



Dynamics and Effectiveness of the Implementation of United Nations Affirmative Action in Enhancing Women Political Participation in Kogi State, Nigeria

Abstract

Patriarchal societies have paved way for women marginalization in every facet of lives. In politics, men and sometimes women folks considered women incompetent and incapacitated to act in multi-tasking elective positions thereby limiting them to the confines of their homes and house chores. Hence, the reason for the formation of the United Nations affirmative action in order to give women 35% of the entire available positions. It is on this basis that this study aimed to study the implementation of the United Nations 35% Affirmative Action and its effect on women political participation in Kogi State, Nigeria. Methodically, this study is both qualitative (using discourse analysis) and quantitative (descriptive analysis). From the perspectives of democratic participatory theory, this study critiqued the concept of affirmative action vis-a-vis women's representation in cabinet positions in Nigeria. The study findings revealed that the religion and cultural practices has been the major stumbling block to the implementation of Affirmative Action in Nigeria and Kogi State in particular since 2006. The study then concluded that until affirmative action is domesticated, its implementation will be at the whims of the disposition of the government in power for the appointment of more women into Cabinet and other key political positions rather than giving them the actual chance and opportunity to contest for various elective positions especially in Kogi State. Thus, the study recommends that there is need for Kogi State Government (KSG) to domesticate United Nations 35% Affirmative Action through policy implementation and government gazette in order to integrate and provide a clear guideline for promoting women's participation in political leadership of Kogi State, Nigeria.

Keywords: United Nations, Affirmative Action, Women, Politics, Kogi State.

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Introduction

Gender issues are gaining the attention of researchers and

policymakers worldwide. This is evident in the ongoing global advocacy for gender equality and women's inclusiveness in government and

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decision-making processes. Many countries around the globe are making both minor and radical changes to address gender issues. Reforms that revolve around the gender question are gaining ascendancy such that many countries, including the most conservative, do not want to be left behind. It is becoming a yardstick to measure levels of democratisation in democratising states and a measure of sustainability of democracy in the considerably democratised ones. However, women are still being marginalised in Nigerian politics. Discrimination against women, as a result of marginalisation, is premised on the age-long false notion that they are care-givers, home maintainers, and children breeders who have no business in public affairs. In some socio-cultural settings, women are not supposed to be educated in the first place. So, the need for their participation in public affairs of general concerns does not arise. It is also a common place to associate women with evils who are bereft of any progressive ideas. There is even a long debate on the humanness of women (Salaudeen & Jiddare, 2025).

There are apparently challenges faced by women when it comes to political participation in both elective and appointive positions as representatives and executives. While in some countries like Rwanda, Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico, New Zealand, and the United Arab Emirates, women are gradually overcoming these challenges and breaking the glass ceiling (UN WOMEN, 2023), this is not the case in most countries around the world.

Politics in many parts of Africa is still seen as an exclusive enclave of men. This is despite the fact that most African countries adopt democracy as system of government. Central to democracy are some appealing concepts like equality before the law, egalitarianism, and majoritarianism which make democracy inherently gender friendly. However, there are stumbling blocks on the part of Nigerian women towards realizing their potential as political beings both in politics and in government (Salaudeen, 2025). It was further argued by Salaudeen (2025) that women are not a minority group in Nigeria. Therefore, relegating them to political oblivion disrobes Nigerian democracy of its majoritarian outlook and gives it an androcentric outlook.

In an attempt to ensure gender equality in various spheres of lives that the United Nations came up with the affirmative action which stipulates that thirty five percent (35%) of appointments and political positions should be exclusively reserved for women. Despite the enactment and implementation of the United Nations affirmative action in Nigeria, Nigeria lags far behind in women political participation index on the African countries. For instance, Nigerian women have about the worst representation of 5.9% in the national legislature when compared to most other African countries such as Uganda, 34.6 per cent, South Africa, 43.2 per cent, Ethiopia, 27.7 per cent, Cameroon, 20 per cent, Niger, 12.3 per cent and Congo, 8.0 per cent (Olumode, cited in Archibong, Bassey & Nwagbara, 2018).

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Kogi state which is the central focus of this study has to some extent made effort towards implementation of the affirmative action policy even though it efforts met it waterloo from 2023 to date. For instance from 2015 to 2023, twenty one female were elected as vice chairperson in all the 21 Local Government Areas in Kogi State. Furthermore, the governor went further to appoint women as his Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Aide-de-Camp (ADC) and head of civil service which earned him recognition by UN women and ECOWAS.

