated in figure 2 below.

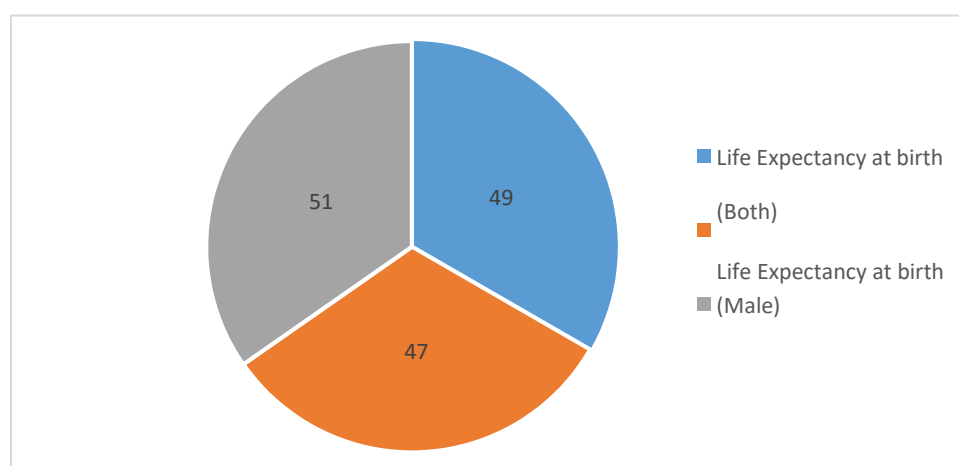


Figure 2. Distribution of life Expectancy by sex, 2016

Note. From Figure 2.1: Distribution of Life Expectancy by Sex, 2016: National Bureau of Statistics (2018). 2017 Statistical Report on Women and Men in Nigeria, p. 4.

For Nigerian women, neo-liberal economic policies emphasised privatisation, which created unhealthy economic competition that marginalised women further; caused higher costs and disproportionately affected low-income households, where women were often the primary caregivers. Infrastructural deficits limited education and healthcare access, while water scarcity took away time that could be spent by women on education or income-generating activities. A huge debt burden was one major reason Nigeria had no major welfare programme that could adequately cater for the needy, such as the unemployed, the aged and the widows. Corruption diverted resources from social programmes that ought to benefit women and created barriers to business ownership for women entrepreneurs. Lack of electricity hindered businesses run by women, decreasing productivity and competitiveness. These factors created a complex web of challenges hindering the development of Nigerian women. Therefore, it is important to comprehensively address these issues through gender equality promotion policies, infrastructure improvements, investment in social programmes as well and tackling corruption.

Conclusion

Development planning has consistently been present within Nigeria's administrative system since independence as noted in the paper. It is concerning that these plans have yet to yield the expected results in Nigeria. Using the implementation of the Transformation Agenda as the basis for measuring President Jonathan's efforts on women's development, the paper provided an in-depth analysis of the achievements of the Programme and the weaknesses in the following contexts. The study sheds light on the minimal gains achieved, which were attributable to Jonathan's interest and efforts in women's empowerment. In the first place, it was realised that the Nigerian state was beset by myriads of economic problems evident by dilapidated infrastructural facilities, mismanagement, and intermittent economic depressions resulting from the adopted neo-liberal economic policies of liberalisation privatisation and corruption. As a result, women, as well as their families suffered from massive unemployment and poverty. This situation that began in the 1980s got worse under the Administration of President Jonathan.

Women's empowerment was also impeded by a combination of administrative, cultural, and systemic factors of Male dominance and constraints resulting from the extant patriarchal structures that upheld male advantages. Therefore, a holistic approach is required to address the barriers to women's empowerment in the country. There is a need to tackle ingrained cultural norms, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and structural inequalities to facilitate meaningful progress in advancing gender equality and women's rights in the country. Only then can Nigeria achieve the goals of its development plans and manifestoes and pave the way for a more equitable and prosperous future for all its citizens.

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