Nevertheless, from 2023 to date, women have been duly underrepresented in Kogi State with only two female commissioners appointed out of the nineteen commissioners and two female members of the State House of Assembly out of twenty five members. This signaled the inability to sustain the implementation of the United Nations affirmative action in various political domains in Kogi State. Hence, the rationale for this study.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the implementation of affirmative action in Nigeria, the level of women political participation and representation is still insignificant due to skewed implementation. This is because, women's scorecard under the Buhari regime did not feature gender equality. Out of the 36 appointed ministers in his first tenure (2015-2019), only six (16.7%) were women. This represents a significant drop from the 31.7% of women in ministerial representation in the previous

administration. On elective positions, there were seven out of 109 senators (6.4%) and 22 out of 360 House of Representatives (6.1%). Like in 2007 under Yar'Adua, the APC regime in 2015 had six women deputy governors. It also recorded 51 women out of 990 members (5.2%) across the State Houses of Assembly (Salaudeen & Jiddare, 2024).

In Kogi State this gender gap is particularly pronounced. Although women constitute nearly half of the population, their representation in political roles remains remarkably low. As of 2023, women hold less than 10% of seats in Kogi State's parliament, placing the state among the lowest nationwide for female political representation (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023). This persistent underrepresentation highlights the interplay of entrenched cultural norms and socioeconomic inequalities that collectively marginalise women in the political sphere. It is against this backdrop that this study is set out to investigate the implementation of the UN affirmative action and its effects on women political participation in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. What is the nature of the United Nations Affirmative Action and women political participation in Nigeria?
- ii. How effective is the implementation of United Nations affirmative action impacted on women political participation in Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the dynamics and

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effectiveness of the implementation of United Nations affirmative action in enhancing women political participation in Kogi state, Nigeria. Whereas the specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Examine the nature of the United Nations affirmative action and women political participation in Nigeria.
- ii. Determine the effectiveness of the implementation of United Nations affirmative action and it is impacted on women political participation in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Affirmative Action

According to Black's Law Dictionary (2019), affirmative action is an action or set of actions intended to eliminate existing and continuing discrimination, to redress lingering effects of past discrimination, and to create systems and procedures to prevent future discrimination, all by taking into account individual membership in a minority group so as to achieve minority representation in a larger group. The term "affirmative action" is understood differently in today's society. It, in most cases, elicits strong feelings both positive and negative. These feelings arise from a misunderstanding of what affirmative action is all about. Affirmative action has no single definition. Though it exists since the late 1900s (Lederer, 2013). As the name implies, it is the practice of "acting affirmatively." According to (Kranz, 2002, p. 4) taking positive, specific steps to overcome the history and current practice of discrimination by having

employers, schools, and government contractors make a special effort to include people of color and women in predominantly white and/or male workforces, student bodies, and businesses receiving government contracts, are what affirmative action entails.

Politics

Politics has remained a dynamic phenomenon, with probably as many definitions as there are scholars in the field. However, there are some popular and authoritative definitions with common key concepts and some scholars. A look at this definition is instructive at this stage. David Easton sees politics as the 'authoritative allocation of values in a society; a view that links politics with the production with the production and distribution of values or resources (Easton, 1960). These values may either be political, economic, cultural, or social values which are vital to human existence and whose allocation can only be done within the political system.

Lasswell succinctly sees politics as 'who gets what, when and how?' This definition has been commended for its attempt to see politics even in social setting. The element of struggle is also implying in who gets what, when and how? Max Weber's definition links politics more directly with power than many others when he says that 'politics means striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power either among states or among groups within a state (Weber, 1947).

The above definitions portrayed that politics is the means by which

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individuals collectively establish a social contract and government to secure their natural rights and promote the common good. That is a Politics is the process of authoritative decision-making, encompassing not only government institutions but also the ways people interact to shape policies and allocate resources.

Political Participation

Political participation encompasses a wide range of activities, from voting and advocacy to contesting elections and holding public office. While voting remains the most common form of participation for Nigerian women, their involvement in higher levels of political leadership remains limited (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023).

Political participation encompasses actions aimed at influencing the allocation of societal resources and values (Willeck, & Mendelberg, 2022). Individuals engage in this process by voting for representatives who craft policies affecting taxes, social programmes, and other public matters. They may also participate in organisations that seek to influence policy decisions directly or communicate their interests, preferences, and needs through public discourse (Le & Nguyen, 2021). Such activities may support or challenge governmental institutions, officials, and policies. Although voting remains the most common form of political engagement, numerous other avenues exist, each requiring different levels of time, skill, and resources.

Empirical Review

Kamila (2025), policy analysis of women's empowerment in political and government participation. Through a review of existing literature, the study identifies gaps in policy frameworks and assesses the effectiveness of current strategies, such as gender quotas and financial support for female candidates. The research emphasizes the importance of comprehensive policies that address these challenges, including legal reforms, economic empowerment, and educational initiatives, to create a more inclusive political environment. By highlighting the potential societal benefits of increased women's participation, such as enhanced diversity in decision-making and greater attention to issues affecting women, the study concludes that strengthening women's empowerment in political and governmental roles is essential for achieving sustainable development, social justice, and democratic governance. Ultimately, this study advocates for continued policy innovation to empower women, promote gender equality, and contribute to democratic and sustainable governance.

Ali & Shamsudeen (2025), did an analysis of socio-economic determinants influencing women's political participation in Adamawa state-Nigeria: A case study of northern senatorial zone. Using a descriptive research design, with data sourced from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) across various years. The findings indicated that approximately 90 percent of political offices in the Northern Senatorial Zone were occupied by men

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between 1999 and 2023 in all general elections across five local government areas: Madagali, Michika, Mubi North, Mubi South, and Maiha. Based on these findings, the study recommended among others that the government address systemic gender imbalances through legal and policy reforms promoting gender inclusivity in politics, mitigate financial barriers that significantly hinder women's political participation, and collaborate with NGOs and political parties to establish financial support systems or grants aimed at empowering women in politics. Additionally, the government should encourage civic engagement and public awareness through grassroots campaigns and initiatives focused on the importance of female political representation.

The study by Adesina (2024), employed a qualitative research approach that incorporates desk research, case studies, and comparative analysis. Two African countries, Rwanda and South Africa, where the protocol has been successfully domesticated, were examined to underscore the importance of domesticating the instrument in ensuring the protection of women's political rights in Nigeria. Findings of the study showed that one of the primary challenges in domesticating Article 9 of the Maputo Protocol in Nigeria is the resistance to gender equality. Deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and societal attitudes may hinder the acceptance and implementation of gender responsive policies. The study recommended that Nigeria should review and amend existing laws to align

them with the provisions of Article 9 of the Maputo Protocol. This includes revising electoral laws to promote women's participation, removing discriminatory clauses, and introducing gender quotas or affirmative action measures to ensure a more balanced representation of women in political offices. By enacting laws that explicitly guarantee women's political rights, Nigeria can provide a solid legal foundation for the domestication of Article 9.

The study by Idanyingi (2023) adopted the qualitative method of data collection and analysis based on content analysis. The research adopted the functionalist theory of gender inequality which believes that it is functional for the society to assign each gender different tasks and this is based on the fact that the division of labour in society was based on the physical differences between man and woman. The study discovered that the re-introduction of democratic governance has witnessed once again an increase in women political participation both in elective and appointive offices. The national average of women's political participation in Nigeria has remained 6.7 percent in elective and appointive positions, which is far below the Global Average of 22.5 percent, Africa Regional Average of 23.4 percent and West African Sub Regional Average of 15 percent. Based on the foregoing, the study recommended the need to create enabling environment that allows women to engage meaningfully in decision making process in a sustainable and effective way that is free from violence and harassments of any kind.

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The study of Anggraini, Havifi, Sari and Gunawan (2024) adopted a qualitative analysis, informed by a comprehensive literature review, suggested that the implementation of the 30% Affirmative Action Policy since the reform era has demonstrably contributed to an increase in female representation within the political sphere. Grounded in both gender equality and affectivity theories, the study pinpoints key issues of gender imbalance and investigates the policy's impact on organizational dynamics within the political sphere. However, the policy's effectiveness remains contingent upon addressing various challenges, including the persistent underrepresentation of women across both legislative and executive positions, where the 30% target has yet to be consistently achieved. Key influential factors in the implementation of this policy include the roles of the government, political parties, and society. Nevertheless, the policy is crucial in reshaping social norms regarding gender roles in politics. Overall, this article provided a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of the 30% Affirmative Action Policy in achieving optimal gender representation in Indonesia. Policy implications and recommendations for enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of this policy were also discussed to advance women's participation in various social and professional aspects of life in Indonesia.

Ongecha (2021) study focuses primarily on elective and appointive positions and is conducted using

doctrinal research. This approach involves the review of relevant primary and secondary sources including legislation, case law, books, journals, newspaper and other articles as well as online internet sources. During this research, it has been observed that Kenya has rich and all-inclusive legal, institutional and policy frameworks on gender equality and equity. The unsatisfactory status quo highlighted above is attributable to the patriarchal approaches to constitutional interpretation, legislative processes and decision-making, which have proven to be a resistant barrier to achieving gender equality in the public sphere. For there to be observable change, it was recommended that the relevant frameworks currently in place ought to be modified to be gender-specific, expansive (taking into account the intersectional nature of discrimination) and highly specialised. Further, priority ought to be given to measures that promote equality of results, while those that promote equality of opportunity ought to take a supplementary role.

Byron's (2024) study's data were solely collected using a qualitative method of data collection. From the data generated, it finds that there is the need for women to participate in political affairs but cultural and religious beliefs affect women in all spheres. This research suggest that Nigeria should domesticate all international conventions that have been signed into national laws and thereby, affirm to its provisions.

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Democratic Participatory Theory (DPT)

Democratic participatory theory gains influence largely due to the works of John Stuart Mills (1806 - 1873), especially his work on utilitarianism, liberty, and representative government. The theory upholds the view that the female gender are perceived as being marginalized to the sphere of domestic work and a more private life and the male in the society are more saddled with the task and responsibilities of shouldering the activities of the public or governance affairs and activities of the society. The democratic participatory theory holds that government at all levels exists solely for the purpose of promoting democracy and participation. Although the theory has been criticized for its assertions that participatory mechanism will not be inherently compatible with some societies because the citizen can become disinterested, self-interested or the rational member has little or no incentive to participate in politics because they lack basic and required skills and knowledge.

Assumptions of the Democratic - Participatory Theory

- i. The democratic participatory theory is a useful tool that aids political liberty and citizen participation regardless of age, gender, or status. It is an indispensable fact that gives freedom and equal rights to all citizens of a state.
- ii. The democratic participatory theory also campaigns for citizen inclusion and freedom of association. All citizens either the old or the young, the male or the female, the rich or

the poor are entitled to participate in politics and be a member of any political party of their choice.

- iii. The theory promotes and facilitates the fundamental human rights of the citizen. Having fundamental human rights as a citizen gives the individual right to communicate with others, the right to vote and be voted for in an election, the right to participate on equal footing with other candidates regardless of gender, age, or social status
- iv. The theory emphasizes the idea that fosters good governance and promotes social welfare. The perception will help enhance good relations among the citizen, and help build a self-reliant community public oriented individuals to ensure good service delivery, since ensuring service delivery is a core function of the State.
- v. The theory centers on participation regardless of gender, age, or status. It gives room for deliberations on issues; full participation involves service dialogue, debate, and discussion in an effort to arrive at possible solutions.

Methodology

The study adopted mixed-method research design. The targeted population of the study is 707,721 which comprises of individuals drawn from United Nations house Abuja, Kogi State House of Assembly, Kogi State Ministry of Women Affairs, National Women Leaders Forum, Kogi State Chapter, and African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) Nigeria Chapter who are actively involved in ensuring the

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implementation of the United Nations affirmative action. Additionally, traditional institutions and community-based organisations in some selected LGAs, namely: Lokoja, Koto Karfe, Okene, Okehe, Dekina, and Ankpa; form a vital part of the population. These groups were carefully chosen because they are positioned at the intersection of affirmative action, community engagement, and political participation offering crucial perspectives relevant to the study's objectives. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) statistical formula was employed to reduce the population of the study to a manageable standard of 382.

The study employed both primary and secondary methods of data collection. The instruments that were used in collecting data for this study are oral interview questionnaires and secondary sources. Stratified and Random Sampling Techniques were used in selecting the respondents among different categories for the administration of questionnaire. For interview, purposive sampling technique was used. The sampling comprised of people with many similar characteristics such as deep knowledge on the subject of investigation, years of experience and age. This study made use of charts as a platform to present the research data and also analyze the data collected from the field on the subject matter using simple percentage and graphs as the case may be for the descriptive analysis. The version that was used for analyzing data for the study is SPSS 25. Content analysis was used to analyze qualitative information.

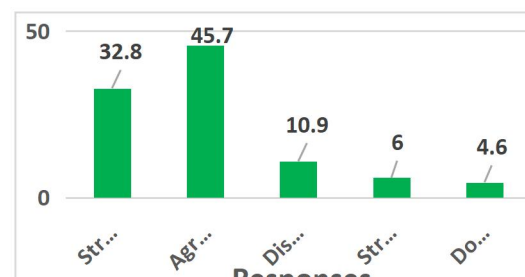
Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results

A total of 382 copies of questionnaire were distributed while 335 copies were retrieved. Therefore, the presentation and analysis was done based on the 335 retrieved copies of questionnaire. The pattern of presentation was based on the objectives of the study using frequency table (frequency, count and percentage) as well as charts. The discussion of findings then followed. This was supported with information from extant literature.

Nature of the UN Affirmative Action and Women Political Participation in Kogi State, Nigeria

The first objective of the study was to discuss the nature of UN Affirmative action and women political participation in Kogi State, Nigeria. To address this objective, respondents were asked appropriate questions and data generated are presented at Figures 1 to 3.

Figure 1: Respondents View on Assessing Whether or Not the United Nations 35% Affirmative Action Provides Clear Guidelines for Promoting Women's Participation in Political Leadership in Kogi State, Nigeria.



Author's Field Survey, 2025.

As highlighted in Figure 1, an overwhelming majority of respondents

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cumulatively ranking 78.5 per cent respondents were of the view that definitely the United Nations 35% affirmative action provides clear guidelines for promoting women's participation in political leadership in Kogi State, Nigeria. Whereas on the other hand 16.9 per cent of the respondents cumulatively disagreed with the posed question.

In line with the above analysis a KII with Gender Desk Officer, UN House, Abuja, (25/08/2025) revealed that:

The UN Affirmative Action, especially through the 1995 Beijing Declaration and subsequent UN Women frameworks, established the 35% inclusion benchmark that Nigeria adopted. For instance, it informed Nigeria's National Gender Policy (2006), which emphasizes women's active role in governance. In many states, including Kogi, this has led to gender desks and women-focused programs across ministries and institutions including private organization.

On the other hand, in an interview with the Chairperson, National Women Leaders Forum (Kogi) (21/08/2025) averred that:

The United Nations affirmative action provides moral legitimacy for women's participation and advocacy. Through its influence, our Forum has mobilized rural women to engage in political party activities, such as during the 2023 general elections, where several women contested local seats in Kogi even at national level where we have the likes of Sen. Barr. Natasha H. Akpoti Uduagan.

Figure 2: Respondents View on Ascertaining Assessing Whether Chinese Investment in Nigerian Infrastructure Projects Has Led to a Noticeable Improvement in the Quality of Infrastructure



Author's Field Survey, 2025.

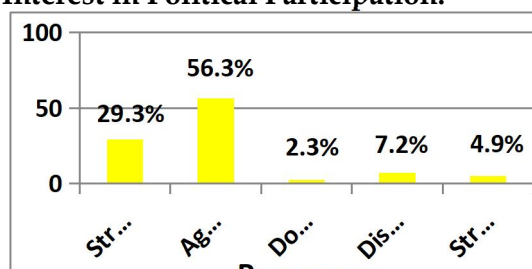
As highlighted in Figure 2, 64.1 per cent respondents cumulatively affirmed the assertion that the principles of the UN 35% Affirmative Action have been adequately integrated into Nigeria's political and electoral systems. In addition, 27.6 per cent of respondents cumulatively opined by disagreeing with the posed question.

It could be surmised from the analysis that indeed the UN 35% affirmative action has been adequate in restoring the glory of women in the society by giving them a voice in different spheres of life political and economic inclusive. Furthermore, it has aided in reducing gender disparity and entrusting gender equality in the schemes of things in Kogi State and Nigeria at large. This can be seen in Kogi State currently where all the Vice Chairperson in all the Local Government Areas are female. Hence, the need for both Nigerian and Kogi State government to sustain the implementation of the United Nations 35% affirmative action in every aspect of

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governance in order to ensure women are carried along in political and economic development of the state at both State and Federal level.

Figure 3: Respondents View on Ascertaining Whether the Awareness of the UN Affirmative Action among Nigerian Women has contributed to Increased Interest in Political Participation.



Author's Field Survey, 2025.

The analysis on Figure 3 shows that majority of the respondents cumulatively making up 85.6 per cent opined by cumulatively agreeing that the awareness of the UN affirmative action among Nigerian women has contributed to increased interest in political participation in Kogi State, Nigeria especially within the period 2015-2025. Whereas 12.1 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that there is little awareness and it has not contributed to increased interest in political participation in Kogi State, Nigeria. See appendix II for a comprehensive list of women in elected positions from 1999-2019.

This result was buttressed by the Political Education Officer, Okehi LGA in a KII (21/08/2025) where he submitted that:

Awareness is still low among grassroots women. Many rural women associate politics with conflict or corruption rather than empowerment, which limits their engagement.

Similarly, the Director of Programmes, Kogi State Ministry of Women Affairs, (22/8/2025) posited in an interview that:

Through state and UN-assisted programs like the 'HeForShe Campaign' and 'Women in Governance Forum,' we have increased awareness in urban areas such as Lokoja and Kabba, though remote regions lag behind.

These two aforementioned KII perspectives highlight that the level of awareness is more in the urban areas thereby limiting or hindering the effectiveness of the implementation of the UN 35% affirmative action in Kogi State, Nigeria. Therefore, the aim and objective of UN gender based policy is undermined by skewed structural design of lack of awareness in the nook and crannies of Kogi State. It could be surmised from the analysis that the level of analysis in regards to the United Nations affirmative action is grossly inadequate. Therefore, there is need to carry out the awareness-campaign to rural and urban areas where such awareness is considered to be low or non-existent.

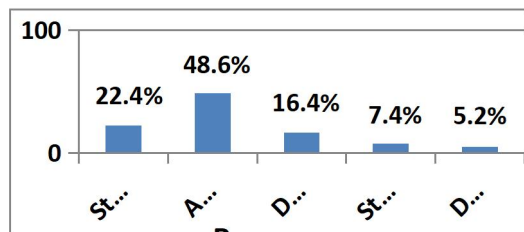
Effectiveness of the Implementation of the United Nations Affirmative Action on Women Political Participation in Kogi State, Nigeria.

The second research objective assessed the effectiveness of the implementation of the United Nations (UN) affirmative action on women political participation in Kogi State, Nigeria. To address this research question, the study asked respondents

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appropriate questions and data generated are presented at Figures 4 to 6.

Figure 4: Respondents Opinion on Evaluating Whether the Implementation of the UN Affirmative Action has Significantly Improved Women’s Access to Political Opportunities in Kogi State, Nigeria.



Author’s Field Survey, 2025.

Figure 4 above depicts as affirmed by a cumulative majority of respondents making up 71.0 per cent sees the implementation of the UN Affirmative Action as a vehicle that have significantly improved women’s access to political opportunities in Kogi State, Nigeria while 23.8 per cent of respondents cumulatively disagreed to the posed question. See Appendix III for Outline of women representation in 2019 elections. This result was buttressed by the Chairperson, National Women Leaders Forum (Kogi) in a KII (26/08/2025) who opined that:

The Affirmative Action inspired the establishment of Women Political Empowerment offices in several LGAs. For instance, in Lokoja, more women now participate in council meetings as observers and aides.

In the same vein, the Gender Advocacy Officer, Dekina LGA revealed in a KII (25/08/2025) that:

Between 2015 and 2023, the number of women in local political positions in

Kogi increased slightly. Awareness programs by NGOs such as FIDA and AWLN have helped women understand nomination processes.

Similarly, the State Coordinator, AWLN (Nigeria Chapter) in a KII (22/08/2025) in a KII that:

Networking programs under the UN Women framework, such as mentorship initiatives linking experienced female politicians with youth, have strengthened women’s readiness for leadership.

Figure 5: Respondents Opinion on determining whether or Not Government Institutions Effectively Enforce Policies derived from the UN Affirmative Action on Women’s Political Inclusion in Kogi State, Nigeria.



Source: Author’s Field Survey, 2025.

Figure 5 depicts that majority of respondents cumulatively ranking 66.9 per cent affirmed that Government institutions effectively enforce policies derived from the UN Affirmative Action on women’s political inclusion. The perspectives of majority of the respondents were corroborated by the Gender Desk Officer, UN House, Abuja in a KII (27/8/2025) who averred that:

Implementation of the UN 35% affirmative action in government institution is partial. Nigeria domesticated the principle through

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policies but lacks a legally binding quota system. This contrasts with nations like Senegal, where gender parity is constitutionally enforced.

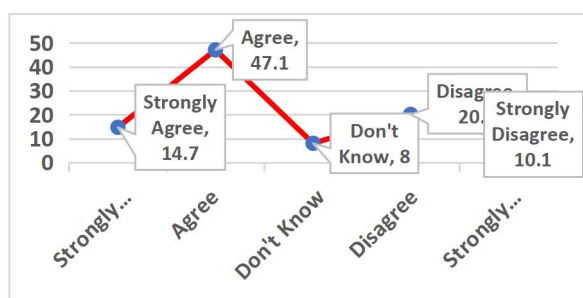
While alluding to the foregoing analysis, a Hon. Member, Kogi State House of Assembly in an interview (22/08/2025) revealed that:

At the state level, some measures are visible, such as appointment of female commissioners and advisers. Yet, legislative seats remain male-dominated, showing implementation gaps.

In the same vein, the Women Mobilization Leader, Okene LGA averred in a KII (26/08/2025) that:

During party primaries, most women candidates lack resources and political godfathers, which limits the impact of affirmative policies at the grassroots.

Figure 6: Respondents View on Assessing Whether or Not UN Affirmative Action Has Contributed to Fair Nomination and Appointment of Women in Political Positions in Kogi State, Nigeria.



Source: Author’s Field Survey, 2025.

Figure 6 depicts that 61.8 per cent of respondents cumulatively agreed that indeed UN Affirmative Action has contributed to fair nomination and appointment of women in political positions. While 30.2 per cent of

respondents cumulatively disagreed to the posed question.

It can be deduced from the above analysis that in recent years, Nigeria’s political atmosphere has witness a significant and monumental change where women are been giving a unfair nomination and appointment as their male counterpart thereby increasing their chances and ability contest and participate in politics without fear of discrimination.

Findings and Discussion

Nature of the UN Affirmative Action and Women Political Participation in Kogi State, Nigeria

In attaining the first objective of the study, the findings revealed that the United Nations 35% affirmative action provides clear guidelines for promoting women’s participation in political leadership in Kogi State, Nigeria. In line with the forgoing finding, it was averred by Okafor & Akokuwebe (2015) that despite the 30% and 35% affirmative action offered to women in the National Gender Policy (2006) and the National Women Policy (2000), respectively, Nigeria has not been able to show its commitment by electing women to leadership posts. Taking leadership positions in private and public organizations becomes challenging when women and girls are not given equal opportunities and access to education. Changing the perception of most Nigerian parents, especially those in rural areas, on the role of women in society will help in achieving this.

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On the other hand, it was discovered that the principles of the UN 35% Affirmative Action have been adequately integrated into Nigeria's political and electoral systems. This is contradicted by available statistics which revealed that out of 109 senators in the National Assembly, only nine (9) are women, while only 27 out of the 360 members of the House of Representatives are women. Besides, out of the 990 members of the state Houses of Assembly, only 54 are women (Fashola, 2015). However, Salaudeen and Jiddare (2024) corroborated the above finding by stating that four states stood out in women's appointment of Female Commissioners to the extent that they exceeded the 35% affirmative action as stipulated in the National Gender Policy. Two states in the North and two in the South. These states based on the highest ranked are Kwara (56.3%), Edo (45.5%), Kaduna (42.9%), and Lagos (36.4%). In fact, Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq of Kwara State appointed more Female Commissioners than male. This was unprecedented not only in Kwara State but in the Nigerian history. While these four states acted commendably in gender balancing, they constitute only 11 percent of the thirty-six (36) states. The percentage is still very poor. Only two out of nineteen states (10.5%) in the North achieved 35% affirmative action. Similarly, only two out of sixteen states (12.5%) in the South achieved it (Salaudeen and Jiddare, 2024). Kogi State which is the focus of this study only show its commitment at the Council level where all the vice chairpersons elected are female.

At the national level under President Muhammadu Buhari, only seven (7) out of forty-three (43) Ministers were female. This is approximately 16 percent which falls way below the stipulated 35 percent. It is a repeat of his 2015 ministerial list which had six (6) out of thirty-six (36) approximately 16 percent. This trend of normalizing the shortfall of women in the cabinet despite 35 percent affirmative action in their favour is a serious challenge to gender mainstreaming. Also, in 2023, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's cabinet only appointed six (6) out of forty six (46) approximately 12 percent. This shows lack of adherence to the UN 35% affirmative action. Using the lens of feminist legal theory which presupposes women's input in law-making and political liberalism which emphasizes accommodating everyone, it reeks of gender insensitiveness that some states could only have one female in their cabinet ostensibly to head the Ministry of Women Affairs.

Furthermore, the study uncovered that the awareness of the UN affirmative action among Nigerian women has contributed to increased interest in political participation in Kogi State, Nigeria especially within the period 2015-2025. Transforming societal attitudes through awareness campaigns is indispensable for dismantling the perception that politics is exclusively a male domain. Educating women on their rights and roles in political processes is essential. Fox and Lawless (2010) demonstrate that young women are equally likely as men to consider public office when encouraged. This

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finding underscores the importance of mentorship programmes, leadership training, and campaigns aimed at redefining gender norms and empowering women to envision themselves as equal political actors. Public education initiatives should also target community leaders and media platforms to challenge stereotypes and promote gender-sensitive narratives.

The study also discovered that the representation of women in Kogi State, Nigeria's political offices reflects the objectives of the UN Affirmative Action which is 35%. However, Anyanwu (2015) contradicts the above finding by positing that the 35% affirmative action for women is far from being achieved in Nigeria based on current realities.

Effectiveness of the Implementation of the United Nations Affirmative Action on Women Political Participation in Kogi State, Nigeria

In determining the effectiveness of the implementation of the UN Affirmative Action, the study uncovers that it has served as a vehicle that have significantly improved women's access to political opportunities in Kogi State, Nigeria. This can be corroborated with Section 16 (1) (b) of the Constitution states that "the State shall, within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in this Constitution, control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom, and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity."

In Section 17(1) and (2) (a), the Constitution states that "The State social order is founded on ideals of Freedom, Equality, and Justice," and in furtherance of the social order—"every citizen shall have equality of rights, obligations, and opportunities before the law." There are many other human rights, legal, and international instruments that advocate for gender equality and prohibit discrimination of any kind against women like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966), the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR, 1981), International Consensus in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA, 1995), Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) 2000, and the Women Right Protocol (HRP, 2003).

Further findings revealed that the government institutions effectively enforce policies derived from the UN Affirmative Action on women's political inclusion thereby leading to fair nomination and appointment of women in political positions. On the other hand, political parties in Kogi State, Nigeria comply with the UN Affirmative Action principles in selecting candidates for elections to a minimal extent thereby partially reducing gender inequality in political activities in Kogi State, Nigeria. In buttressing the above discovery by this study, it can be stated without the fear of contradiction that political parties are pivotal to enhancing women's political participation. Mlango & Kapingura (2019) highlight the importance of engaging political parties to include women on their candidate

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lists and to facilitate their involvement within party structures during election periods. However, Liu (2019) argues that achieving this requires recognising and addressing the unequal power structures within electoral institutions, political parties, and society at large. Gender stereotypes and the marginalisation of female politicians often stem from deeply ingrained societal power imbalances that influence perceptions of women's capabilities. By fostering equitable power distributions within party dynamics, political parties can become effective vehicles for gender parity in politics.

Conclusion

This study discusses affirmative action and highlights some of the contentious issues that accompany its implementation. Whether one agrees with it or not, the reality is that it is a universal and age-long concept that aims at addressing age-long discrimination of women in political activities in Kogi State and Nigeria at large. Nigeria has a pool of meritorious women who are well-qualified for public roles, which the state can draw from. On the question of discrimination, it must be acknowledged that there is a symbiotic relationship between affirmative action and discrimination. While religion is said to be a factor that debars women from making it to cabinet offices and other high-ranking positions in government in Kogi State, this is not always the case in other religious dominated states like Kaduna and Kwara. Violence is another factor often cited for women's poor representation in politics. While it is true that violence

steers women away from politics (especially the core power struggle), it has nothing to do with their representation in cabinet offices. When women, against all odds, eventually participate in politics, they are most relevant on the fringe of the political arena as mobilizers, dancers, and voters. Political campaigns are often populated by women of different categories and age brackets where they sing and dance to boost the ego of male political office seekers. Their visibility becomes very important and adds colors to campaign activities. But ironically, their usefulness ends as soon as elections are won. This has mostly been the case with the women in Kogi State politics.

It is worthy of note at this juncture that the 35% Affirmative Action for women in Nigeria has not been achieved for over 17 years since the formulation of the National Gender Policy, even though several African countries have made progress. For instance, countries like Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, Djibouti, DRC, Kenya, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, and Togo (all in Africa) are among those that have passed legislation and adopted national policies mandating gender parity in executive, legislative, and judicial branches, using legislative quotas. The study then concludes that until affirmative action is domesticated, its implementation will be at the mercy of the disposition of the government in power for the appointment of more women into Cabinet and other key political positions rather than giving them the actual chance and opportunity to contest for various elective positions.

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Recommendations

- i. The Kogi State Government should domesticate the United Nations 35% Affirmative Action policy through a binding state law mandating a minimum of 35% women's representation in elective and appointive political positions, with clear implementation responsibilities assigned to relevant MDAs and enforceable monitoring and sanction mechanisms.
- ii. Political parties and electoral bodies should institutionalize the 35% gender quota in candidate selection and party leadership structures, with INEC enforcing compliance as a condition for candidate nomination and participation in elections

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